

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Distant Intimacy: Stardom and Moving Image Cultures on the Post-2000 Screen

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6jh1d0hc>

Author

Wang, Pai

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Distant Intimacy: Stardom and Moving Image Cultures on the Post-2000 Screen

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Pai Wang

Committee in charge:

Professor Ping-hui Liao, Chair
Professor Daisuke Miyao
Professor Hoang Nguyen
Professor Paul Pickowicz

2022

Copyright

Pai Wang, 2022

All rights reserved.

The Dissertation of Pai Wang is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

To Professor Yingjin Zhang,

For all your support, spoken and unspoken.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE.....	iii
DEDICATION	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VIII
VITA	XI
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	XIII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1.....	22
Intimacy with the Imagined: Kwei Lun-Mei and Her <i>Xiaoqingxin</i> Glamour	
CHAPTER 2.....	56
Intimacy with the Resurrected: Archiving Teresa Teng in the Hologram Performance	
CHAPTER 3.....	89
Intimacy with the Disembodied: On/Off-Screen Spectators in Chinese Reality Talent TV Shows	
CHAPTER 4.....	112
Intimacy with the Dislocated: Vlogging Cinematic Shots through the Camera Eye	
REFERENCES.....	148

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: screenshots of the subtitles introducing Jay Chou’s dream of performing with Teng, and Jay Chou’s virtual duet with the holographic Teng on his 2013 Taipei Concert. ...	1
Figure 2: Sessue Hayakawa’s character in <i>The Cheat</i> (1915).....	16
Figure 3: Brigitte Lin's character in the movie <i>Outside the Window</i> (1973)	28
Figure 4: Brigitte Lin's screen image of Asia the Invincible in <i>Swordsman II</i> (1992)	30
Figure 5: Garbo in Sweden, a portrait taken in 1923.	38
Figure 6: One of Garbo's portraits taken by Arnold Genthe in 1925.....	39
Figure 7: The switches between subjective and objective PoV shots in <i>Blue Gate Crossing</i> (2002).	45
Figure 8: The montage of a hand opening the note and the closeup of Xiaoyu’s face in <i>Secret</i> (2007).	48
Figure 9: Andy Warhol’s screenprint portfolio of Marilyn Monroe.....	60
Figure 10: Screenshot of 2013 Jay Chou Taipei Arena concert duet with the virtual Teresa Teng.....	61
Figure 11: Gorillaz’s quasi-hologram performance on stage.....	74
Figure 12: Comment referring to Superorganism’s music video “Everybody Wants to be Famous” on YouTube.	75
Figure 13: Suga (the 4th from the left) appeared as a holographic image in BTS’s performance of “Life Goes On” at the 2020 MAMA.	78
Figure 14: Screenshot of “Teresa Teng Brought to Life after 22 Years Using the Latest 3D VR Technology” on YouTube.	80
Figure 15: Xue Zhiqian (the farrest right) follows the camera’s PoV during HeZ’s performance in <i>The Coming One</i> , ep. 7.	105
Figure 16: Xue Zhiqian’s duet performance with the virtual idol Luo Tianyi on 2019 JSTV NYE Concert.....	106
Figure 17: The fan-made video of Zhiqian’s live performance with the virtual idol Luo Tianyi on 2019 JSTV NYE Concert, in which the image of Luo does not exist.	107
Figure 18: the reaction of trainees as audiences when seeing the live performance on the screen.....	109

Figure 19: Jawed Karim is talking to the camera in his first vlog “Me at the Zoo.” 116

Figure 20: Li Ziqi in the vlog “Peanut and Melon Seeds, Dried Meat, Dried Fruit, Snowflake
Cake — Snacks for Spring Festival.” 125

Figure 21: “Monday.” on the screen serves as a temporal marker in this vlog..... 130

Figure 22: SpongeBob timecards as time indicator in vlogs..... 131

Figure 23: “Cleaning the countertop...” is identification intertitle in this vlog to provide extra
information..... 131

Figure 24: screenshot of the vlogger revealing the camera device from Harry and Wenning
VLOG Sep. 13, 2021..... 142

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements—the last thing I need to complete for this dissertation. For me, it is the most difficult part. Every time I opened this document, numerous names and faces flooded into my mind. They have turned this piece into flesh and blood. They have made this project unbearable lightness of being. It is a sentimental and blessed journey for me to evoke all the generous support I received that relates to this dissertation.

First, I would like to acknowledge all the film stars and media celebrities that I included in my writing. You are not only the motive that drives me throughout the whole writing process, but also the company that comforts me at those countless upset and directionless moments. I am grateful that I have the autonomy to choose You as my topic. I wish you could know that your influence was beyond your talents and inspired a PhD student for her career path.

I express deep gratitude to my M.A. supervisor, Kristof Van den Troost from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Your encouragement and supervision have led me onto the academic journey that I enjoy. Your suggestion to write on Brigitte Lin and Anita Mui for my master thesis opened my mind and eventually impelled me to further explore Star Studies and Film Studies during my PhD studies.

At UCSD, I have received various financial and intellectual support. I thank Literature Department who awarded me one-year dissertation fellowship in my fifth year. Besides, the first-year Chinese studies fellowship and other summer research grants I received from UCSD significantly helped me to adjust to new study environment and concentrate on my research. My committee members: the Chair Ping-hui Liao, and Daisuke Miyao, Hoang Nguyen, and Paul Pickowicz, you have my most sincere gratitude. I cannot gain the current achievement without your selfless mentoring, encouragement, and trust over the past 7 years. I am fortunate

to have you on my committee and believe me, I will pass on your benevolence and profession in my own teaching and mentoring.

Yingjin Zhang, and Ari Larissa Heinrich, you absolutely deserve an acknowledgment here, even though your names are no longer on my committee. Ari, I am grateful that I got to be your student for several years before you left UCSD. You are the most genuine person I have ever met. I shared with your interest in cutting-edge research and passion on teaching. They were the treasure that you endowed me with when you were here. Yingjin, you were the primary reason that I came to UCSD. More than that, you have been a role model for me to consistently pursue scholarly innovation and accuracy. The tireless dedication of time that you were committed to me was truly a blessing and although this might be greedy of me, I wish you were there to see the student you nurtured defend that magnificent day. This dissertation is dedicated to you.

I also thank Wendy Matsumura from History Department, for your generous help in hosting the Job Market workshop in Summer 2020, and IAH Dissertation workshop in Winter 2021; I thank faculty from Chinese Studies and Literature Department, such as Pei-Chia Chen, Géraldine Fiss and Sal Nicolazzo, for helping me with job interviews; I thank Xi Chen, for purchasing and reserving library resources in a timely manner. And of course, my peers at UCSD: Yiwen Wang, Jing Chen, Xiaojiao Wang, Ying Guo, Weiyue Kan, Xiaojian Yin, and many others, it's truly appreciated to have your emotional support when I was stressed with coursework and job hunting. Starting from this March, I have attended the Memory and Desire Writing Group initiated by Luis Cortes. Luis, Marina, and Betty, thank you for sharing your work and experience in job hunting, as well as your feedback on my work, and mock interviews.

It is the most committed and provoking workshop I have ever attended. It's amazing that we witnessed the milestones in each other's career path during the past several months.

I have also received profound inspiration and feedback from people inside and outside of UCSD on this dissertation. Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay and Olivera Jokić, thank you for guest editing the special issue of *The Journal of Popular Culture*: "Archival Lives of Popular Culture." Yingjin and Paul, thank you for organizing the conference event "Cultural Meets Geopolitics: Trans-Pacific Dynamics Projected on Taiwan Screens," and putting our papers together in this edited volume: *Locating Taiwan Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*. Andrew Rodekhr, your paper presentation at the 2018 AAP conference fundamentally inspired my Chapter 2, thank you.

Lastly, I cannot express my gratitude enough to my parents, Wang Jian and Tang Xiulan, who unconditionally support their only daughter to pursue her dream in a foreign country. And Andrew Sit, you entered my life at the critical moment and warmed my heart with your love. You are my best luck charm ever. Although this is our first year together, I look forward to many more years together.

Chapter 1, in part, is a reprint of the paper entitled "Filming and Performing the Girl Next Door: Kwei Lun-mei and Her Xiaoqingxin Glamour," as it appears in *Locating Taiwan Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang (Cambria, 2020). The dissertation author was the primary author of this paper.

Chapter 2, in part, is a reprint of the material entitled "Disembodied Performance, Embodied Archive: Reviving Teresa Teng in Hologram," as it appears in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 53, No. 6, 2020, pp. 1435–1455. The dissertation author was the primary author of this paper.

VITA

EDUCATION

- 2022 Ph.D. in Literature, University of California San Diego
- 2014 M.A. in Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- 2013 B.A. in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Shaanxi Normal University

PUBLICATIONS

- “Disembodied Performance, Embodied Archive: Reviving Teresa Teng in Hologram.” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 53, No. 6, 2020, pp. 1435–1455.
- “Filming and Performing the Girl Next Door: Kwei Lun-mei and Her *Xiaoqingxin* Glamour.” *Locating Taiwan Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang, Cambria, 2020, pp. 187–205.

FIELD OF STUDY

Chinese-language film, literary and media culture; star and celebrity studies; East Asian film and popular culture; performance studies; digital media distribution

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2020–2021 Departmental Dissertation Year Fellowship
- Winter 2019 The Dean of Arts and Humanities Travel Fund
- Summer 2019 Institute of Arts and Humanities Graduate Summer Fellowship
- Summer 2018 The Dean of Arts and Humanities Travel Fund
- 2015–2016 Chinese Studies First-Year Fellowship

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Fall 2021 Instructor of Record, CHIN 20AM: 2nd-Year Chinese.
Chinese Studies Program, University of California San Diego
- Spring 2020 Instructor of Record, LTCH 101: Chinese Film Stars.
Literature Department, University of California San Diego
- Summer 2019 Instructor of Record, LTCS 110: East Asian Pop Culture.
Literature Department, University of California San Diego

2015-2022 Teaching Assistant, Chinese Studies Program & Literature Department,
University of California San Diego

INVITED TALKS

Book Talk: *Locating Taiwan Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*. University of California, San Diego, March 29, 2022.

“From Taiwan’s Xiaoqingxin to Japan’s Kawaii: Female Stardom and Alternative Femininity in Contemporary East Asia.” International Education Week, University of Houston, Nov. 15, 2021.

Roundtable: Special Issue on “Archival Lives of Popular Culture” at *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Staging National Abjection, Kadir Has University, April 22, 2021.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Paying for High Definition or Not? iQIYI and the Chinese VOD Market.” Society for Cinema & Media Studies (SCMS) 2022 Conference, Chicago, IL, March 2022, accepted for presentation.

“Camera, Body, and Viewfinder: Vlogging the Multifaceted Interfaces in Contemporary China.” Association of Asian Studies (AAS) 2022 Annual Conference, Honolulu, Hawai’i & Online, March 2022, accepted for presentation.
(Panel Co-organizer, “In-between Media: The Cultures of Interface from Early Modern to Contemporary China” Panel.)

“Disembodied Performance, Embodied Archive: Reviving Teresa Teng in Hologram.” American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) 2021 Virtual Conference, April 2021.

“Filming and Performing the Girl Next Door: Kwei Lun-Mei and Her *Xiaoqingxin* Glamour.” Society for Cinema & Media Studies (SCMS) 2021 Virtual Conference, March 2021.

“Performing the Spectator: Digital Participation in Chinese Idol Producing Show.” Association of Asian Performance (AAP) Annual Conference 2018, Boston, MA, July 2018.

“Remaking National Cinema, Performing Multiple Authorship: Reading ‘Maggie Cheung’ in *Irma Vep* (1996).” Film-Philosophy Conference 2018, Gothenburg, Sweden, July 2018.

“The First *Hallyu* Star in China?: Jin Yan’s Passage from Korean Exile to Chinese Movie Emperor.” Screen Studies Conference 2018, Glasgow, UK, June 2018.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Distant Intimacy: Stardom and Moving Image Cultures on the Post-2000 Screen

by

Pai Wang

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Ping-hui Liao, Chair

This dissertation tackles the issue of star-audience relationship by investigating the ways that audiences engage with stardom and celebrity pertaining to the imagined, the resurrected, the disembodied, and the dislocated in contemporary media industries in Taiwan and mainland China. Situated at the intersection of media and cultural studies, this project bears three objectives. First, it revises the boundary between Star Studies and Celebrity Studies by merging these two fields through the portal of moving image culture. Second, it theoretically enriches media and cultural studies with a new understanding of screen-based spectatorship which is

associated with the awareness of technological mediation. Finally, it pushes beyond investigations based solely on Western examples by providing a thorough account and new insights of stardom in the East Asian context.

In this dissertation, I adopt an audience-oriented perspective which examines how the new technologies and cultural trends have shaped and altered our sensational and embodied viewing experience. Chapter 1 examines the concept of cinematic glamour in the case of Taiwanese actress Kwei Lun-Mei, whose embodiment of *xiaoqingxin* represents a new measurement of glamour beyond the existing system dominated by Hollywood. I argue that Kwei's cinematic body is an idealized space for emotional resonance independent from the film plots. In Chapter 2, through a close reading of Taiwanese pop diva Teresa Teng's resurrected performances in hologram, I argue that the hologram of the virtual Teng redefines authenticity as a consequence of the materiality of affect, rather than as a consequence of the materiality of Teng's biological body. Chapter 3 interprets various roles played by viewers of Chinese reality talent TV shows such as *Super Girl*, *Idol Producer*, and *The Coming One*. Here I illustrate that the viewer is an essential character who not only blurs the boundary between viewing and performing, but also supports the narrative as performing spectacle and practical interpreter. The last chapter delves into the dislocated stardom of internet video bloggers (aka. vloggers) in relation to camera technologies. I argue that the camera is not only a chain of medium apparatus along with the screen and film/video, but also exceeds the medium-body interaction and facilitates techno-corporeality that extends or dislocates the human point-of-view.

INTRODUCTION

1. From the Holographic Resurrection of Teresa Teng

“I once imagined that I could travel back to thirty years ago and sing a song with her. That would be my honor.” With the subtitle fading away on the screen, Jay Chou (Zhou Jielun) surprised everyone by saying: “Welcome Deng Lijun (Teresa Teng)!” At the same time, a holographic image of Teresa Teng appeared at the façade of Red Dust Inn (*hongchen kezhan*) — a virtual background projected on the screen. The virtual Teng was dressed in an elegant white chengsam with patterns of red blossoms, an apparently new style different from her past image (figure 1). Using her distinguished sweet and soft voice, the virtual Teng performed three songs in a row with Chou: “What Do you Have to Say? (*ni zenme shuo?*),” “Red Dust Inn (*hongchen*

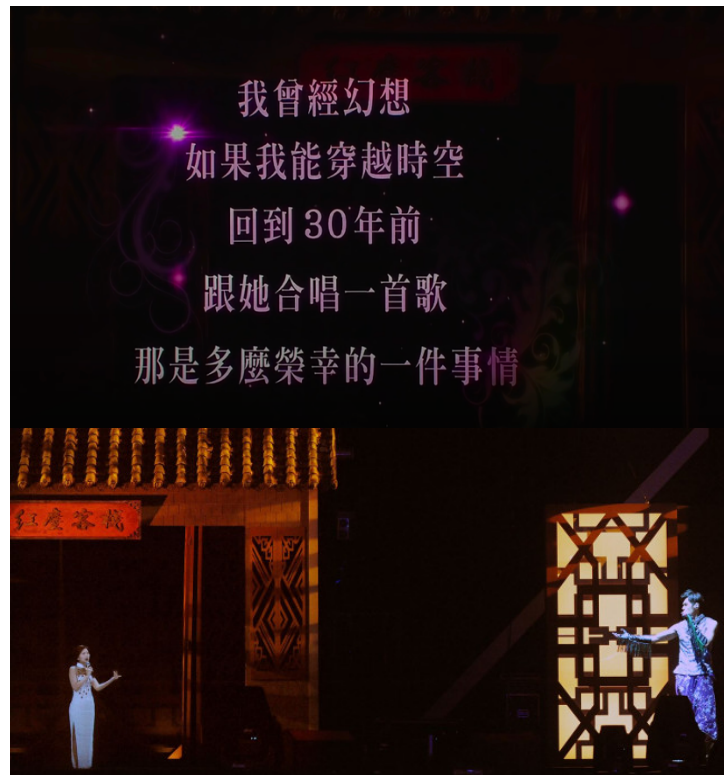


Figure 1: screenshots of the subtitles introducing Jay Chou's dream of performing with Teng, and Jay Chou's virtual duet with the holographic Teng on his 2013 Taipei Concert.

kezhan),” and “Faraway (*qianli zhiwai*).” After finishing the last chorus, Teng’s image disappeared in the form of fleeting stars. This scene happened at Jay Chou’s Taipei Concert on September 6, 2013. As one of the most famous Mandopop stars of the twenty-first century, Jay amazed the world with his virtual duet with the musician Teresa Teng, a legendary Taiwanese singer who passed away in 1995. Teresa Teng is not only a celebrity musician but also a cultural icon for Chinese-speaking communities, even after her death. Growing up in an eastern city in China, I vaguely remembered her songs were replayed repeatedly on the radio and television. Later on in my life, I moved from my hometown to a western city in China, then to Hong Kong, now to the US. Teresa Teng’s songs always haunt me in different ways, from radio to television to computer. When I first saw the clip of Jay Chou’s duet performance with the holographic image of Teng, I was shocked as if Teresa Teng was really brought back alive.

The technological renovation in the creative media industry has significantly changed the way how a celebrity is produced, commemorated, and interacts with audiences. The virtual Teng on Jay Chou’s concert is created by Digital Domain, an American visual effects and media application company which also produced the virtual likeness of Tupac Shakur on the 2012 Coachella Music Festival. Due to the limitation of current technology, Digital Domain could not create a 360-degree VR presence of the character. They generated a 3D illusion by expanding layers of 2D surfaces into a 3D space. Although the physical movement of Teresa Teng’s avatar was restricted to the invisible 2D screen that could not cross the spatial boundary, the “liveness” of her hologram performance manifested a resurrecting effect, which consequently put the audiences into astonishment. One hundred years ago, the early movie viewers were grabbed by “the arrival of a train at the station” at the Grand Café because the real-world was moved onto the

screen; one hundred years later, contemporary audiences were astonished again because the technology of posthumous reconstruction enables the virtual body to interact with people lively.

Since the new millennium, the advent and development of new technologies and cultural trends have urged us to reconsider the traditional representations of stardom in the digital age as they foreground interactions with audiences. How do the traditional representations of stardom change in the digital era? How to examine stars and celebrities not only as social phenomena or industrial production, but also as new possibilities of technological and affective experiences for audiences? How does the mobility of stardom indicate a transnational and global distribution of media products? This dissertation tackles these questions by adopting an audience-centered perspective. Taking Teresa Teng's holographic performance as a starting point, I aim to draw attention to the visible and invisible boundaries that multimedia celebrities transcend, as well as how our sensational and embodied experience has been nurtured as audiences.

Situated at the intersection of media studies and cultural studies, this dissertation contributes to the literature on both fields in three aspects. First, it revises the boundary between star studies and celebrity studies. Conventionally, star studies was considered a subcategory of film studies, which has usually situated its legitimacy in the textual and cultural significance of specific star cases. In contrast, celebrity has been mostly studied under the social science disciplines in which human activities and social impacts are emphasized. By merging these two fields through the framework of moving-image culture, I employ interdisciplinary approaches including film studies, media archaeology, area studies, gender studies, and performance studies, to reflect the aesthetic as well as social-cultural comprehensiveness of diverse media forms and how they mold our understanding of stardom and spectatorship in the contemporary world.

Second, it theorizes “distant intimacy” as a parameter to examine stardom and celebrity pertaining to the imagined, the resurrected, the disembodied, and the dislocated in contemporary media industries. Studio-era stardom in Hollywood is built upon concepts such as mysteriousness and distance. Contemporary stardom in all kinds of media, however, tends to be deprived of enigma and privacy. Intimacy, therefore, has started to dominate our discussion about media celebrities, both literally and figuratively. I coin the concept “distant intimacy,” to draw attention to the apparatus of the screen as it mediates the spectators’ relationship with the star image. Besides the temporal and spatial distance, “distance” here also refers to the distorted perspective, the filter of imagination, and the dimensional difference between 2D and 3D, the virtual and the real. Other than a physical and metaphorical boundary between “now and then,” “here and there,” I interpret the screen as a threshold, which enables the communication between the two sides of the screen.

Finally, by locating Chinese-speaking stardom in a global and cross-cultural context, this dissertation pushes beyond the limits of investigations based solely on Western examples by providing a thorough account and new insights into stardom in an Asian context. Taking specific case studies in film, television, live performance, and digital media as examples, I directly explore how my work can push Eurocentric film and media theories to think more critically about the issues of stardom, spectatorship, and global digital media.

2. How It Began: Theorizing Star Studies

When the viewers were seeing Méliès’s *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)¹ in the movie theater in 1902, they could be amazed by the stunning narrative, and innovative special effects associated with the interactions with characters, but unlike the actors who played them. In the early days of

¹ Georges Méliès’s *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) was one of the earliest short movies that showcased the special effects of fantasy and narrative elements. It received internationally popularity on its release.

film history, the actors in a movie were uncredited, so the public had no idea of who they were and where they came from. The production of film stardom began with the American “Biograph Girl” Florence Lawrence (Dyer 9), whose star image was used for deliberate manufacture for the first time in public media. In the early 1910, there were rumors that the famous “Biograph Girl” was killed in a car accident. On March 12, 1910, an ad entitled “We Nail a Lie” from *The Moving Picture World* denounced that Lawrence’s death was a vicious lie. This event made Lawrence’s name widely known to the public and marked the origin of stardom in film history.

In academia, the film star started to receive scholarly attention after the recognition of film techniques as tools to engage the audiences. Béla Balázs, an early film critic, argued that the close-up of face in silent films revealed a world of microphysiognomy as the facial expressions of the actor were emphasized. Microphysiognomy, according to Balázs, refers to a world that could not otherwise be seen with the naked eye or in everyday life (5). As Dyer commented, “Balázs is important because he gives expression to a widely held view, namely that the close-up reveals the unmediated personality of the individual, and this belief in the ‘capturing’ of the ‘unique’ ‘person’ of a performer is probably central to the star phenomenon” (17). Later, Roland Barthes also noticed the inexplicable glamour on certain faces such as the one of Garbo’s; he connected “the face of Garbo” with mythology by depicting Garbo as the sign of an asexual beauty.²

In addition to their screen image, the film star’s double persona on and off screen has also come into notice in its comparison with the stage actor: as defined by Stanley Cavell, the word “star” was an advanced status of “actor”. Different from the stage actor who had to yield to the character, Cavell pointed out that the screen performer should be the subject-matter to study rather

² See Roland Barthes’s “The Face of Garbo.”

than his or her role in the movie.³ “Star studies” was thenceforth launched as a legitimate field which seemed inseparable from the cinematic medium. The study of stardom can be as broad to include film performance, star publicity, and star-audience relationships.

In film criticism, stars and the phenomenon of stardom have been considered as a reflection or reproduction of the ideological manipulation (Dyer 1979), or as an invitation of desire and identification which is associated with Hollywood star-system and capitalism (Gledhill 1991). The followers of Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer insist that the production and consumption of stars is in line with the function of “cultural industry” as a configuration of capitalist modernity, whereas film scholars like Miriam Hansen adopts the optimistic approach from Walter Benjamin and discovers the (gendered) public sphere that is formed and transformed within cinematic reception.⁴

For a long time, Hollywood had its dominance in the scholarship of film and star studies. To quote Sabrina Qiong Yu, “From Dyer onwards, stardom in essence is perceived as a Hollywood phenomenon and defined decisively by Hollywood stars. Stars from other cultures are seen as imitations of Hollywood stars” (16). It was not until 2000 when the field of star studies embraced diverse perspectives. In 2000, the publication of Ginette Vincendeau’s *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* firstly brought into attention the star phenomena outside Hollywood. Within the Hollywood star-system, there are several “deviational” cases such as the prosperous careers of Asian American stars: Sessue Hayaka and Anna May Wong, which have been respectively

³ See Stanley Cavell’s “Audience, Actor, and Star” in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (1979).

⁴ Frankfurt School’s discussion on the cultural industry can be found in the chapter “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Miriam Hansen’s discussion of cinema as the public sphere is in her book *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (1991).

explored by scholars like Daisuke Miyao and Yiman Wang.⁵ In the East Asian context, book-length studies on East Asian stars and stardom have not emerged until recent decade, and examples can be found in Mary Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang's edited volume *Chinese Film Stars*, Wing-Fai Leung and Andy Willis's collection on East Asian Film Stars, and a few monographs on Hong Kong and Chinese stardom (Yu 2012; Feng 2017; Gallagher 2018; Lau 2018).⁶ More recently, Sabrina Qiong Yu and Guy Austin's edited volume *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes, and Methods* sets a landmark as it challenges the conventional boundaries of film stardom. As Yu and Austin contend, "more than merely being a comparative point for the study of other kinds of fame, the study of film stardom has the power to reinvigorate itself and redefine the concept of star and stardom" (14). The debate on revising and expanding the boundary of star studies is still going on.

3. An Extended Understanding: Theorizing Celebrity Studies

Star studies first emerged as a subfield of film studies, but the study of star phenomenon has gone beyond film and rapidly expanded to other media. A result is the rise of celebrity studies, which aims to understand the celebrity culture in contemporary society. For Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, celebrity is primarily related to the phenomenon of fame.⁷ As they indicate, celebrity is "historically conceptualized as a particular form of fame". However, as fame becomes more ubiquitous in contemporary public discourse, the term celebrity has come to be used in a "highly

⁵ See Daisuke Miyao's *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (2007) and Yiman Wang's "Anna May Wong: A Border-crossing 'Minor' Star Mediating Performance," in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* (2008).

⁶ See Wing-Fai Leung and Andy Willis's *East Asian Film Stars* (2014), Sabrina Qiong Yu's *Jet Li: Chinese Masculinity and Transnational Film Stardom* (2012), Feng Lin's *Chow Yun-fat and Territories of Hong Kong Stardom* (2017), Mark Gallagher's *Tony Leung Chiu-Wai* (2018), and Dorothy Wai Sim Lau's *Chinese Stardom in Participatory Cyberculture* (2018).

⁷ See their edited volumes *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (2006) and *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* (2007)

playful and usually derogatory sense” which is often associated with tabloid celebrity magazines and news reports (*Frame Celebrity* 11). Different from star studies which usually situates its legitimacy in the textual and cultural significance of specific star cases, the ambiguous meaning and cross-media focus decide the comprehensiveness of celebrity studies. At the same time, the judgment of putting what kind of celebrity topic or figure under academic discussion is more problematic compared to the field of star studies.

In *Star Studies*, Dyer’s theory of “structured polysemy” draws attention to the duality between actor and character, as well as the multiplicity of meanings and affect that a star-image contains. Based on Dyer’s theory, Christine Geraghty analyzes film star in its relationship with three other categories: celebrity, professional and performer in the media; each of them respectively corresponds to the emphasis on a star’s private life, a stable star image (linked with a specific role or particular genre), and a consistent persona or impersonation. For Geraghty, the celebrity element of stardom emphasizes not the achievement or talent but the private sphere of a star. Moreover, she considers the discourse of celebrity a terrain where film stars interact with other forms of fame from sport, television, fashion and music. Geraghty’s category provides the ultimate confirmation of film stardom over celebrity in other media. However, this opinion was challenged and modified after the boom of celebrity studies as a real academic consideration in the late 1990s and early 2000.⁸

Graeme Turner, in *Understanding Celebrity*, argues modern celebrity as “a symptom of cultural change” that “privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written, and the rational” (5). On top of that, a postmodern culture that is saturated with simulation and virtuality also impels the celebrity industry which nevertheless has lost its

⁸ See Christine Geraghty’s “Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance,” in *Reinventing Film Studies* (2000).

grounding in substance or reality. As a result, celebrity has been understood as a mass-mediated product in modern society. Based on Andre Wenick's definition of "star" in *Promotional Culture* (1991), Turner understands celebrity as "a genre of representation and a discursive effect; [...] a commodity traded by the promotions, publicity, and media industries that produce these representations and their effects; and [...] a cultural formation that has a social function we can better understand" (10). Turner's definition sets celebrity at the discursive regime within which celebrity is represented across the media landscape. This broader perspective also reflects the multidisciplinary interest in stardom and celebrity. In other words, different from Star Studies which is almost exclusively linked with film and media studies, Celebrity has been approached from various perspectives in media and cultural studies, sociology, communication, etc.

As history scholars, Leo Braudy and Fred Inglis believe that the modern history of celebrity embodies the transformative relations in fame, power, and charisma. In *The Frenzy of Renown*, Leo Braudy claims that the history of fame is the history of how individuals have gained power by bringing them to the public gaze (3). The desire to be famous, as Braudy points out, is "enhanced by and fed upon the available means of reproducing the image" (4). From literature, theater, and painting to photography, movie, and television, the advent of each new medium expands the intensity of the human images it conveys and the number of individuals it celebrates (4). At the same time, the meaning of each individual appearance is less and less personal as the public facilitates human exchange of the distinguishing marks from famous people (4-5). For Inglis, "celebrity has largely replaced the archaic concept of renown" as it serves as adhesive to pull together "the realms of public politics, civil society, and private domestic life" since the mid-eighteenth century (4). Whereas renown was considered an expression of authority and devotion to the society (as shown in the example of Queen Elizabeth I), celebrity became the feature of

individualization of fame (4-5). Elizabeth's Progress, as Inglis argues, was the display of spectacular, or charisma, a term devised by Max Weber to describe the principle of those "natural" leaders who "possessed specific physical and spiritual gifts which were regarded as supernatural, in the sense of not being available to everyone" (17). The new urban culture, however, bred new social figures in which glamour and celebrity replaced honor and renown (5). According to Inglis, celebrity has been industrialized due to three social formations in the western cities:

first, the new consumerism of eighteenth-century London; second, the invention of the fashion industry with department stores to match in mid-nineteenth-century Paris; third, the coming of the mass circulation newspaper, its gossip columns, and its thrilled, racy transformation of city life in New York and Chicago into the glitter of publicity. (9)

In addition to "the democratization of society" and "the commodification of everyday life," Chris Rojeck considers "the decline in organized religion" another crucial public preoccupation of the emergence of celebrity in the Western world. Rojeck claims celebrity worship as a replacement of religious worship in modern society, as he writes, "in secular society, the sacred loses its connotation with organized religious belief and becomes attached to mass-media celebrities who become objects of cult worship" (53). As the belief in God waned, celebrities have become new symbols of belonging and recognition. The new urban culture and popularity of mass media has brought celebrity to everyday lives, making the audiences simultaneously close to them yet so distant. In other words, the mass media turns celebrities into a significant other for their fans, despite the physical and social remoteness. Horton and Wohl name this kind of relationship with a sociological term: "para-social relationship," a "one-sided" and "non-dialectical" interaction between the spectator and the performer (215). To be specific, such a relationship creates an

illusion of intimacy for the audiences with the personae of media figures; moreover, it “provides a social milieu in which the everyday assumptions and understandings of primary group interaction and sociability are demonstrated and reaffirmed” (223). From cinema to other kinds of mass media, the audiences’ intimacy with the celebrity is mainly a form of second-order intimacy which is built on their imagination and/or emotional identification with the “personalities” of media figures. Such intimacy is significant in terms of bonding the spectator and the performer, and sustaining the development of celebrity culture.

The existing scholarship tends to investigate the intimacy with film stars from a bodily, phenomenological perspective whilst the intimacy with media celebrities have been usually scrutinized in relation to their social, political, and cultural histories. The methodological differentiation might be attributed to the different disciplinary affiliation of each field. Star studies is a subcategory of film studies, which has been originally adopting approaches such as text analysis and semiotics from literary studies. On the other hand, celebrity has been mostly studied under the social science disciplines in which human activities and social impacts are emphasized. Considering the increasing application of interdisciplinary approaches in both fields, some scholars have suggested incorporating Star studies into Celebrity studies.⁹ However, as Sabrina Qiong Yu contends, film star and celebrity are not always exchangeable. “A film star can be a celebrity and vice versa. But a film star does not have to be a celebrity, which is often the case outside of the Hollywood system” (*Revisiting Star Studies* 13). A compelling example is the “Red stars” of Socialist China, who were merely embodiments of communist ideology on screen. They were not considered as celebrities since their offscreen selves did not obtain publicity and fame.

⁹ See, for example, Marshall David’s *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (1997), and Holmes Su and Redmond Sean’s *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (2006).

As a result, Yu and Austin propose to see film star as a distinctive category paralleling celebrity (13-4).

In the contemporary media-saturated society, stardom and celebrity play a vital role in understanding the local and global media cultures and industries. Star studies and celebrity studies are by nature interdisciplinary, as they offer scholars a hook on tackling various critical issues in cultural studies, film and media studies, area studies, history, sociology, and so on. Rather than debating on the categorization of these two fields, I merge them through the framework of moving image culture, to better inform and reflect new methods and theory in a wide range of disciplines. Bearing the on-going debate in mind, I suggest a spectator-oriented perspective. I use “intimacy” as a parameter to explore how the spectator’s affective experience and cultural understanding of various media products are shaped and practiced through their interaction with screen images.

4. From the Spectator’s Perspective: Theorizing “Intimacy” in Cinema and New Media

The spectator’s relationship with screen images is core to the study of cinema as a way of understanding film narratives and cultural myths. In the 1970s, with the dominance of semiotic and psychoanalysis approaches, the concept of spectatorship was examined as a passive element of cinema apparatus. Scholars like Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Laura Mulvey, for example, interpreted the spectator as a code embedded in a single film entity but neglected the specific context where the spectator anchors.¹⁰ Since the 1990s, with a turn to materialist history,

¹⁰ See Jean-Louis Baudry’s “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus.” Christian Metz’s “Identification, Mirror” in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1982), and Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”

phenomenology, and cognitivist approach in film scholarship, the spectator has been widely accepted as an active participant both in and out of films.¹¹

As Dyer argues, “star images” is the essential term to understand stars as a production-consumption dialectic of the cinema. Rather than an exclusively visual sign, “image” here refers to a complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs, which is manifested not only in films but in all kinds of media text (Dyer 38). Although spectators may not directly create star images, their responses to star images play an important role in shaping the star phenomenon. Andrew Tudor suggests four types of star-audience relationships, they are emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and projection (Dyer 20). All the four categories are relevant to the generation of intimacy as a possible way of understanding the affective bonding that links the spectator with a film star.

The generation of intimacy is ubiquitous in our daily life, both at the private and public levels. As Lauren Berlant interprets on a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* in 1998,

To intimate is to communicate with the sparsest of signs and gestures, and at its root intimacy has the quality of eloquence and brevity. But intimacy also involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way. Usually, this story is set within zones of comfort: friendship, the couple, and the family, animated by expressive and emancipating kinds of love. Yet the inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding public-ness. (281)

¹¹ For a materialist-history turn in film studies, see works from Tom Gunning and Miriam Hansen; see works from Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks for their application of phenomenology approach in film studies; David Bordwell was known for his cognitivist approach.

Inspired by Berlant's definition, Thomas Elsaesser proposes that "intimacy should be a cinematic topic par excellence" ("Touch and Gesture" 10). As he explains, "the very definition of intimacy as proposed by Berlant implies a tension and mutual interdependence between public and private that is nothing less than foundational and constitutive for the cinema, which is, after all, our last public sphere, where the private is depicted, experienced, and negotiated as *private*" (10). Miriam Hansen is one of the earliest scholars who read cinema as a public sphere through theorizing spectatorship from the perspective of cultural history. In her book *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Hansen insists that the spectator is not just a function of signifying structures and the strategies of filmic narration. Rather, it enters the cinema "as a consumer, as a member of a demographically diverse audience" when the cinema has been noticed as "an economic and social institution" (5). Using the stardom of classic Hollywood star Rudolph Valentino as a starting point, Hansen further contends that cinema can provide a threshold for (female) spectators to practice fandom activities and even social interference in which "the social construction(s) of female subjectivity [...] could be recognized and interpreted" (250). It is noticeable that fandom activities such as the circulation of photographs, autographs, and star paraphernalia have already existed in the Hollywood studio period, when Hollywood gradually established its star system.

The star system intensively created, promoted and exploited glamorous stars, which also brought Hollywood the name of "glamour factory." With the glamour system, the star-spectator intimacy is not only established upon the fandom activities, but is also manifested in our viewing experience. Building on the mysterious attractiveness of the star, such intimacy was not just a phenomenon of closeness, but also a phenomenon of distance, which was relevant to Walter Benjamin's concept of aura. When seeing a glamorous star on the screen, the spectator may firstly

experience emotional affinity and then the desire of overcoming the “aura” and getting closer to the star. That is where the intimacy is generated.

A well-recognized mechanism of cinematography that generates the sense of intimacy is the close-up:

The close-up has inspired fascination, love, horror, empathy, pain, unease. It has been seen as the vehicle of the star, the privileged receptacle of affect, of passion, the guarantee of the cinema’s status as a universal language, one of, if not the most recognizable units of cinematic discourse, yet simultaneously extraordinarily difficult to define. (Doane 90)

As Mary Ann Doane argues above, the close-up can carry out the essential quality of the star on screen and strengthen the affective connection between the star and the audience regardless of the film text and context. Especially in the silent cinema, the face can speak to the viewers more eloquently via close-up shots. In this 1915 Hollywood film *The Cheat*, for instance, the actor Sessue Hayakawa’s nuanced facial expression is captured in close-up shots which shows his intense emotions (figure 2). With a close concentration on his face, the audience is able to better sense his emotions and generates empathy for his character.



Figure 2: Sessue Hayakawa's character in *The Cheat* (1915)

French Impressionists Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein consider the face of Hayakawa revelation of “photogénie,” a concept that is coined to describe the inarticulable enhancement added to an object by a photographic medium.¹² The close-up, as Doane points out, is “the privileged site for this experience of photogénie” (89). It resembles a magnifying glass for the audience to better perceive the object on screen and generates intimacy via provoking a sense of tangibility. As Doane argues, “The close-up transforms whatever it films into a quasi-tangible thing, producing an intense phenomenological experience of presence, and yet, simultaneously, that deeply experienced entity becomes a sign, a text, a surface that demands to be read” (94). The reversibility of the visible and the tangible is a crucial point made by Laura Marks in her two books: *The Skin of the Film* (2000) and *Touch* (2002). As a theorist who actively engages with the phenomenological approach when studying cinema and experimental videos, Marks calls for returning to the body as a complex surface of perception and communication both within the

¹² See Louis Delluc's “Beauty in the Cinema.” and Jean Epstein's *Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna* (1926).

represented film worlds, and between the spectator and the screen. She offers the concept of “haptic images” which “invite the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, and thus facilitate the experience of other sensory impressions as well” (*The Skin of the Film 2*).

The revival of phenomenology in the early 1990s, as Elsaesser comments, is one of the reasons that the topic of “intimacy” has become symptomatic in the context of cinema (“Touch and Gesture” 10). Besides Marks, Vivian Sobchack is another prominent film phenomenologist. Building on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology, Vivian Sobchack foregrounds the existential activity of the lived body¹³ in two of her books: *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992) and *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004). As she indicates, the lived body is “both an objective subject and a subjective object: a sentient, sensual, and sensible ensemble of materialized capacities and agency that literally and figurally makes sense of, and to, both ourselves and others” (*Carnal Thoughts 2*). Such perspective suggests a dynamic interplay between the spectator and the screen as it not only reflects the spectator’s freedom to reach out the screen image, but also underlines the media’s openness to engage the spectators. It is the physical nature of the encounter of screen projections and viewer that entails the embodied experience where the viewer can be fully involved.

From a body-centered perspective, Sobchack writes that both camera and projector “enable the reversibility of perception and expression at an intrasubjective level” (*The Address of the Eye 193*). Furthermore, she describes the projector as an ambiguous machine:

It both expresses the mediation of the camera between the filmmaker and the intended world and enables the spectator to perceive that mediation.

Simultaneously, it incorporates and expresses the embodiment relation between

¹³ According to Sobchack, the “lived body” refers to your own body as experienced by yourself.

filmmaker and camera, and it is itself incorporated as the embodiment relation between spectator and projector that allows perception. (194)

Here, I would like to replace “projector” with the mechanism “screen” to fit into the elastic context of contemporary moving image culture. From celluloid cinema to television to intelligent mobile devices like smartphone and laptop, the screen serves as input and output surface of medium, mediates and interrogates representation of the material and the immaterial, and the real and the virtual. Especially with the development of digital technologies, the screen innovatively creates and changes the ways in which spectators perceive and express the filmic world of the star. Hence, compared to the filmic-specific term “projector,” the medium-oriented term “screen” can better respond to the image-saturated culture in the contemporary world as well as the debate on whether cinema has come to its end. This is probably why both Sobchack and Marks have extended their scope of phenomenological theory in their second books to include a broader range of analog and digital mediums.

In 2001, the publication of Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* called to redefine cinema in the digital era. Manovich’s opinion that “new media can find its origins in old media, particularly cinema” has forecasted a media archaeological trend in which cinema is relocated in a broader context of pre-and post-celluloid media history. In the recent two decades, the methodology of media archaeology has been developed by Thomas Elsaesser, Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka and many others.¹⁴ Their profound insights on the future of cinema in the digital era can be found in the scholarship such as *What Cinema Is!: Bazin's Quest and its Charge* (Dudley Andrew), *Lumiere Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (Casetti Francesco), and

¹⁴ Some scholarship related to media archaeology are Thomas Elsaesser’s *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema* (2016), Erkki Huhtamo’s *Illusions in Motion. Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (2013), and Jussi Parikka’s *What is Media Archaeology* (2012), etc.

The End of Cinema?: A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age (Gaudreault André and Marion Philippe), to name a few. Although none of them declare the death of cinema, they all agree that an ontological understanding of cinema as representation/indexicality of the physical world does not make sense anymore.

On observation of the rise of new cultural dominance other than cinema in the 21st century, Steven Shaviro coins the term “post-cinematic affect” to describe “what it feels like to live in the early twenty-first century” (16). As he implies, film and video works in the new millennium are expressive¹⁵ as they “do not just passively trace or represent, but actively construct and perform, the social relations, flows, and feelings that they are ostensibly ‘about’” (23). Shaviro calls these film and video works “affective maps.” To quote Eric Shouse, an affect is “a non-conscious experience of intensity, a moment of unformed and unstructured potential” that plays an important role in determining the embodied and bodily relationship with others and environment (26). Although a concept relates to emotion, affect differs from emotion in many ways. For instance, whereas emotion is “representable and representative,” affect is “transpersonally and transversally” (Shaviro 20).¹⁶ On the one hand, like intimacy, affect seems to be everywhere and nowhere at once. On the other hand, different from intimacy which deals with emotion in a personal way, affect is the intensity behind emotion that does not belong to any particular subject. The intimacy with post-cinematic pop stars, as Shaviro argues, is “the situation in which people try to probe each other’s hidden depths” (29). Furthermore, based on his own experience, Shaviro connects intimacy with allure in which the object (pop culture figures in particular) not just displays particular qualities that he is familiar with, but also insinuates something more than that. The alluring object is

¹⁵ According to Shaviro, “expressive” here means both symptomatic and productive.

¹⁶ As Shaviro indicates, “emotion is affect captured by a subject, or tamed and reduced to the extent that it becomes commensurate with that subject” (18-9).

therefore affectively charged because it is beyond experience but still situated in the “here and now.”

5. A New Departure Point: Distant Intimacy

Rather than simply analyzing the spectator’s intimacy with cinematic or media representations, this dissertation explores how the moments of intimacy inform the affective flow and perceptual event in contemporary moving image cultures. By “distant intimacy,” I propose an innovative perspective in which the stardom is usually presented as hallucination of cultural memories or replacement of technological incarnation.

This dissertation is organized around star and celebrity cases in four chapters, with each focusing on different moving image cultures. Through the analysis of stardom and spectatorship in its specific cultural and technological context, each chapter discusses the concept of “distant intimacy” from a distinct perspective concerning affective politics. Chapter 1 examines the concept of cinematic glamour in the case of Taiwanese actress Kwei Lun-Mei, whose embodiment of *xiaoqingxin* (can be roughly translated into “little freshness”) represents a new measurement of glamour beyond the existing system dominated by Hollywood. I argue that as a consequence of *photogénie* and restrained acting, Kwei’s cinematic body becomes an idealized space for emotional resonance independent from the film plots.

The focal transition from film stars to music, television and internet celebrities in Chapters two to four facilitates a transmedia understanding of stardom within audiovisual moving image cultures. These three chapters also bring up the discussion of emerging technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and wearable cameras in their relations to new affective experiences with stardom and celebrity. Chapter 2 turns to Taiwanese pop diva Teresa Teng’s resurrected

performances in hologram. Drawing on perspectives from media studies and performance studies, I argue that the holographic resurrection of Teresa Teng reveals the transformative nature of digital archives as it creates effects and affects by unifying the past and present in its algorithmic-based and culturally-rich memory, which is able to generate embodied experience among audiences.

Chapter 3 interprets various roles played by spectators of Chinese reality talent TV shows. With *Super Girl*, *The Coming One*, and *Idol Producer* as three distinct examples, I focus on how their narrating format changes to reflect the affective economics in association with the fan culture in China. Here I illustrate that the spectator is an essential character who not only blurs the boundary between viewing and performing, but also supports the narrative of the show as a media spectacle, supporting performer, and practical interpreter, either onscreen or offscreen.

The last chapter delves into the dislocated stardom of internet video bloggers (aka. vloggers) in relation to camera technologies. I argue that the camera is not only a chain of medium apparatus along with the screen and film/video, but also exceeds the medium-body interaction and facilitates techno-corporeality that extends or dislocates the human point-of-view. Focusing on the camera as an actor with its own agency, I further examine how portability and cinematic quality are embedded in the design of vlogging cameras from Chinese tech companies DJI and Insta360.

CHAPTER 1

Intimacy with the Imagined: Kwei Lun-Mei and Her *Xiaoqingxin* Glamour

1. Introduction

Glamour is a term that has frequently been associated with film stardom. As a phenomenon that reflects the sensual and emotional interaction between viewers and the screen persona, glamour is manufactured to appeal to the viewer and simultaneously keep a distance with them. The sensation of glamour varies depending on the individual—everyone has an idea of what it means, but few can clearly define it. In Webster’s definition, glamour is “an elusive, mysteriously exciting and often illusory attractiveness that stirs the imagination and appeals to a taste for the unconventional, the unexpected, or the exotic.”¹⁷ The imaginative realm of glamour makes it difficult to encapsulate. Roland Barthes observes the nuanced difference between the glamour of Greta Garbo and that of Audrey Hepburn, but he only comes to an evasive conclusion that “the face of Garbo is an Idea, that of Hepburn, an Event” (Barthes 473). Here, Barthes merely pushes the question up to a semiotic level without really clarifying why the face of Garbo was so attractive. It is only later that scholars theorized the concept of glamour based upon material culture. Stephen Gundle and Clino Castelli attempt to define glamour by emphasizing the connection between “the forms of social relations” and “the construction of artificial personas, personal images and desirable exteriors”; for them, glamour “consists of a retouched or perfected version of a real person or situation,” which usually undergoes a process of manufacture and invites consumption (8). We can often discern a touch of glamour on the screen image of a film star in her/his impactive

¹⁷ See Gove et al., *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, 962.

performance and repetitive advertising and publicity. On the one hand, those stars are god-like figures for the audience. On the other hand, they are manufactured commodities on the market.

In film history, glamour has been widely recognized as a nature associated with stardom since Hollywood established the studio dominance in the 1930s. Based in California golden fields, Hollywood was transformed from a mining camp into a factory town in the early twentieth century. By the mid-1920s, four major studios: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Paramount, Fox, and Warner Bros had built up their assembly lines in filmmaking as well as creating and promoting stars in Hollywood. No other national film industry has ever had similar influence as Hollywood did in transforming an ordinary person into a glamorous screen star. On top of its abundant capital, advanced technology and expanding markets, movie people from Europe, Latin America, Australia, and Asia all came to Hollywood to make their dream come true. As a result, Hollywood in its studio era became a cosmopolitan dream factory and impacted the global imagination on what a glamorous movie star looked like. It was not unusual for Hollywood studios to manufacture stars corresponding to different types of persona to meet the consuming demand for the mass market. Due to their assembly-line production mode, the star figures all fell into a pool of limited varieties such as the innocent, the enigmatic, the exotic, or the sexual. From “America’s sweetheart” Mary Pickford to “America’s most famous sex symbol” Marilyn Monroe, Hollywood has produced quite a few pop icons that spoke to the audience’s desire and aroused their emotions.

Hollywood has its hegemony not only in global film markets, but also in academia, especially in the field of Star Studies.¹⁸ However, Hollywood is by no means the only source of glamour; neither is it the solely standard to define the attractive quality of a film star in today’s world. Besides Hollywood stars, there are many other sources of glamour that have been

¹⁸ As I mentioned in Introduction, the scholarship in star studies has been dominated by Hollywood stardom since 1970s.

underestimated in recent decades. In her book *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema*, Jessica Ka Yee Chan introduces socialist glamour, a type of glamour which was produced after the establishment of PRC in 1949 to reflect “the socialist spirit (*jingshen*)” (120). In 1962, China launched its “22 Big Movie Stars,” including Bai Yang, Zhao Dan, Shangguan Yunzhu, and Zhu Xijuan, etc., which led to a state-sponsored nationwide trend of star craze in the following two years. Different from Hollywood star culture which primarily produces actors as sex symbols and symbols of capitalist culture, the socialist star culture represented by those 22 Big Movie Stars, as Chan argues, “performed an ethical and ideological function in the PRC” (120). Through cinematography, lighting and acting, the cinematic and iconic gazes of heroes and heroines starred by those movie stars tangibly evoke “the sacredness of spiritual communion with the Party” (120). Whereas Hollywood glamour represents commodity fetishism, socialist glamour is considered associating with the promotion of socialist ideology.

In Taiwan cinema, a new measurement of glamour represented by young actors like Kwei Lun-Mei has started to attract the public’s attention since 2000. From her debut as a tomboyish high school girl in *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002) to winning the Best Leading Actress in the 49th Golden Horse Awards for her role in *Girlfriend, Boyfriend* (2012), Kwei has grown on East Asian audiences, thanks to her glamorous onscreen presentation and versatile performance. Kwei’s star vehicle has displayed her *qingchun* (pure/purity), her possession of *qizhi* (sophistication), and all-around girl-next-door persona, which is closely associated with *xiaoqingxin*, a term that has been coined to refer to a fresh and refined temperament. The commercial success enjoyed by Kwei and her *xiaoqingxin* star vehicle indicates an emerging stardom as well as a cultural phenomenon that features prominently in post-2000 Taiwanese youth cinema.

It is worth noting that glamour is not necessarily bound to certain kinds of screen persona, even the same screen persona can demonstrate different types of glamour. The understanding of the girl-next-door persona has different spatial and temporal variations. For example, Doris Day, an American singer and classic Hollywood film star, was widely promoted as a girl next door in the United States. Her girl-next-door image was widely seen as a feminine archetype designed to pander male fantasies. In the 1970s, following her debut in *Outside the Window* (1973), Taiwanese film star Brigitte Lin (Lin Qingxia) was also called a girl next door. Beautiful, young, sentimental, Lin was a good fit with the characteristics of the heroine in films adapted from popular romantic novels by Qiong Yao. In entertainment reports at that time, Lin was also described as being *qingchun* and possessing *qizhi*,¹⁹ just as Kwei has been characterized. It seems that the preference for this kind of girl-next-door image has prevailed in Taiwanese cinema across three decades.

2. A Girl Next Door in Taiwan: Brigitte Lin versus Kwei Lun-Mei

Usually, the glamour is determined by the persona of a star, both on and offscreen. That is to say, exotic glamour corresponds to exotic persona, and sexual glamour comes from sexual persona. Simultaneously, the same star persona can demonstrate various types of glamour. Kwei has demonstrated different facets of a girl-next-door persona in her star vehicle. The girl-next-door image on screen, which usually conveys the allure of purity and natural beauty and connotes a quality transformed from unremarkable to idealistic, is where glamour is induced. Brigitte Lin, another representative of the girl next door from the 1970s and 1980s Taiwan and Hong Kong cinema, has explained such image in a different way. In other words, the girl-next-door screen images of Lin and Kwei exhibit the two contrasting modes of glamour. Neither of them is

¹⁹ See examples in *The Kung Sheung Daily News* and *Overseas Chinese Daily News*, 1973.

conventionally feminine women. However, whether as mischievous tomboy, melancholy heroine or brazen school rebel, Kwei's *xiaoqingxin* glamour always haunts her characters and consistently attracts the audience, who feel safe and comfortable in that they are able to discern their familiar Kwei underneath each of her roles. From this perspective, the girl-next-door image of Kwei is—like the face of Garbo—an Idea, while that of Lin is an Event like Hepburn's. On the other hand, the plasticity of Lin's androgynous image has been employed for different characters, both feminine and masculine. As Hong Kong New Wave director Tsui Hark asserts, "the more you twist the form of Brigitte Lin, the more interesting it is. If you take her as she comes, it might be less interesting. I've never taken the character of Brigitte Lin as anything but female."²⁰ Hence, I come to the conclusion that compared to Kwei, the seduction of Lin's screen image relies more on the gender-ambiguous potential that she managed to explore and embody.

2.1 Brigitte Lin: From Feminine to Androgynous Glamour

In Chinese-language films, there has been no other actor as good as Brigitte Lin with regards to personifying the gender-bending characters. Lin started her acting career with playing sentimental heroines in Qiong Yao's *wenyi* films,²¹ a film genre that had dominated Taiwan film market from the mid-1960s to the beginning of the 1980s. In 1965, Qiong's novel *Wan-chun* was adapted into *Four Loves* by Central Pictures Corporation and hit Taiwanese audiences who were already fans of her love stories. The picturization of Qiong's novels launched a new period in Taiwan cinema in which the state-controlled filmmaking was replaced by a commercial-oriented

²⁰ See interview with Tsui Hark in *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (d. Stanley Kwan, 1996).

²¹ *Wenyi* here can be loosely translated into "letters and arts," *wenyi* film in China origins from the *Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly School* literature. For more details, see Emilie Yueh-Ye Yeh's works such as "*Wenyi* and the Branding of Early Chinese Film," and "A Small History of *Wenyi*."

mode. From 1965 to 1973, the casting process was to find people who were able to embody the ideal characters in the novels. Actresses such as Tang Pao-yun, Gua Ah-leh, and Chiang Ching all starred in Qiong Yao's films as they were thought of manifesting the innocent and sentimental feminine characteristics of the female leading roles.

In 1973, Qiong Yao decided to bring her autobiographic novel *Outside the Window* to the big screen. Brigitte Lin had never thought of being an actress until her discovery in this film. After failing her college entrance examinations, Lin studied at an evening school near Ximending, Taipei. One day, a talent scout spotted her and asked whether she would like to act in a movie, but Lin only agreed to play the role of a student. Then arrangements were made for Lin to participate in the screen test for *Outside the Window*. Rather than playing the part of a student, she was selected to play the female leading role, Jiang Yanrong.

Despite her lack of professional training, Brigitte Lin exuded great confidence in this film because she thought the role of Jiang Yanrong was tailor-made for her. As she writes in her autobiography *Chuangli chuangwai* (Inside and Outside the Window):

The film company gave me a novel — *Outside the Window*.

Page one in the novel: “Jiang Yanrong is slim and small, her somber eyes look like dreams and fog. Her arms under the white T-shirt are pale and thin, which makes her look pitiful.”

Page two: “Jiang Yanrong wanders, out of her mind; she is now immersed in her secret world.”

I was thinking then: that was exactly me! I was born slim and small, sensitive, and blue; these make me look three years younger than my actual age. I had a ten-

minute walk from my home to school when I was in middle school and high school.

During those ten minutes, I would always revel in my fantasy world. (Lin 256)

Same as Kwei Lun-Mei in *Blue Gate Crossing*, Brigitte Lin was chosen because of the biographically fitting role and therefore she delivered some degree of self-performance in this film (figure 3).²² Since her debut in *Outside the Window*, Lin became the most popular girl next door



Figure 3: Brigitte Lin's character in the movie *Outside the Window* (1973)

in Taiwan and even launched a new climax of Qiong Yao's films. Lin successively appeared in about fifty of Qiong Yao's *wenyi* films (e.g. *Gone with the Cloud* (1974), *Girlfriend* (1974), *Cloud of Romance* (1977), etc.), which has earned her the name of a "*Qingchun yunv*" (pure maiden) among fans. Three years after *Outside the Window*, Qiong Yao established *Juxing* (superstar) Film Company, which gave her more freedom in film production. Although many other actors got recognition because of their roles in Qiong Yao's films, no other star was as successful as Lin from 1973 to 1980; Qiong Yao even tailor-made the roles for Lin in order to make sure her pure and sentimental persona was consistent for the public. During this time, Lin was manufactured as a

²² For discussion on self-performance, see Zhang and Farquhar's Introduction in *Chinese Film Stars* (2010).

pin-up girl who did not have much agency in controlling her screen image. Besides her natural beauty and self-performance, Lin's glamour was also attributing to the extremely romantic and sentimental world established by Qiong Yao's stories.

With the descent of Qiong Yao film in the early 1980s, Lin transferred her career to Hong Kong and embraced characters in different genre films from comedies to martial arts. Lin was lucky since her acting career overlapped with the golden ages of Taiwan and Hong Kong cinema. However, she had little to do with her screen images in the highly standardized film industries of the 1970s and 1980s. Despite of that, acclaimed as Greta Garbo's counterpart in East Asia, Brigitte Lin could make the best of herself to demonstrate the gender-ambiguous persona in her characters, especially in her collaboration with Hong Kong director Tsui Hark. It was surprising that her feminine screen image established in Taiwan cinema could be smoothly replaced by an androgenous one. If saying Qiong Yao explored the sentimental facet in Lin's characteristics and promoted certain level of self-performance in her girl-next-door persona, Tsui Hark delved into the androgynous possibility that Lin could demonstrate in her star vehicle, which did not inhabit in Lin's personality in real life. The androgynous glamour of Lin was manufactured for the consumers who were influenced by the global postmodern movement in the 1990s. Under the impact of postmodern culture, Hong Kong films tended to practice their gender politics and genre conventions in a renovative way, especially in *wuxia* films.²³

After experimenting masculinized characters in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (1977) and *Peking Opera Blues* (1986), Lin's feminine girl-next-door persona was constructively subverted in Tsui Hark's *wuxia* film *Swordsman II* (1992), which created "an icon of postmodern *wuxia*" (Teo 199). In *Swordsman II* and its sequel *The East Is Red* (1993), Lin plays the role of

²³ *Wuxia* is genre that refers to Chinese ancient martial arts fiction.

Asia the Invincible (*Dongfang Bubai*), a distinctive villain from Jin Yong's 1963 novel *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* (*Xiao'ao Jianghu*) (figure 4). Asia the Invincible was a male who wants to control the *jianghu* (a fictional word referring to the world). In order to learn the super



Figure 4: Brigitte Lin's screen image of Asia the Invincible in *Swordsman II* (1992)

kungfu “*Kuihua baodian*,” he castrated himself and becomes more and more feminine. *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* had already been adapted into film and television works years before *Swordsman II*,²⁴ but the role of Asia the Invincible in previous works had always been played by male actors. In Tsui Hark's version, Lin embodies Asia the Invincible as an ideal transgender figure that is comparable to the female warrior figure in Hong Kong *wuxia* films. Images of female warrior once dominated Hong Kong's silver screen in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as scholars have pointed out, those female warriors were generally standard-bearers of masculine and patriarchal discourses.²⁵ The gender-bending figure played by Brigitte Lin to some extent blurred the

²⁴ Such works include a film produced by the Shaw Brothers in 1978, two TV series produced by TVB in 1984, and one produced by TTV in 1985.

²⁵ See Man-Fung Yip's “The Difficulty of Difference Rethinking the Woman Warrior Figure in Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema,” in *Chinese Literature Today* (vol. 3, 2013), and Sek Kei's “The War Between the Cantonese and Mandarin Cinemas in the Sixties,” in *The Restless Breed: Cantonese Stars of the Sixties*, 20th Hong Kong International Film Festival (1996).

traditional gender norm and refashioned the female warrior figures in Hong Kong films. Lin's transgender persona represents a unique type of androgynous glamour that can hardly be reproduced in mass culture. She is attractive in certain ways which not only escape the male gaze, but also distances herself from the viewer who finds it difficult to sensuously identify with her characters.

2.2 Kwei Lun-Mei and Taiwan *Xiaoqingxin*

Admittedly, Kwei and Lin have something in common in their performing experiences and star vehicles. However, what mostly differentiates Kwei from Lin is the distinctively *xiaoqingxin* glamour that manifests in Kwei's girl-next-door image. To some extent, Kwei's *xiaoqingxin* glamour lies in the publicity of her debut as a non-professional but truthful performer. Compared to Lin's girl next door who usually confronts pressures from family and societal moral values in terms of love pursuit, Kwei's girl next door brings about broader discussion on social issues, especially adolescent uncertainties. Her girl-next-door screen persona is something vernacular, rather than dramatic, that viewers can relate to sensuously.

Kwei started her acting career while still a high school student in Taipei. She was first discovered by the film crew for *Blue Gate Crossing* in Ximending. According to director Yee Chih-Yen, "Kwei gave me a very clean first impression, whether her appearance or her personality. I think it was because of her education and the protection provided by the school and her family... There is something innocent about the teenager character that is hard to perform. That is why I need to find teenage non-professionals for the roles."²⁶ After *Blue Gate Crossing*, Kwei participated in the Joint College Entrance Examination and got two admission offers: one from the

²⁶ See interview with Yee Chih-yen in Q. Zhang and Wang's "Yee Chih-yen: A Story of the Summer Youth."

School of Theatre Arts at Taipei National University of the Arts, and the other from the Department of French at Tamkang University. Yee advised Kwei to study French, as he insisted that good performance does not come from professional training but rather from intimate experiences of life. Kwei took Yee's advice and returned to the screen after her three-year college studies. The anecdote has been repeatedly referred to in news and magazines in association with Kwei's *xiaoqingxin* glamour, reducing the gap between the status quo (what is) and the ideal (what should be) of Kwei's stardom.²⁷ For her viewers, kwei's star persona is demystified and can be easily connected with in their daily life.

In their examination of Hollywood glamour, Gundle and Castelli noted that "the film industry reinvented glamour as an enticing image that was removed from specific social referents and that relied solely on technique, artifice and imagination" (63). The tendency to detach glamour from its social referents is still ubiquitous in its contemporary usage, whether in an American or Taiwanese context. As a result, viewers tend to ascribe the refreshing attractiveness of Kwei Lun-Mei to her natural beauty, which is retouched in their own imaginations. Such a phenomenon exists especially in the consumption of Taiwan films because on the one hand, they rarely promote mass commercial consumption of stars in the way that Hollywood and Hong Kong did, and on the other hand, *xiaoqingxin*—when it was initially coined—was underpinned as a utopian concept that resists the flush of capitalist consumerism in the new millennium. Therefore, it is difficult for viewers to consciously associate *xiaoqingxin* with glamour consumption when they are seduced by Kwei's innocent smile on-screen.

Paradoxically, despite its anti-consumerist ideal, the phenomenon of *xiaoqingxin* has been quickly utilized by the commercial market through its material attachment to music and films even

²⁷ For more elaboration on "the status quo" and "the ideal," see Dyer's *Stars*, 25.

before the recognition of *xiaoqingxin* as a distinctive cultural motif. In the case of music, for example, the success of Taiwanese independent singer-songwriter Cheer Chen (Chen Chi-chen) has revealed the commercial value of *xiaoqingxin*. In 2008, before her first solo concert in Beijing, people were skeptical about her market potential. However, tickets for her concert quickly sold out and some fans had to pay higher prices to ticket scalpers who even wondered “who is this Cheer Chen?” Since then, Cheer Chen has been known as the ambassador of Taiwanese *xiaoqingxin* in mainland China.

In cinema, *xiaoqingxin* has been a feature of Taiwanese new youth film since *Blue Gate Crossing* went viral in Asia. Despite the international recognition of its *auteur* art films, Taiwan’s local film market was dominated by Hollywood and Hong Kong movies in the 1990s, which gradually homogenized and standardized audience tastes. Kwei’s brand of *xiaoqingxin* stardom marks the beginning of a star-centered and audiences-oriented trend of post-2000 Taiwanese cinema, which differs from the *auteur*-centered and festival-oriented Taiwan New Cinema. According to Yee Chih-yen, the director of *Blue Gate Crossing*, having witnessed a hard time in Taiwan local films since 1995, he wanted to make some changes in the filmmaking in order to target the contemporary audiences and market. When shooting *Blue Gate Crossing*, he used lots of telephoto with shallow-focus lens to emphasize human characters while their environment was softened. Although differ from Taiwan New Cinema which elaborates realism with deep-focus cinematography, Yee believes that his filming techniques and employment of non-professional actors also delivers a touch of realism.²⁸ With a totally different storytelling and visual style, *Blue Gate Crossing* revitalized Taiwan’s film market at the start of the new millennium and achieved a box-office success, ranked among the top 5 Chinese-language movies of 2002.

²⁸ See interview with Yee in Juezhen Xiao’s *Wo ’men zheyang paidianying* (How We Make Movies): *Face Taiwan*, 185.

In 2006, the release of *Eternal Summer* marked the full arrival of the “new youth film era” in Taiwan cinema.²⁹ From 2006 to 2008, almost thirty new youth films came out. Among them, *Cape No.7* (2008) even rewrote Taiwan film history by taking in over NT\$500 million at the box office. No one could ignore the resuscitation of Taiwanese local films brought by these *xiaoqingxin* film productions. Moreover, the recurring *xiaoqingxin* motif has also refashioned the market desire for the individualized emotional expressions and visual patterns that are “symbolized by the cleanness and clearness of the imagery of blue skies, white clouds, and green fields” (Lim 5).

Sometimes, those *xiaoqingxin* youth films have also been categorized as *wenyi* film, a genre that has been prevalent in Taiwan since the 1960s. Initially, *wenyi* films like *Outside the Window* not only dominated Taiwan film market but also swept Southeast Asia in the 1970s. Audiences especially favored “Two Chin’s and Two Lin’s,”³⁰ who starred in more than half of Qiong Yao’s popular films. However, there have been few stars as influential as these actors since the decline of Qiong Yao films in the mid-1980s. On the one hand, the Hollywood or Hong Kong-style star system can hardly develop in Taiwan’s film industry due to the scarcity of productions each year (Tu 77). On the other hand, the popularization of *xiaoqingxin* films and stars like Kwei Lun-Mei requires reconsideration of the star and glamour system in the new millennium.

3. A Medium of Perception: Locating Hollywood Glamour

3.1 Revisiting Aura and Glamour

Before exemplifying Kwei Lun-mei’s manifestation of *xiaoqingxin* glamour, I will firstly dissect the material and visual elements of glamour by locating it in the context of Hollywood

²⁹ See Z. Li, *Daoyan de lüdong* (The Rhythm of Directors), 47.

³⁰ This phrase refers to four film stars in 1970s Taiwan: Chin Han, Charlie Chin, Brigitte Lin, and Joan Lin.

studio era. Through analysis of Hollywood stars: Greta Garbo and Sessue Hayakawa, I argue that the sensational attraction of glamour is primarily a consequence of cinematography and acting on the screen.

The concept of aura has always been referenced to in defining the essence of glamour. For example, Richard Abel points out that to have glamour often meant “to possess a mysterious aura of desire that attracted attention and aroused emotion.”³¹ Stephen Gundle and Clino Castelli remark glamour as “the manufactured aura of capitalist society, the dazzling illusion that compensates for inauthenticity and reinforces consumerism as a way of life” (9). Without aura, as they write, “imagination is impoverished and commercial potential undermined” (9). In his “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Benjamin distinguishes photography from painting in terms of their ability to fulfill our desire. He believes that photography causes “decline of the aura” since “the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze” (188). Moreover, due to its “perpetual readiness of volitional, discursive memory,” Benjamin argues that photography reduces the imagination, namely “an ability to give expression to desires ... that have ‘something beautiful’ as their intended fulfillment” (186). Here, I propose that technological reproduction such as photography and film is not the reason why the aura declines, but how it becomes visible through the masquerade of glamour. Due to the manufactured characteristic of glamour, aura here might appear as repetitive patterns that is easier to recognize.

Roland Barthes writes that the face of Greta Garbo is “an archetype of the human face” that seduces the audience with its unrealistic perfection (471). By the same token, French impressionist filmmaker and critic Louis Delluc remarks Sessue Hayakawa as “a natural force” and “his face as a poetic work” (138-9). In Barthes and Delluc’s discussions on Garbo and

³¹ See Abel, Richard. “Photogénie and Company.”

Hayakawa, the faces of these two Hollywood stars are no longer the face of a person, but an image without personality, a signifier “that signified nothing beyond its ability to attract attention and express manufactured beauty” (16). For Jean Baudrillard, the consumption culture declines “the traditional sublime status of artistic representation;” as a result, the essence or signification of the object is no longer privileging the image (115). The object for Baudrillard refers to “mass-produced” objects including cultural recycling where aesthetics is generalized for individuals. Consequently, to quote Baudrillard,

the true message the media of TV and radio deliver, the one which is decoded and “consumed” deep down and unconsciously, is not the manifest content of sounds and images, but the constraining pattern—linked to the very technical essence of those media—of the disarticulation of the real into successive and equivalent signs.
(122)

Glamour, as known as the manufactured aura, is integral to capitalist modernity and commercial culture. In the industrial and mass production environment, therefore, to understand glamour we need to pay attention to the connection between the artificial persona and the commercial social relations. As Gundle and Castelli write, glamour “consists of a retouched or perfected version of a real person or situation,” which usually undergoes a process of manufacture and invites consumption (8).

The concept of glamour has been discussed as a result of the speculation that the authenticity and individuality of objects are destructed in an industrial society, but an important part is missing here: how is glamour put into effect? Where does its attractiveness come from? Notwithstanding an industrial design, glamour fundamentally roots in material culture that only implements with a repertoire of extraordinary images, colors, and visual spectacles. When we talk

about the register of glamour—the technological media, we should not neglect its function as a kino-eye. As Marshall McLuhan remarks, “The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance” (27). Like aura, glamour is a medium of perception (or an optical unconsciousness) that invests the object the ability to return the gaze to the viewer, in which the individual will discern fragmentary self-existence and engender perceptual-mnemonic resonance. In addition, through the technological media, glamour visualizes the distance of aura while magnifies what it wants to show and diminishes what it wants to hide—it manipulates people’s attention and creates space for imagination.

For Gundle and Castelli, contemporary mass media (cinema in particular) made glamour into “a generalized, everyday experience” (12-3). It left the audience an impression that glamour “relied solely on technique, artifice and imagination” (63). On the contrary, however, glamour is a manufactured signature designed for the capitalist consumption culture. Only if we put glamour in its specific cinematic and historical context could we understand the spatial and temporal variation of glamour styles in the Hollywood and world cinema. With two early Hollywood stars Greta Garbo and Sessue Hayakawa as examples, I will introduce the concept of *photogénie* and how it facilitates the understanding of glamour as a medium of perception.

3.2 The Techno-power of *Photogénie*

As I mentioned before, in Barthes and Delluc’s scholarly discussion, the faces of Garbo and Hayakawa are considered images without personality, signifiers that signified nothing but attraction. It indicates an inarticulable glamour that seems to come directly out of aura without the modification of techniques and artifice. Emotions may be inarticulable, but techniques are not. The

glamour of Garbo and Hayakawa displays the magnificent power of camera which is able to embellish the attractiveness of a star and stir the emotion of viewers. As two of the most unforgettable icons that were involved in the formation of Hollywood narrating style and operation mode in its early years, Garbo and Hayakawa both went through the transition period when the Hollywood studios were still exploring their filming and promoting signatures to best exhibit the beauty of a star and to allure the mass market.

When Garbo arrives in New York in 1925, this twenty-year-old Swedish girl was not attractive at all in the eyes of American people—she was taller than average and had crooked teeth and frizzy hair (figure 5). However, had noticing the charming eyes and unique personality of Garbo, the experienced Hollywood moguls successfully transformed this ordinary European actress into a glamorous icon in front of the camera. “The essence of Garb could only be seen through a camera lens,” wrote Barry Paris (87). It is definitely true in Garbo’s stardom. Before going to the stage, Garbo was selling hats in PUB, a department store in Stockholm. Her photographic debut was modelling for PUB’s millinery, then she started appearing in short commercial films until being discovered by Mauritz Stiller, a pioneer of Swedish films in the 1920s.



Figure 5: Garbo in Sweden, a portrait taken in 1923.

In November 1924, MGM's co-founder Louis Mayer met Stiller and Garbo in Berlin to invite them to work for MGM in Hollywood. However, neither of them was satisfied with Garbo's low salary in the original contract. After seeing a series of Garbo's portraits photographed by Arnold Genthe in New York, MGM agreed to revise their contract with Garbo and started her promotion immediately. Genthe was famous for his experimental style in focus, colouring, and angles. He often avoided telling his subject the exact exposure time as he is waiting for a best angle and moment that he believes can capture a human being's essence. In one of his photographs of Garbo, for example, Garbo was facing the camera with her side face; her beautiful eyes and neck were emphasized while her frizzy hair was concealed in the dark (figure 6). Garbo's face appeared sculptural and preserves a sense of "momentary revelation".³²



Figure 6: One of Garbo's portraits taken by Arnold Genthe in 1925.

³² For elaboration on "momentary revelation," see Henning's "The Floating Face," 159.

In MGM, nevertheless, Garbo's first screen test failed to tempt anyone due to poor lighting. Thankfully, her second test with Henrik Sartov fully brought out her quality on screen. Sartov was a Hollywood portrait photographer and cinematographer hired by G.W. Griffith. By devising "a method of reducing a dozen lenses to one combination that could fit into other lenses without f-stops," Sartov created the soft-focus effect that could bring out the beauty of anyone through the camera. Before Garbo, he had taken some gorgeous portrait photos for Lillian Gish, which brought him to MGM and worked in some of Griffith films. In Garbo's second screen test, Sartov used his soft lens to "clean out" her face "through spot lighting" and reveal her glamour on screen (Pairs 93). Shortly after, Garbo was chosen by the director Monta Bell to star in *Torrent* (1926), where she played the role of an innocent village girl who wanted to become a singer.

The soft-focus effect reduces the contrast of fine detail in an image and sometimes gives it a dreamy glow. Besides portrait photography, such effect is often used in the scenes with the leading actress in Hollywood classic films—it is an open secret of how Hollywood industry enhances the glamour of a film star like Garbo especially before the arrival of colour films. In the age of technological reproduction, photography and cinema operate a viewer's encounter with the character on screen by using distorted angles and filters, altering presence and absence of the character in an unexpected way. As a result, the looking relations between individuals are changed and stimulate a new experience of aura and thereafter glamour. From this perspective, the alluring face of Garbo is less a natural miracle beyond human words but more attributable to the transformation power of the camera.

Primarily a visual experience, the phenomenon of glamour needs to be understood as a complex language of gestures, materials and visual spectacles. In other words, the acting style and technical components of framing, lighting, and mise-en-scène settings all account for the

sensational seduction of a star's onscreen image. On top of the technical materiality, performance is another vital but often ignored element in the attractiveness of glamour. By reading performance, as Paul McDonald points out, we may develop an intellectual agenda of film studies and pay attention to "the significance of emotion when assessing the impact of the movies" (39). "Emotion" here not only refers to capturing the emotion of the character, but also to how viewers' emotions are stirred by the film acting. That is the most direct communication between a viewer and an actor.

Both Garbo and Hayakawa were praised for their silent film acting that differentiated them from other actors. For Hayakawa, rather than employing the histrionic style of acting³³ that dominated American film studios in the beginning of silent film acting, he adopted verisimilarly coded acting in which his acting emphasis transited from "highly stylized and physicalized pantomimic gestures" to meticulous "facial expressions". In such way should the actor has his/her own interpretation part and emotional manipulation of the character. In his early films such as *The Cheat* (1915), and *The Hidden Pearls* (1918), Hayakawa was praised for being able to demonstrate "ambiguity of the emotional, psychological, and physical states of the characters" with his "mask-like" facial expression (Miyao 200). Different from Anna May Wong, another Asian American film star in early Hollywood, who put on the ethnic masquerade to perform exotic glamour in Hollywood movies,³⁴ Hayakawa seemed to conceal his emotions and ethnic otherness under his mask-like face.³⁵ Louis Delluc discovers "pure beauty" from this face, as it reveals the mysterious attractiveness through Hayakawa's expression of melancholy.³⁶ Such affect, however, cannot be fully carried out without the frequent use of close-up shots in the film. Similarly, when Garbo is

³³ "Histrionic style of acting" is usually overly emotional and dramatic.

³⁴ See Yiman Wang's "Anna May Wong: A Border-crossing 'Minor' Star Mediating Performance." *Chinese Film Stars*, 19-31.

³⁵ Reference to a figure of Hayakawa's mask-like face can be found in Introduction.

³⁶ See Abel's *French Film Theory and Criticism, vol 1*, 138.

performing, the nuanced transmutation of her emotion could only be perceived in its magnification on screen. As the American director Clarence Brown remarks, “Garbo had something behind the eyes that you couldn’t see until you photographed it in close-up. You could see thought. If she had to look at one person with jealousy, and another with love, she didn’t have to change her expression. You could see it in her eyes as she looked from one to the other” (Paris 223).

Why did the seemingly expressionless faces of Hayakawa and Garbo bear so much glamour in the close-up? As Mary Ann Doane argues, “the close-up transforms whatever it films into a quasi-tangible thing, producing an intense phenomenological experience of presence, and yet, simultaneously, that deeply experienced entity becomes a sign, a text, a surface that demands to be read” (94). In other words, the face in the close-up not only manifests the uniqueness of an individual, but also becomes a tool of intersubjectivity—it provides an experience of *photogénie*.

The notion of *photogénie* was launched by Louis Delluc as a key concept for French impressionist cinema sometime around 1920.³⁷ The concept also appeared in the writings of Delluc’s contemporaries such as Ricciotto Canudo, René Schwob, René Clair and Jean Epstein.³⁸ *Photogénie* is usually used to delineate the “uniqueness of the film image and the mediating power of the camera/screen” (Abel 109). Rather than a veracious reproduction of reality, *photogénie* is seen as the transforming nature of cinema in which a level of “mysteriously alienating quality” (Bordwell, 106) is embedded. Regardless of the social distinction between viewers, *Photogénie* primarily relates to the “viewer’s aesthetic” in promotion of an unfamiliar way of seeing if put in the context of French impressionist film movement. Moreover, Delluc and his impressionist associates tended to differentiate themselves from those commercial filmmakers in Hollywood as

³⁷ See “Photogénie and Epstein”, in Paul Willemsen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory*, London, BFI Publishing, 1994, p. 126.

³⁸ For other scholarship on French impressionist cinema and *photogénie*, see Abel’s *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol 1.

they “focus debate on how the shot and its constituent elements could produce patterns of continuity other than those of the classical Hollywood cinema, which almost exclusively served the purpose of storytelling” (Abel 208). The aesthetic meaning of *photogénie* can be explicated in the mobile camerawork, optical devices, and editing patterns that enhance the character’s inner states or shifting moods, for the viewer to better perceive and therefore be seduced by the essence of the subject’s glamour.

The effect of *photogénie* pertains to the concept of glamour, as they both touch on the illusory attraction of a star on screen. As a vital contribution to glamour, *photogénie* aims at bringing about a surplus of special qualities which creates an unfamiliar familiarity in order to draw attention and manipulate emotions. That is also the value which the film industry uses to transfer the technological power into mass culture. Because of their unfixed definitions, people often misunderstand or oversimplify these two concepts. One thing for sure, both concepts refer to the ambiguous relationship between sensation and consumption, and only make sense in their specific social and cultural contexts.

In the classic Hollywood period, a glamorous actress was always tied with the quality such as exotic, sexual, or innocent. You can hardly find a film star who does not fit any one of these categories. Hollywood is not the only authority of defining what a glamorous star is. On top of Hollywood stars, there are many other sources of glamour that have been underestimated in recent decades. Drawing on my observation of Hollywood studio era’s glamour, especially the idea of *photogénie* and restrained acting style in their relationship with manifestation of glamour, I will then explore the sensational attraction of Kwei’s *xiaoqingxin* glamour from two perspectives: cinematography and performance. In considering cinematography, I will draw on the concept of *photogénie* to discuss how the distorted spatial and temporal points of view enhance the audience’s

perception of Kwei's cinematic body. With respect to performance, I will illustrate how Kwei's restrained acting style addresses audience identification through emotional manipulation. To conclude, I will argue that the *xiaoqingxin* glamour has converted Kwei's body-of-attitudes to a body-of-gest (ceremony) that is independent from her film plots.

4. Kwei Lun-mei: Filming and Performing *Xiaoqingxin* Glamour

4.1 Filming *Photogénie* and Engaging Audiences

As both a film critic and filmmaker, Jean Epstein had constantly attempted to define and apply *photogénie* in his films and writings. For him, *photogénie* is “the purest expression of cinema”—it draws attention to cinematic style rather than the narrative (293). In other words, the less narrative-driven a film is, the more *photogénie* it may reveal. Most *xiaoqingxin* films like *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Secret* (2007) belong to this type of film—they are not dominated by plot and narrative but employ the transformative power of the camera to sensuously engage the audience. Although there is no direct evidence that *xiaoqingxin* films have been influenced by the idea of *photogénie*, I would draw on Epstein's key ideas on *photogénie* to explain the sensory appeal of Kwei's *xiaoqingxin* glamour.

Firstly, I analyze how the camera movements in *Blue Gate Crossing* influence the audience's perceptions of the character. *Blue Gate Crossing* is a film about adolescent romance and confusion of sexual orientation experienced by three high school students in Taipei: Meng Kerou (Kwei Lun-Mei) is secretly in love with Lin Yuezhen (Liang Shu-hui), while Yuezhen has a crush on Zhang Shihao (Chen Bolin). In the film, the horizontal composition and framing of long shots and empty shots show the influence of master New Taiwan Cinema directors like Hou Hsiao-hsien. Nevertheless, director Yee Chih-yen shows his inventiveness in telling characters' emotions

with the camera rather than the story. He tends to utilize more edits and closeups in which *photogénie* manifests for those who are sensitive to it. The mixture of closeups, medium shots, and long shots displays Kwei's emotion, action, and relation with her surroundings in an extreme way.

For example, in the sequence where Kerou and Yuezhen encounter after not talking to each other for a while, the camera begins with a medium shot on Yuezhen's gesture. She is facing the handrail of the hallway with her eyes closed. Suddenly, she initiates a dialogue with someone offscreen. She asks, "what did you want the other day?" An angry voice replies back, "nothing." Yuezhen opens her eyes and keeps saying, "I know who wrote on your desk." Then the camera cuts (not zoom out) to a full shot. We see Kerou quickly passing by and she stops before disappearing from the right side of the frame. "Who?" Kerou asks when walking back to Yuezhen. They both look in the direction that Yuezhen points to. Their point-of-view (PoV) shot comes up with a ponytail girl moving forward, however, not in the middle of the frame. Shortly thereafter, Kerou appears in the same frame—she stalks and stares at the girl in order to get her attention—Kerou and Yuezhen's PoV shot is now replaced by an objective tracking shot (figure 7).



Figure 7: The switches between subjective and objective PoV shots in *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002).

The seamless switches between subjective and objective PoV shots in this scene convert the audience into the viewing subject, who captures Kwei's body and the emotional intensity of her gaze. The off-screen spaces prepare for the emotion of Kerou to enter into the audience's consciousness before her physical presence. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the subjective and objective PoV shots together without indicating a clear beginning and logical camera movements, the scene gives an evocative presence to Kerou, who is a stranger to the plot but true to life. That is the moment of *photogénie*, which may not be noticed in real life but can be magnified and sensed in film reproduction.

As Epstein has remarked, there is also a temporal dimension in *photogénie*—cinema can explore the temporal point of view just as it does with the spatial point of view. By considering *Secret*, we can see how the temporal effects of a film can enhance the audience's perception of the character. *Secret* tells the story of a campus romance mixed with time-travel fantasy. In *Secret*, Kwei plays Lu Xiaoyu, a student who studied in the same school as Ye Xianglun (Jay Chou) twenty years before him. By playing a score called "Secret" she finds on the oldest piano on campus, Xiaoyu is able to travel forward in time to meet Xianglun. However, Xiaoyu can only be seen by the first person she sees. The main plot is deployed from three different narrative perspectives: Xianglun's perspective without knowing the secret (P1), Xianglun's perspective after recognizing the secret (P2), and Xiaoyu's perspective in the narration of Xianglun's father (P3). The first three-quarters of the film is more or less an ordinary campus romance with the exception of Xiaoyu's untraceable appearance and disappearance. It is only when Xianglun realizes that only he can perceive the existence of Xiaoyu that the secret is partly unraveled. Near

the end of the film, Xiaoyu's perspective of what has happened is manipulated as a story-within-a-story in Xianglun and his father's dialogue. The pieces of the puzzle are finally put together.

Several film reviews have commented that the attraction of Kwei's role lies in her mysteriousness, rather than prettiness. One reviewer writes, "at first, I thought the lead girl character, [Xiaoyu] was first of all, not that pretty and second of all, kind of annoying with her mysteriousness, but as I gradually understood what was happening towards the end of the film, she really grew on me and even started to [seem] prettier to me as a result!"³⁹ Another reviewer remarks, "[Xiaoyu] lacks the conventional definition of prettiness; [but] she was able to shine with her charisma and did well to paint an aura of secrecy around her."⁴⁰ The mysterious aura around Xiaoyu to a large degree is enhanced by the film editing. With the progress of plot and film editing, viewers experience the same event three different times, from different perspectives. According to Epstein, just as the camera movements change the viewers' perception of space, the variation of recording speed and editing also reveals the flow of time, relating differently to the narrative perspective, which therefore influences our perceptions and emotions. In his short film *Le Tempestaire* (1947), for example, in order to maximize viewers' sense of transformation of nature, Epstein practiced temporal distortion in the Tempest Master sequence, with slow-motion, fast-motion, and reverse-action cinematography. Since then, such optical devices have been widely used by artists to create temporal effects of film mobility.

In *Secret*, the temporal effect manifests in the use of flashback and alternating eyeline-matching cuts. In the flashback sequence in P2, the closeup of Xianglun's pondering face intercuts forth and back to the scenes of his interaction with Xiaoyu in his memory (P1). The quick editing

³⁹ See "The Secret That Cannot Be Told." <http://akosifaith.blogspot.com/2012/04/secret-that-cannot-be-told-movie-review.html>

⁴⁰ See R. Lim, "*Secret* (Taiwan)." <http://www.moviexclusive.com/review/secret/secret.htm>.

of sequential shots with and without Xiaoyu implies new associations of the eyeline matching in those scenes. For example, in a scene where Xianglun passes a note asking Xiaoyu to meet in the practice room, the closeup shot of a hand opening the note is followed by Xiaoyu raising her head and smiling at Xianglun (figure 8). This sequence conveys the message that Xiaoyu is cheerful

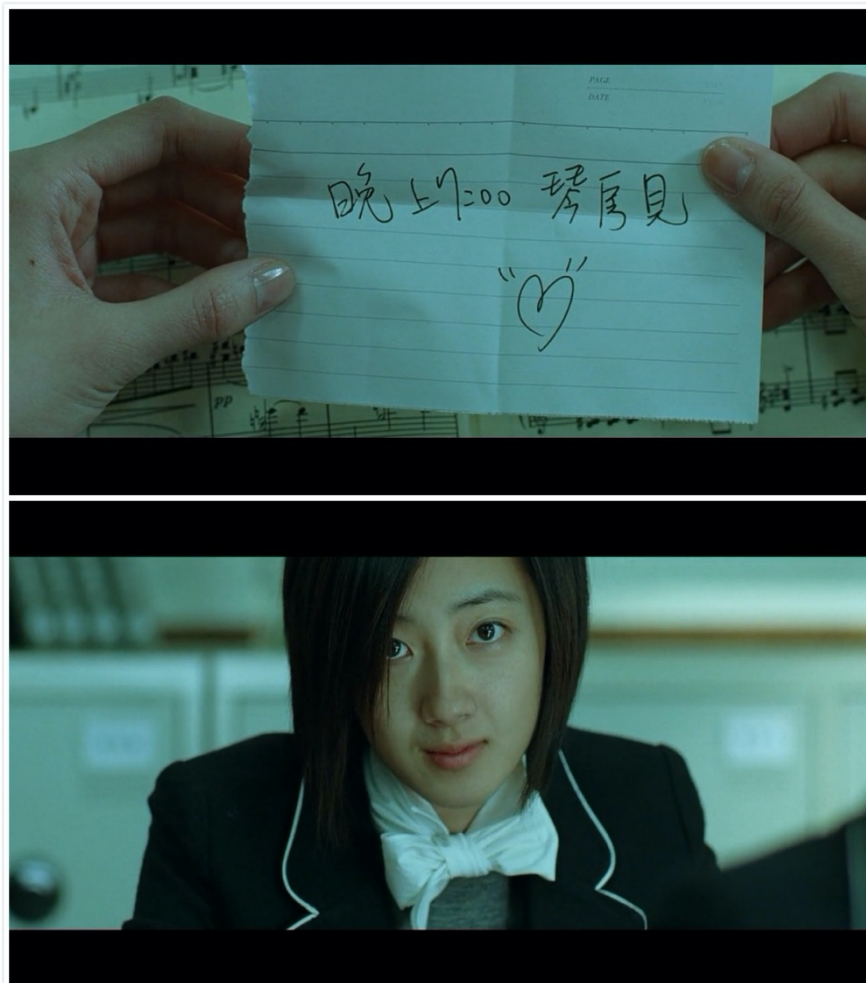


Figure 8: The montage of a hand opening the note and the closeup of Xiaoyu's face in *Secret* (2007).

after seeing the note. However, in the flashback, after the closeup of the note, the camera moves up and captures a medium shot of Qingyi (a girl that is secretly in love with Xianglun) looking at the note. Xiaoyu's smile may then appear melancholy given that information. The slightly different editing of the same scene in P1 and P2 engenders a Kuleshov effect in which, by looking at two

spliced shots, viewers are able to provide their own explanation of the emotional content of the sequence. Rather than “temporarily break[ing] the chronological sequence of the previous shots” (Bordwell 186), flashback here provides two temporal points of view regarding Xiaoyu’s persona: mysterious and melancholy. The eyeline-match cuts in P3 have the same effect, but from Xiangyu’s point of view. With the temporal-distortion editing in *Secret*, the character of Xiaoyu grows on the audience as she invites them to gradually enter into her emotional dynamics.

4.2 Performing Emotions and Acting Truth

As mentioned previously, Taiwan *xiaoqingxin* film is a subgenre of *wenyi* film, which is “a metanarrative of emotion and sentiments” (Yeh “A Small History of *Wenyi*” 6). In lieu of the relationship between performing style and emotional effects, *xiaoqingxin* films and Qiong Yao films can be seen as two opposite poles between restrained and excessive styles. To quote Emilie Yeh, the restrained style requires discreet performances that “suppress more assertive expressions of emotions,” whereas the excessive style requires actors to “fully discharge their emotions to deliver an obvious, propulsive narration” (Yeh “The Road Home” 207). There is a widespread notion that emotional manipulation is the most important element in performance and determines whether the performance is truthful.

With this in mind, I examine the truthfulness of Kwei’s performance through her emotional manipulation in *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Girlfriend, Boyfriend* (2012). Kwei’s first onscreen appearance in *Blue Gate Crossing* left a marvelous impression on both audiences and critics due to her restrained performance, which was also considered very convincing. One reviewer writes, “Moody and slow moving, it depends on the truthfulness of its performances to carry it. Ms. Kwei’s Kerou, the most developed character, is a carefully understated portrait of youthful

determination and stoic suffering.”⁴¹ The praise of Kwei’s performance can be also found in the lines below: “While [Kwei] is less conventionally pretty than Liang, her body language and silent stubbornness give her a more evocative presence.”⁴² Such statements have observed the intense contrast of Kwei’s body language and emotion in *Blue Gate Crossing*. The recurring repetition and mimicry in the film stylistically address the emotions of uncertainty and anguish of the characters. Shihao, for examples, repeatedly introduces himself to Kerou with “I am Zhang Shihao, Scorpio, blood type O, guitar club, swimming team,” and keeps asking Kerou questions like “who is she?” or “are we breaking up?” Kerou, on the other hand, cannot articulate her emotions verbally. Therefore, she finds a physical outlet for her suppressed emotions—she marches around the high school, engraves the graffiti wall, stubbornly kicks at a love letter stuck to the floor, and jostles with Shihao amid rows of chairs in the assembly hall.

In an interview, the director Yee said that his preferred acting style draws both from New Taiwan Cinema and the Hollywood Method acting that he learned at UCLA’s film school:

I always treat the actor as actor and expect accuracy from their performance. That is why I have performance training for them. I want them to remember everything... and most importantly, they have to be familiar with their roles and have a clear idea of what to do in each step... During the rehearsal, we usually try different acting approaches and find out the best and most comfortable one. The actors just need to act this way out when we shoot.⁴³

Method acting is built on Konstantin Stanislavsky’s “System” of acting as developed by Lee Strasberg from the Group Theatre and the Actors Studio in the twentieth century. Based on

⁴¹ See Stephen Holden’s “Two Teenage Girls and a Swimmer.”

⁴² See George Wu’s “Blue Gate Crossing.”

⁴³ See R. Xie and Yang’s “Qingchun de weicheng,” 38.

Stanislavsky's technique of emotional memory, Method acting advocates that the actor attune her/himself to the emotions of the character by associating it with an analogous emotion generated from her or his own experience. With such techniques, the presence of the actor's self can ground the truthful performance and induce the audience's empathy. In *Blue Gate Crossing*, Kwei's self closely resembles the character Kerou, who is innocent and sometimes stubborn in her way of dealing with youth and love issues. Therefore, Kwei's restrained acting in the movie is not because of the rules of the *wenyi/xiaoqingxin* genre but rather a consequence of truthful performance.

Sometimes, the actor's truthful performance can even achieve cinematic realism that the camera cannot. For example, there is a scene in the film where Shihao and Kerou sit on the ground of the basketball gym and share secrets. The director Yee ascribes cinematic realism to the performances by Kwei and Chen this way:

It is really like stage performance here, of which the rhythm is hard to manage. The camera can do nothing but slowly dolly toward the two protagonists. The open space and dark light make it hard for the audiences to see their faces. They do not try to amuse the audiences, but it is not boring at all... The kiss scene is also good in its rhythm, neither too fast nor too slow.⁴⁴

The theory of *photogénie* stipulates that the usage of temporal effects such as rhythmic montage or variable recording speed can influence our perceptions and emotions more accurately than in real life, but things are different here—sometimes the audience is very sensitive to cinematic time as it represents real time. Without any background music, Kwei and Chen have to decide the rhythms of when to say their lines and when to keep quiet. Rather than a well-designed mise-en-

⁴⁴ See R. Xie and Yang's "Qingchun de weicheng," 38.

scène, it is the actors' life experiences that address the emotions of the characters, which turn out to be real and accurate.

“Stars are frequently cast into biographically fitting roles and therefore deliver some kind of self-performance onscreen.” (Farquhar and Zhang 7). If Kwei's restrained acting in *Blue Gate Crossing* is attributable to her quotidian self-performance, then her similar mode of acting in *Girlfriend, Boyfriend* has converted her everyday body into a ceremonial body where the visible body disappears. *Girlfriend, Boyfriend* begins with its three protagonists—Mabel (Kwei Lun-Mei), Liam, and Aaron—as high school rebels in Kaohsiung in 1985, when Martial Law was still in effect. In their love-triangle relationship, Mable has feelings for Liam, who is secretly in love with Aaron. After being rejected by Liam, Mable agrees to be Aaron's girlfriend. As Liam and Aaron move on to college in Taipei and join the 1990 Wild Lily student movement, the three friends all experience some changes in their lives. By 1997, when the three meet again, Mabel and Aaron are still together, although Aaron is married to a politician's daughter. Meanwhile, Liam has been involved in an unsatisfactory affair with a married man.

Compared with *Blue Gate Crossing*, *Girlfriend, Boyfriend* is more direct in demonstrating the cultural, social and political background of the story and its impact on the characters. In order to better interpret the complex image of Mabel, Kwei incorporates Brechtian techniques in her acting. In response to the creation of political theatre in the early to mid-twentieth century, Bertolt Brecht developed the theory of epic theatre, in which the most important principle is to request the actor to keep a distance from the character in order to address the audience critically. In the early scenes of the film, Kwei's brazen and crafty behaviors as a student rebel contrast with her later fragile but steely image. For example, in the reunion scene in which the three friends are singing karaoke, Aaron receives a phone call from his father-in-law. When Aaron is on the phone, Mabel

tries to flirt with him but is stopped by Liam. Facing Liam's query: "That's enough! Is it funny?" Mabel cannot suppress her emotions anymore and slaps Liam repeatedly without saying anything. Kwei's gest acting here echoes her silent acting in the earlier scene in which she and Liam confide to each other at the pool. For Kwei, such silent acting is at its sophisticated best and exemplifies the silent soliloquy, "in which a face can speak with the subtlest shades of meaning without appearing unnatural and arousing the distaste of the spectators" (Balázs 62-3).

In Brechtian techniques, *gest*—revealing the actor's attitude through physical gestures—is believed to be an ideal way of making visible a character's social relations and the causality of her/his behavior. It is no longer Kwei Lun-Mei the character who holds back her emotions in the film, but the restrained emotion itself which carries out the essential quality and becomes the true character of the film. As one reviewer observes, "I finally see the authentic Kwei Lun-Mei in my mind. I have been a fan of Kwei since *Blue Gate Crossing* because of her unique aura and touching performance. Years later, however, I only remember her character of Meng Kerou and Lu Xiaoyu [...] now Mabel has touched me again."⁴⁵ Kwei's recurring restrained performance in these films has witnessed the passage of her girl-next-door persona from the everyday body to the ceremonial body and consequently generates a new touch of glamour. This is what Deleuze calls the "cinema of bodies": "the character is reduced to his own bodily attitudes, and what ought to result is the *gest*, that is, a 'spectacle', a theatricalization or dramatization which is valid for all plots" (Deleuze 192). From *Blue Gate Crossing* to *Girlfriend*, *Boyfriend*, Kwei's *xiaoqingxin* glamour has been closely associated with her star personality, which inhabits the space between her body-of-attitude and body-of-gest that precedes the film narrative.

⁴⁵ See Ai Yong's "Zai zhangya wuzhua de qingchun li." <https://movie.douban.com/review/5576535/>.

5. Kwei Lun-Mei's Cinematic Body as Body-of-Gest

Since the new millennium, Taiwan's Asian neighbors have hit the world with new sex symbols such as Japan's *kawaii* (cute) icons and South Korea's sexy pop idols. Kwei's register of *xiaoqingxin* popularity has spread wildly throughout East Asia as an alternative of those hyperfeminine icons.⁴⁶ Between 2008 and 2011, Kwei appeared in three co-productions directed by Hong Kong directors. Two of these—*All About Women* (2008) and *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate* (2011)—are directed by Tsui Hark, who is often said to be great at creating female roles. Having succeeded in transforming Brigitte Lin from an emotional pin-up girl to an androgynous swordswoman in her onscreen persona, it seems that Tsui had also attempted to twist Kwei's screen persona in a similar way. In *All About Women*, Kwei is cast as an unorthodox 19-year-old Beijing girl who is a punk rocker, an amateur boxer, and an Internet novelist with exaggerated masculine and imaginary characteristics. In *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate*, Kwei attempts a greater breakthrough in her screen image by playing the Tribal princess, who is enchanting and arrogant. Apparently, both roles are too dramatic and too different from her usual self. It is noteworthy that neither of these “reversed” roles have received the same widespread recognition as her roles as the girl-next-door in Taiwanese films because her *xiaoqingxin* image has already been so deeply established in the audience's memory. As Bazin pointed out decades ago, since the public likes to see “their favorite actors in their established roles,” the familiarity of the actor's “face and some recurring mannerisms in his acting” often prevents the actor from surpassing a single role (Bazin 30).

Kwei's debut as a girl-next-door has unified her on-and-off screen personality from *Blue Gate Crossing* onwards. In Brigitte Lin's Hong Kong period (1980s–1990s), most Asian countries

⁴⁶ Within the hyperfeminine culture in East Asia, both male and female pop idols adopt cutesy or sexy features in both their appearances and personalities in order to attract a broad range of audiences.

were involved in the postmodern cultural movement, which made the contrasting screen persona of Lin more readily acceptable for audiences. On the contrary, as a representative of the *xiaoqingxin* concept, Kwei's cinematic body becomes an idealized space that reflects the audience's individualized yearning for their lost youth or the emotional resonance of everyday life. Furthermore, audiences can find different qualities of their ideal girl-next-door on Kwei's cinematic body so long as it is loaded with her *xiaoqingxin* glamour. From this perspective, Kwei's screen image has been condensed to a body-of-gest that extends the daily attitudes into a collective enunciation that is independent from the film's story. Such is the power of cinematic glamour.

This chapter, in part, is a reprint of the paper entitled "Filming and Performing the Girl Next Door: Kwei Lun-mei and Her *Xiaoqingxin* Glamour," as it appears in *Locating Taiwan Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang (Cambria, 2020). The dissertation author was the primary author of this paper.

CHAPTER 2

Intimacy with the Resurrected: Archiving Teresa Teng in the Hologram Performance

1. Introduction

In the last chapter, we discussed the of creation of sensational intimacy with glamour, a concept that has always been associated with film stars. I emphasized the significance of cinematography and an actor's performance in the contribution of such kind of emotional identification among audiences. I also introduced concepts such as *photogénie* and body-of-gest in terms of interpreting the power of *xiaoqingxing* glamour, which has made Kwei Lun-Mei's cinematic body an idealized locus for emotional resonance that is independent from the film plots. In this chapter, I will further delve into the relationship between perception and memory in the media artifacts presenting resurrected celebrities like Teresa Teng. The focal transition from film stars to music and internet celebrities in the following chapters also facilitates a transmedia understanding of stardom and celebrities within audiovisual moving image cultures.

Before starting the topic of star resurrection, we should be aware of another significant issue relevant to the resilient stardom, which has received growing critical attention in recent years—ageing. Ageing has usually been considered an inferior in a star's film career as the star is unable to present similar glamour she/he used to have at a younger age. However, as Sabrina Qiong Yu indicates in the introduction of *Revisiting Star Studies*, ageing is a type of masquerade among others such as ethnicity, appearance, acting, and camp. By using the trope of masquerade, Yu implies that the stardom is consequences of performativity which can be easily manipulated by the star-industry-audience matrix (3). Chinese film and drama actress Wu Ying is a compelling example that embodies the notion of ageing as a masquerade. Wu was acknowledged for her aged

characters in the classics such as *The Spring River Flows East* (1947), *Myriad of Lights* (1948), and *Crows and Sparrows* (1949) when she was still young. Rather than a glamorous screen persona, Wu's old characters demonstrate her marvelous acting skills and won her the title of "one of the best actors of the 100 years of Chinese cinema." Sometimes, an ageing film star could benefit from the booming new entertainment industries, as seen in the example of Gloria Swanson, a formerly popular Hollywood star whose glamorous personas were recycled and renegotiated upon her entrance into the television industry through her 1948 talk show *The Gloria Swanson Hour* on WPIX-TV. As Mary R. Desjardins argues, in comparison to the Hollywood studios which attempted to produce glamorous or mysterious cinematic stars as a reflection of the "paradoxically ordinary-extraordinary persona," television brought out more of the ordinary personality of a star due to its technological, aesthetic, institutional, and reception characteristics such as "live transmission," "direct address and continuing narratives," and "reception in private, domestic space" (17-18). To some extent, new mediums have provided stars with new opportunities to promote their films, and at the same time complicates their star personas.

More often, however, older stars, especially older female stars are subject to age discrimination, and even have to terminate their acting career due to lack of roles. Kwei Lun-Mei has been mostly accepted as an icon of the *xiaoqingxin* girl next door since she was 19 years old. However, because of the age condition, Kwei could no longer play such kind of roles after entering her 30's. Although attempting some breakthroughs in her screen image such as the widow in *Black Coal, Thin Ice* (2014) and the prostitute in *The Wild Goose Lake* (2019), the golden age of Kwei's acting career has already gone with her young adulthood. Sometimes, an ageing actress is criticized of lacking "*shaonü gan*" (girlish feeling) when required to act out the adolescent period of a character, as seen in the cases of Zhou Xun in the TV series *Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace*, and

Zhang Ziyi in the TV series *The Rebel Princess*.⁴⁷ While an ageing male actor might be considered showing more of masculinity, a female's age has always become the consensus focus of spite, regardless of her more mature acting skills. On the 13th FIRST International Film Festival held in Xining, China, 41-year-old Hai Qing gave a talk on behalf of a group of middle-aged Chinese actresses regarding excessive age discrimination facing female actors in China's film and television industry. "We are passionate about films, but most of us have been very passive and we are kept away from fine productions due to various limitations, such as the market and the script," said Hai, followed by other middle-aged actresses, Yao Chen and Liang Jing, who claimed that they had to find other ways out such as the position of a producer although they still wanted to perform the most.⁴⁸

Ironically, in opposition to the harsh market for ageing stars, celebrities who faded away from public attention at a relatively young age, usually those who died unnaturally, tend to receive enormous attention even decades after their death. It seems that the entertainment industry has an obsession with commemorating and even "resurrecting" the dead celebrities in various ways, such as memorial museums, TV documentaries, and biographical films (a.k.a. biopic). Among them, the biopic is claimed by George F. Custen "a kind of overlooked historical discourse" (8) as it translates the historical truth into a visual narrative form. The translatability of the historical truth from its verbal state to a visual one, however, comes with a "crisis" in historiography. How authentic can the biopic represent a historical figure? Hayden White believes that the visual praxis regarding historical discourse is "capable of telling us things about its referents that are both different from what can be told in verbal discourse and also of a kind that can only be told by

⁴⁷ Zhou Yun was 44 when played the character Ruyi; Zhang Ziyi was 38 when played the character Awu.

⁴⁸ For more details, see *China Daily*, "Middle-aged Actresses Decry Lack of Better Roles in TV, Movie Industry," https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201908/07/WS5d4a2417a310cf3e35564419_1.html

means of visual images” (1193). The function of the biopic in mediating the history (or the viewer’s sense of history) lies in the uniqueness of biopic as a medium to employ different filmmaking strategies, such as self-reflexivity and intertextuality.

One example is Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan’s *Center Stage* (1992), in which Hong Kong actress Maggie Cheung is chosen to reenact the Chinese silent-era film star Ruan Lingyu, who committed suicide in 1935, at the age of 25. *Center Stage* is made during a time when the post-war Hong Kong cinema tended to express Hong Kong identity as a problematic issue.⁴⁹ A trend of nostalgia cinema was therefore initiated and peaked in the early 1990s. As one of the most famous stars of the Golden Age of Chinese cinema, Ruan Lingyu can be seen as a signifier that entails Hong Kong director’s nostalgia of the glory days of the Shanghai film industry in the 1930s when the film industry in Hong Kong and mainland China were closely connected. In *Center Stage*, Kwan constructs nostalgic connection between contemporary Hong Kong and old Shanghai through self-reflective and intertextual visual narratives that yearn for a lost star and the long-gone 1930s. Cheung’s performance is juxtaposed with the documentary record of filmmaking process, and the archival images and footage from the films featuring Ruan Lingyu. The double meanings of Cheung’s cinematic body as both herself and Ruan Lingyu blur the boundaries between “now” and “then,” “fiction” and “non-fiction,” which complicates the discussion of star resurrection with respect to reenacting the prototype.

In terms of interpreting the past story of a dead star, it is important to consider how her historical images are selected and represented in order to serve the purpose of social and affective expressions. To quote Desjardins, “the sign of the [female] star—and the vicissitudes of her

⁴⁹ In 1984, Hong Kong’s fate to return to China’s sovereignty in 1997 was sealed in the “Sino-British Joint Declaration,” filmmakers started to rethink issues of nationalism and identity within a new environment.

identity in a culture in which some identities are more ‘rewardable’ than others—is central to understanding many of the anxieties, as well as pleasures, that recycled stars invoke through their public, multi-mediated emergence, loss, and return” (3). Besides the biopic, the recycling of star images in other forms of media incarnation also embodies the renegotiation of star identities. For instance, following the death of Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe in 1962, Andy Warhol colored and replicated the face of Monroe based on a publicity photograph of her as a signature subject in his screenprint portfolios (figure 9). In this work of pop art, Warhol transformed Monroe’s face



Figure 9: Andy Warhol’s screenprint portfolio of Marilyn Monroe

into a death mask, exemplifying the relationship between fame and death in a consumer society. Another example is Cecilia Barriga’s avant-garde video *Meeting Two Queens*. Identified as the core of the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s (Desjardins 195), *Meeting Two Queens* recomposed the film footage from Hollywood films featuring Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich with a lesbian interpellation effect that was absent from original film scenes. *Meeting Two Queens* can also be considered as fan art by and for the fans of Garbo and Dietrich who seek to liberate the stars from

their stereotyped Hollywood role models. The various media artifacts of star resurrection, from mainstream to avant-garde, not only demonstrates the popular trend of continuing or rebuilding the emotional intimacy between audiences and a star's afterlife in the entertainment industries, but also encourages a reexamination of archives as they marry the past and the present in the materiality of affect.

2. Teresa Teng Is Revived!

On September 6, 2013, Jay Chou (Zhou Jielun)—one of the most famous Mandopop stars of the twenty-first century—held his nineteenth concert of the year at Taipei Arena. Chou surprised everyone at this concert with his virtual duet with the musician Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun), who had died eighteen year earlier. After finishing the first chorus of the song “What Do You Have to Say?”, Chou stopped and pointed the audience's attention to the big screen on which the words “I once imagined that I could travel back to thirty years ago and sing a song with her. That would be my honor” gradually appeared. Then the 3D holographic image of Teng, the original singer of the song “What Do You Have to Say?”, appeared on the screen (figure 10). “Teng” made Chou's



Figure 10: Screenshot of 2013 Jay Chou Taipei Arena concert duet with the virtual Teresa Teng

dream come true by performing three songs in a row with Chou: “What Do You Have to Say?”, “Red Dust Inn,” and “Faraway.”

Teresa Teng was a legendary Taiwanese singer active in East and Southeast Asia throughout the 1970s and 1980s. She died from a severe asthma attack while vacationing in Chiangmai, Thailand, in 1995, at the age of forty-two. Teng’s sudden death caused enormous grief among her fans and in Chinese-speaking communities around the world. Although it has been decades since Teng passed away, several singers still mimic Teng’s soft and sweet voice, with some of them even claiming to be the reincarnation of Teng (as in the case of the Thai singer Vanatsaya Viseskul, who appeared on the television singing competition *The Voice of China*). In Jay Chou’s concert, the audiences experienced a “revival” of Teng with the help of holographic technology for the first time. After the duet video was uploaded on YouTube by JVR Music, it quickly surpassed 8 million views. The online “audience” was also amazed; it was as if Teng had really come back and sung for her audience. One comment said, “although the virtual image does not [totally] resemble Teng, I somehow could not hold back my tears while watching the video. When Teng disappeared in the form of fleeting stars in the last scene, I felt like she was really back” (Liang).

In the world of popular music, digital clones and virtual idols have drawn public attention since the start of the new millennium. Following the debut of Japanese vocaloid Hatsune Miku in 2007,⁵⁰ the deceased American musician Elvis Presley “reappeared” on the television show *American Idol*, singing a duet with Celine Dion. Whereas Miku was released based on the idea of “an android diva in the near-future world where songs are lost” (“Hatsune”), the ghostly reappearance of Elvis Presley was based on a real human model, bringing the reality of time and

⁵⁰ Vocaloid is a line of vocal synthesis products from Japan, which are marketed with “virtual idols.”

space into question. The idea of using hologram technology to bring back departed artists on stage has quickly become a global trend. Other significant cultural figures, such as American rapper Tupac Shakur and the “King of Pop” Michael Jackson, have also been successfully resurrected in live performance using the technology.

Teresa Teng was the first Asian musician to be revived on stage in 3D holographic form. Despite the music and video footage of her performances having been continually replayed and reproduced on both new and old media, the astounding effect caused by the holographic performance was unprecedented and managed to fulfill the desire of Jay Chou, and probably many of Teng’s fans, to bring Teng “back to life.” Rather than biologically reviving the dead celebrity, Teng’s digital resurrection embodies a symbolic immortality, which enables the media representation of Teng to play a role after her death. Following her first virtual performance in Chou’s concert in 2013, “Teng” has been resurrected several more times: in the Japanese television show “Kin SMA”; in “If a Wish Could Be Made: Teresa Teng 20 Years Anniversary Memorial Concert in 3D in Taiwan” in 2015, and in “Teresa Teng: The Legend” in Hangzhou, China, in 2018. The continual posthumous transnational circulation and commemoration of Teng’s stardom and fame, rather than just being financially expedient, has significant cultural and technological value. In addition to the political and sentimental connotations preserved in Teng’s symbolic immortality, her holographic resurrections also encourage a rereading of media representations of Teng as digital archives that foster an affective experience among audiences. Liew Kai Khiun has framed such holographic experiences as “a manifestation of the Chinese theological concept of *ying hun*, loosely translated as ‘shadow and soul’” (“Shadow and Soul” 156). For Khiun, the shadow refers to “the optical aspect of the stereoscopic projection,” whereas the soul “carries the transient and affective memories that were accumulated during the celebrities’ lifetimes” (156). In

the stereoscopic projections of Teng, it is the cultural memory associated with Teng's melodic presence that evokes nostalgic and sentimental resonances. Although lacking corporeal presence, the combination of the digitalized archive with the virtual Teng's real-time performance recontextualizes Teng's cultural significance, since her sweet and soft voice is able to transcend long-standing geopolitical obstacles and forge a kind of sentimental unity both during and after her lifetime. Such an aural sensation is bound to the cultural memory of Teng, and haunts Teng's posthumous fame.

In this chapter, through a close reading of Teresa Teng's afterlife images and performances, especially her holographic representation in Jay Chou's 2013 concert, I argue that the holographic performance of virtual Teng, which is built on a nostalgic re-creation and digitalization of archival materials, generates an affective experience for her transcultural and cross-generational audiences. Furthermore, the resurrection of the various bits of the archive could produce "real" emotional reactions in the audience's encounter with Teng's holographic image and reproduced melodies, which redefines the conception of authenticity as a consequence of the materiality of affect, rather than the materiality of Teng's biological body.

3. Archive Affect in Media Representations of Teresa Teng

Like the biopic and other contemporary media arts, the hologram manipulates the collection of photographic or filmic documents to show its indexical relationship to the history. It draws our attention to photography as a basic form of archive for those artworks. The two characteristics of photographic images, seeming veracity and reproducibility, make them archival objects par excellence, sustained by belief that they are important for the production and preservation of documentary evidence. Walter Benjamin points out that the tension between the

exhibition value and cult value of an artwork has shifted since images could be mechanically produced and reproduced. In prehistoric times, that which defined the works of art that were created for worship and were usually kept out of sight was their cult value. In the machine age, however, the exhibition value of an image has gradually become superior to its cult value. The exhibition value of photographic images has enabled them to be appropriated for a variety of cultural, industrial, and institutional purposes, such as advertising, entertainment, and government propaganda. During this process, the function of the photograph has gradually shifted from being a work of art to a form of archival documentation. Benjamin associates the authenticity and authority of an artwork with its physical duration (the here and now), which is jeopardized when the artwork is detached from its original context via technological reproduction. Technological reproduction makes those photographic and filmic copies independent from the original and puts them in new situations that the original could never attain (22). On the one hand, the image and sound of the star are stored in audiovisual media as referents to their presence. On the other hand, audiovisual archives gain new lives as they connect the past to the present, “sought out as part of a broad culture of sampling, sharing, and recombining of visual data in infinite calibrations of users and receivers” (Enwezor 23).

The cultural praxis of sampling, sharing, and recombining visual data has led to a proliferation of terminology such as “compilation film,” “found footage film,” “mash-up,” and “remix” in a variety of media using those editing strategies. Jaimie Baron has classified all of these media under “appropriation film,” a broad category she reconceptualizes to point not only to the act of recontextualization of the archival documents, but also to the consciousness of the “archival” uses in the viewers (9). The archival document in an appropriation film, as Baron defines it, is “an experience of reception”; an experience she terms the “archive effect.” Baron argues that “archival

documents exist as ‘archival’ only insofar as the viewer of a given film perceives certain documents within that film as coming from another, previous—and primary—context of use or intended use” (7). The emphasis on the viewer’s experience destabilizes the archival structure in terms of its mediation of space and time. Moreover, it offers new insights of analyzing the archive in response to the scholarly debates about reenacting or recycling the departed celebrity in popular culture praxis.

The archive effect is often accompanied by the archive affect, especially when the historical document is presented in fragments and not for the purpose of creating unitary meanings within the artifact. As long as the technology permits, the recorded music and filmic video can be preserved and transmitted through media such as TV documentaries, biopics, and museums for the public to commemorate a departed celebrity. Those media serve as archives for the desired audiences to approach the celebrity discourse from different temporal and spatial dimensions. At the same time, however, the indexical materials embedded in those traditional media are explicitly connected to the irreparable past, pointing to the actual physical “death” of the celebrity. Audiences are therefore always experiencing a sense of loss and nostalgia when viewing the materials that index the past. In associating the archive affect with nostalgia, Baron argues, “the archive affect may encourage either a nostalgic desire to recreate the past in the image of the ‘perfect snapshot’ (i.e. the reflective mode) or a nostalgic but self-conscious awareness of the past as past (i.e. the restorative mode)” (130). The convergence of the restorative and the reflective modes of nostalgia, as embedded in Teng’s “afterlife” media representations, draws viewers into the empathetic dynamism within the archival space.

Teresa Teng is both a controversial cultural icon and probably the most beloved singer in East and Southeast Asia during the 1970s and 1980s. Her enduring popularity is associated with

the understanding of Chinese identity from Taiwan to Japan and mainland China. In 1964, as an eleven-year-old teenager, Teng showed her singing talent in a TV competition she won with her rendition of a song in *Huangmei*, a type of Chinese traditional operatic tune. Shortly thereafter, Teng left school and turned to a professional singing career. Teng quickly gained popularity because of her “modern songs,” which used a unique singing style incorporating Chinese and Western elements. Moreover, Teng’s unique voice is associated with significant cultural value. Andy Rodekohr argues that “[Teng’s] ability to evoke longing both for something lost to history and for a sophisticated modernity of the present parallels the struggle for identity that characterized Taiwan after 1949, as the island ostensibly claimed legitimacy as ‘China’” (836).

After releasing several albums in Taiwan, Teng attempted to break into the Japanese market and rapidly won fame in Japan with a string of hit songs. At the time, it was rare for Japanese audiences to show enduring affection for a foreign singer like Teng. Most of Teng’s popular hits in Japanese were love ballads. While performing, Teng paid close attention to the lyrics and embodied the romance or melancholy expressed in the song’s lyrics through her facial expressions; this made it seem to her listeners that Teng was singing from an experience they shared. Teng’s voice became more mature as she incorporated the singing style of Japanese ballads. During and after her stay in Japan, Teng covered many Japanese pop songs by translating them into Chinese, which helped to circulate popular culture elements between Japan and the Chinese-speaking communities.

In the 1970s, Teng’s popularity boomed in many countries in Asia and beyond as she sang in Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, and English. In contrast, her songs were banned in mainland China for many years for being too “bourgeois.” However, due to Deng Xiaoping’s “open-door” economic policies, transistor radios along with the so-called “bourgeois” songs entered mainland

China beginning in the late 1970s. After listening to decades-worth of collective anthems through mediatized state propaganda during the Cultural Revolution era (1966–76), people in mainland China began to discover and develop other tastes by playing the broadcasts or bootlegged cassettes of pop music from Taiwan and Hong Kong in their homes. Teng’s songs proved exceptionally popular because her soft and sweet voice signified a fresh experience of music stripped of explicitly political connotations and designed to generate purely sentimental resonances.

Teng’s charm has continued to captivate listeners through various media platforms for more than twenty years since her death. At the same time, the geocultural imaginations related to her afterlife reception keep haunting Teng’s fans as “an intersection between the more fluid contemporary pop culture and the older and territorialised concept of the politics of belonging and identity” (Khiun, “Rewind and Recollect” 504). The media representations of Teng’s legacy, I argue, demonstrate prominently either a sense of belonging to Cultural China or a nostalgic recollection of historical monumentality.

In the 1980s, sinologist Tu Wei-ming coined the concept of “Cultural China,” in which he proposed “a search for cultural roots and a commitment to a form of depoliticized humanism” in the discourse of Chineseness and the imagined communities of China (25). Teng can be considered as a representation of this Cultural China, not only attributed to her traditional star image and singing style, but also because of her enthusiasm for disseminating Chinese culture through her songs. In 1983, Teng released an album titled *Dandan youqing* (Faded Feelings). The album contains twelve songs, which are notable for their use of poems from the Chinese Tang and Song Dynasties as lyrics. Teng’s whispery intonation is particularly suitable for this “*Zhongguo feng*” (Chinese style) music, a Chinese pop music genre that adopts traditional musical aesthetics in its lyrical content and instrumentation.

After Teng's *Dandan youqing*, the *Zhongguo feng* style reached another climax in the early 2000s with Jay Chou's albums combining Chinese instruments with Western hip-hop and rock elements. In his Taipei concert in 2013, Chou performed two of his *Zhongguo feng*-era songs—"Red Dust Inn" and "Faraway"—with the virtual Teng. Dressed in an elegant white cheongsam with patterns of red blossoms, virtual Teng appeared at the façade of a traditional Chinese-style house with a board labelled "Red Dust Inn" hung atop the doorframe, a decision seemingly made to enable the concert audience to imagine that Teng was really travelling back from the past and simultaneously to experience all the nostalgic sentiments and memories awakened by the sound of her voice. Although the voice was not in fact from Teng herself but rather an impersonator, the audience could still feel connected to the virtual character emotionally.

Sometimes, even the music itself could carry symbolic meanings due to Teng's influence. For example, the title of Teng's song "*Tian mi mi*" (Sweetness) is used as the Chinese title, as well as the theme song, for the 1996 Hong Kong film *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*. Released one year after Teng's unexpected death, *Almost a Love Story* has been considered a tribute to Teng not only because "*Tian mi mi*" facilitates the romance between the movie's female and male protagonists (played by Maggie Cheung and Leon Lai respectively), but also because Teng's music is associated with the collective memory that can incite the sentimental resonance of that period. Set in late-1980s Hong Kong, the movie portrays two migrants from mainland China to Hong Kong who are seeking life-changing opportunities in the metropolis but instead find themselves trapped in loneliness and unsatisfied. Teng's melodic presence in the movie poignantly speaks to the historical monumentality as well as the cultural anxiety caused by China's "open-door" economic policies and Hong Kong's sealed fate of being returned to Chinese sovereignty. The continued fever for Teng's songs in Chinese-speaking communities after her death, to borrow

Rodekohr's words, indicates that "Teng transcended the prevailing ideological obstacles that fractured China and forged a kind of sentimental unity" (834).

However, not all media representations of Teng are able to evoke affective responses from audiences. In 2007, TV Asahi in Japan produced and broadcast the one-episode TV show *Teresa Teng Monogatari* (The Story of Teresa Teng). The show was adapted from Yoshifu Arita's biography of Teng, *My Home Is on the Other Side of the Mountain: The Truth of Teresa Teng's Tenth Year*. The book describes the last twenty-two years of Teresa Teng's life, from her debut in Japan to her death in Thailand, with a focus on the several political events in which Teng was involved, including the temporary restriction from her entering Japan due to the fake Indonesian passport she used and her rendition of the song "My Home is on the Other Side of the Mountain" during the "Concert for Democracy in China" held in Hong Kong to support the 1989 Tiananmen student protest in Beijing. By highlighting the geopolitical barriers that Teng encountered under the conditions of the Cold War, *Teresa Teng Monogatari* stresses the political connotations that Teng carries as a cultural icon but neglects the emotional attachment that Teng's story could deliver. On its homepage on *Douban* (a Chinese social media website that allows users to create, upload, and comment on music, films, TV shows, and other content), several viewers commented that the show failed to speak to Chinese audiences because the Japanese actress Yoshino Kimura did not resemble Teresa Teng either physically or spiritually. In Taiwan, Teng's family and the Teresa Teng Foundation wanted the Taiwanese-American director Ang Lee to film a biopic of Teresa Teng, but the plan has been delayed for years due to Lee and Teng's family being unable to reach an agreement on who would play the role of Teng (Han). Adding to the difficulty of producing the biopic are questions about how to find a balance among the representation of the

real Teng, the persona that present audiences empathize with, and the screen image that Teng's family would be satisfied with.

4. Redefining Authenticity in Nostalgic Re-Creation and Digitalization of Archives

In the praxis of transcultural and cross-generational star resurrection, one might argue that as long as the celebrity is portrayed by someone other than her/himself, the problem of resemblance always exists. "Bruceploitation," a film subgenre that refers to the imitation martial arts films starring Bruce-Lee-look-alike actors, such as Ho Chung Tao, Chang Yi-tao, and Wong Kin Lung, etc., provides a paradigm that emphasizes the recontextualization of star discourse rather than physical resemblance. As one of the most influential martial artists and pop culture icons of the twentieth century, Bruce Lee's sudden death during the making of his last film, *Game of Death* (1972), left his audiences grieving. So-called Bruceploitation films, as the name indicates, have exploited and refined Bruce Lee's cinematic persona even beyond the original meaning it registered. To be specific, Bruce Lee imitators and those related films disassociate Lee's screen persona, such as Lee's rebelliousness, from the specific human body and extend it into other bodies through appropriation and re-narrativization. Brian Hu, in his "'Bruce Lee' After Bruce Lee," discusses the reconceptualization of Lee's stardom as a "star-function," where the star is understood as "an ownable and thus copyrightable commodity" with certain visual and aural qualities (166). In the case of Bruce Lee, his yellow and black jumpsuit in the last film has been recognized worldwide as a symbol for Lee and has been repeatedly appropriated in films such as Stephen Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* (2001) and Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003).

The phenomenon of Bruceploitation film implies that the posthumous artifact of a dead celebrity can be only mass-reproduced in remediation, which is deprived of its political and

narrative specificity and open for revision in the new context. Bruce Lee's posthumous stardom echoes the global popularity of Hong Kong martial arts films from the 1970s. The huge box-office success of Lee's *Enter the Dragon* (1973) had inspired some Hong Kong film studios to make "Bruce Lee"-starring films even after Lee's death in order to increase the profitability of their films. At a time when CGI (computer-generated image) technology was not sufficiently developed to create real human characters, studios found Lee look-alike actors and/or endowed them with Lee-like screen names in feature films that either rehashed Lee's classics or used Lee's death as a part of the story. As Hu points out, "the logic of the Bruce Lee look-alike is that Bruce Lee is not a person, but a readily-assumable attitude and style" (174). Although categorized as "Bruce Lee imitators," those impersonators did not intend to copy Bruce Lee down to the smallest detail but instead represented and revisited the "attitude" and style of Lee with which his global fans were familiar.

The model of Bruce Lee imitators helps us understand the digital resurrection of Teng in its relationship to archive affect. As Lee's example illustrates, archival uses can generate alternative meanings for the star image through decontextualization and recontextualization, and at the same time they can lead to a feeling of authenticity due to the affect charge in the memory. From this perspective, Teng's digital body in holographic projections should be understood as a nostalgic re-creation charged with affective memories. Teng died in the era of simulacra and simulation, when the distinction between reality and its representation had started to collapse. This was an era in which, according to Jean Baudrillard, the real is no longer separated from its artificial resurrection, as "everything is already dead and resurrected in advance" (6). Following Baudrillard, Malcolm Le Grice has argued that "our discourse with the real has become a discourse with the represented image, a presence of the image not in conflict with its lack of physical proximity"

(311). The collapse of the distinction between reality and its representation causes a dysfunction of official archives in terms of restoring historical reality. Holograms, whose principle derives from the “magic lantern shows” that were invented centuries ago, are a production of phantasmagoria, which displays hallucinations in real space with coherent light. Audiences can therefore fully enjoy the holographic image without the assistance of optical devices. The holographic return of Teng produces an alternative understanding of the archive in its relationship with the virtual reality of a celebrity in the digital era. Since the new millennium, photographic archives have been undergoing a digital transformation, and individuals hence have greater flexibility in interpreting and mediating archival documentation.

The evolution of digital technologies, especially the technologies of virtual reality and the hologram, have therefore changed the way a celebrity being produced, consumed, and commemorated. Actually, the concept of virtual reality had already been incorporated with music performance long before the Japanese virtual idol Hatsune Miku went viral, as seen in the case of Gorillaz, a virtual band made up of cartoon characters from Britain. The four animated members: 2-D (vocals and keyboard), Murdoc Niccals (bass), Noodle (guitar), and Russel Hobbs (drums) were created in 1998 by artist Jamie Hewlett and musician Damon Albarn, who was also the front man of the band Blur as well as the lead vocalist and songwriter of Gorillaz. Although having real musicians performing the music, their fictional universe has been presented in music videos, interviews and even live performances as representation of the band. How to enliven the animated cartoon characters on the stage? As shown in their early live performances at MTV Awards in 2005, Grammy Awards in 2006, and Brits Awards in 2010, the two-dimensional characters were projected on the transparent foil as a three-dimensional optical illusion (figure 11). It seemed the cartoon characters were performing in real world even though the projection was strictly



Figure 11: Gorillaz's quasi-hologram performance on stage.

speaking not a hologram. In fact, such quasi-hologram technology has been used in many scenarios including the virtual Teng at Jay Chou's concert.

More often, however, Gorillaz has been put into comparison with Hatsune Miku when it comes to the concept of hologram and virtual musician. Among the comments under Gorillaz's BRITs performance of "Clint Eastwood" on their YouTube channel, the one that wrote "Japan has hatsune miku, UK has gorillaz" (Zefryro) has received the most likes.⁵¹ Although with similar visual effect, the design concepts behind Gorillaz and Miku are different. While Miku roots in Japanese anime and idol culture, the birth of Gorillaz was due to Albarn and Hewlett's attempt to sophisticate the substance in the music videos.⁵² For Gorillaz, human musicians and producers have the credit regardless of the animated line-up. Since 2010, they have started to expose the real band on their live stage. On the other hand, Miku has become an icon of vocaloid singers and

⁵¹ For the details of the comment, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxLWuM_SHcI&list=RDMMxxLWuM_SHcI&start_radio=1&ab_channel=TomaLaBananas

⁵² See <https://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/33343/1/how-gorillaz-created-their-mind-bending-alternate-universe>

Japanese ACG (anime, comic and games) culture. She has held several live holographic tours that Gorillaz dreamed of but never ultimately made it due to the tremendous expense.

With the rapid development of social networking sites, virtual band has also come to be used for “music groups who collaborate using the Internet”.⁵³ The web-based indie band Superorganism is such a group consisting of eight members from UK, the USA, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, the youngest of which is the band’s lead vocalist, Orono Noguchi. The band was well-known for demonstrating signature internet-based visual and audio elements in their music videos. The one for the song “Everybody Wants to be Famous,” for instance, operates the theme around Orono as a YouTube celebrity with mysterious Internet origins. The video features comments underneath the fictional YouTube video purporting that “Orono is not a Japanese girl, she’s a Japanese HOLOGRAM” (figure 12). The metaphor/satire

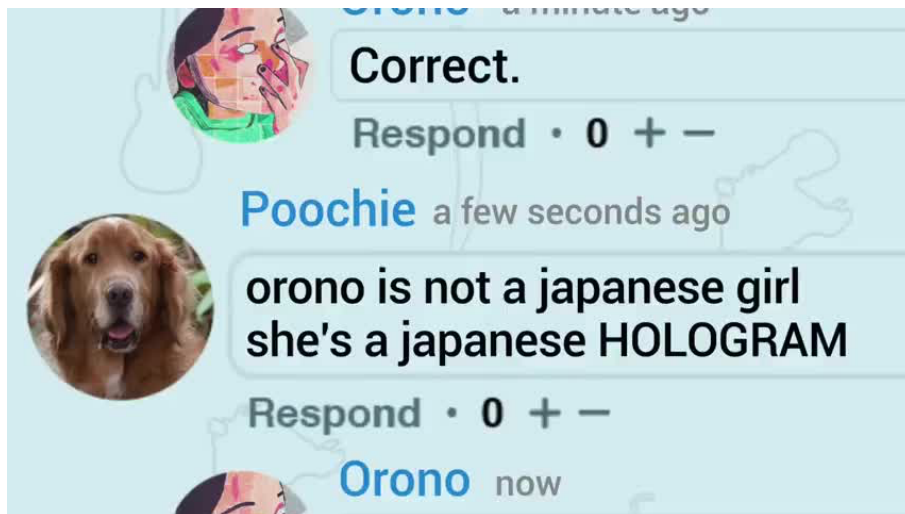


Figure 12: Comment referring to Superorganism’s music video “Everybody Wants to be Famous” on YouTube.

⁵³ For more details on virtual band, see “Virtual band,” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_band#:~:text=In%20entertainment%2C%20a%20virtual%20band,corporeal%20musicians%2C%20but%20animated%20characters.

here redefines hologram as a symbol of virtual representation rather than merely digital technology. Furthermore, it seems that the concept of hologram profoundly embodies what Baudrillard describes as simulacra, as he writes:

Nothing resembles itself, and holographic reproduction, like all fantasies of the exact synthesis or resurrection of the real, is already no longer real, is already hyperreal. It thus never has reproductive (truth) value, but always already simulation value. (108)

Baudrillard completely denies the hologram's indexical/referential relation with reality at a perception level. He compares the hologram to trompe l'oeil since they both contrast with painting: "instead of a field as a vanishing point for the eye, you are in a reversed depth, which transforms you into a vanishing point" (105). On the other hand, however, Baudrillard points out that the hologram lacks trompe l'oeil's intelligence of seduction through "allusion to and ellipsis of presence" because "with the hologram we are already virtually in another universe: which is nothing but the mirrored equivalent of the one" (106). No matter based on real human model or a fully invented character, the hologram symbolizes an embodied experience of disembodiment, which can be seen as a utopian version of virtual reality to "escape into another world for the audience (users)" (Ke 192). I will discuss more about it in the next section.

In East Asia, the exploitation of hologram and virtual reality in the realm of popular culture has been booming in the last decade to respond to the national investments in soft power. Following the global popularity of Japanese virtual idol Hatsune Miku, a Chinese Vocaloid character, Luo Tianyi, was created by Shanghai Henian Information Technology Company in collaboration with Japanese Yamaha Corporation (the creator of the Vocaloid software) in 2012. As the most successful digital avatar in China, Luo Tianyi not only "held" a joint concert with the internationally known pianist Lang Lang in Shanghai but also performed Teresa Teng's "*Dan Yuan Ren Changjiu*" (May We be Blessed with Longevity), a song from the album *Dandan youqing* in

Everlasting Classics, a CCTV (China Central Television) program aimed at revisiting and disseminating Chinese classics.

At around the same time, two leading South Korean K-pop entertainment companies, YG and SM, began a collaboration with the state telecommunication and technology institutes KT Corporation and KAIST (Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology) to enhance audiences' interactions with K-pop stars through the help of holography technology. In January 2014, YG Entertainment opened Klive hologram hall, which features 3D performances by the most prominent YG artists, including Psy, BIGBANG, 2NE1, etc. After testing out hologram performance in the Japanese market, SM released the world's first hologram musical, *School Oz*, starring SM idols from TVXQ, EXO, F(x), and Red Velvet in SMTOWN studio. Considering the K-pop idols' busy schedules, such hologram theatres provide both domestic and international K-pop fans the fantasy of having an intimate interaction with their idols through the disembodied performance on display. Moreover, as Suk-Young Kim argues, the K-pop stars' holographic bodies "by analogy, fabricate the ideal national body: a technologically savvy futuristic body created by the convergence of culture and ICT" (132-3).

In respond to the nation's ambition of promoting its "creative economy" (Kim 133), the entertainment industry in South Korea thrives on exploring the convergence of technology and K-pop culture. Lately, at the 2020 MAMA (Mnet Asian Music Awards), one of Asia's biggest music award ceremonies, the top K-pop group BTS performed their song "Life Goes On" with a hologram version of the member Suga joined for about two minutes, who was unable to perform in person as he was recovering from a shoulder surgery (figure 13). The Suga hologram was pre-recorded and then a 3D avatar was built from the recording. To be honest, without knowing that Suga was absent from the event, I did not realize what I saw was a hologram when I first watched

the video, although his image did seem uncanny to me. It is noted that the 2020 MAMA was held with no on-site audience due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That is to say, when everything we saw was digitally recorded, the digital media itself has already thrown us into a universe of virtual reality in which audiences might trust the screen more than their own eyes. As Aden Evens contends, “the desired presence is a phantasm, a myth propagated by an industry and a culture that dream of a wholly virtual reality. There is no presence, only a representation” (128).



Figure 13: Suga (the 4th from the left) appeared as a holographic image in BTS’s performance of “Life Goes On” at the 2020 MAMA.

In addition to local and inter-Asian interfaces of digital technologies and popular culture, the flourishing East Asian new media market has also appealed to Western media and technology companies, inspiring them to seek collaboration with East Asian entertainment industries. A compelling example is Digital Domain, the American visual effects and media application company that produced the virtual likeness of Tupac Shakur for the Coachella Music Festival in 2012 and that of Teresa Teng for Jay Chou’s 2013 Taipei concert. Digital Domain, established by film directors James Cameron, Stan Winston, and Scott Ross in 1993, originally aimed at producing visual effects for films including *Titanic*, *Apollo 13*, and *The Fifth Element*. As they

began experiencing financial difficulties at the start of the new millennium, in addition to their visual effects services, the company sought to expand their business scope to film production, content ownership, and new media. After undergoing bankruptcy and restructuring, Digital Domain was acquired by a Hong Kong-based company called Sun Innovation from Beijing Galloping Horse in 2013. Following the acquisition, Digital Domain's new head office was relocated to Hong Kong, giving it much greater accessibility and capital support for posthumous reconstructions in Greater China. Teng's duet with Jay Chou was their first, but certainly not their last, exploration of reviving this legendary cultural icon; Digital Domain has already signed a ten-year agreement with TNT Production Limited and has made a multitude of investments in virtual reality and interactive technologies. Their virtual human team has dedicated itself to polishing the digital reproductions of Teresa Teng since the original 2013 performance, in events including the twenty-year anniversary memorial concert in Taipei to commemorate Teng's death and the first holographic concert in Hangzhou.

In order to accurately mimic Teng's facial expressions, bodily gestures, and other characteristics, the technicians from Digital Domain collected and learned from old pictures and videos of Teng before designing a set of algorithms to make use of them. With the algorithms, they were able to make the virtual Teng do what she never did in her physical life, namely to speak words that she had never spoken while alive, for the singing performance with Jay Chou. At the same time, however, the virtual image of Teng was not a perfect reduplication. In the absence of high-definition archival footage, the fuzzy pixels of the old images from the 1970s and 1980s did not allow for the technicians to restore the details of Teng's face and body movements flawlessly. Therefore, instead of focusing on how to make Teng's figure "look" real, the team aimed to make it "feel" real. Steve Preeg, Digital Domain's visual effects supervisor and animation director, states

that their “goal was to honor Teresa Teng, as a singer and as a person . . . If her family and friends feel that her personality came through in the performance, then [they] did [their] jobs” (Brzeski). Although the existing technology could not reproduce Teng’s physical body in the way that a photograph does, the technicians tried to underscore the identifying features of the singer’s body, such as her sweet smile, her sincere eye contact, and her vibrating throat while performing in a high register. By doing so, Teng’s digital double becomes an ideal embodiment, evoking nostalgic memories and emotional resonances.

While the evolution of AI (artificial intelligence) technology is making digital human reproduction a promising project, the increasing trans-geopolitical communication in the intersection of technology and culture serves to gradually deprive Teng’s posthumous iconicity of its temporal-spatial specificity. That is to say, Teresa Teng has been resurrected several times as an icon of sentimental unity that bridges both the past and the present and Greater China and the rest of the world. In 2017, the Japanese TV program “Kin SMA” reenacted Teng’s performance of “*Toki no nagare ni mi wo makase*” (Time Goes By) in stereoscopic projection (figure 14). The video has since been uploaded to YouTube on different channels, with subtitles added in Japanese, Chinese, and English so that Teng’s global fans can enjoy it (Lea).



Figure 14: Screenshot of “Teresa Teng Brought to Life after 22 Years Using the Latest 3D VR Technology” on YouTube.

When Teng appeared on the stage, the audience was so amazed at the realism of the virtual character that it felt as if Teng had been really brought to life. A commenter on Adrian C.'s channel wrote, "I was moved to tears, watching Ms. Teng's remarkable revisionary performance . . . It's so painful . . . even for me, a Westerner with no familial connection with Taiwan or China. It shreds the heart. So realistic, yet irretrievable" (Lea). However, by comparing this show to the original video of Teng performing the same song on the 1986 Japan Cable Awards, viewers quickly realized that it was not fully a creation of 3D computer graphics and algorithms but rather a restoration using the technology of virtual studio, which allows a seamless real-time combination of the broadcasting studio and an existing image of Teng in performance. That is why the virtual camera was able to capture Teng's image from the side and back angles, which a typical holography technology is not capable of. The same technology was used over and over again in Japanese TV programs to resurrect Teng, in duets with Japanese singer Yukino Ichikawa in the same year, with Aya Shimazu in 2018, and with Sachiko Kobayashi in 2019.

In Japanese TV programs, the archival footage of Teng singing in Japanese is directly detached from its specific historical moment and placed in a new context, which highlights the miracle of resurrecting a departed celebrity with the assistance of new technology. The virtual studio technology provides a Baudrillardian simulacrum that represents the original figure of Teng but still noticeably exposes its differences from the original. Simulacrum, in the words of Baudrillard, shows that "the real is no longer what it was," but "a plethora of myths of origins and of signs of reality" (6). The signs of reality can be understood as an archive affect that elicits the viewers' affective memories. The resurrection of the various bits of the archive for a holistic mirage changes the way in which viewers encounter the departed celebrity. With the holographic technology, nobody is expecting a real revival of Teng's biological body. Instead, it is the live

performance of Teng's digital double that produces embodied emotional consequences. Moreover, the performance also serves as a form of storage for integrating the past and present time and memory for which the digital archive stands.

5. Digital Archive and Embodied Experience

Jacques Derrida, in his "Archive Fever," traces the concept of the archive to the Greek word *arkheion*: "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded" (9). For Derrida, archives should take place in "domiciliation," a place that "marks this institutional passage from the private to the public" (10). In digital culture, however, one notices the disappearance of a concrete place for archival storage. All the documents, including words, images, sounds, and times, are reduced to the information unit of bits of data and therefore become "archivally encodable" (Ernst 83). The essence of the structure of the digital archive, as Wolfgang Ernst has argued, "is less the archived material per se than a dynamic conception of the idea of the archive" (83). It echoes what Baron has termed the "archive effect." Viewers usually encounter archives in an implicit way, in which the archival information has been remediated after a series of digital data processing techniques and consequently differs from its original presentation. However, the consciousness of the archival is still inherent in such artifacts, as shown in Digital Domain's digitalization of Teng's image.

Unlike the traditional understanding of archives that always indexes the past, digital archives feature a blurring of the distinction between the past and the present. In his introduction to a volume of Wolfgang Ernst's essays on his media archaeological approach to understanding technical media, Jussi Parikka comments that "the materialist media grounding of contemporary archives [engages] not only with images and sounds but nowadays increasingly with software-

based cultural memory. The issue of digital memory is then less a matter of representation than of how to think through the algorithmic calculation-based ontology of a memory” (9). Lev Manovich has also argued that in the era of new media, “a computer database becomes a new metaphor that we use to conceptualize individual and collective cultural memory, a collection of documents or objects, and other phenomena and experiences” (214). In the thinking of Ernst and Manovich, the digital archive (usually in the form of computer database) serves as storage not only for the subjective experience and memory but also for the objective time. With its attachment to nostalgic memories, the holographic image transcoded from the digital archive can be understood as the crystal-image, where “the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image” (Deleuze 69). For Deleuze, what is actual always exists in the present at the level of perception whilst the virtual is from the past and ready to be actualized. The crystal-image is a representation of the splitting of time in the dynamic circuit of the present and the past. As viewers, we are standing outside time, seeing the past survive and be preserved in the present. In other words, the subjective memory anchored in Teng’s holographic images is reduced to the objective time in which the past and the present coexist.

While the holographic images serve as a form of storage for memories, it is the live performance that actually realizes the embodied experience of affect moments. Diana Taylor’s paradigm of scenarios helps to frame performance in its relationship with the archive. According to Taylor, the scenario features not only “narrative and plot” as usually theorized in literary and film analysis but also the “milieux and corporeal behaviors” (28). “Like other forms of transmission,” scenarios “allow commentators to historicize specific practices” (31) drawing from the modes of the archive and the repertoire, which respectively encapsulate “supposedly enduring materials (i.e. texts, documents, buildings, bones)” and “the so-called ephemeral . . . embodied

practice/knowledge (i.e. spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (19). The holographic performance, as a combination of enduring materials and embodied practice/knowledge, enables the process of selection, transmission, memorization, or internalization.

In Teresa Teng’s holographic performance, if considering her visual images drawn from those archival footage enduring materials, the sound and voice in her performance can be seen as the embodied practice that carries the “readily-assumable attitude and style” and produces the “real” emotional consequences. As I mentioned before, Benjamin associates the authenticity of a photographic image with its physical duration. Then how about music? Does music have aura that requires the audience to be there and be at the moment? Before the existence of sound recording, as Aden Evens argues, “music drew its meaning from its surroundings, connecting to the lives of listeners and connecting them to the time and place of the music’s production” (8). However, according to Evens, the recording technologies have made it possible to isolate the musical work of art from its original social contexts and consequently, music is given meaning through interpretation rather than experience of the world (8). The contradiction between recorded music and live music, in the case of Teng’s virtual performance, alters to the contradiction between original voice and simulated voice. When the holographic figure is performing on the stage, it is the invisible imitator whose voice really being heard. For one thing, compared to re-creating a digital avatar with physical likeness, it is easier to find a voice similar to Teng’s. For another, sonic memories can better generate the affective experience which, according to Steve Goodman, due to two sonic effects in relation to *déjà-vu*: “the effect of a sound triggering a memory of another sonic time and place, and the effect of mentally produced sounds conjuring up imagined experiences” (151). That is to say, whether the voice is authentic or not does not matter, it is the musical sound associated with the voice that stimulates the memory and connects the past to the present. The

authenticity of music, same as the holographic image, is a consequence of the materiality of affect, rather than the materiality of Teng's biological voice.

The artifacts of digital archives are not only nostalgic but also performative as a way of generating embodied experience. Diana Taylor argues that "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called 'twice-behaved behavior'" (2-3). In Schechner's description, "twice-behaved behaviors," or "restored behaviors," are "physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first time; that are prepared or rehearsed" (*Performance* 29). Like the archival materials, behaviors can also be "stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed" (Schechner, *Between* 36). In contrast to Schechner's claim of restored behavior as the main characteristic of performance, Peggy Phelan considers "liveness" to be the ontology of performance, as she contends: "performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (146). Due to its unreproducible attribute, Phelan believes that "performance's being . . . becomes itself through disappearance" (146). We should be aware that Phelan's notion of performance is temporal, ephemeral, and nonrepresentational; it is unmediated and only continues in the audience's memory after disappearing. Nonetheless, Teng's hologram performance does not fit into this structure, since the act of mediation has been preset in her virtual body on stage.

Phelan's argument has been challenged by scholars like Philip Auslander, who refuses to "place live performance and mediatized or technologized forms in direct opposition to one another" (*Liveness* 45). Liveness is usually a concept linked with embodiment, while disembodiment is considered its opposite. The holographic resurrection of Teng undoubtedly challenges such

conceptualizations: virtual Teng's digitized and disembodied performance engenders an immersive interaction with the audience and therefore produces an archival affect based on the lived experience of her avatar. According to Benjamin, the cult of "remembrance of dead or absent loved ones" is associated with the cult value of the object (27). Rather than the exhibition value, a sense of cult value is emphasized in Teng's avatar performance, which requires "being there" rather than "being seen."

In Jay Chou's virtual duet with Teng, presence and absence coexist: the corporeal absence of Teng coexists with the corporeal presence of Chou while the digital double of Teng coexists with the corporeal presence of the audience. The digital double of Teng is performing at the façade of "Red Dust Inn" on the center of the stage, with Chou standing at the edge of the stage some distance away. Due to the murky stage lighting, it is difficult to determine who is real and who is virtual in a full shot from the back. The camera cuts between the medium shot of Teng and the old audiences in the auditorium, who are almost moved to tears. In some shots, Chou's body is superimposed with Teng's digital body, creating the effect that they are interacting with each other at a close distance. When juxtaposed against the live bodies, the virtual body, as Steve Dixon has contended, "operates as an index, as another trace and representation of the always already physical body" so that "audiences cognitively and empathetically perceive the performing virtual human body as always already embodied material flesh" (215). Dixon discloses the indexical relationship between the physical body and its digital double, which makes the lived virtual performance an embodied experience. Other than that, the consciousness of temporality and memory carried in the "soul" of the digital body also contributes to such embodied experience. Understood in this way, liveness and presence in their relations with performance are built primarily around audiences' affective experience. Auslander therefore articulates a useful definition: "Liveness does not inhere

in a technological artifact or its operations—it results from our engagement with it and our willingness to bring it into full presence for ourselves” (“Digital Liveliness” 8).

6. Conclusion

The replication and “revival” of the real human body is an old human desire and a topic of much discussion for ethicists and scientists, as well as for cultural analysts and historians. In the entertainment industry, such desire has transferred into technological attempts to not just retell the historical story but also to recall the emotions attached to the specific figure. Among the holographic visualizations I have discussed, Hatsune Miku and Luo Tianyi are “fan-created” and digital-only cartoon virtual sensations who are permanently updating; the animated stereoscopic projections of K-pop idols are designed to physiologically replace the actual human in order to create intimate illusions. In contrast, the virtual human figure of Teresa Teng signifies as both nostalgic re-creation and sentimental embodiment; her social-cultural values, on the other hand, have been recontextualized by using the archive as an encodable apparatus. The transformative nature of the digital archive creates effects and affects by unifying the past and present in its algorithm-based and culturally-rich memory.

While analogue photography provides a 2D view of a 3D object, the hologram instead shows an attempt to break free from the restriction of a flat screen and displays the 2D image of an object in the 3D form, but “Why would the simulacrum with three dimensions be closer to the real than the one with two dimensions?” (Baudrillard 107). By pondering this question, Baudrillard suggests that the hologram is not real but hyperreal. As he explains, “the third dimension is only the imaginary of a two-dimensional world” (107). The extra dimension by default does not add to the realness of a holographic projection, but it can lead to an embodied experience since the two-

dimensional image has been transformed into a three-dimensional performance. By exhibiting vivid movements and enchanting melodies of the virtual body in real time and space, the hologram performance mediates the audience's perception of a lived performance and thus reconfigures their affective relations with the simulacrum as if its actual body was revived. In 2018, in their collaboration with Prism Entertainment and the Teresa Teng Foundation, Digital Domain designed a fully holographic concert entitled "Teresa Teng: The Legend" in Hangzhou, China. By adopting the form of a musical stage-show, the show fully immersed audiences in the holographic and panoramic stage, providing an experience of real-time interaction with Teng's digital double. More importantly, this virtual concert made Teng's unfulfilled wish of singing on the soil of mainland China come true. Although not in her own voice, the enchanting melodies stored in Teng's virtual body are transmitted "live" across spatial-temporal boundaries.

This chapter, in part, is a reprint of the material entitled "Disembodied Performance, Embodied Archive: Reviving Teresa Teng in Hologram," as it appears in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 53, No. 6, 2020, pp. 1435–1455. The dissertation author was the primary author of this paper.

CHAPTER 3

Intimacy with the Disembodied: On/Off-Screen Spectators in Chinese Reality Talent TV Shows

1. Introduction

I once had a conversation with a friend about the preference of a live concert. She said that compared to a live experience, she would prefer to sit in a cozy chair and put on her headphones to enjoy CD-quality music without external disturbances. I am the opposite. For me, being surrounded by thrilled people who are screaming and crying for their beloved idols on the stage would bring me much more excitement. At that moment, a feeling of intimacy with the performers would reach its peak even though often I could neither hear nor see them clearly from the back of auditorium. Our opposite approaches manifest a volatile relationship between lived experience and the experience of embodiment. In my previous chapter, I concluded that embodiment does not necessarily relate to the physical experience of liveness and can be the audience's emotional and cognitive engagement with the performance from a mediated environment. This argument seems conflict with my personal preference for going to live concerts. However, considering that not everyone has the chance to do so, a physically absent viewing experience of a performance on a screen is one of the most common activities in our daily lives.

Whereas a live concert is primarily held for live audiences, a reality TV show is produced for television and internet audiences, and simultaneously allows a limited number of live spectators. My focus in this chapter is Chinese reality talent shows, a genre that developed from television to internet and has boomed in the digital era. In media and cultural studies, there is a rich body of studies on the relationship between (on-screen) performers and (off-screen) spectators. Yet the element of on-screen spectators has long been neglected in the existing scholarship. In a live show,

the screen is usually a part of the stage setting and allows audiences to better observe the performance in close-up or medium shots. The screen here, however, does not serve as a physical barrier that separates performers from spectators like a TV screen or computer screen usually does. It instead brings the two sides closer by blurring the boundary between a live and a mediated environment. Sometimes, the live audiences will be included as a part of the performance on the screen, indicating that the position of the performer and the spectator can be switched. Jacques Rancière names the spectator in this transferrable relationship “the emancipated spectator,” as he writes,

“Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts. She observes, selects, compares, interprets.” (13)

Francesco Casetti, from a similar perspective, points out that an audience is also a performer since “to watch a movie has become a performance” (13). Casetti further suggests several practices of vision in terms of how the audiences engage the film cognitively, emotionally, technologically, and sensorily, etc. Same as watching a movie, watching a reality show also requires certain aspects of engagement. Different from a movie, however, a reality show is usually a hybrid media form encompassing the elements of cinematic techniques and stage performance, in which the spectator not only participates as an outsider, but also plays a role in the narrative of the show. In other words, the spectator performance is realized in making and remaking the show, which constitute multiple practices onscreen and off.

As a subgenre of the reality TV show, the talent show firstly emerged in 2001 when British ITV created the music competition show *Pop Idol*, a show that elected the best young singer based on viewer voting. This television format, which required viewer participation, quickly became an international TV franchise and spawned similar shows in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as all over the non-Anglophone world. It hit the Chinese market in the beginning of 2004 when Hunan satellite TV launched *Super Girl (Chaoji Nvsheng)*, a singing contest for female contestants. The program's impact was limited to Hunan province in its first season; it was not until its second season in March 2005 that *Super Girl* achieved nationwide attention. By the middle of this season, *Super Girl* became one of the most watched television entertainment shows in mainland China, with tens of millions of viewers. It attracted more than 120,000 applicants during the preliminary selection rounds, which were held in the five provinces of China. The regional preliminaries were followed by a weekly broadcast knockout competition. Viewers called in to vote for their favorite contestants and the votes directly determined the survival contestants and their rankings. The three finalists: Chris Lee (Li Yuchan), Jane Zhang (Zhang Liangying), and Zhou Bichang are the most successful singers from the 2005 season of *Super Girl* and they are still active in the entertainment industry nearly two decades later.

The term for talent show in Chinese is *xuanxiu*, a concept that originated in the Qing Dynasty. Then, *xuanxiu* refers to the selection of young unmarried girls as *xiunu* (elegant women) for the court as either maids or concubines. While the process of *xuanxiu* in ancient China was dominated by the court and the emperor, its contemporary variant is a democratic competition that invites perspectives from both the judges and the viewers. The viewers actively participate in this event as they can not only contribute to the elevation of the finalists, but also demystify the process of how an ordinary person transforms into a celebrity. Since *Super Girl* became a hit, Hunan and

other satellite TV stations in Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu provinces have released other reality TV shows such as *Super Boy*, *My Hero*, *My Show*, *Jueduichangxiang*, and *The Voice of China*.⁵⁴ Since 2015, with the rise of digital streaming platforms such as Tencent Video, iQIYI, Youku, and Mango TV, talent reality TV shows have become a large portion of the Chinese entertainment industry and cover a broader range of performance formats including rapping (e.g.: *The Rap of China*), dancing (e.g., *Street Dance of China*), operatic and classical singers (e.g., *Super-Vocal*), idol groups (e.g., *Idol Producer*, *Produce 101 China*), and bands (e.g., *The Big Band*), etc. Online streaming platforms have also altered the ways in which audiences participate in those shows, as they are no longer restricted by broadcasting schedules or a single media format.

In the past two decades, Chinese reality talent shows have gone from producing singers to producing idols, as well as recycling celebrities. On top of the influence from trendy reality shows around the world, the shift from the television age to the digital age has also significantly contributed to this evolution. In this chapter, rather than tracing the genealogy of Chinese reality talent shows, I will focus on three specific cases: 2005 *Super Girl* by Hunan satellite TV, *The Coming One* Season 1 (2017) by Tencent Video, and *Idol Producer* Season 1 (2018) by iQIYI. Each of these three programs represents a format revolution in terms of the engagement of the spectators. Yet no matter how the format changes, the stage performance always remains the spotlight for both the on- and off-screen audiences. The digital screen displays the (quasi-)live performance of stage performance while the stage performance is mediated as a story-within-the-story, a film-within-the-film. On top of that, the “reality” part of the show also stands out in terms of weaving the narrative around the personality of a performer.

⁵⁴ In 2021, however, China’s National Radio and Television Administration called for boycotts over effeminate male idols in Chinese reality shows. It caused the suspension of shows such as *Youth With You* (sequential seasons of *Idol Producer*).

Narrative, according to Gérard Genette, can refer to three different concepts. First, narrative simply means the narrative statement, or the discourses that tell a story. Second, narrative can be “the succession of events,” and the subjects “to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc.” that are studied “without regard to the medium, linguistic or other.” Last, narrative refers to someone recounting an event, or the act of narrating (25-6). The study of narrative discourse, as Genette further illustrates, is the study of the three aspects of narrative: *story* (“the signified or narrative content”), *narrative* (“the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself”), and *narrating* (“the producing narrative action” and “the whole of the real or the fictional situation in which that action takes place”) (27).

Based on Genette’s definition, Tom Gunning rearticulates that film’s narrative discourse is the interrelation of the three levels of “the pro-filmic, the enframed image, and the process of editing” (395). The pro-filmic refers to everything placed in front of the camera to be filmed. It “embodies a series of choices and reveals a narrative intention behind the choices”. The spectator “receives the results of these choices and makes references based on them” (396). The result of these choices is called the enframed image. It embodies the effects of perspective, selection of camera distance and angle, framing for composition, etc. “Whether on a conscious or preconscious level the viewer recognizes the construction of the image as a powerful narrative cue” (396). Editing, at last, deals with the difference between the temporal order of narrative discourse and that of the story (reality). These three levels of narrative discourse, according to Gunning, constitute the narrator system of a film (398).

Drawing from the tradition of literature and multiple visual arts, David Bordwell approaches narrative from three different aspects: representation, structure, and narration. In film theory, to be specific, whether cinema can be seen as a physical representation of the real world

has been studied since Kracauer and Bazin, and has raised another round of debate at the dawn of the digital age. Film structure, on the other hand, refers to the story or plot of a movie. It usually depicts the layout of a filmic text without considering the spectators' participation. Narration, however, indicates a dynamic process of "selecting, arranging, and rendering story material" (xi Bordwell) that leads to specific effects on the spectators. Drawing upon the Aristotelian distinction of telling and showing, Bordwell, in his *Narration in the Fiction Film*, provides us with two modes of narration: mimetic and diegetic. Mimetic theory believes that "an object of perception is presented to the eye of the beholder" and highlights changes in the representational practices as seen in Greek art and theatre, as well as Renaissance arts (4). Diegetic theory, on the other hand, brings out linguistic activity as the master system of the narration. Whereas the diegetic approach foregrounds how enunciation creates the utterance, the mimetic approach centralizes the concept of perspective, or point of view, as a storytelling device. In Greek painting, for example, Athenian artists would "calculate visual spectacle in relation to the spectator's sight" as reflected in the conception of "central linear perspective" (4). To some extent, Bordwell's notion of narration encompasses all three levels of narrative discourse in Gunning's discussion. In other words, narration for Bordwell not only involves the transferring process from the pro-filmic to the enframed image, but also forms certain perspective through editing.

Here, I want to expand Gunning and Bordwell's adoption of narrative theory in film studies, to the study of the reality TV. Paralleling reality TV to film manifests its characteristic as cinematic apparatus, especially in terms of its storytelling and aesthetics. Moreover, in a reality show the interaction between the performer and the spectator is often emphasized in its narrative discourse, since the spectator not only engages with the narrative discourse cognitively and emotionally, but also becomes a part of the narration both on and off the screen. By framing the roles of spectator

in the three levels of narrative discourse, namely, the pro-filmic, the enframed image, and the editing, I will analyze how a spectator, either as a signifier or a signified, mediates the narration in three of Chinese reality talent shows: 2005's *Super Girl*, 2017's *The Coming One*, and 2018's *Idol Producer*.

2. Reality TV, Point of View, and Media Spectacle: 2005 *Super Girl* as an Example

The year 2005 is the *xuanxiu* genesis of China. *Super Girl* called forth the revolution to the Chinese entertainment industry as it exhibited how an ordinary girl grows into a superstar over several months. The *xuanxiu* wave brought by *Super Girl* rewrote the history of Chinese television with a new paradigm of participatory culture. Before going into detail about the relationship between television narrative and participatory culture, I will briefly introduce the development of the post-Mao Chinese media industry and fan culture in its relation to the variety TV programs.

In 1990, in collaboration with The Charoen Pokphand Group Company, Ltd. based in Thailand, China Central Television (CCTV) produced “Zhengda Variety Show (*zhengda zongyi*)”. The advent of “Zhengda Variety Show” marked that China’s television industry had gradually integrated global television formats⁵⁵ and demonstrated a growing amount of grassroots-oriented entertaining content. Especially after the twenty-first century, the convergence of mobile, satellite TV, print media, and the internet has established the infrastructure for individualized and participatory interactions between audiences and TV programs. From the 1990s to the 2000s, in addition to “Zhengda Variety Show”, CCTV also produced other variety programs like “Quyuan Carlo (*Quyuan Zatan*)”, “Lucky 52 (*Xingyun 52*)”, and “Quiz Show (*Kaixin Cidian*)”, among

⁵⁵ For example, the show integrates elements such as a theme song, VCR, and puzzle quiz, features that used to only appear in foreign or *gangtai* variety shows.

others. Those programs made CCTV the most-viewed channel in China until provincial satellite television (PSTV) became available to audiences nationwide. CCTV's dominance in variety TV programs was challenged after Hunan Satellite TV's *Super Girl* went viral. *Super Girl*'s finale even reached 11.75% in its viewing rate, demonstrating the regional television station's triumph over CCTV (Meng 261). For *Super Girl*, the audiences' participation in the judging process through SMS voting was considered a trailblazer for cultural democracy. Besides, the national craze for the champion, Li Yuchun, also invoked the demand for democratic expression. In this singing contest show, Li's singing skill was not as outstanding as the other two contestants, Zhou Bichang and Zhang Liangying. However, her androgynous style and personality opened new possibility for gender representation. As well as becoming the champion of a talent show, Li was also selected as a cultural icon whose public image raised the debate on the notion of femininity in contemporary China.

As scholars point out, the Chinese media industry experienced two stages of major transformation in the post-Mao era: from the 1980s to the early 1990s, the media sector gradually entered the full-scale commercialization stage as a result of the market-oriented economic reform; then, starting from the late 1990s, the government initiated a series of policies to nurture a handful of media conglomerates in terms of their business expansion (Meng 262). Following the collapse of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China started to build contacts with the outside world in the 1980s. As a result, the trend of *gangtai*⁵⁶ music and movies were a massive hit Chinese audiences and nurtured the first generation of fans in China. Teresa Teng, Chow Yun-Fat, Leslie Cheung, Cui Jian, etc., quickly occupied people's everyday lives through radio, television, and

⁵⁶ *Gangtai* refers to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

video halls. However, fans at this time did not evolve into fan communities we are familiar with today, because their communication with the media was merely one-directional.

The development of fan culture has accelerated since the establishment of online forums such as Tianya Club and Baidu Post Bar (*tieba*).⁵⁷ The Post Bar provides its users with a virtual community to interact socially with each other, build emotional connections, and organize off-line events. At around the same time, Japan and South Korea's idol culture brought enormous impact to Chinese fan groups. As a result, fan groups in China started to form organized communities under unified names, as well as use certain fan chants and fan paraphernalia that identifying their associations with the celebrity. For example, Li Yuchun's fans call themselves "Yumi," meaning "corn kernel," a portmanteau for her given name Yuchun and the Chinese word for "fan (*mi* in Chinese)." During performances, audiences would call out Li Yuchun's name as a way of showing support. They also designed slogans and fanchants such as "*chaonu shidai, yuchun zuishuai* (Yuchun is the best in the *Super Girl* Era)," "*Yuchun wukequdai, yumi wuchubuzai* (Yuchun is irreplaceable, Yumi is everywhere)," and "*Yumi bupa lei, xiaoyu zui zhengui* ([We] Yumi are not tired because Yuchun is worth our love)." Those slogans usually manifest the fans' intimate bonding with, as well as unconditional support for their idols. Compared to general audiences, a fan audience demonstrates much more emotional and financial investment in the show. Beyond the role of consumers, their presence is also emphasized in the narration of the reality TV.

Reality TV, as defined by Laurie Ouellette and Susan Murray, is "an unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real" (Murray and Ouellette 3). Regardless of its various formats and subgenres, the unscripted access to "real people" and "real

⁵⁷ Tianya Club was founded in 1999, Baidu *tieba* was established in 2003. They are two of the most popular online platforms in China.

life” has distinguished the reality TV from other fictional television programs and made it desirable. However, in an era in which the distinction between reality and fiction collapses,⁵⁸ the audiences are aware that even a reality TV also contains “fictional” elements. As indicated in a 2005 Associated Press/*TV Guide* poll, over 70 percent of participants “did not believe reality TV was real, but they also didn’t care that much” (Murray and Ouellette 8). Under this circumstance, Ouellette and Murray also point out that “reality TV provides a multilayered viewing experience that hinges on culturally and politically complex notions of what is real and what is not...Further [it] complicates text-based notions of meaning and truth” (8). While an unscripted program is usually the selling point for the reality TV, it is the audiences’ activities and practices that actually call people’s attention and impact the narrative of the TV program. More than a text-based narrative that shows “the real,” the television narrative here emphasizes the visual narration which involves the spectators’ point of view.

For *Super Girl*, “authentic” personalities and storytelling are definitely its selling point. On top of that, “mass entertainment” instead of “competitiveness” has become the primary focal point of the program. *Super Girl* has double narrative events to reflect both selling points: one is the advertisement of “*xiangchang jiuchang* (singing whenever and whatever you want)” from the contestants’ perspective. Another one is the mechanism of voting from the spectators’ perspective. Although entering the narrator system at different stages, the two storylines both contribute to the narrative discourse of the program, like two compatible vanishing points of a picture. The coexistence of the two narrative threads echoes Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia,” which describes the coexistence of various languages (aka points of view) within a language in a text. The program of *Super Girl* mingles the points of view from both the contestants and the (on-screen)

⁵⁸ For more discussion on the blurring of the boundary between reality and fiction, see Chapter 2.

spectators, usually through intensive visual languages, such as the switches of shots between the performance and the auditorium. As a result, the boundary between viewing and performing is blurred, and the point of view on both sides keep evolving and influencing each other.

At the preliminary selection stage, the auditions were recorded and broadcasted on TV barely with editing. It provided the (off-screen) audiences an “unmediated, voyeuristic, and yet often playful look” (Murray and Ouellette 5). At this stage, however, the television audiences objectified the players at a distance without much emotional and financial investment. When it came to the weekly knockout competition, the audiences were called in to vote for their favorite players. More than showing support, the votes significantly determine the outcome of the competition. The weakest two — as voted by the judges and the audiences’ weekly SMS votes — faced off in *PK* (player killing). At *PK*, a group of “non-professional judges” composed of audiences and previous contestants would vote out one contestant. Starting from the regional “20 into 10 knock-out” competition, the professional judges were no longer the only audiences the contestants would face when performing. A limited number of fans as well as the contestants’ friends and families were invited to watch the live show. Furthermore, the show also began to alter its stage setting and storyline to emphasize the increasing interaction between the fan-spectators and the performers. With the on-screen audiences entering the narrator system, the prior narrative discourse reorients from “the ordinary girls chasing dreams” to “mass participation and entertainment.”

As Bordwell articulates, “point of view” is a storytelling device that has often been used in the mimetic mode of narration. In audiovisual media, the camera movement is the most direct technique to determine the point of view of the enframed images. During the performance in the 2005 *Super Girl*, the camera movements mainly consist of crane shots that zoom in and out,

capturing either full shots or half shots of the performers from both low and high angles. The camera's point of view does not really mimic the on-screen characters' point of view. Most of the time, it represents a third perspective that serves as the role of observation. This perspective is also that of the off-screen audiences. Here I distinguish the off-screen audiences (or television audiences) from the on-screen audiences, not only because their perspectives are different, but also because of the different roles they play in the narrative discourse of the TV program.

The television audiences are by no means passive viewers. Regardless of their visual absence in the narration of the program, they still play a role in the narrative events. For example, when the host asked the contestants "what do you want to say to your fans?" the "fans" in this context refer to both the on- and off-screen fans. Moreover, different from the film viewers, a reality TV show is able to include the viewers as characters in its performance. At this time, the spectators, especially fan-spectators are also performers. Their performance becomes a media spectacle that embodies "affective economics." Spectacle is first of all a visual phenomenon that involves an aesthetic dimension. In addition to that, French theorist Guy Debord coins the concept "society of spectacle," to interpret *spectacle* as the "social relation between people that is mediated by images" (7). Built on Debord's explanation of society of spectacle, Douglas Kellner further comes up with the notion of "media spectacle," which as he illustrates, is special spectacle that media constructs out of ordinary and habitual daily routine. In contemporary high-tech and media-driven society, media events and rituals of consumption, entertainment, and competition have usually been conducted in a spectacular form in attempt to attract maximum audiences. As Kellner indicates, the Olympic Games, the Oscars, and U.S. presidential elections are all examples of media spectacles.

“Affective economics” is a concept developed by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture*. As a configuration of marketing theory, affective economics “seeks to understand the emotional underpinnings of consumer decision-making as a driving force behind viewing and purchasing decisions” (Jenkins 61-62). Using *American Idol* as an example, Jenkins points out that affective economics heavily influences reality TV, since “the fan community of certain cult television shows may gain greater influence over programming decisions” (62).

Super Girl is the first reality TV show in China that demonstrates affective economics in association with the fan culture. Referring to its narrative discourse, *Super Girl* not only integrates the voting mechanism into its program strategy, but also promotes the audiences’ performance on the editing level. Different from regular TV programs, the fan-spectators for *Super Girl* are equipped with props that clearly indicate their association with the contestants on stage. Their fan identities are embodied via sweeps of uncontrolled screaming and loud chants, as well as wavy colored banners, light name boards, and other fan paraphernalia. Sometimes the camera quickly captures the auditorium in full shots, presenting the fan groups as a collective spectacle. Sometimes the frame is cut to a close-up of an individual spectator’s facial expression, facilitating an emotional resonance between the on-screen and off-screen audiences. Sometimes the fans’ off-screen screaming is displayed as extra-diegetic sound in supplement to the stage performance, documenting an authentic and timely interaction between the performers and the spectators. The selection of camera movements in *Super Girl* exhibits the on-screen spectator as narrative cue, as a self-reflexive medium bonding the on-stage performers with the off-screen spectators.

3. The Unseen Idol on the Stage: 2017 *The Coming One*

Super Girl has provided a visual narration mode that features the spectators as both the performers and spectacle on the screen, a mode that has been widely seen in the global reality TV shows, including other *xuanxiu* programs in China in the following years. The production of *Super Girl* was inspired by the concept from Western TV shows such as *Pop Idol* and *American Idol*. With the word “idol” in their titles, those shows aimed to select the best new pop singer as a combined decision from the vocal judges and viewers’ votes. It was the same for *Super Girl*, whose competition criteria was based on the contestants’ singing performance. However, after seeing the enormous profits brought by the business model invented by the J-Pop and K-Pop industries, Chinese *xuanxiu* programs started to seek a new way to better exploit the affective economics brought by the fan community.

The first step is to reconsider the definition of “idol” and its associated fan culture in an Asian context. Developed from its English origin “idol,” the Japanese word アイドル (*aidoru*) is used to describe specific celebrities who are marketed for their image, attractiveness, and personality. An *aidoru* is usually associated with certain portrayed persona, affiliated agency, and music style. *Aidoru* industry firstly emerged in post-war Japan, when Japanese American Johnny Kitagawa founded the talent agency “Johnny & Associates,” and launched his first boy band, “Johnny’s” in 1962. Entering the 1980s, the popularization of television had made visual component an important consideration to the enjoyment of *aidoru* music. As a result, *aidoru* singers began to appear in commercials and television dramas. With the emergence of internet culture at the end of the 1990s, Japan’s *aidoru* industry has crossed over media and even impacted the ACG subculture (anime, comic, and game). In Asia, Japanese *aidoru* industry has also been used as a model for other pop idol industry, such as K-Pop. Modern K-Pop music has undergone

significant growth since they expanded to other Asian and global market. The idol production under this mode highly relies on, as well as caters to fan activities.

Entering the digital era, the Chinese pop idol industry has become divided, with traditional broadcasting TV continuing to make singing-competition shows (e.g.: *Sing! China* from Zhejiang TV, and *Sing My Song* from CCTV, etc.) while the rising online video platforms attempt to explore new possibilities of idol production that align with the uniqueness of Asian pop culture. YouKu, iQIYI, and Tencent Video are the top 3 online video platforms in this digital *xuanxiu* war. Compared to traditional reality talent TV shows, online *xuanxiu* programs are more audience-oriented since they can take advantage of the digital distributive process and China's substantial fan base developed from J-pop and K-pop fan culture. In 2017 summer, Tencent Video broadcasted the first season of *The Coming One (Mingri Zhizi)* on its platform. Aiming to reflect the diverse tastes of contemporary young people for "idols," this reality show uses music to open up three unique panels: "Prosperity Beauty (*Shengshi Meiyuan*)," "Prosperity Magic Sound (*Shengshi Moyin*)," and "Prosperity Unique Show (*Shengshi Duxiu*)." Each panel features a celebrity commentator as the "star promoter (*xing tuiguan*)." They select contestants to join their panels, and compete for the Nine Labels (*Changpai*) to represent nine unique idol styles.

The Coming One shows Tencent's attempt to reach wider audience groups by incorporating subcultural elements that appeal to the young generation. One of the significant changes it has made is to include HeZ, a virtual idol in the competition. As I mentioned in the last chapter, before HeZ, China already promoted the virtual idol such as Luo Tianyi, who was inspired by Japanese vocaloid character Hatsune Miku. Both Miku and Luo Tianyi have an exceptional fan base that involves *otaku* and other audiences who admire the concept and technology represented by "virtual idols." The advent of "virtual idols" changes the way that an idol is produced, consumed, and

interacts with fans in a real-life environment. Like Miku and Tianyi, HeZ is also born from the ACG culture. Created by Tianjin Whalesong Information Technology Company, HeZ is an 18-year-old male vocaloid boy with a persona that loves singing, dancing, and eating snacks. He has a tail that serves as a plug he can use to recharge. His name refers to the 52-HeZ whale, whose pitch is at a higher frequency than that of other whale species.

The idea of presenting a virtual character in a reality TV show challenges the principle of “reality.” Yet it opens up the discussion of how to narrate an “unseen” performer to the audiences. In *The Coming One*, HeZ’s presentation is multi-dimensional. When he firstly showed up in the Episode 3, HeZ was presented in 2D form as if he was an anime character on the screen. In the Episode 6, HeZ first appeared onstage via AR (augmented reality) technology. While hologram technology (or VR technology) presents the virtual character in the 3D form that can be directly perceived by human eyes, AR is able to add 3D digital images to a live view through the operation of a camera. Technically, the AR images can only be perceived through the camera lens, not in a real-life environment. As it implied in *The Coming One*, the live audiences including the staff could not see HeZ when his image appeared vividly on the stage for the off-screen audiences. The conflict between “seeing” and “unseeing,” “virtuality” and “reality” drives the narrative of the show to its climax.

While the holographic performance of Teresa Teng attempts to create a 3D illusion that blurs the boundary between the virtual and the real, *The Coming One* tends to reveal such boundary in its narration. In the Episode 7, one of the star promoters, Xue Zhiqian, reemphasized the unfairness of allowing a virtual idol to compete with real people. When HeZ was “performing” on the stage, Xue Zhiqian moved behind the cameraman, trying to follow the camera’s point of view as it projected the AR image on the screen (figure 15).



Figure 15: Xue Zhiqian (the farthest right) follows the camera's PoV during HeZ's performance in *The Coming One*, ep. 7.

By following the PoV shot of the camera, Xue attempted to acquire a mediated perspective that resembled the one shared by the off-screen audiences. Compared to the off-screen audiences, whose perspective is mediated by the screen, live audiences usually have more autonomy in perceiving the object from different perspectives. The AR technology, however, favors the off-screen perspectives in terms of generating a consistent and embodied viewing experience. As part of the narrative discourse, the on-screen audiences have to perform as if they can “see” the virtual performer. For example, in the Episode 6, HeZ's star promoter Hua Chenyu for the first time came to the stage to interact with him, as if HeZ was really standing next to him.

In a global context, AR technology widely entered the public awareness through Pokémon Go, a mobile game released in 2016, which used mobile devices with GPS and AR+ mode to capture and battle virtual Pokémon in a real-life environment. After the debate was raised by HeZ for the reality TV show, there has been an increasing application of AR technology for virtual idols' stage performance. At first, AR was thought of as a similar technology to VR or hologram. Compared to VR, AR in fact breaks the physical boundary with a more immersive extension of the space. As for the virtual idol, AR enables them a 360-degree presence for off-screen audiences.

In 2018 JSTV New Year’s Eve Concert, the virtual idol Luo Tianyi was invited for a duet performance of “Let It Go” with the real-life singer Zhou Huajian. In the following year, Luo appeared in JSTV New Year’s Eve Concert again, to perform “*Dalabengba*” with Xue Zhiqian (figure 16). A fan-made video of the live performance was uploaded to Bilibili the next day of the concert, on which Xue Zhiqian was the only character on the stage singing with the “unseen” performer Luo Tianyi (figure 17). Be it HeZ or Luo Tianyi, their 3D presence in AR demonstrates that the disembodied performance could lead to an embodied intimacy. Different from Teresa Teng’s holographic performance, of which the sense of intimacy originates from its embedded cultural memory, intimacy with the virtual idol results from their representation of technological incarnation.



Figure 16: Xue Zhiqian’s duet performance with the virtual idol Luo Tianyi on 2019 JSTV NYE Concert.



Figure 17: The fan-made video of Zhiqian’s live performance with the virtual idol Luo Tianyi on 2019 JSTV NYE Concert, in which the image of Luo does not exist.

4. PoV Shot and Reaction Effect: 2018 *Idol Producer*

In addition to “media spectacle” and “performer,” the spectator also plays the role of interpreter. As demonstrated by the self-recorded video of Xue Zhiqian and Luo Tianyi’s duet performance on Bilibili, the TV producer no longer has full dominance over its program. Video-sharing platforms like Bilibili provide online audiences with a locale to share, interpret, and even recreate the audiovisual content from different perspectives other than the mainstream television narrative.

Since *The Coming One*, the Chinese digital platform has shown its ambition in copying the success of K-pop idol industry, because their reality TV shows such as *Produce 101* has already had its fan base in Chinese market. In 2018, iQIYI released *Idol Producer (Ouxiang lianxisheng)*, a reality boy group talent show that was inspired by *Produce 101*. Using a similar system, the program of *Idol Producer* selected 100 trainees from Asian entertainment companies and talent agencies. The trainees would be evaluated multiple times and eliminated by the audience’s votes,

until the last nine debuted as a boy group. Instead of professional judges, *Idol Producer* features pop mentors who instruct the trainees but cannot decide the outcome of the competition. With the promotion of the concept of “mass producer,” the fan-spectators’ viewing experience is centered at the narrator system. A distinct example is the frequent use of point-of-view shots and single takes in the filming process. In Episode 11, the mentor Lay Zhang had a stage collaboration with selected trainees. This 4-minutes performance was presented in one take with all the cameras’ point-of-view shots, aiming to create an engaging viewing experience for online audiences.

Despite the fact that camera movements prioritize the online (aka. off-screen) audiences’ perspective, the on-screen perspective still serves as a narrative cue in terms of engaging the audiences. On top of the auditorium audiences, the trainees’ and mentors’ perspectives are also recorded. In *Idol Producer*, there are two green rooms⁵⁹ for the trainees and mentors in which to watch the live performance. Their reaction would be recorded and played during the show, sometimes intentionally edited to interrupt the stage performance. In Episode 4, for example, Group A’s performance of the song “PPAP” includes a scene of two trainees holding their hands and moving towards each other. Considered a selling point in this episode, the scene is replayed three times with cuts of other trainees’ immediate emotional reactions (figure 18). Due to the reaction video effect,⁶⁰ watching the show becomes a collective activity.

⁵⁹ Green room here refers to the backstage where the performers relax and wait for their time to be up onstage.

⁶⁰ Reaction videos were a feature of Japanese variety show since the 1970s. Later, they began to proliferate on the YouTube as a video genre.



Figure 18: the reaction of trainees as audiences when seeing the live performance on the screen.

The reaction video effect emotionally engage the audiences, especially when they seek emotional identification in a highly individualized society. On the other hand, the fragmented narration deprioritizes the integrity and consistency of the stage performance. As the interpreter (or content-creator), audiences could remake the TV programs and share it with other people. You can easily find “chopped” or adjusted versions of the performance clips online, with such modifications as erasing the background noise, reorganizing the discontinuous narrative with clear storylines, and comparing two particular scenes within the same frame, etc. Sometimes, these

remade online videos have higher view rates than the originals, because they are customized to the needs and interests of different audience groups.

5. Conclusion

This chapter delves into the embodied viewing experience of Chinese reality talent shows. Contrasting a traditional understanding of embodiment as association with physical presence, I introduce the concept of “intimacy with the disembodied” after observing the different perspectives between the on- and off-screen audiences. While the spectators play a vital role in the narrator system as performers, media spectacle, and interpreters, “viewing” has been considered a personalized activity that can be tailored to maximize the affective economic. On iQIYI’s website for *Idol Producer*, for example, you can find the video clips focusing on each performer in a group performance. For the audiences, especially fan spectators, viewing and voting are no longer performance-oriented. The stage performance is dismantled and reassembled so that the online (off-screen) audience’s perspective is prioritized. To a large extent, off-screen audiences can have a more immersive and diverse perspective than the one who are at presence.

From *Super Girl* to *The Coming One*, to *Idol Producer*, Chinese reality talent shows have demonstrated a significant transition from producing singers to producing idols (aka *aidoru*). At the same time, the prosperity of the pop idol industry has cultivated the booming fan culture in China, which in return influences the narrative discourse of these television programs. However, different from J-Pop and K-Pop, whose idol system is well developed to be able to convert the fan culture into sustainable affective economics after the end of the show, the Chinese fan zenith usually drops after the show ends. Due to its political and social restrictions, China’s celebrity culture has been formed around professional performers rather than idol groups. Moreover, since

2017, the censorship against “over entertaining” in Chinese entertainment industry has caused suspension of a series of reality shows such as “Youth with You (*qingchun youni*).” As a result, a trend of recycling celebrities has been growing in Chinese entertainment industry recently. For example, Mango TV, Hunan Satalite TV’s online-content-platform collaborator, produced several reality shows in these two years that target millennials.⁶¹ These shows include three seasons of “Sisters Who Make Waves (*chengfengpolang de jiejie*),” and two seasons of “Call Me by Fire (*pijingzhanji de gege*)” that feature celebrities who have been in the entertainment industry for over ten years, to compete to form a performance group by the end of the show. Thinking together with the holographic performance of dead celebrity that I discussed in Chapter 2, it is noticeable that stardom and celebrity are increasingly presented as a hallucination of cultural memory, repackaged in new technology and digital media.

⁶¹ The term “Millennial” refers to the demographic cohort born between 1981 and 1996 that reached young adulthood in the early 21st century.

CHAPTER 4

Intimacy with the Dislocated: Vlogging Cinematic Shots through the Camera Eye

1. The Variants of Blog and Celebrity

In 2019, the English word “influencer” has been added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, with an additional definition as “a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media.” Earlier, the Chinese word 网红(*wang hong*) was listed as one of the Top 10 Chinese Internet Buzzwords of 2015.⁶² As the Chinese equivalence of “influencer,” *wang hong* has also been used to describe people with huge fan bases on social media, who can turn their popularity into productivity. Both the word influencer and *wang hong* are variants of “celebrity,” indicating the social media not only as display platform of their stardom, but also one of their identifying features. That is to say, while the conventional media representations of celebrity were usually associated with print media, film, and television, the emerging popularization of the influencer or *wang hong* has indicated a new type of celebrity generated from social media such as *weibo*, Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok (*douyin*).

Chris Rojek has divided celebrity status into three forms: ascribed, achieved and attributed. For Rojek, ascribed celebrity is predetermined and typically from bloodline (i.e., royalty); achieved celebrity derives from rare talents or skills (i.e., athletes and musicians); attributed celebrity is usually compressed, concentrated, and media-generated. Rojek uses the term “celetoid” to refer to the individual with attributed celebrity, who usually has a short-lived fame to the public. As the celebrity of celetoid is intimately linked to the social media, an influencer or *wang hong* has always been seeking innovative ideas to appeal to viewers or followers on the various social

⁶² The list was released by 咬文嚼字 *Yaowen Jiaozi*, a monthly Chinese linguistic journal.

media platforms, and therefore to prolong their fame in public consciousness. Serving as virtual communities and networks for information sharing and exchange, social media such as Weibo, Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok (Douyin) have not only created tremendous amounts of user-generated content, but also transformed ordinary people into celestoids. Compared to film stars and musicians, whose public persona is mainly demonstrated through their products (i.e., movies and songs), those celestoids usually rely on social media to sustain their public personae.

The paradigm of “para-social interaction” (Horton and Wohl) was first used to interpret the film and television phenomenon, but the online environment has created a new channel through which para-social interaction is formed among ordinary people. In the late 1990s, “blog” and “blogger” were coined to describe online diaries and their writers.⁶³ Yet a blog consists of more than words and images that a diary usually has: it is the sum of “writing, layout, connections and links and the pace of publication” (Rettberg 20-1). In its early years, websites such as Pitas.com, OpenDiary.com, LiveJournal.com, and Blogger.com were launched to provide services for individuals to share stories and comment on blogs. A social networking community was therefore established online, with a growing number of users joining every day. Blogs entered China in 2000 but did not receive broad attention until 2003. At the end of that year, a girl named Muzi Mei became the spotlight of controversy due to her blogs on blogcn.com, which described her sexual encounters with men. Having spotted the blog as a niche in the Chinese market, Chinese technology companies such as Sina, Tencent, Sohu, and NetEase successively released their blogging (*boke*) services in the following years.

Blogging has marked the worldwide rise of internet celebrity culture in which individual celebrity is intertwined with Internet media. Internet media is often associated with digital media

⁶³ The term “blog” was coined by Peter Merhoiz in 1999 to break the word weblog coined by Jorn Barger.

and at the same time emphasizes its reliance on Internet as communication medium. Internet media identity, I propose, can be read from two interrelated aspects. First, internet media breeds hybrid moving images. Hybrid moving images, to borrow the definition from Jihoon Kim, are “an array of impure image forms characterized by the interrelation of the material, technical, and aesthetic components of existing moving image media—namely, film, video, and the digital” (3). Kim contextualizes the emergence of hybrid moving images within “post-media condition,” in which “a media’s material and technical components” do not immediately determine “its forms and expressive possibilities” (10). Internet media works usually foster hybrid moving images by either incorporating more than two media components or converting the old media materials into digital codes. Whereas the identity of internet media is not self-determined due to its hybridization, media specificity still maintains in hybrid moving images.

From the same perspective, Rettberg suggests that “rather than looking at Internet as a single medium, it makes more sense to consider different authoring software as providing different media” (72). This leads to the second aspect of internet media identity: the difference between a genre and a medium is blurred with the internet. According to Marie-Laure Ryan, “both medium and genre exercise constraints on what kinds of stories can be told, but whereas genre is defined by more or less freely adopted conventions chosen for both personal and cultural reasons, medium imposes its possibilities and limitations on the user” (290). The hybridity of internet media, however, renders various possibility of the combination of an encoded object and the act of encoding. Blog, for example, can be categorized as either the subgenre of the text if seen as hypertext, or a sub-medium of the internet if seen as a system of organizing the text.

In his monograph *Blogging* which came out in 2008, Rettberg anticipated that even if the word “blogging” were to vanish in twenty years, the “form of personal publication, with links,

social networking and brief posts” will probably remain” (330). A decade has passed, and this form of personal publication not only remains, but permeates almost every corner of our everyday lives. From 2000 onward, new visual, aural, and literary codes have emerged and recast our sensory perceptions and technological experiences. One of the most noticeable changes is that “vlogging” has gradually replaced “blogging”. As the name indicates, “vlog” stands for “video blog” or “video log.” It is a form of blog for which the medium is video. “Vlog” can also be used as a verb, which means filming footage for one’s video blog. After YouTube was founded in 2005, vlogging saw a strong increase in its popularity. With the slogan of “Broadcast Yourself,” YouTube has created a social community for individuals to watch, upload, and comment on user-generated videos. These individuals are known as YouTubers. They operate public personas through bringing strangers together as an online family for emotional support, information exchange, and entertainment. Nowadays, being YouTuber has even become a full-time job option for people who hope that the financial incentives associated with the views of their videos have the potential to make them billionaires. Compared to text-based blogs, vlogs enable a more direct and intimate way of self-branding.

The first ever “vlog”⁶⁴ was uploaded by Jawed Karim (the co-founder of YouTube) on his channel “jawed” in April 2005. This 18-second video clip is titled “Me at the Zoo,” featuring Karim standing in front of the elephants in San Diego Zoo, making spontaneous notes directly to the camera about what is happening around him (figure 19). The transcript is as follows: “All



Figure 19: Jawed Karim is talking to the camera in his first vlog “Me at the Zoo.”

right, so here we are in front of the, uh, elephants, and the cool thing about these guys is that, is that they have really, really, really long, um, trunks, and that’s, that’s cool, and that’s pretty much all there is to say.” The whole video clip appears improvisational, with no script or editing. Karim’s monotone voice and aimless gestures in this video, nevertheless, captivated more than 160 million views on YouTube as of April 2021. “Me at the zoo” plays a crucial role in fundamentally establishing the tone for the vlog on YouTube in its early days, which is characterized by “everydayness” and “dry aesthetic” (Duplantier 122). By capturing mundane moments of his daily life and talking directly to the camera (aka. viewers), Karim not only aimed to establish an intimate

⁶⁴ While “Me at the Zoo” is considered the first vlog on YouTube. The first ever vlog online belongs to Adam Kontras, who posted a 15-second video of himself sneaking a cat into his apartment building, on January 2nd, 2000.

relationship with his viewers, but also encouraged YouTube users to broadcast themselves anytime and anywhere like he did. The amateurism of these videos, to a large extent, implies the approachability of their creators and the accessibility of creating user-generated content. Moreover, unlike a movie star whose off-screen personality does not necessarily align with their on-screen persona, a YouTube celebrity usually makes their personal lives public to display an authentic self to their viewers.

At the end of 2006, *Time* Magazine's annual Person of the Year was "You." The cover of the magazine featured an iMac computer with a reflective panel situated as the window of a YouTube-like video player. It implied that anyone who picked up the magazine would see his or her face as the content reflected on the computer screen. The tagline on the cover read, "You control the Information Age." The Information Age is primarily a consequence of the technological development which enables two-way communication. From blogging to vlogging to microblogging,⁶⁵ from Facebook (founded in 2004) to YouTube to Twitter (founded in 2006), a trend of "we media" has emerged on the internet, which demolished the centralization of information. Practically speaking, anyone and everyone can participate in and influence social media communities.

2. Regional Platforms and Interfaces

Years before the dominant of internet media, Marshall McLuhan has suggested that "the content of any medium is always another medium," and the message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (8). In other words, internet media is not something new: it is built upon the properties of old media. At the same time,

⁶⁵ Microblogging is an act of creating concise posts on social media platforms such as Twitter, Tumblr and Weibo.

since the boundary between a genre and a medium is blurred with the internet, the traditional understanding of media with respect to its forms and styles does not seem applicable anymore. Considering this, scholars have started to investigate internet media from a new perspective: platform. As Marc Steinberg and Jinying Li write, at times the term “platform” seems to “displace the word ‘media’ itself as a catch-all content-holding or content-supporting entity, before branching off into a seeming endless range of sub-uses, from automotive manufacture to computer hardware to software systems and video-sharing websites” (175). On the one hand, internet/digital media has been usually characterized by its placelessness and rootlessness. On the other hand, however, the very notion of platform “underlines its special locality in both conceptual and metaphorical senses”. Such consideration reconfigures our understanding of digital media not only as an interface for the practices of hybrid moving images, but also as “places where contents, technologies, and users meet” (Steinberg and Li 178).

Digital media has its borders and regional specificity even though often imagined as global and borderless. It is noticeable that the US-based platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are often taken as models to discuss a seemingly universal experience or cultural phenomenon. Whereas these platforms are seen as pioneers in the development of digital media, the rise of Asian platforms since the 2010s such as Japan’s Niconico and China’s Bilibili and TikTok have refashioned digital media more or less on its contents, interfaces, and user groups. In China in particular, Sina Weibo, Bilibili, and *Douyin* (Chinese version of TikTok) as content platforms have dominated the domestic market for a while. Among them, Sina Weibo is a microblogging website launched in 2009. Bilibili (or B site) is a Chinese video-sharing website featuring a *danmu* (*danmuku* in Japanese, “bullet curtain” in English) commenting system launched in 2010. The newly launched Douyin is also a video-sharing platform aimed for making

and sharing short-form videos. Due to the country's internet censorship policy, China sweepingly shut down US-based social media services, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. around 2009. Seen as an opportunity, Chinese technology companies started to simulate the features of those popular US-based platforms with accessible services for users in China, the products include Renren (simulating Facebook), Sina Weibo (simulating Twitter), Youku (simulating YouTube), etc.

Border does not merely imply constraints, but also affordances. Especially in the digital era, a platform perspective is often used to scrutinize the interaction of media studies and area studies. Steinberg and Li argue that "platforms are inherently regional," and "every platform defines and delimits a region, whether subcultural or geographical or an amalgam of the two" (175). It is especially true in the context of Asian media industries. For example, originally inspired by the interface design of Japan's Niconico (launched in 2006), China's users created their own video-sharing platforms A-site (ACFun) and B-site (Bilibili), which were both orientated as an animation, comic, and game community. A unique feature of these platforms is *danmu* commenting system: a real-time display of user comments as scrolling subtitles overlaid on the video player screen. The *danmu* interface quickly spread across all China's video-streaming platforms like Youku, iQiyi, and Tencent, as well as other media artifacts such as cinema and television. Despite deriving from subcultural community, the *danmu* effect was quickly adopted by mainstream culture and media industry in China. As for Bilibili, one of the first video-streaming services that features *danmu*, has also expanded to a broader audience group and become one of China's major video-sharing platforms since the mid-2010s, when US-based social media services were largely blocked on the Chinese market.

Another border-crossing example is TikTok. In August 2020, then-President Donald Trump signed an executive order to ban Chinese-owned apps including WeChat and TikTok. As claimed by the Trump administration, these apps were feeding data directly to the Chinese Communist Party.⁶⁶ It drew people's attention to the viral trends brought by TikTok in the United States. With over 2 billion mobile downloads worldwide as of October 2020, the global expansion of TikTok was calculated. In 2016, Chinese tech giant ByteDance launched Douyin (meaning "shaking sound"), which quickly attracted 100 million users within one year. Later in 2017, ByteDance released the international version of Douyin — TikTok. Its market overseas has grown rapidly after merging with Musical.ly, a Shanghai-based social media platform that allows users to create 15-second to 1-minute lip-syncing music videos. Contrast to its tepid reaction in mainland China, Musical.ly received huge popularity among American teenagers. With ByteDance's powerful algorithm recommender system and Musical.ly's playful effect and filter editing options, the merger of these two apps under the title TikTok has created a larger short-video community that particularly attracts young internet users.

The transnational and global success of the video-sharing platforms in the examples above, echoes what Thomas Lamarre observed in "Regional TV: Affective Media Geographies," that "producing distribution (infrastructures and technologies) precedes and exceeds the production of contents or programmes". As Lamarre further explained, the production of distribution has social functions that not simply added to the product as it produces "a feeling of something coming into common, of a region in common" (94). Although Lamarre's argument was made in the context of transnational and transmedial serialization in East Asia, it also applies to a larger and more

⁶⁶ For details, see "Chinese Software Companies Feeding Data Directly to CCP: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo." *DNA*, <https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-chinese-software-companies-feeding-data-directly-to-ccp-us-secretary-of-state-mike-pompeo-2835632>

complicated context of global media networks. Platform-based distribution in the digital era affords a dynamic interaction between the virtual space and geographic space. Such interaction, regardless of geo-blocking in some countries, produces a “virtual unity” (Lamarre 97) that is highly related to the means through which users approach the media content, rather than the content itself. The feeling of virtual unity, as Lamarre argued, is intensified through transmedial practices (media mix) and thereafter becomes a matter of affect.

3. Vlog on China-based Platforms

In the early twenty-first century, YouTube has rapidly spawned the vlog as a new media format online in a global scale excluding China and some other countries. Despite the fact that a few Chinese YouTube influencers emerged in the mid-2010s, their fan-base were rather small, from hundreds to thousands of fans. Most of them (e.g.: Hanyan Li, zhumaomao 朱毛毛, Savislook, Cynthia 默小宝, etc.) started their channel as beauty bloggers, sharing information about beauty products and tutorials in their videos. Under the influence of the vlog trend on YouTube, a growing number of influencers from China have picked up the camera to capture their daily lives and share with their subscribers, even though they did not fully realize this format as vlog.

Different from its spontaneous emergence among grassroots on YouTube, vlogs massively entered Chinese market as an imported business model promoted by video-sharing platforms such as Xigua Video,⁶⁷ Sina Weibo, Bilibili, iQiyi, and TikTok. In her collaboration with Xigua Video, Taiwanese pop idol Ouyang Nana started her vlog series in 2018. As a cellist and actress, Ouyang Nana has already had a stable fan base before her role as a vlogger. Her down-to-earth vlogs nonetheless boosted her popularity— these vlogs did not focus on her established stardom but

⁶⁷ *Xigua* Video is a video-sharing platform launched by ByteDance in 2016, “xigua” means watermelon.

instead document her everyday lives as an ordinary student at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Each vlog is usually around 10 minutes, featuring most FPV (first-person view) and PoV (point of view) shots with slight editing. Vlogs here can be seen as the equivalence of newspapers and magazines in the print media era for the publicity of a celebrity, whereas vlogs enable more autonomy of the celebrity and evoke more intimate bonding with fan viewers.

2018 was the genesis of the vlog trend in China, despite the fact that both the documenting format of UGC (user-generated content) and online video creators who shot to fame (e.g.: papi Jiang) already existed for years. Chinese social media was crowded with short videos under the lead of *Douyin* and *Kuaishou* at that time.⁶⁸ The popularity of Ouyang Nana’s vlogs drew people’s attention to this “up-and-coming video content market that now involves movie stars, internet celebrities, and online video creators.”⁶⁹ In the same year, Sina Weibo, the most influential microblogging platform in China launched a vlog event to give more exposure to those who regularly uploaded vlogs on the platform. As of June 3, 2021, there are more than 200,000 vloggers⁷⁰ according to vlog chaohua on Sina. Bilibili, the largest UGC online site in China, is often referred as China’s YouTube. Starting in 2018, they have launched a series of vlogging competitions with themes such as “First Time in My Life,” “Ideal Life,” and “Be A Vlogger.” In addition to that, Bilibili also launched projects such as “Creative Incentive Plan,” “Creative Incentive Rookie Award” and “New Star Plan,” which provide official bonuses to encourage more high-quality content to be made. Other video sharing platforms including iQIYI’s Suike (“Anytime”) and Douyin are also devoted to vlog promotion.

⁶⁸ In China, the vlog trend came after the short-video trend, which is the opposite to the phenomenon in the West.

⁶⁹ See Fan, “Which Platform Will be China’s YouTube for Vloggers?” *RADII*
<https://radiichina.com/china-youtube-vlogging/>

⁷⁰ Those who uploaded more than four vlogs in a 30-day period qualified as vloggers.

Being famous online has been demystified—those platforms guide their users through every step toward a vlogger including content production, distribution, streaming and monetization. Moreover, a vlogger usually posts across several platforms in order to target as many viewers as possible. The platform-driven vlog trend, especially the trans-platform distribution of vlog content, grows on the Chinese UGC market like mushrooms after a rainstorm. The trans-platform distribution takes advantage of the distinct features of each platform, for instance, the *danmu* commenting system on Bilibili, and TikTok app interface (i.e., filters, background music, special effects, etc.), to attract diverse groups of users and produce an affective response from individuals. Here, I suggest using interface theory to analyze the affective relationship between humans, society, and technology. Like platforms, interface is another concept that has often been used to examine the aesthetic as well as the social-cultural comprehensiveness of new media in the last decade. For Alexander R. Galloway, interfaces are “autonomous zones of activity” (vii). For Seung-hoon Jeong, “interface means the communication boundary or point of interaction between two other parts or systems, while it becomes part of that system, influencing how two parties interplay with each other” (3). To conclude, whereas a platform perspective emphasizes the material properties of a medium, interface theory discusses the process of how the interaction happens and develops. More importantly, it goes beyond the transmedial and transnational level of adaptation, and draws attention to a variety of material and immaterial, human and non-human encounters. The trans-platform distribution as discussed above is such an example.

The generation of internet celebrity cannot be discussed without considering the media ecology in which it is embedded. What is the relationship between a vlog, its creator, and its viewers? What attracts viewers the most—the video content or its creator? How does the platform interface affect the interactions among content, technologies, and users? How can we understand

the role that a platform plays when the transmedial practice is replaced by a trans-platform one? In considering these questions, let us go back to Jeong's interface theory in which content (cinema), screen, and body are approached as three correlated types of interfaces. For Jeong, cinema, or the cinematic mode that "comprehends the mobile camera, the representation of space, editing techniques, narrative conventions, and the activity of a spectator" (4) is a cultural interface that forge people's informative vision of the world (sometimes in the form of a database). The (cinematic) screen, according to Jeong, is a perceptual interface linking "the social, cognitive, psychological, and technical practices of a given culture into harmonious and integrated wholes" (5). Based on perceptual interfaces, Jeong develops the third type, in which the body functions as an embodied interface especially in the digital landscapes, specifically with the affective sensorimotor body frames "disembodied digital information into embodied concrete information imbued with (human) meaning" (6). The interactions among video contents, users and technology can be framed into this cultural-perceptual-embodied interfaces paradigm.

4. Vlog as a Genre: From an Artistic Perspective

4.1 A Case Study: Li Ziqi

In the opening scene of this 10-min long video titled "Peanut and melon seeds, dried meat, dried fruit, snowflake cake — snacks for Spring Festival," the camera shifts between the close-ups of chestnuts and fruit trees in the forest, and a young woman dressed in an old-fashioned blue coat collecting raw chestnuts and throwing them into a bamboo basket. Two puppies and a lamb follow closely behind (figure 20). As the extra-diegetic light music swells, the camera pulls back to capture a full shot with the woman walking away through tall grass. Then the camera is repositioned in a yard, facing a bonfire in front of which sits an old lady. The young woman walks

toward the old lady, pours out the chestnuts in her basket, and starts her food preparation. After this opening scene, which lasts less than a minute, the stationary camera/frame switches between closeups and medium shots, capturing the following snacks being made from scratch: roasted chestnuts, snowflake crisp, *bingtanghulu*,⁷¹ peanut sesame candy, spicy beef jerky, popcorn, roasted sunflower seeds and peanuts, crispy eggrolls, and dried mango. Deprived of redundant documenting footage or dull monologues delivered straight to the camera, the creator seems emotionally detach herself from her audience. Regardless of this, viewers are struck by the peaceful and natural ambience exhibited in her video content and hence feel connected with the creator. As of June 20, 2021, this video has received over 92M views and almost 5M comments on YouTube. The creator’s name is Li Ziqi.



Figure 20: Li Ziqi in the vlog “Peanut and Melon Seeds, Dried Meat, Dried Fruit, Snowflake Cake — Snacks for Spring Festival.”

With over 15M subscribers on YouTube, 27M followers on Weibo, and 7M fans on Bilibili, Li Ziqi has been recognized as the most globally influential Chinese *wanghong*. Li was well-known for her unique, natural-style videos, in which she uses traditional Chinese techniques to

⁷¹ *Bingtanghulu* is a traditional Chinese snack of sugar-coated haws on a stick.

create food and handcrafts from basic ingredients and tools. Li lives with her grandmother in the countryside of Mianyang in Sichuan province, located in southwest China. Her video is particularly popular among urban and foreign viewers as it visualizes their rustic imagination of countryside lives and ancient Chinese culture.

At the same time, controversies have arisen on the authenticity of Li's contents. Some netizens thought that such "cinematic" quality could never be achieved by an amateur and had to require teamwork with professional cinematographers. In responding to this inquiry, in May 2017, Li posted on her social media account a detailed account of how she filmed and edited the footage. She claims knew nothing about cinematography when she first started making short videos in 2016. After realizing that the smartphone she was using could not produce high quality image, she bought a SLR digital camera and a tripod. Without anyone's help, she had to set up and adjust the angle of the camera repeatedly just to film a seconds-long scene that she was satisfied with. With respect to the editing, she had been using a mobile app called "Cute Cut" for years. The techniques she frequently used, such as dissolving and adding text and score were also basic. However, in order to get the "cinematic" effect, Li had to film hundreds of hours of raw footage just for one 2-minute shot, and went through several rounds of re-filming and re-editing processes before exporting the final product from the phone.

Li's *fugu* (retro-style) videos reveal that the distinctions between the amateur and the professional, life and art are being blurred in terms of videography. Nowadays, the category of "artwork" seems broad enough to cover "the banal, the ephemeral, the overlooked and the everyday" (Elsasser 13). As Thomas Elsasser indicates, at the turn of the 21st century, the distance between life and art has been shortened by avant-garde artists. On the other hand, our life looks more like art in three ways:

firstly, [in the Western world,] everyday life has in almost all its aspects fallen under the regime of style, usually seen as the consequence either of a relentless aesthetisation (to use a Benjaminian term) or of commodification (to use the Marxist term). But in the form of design, this will to style has become much more than either aesthetisation or commodification: it has become the very term of our self-determination and self-reference as individuals and as political collectives: we want to take control of our life by giving it shape and design, not just by ‘preserving it’ as long as possible, but to improve, maximise, optimise it. (15)

In contrast to its early stage, when vlogs were advertised on YouTube with a dry aesthetic, vlogging nowadays strives for meticulous “cinematic shots” in tune with the media trend of artistic expression. Especially since internet celebrity has been substantially maneuvered by the technological capital, vlogs should be read as a site of negotiation between art and everyday life, where the stardom of its creator is promoted in a dynamic spectrum from visible to invisible. In most cases, the vlogger her/himself plays simultaneous roles of director, screenwriter, actor, cinematographer, and editor. Although a vlog is about the everyday life of its creator, the creator does not necessarily appear in the video. Sometimes, we see the vlogger talk to the camera (viewers) directly. Sometimes, the camera is set from the first-person point of view and the creator is absent in the shots. Sometimes, the creator might set the camera at a particular angle to only include part of her/his body in the frame. No matter whether the creator is physically present or not, they are always the overarching character that manipulate viewers’ affective experience. Framed in the cultural-perceptual-embodied interfaces paradigm, the stardom of a vlogger is nonetheless dislocated in the camera eye. In other words, rather than the bodily (visible) encounter, it is the cinematic/screen interfaces that facilitate the affective labor.

In vlog's Chinese localizing process, there is a homogenizing tendency in terms of the content that being made. The homogenized content has nevertheless turned vlog into a distinct internet medium/genre featuring hybrid moving images (i.e.: film, video, and digital). The current vlog genre has gradually exceeded its original function of documenting daily lives and paid more attention to artistic expression. The medium hybridity of internet media does contribute to such phenomenon. As Lev Manovich points out, Web 2.0 practices entail new kinds of communication where "content, opinion and conversation" are often merged in a networked environment (40). The communication happens not only between individuals via online media, but also between different media practices in terms of their artistic expressions and strategies. For instance, music video editing strategies are adopted in fan-made videos. Video games start to underline the narrative and cinematography components as a movie does. The combination of animation and live action permeates feature films and televisions. Film, video, and digital are no longer taken as "definable object or stable medium", but instead "a set of representational, perceptual, and expressive conventions" that have been borrowed by new media (Kim 23).

Based on my personal observation, I will discuss some main vlog features and how they are influenced by or connected with conventional media forms from the perspectives of cinematography, soundtrack, narrative, and editing. Here I want to claim that my conclusion is drawn from a selective pool of vlog samples on YouTube⁷² that I personally enjoyed watching. The vloggers for reference include but are not limited to: Li Ziqi, Savislook, Janine Lee, TheKellyYang, yyselina, Harry and Wenning, Vicky Soupsss, and 子时当归 (Zishidanggui). They have all posted on YouTube constantly for more than three years. Although there is no way to

⁷² Some of the YouTube vloggers also posted on other social media platforms such as Sina Weibo and Bilibili, for China-based audiences to access.

clarify that my arguments are sufficiently proved by all the examples above, I hope to provide a perspective/paradigm to better understand vlog as a genre through analyzing the repetitive patterns I have observed.

4.2.1. Early films

Tom Gunning argues in his classical essay on “cinema of attraction” that before the arrival of feature films in around 1912, early cinema is less a way of telling stories than a way of fascinating audiences with animation or effective tricks through editing. For example, in a short British trick film titled “House that Jack Built,” a boy destroys a castle built by a girl and then “rebuids” it with the reversed sequence. Another trick effect, mounting the camera upside-down when inverting the backdrop picture, was also used a lot in trick films such as “Upside Down,” in which an illusion of walking on the ceiling was created.

Whilst tricks in early films are more of revealing the devices of filmmaking and celebrating its craft, they are adopted in vlogs as a quasi-professional attraction. Since they are often more than 10 minutes long, a vlog might bore its audiences if it lacks cohesive storytelling or catchy audiovisual elements. The supplement of tricks not only captivates audiences with cinematic effects, but also demonstrates technological enchantment. Some of the frequently used tricks in early films are also widely seen in vlogs, such as reverse motion, stop motion, slow motion, and time-lapse photography. Among them, stop motion is often seen in unboxing videos, time-lapse is frequently used in food preparation or driving scenes, reverse motion can be found in the beginning of a vlog as a hook, and slow motion is commonly added as to highlight fun moments.

In addition to tricks, intertitles are also a vital component in vlogs that resembles early films. In the silent film, intertitles not only indicated the dialogue within the diegesis (often referred as dialogue intertitles), but also served as the commentary or enunciation outside the diegesis

(referred as expository intertitles).⁷³ In modern usage, intertitles are sometimes replaced by texts over images, I also consider them intertitles despite the fact that they are displayed in digital form and do not occupy the entire screen. Chisholm listed seven categories of expository intertitles: identifications, temporal markers, narrative summary, characterization, mediated thoughts/paraphrased dialogue, commentary on story, and commentary on discourse. Among them, temporal markers are frequently seen in vlogs to sew the various component footage in a linear timeline (figure 21). Especially in daily, weekly or monthly vlogs, the footage is usually edited in an assemblage according to what happened in a period of time. Besides a concrete time indicator, SpongeBob timecards (figure 22)⁷⁴ have also been used a lot for vlogs to represent how much time has passed, usually in an exaggerated way. For most of the time, however, the temporal marker does not directly contribute to the narrative of a vlog.

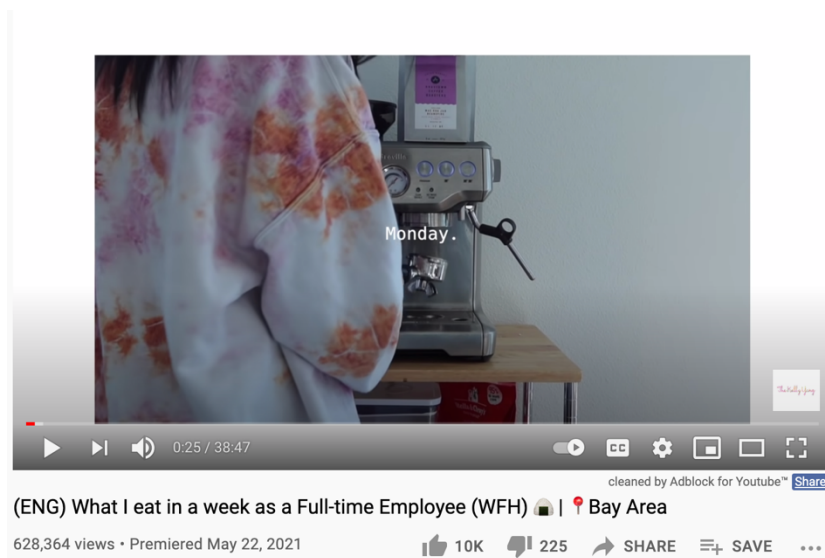


Figure 21: “Monday.” on the screen serves as a temporal marker in this vlog.

⁷³ For an explanation of different types of intertitles, see Brad Chisholm’s “Reading Intertitles” in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (1987).

⁷⁴ Timecards are used in the American animated TV show *SpongeBob SquarePants* to humorously represent how much time has passed within an episode.



Figure 22: SpongeBob timecards as time indicator in vlogs.

Different from old silent films, which did not feature synchronized speech due to technical limitations, vlogs can combine synchronized speech with voice-over and expository intertitles depending on what kind of effect the creator wants. Besides temporal markers, identification and narrative summary intertitles are also commonly used for the purpose of providing extra information (sometimes unnecessary) (figure 23). Although a vlog might be narrative-oriented like



Figure 23: “Cleaning the countertop...” is identification intertitle in this vlog to provide extra information.

a feature film, its ultimate goal is for turning its popularity into productivity. In other words, a creator might want to orient viewers' interests toward certain consumer products through creating product-related content. Sometimes, they provide the product information in the description box under the video, so that they will earn a small commission if anyone purchases the item through the provided link. Sometimes, they just insert brief product information with intertitles in the video in case viewers are interested. To summarize, when identification or narrative summary intertitles are used, it is usually for the purpose of directly communicating with the audience rather than addressing the narrative. Finally, commentary intertitles appear in vlogs in various forms to imitate creator-viewer interactions. In Chinese context in particular, commentary intertitles are sometimes influenced by the *danmu* interface.

4.2.2. Music Videos

In terms of the relationship between sound and image, Michel Chion defines cinema as “a place of images, plus sounds,” with sound being “that which seeks its place” (68). Sounds play a significant role in cinema and vlogs alike. The sound in a vlog usually consists of onscreen sound, offscreen sound, and non-diegetic sound. According to Chion, onscreen sound is sound “whose source appears in the image” while the source of offscreen sound is invisible. As for nondiegetic sound, Chion uses this term to refer to sound “whose supposed source is not only absent from the image but also external to the story world,” such as voiceover commentary and musical underscoring. Although these three categories of sounds may sometimes transcend each other, they each play a crucial role in communicating information and engaging audiences. Different from a film in which the offscreen sound may be forged on purpose for creating a realistic cinematic world, the offscreen sound in a vlog is usually recorded naturally and unintentionally, since it is already a part of the physical reality. Sometimes, however, offscreen sound becomes unnecessary noise,

so that the creator would like to cover it with nondiegetic sound, usually in the form of musical underscoring.

Musical underscoring is uncommonly seen as the primary sound in a film. For most of the time, it appears as “ambient sound,” that “envelops a scene and inhabits its space without overtly raising the question of identifying or visually confirming its source” (Chion 75). It is quite the opposite in music videos, where images and videos serve to visualize the narrative or atmosphere of a song. In other words, a music video is a place of sounds with an image seeking its place. Although music videos initially took inspiration from cinematic shooting as well as editing styles and techniques, they also contributed to new relationships between music and images to today’s audiovisual aesthetics, by producing “a mediascape that foregrounds musical features” (Vernallis 5). On the one hand, post-cinematic practices of moving images demolish the boundaries of different media forms. On the other hand, however, the cinematic mode still essentially embraces hybrid moving images. Carol Vernallis, for example, points out that the “mixing-board aesthetic” extends music video and YouTube clips into “post-classical cinema” (5). Under such circumstances, the comparison between music video and vlogs seems pointless. Yet I would still like to bring the parallel to the fore as musicality occupies different positions in each medium. A classical film is usually narrative-oriented, in which images and dialogue speak louder than music. On the contrary, a music video and a vlog are primarily made as marketing campaigns, so they tend to be more experimental in terms of styles and techniques. For most of the time, music videos and YouTube clips are affect-oriented rather than narrative-oriented, in which musicality serves as a universal affective device as it stirs human sensation to time, space, and rhythm. Music can make a video clip speaks to the audience out of context, or soften an abrupt transition of the scene.

Therefore, comparing to a feature film, a vlog may depend more on music as non-diegetic sound to attract audiences.

4.2.3. *Desktop documentaries, Trailers, and Others*

The desktop documentary is a term refers to the computer or smartphone screen-based media coined by Kevin B. Lee in 2015. It has been adopted as a visual technique in video essays and several feature films since the 2010s such as *Noah* (2013), *Unfriended* (2014), and *Searching* (2018). The popularity of desktop documentary reflects the growing impact of internet and in-built webcam as a surveillance device in our daily lives. The screen recording or screenshot has often been seen as a visual component incorporated in online videos. Especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of our daily activities have been conducted online for over a year. The so-called “Zoom university” and “Skype office” have not only transferred our reactions to a virtual environment, but also captured and recorded our facial expressions and petty actions in a real-time lived space. It is predictable that the desktop documentary will surge in visibility in both amateur and professional videos as an experimental technique and realistic documentation.

A film trailer, consisting of a series of the most exciting or noteworthy shots from a feature film, is a commercial advertisement for a film that is will be shown in theatres. A trailer is usually available months before the official release of a film, to attract audiences’ attention and forge their expectations. Yet a vlog trailer is directly attached to the vlog content as a hook or preview. The growing usage of trailer and music video techniques in a vlog reflects the accessibility and popularity of video mashup in the digital age. In most cases, a vlog itself can be seen as a video mashup as it mixes different audiovisual sources together in order to create innovative and appealing content. The medium hybridity not only defines the identity of vlogs, but also serves as a unique way of vloggers’ artistic expression.

Finally, I want to draw attention to two special vlog formats: one is episodic vlogs; the other one is livestreaming. Since these two types of vlogs leave the creator limited or no time for editing, their values lie in the (quasi) real-time delivering of everyday lives, rather than artistic expression. Episodic vlogs, such as Vlogmas and 30-Day Challenge, are challenges taken by vloggers on YouTube to shoot and post daily content on their personal channel constantly for 30 days, or 25 days (for Vlogmas). Compared with the serialization of content on streaming services such as Netflix, HBO Max, and Amazon Prime, the episodic content created by a vlogger rarely unfolds a continuous plot over the entire series. Usually, the content of episodes is unrelated. Although all the episodes are not released at one time, episodic vlogs, for their fan viewers, ritualize the behavior of subscribing and checking on the vlogger's channel on a daily base and therefore entail intense intimacy in a temporal dimension. When watching a movie or a TV show, audiences are aware that the content they are watching was made months, even years ago. Nevertheless, when audiences are informed that the content they are watching just happened hours or even minutes ago, the time delay between happening and seeing becomes insignificant. That is the reason why an episodic vlog can generate a quasi-live experience, to say nothing of livestreaming, in which audiences are able to interact with the video creator in real time.

5. Vlog as a Dispositif: From a Media Archaeology Perspective

So far, the discussions have centered on vlogging as a sub-category of internet media, as well as a medium for amateurs to practice artistic expression and gain fame online. In the cultural-perceptual-embodied interfaces paradigm, the vlogging contents serve as cultural interfaces that forge users' interaction with the dispositif it is associated with. The dispositif, or apparatus here, represents the technological, discursive, and institutional information that is processed and

(re)mediated in the digital landscape. Yet the perceptual interfaces of the social media platforms (virtually) and mobile screens (physically) decide how information is translated on both sides of the screen. From mundane display of everyday lives to diverse exploration of cinematic shots, our attention is drawn to vlogging contents in a similar way as watching movies. In the 1970s, French scholar Jean-Louis Baudry introduced *dispositif* as apparatus in film studies. Thinking through the Marxist notion of the ideological state apparatus, Baudry read the movie camera, screen, and projector as cinematic apparatuses that create an illusion of continuous movement of the image and the meaning, known as the “ideological effect.”⁷⁵ Apparently, watching vlogs on a mobile screen generates a different viewing experience from watching a Hollywood movie in a theatre, no matter the viewing environment or the purpose. To be specific, the movie theatre serves as public sphere where collective memories are created, whilst the mobile screen on a computer, smartphone, or tablet often indicates relatively private, home-based entertainment. Other than that, compared to feature films, vlogs are less narrative-oriented and no longer require much cognitive processing. People often watch vlogs when eating alone.⁷⁶

In Baudry’s theory, spectators were considered to passively identify with the screen characters and tended to mistake the film world as the real world. While the “passive spectatorship” occupied the core thesis of apparatus theory in the 1970s and 1980s, the cultural and material turn in film and media studies in the 1990s began to question such epistemology. Spectators are thereafter seen as active and historical participants rather than passive and semiotic entities. At the same time, film scholars’ interests in the studies of film experience and the relations between viewers and moving images are refashioned towards a phenomenological endeavor lead by Vivian

⁷⁵ For more on Baudry’s interpretation of ideological effect, see his “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus.”

⁷⁶ In the Chinese context, people usually refer to watching vlogs when eating as 下饭 *xiafan*, a term used to describe something that makes the eating process more fulfilling.

Sobchack. They argue that the physical nature of the encounter of the screen and spectators entails an embodied experience where spectators can be fully involved. Such explanation not only reflects spectator's agency in terms of interpreting the screen image, but also underlines the media's openness to engage spectators.

The cinema screen is a perceptual interface indicating a suture process. In suture theory,⁷⁷ the spectator is considered the viewing subject addressed by the film. In a typical Hollywood movie, for example, the shot/reverse shot formation keeps suturing the spectator into the diegetic world, making sense of the editing, narrative and discourse. As a perceptual interface, the screen innovatively creates and changes the ways in which the spectator perceives and expresses the cinematic world. Different from conventional understanding that the screen physically and intellectually separates two worlds — onscreen and offscreen, the vlog indicates an alternative way of communication between the onscreen and offscreen worlds. Primarily, the character in a vlog performs for the spectators. In most cases, they talk directly into the camera as to the (imagined) spectators. Even when they do not perform to the camera, they usually have spectators in mind. On the spectators' end, by the same token, despite their absence on the screen, their presence offscreen is by nature sutured in the video. In other words, the screen no longer serves as a divide between the cinematic and real worlds. Rather, it functions as a transparent interface not just between the creator and the spectator, but also between the subject and the object point-of-view, between the disembodied and the embodied.

Whereas in Hollywood movies, filmmakers tend to conceal the mediation of camera, in vlogs the existence of the camera is usually visible, articulated, and even emphasized. For instance,

⁷⁷ Suture theory is developed from Lacan's psychoanalysis by critics such as Kaja Silverman to describe how meaning is created for film viewers.

we can sometimes hear the vlogger say something like “the battery is going to die, let me charge the camera/switch to another camera”. Another scenario that could happen is that the camera is out of focus or takes some time to focus. In addition to that, the footage of the unexpected movements of the camera are also kept in some vlogs. Such “misbehaving” scenes seem to disrupt the cinematic atmosphere and are disposed in a commercial film for the sake of the narrative consistence. Nevertheless, when they appear in a vlog, they usually indicate the effects of immediacy and intimacy that the viewers desire. As cultural interfaces, this misbehaving footage sutures the “behind-the-scenes” area into the virtual world (in the form of a digital database) on video-sharing platforms. The exposure of the camera, both visually and cognitively breaks the fourth wall of the theatrical imagination featured by Hollywood cinema.

Taking a media archaeological perspective, I hope to call attention to the role played by camera in vlogs, not only as a technological device but also as an actor with its own agency. In addition to a chain of medium apparatuses along with the screen and film/video, the camera also exceeds the medium-body interaction and facilitates techno-corporeality. By switching between the subjective and objective position, the camera is core to the cultural-perceptual-embodied interface that interconnects the onscreen and offscreen worlds. The screen here, more than the projecting and viewing screen, also refers to the camera lens. Oftentimes the camera lens is shared by the projecting/viewing screen in a vlog, being a portal to profilmic objects. Also shared is the camera’s perspective, sometimes identifying with the spectator, sometimes with the vlogger. The most popular vlogging cameras on the market, from smartphone and SLR (single-lens reflex) digital camera to action cameras such as GoPro, DJI Osmo Pocket and Insta360, despite different forms, all have lens as a privileged part of the camera body. To quote Cartwright and Rice, “the lens is synecdoche for the whole of the camera, serving as its defining feature” (29). The camera

lens functions as a technological prosthesis for human eyes — we see through the lens, and the lens captures the event for us to see. The lens creates an intersubjective vision between human and machine. It requires us not merely to examine the camera as an intact device but to shift our focus to its interior and exterior machineries and design, through which the profilmic object is exhibited, modified, and dislocated.

While the lens is the interior eye of a camera, the viewfinder—the external replication of the lens is the site where human’s interaction with the camera really happens. In a SLR camera, the viewfinder is usually built in its optical system, as either OVF (optical viewfinder) or EVF (electronic viewfinder). The viewfinder, as “tools of prediction and approximation” (Cartwright and Rice 30), let the photographer look through to compose and focus the picture. Besides the viewfinder, contemporary technologies also allow a live (pre)view through the display screen attached to the camera. The display screen, for vloggers, usually serves as a quasi-EVF especially when they are unable to hold the camera close enough to their eyes when shooting the footage. In fact, the viewfinder tends to play an insignificant role for amateur cinematographers compared to professional photographers. Therefore, viewfinderless cameras such as GoPro and Insta360 are becoming popular among vloggers. These cameras usually sacrifice the viewfinder for a smaller size. At the same time, the display screen, no matter attached or detached to the camera body, replaces the viewfinder as an exterior counterpart of the lens. Moreover, it becomes a necessary part on the camera for vloggers.

Now our focal point turns from the lens back to the screen. Different from the viewfinder that replicates in human eyes what the camera eye sees, the display screen that a cinematographer consults with does not match the human point-of-view. Even a first-person perspective does not necessarily determine the cinematographer’s perspective and is more or less dislocated. For

example, if a creator wants viewers to feel like s/he talks to them directly, the creator has to look at the camera lens by nature. In that case, the creator cannot preview the composition of the frame. Yet, if the creator's gaze orients towards the display screen, what s/he sees turns out to be different from what viewers will see. Not to say that if the creator wants to take footage from the camera's point of view without any assistance, they may need to make multiple attempts as Li Ziqi claimed in her earlier video-creating experience. On the one hand, the display screen questions camera's indexicality from both a chemical and an ocular perspective. On the other hand, it emancipates the camera from a cinematographer's subjectivity. As an actor with its own agency, the camera not only reflects the objects of our gaze, but is also able to capture the photographer/cinematographer's body movements, especially with those wearable action cameras. For most vloggers who are simultaneously an actor and cinematographer, they not only use the camera to represent their own perception, but also need it to approximate viewers' perception for an immersive viewing experience. The camera thus becomes body-extending equipment in the act of filming.

Cartwright and Rice, in their examination of the viewfinderless action camera, call attention to the dispositif as “a *partial agent* in the production of ontological and...phenological activity”, as they write:

In the current era of the viewfinderless action camera, we propose: seeing is a dispersed, fragmented, and asynchronous activity with ironically weak links to observational traditions of knowledge production, but with strong implications for ontological and phenomenological conditions of the real generated through the activity of camera–body experience. (31)

Whereas the use of viewfinder to a large extent distinguishes a professional photographer from their amateur counterparts, such distinction is dismissed in vlogging. The rejection of viewfinder

can be seen as equivalent to discarding the privilege of “seeing” in the camera-viewer interface. As a result, the spectator’s visual pleasure is associated with a dislocated stardom as they now identify with the camera’s gaze which is not necessarily seen by the character on the screen. In most cases, the vlogging camera aims for an embodied communication that is engaged by the creator and viewers at both an intra-subjective and an inter-subjective level. The camera, as a perceptual-embodied interface, facilitates the exchange of perception and expression by aligning its lens with the viewer’s point-of-view rather than with the creator’s. The camera can be positioned in a refrigerator, in a car, on the street, or under a table, capturing the subject’s entrance into and departure from the frame. Those angles, what I call the “impossible perspectives,” extend not only the creator’s body, but also viewers’ embodied eyes. Through performing for the camera, the character onscreen intuitively performs for the absent viewers. That is how the existence of offscreen viewers is sutured into the video.

With respect to the body extension, the evolution of cameras indicates that the camera body is also extended or remolded to accommodate human vision and action. Wide-angle lenses, tripods, and external microphones are the most common accessories that a vlogger may use to produce better audiovisual effects. The wide-angle lens is used for capturing expansive backgrounds and allowing more of the scene to be included in the frame; the tripod is designed for cinematographer to hand hold the camera without introducing shake in the footage, or simply a hands-free device that a camera can mount on; the external microphone is attached to the camera for improving the recording quality, especially when there is background noise. They each recast human’s senses of sight, sound, and touch, making vlogging an embodied interface for both the creator and viewers (figure 24).



Figure 24: screenshot of the vlogger revealing the camera device from *Harry and Wenning* VLOG Sep. 13, 2021.

In fact, the photographic camera and video camera were separate until the transition to digital cameras started to make built-in recording media a default for most cameras, including smartphones. When camera was firstly invented, people considered it a scientific apparatus to reproduce the physical world on the photographic image. Later, artistic and political meanings were introduced to photographic images. The photographic camera is thus endowed with social and commercial values. As for the video camera, it was originally designed for television production. In the 1980s, Sony released the first Camcorder (a portmanteau of “camera” and “recorder”, which has become the genericized term for all handheld video recorders) for personal use, with video capture and recording as its primary functions. Like analog photographic cameras, the earliest camcorder was tape-based and recorded analog signals onto videotape cassettes. After digital recording has become the norm, camcorders have been gradually replaced by digital cameras and other camera devices with greater portability and affordability.

Video making is becoming more accessible in our contemporary media-saturated society compared to decades ago. It is no longer surprising to see a well-made video featuring cinematic

shots produced on small and affordable camera devices. The conventional standard of distinguishing professional photographers and their cameras from amateurs has therefore been altered. Especially for vloggers, what kind of camera to choose is highly dependent on the condition of mobility besides image quality: whether it is portable, anti-shake, focuses quickly on movement, etc. It not only requires the camera to simulate the human eye as much as possible, but also extends human eyes, as in the case of GoPro and drone cameras.

GoPro is the name for an American technology company founded in 2002, as well as the camera system that the company manufactures. The founder, Nick Woodman, is a surfer. Hoping to capture high-quality action photos at reasonable prices, he designed the first GoPro Hero camera two years after founding the company. GoPro Hero is lighter and smaller compared to SLR digital cameras. More importantly, it is designed to be able to attached to a moving vehicle or body. As its name implies, GoPro aims to film on the water to capture close-up action shots and make the subject look like a professional. Despite being a self-documenting device, GoPro camera does not aim to document one's self, but rather one's own point of view, to create "the visual pleasure" of immersion. As Cartwright and Rice write,

With the design of the GoPro, the emphasis on self-documentation shifted the tenor of the image's indexicality away from the document of the photographer's having been there, to one of the camera-body *having done that*. Speed and movement register against the stillness of *something* in the foreground to bring the viewer into close proximity with the immersive conditions and experience of the life-world of the photographer and photographic subject, who are conjoined as one without necessarily ever showing the human face in the frame except incidentally. (46)

Although not originally designed for vlogging, GoPro cameras have gradually gained popularity among vloggers due to its pocket-sized dimensions and capacity to create immersive POV shots. Especially when recent technology enables 4K and even 5K display resolution for GoPro Hero, it has functions beyond merely those of a waterproof action camera, and can compete with professional digital cameras in terms of producing cinematic footage.

Before being widely put into commercial and recreational applications, the drone was long associated with warfare for aerial target practices. The first use of drones for non-military purposes started in 2006. Since then, the application of drones has spread across fields such as aerial photography, surveillance, and delivery. For photography and cinematography lovers, camera drones help to extend the human body to capture those “impossible perspectives” in the air. It is noticeable that the global civilian drone market is dominated by Chinese tech company DJI, which holds a 76% civil market share as of March 2021. Combining superior AI technology with advanced hardware, DJI has provided consumers with affordable and portable camera drones that suit the needs of both beginners and professionals. The drone perspective, often in FPV (first-person view), is widely seen in video games for an immersive experience. DJI’s camera drone has transitioned from the virtual environment into the real world, exchanging the human eye’s perspective with that of the camera’s eye.

If saying the advent of GoPro cameras decenters human eyes from “processes of projection and introjection” and reconfigures identification and power relations in the video (Cartwright and Rice 30), the application of recreational drones in vlogging further detaches human subjectivity from the operation of machinery. Regarding the spectatorship in vlogs, since spectators and cameras are both sutured in the video as significant actors, the camera as mediating apparatus, occupies both subjective and objective positions. As Shane Denson argues,

“[...] digital cameras [...] render images themselves fundamentally processual — at once inextricably bound up in computational processes and simultaneously initiating a volatile feedback loop between these and the spectator. Such post-cinematic images, which fail to ‘settle’ or coalesce into a fixed and distant position, thus displace the film-as-object-of-perception and uproot the spectator-as-perceiving-subject—in effect, enveloping both in an epistemologically indeterminate but materially quite real and concrete field of affective relation. (31)

Dension calls these “post-cinematic images” dis-correlated images. According to Dension, whereas the correlative force of images makes sense of the diegesis through spatiotemporal continuity and integrity, dis-correlated images rethink the bond between “perceptual consciousness” and its “intentional objects” as reflected in the dislocated point-of-view shots. Although violating integral subjectivity and spatiotemporal continuity, those images evoke “more basic embodied sensibilities as the site of microtemporal impacts” (17). The hybrid media form of vlogs determines its occupation with mainly dis-correlated images. As a result, spectators’ engagement with vlog contents no longer relies on rational orderings of space and time but is charged with senses to negotiate with “the transactions between human and machinic agencies (2).

6. Conclusion: A Technological Turn

The contemporary world’s digital landscape is firmly bound together through globalization of media distribution. Despite the restriction of regional platforms, media technology transcends the geographic boundaries and enables a virtual unity that is based on affective forces. As a core contribution to the rise of internet celebrities and amateur photographers and cinematographers, the camera has exposed itself as not just cinematic apparatus but also an actor that disturbs the

vlogger's subjectivity in the video. The aesthetics of vlog as a post-media form is intensively influenced by the affordance of cinematographic apparatuses, and vice versa. The industrialization of vlogging has hastened the specialization of camera devices. The features of high-definition image, lightweight, auto focus, and stabilization have almost become defaulted in the cameras designed for vlogging.

Although it entered the vlogging market later than many other countries, China has shown strength in this global competition within a short period through technological dominance. Besides camera drones, the DJI company has further expanded their product lines to action cameras, stabilizers, gimbals, and tripod heads. In the end of 2018, when vlogging grew into a trend on China-based platforms, DJI released *Osmo Pocket*, a pocket-size handheld camera, with its successor *Osmo Pocket 2* came out two years later. It targets the vlogging market. At around the same time, another camera company Insta360 was founded in Shenzhen, China, and released their 360-degree cameras ONE series and GO series, aiming to create videos with a 360-degree immersive effect. By making the camera portable and wearable, both DJI Pocket and Insta360 enhance the human-technology interface into a techno-corporeal level. On their tiny camera bodies, not only is the viewfinder removed, but the display screen is too diminutive for monitoring the image precisely. In the case of DJI *Osmo Pocket*, the lens detaches itself from the camera body and is supported by a 3-axis gimbal stabilizer. One of *Osmo Pocket*'s feature designs "ActiveTrack" enables lock of the targeted object in the shot no matter how you move. The camera lens' movement is thus divorced from the cinematographer's hand movement but aligns with the profilmic object. Under such circumstance, the act of filming manifests a double agency between that of the creator and that of the camera. In Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, one of the main characters HAL is an artificial intelligence computer depicted as a camera lens containing

a red dot. Although there is no evidence that the *Osmo Pocket*'s design was inspired by HAL, one day the camera may evolve into a posthuman mechanism and be totally out of our control, bringing the concept out of science fiction.

REFERENCES

Introduction

- Balázs, Béla. *Theory of the Film*. Dennis Dobson LTD, 1952.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Face of Garbo." *Film Theory and Criticism*, 7th ed., edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 471-73.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Intimacy: A Special Issue." *Critical Inquiry* vol. 24, no. 2, 1998, pp. 281-288.
- Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame & Its History*. Vintage, 1997.
- Casetti, Francesco. *Lumiere Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. New York: Columbia UP, 2015.
- Cavell, Stanley. "Audience, Actor, and Star." *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*. Harvard UP, 1979, pp. 25-29.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema." *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2003, pp. 89-111. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/50602.
- Dudley, Andrew. *What Cinema Is!: Bazin's Quest and its Charge*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. BFI Publishing, 1979.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Touch and Gesture: On the Borders of Intimacy." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2019, pp. 9-25. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/724740.
- Gallagher, Mark. *Tony Leung Chiu-Wai*. BFI, 2018.
- Gaudreault, André and Marion, Philippe. *The End of Cinema?: A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age*. Trans. Timothy Barnard. Columbia UP, 2015.
- Geraghty, Christine. "Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance," *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, Arnold, 2000, pp. 183-200.
- Gledhill, Christine, editor. *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, 1991.
- Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Harvard UP, 1991.

- Holmes, Su, and Sean Redmond, editors. *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*. Routledge, 2012.
- Horton, Donald, and R. Richard Wohl. "Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance." *Psychiatry* 19.3 (1956): 215-229.
- Inglis, Fred. *A Short History of Celebrity*. Princeton UP, 2010.
- Lau, Dorothy Wai Sim. *Chinese Stardom in Participatory Cyberculture*. Edinburgh UP, 2018.
- Laura U. Marks. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Duke UP, 2000.
- . *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Lin, Feng. *Chow Yun-fat and Territories of Hong Kong Stardom*. Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. The MIT Press, 2001.
- Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Miyao, Daisuke. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. Duke University Press, 2007.
- Redmond, Sean, and Su Holmes, editors. *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. Sage, 2007.
- Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books, 2001.
- Shaviro, Steven. *Post Cinematic Affect*. John Hunt Publishing, 2010.
- Shouse, Eric. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *M/C Journal*, vol. 8, no. 6, 2005, pp. 26.
- Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. University of California Press, 2004.
- . *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. 2nd ed., Sage, 2014.
- Vincendeau, Ginette. *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000.

Wang, Yiman. "Anna May Wong: A Border-crossing 'Minor' Star Mediating Performance." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* vol.2, no. 2, 2008, pp. 9-102. Reprinted in Yingjin Zhang, Mary Farquhar eds. *Chinese Film Stars* (Routledge, 2010), pp. 19-31.

Willis, Andy and Leung, Wing-Fai, editors. *East Asian Film Stars*. 2014.

Yu, Sabrina Qiong. *Jet Li: Chinese Masculinity and Transnational Film Stardom*. 2012.

Yu, Sabrina Qiong, Austin Guy, editors. *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes and Methods*. Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Chapter 1

(no author) "The Secret That Cannot Be Told: a movie review." April 6, 2012,
<http://akosifaith.blogspot.com/2012/04/secret-that-cannot-be-told-movie-review.html>.

Abel, Richard. "Photogénie and Company." In *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907–1939. Vol. 1: 1907–1929*, edited by Richard Abel, 95–124.

Ai Yong. "Zai Zhangyawuzhua de Qingchunli Lixia Xishuichangliu de Ai." (Live with the Steady Love in the Rattling Youth) Sep 7, 2012,
<https://movie.douban.com/review/5576535/>.

Balázs, Béla. *Theory of Film*. London: Dennis Dobson LTD, 1952. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988.

Barthes, Roland. "The Face of Garbo." In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 471-473. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Bazin, Andre. *What Is Cinema* Vol. II. 1967. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Sage, 2016.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Bordwell, David J. *French Impressionist Cinema: Film Culture, Film Theory, and Film Style*. The University of Iowa, 1974.

Chan, Jessica Ka Yee. *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Propaganda, Aesthetics and Internationalism 1949–1966*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

Custen, George Frederick. *Bio/pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*. Rutgers University Press, 1992.

- David, Bordwell. *French Impressionist Cinema: Film Culture, Film Theory, and Film Style*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema." *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2003, pp. 89-111. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/50602.
- Dyer, Richard. *Stars*, second edition. London: British Film Institute, 1998.
- Epstein, Jean, "On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie." In *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, edited by Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul, 292-296. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2012.
- Gundle, Stephen, and Castelli, Clino. *The Glamour System*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Henning, Michelle. "The Floating Face: Garbo, Photography and Death Masks," *Photographies* vol. 10, no.2, 2017, pp: 157-178.
- Holden, Stephen "Two Teenage Girls and a Swimmer, Staking Out Territory in a Triangle." Nov 21, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/21/movies/film-review-two-teenage-girls-and-a-swimmer-staking-out-territory-in-a-triangle.html>.
- Li, Zhenlin 厉震林. "Taiwan 'xin qingchun dianying' de 'jiushi' daolu (The Road of Saving the Market of Taiwan New Youth Film)." *Daoyan de Lvdong* (The Rhythm of Directors), Shanghai shudian chubanshe (Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House), 2011, pp. 45-74.
- Lim Jr, Richard. (no date) <http://www.moviexclusive.com/review/secret/secret.htm>.
- Lim, Song Hwee. "Citizen-to-citizen Connectivity and Soft Power: The Appropriation of Subcultures in 'Little Freshness' Across the Taiwan Strait," *China Information* vol. 33, no. 3 (forthcoming 2019): 5. Advanced publication online. url: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0920203X18806418?journalCode=cina>
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT press, 1994.
- McDonald, Paul. "Why Study Film Acting? Some Opening Reflections." *More Than A Method: Trends and Traditions in Contemporary Film Performance*, edited by Cynthia Baron, Diane Carson and Frank P. Tomasulo, Wayne State UP, 2004, pp. 23-41.
- Miyao, Daisuke. "Sessue Hayakawa: The Mirror, the Racialized Body, and *Photogénie*." *Flickers of Desire: Movie Stars of the 1910s*, edited by Jennifer M. Bean, Rutgers University Press, 2011, pp. 91-112.
- Paris, Barry. *Garbo: A Biography*. Alfred a Knopf Incorporated, 1995.

- Teo, Stephen. "Wuxia Redux: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon as a Model of Late Transnational Production." *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*. Hong Kong University Press, 2005, pp.191-204.
- Tu Xiangwen 塗翔文, "2007 Yinmu Xinren" (2007 New Faces on the Screen). In *2008 Taiwan Cinema Yearbook*, 76–78. Taipei: Government Information Office, 2008.
- Wu, George. "Blue Gate Crossing (Lanse Da Men)." Dec 12, 2003, <https://culturevulture.net/film/blue-gate-crossing-lanse-da-men/>.
- Xiao, Juzhen 蕭菊貞. "Yee Chih-yen." *Wo 'men zheyang paidianying: Face Taiwan* (How We Make Movies: Face Taiwan), Taipei: Dakuai wenhua chuban gufen youxian gongsi (Dakuai Cultural Publishing Ltd.), 2016, pp. 184-188.
- Xie Renchang 謝仁昌, Yang Yihui 楊憶暉, "Qingchun de Weicheng" (The Besieged Fortress of Youth). In *2003 Cinema Yearbook in Republic of China*, 30-42. Taipei: Taiwan Film Institute, 2003.
- Yeh, Emilie Yueh-Yu. "A Small History of *Wenyi*," In *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, edited by Rojas Carlos and Eileen Chow, 225-249. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- . "The Road Home: Stylistic Renovations of Chinese Mandarin Classics." In *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, edited by Davis Darrell William and Ru-shou Robert Chen, 203-216. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Zhang, Qu 张去 and Wang Jiaming 王家铭, "Yee Chih-yen: Xiari Qingchun Wuyu" (Yee Chih-yen: A Story of the Summer Youth), in *Qingnian Zuojia* (Youth Writers), no. 13, 2015, pp: 122-129.
- Zhang, Yingjin and Mary Farquhar. "Introduction." In *Chinese Film Stars*, edited by Yingjin Zhang and Mary Farquhar. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Chapter 2

- (no author) Middle-aged Actresses Decry Lack of Better Roles in TV, Movie Industry," *China Daily*, 7 Aug. 2019, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201908/07/WS5d4a2417a310cf3e35564419_1.html.
- Arita, Yoshifu. *My Home Is on the Other Side of the Mountain: The Truth of Teresa Teng's Tenth Year* [Watashinoie wa yama no mukō — Teresa Teng jūnenme no shinjitsu]. Bungeishunju. 2005.
- Auslander, Philip. "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2012, pp. 3–11.

- . *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Routledge, 2008.
- Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. Routledge, 2013.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. U of Michigan P, 1994.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)." *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, et al., translated by Edmund Jephcott et al., The Belknap Press, 2008, pp. 19–55.
- Brzeski, Patrick. "Taiwanese Pop Singer Performs with Hologram of Late Star Teresa Teng (Video)." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 9 Sept. 2013, www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/taiwanese-pop-singer-performs-hologram-624394 . Accessed 25 Jan. 2020.
- Custen, George Frederick. *Bio/pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*. Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Desjardins, Mary R. *Recycled Stars: Female Film Stardom in the Age of Television and Video*. Duke University Press, 2015.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Dixon, Steve. *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*. MIT Press, 2007.
- Evens, Aden. *Sound Ideas: Music, Machines, and Experience*. University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Enwezor, Okwui. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. International Center of Photography, 2008.
- Ernst, Wolfgang. "Underway to the Dual System: Classical Archives and Digital Memory." *Digital Memory and the Archive*, edited by Jussi Parikka, U of Minnesota P, 2013, pp. 81–94.
- Goodman, Steve. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. MIT Press, 2012.
- Han, Songluo. "Teresa Teng's Biopic Might be the Most Difficult Movie for Ang Lee." *Tencent*, <https://new.qq.com/omn/20181118/20181118B1BTHQ.html>. Accessed 20 Sept. 2020.

- “Hatsune Miku.” *Wikipedia*, 3 Feb. 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatsune_Miku. Accessed 25 Jan. 2020.
- Hu, Brain. “‘Bruce Lee’ After Bruce Lee: A Life in Conjectures.” *Chinese Film Stars*, edited by Mary Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang, Routledge, 2010, pp. 165–79.
- Khiun, Liew Kai. “Rewind and Recollect: Activating Dormant Memories and Politics in Teresa Teng’s Music Videos Uploaded on YouTube.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 5, 2014, pp. 503–15.
- . “Shadow and Soul: Stereoscopic Phantasmagoria and Holographic Immortalization in Transnational Chinese Pop.” *Asian Perspectives on Digital Culture: Emerging Phenomena, Enduring Concepts*, edited by Sun Sun Lim and Cheryl Soriano, Routledge, 2016, pp. 152–68.
- Kim, Suk-Young. *K-pop Live: Fans, Idols, and Multimedia Performance*. Stanford UP, 2018.
- Le Grice, Malcolm. *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*. British Film Institute, 2001.
- Lea, Allen. Comment on “Teresa Teng Brought to Life after 22 Years Using the Latest 3D VR Technology.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Adrian C, 6 June 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=no32ZLYjyM4&t=149s&ab_channel=AdrianC. Accessed 20 Sept. 2020.
- Liang, Colin. Comment on “2013 Jay Chou Taipei Arena Concert Duet with Teresa Teng “What Do You Have to Say?,” “Red Dust Inn,” and “Faraway.”” *YouTube*, uploaded by Zhou Jielun Jay Chou, 6 Sept. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=TixHYua3XCI. Accessed 25 Jan. 2020.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2002.
- Parikka, Jussi. “Archival Media Theory: An Introduction to Wolfgang Ernst’s Media Archaeology.” *Digital Memory and the Archive*, edited by Jussi Parikka, University of Minnesota Press, 2013, pp. 1–22.
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 2003.
- Rodekohr, Andy. “The Death of Teresa Teng.” *A New Literary History of Modern China*, edited by David Der-wei Wang, Harvard UP, 2017, pp. 833–39.
- Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2010.
- . *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2013.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke UP, 2003.

Tu, Wei-Ming. "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center." *Daedalus*, vol. 120, no. 2, 1991, pp. 1–32.

Yu, Sabrina Qiong. Introduction. *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes and Methods*, edited by Sabrina Qiong Yu and Austin Guy, Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Chapter 3

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Casetti, Francesco. *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. Columbia University Press, 2015.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Bread and Circuses Publishing, 2012.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cornell UP, 1983.

Jenkins Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York UP, 2006.

Kellner, Douglas. "Media Spectacle and Media Events: Some Critical Reflections." *Media Events in a Global Age*. Routledge, 2009. pp. 76-91.

Gunning, Tom. "Narrative Discourse and the Narrator System." *Film Theory and Criticism*, 7th ed., edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 390-401.

Meng, Bingchun. "Who Needs Democracy if We Can Pick Our favorite girl? Super Girl as media spectacle." *Chinese Journal of Communication*, vol 2, no.3, 2009, pp. 257-272.

Murray, Susan, and Laurie Ouellette, editors. *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. NYU Press, 2009. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jmlm>. Accessed 27 Jul. 2022.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, 2009.

Chapter 4

Baudry, Jean-Louis, and Alan Williams. "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1974, pp. 39-47.

Cartwright, Lisa, and D. Andy Rice. "The Camera–Body’s V: A Media Archaeology of Tiny Viewfinderless Cameras as Technologies of Action." *The Camera as Actor: Photography and the Embodiment of Technology*, edited by Amy Cox Hall, Routledge, 2020, pp. 29-51.

Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Columbia University Press, 2019.

- Chisholm, Brad. "Reading Intertitles." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol.15, no.3, 1987, pp. 137-142.
- Denson, Shane. *Discorrelated Images*. Duke University Press, 2020.
- Duplantier, Aaron. *Authenticity and How we Fake It: Belief and Subjectivity in Reality TV, Facebook and YouTube*. McFarland, 2016.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "'Constructive Instability', or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?" *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*, edited by Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008, pp. 13-32.
- Galloway, Alexander R. *The Interface Effect*. Polity, 2012.
- Jeong, Seung-hoon. *Cinematic Interfaces: Film Theory after New Media*. Routledge, 2013.
- Kim, Jihoon. *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-Media Age*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.
- Lamarre, Thomas. "Regional TV: Affective Media Geographies." *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2015, pp. 93-126.
- Manovich, Lev. "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life." *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*, edited by Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008, pp. 33-44.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT press, 1994.
- Rettberg, Jill Walker. *Blogging*. Polity, 2014.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Media and Narrative." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan. Routledge, 2010.
- Steinberg, Marc, and Jinying Li. "Introduction: Regional Platforms." *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, vol. 4, no.3, 2017, pp. 173-183.
- Vernallis, Carol. *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*. Oxford University Press, 2013.