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# Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema

No film is an island

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Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam**

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No film is an island

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## 7 Generic ghosts

### Remaking the new 'Asian horror film'<sup>1</sup>

*Bliss Cua Lim*

Ghosts, it appears, are growing ever more generic. This paradox is encapsulated in the Derridean understanding of the ghost as 'repetition *and* first time'.<sup>2</sup> We are faced, on the one hand, with the force of singularity: the singularity of the jolt, of the first time one sees a ghost, or screams at a terrifying turn in a movie. On the other, formulaic repetition: one sees the same ruse again and again. A scream gives way to a chuckle; the horror film fails to horrify, losing the affective charge for which the genre was named. The ghost becomes generic, the very figure of genre. Through singularity and repetition, the ghost figures both the force and depletion of return.

The genre film is cannibalistic: 'implicitly, each new genre film ingests every previous film'.<sup>3</sup> The centrality of intertextual repetition in genre films is particularly pronounced in the cannibalism of a remake, which even more emphatically 'ingests' its precursors.

The names for intertextuality and generic exchange are many: remake, sequel, allusion, and influence retain, to greater or lesser degree, the more pejorative cast of ripoff, steal, and copy. Their shared semantic horizon, of course, is repetition: a repetition faulted both for lack of originality and for imitation found wanting. Repetition draws us inexorably into the local, specific character of Hong Kong cinema as well as to transnational generic exchange in regionalist and globalist perspectives. This essay focuses on a regionalist-globalist moment in the recent transnational history of the repetitive cannibalism of genre: what can only be called Hollywood's Asian remake frenzy in recent years.

One critic calls Hong Kong cinema 'an unabashedly imitative cinema', noting 'its voracious appetite for imitation, most boldly of Hollywood material' in the form of 'remakes, takeoffs, or simply steals of popular American movies'. She observes, alongside this appetite for imitation, a tendency towards exhaustion: 'the Hong Kong film industry is notorious for seizing upon a working formula and then working it to death'.<sup>4</sup> But what such critical commonplaces conceal is the fact that these generic exchanges are not unidirectional. In contradistinction to a vulgar cultural imperialism model which posits a one-way intertextual flow from the United States to its others, rights to *The Eye* (*Jian Gui*; dir. Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang, 2002), which

reviewers charged was merely derivative of Hollywood horror, have been bought by Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner for a remake at Paramount. *The Eye* is among several 'original Asian horror films' that American studios see as 'reviving' the 'creatively dead' Hollywood horror film, whose own slasher film sequels have run out of steam. One reporter writes, 'Hollywood's horror industry is running scared. The formulas and franchises have been squeezed dry. And now Hollywood is turning to Asia to restock the cupboard'.<sup>5</sup>

Our current moment is characterised by furious transnational exchange between Hollywood and what has been dubbed the 'Asian horror film' – a new regionalist appellation less inclusive than it sounds, since it consists primarily of Japanese, South Korean, Hong Kong, and Thai horror films. *Variety* quips, 'In the Hollywood remake kitchen, French is no longer the *cuisine du jour*, Italian has lost some of its flavour, Latin dishes may be starting to tickle taste buds, and Asian fusion is so hot it's smoking'.<sup>6</sup> Another concurs, writing that Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998), Takashi Miike's *The Audition* (1999), and Pang Brothers' *The Eye* all 'confir[m] Asia's position at the vanguard of modern horror cinema'.<sup>7</sup> Since at least 2001, Hollywood has been in the grips of an Asian horror remake frenzy. Witness Dreamworks' remakes of the *Ringu* cycle (*The Ring*, 2002 and *The Ring 2*, 2005), Senator International and Paramount's remake of Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on* (2000) as *The Grudge* (2004), and Disney-based Pandemonium's remake of Nakata's *Dark Water* (2005), to name only a few.<sup>8</sup> By 2003 at least 18 remakes of films from South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong were either completed or in the works at various studios: Dream-works, Paramount, Miramax, Warner Brothers, Paramount, United Artists, Fox, Universal, and MGM among them.<sup>9</sup>

Hollywood's current crop of remakes is certainly not confined to Asian horror alone; nor is the current preponderance of horror on studio slates surprising. In 1999, with *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Sixth Sense*, Hollywood horror films turned a profitable corner, away from previously exhausted genre trends (1980s slasher films and their ironic nineties counterparts, e.g., *Scream* [1996]).<sup>10</sup> By 2002, *Variety* was reporting a wave of new and upcoming Hollywood horror releases.<sup>11</sup> In 2003, *Sight and Sound* remarked the popularity of remakes and sequels of 1970s Hollywood horror classics. Like 1980s horror films that revisited 1950s movies, remakes like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), 'a hallmark 1970s horror product cunningly rebranded for a jaded 21st-century audience', testify to what has been called horror cinema's 'regurgitative' impulse, an 'enthusiasm for devouring and regurgitating its own entrails'.<sup>12</sup>

Why horror? Why the remake? What accounts for the new conspicuousness of a genre (horror) and a generic practice (the remake) in transnational generic exchange between Hollywood and regional Asian cinemas? The answers to these questions are generic-economic: first, the 'value proposition' of playing in the 'genre space' of the mid-priced horror film. 'Horror films are often cheap to make, they are not usually star-driven, don't need a

lot of expensive special effects and can be made in a tight locale'.<sup>13</sup> Senator International, one of the companies involved in the *Ju-on* remake, sees itself as playing in the 'genre space' of horror and comedy, a 'robust' clearing in the international film market for moderately priced fare (productions between US\$10–\$40 million, at a time when production and marketing costs for Hollywood releases average around US\$90 million).<sup>14</sup> Second, remakes and sequels are at base financially conservative studio strategies, considered a 'foolproof', inexpensive, alternative form of development, since the screenplay has already been proven market-worthy.<sup>15</sup> As scholars have pointed out, classical Hollywood horror was characterised by sequelisation and in the 1960s sequelisation was part of the conservatism of New Hollywood marketing.<sup>16</sup> Horror film remakes and sequels, then, are truly nothing new. But although remakes have always been with us, the preponderance of Hollywood remakes of commercial Asian fare is a striking new phenomenon. Of course, there have long been horror films produced in Asia. But what I am calling the new Asian horror film refers to the pronounced role of the horror film, among other commercial genre fare, in the convergence of regional, 'pan-Asian' cinema with global Hollywood initiatives from about 2001 to the present.

Part of this story is already the stuff of recent American film-industrial legend. *The New Yorker* describes Roy Lee as the 'remake man' who 'brings Asia to Hollywood'. By 2003, Lee, a Korean-American film producer working in a white-ruled industry, had sold Hollywood studios remake rights to 18 Asian films, including *Ringu* and *Ju-On*. Test market studies for Hollywood films often come too late (after the film has already been financed and completed) and are frequently inaccurate (relying on small, unrepresentative audience samples). In this light, Lee's opportunistic pitch – telling Hollywood executives to regard an Asian movie as 'as a script that someone had taken the trouble to film, and that happened to have been tested and proved as a hit in its own country' – is extremely appealing to studios uncertain about market tastes.<sup>17</sup>

Such generic-economic factors point to the dangers of characterising Hollywood's current spate of Asian horror remakes in exceptionalist terms. Exceptionalist claims regarding the superiority of Asian horror films constitute one pole of journalistic commentary, a counterpart to the opposite claim that such films are nothing but poor Hollywood copies.<sup>18</sup> Rather than touting the singular merits of a particular film cycle, it might be more productive to see this very cyclicity as characteristic of the social life of genres themselves. Christine Gledhill writes, 'The life of a genre is cyclical, coming round again in corkscrew fashion, never quite in the same place. Thus the cultural historian lacks any fixed point from which to survey the generic panorama'.<sup>19</sup>

Gledhill's cyclical notion of genre emphasises decline and reemergence, keying us to return, reinvention, and movement, rather than stasis. Thus the musical, after several decades, might bob its head up again, but not in the

same shape as before. Similarly, the heterogeneous range of screen texts we refer to under the banner of the horror film has undergone, with dizzying speed in the past few decades alone, a series of deaths, returns, and transmutations: as B-film, high concept, indie, slasher, splatter, gore, and ghost film, and most recently, in the guise of Asian spectres furiously retooled by Hollywood studios.

For these reasons, I am sceptical of claims for the exceptionalism and longevity of this instance of transnational generic exchange. Like many other generic tendencies, every cycle is always vulnerable to a quick weary death from market saturation. Rather, I am interested in seeing how the feverish transnational circulation of a generic practice characterised in simultaneously globalist and regionalist terms (Hollywood remaking an Asian genre) challenges us to rethink prevailing paradigms for national cinema and its imbrication with genre scholarship in the discipline of film and media studies. Given that Hong Kong horror movies are increasingly framed via discursive slippage as 'Asian horror films', how do globalist-regionalist remaking and generic exchange force a reconsideration of the truisms of genre studies and national cinema?

This essay argues that any notion of the distinctiveness of national cinema (whether formal, cultural, economic, or historical) must contend with Hollywood's voracious capacity to deracinate such forms of distinction. Historically, Hollywood's deracination of Hong Kong cinema has taken aim at the genre film – first, 'Hong Kong action film style' from the 1990s on; and second, the appropriation of 'pan-Asian' horror cinema in this decade. The recent emergence of a generic practice, the remake, as a vehicle for Hollywood's globalist deracination of Asian genre films points to the recruitment of generic intertextuality for flexible accumulation. Generic repetition and influence are here a function of the speed with which film industries respond to their rivals by mimicking and deracinating their local, cultural, or national signatures on screen. The newly-minted 'Asian horror film' represents the convergence of both regionalist discourses on the 'pan-Asian film' and globalist profiteering of Asian commercial cinema as at once culturally specific and culturally neutral, hence immensely appealing to audiences worldwide. The new regionalist and globalist Asian horror films and their remakes rely on the recent market proximity of Asian films to various national-popular audiences in Asia and the United States. The attempt to unify heterogeneous transnational audiences via a global smash hit attests to the intermeshing of the national-popular with the internationalised Hollywood standard. We see in Hollywood's furious remaking of Asian horror films two moments: a first moment of triumph for local Asian film industries whose inexpensive genre films outdo high dollar Hollywood productions domestically; and a second, bleaker moment, when Hollywood remakes these modes of resistance into global profits, outperforming domestic productions once again by retooling the Asian horror film as a cultural key to the enticing Asian market.

### **Deracinating genre cinemas: from Hong Kong action to Asian horror film**

Gledhill proposes a modal approach to genre that is cross-national by definition:

The notion of modality, like register in socio-linguistics, defines a specific mode of aesthetic articulation adaptable across a range of genres, across decades, and across national cultures. It provides the genre system with a mechanism of 'double articulation', capable of generating specific and distinctively different generic formulae in particular historical conjectures, while also providing a medium of interchange and overlap between genres ... In such permeability lies the flexibility of the system necessary to the forming of a mass-produced 'popular culture' for a broadening society, drawing into public view a diversity of audiences, sometimes dividing but working more generally to unite them, while at the same time facilitating international exchange.<sup>20</sup>

Adopting this modal view of genre, we might conceive of the 'productivity of genre'<sup>21</sup> in terms of the 'international exchange' between national cinemas, domestic and overseas audiences, cult aficionados, film producers, studio distributors, critics, and promoters. If genres 'serve diverse groups diversely', as Rick Altman puts it, then no player on the generic field is a monolith. What we name – as a form of shorthand – audience, Hollywood, producer, and so on, are all variegated cultural actors who do different things with the 'same' genre film. As Altman points out, genres 'have multiple conflicting audiences' and 'Hollywood itself harbours many divergent interests'.<sup>22</sup>

That the international recognition of Hong Kong cinema to and through Hollywood eyes was always genre-driven underscores the cross-national proclivities of genre. 'Hong Kong Cinema' designates a particular industrial base and cultural and historical specificities; this is what we mean when we analyse it under the rubric, however problematic, of a 'national cinema'.<sup>23</sup> Yet from the late 1990s onwards, films that did not originate in the Hong Kong film industry in this particularised sense increasingly brandished a set of cinematic strategies (editing, action choreography, cinematography) formerly identifiable as stylistic signatures of particular Hong Kong action film genres.

In an article first published in 1999, Cindy Wong wrote presciently of the 'sinister globalism' which subtends Hollywood's interest in Hong Kong cinema. 'By taking over Hong Kong', she warned, 'Hollywood ultimately denatures and denies it ... Hong Kong films may be different from Hollywood, but as Hollywood analyses what sells in Hong Kong film, it finds that it can appropriate these features and sell them better'. That year and the following, *The Matrix* (1999) and *Charlie's Angels* (2000), two films which

notably did not feature Hong Kong stars or directors, premiered. With the help of two prominent Hong Kong action choreographers, the brothers Yuen Woo-ping and Yuen Cheung-yan, both films arguably found 'what sells in Hong Kong film' and 'sold them better' to audiences the world over, fulfilling Wong's prediction that 'the general audience may see a Hollywood movie with or without knowledge of its Hong Kong connections at all'.<sup>24</sup>

Through *The Matrix*, *Charlie's Angels*, and a host of others in their wake, including the global blockbuster/art film co-production *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), Global Hollywood has invoked, with great success, a deracinated (that is, uprooted, displaced, de-localised) understanding of 'Hong Kong Cinema' as a style, an aesthetic, a mark of polish in certain high concept action films. This makes it possible for 'Hong Kong Cinema' to be in the room, so to speak, in a film starring Cameron Diaz even for an audience unaware of action choreographer Yuen Woo Ping's lineage in Hong Kong martial arts film production nor his status as Hollywood film maker-émigré. (Nonetheless, publicity around both *The Matrix* and *Charlie's Angels* was poised to draw the interest of knowing Hong Kong film buffs as well.) The appropriation of Hong Kong action films to Hollywood productions is not new, nor is it the first time that Chinese martial arts genres are absorbed into American action genres in the service of American stardom.<sup>25</sup>

An unmistakable aspect of this earlier moment of deracination was its generic stamp, its reductive caricature of Hong Kong cinema as 'action film style'. Stephen Teo calls the international misrecognition of Hong Kong cinema as action film the 'supreme irony in the history of Chinese cinema' given that martial arts films were on the wane for domestic Hong Kong audiences at the time of Hollywood's infatuation with the genre in the 1990s.<sup>26</sup> Critical ambivalence towards the *wuxia* or martial arts genre has long structured debates on the 'quality film', first in Mainland China in the late 1920s and early 30s, then in Hong Kong via Shanghai expatriate film makers in the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> The deracination of Hong Kong action cinema was a 'prequel', so to speak, for the current deracination of Hong Kong genre films under the banner of the Asian horror film. Upon hindsight, what is most striking about Hollywood's deracination-and-appropriation of Hong Kong genre cinema (and soon after, of 'Asian' genre cinema) is the speed with which it was accomplished. Not so very long ago, in 1996, *Time* magazine asked: 'Will Hollywood Ever Make a Place for Hong Kong Cinema?', referring to the hesitant overtures of Hong Kong film luminaries John Woo and Jackie Chan to the US film market. At that time, a Hong Kong genre, the action film, was also being touted as Hollywood's much-needed 'shot of adrenaline', echoing more recent rhetoric hailing the new Asian horror film as a tonic for another depleted Hollywood genre.<sup>28</sup>

Hollywood's uptake of Japanese and Korean genre films happened quickly as well. To take the example of South Korean commercial films: in 2001, when Miramax paid \$950,000 for remake rights to *My Wife is a Gangster*, trade journalists were still regretting that 'South Korea's movie

miracle' – powerful domestic box office successes that outshone Hollywood summer blockbusters – 'largely remains a secret reserved for its 45 million people'. Says *Variety*, '[T]he irony is that all this success, which mirrors other celluloid renaissances in Thailand and Hong Kong, is little appreciated beyond home turf'.<sup>29</sup> While 'Korea Fever' for popular music, television and film ran strong in the region (especially in South Korea's most lucrative entertainment market, Japan), the window of opportunity to Western audiences appeared narrow, due to a lack of a clearly identifiable generic trend, and Hollywood's limited slots for Asian films:

With the West able to absorb only a handful of Asian pics every year, Korean cinema still lacks a popular hook in audience's minds. Chinese cinema is martial arts extravaganzas and arty peasant dramas, Wong Kar-wai and Zhang Yimou. But Korean? Even upscale Western audiences would be hard-pressed to name a single director, let alone a popular genre, that identifies Korean cinema.<sup>30</sup>

Hence, for *Variety* in 2001, the 'global breakout' 'eyed' by Korean cinema still seemed to be a question of gaining international legibility through a single signature genre, or via globally-recognised stars and/or directors. As it turns out, the Asian/Korean mark would be not so much a genre as a generic practice – the remake.

Nakata's 1998 *Ringu* is often situated as the progenitor of the Asian horror remake trend, sparking generic repetition across Asian and Hollywood film industries, a regional-international cycle replete with its own conventional iconography: 'girls with long hair hiding their malevolent faces, dotted old ladies, child zombies caked in white – all of which you can expect to see in the Hollywood remakes'. Hollywood's remakes of the two most profitable J-horror cycles – *The Ring* and *Ju-On* – represent a departure from usual Hollywood practices in that the original Japanese directors (Nakata for *Ring 2* and Shimizu for *The Grudge*) signed on to remake their own films.<sup>31</sup>

Writing about a US remake of a French film, one critic has characterised the American remake as motivated by an attempt to erase the foreign film's subtitles. Subtitles are always evidence of 'the process of being transposed, translated, exported', of the labour of repeating and recontextualising a film, of the need to render a foreign utterance in a local tongue. Subtitles also disrupt the seamlessness of sound and image through the obviousness of the need to work at legibility. The remake seeks to efface the sign of cross-cultural negotiation in order to deliver the foreign as already domesticated and familiar.<sup>32</sup> In this light we might understand Hollywood's feverish spate of Asian horror remakes as deracinating acts of cultural appropriation.

Appropriation contrasts starkly with translation. Derrida writes that translation delights in 'idiomatic singularity', 'approaching as closely as possible while refusing at the last moment to threaten or to reduce, to consume or to consummate, leaving the other body intact but not without causing the other



to appear'.<sup>33</sup> Its antipode is appropriation, which transposes to another register the other that it erases. In this sense the remake, construed as an avoidance of subtitles, might be an attempt to circumvent both the idiomatycity of the precursor text as well as the sign of the work of cultural translation.

### **Intertextuality and capital**

Intertextuality – the way in which texts always point to other texts – in this case serves the ends of capital. The ability to seize upon, to trope (whether by allusion, imitation, or transformation) a prior commodity's most marketable signature, and to do it with enough speed to exploit the currency of always-presentist audience demands, must be understood as a form of flexible accumulation. For Yeh Yueh-Yu and Darrell William Davis, flexible accumulation in the Hong Kong film industry means above all the rapid appropriation and containment of a competitor's market innovations. 'Flexible accumulation means that producers have one eye on the competition, ready at all times to borrow elements embraced by audiences.'<sup>34</sup> The flexible accumulation typified by Hong Kong's workshop model accounts for the speed with which the industry is able to respond to and appropriate the strengths of its foreign competitors, thus accelerating the cycle which moves from novelty to exhaustion in generic exchange. Flexible accumulation means that:

[W]hen a genre or fad proves popular in Hong Kong, it swiftly blazes out of control. This exemplifies a flexible system of production because it depends on a very quick turn around between the popular embrace of a Japanese television drama, for instance, and a Hong Kong reworking of its motifs. The challenge in Hong Kong is to produce a recognisable knockoff or parody before the shelf life of the source has expired.<sup>35</sup>

This attempt to capitalise on the aficionado's knowledge and interest in transnational genre trends before their shelf life has expired is not unique to Hong Kong: as I have tried to show, we see flexible accumulation on a greater scale in Hollywood's deracination of Hong Kong cinema's (once) signature action cinema.

Clearly, several processes are at work in Hollywood's deracination of Asian genre cinemas: on the one hand a signature (a mark of innovation, of originality, of newness or novelty greeted by vigorous, profitable audience demand) is being transformed into a formula (no longer a mark of local, national, or cultural singularity but a mark of deracinated iterability). We see this over and over again in the terrifying speed of Hollywood's own capacity – whether by way of homage, by hiring émigré talent, through distributor pick-ups of foreign films and through the funding of transnational productions – to neutralise national or regional cinemas that have acquired

cult US audiences and have proven able box office adversaries abroad. This is intertextuality as flexible accumulation, in the service of capital and deracination. All of a sudden, Hollywood action blockbusters look just like Hong Kong martial arts flicks and the distinctions between J-horror and Hollywood horror become less acute. This aspect of flexible accumulation, in another film-industrial context (Hong Kong media producers' ability to imitate profitable Japanese products), has been described by Yeh and Davis as the 'softening of contrast'.<sup>36</sup> This softening of contrast, the quickly-accomplished reduction of the distance between generic innovation and generic repetition, is the very sign of intertextuality in the service of late capitalism, literalised by the operation of genre: commodity distinction made iterable, rapidly repackaged and redistributed for market gain before its popularity runs dry. With startling celerity, an infusion of freshness, a break in generic formula, becomes a trend that runs high risks of exhaustion.

### **The play of globalism and regionalism**

The discourse of exceptionalism that underwrites most Hollywood studio rhetoric on the Asian horror remake cycle is caught between two moves, emphasising the cultural specificity of the Asian horror film while imputing a cultural neutrality that guarantees its appeal to global audiences. A Miramax executive explains the Asian remake fever in these terms: 'These stories can work in any culture.'<sup>37</sup> Similarly, an American distributor of Asian horror films states that these films succeed because they boast strong, 'cerebral' writing, and because the 'Asian mythologies' behind these monsters 'are new to us and make the terror feel more rooted, less arbitrary'. This rhetoric is at once exceptionalist, regionalist, and globalist: Asian horror, in this account, is exceptionally well-written, rooted in mythology, and different from all other generic fare. At the same time, it is exceptionally rootless, deracinated, globalist. 'What does it tell us', one reviewer asks, 'that Asians are turning out stories that can be transplanted, that embody a form of postpunk youth culture as meaningful to kids in London and LA, as those in Tokyo and Seoul?'<sup>38</sup>

Naming is never neutral. The recently conspicuous, spectacularly lucrative 'Asian horror film' is not only a film cycle but also a complex generative act of naming, a discursive formation, regionalist and globalist in character, that allows an array of movies to become coherent and marketable in particular ways. Why call the naming of the new Asian horror film regionalist and globalist? The regional rather than national appellation (Asian, rather than simply Korean, Japanese, Hong Kong, or Thai) establishes a horizon of reception for Asian horror across the board for Hollywood studios, producers, distributors, exhibitors, critics, and audiences. Regionalist framing encourages us to downplay the differences between Hideo Nakata and the Pang brothers, directing us instead to make sense of them as

part of the same phenomenon. In effect, to global (read Americanist) audiences, the coinage 'Asian horror film' affords an abstracted measure of cultural distinction. The films are culturally distinguished as Asian; yet their cultural distinction has been blunted by both regionalism and generic familiarity, by all the ways in which these horror films are new yet readily recognisable. This rhetoric betrays a play with cultural/regional identity that, in the same breath, discounts cultural specificity, claiming a universal, culture-neutral appeal.

The regionalist-globalist discourse on Hong Kong genre films like *The Eye* does not stem from US distributors alone. Regionalist rhetoric hawking a commercial Asian cinema to global audiences is articulated by Asian film producers themselves. Made under the mantle of Applause Pictures and Singapore's Raintree Pictures, *The Eye* is an instructive example in this regard. Applause Pictures is one of many Hong Kong companies – Media Asia, Emperor Movie Group (EMG), and Filmko Pictures among them – aiming to fashion a pan-Asian cinema palatable to global, Americanist tastes.<sup>39</sup> Peter Ho-Sun Chan, the Hong Kong director and producer who co-founded Applause Pictures in 1999, articulates the gist of this deracinated battle-plan: 'The people who are portrayed in the movies that strike Americans as very Chinese, such as martial arts films, are not real people ... The truth is we are alike. America's way of life has become the world's way of life.'<sup>40</sup>

In an interview, he enjoins Hong Kong to 'take the lead in Asia to organise other industries ... to produce an Asian cinema. The trend is towards non-local development'. Chan envisions an 'Asian Cinema' (as opposed to a 'Hong Kong cinema') in which distinguishing between Japanese, Taiwanese, Korean, and Chinese cultural traits would become difficult, if not impossible.<sup>41</sup>

We recall that Peter Chan is among the mini-exodus of Hong Kong film personalities who worked in Hollywood in the 1990s.<sup>42</sup> Many of them have since returned to Hong Kong while maintaining a regionalist/globalist filmmaking purview. These film maker émigrés belong to globalisation's new breed of 'transnational design professionals', 'cultural specialists and intermediaries working in the film, television, music, advertising, fashion, and consumer culture industries' who, though based in different 'quarters' of various 'world cities', exhibit a 'degree of homogenisation in [their] procedures, working practices, and organisational cultures'. Jetting back and forth between Hong Kong and Los Angeles/New York, these mediators of 'intercultural communication'<sup>43</sup> can only work in the global film industry by speaking its lingua franca (English) and mastering and personifying the latter's transnational protocol, which they constantly exhort their local film industry to take up in the interests of staying competitive or becoming more efficient. One senses in their 1990s interviews a kind of euphoria at being newly initiated into these ranks as well as the stresses of having had to prove their mettle in a Hollywood which is far from leaving orientalist prejudices

behind. Once vetted, they remain well aware of gate-keeping at the doors of global cultural regimes but decide this is well worth the cost. In return, they are granted access to better financial compensation, global audiences, positioning in the world's filmmaking capital, and the power to shape global culture as a transnational design professional.

### **Audiences and transnational generic exchange**

Toby Miller writes, 'We live in an international age that by its very formulation decrees that we are also in a national one'.<sup>44</sup> Miller *et al.* characterise 'the paradigmatic nature of the national in an era of global companies' as 'the requirement to reference the local in a form that is obliged to do something with cultural-economic meeting-grounds'.<sup>45</sup> This paradox is internal to Hollywood's hailing of world audiences. The internationalisation of the Asian horror film prompts us to ask: How does the genre film manage to craft 'a version of the "popular" capable of producing recognition for a range of audiences from different classes, localities, and national groupings?'<sup>46</sup> The role of transnational, heterogeneous audience formation here is vital. The globalist genre film, pitched at audiences all over the world, strives to unify the proliferation and differentiation of a genre's variegated users in search of a worldwide hit.

*The Eye* exemplifies the pan-Asian cinema model, harnessing talent from various countries in the region in order to hail regional audiences. The careers of the film's Thailand and Hong Kong-based directors, Oxide and Danny Pang, are themselves indebted to the renaissance of the Thai film industry in 1997, which allowed the brothers to collaborate on Oxide's directorial debut feature, with Danny editing. Tony Rayns further credits the Pang brothers' Hong Kong-Thai background with their insights into genre innovation: '[A]nyone who has worked in the faltering Hong Kong and Thai film industries in the past decade must have learned to doubt the market potential of by-the-numbers genre film-making'. Casting for *The Eye*, which drew actors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Thailand, for a film set in both Hong Kong and Thailand, was calculated to allow 'maximum reach' across regional audiences.<sup>47</sup>

Applause pictures' *Three* (2002), an omnibus horror anthology by three directors, encapsulates the regionalist-globalist aspiration of the new Asian horror film perhaps even more forcefully than *The Eye*. In *Three*, each director's name functions as shorthand for a local cinematic renaissance. Alongside Hong Kong's Peter Chan, the other two directors are Thailand's Nonzee Nimibutr, whose box office successes spearheaded the newfound vigour of the Thai film industry since the late 1990s;<sup>48</sup> and South Korea's Kim Jee-woon, whose horror film *Tale Of Two Sisters* (*Janghwa, Hongryeon*, 2003) performed vigorously in Korea, ousting *The Matrix Reloaded* from first place in the domestic box office in June 2003. *Tale of Two Sisters* is also slated for a Hollywood remake by Dreamworks.<sup>49</sup>

All this underscores the value of looking beyond what Yeh and Davis call 'the blinkered perspective of cross-cultural criticism that deals with cultural flow solely on the East-West or Hong Kong-Hollywood axis'.<sup>50</sup> Faced with the regionalist-globalist character of the new Asian horror film, we are required to look closely at cultural traffic between other coordinates, the way in which call and response in Hong Kong genre cinema of late answers as much to pan-Asian sensibilities as to Hollywood's long shadow.

Films like *The Eye* and *Three* are couched to address a 'pan-Asian film-going culture'. Critics using this term usually refer to Hong Kong, Japan and Korea, but it is clear that regional networks are also extending to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, the Philippines, and beyond. According to Yeh and Davis: '[W]hat this pattern reveals is the gradual tightening of Asian regional connections, the result of finer, improved feedback networks between entertainment and audiences, producers and their multiple publics.'<sup>51</sup> The perceived collocation and synonymousness of Asian horror films from various nations is precisely the effect cultivated by regionalist co-production, distribution, marketing, and critical and popular audience reception.<sup>52</sup>

I have learned a great deal from Yeh and Davis's analysis of 'the ubiquity of Japanese media' in Hong Kong and their discussion of Hong Kong pan-Asian production companies like Media Asia. Media Asia is cued to what they call, variously, 'a regional, transpacific youth culture', and 'inter-Asian transnational entertainment', a kind of pan-Asian popular culture that encompasses the production and circulation of film and television between nations as well as the heightened cultural competencies of audiences grown familiar with such inter-Asian commodities. What is key in their discussion of pop cultural flows between Japan and Hong Kong, which I would extend to the pan-Asian character of the horror films under discussion, are their notions of 'instantaneity' and 'market proximity' in the consumption of film and television in Asia (in the past few years, for example, journalistic coverage shows that Koreans, Filipinos, Singaporeans and Malaysians alike have all thrilled to the Japanese *Ringu* and *Ju-On* cycles). The term 'market proximity' refers to a close familiarity between one national popular audience and another nation's screen texts. Yeh and Davis suggest that in some cases, the market proximity of regional cultural products might be able to counterbalance Hollywood dominance in domestic Asian film and television markets.<sup>53</sup>

I would argue that Hollywood remakes of Asian horror are premised on the relatively new market proximity of Asian cinemas as a whole. In 2004, *Variety* noted a 'sea change' at that year's Cannes Film Festival. In a reversal of prior years, art films by 'elite auteurs' were the exception, while the 'popular cinemas of East Asia ... attract[ed] the most attention on the world stage'.<sup>54</sup> How did this come about? Clearly, many rivers fed this current: the cult love of Asian cinema' by overseas audiences; the triumph of Asian auteurist cinema over the past two decades; the mainstream audiences drawn to deracinated, high-dollar Hollywood films made with émigré Asian

talent; and the critical and popular success of foreign language, subtitled global Hollywood productions (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*). Like Hong Kong action cinema before it, the growing audience for Asian horror films in the United States emerges in part from the mainstreaming of subcultural cult fandom. The example of one New York-based Asian cult fan-turned-festival programmer is instructive: as cult film tastes in Asian horror dovetail with big dollar business, small cinephilic Asian film festivals run by avid fans, early adopters many years ahead of the Hollywood curve, become financially imperilled.<sup>55</sup> The mainstreaming of subcultural spectatorial sensibilities might also be seen as part of the complex dynamic between the various social actors involved in genre-making and unmaking; 'marginal reception' practices become widespread as new genre trends are first 'poached' then, once established, 'raided' in turn.<sup>56</sup>

Within the last 15 years, from the prominence of auteurist art cinema from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea in the early 1990s to the mainstreaming of cult tastes in Asian genre films (primarily from Hong Kong and Japan) by the end of the decade, Asian cinema has been an increasingly familiar regional presence on the horizon for moviegoers in the United States. The legibility of Asian genre cinema to American audiences today makes the early difficulties encountered by Jackie Chan in his attempts to break into the US market seem dated by contrast,<sup>57</sup> attesting once again to the speed with which the market proximity of Asian cinema in regionalist-globalist terms has been accomplished. In the United States, this market proximity is orchestrated by theatrical, broadcast, and video distribution, film festivals, the mainstreaming of Asian cult cinephilia, as well as promotional discourse and critical acclaim. In this light, transnational generic exchange must be understood not only in intertextual-aesthetic terms of influence, the debt of one genre film to all others, but also in terms of the regional and global legibility of genre cycles, in particular, the perceived interchangeability and synonymousness of a genre film from one industry with that of another (Hong Kong and Korean horror films become collocated with J-horror). If genre films address an ideal spectator, an insider-aficionado whose familiarity is born of long spectatorship in the genre, then transnational generic exchange presupposes a transnational aficionado familiar, not only with the *Carrie* (1976) and *The Exorcist* (1973) but with *Ringu* and *Memento Mori* (1999).

At the same time, I would hesitate to overstate such proximity. Whereas in Asia, various national-popular audiences might have firsthand familiarity with the Asian sources for Hollywood horror remakes, American audiences may not always know that these films are remakes in the first place, since promotional materials for films like Dreamworks' version of *The Ring* are characteristically silent on this score. Even where American audiences may know that they are watching a remake, they may not have seen the Asian 'original' prior to the Hollywood version, in which case the question of firstness in remakes and sequels requires greater nuance.

Here we see that the specific contours of transnational generic exchange undermine the temporality conventionally attributed to sequels and remakes. Sequels and remakes are usually differentiated from other forms of intertextuality via their temporality, which might be dubbed the time of afterwards: the sequel or remake is thought to always follow from a precursor text. Yet this temporality, as with the premise of originality, proves upon closer view to be illusory. The time of 'afterwards' starts to come apart the closer one looks at things, since intertextuality is itself always temporally discrepant.<sup>58</sup> So perhaps remakes and sequels are not only afterward but also a refusal of afterward. What do we make of the spectator who comes to Nakata's 'original' *Ringu* second, having first seen Gore Verbinski's remake *The Ring* (2002)? In this case the remake becomes the ground for the reception of the precursor text, introducing instability into the very terms original, copy, precursor, remake, and sequel; in short, to questions of priority and cultural value in genre studies.

### From national cinema to Asian markets

Writing in 1989, Andrew Higson already understood the problems posed by Hollywood to the issue of national cinema. To begin with, any essentialist understanding of national cinema which seeks to define it in terms of an absolute difference from Hollywood films is bound to fail, not least because Hollywood has so profoundly infused what counts as national-popular throughout the world, beating domestically-produced films in their own backyard. To take seriously the question of what national-popular film audiences are actually watching, our notion of national cinema must acknowledge the existence of the Hollywood other within. Thus a model of national cinema that seeks to work contrastively, via a rhetoric of singularity or exceptionalism, runs aground vis-à-vis the suffusive reach of Hollywood. Higson writes:

Such an operation [the attempt to define a national cinema by contrast to others, as different from the cultural production of other nations] becomes increasingly problematic as cinema develops in an economy characterised by the international ownership and circulation of images and sounds. It is therefore necessary to examine the overdetermination of Hollywood in the international arena. *By Hollywood, I mean the international institutionalization of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectations, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing, to accommodate, regulate, and reproduce these standards and values...*

Hollywood never functions as simply one term within a system of equally weighted differences. Hollywood is not only the most internationally powerful cinema – it has also, of course, for many years been

an integral and naturalised part of the national culture, or the popular imagination, of most countries in which cinema is an established entertainment form. In other words, Hollywood has become one of those cultural traditions which feed into the so-called national cinemas of, for instance, the western European nations.<sup>59</sup>

(my emphasis)

Higson's definition of Hollywood as the internationalisation and institutionalisation of filmic standards and values – affecting audiences, film professionals, production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing strategies – has great analytical force. Nonetheless, Higson's discussion of the traffic between Hollywood and national cinemas remains regrettably one-sided. His argument emphasises Hollywood's contributions to national cinema, especially national popular cinema, but he fails to mention the converse: Hollywood's debts to other national cinemas, its founding reliance on émigré talent, its appropriation of aesthetic hallmarks, its practices of borrowing and remaking, and its eye on foreign markets.

How then does global Hollywood – defined not only as a geographically situated film industry, but as the *internationalisation* of filmic standards, values, professional ideologies, industrial practices, marketing strategies, and audience expectations – prompt us to nuance our understanding of national cinema? First, as Higson points out, national cinema cannot be defined via absolute difference from Hollywood; second, the economic reality is such that, to survive, national cinemas must play in the key of this juggernaut's standards:

Part of the problem, of course, is the paradox that for a cinema to be nationally popular it must also be international in scope. That is to say, it must achieve the international (Hollywood) standard. For, by and large, it is the films of the major American distributors which achieve national box-office success, so that film makers who aspire to this same level of box-office popularity must attempt to reproduce the standards, which in practice means colluding with Hollywood's systems of funding, production control, distribution and marketing. Any alternative means of achieving national popular success must, if it is to be economically viable, be conceived on an international scale.<sup>60</sup>

The regionalist-globalist thrust of the new Asian horror film and its uptake in Hollywood underscores Higson's argument that to be national-popular is to be international. Framing the question of transnational generic exchange between 'Asian horror' and Hollywood remakes in light of such vexed questions of national cinema brings several issues into view: first, as I have argued, the limits of a naïve insistence on the exceptionalism of the 'Asian horror film' that claims hard-and-fast distinctions from Hollywood analogues. Second, against Higson's image of Hollywood radiating a

one-way stream of influences to the rest of the world, here we see clearly that Hollywood, too, pillages from its rivals, a conspicuous instance of national-regional counterflows, in which the centre imitates its cinematic elsewhere, lest we forget that film is truly global. Finally, there is the complicated question of what is really being mimicked here: not just genre, but globalised film culture writ large, the internationalisation of film standards, and the imbrication of this internationalisation/standardisation with the national-popular.

Here Higson's observations appear to be borne out, since the new Asian horror films prove to be nationally popular (strong domestic box office able to equal or better Hollywood competitors), and meet the 'international standard', yielding the familiar, globally-recognised pleasures of the 'well-made film' (strong narrative conceits, visual élan, effective set-pieces). Speaking the internationally-legible language of the generic standard with culturally specific flair, such films do well, first nationally, then regionally, then, at the farthest remove, globally, especially in the mouths of their new Hollywood versions.

But the so-called the Asianisation of Hollywood requires us to look further than the national cinema-Hollywood nexus to assess the impact of regionalist-globalist discourses on national cinema markets in an internationalised frame. Studies on the 'Asianisation of Hollywood' and the corollary 'Hollywoodisation of Asia' point to the globalisation of film production and distribution, of cultural labour, and of film markets. Christine Klein puts it in this way: 'Hollywood is becoming an export industry, making movies primarily for people who live outside the US.' At present, overseas earnings account for over half of a Hollywood film's revenue. Over the last two decades, Asian film markets in particular have taken centre stage: 'Today, Hollywood movies take about 96 per cent of the box office receipts in Taiwan, about 78 per cent in Thailand, and about 65 per cent in Japan, which has become Hollywood's single most profitable export market.' The Asian film market has been described as 'Hollywood's fastest growing regional market', with Hollywood keen to fully tap the vast audiences of China and India. Klein points out that the remake phenomenon must be seen in the context of the globalisation of labour: '[I]n effect, they [Hollywood studios] are buying the labour of South Korean screenwriters, which is much cheaper than that of American writers.' Yet I would disagree with her assessment that 'far from weakening the South Korean industry by extracting talent from it, the studios are strengthening it by providing it with a new source of revenue'.<sup>61</sup> This is true only in the short run; over the long haul, Hollywood appropriations of Asian filmmaking (whether in terms of talent, of film markets, or of the distribution or co-financing of 'local' productions) are poised to extract revenue from its internationalising of Asian cinemas.

The recent box office triumphs of J-horror (the overwhelmingly cheap and successful *Ring* and *Ju-on* movies come to mind) are a concrete example of how small Asian B-films can outperform, in domestic and/or regional

markets, high-dollar Hollywood products that are exponentially better financed and better marketed by comparison. At least prior to their ingestion by Los Angeles studios, Asia's recent spate of audience-grabbing, low-rent, not-by-Hollywood horror films did seem to confirm the observation that 'the absolute significance of story over cost for audiences goes against classical economics' standard assumptions about the role of price in balancing supply and demand'.<sup>62</sup>

The other half of the story is darker, though. Remakes of Asian commercial films are allowing Hollywood to better penetrate foreign markets with borrowed force, outdoing the originals in their own home markets and beyond. (Nakata's *Ringu* cost US\$1.2 million in production and reaped US\$6.6 million in Japan. The Verbinski remake, *The Ring*, cost US\$40 million and brought in US\$8.3 million in Japan in its opening weeks alone. Globally the Japanese *Ringu* reaped US\$20 million, its sequel earning twice that amount. Hollywood's remake, meanwhile, is reported to have grossed US\$230 million worldwide.)<sup>63</sup>

We see this not only with regards to J-horror. By 2004, *Variety* reports that the Korean horror film's domestic success story closed on a less sure-footed note in the summer of 2004, when Hollywood films dominated the protectionist Korean film market more powerfully than at any time in the prior 22 months. While Hollywood studios are gearing up for global profits on remakes of successful Korean films, Korea is hard pressed to produce new hits of its own. This downturn is attributed to Hollywood competition and generic exhaustion.<sup>64</sup> This sobering reversal recalls Hollywood's appropriation of the Hong Kong action film from the late 1990s onward, which coincided with Hong Kong cinema's losing ground in local and overseas Asian markets, its historical bailiwicks.<sup>65</sup>

The Hollywood appropriation of pan-Asian signatures in the horror genre is particularly unsettling considering that not too long ago it was precisely this kind of regional intertextual borrowing that scholars hailed as a form of resistance to Hollywood, 'a potential breakthrough for the powerful onslaught of Hollywood', enabling national cinemas to 'catch their breath in the fight to win back audiences'.<sup>66</sup>

The Asianisation of Hollywood has been touted as an end to Eurocentrism<sup>67</sup> or as financially advantageous to domestic Asian film industries,<sup>68</sup> but in the long run the converse is true. Culture, whether operating as difference or resonance, 'is simultaneously the key to international textual trade and one of its limiting factors',<sup>69</sup> at once enabling and constraining the transnational and cross-cultural lives of commodities. Hollywood's remakes of Asian horror films might be seen as one attempt to forge a cultural key to open the door to Asian markets. In its bid to dominate promising and increasingly important Asian markets, Hollywood embraces cultural chameleonship yet again, this time in generic guise.

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## 7 Generic ghosts: remaking the new 'Asian horror film'

1 I wrote this essay while on sabbatical research leave from the Film and Media Studies Department at the University of California, Irvine. During my sabbatical I was Visiting Fellow at the University of the Philippines Film Institute and Visiting Scholar at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. For financial support during this period, I gratefully acknowledge grant assistance from UCI's Inter-

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### 2 Derrida writes:

Repetition and first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. *What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? ... Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time makes of it also a last time.*

(J. Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 10.)

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- 8 Some accounts date the beginning of this trend to Dreamworks' purchase of remake rights to Hideo Nakata's 1998 Japanese horror film *Ringu* in 2001; others to Miramax's acquisition of remake rights to Jo Jing-yu's South Korean action-comedy *My Wife is a Gangster* in the same year. See T. Friend, 'Remake Man', *The New Yorker*, 2 June 2003, pp. 43–44; and D. Chute, 'Spotlight: Pusan Film Festival: Hollywood Catches Case of Remake Fever', *Variety* 392.7, 29 September–5 October 2003, p. C1.
- 9 What follows is a partial list of Asian films – not confined to horror films alone – whose remake rights have been optioned by Hollywood studios. The list is organised by studio. Some of these remakes have been completed and released, while others are still in development. Dreamworks: *Ringu*, Japan, 1998; *Ringu 2*, Japan, 1999; *My Sassy Girl*, South Korea, 2001; and *Tale of Two Sisters*, South Korea, 2003. Miramax: *My Wife is a Gangster*, South Korea, 2001; and *Shall We Dance?*, Japan, 1996; Dimension: *Teacher Mister Kim*, South Korea, 2003; and *Jail Breakers*, South Korea, 2003; Warner Brothers: *Infernal Affairs*, Hong Kong, 2002; *Il Mare*, South Korea, 2000; *Marrying the Mafia*, South Korea, 2002; and *Akira*, Japan, 1988. United Artists: *The Cure*, Japan, 1997. Universal: *Chaos*, Japan, 1999. Radar Pictures: *Turn*, Japan, 2001. Paramount: *The Eye*, Hong Kong, 2002; (with Sam Raimi and Senator International) *Ju-on*, 2000; and *Ikiru*, Japan, 1952; MGM: *Hi Dharma*, South Korea, 2001; Fox: *Afterlife*, Japan, 1998; and *Tell Me Something*, South Korea, 1999.
- 10 R. Lyman, 'The Chills! The Thrills! The Profits!', *The New York Times*, 31 August 1999, p. 1.



- 11 C. Dunkley, "'H'wood's Fright-Geist: Studios Add New Twists to their Scare Tactics'. *Variety* 388.12, 4 November 2002, pp. 1-3. Dunkley mentions the following releases: *They* (2002), *Ghost Ship* (2002), *Van Helsing* (2004), *Darkness Falls* (2003), *The Exorcist: the Beginning* (2004), *Dreamcatcher* (2003), *Jeepers Creepers 2* (2001); *Gothica* (2003), *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), *Final Destination 2* (2003), *Highwaymen* (2003), and remakes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003) and *Willard* (2003).
- 12 M. Kermodé, 'What a Carve Up!', *Sight and Sound* 13.12, December 2003, pp. 12-16. The films Kermodé mentions include remakes (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 2003; *Dawn of the Dead*, 2004; *Amityville Horror*, 2005); re-releases: (*Alien: the Director's Cut*, 2003; *The Exorcist: the Version you've Never Seen*, 2000); sequels of 1970s horror classics (*Land of the Dead*, 2005); and 1980s remakes of 1950s horror (*The Fly*, 1986; *The Thing*, 1982).
- 13 Dunkley, "'H'wood's Fright-Geist', p. 1.
- 14 C. S. Dunkley, 'Cannes Preview: Beachy Keen', *Variety* 394.12, 3-9 May 2004, p. B1; see also C. Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood', *Yale Global* (25 March 2003): www.yaleglobal.yale.edu (accessed 16 August 2005).
- 15 D. McNary, 'Remakes Need a Makeover: H'wood Steps up its Updates, but Idea is Far from Surefire', *Variety* 391.9, 21 July 2003, pp. 9-10.
- 16 M. Harris, 'You Can't Kill the Boogeyman', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 32.3, Fall 2004, pp. 98-99.
- 17 Friend, 'Remake Man', pp. 40-47.
- 18 For an example of such exceptionalist rhetoric, see T. Rafferty, 'Why Asian Ghost Stories are the Best', *New York Times*, 8 June 2003, p. 13. Renee Graham, reviewing *Tale of Two Sisters*, writes: 'There's a reason why Hollywood has been so busy in recent years remaking Asian horror movies. Scare for scare, they're generally better, relying more on things-that-go-bump-in-the-night suspense than the blood-splattered gore-fests that overwhelm so many contemporary American films'. 'R. Graham, "Two Sisters" Truly Frightens, Without The Gore', *The Boston Globe*, 25 February 2005, p. D5. See also S. C. Ong, 'Horrorifying Thoughts: Asian Horror Films Resonate because they are Closer to Home and Acknowledge Cultural Myths and Folklore', *The Straits Times*, Life section, 27 November 2004, via LexisNexis (accessed 26 July 2005).
- 19 C. Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies*, London: Arnold, 2000, p. 227.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 229-30.
- 21 Ibid., p. 226.
- 22 Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 207-8.
- 23 Analysing Hong Kong film via a national cinema paradigm is always problematic, not least because of Hong Kong's pre-1997 positioning as a territory 'between two colonizers' (as Rey Chow puts it) and its post-1997 status as a Special Administrative Region upon the handover to Mainland China. See R. Chow, 'Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-writing in the 1990s', *Diaspora* 2.2, 1992, pp. 151-70.
- 24 C. H. Y. Wong, 'Cities, Cultures and Cassettes: Hong Kong Cinema and Transnational Audiences', *Postscript: Essays in Film and the Humanities* (Special Edition: Hong Kong Cinema), 19.1, Fall 1999, pp. 102-04.
- 25 David Desser writes that when the kung fu craze spearheaded by Bruce Lee movies subsided, a deracinated martial arts genre continued to be popular in late 1970s American Vietnam War films. According to Desser, such films saw 'the rise of white male martial arts stars who, in a sense, co-opt Asian martial arts for the American action hero, for the American movie star, for the American man'. See D. Desser, 'The Kung Fu Craze: Hong Kong Cinema's First American Reception', in P. Fu and D. Desser (eds), *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 39.
- 26 'Ironically, when *Iron Monkey* came out in Hong Kong, that film style was going down', says the film's star Donnie Yen, 'But Woo-ping's fight standards are so high'. 'Hollywood Embraces Three Legenday Hong Kong Film Directors', *China Daily* (25 October 2001): www.china.org.cn/english/2001/Oct/21197.htm (8 November 2005).
- 27 Teo argues that this reduction of Hong Kong cinema to *wuxia* overlooks achievements in other genres, especially the *wenyi* (realistic, socially conscious) melodrama acclaimed by local critics. Subsequently banned by the Guomindang government of pre-World War II China, the *wuxia* was revived in postwar Hong Kong, where it soon became a generic staple. See S. Teo, 'Hong Kong's Electric Shadow Show: from Survival to Discovery', in K. Law (ed.), *Fifty Years of Electric Shadows. Proceedings of the 21st Hong Kong International Film Festival*, Hong Kong: Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1997, pp. 19 and 24. For more on Hollywood's 'selective uptake' of Hong Kong cinema, see S. Cheung, 'Hong Kong Filmmakers in Hollywood: Terence Chang', trans. B. Cheng, pp. 130-31. According to Cheung,
- When Hong Kong cinema was in fashion in Hollywood, many directors made the US debuts; and stars like Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh were cast as leads in Hollywood A-productions. The Hong Kong style of action has been adopted in the hugely popular *The Matrix*, choreographed by Yuen Woo-ping, setting off a new 'kung fu craze'. However, this by no means shows that Hollywood has accepted Asians and Chinese language films; only that it is being very selective about certain elements of Hong Kong cinema.
- 28 R. Corliss, 'Go West, Hong Kong: John Woo and Jackie Chan Meet Hollywood', *Time* 147.9, 26 February 1996, p. 67.
- 29 D. Elley, 'South Korea: Local Hitmakers Eye Global Breakouts', *Variety* 385.3, 3-9 December 2001, pp. 20, 25.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 R. Corliss, 'Horror: Made in Japan', *Time* 164.5, 2 August 2004, p. 76.
- 32 D. Wills, 'The French Remark: *Breathless* and Cinematic Citationality', in Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal (eds), *Play it Again, Sam*, pp. 148-49.
- 33 J. Derrida, 'What is a "Relevant" Translation?', trans. L. Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27.2, Winter 2001, p. 175.
- 34 Y. Y. Yeh and D. W. Davis, 'Japan Hongscreens: Pan-Asian Cinemas and Flexible Accumulation', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 22. 1, 2002, pp. 61-62.
- 35 Ibid., pp. 61-65.
- 36 Ibid., p. 66.
- 37 Chute, D. 'Spotlight: Pusan Film Festival: Hollywood Catches Case of Remake Fever', pp. C1, C3.
- 38 D. Chute, 'East Goes West', *Variety* 394.13, 10-16 May 2004, p. 10.
- 39 W. Kan, 'Reconstruction Project: Filmmakers Focus on Revamping Biz', *Variety* 386.11, 29 April 2002, pp. A1-A2.
- 40 Quoted in Chute, 'East Goes West', p. 10.
- 41 Cheung, S. Y. 'Hong Kong Filmmakers in Hollywood: Peter Chan Ho-Sun', pp. 134-35, 137.
- 42 Directors John Woo, Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, Stanley Tong, Peter Chan; actors Jackie Chan and Chow Yun-Fat; Producer Terence Chang; and action choreographers Yuen Woo-ping, Corey Yuen, and Yuen Cheung-yan. See Ibid., p. 129.
- 43 M. Featherstone, 'Localism, Globalism, and Cultural Identity', in R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake (eds), *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 60-61.
- 44 T. Miller, 'Screening the Nation: Rethinking Options', *Cinema Journal* 38.4, Summer 1999, p. 94.

- 45 T. Miller, N. Govil, J. McMurria, R. Maxwell, and T. Wang, *Global Hollywood 2*, London: British Film Institute, 2005, p. 80.
- 46 Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', p. 230.
- 47 T. Rayns, 'The Eye', *Sight & Sound* 12.11, November 2002, p. 43–44.
- 48 K. Rithdee, 'Bangkok Journal: Kong Rithdee on Cinematic Renewal in Thailand', *Film Comment* 38.5, September–October 2002, pp. 12–13.
- 49 D. Elley, 'Film Reviews: a Tale of Two Sisters', *Variety* 391.8, 14–20 July 2003, pp. 24–25.
- 50 Yeh and Davis 'Japan Hongsreen', p. 67.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p.78
- 52 Reviews suggest that such films, regardless of national origin, are received within a shared generic field. A Malaysian film critic writes, 'If you liked *The Eye*, you'd definitely like *Dark Water*. Language barriers don't matter when you're gripping the sides of your chair with knuckles turned white'. The same writer also plays down language differences by recourse to the shared horizon of affect: 'Though the movie is Japanese, the English subtitles will take you through the story effectively. And besides, most of the eerie bits take place when no one is speaking'. R. Omar, '*Dark Water*', *New Straits Times*, 13 September 2002, p 6.
- 53 Yeh and Davis, 'Japan Hongsreen', pp. 63–78.
- 54 Chute, 'East Goes West', p. 10.
- 55 See *The New Yorker's* profile of Grady Hendrix, a co-founder of the New York Asian Film Festival:
- J-horror has become more and more mainstream, with several big-budget Hollywood remakes scheduled to open this year, which may well spell the end of Hendrix's film series, since he will no longer be able to wrest festival rights from the studios.
- (M. Agger, 'The Pictures: Gross and Grosser', *The New Yorker* 80.17, 28 June 2004, pp. 37–38)
- 56 Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 211.
- 57 See S. Fore, 'Jackie Chan and the Cultural Dynamics of Global Entertainment', in S. H. P. Lu (ed.), *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997, pp. 239–62.
- 58 P. Budra, and B. A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction', in P. Budra and B. A. Schellenberg (eds), *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press., 1998, p. 11. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that language is 'heteroglot from top to bottom', embodying 'the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past'. M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in M. Holquist (ed.), Emerson and M. Holquist (trans.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 291.
- 59 A. Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen* 30.4, Autumn 1989, pp. 38–39.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 61 Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood', op. cit..
- 62 T. Miller, 'Hollywood and the World', in J. Hill et al. (eds), *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 371.
- 63 I. Garger, 'Selling Screams: a New Generation of Filmmakers is Turning Once Lowly Asian Horror into a Hot Global Commodity', *Time International*, Asia Edition, 164.22, 29 November 2004, p. 49.
- 64 J. Kim, 'Biz Pines for Summer Horror Hits', *Variety* 396.3, 6 September 2004, p. 14.
- 65 Plagued by rampant piracy, regional economic crisis, a sharp decline in local movie attendance, and the defeat of Hong Kong films by Hollywood fare in its

own backyard, the Hong Kong film industry in the late 1990s was in dire straits, a circumstance aggravated by the migration of its brightest talents. Whereas there used to be 200 local films screened a year in Hong Kong, in 1997 and 1998 this dropped to about 90, so the film industry went from dominating 80 per cent of the local film market to less than half that amount. The unemployment rate in the film industry soared to 70 per cent at its worst, but in 2001 the *South China Morning Post* announced that the industry was on its way to recovery, with local films screened rising to 150 and several new government services and funds established to help the ailing industry. See K. C. Lo, 'Transnationalization of the Local in Hong Kong Cinema of the 1990s', in E. C. M. Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, pp. 262, 265. See also See E. Lee, 'Scene Set for Reel Recovery', *South China Morning Post*, 15 February 2001, p. 15; and L. Leung, 'SAR Film-Makers Prepare for Boom Year as Budgets Rise', *South China Morning Post*, 7 January 2002, p. 1.

- 66 Yeh, and Davis, 'Japan Hongsreen', pp. 75–77.
- 67 S. Fore, 'Home, Migration, Identity: Hong Kong Film Workers Join the Diaspora', in K. Law (ed.), *Fifty Years of Electric Shadows: Proceedings of the 21st Hong Kong International Film Festival*, Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1997, p. 130.
- 68 Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood', op. cit..
- 69 Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2*, p. 79.

## 8 Copies of copies in Hollywood and Hong Kong cinemas: rethinking the woman-warrior figures

- This observation can be extended to popular American TV programmes as well, for instance, *Xena Warrior Princess* (aired 1995–2001), *Alias* (2002–), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–), *La Femme Nikita* (1997–2001), and *Dark Angel* (2000–2002). For analysis of the women warrior figure in the 1990s American television culture, see S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999; F. Early and K. Kennedy (eds), *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003; D. Heinecken, *The Warrior Women of Television: a Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media*, New York: Peter Lang, 2003; S. A. Inness (ed.), *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004; 'Vamp(ire)s and those who Kill them: Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Dana Scully', in S. Kord and E. Krimmer, *Hollywood Divas, Indie Queens, and TV Heroines: Contemporary Screen Images of Women*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, pp. 141–59.
- First appearing in Mandarin martial arts features, Yu was the queen of Cantonese martial arts films. Between 1948 and 1966, she starred in more than two hundred films that can be roughly divided into three categories: martial arts films, Cantonese opera films and detective thrillers. 'Yellow Oriole' was the character she played in the detective thrillers, *Three Female Secret Agents* (1960) and *The Dragon and the Secret Pearl* (1966).
- Nan Hong played the female Robin Hood-type thief with Chan Po-chu as her sidekick in *Black Rose* (1965) and *Who is that Rose?* (aka *Spy with My Face*) (1966). Both films were directed by Chor Yuen (Chu Yuan) who later became Nan Hong's husband.
- The other thrillers include *Lady in Distress* and *The Magic Cat*, in which Chan played a fighting heroine. Both were released in 1966. Chan also played similar role in other action movies like *The Number One Female Detective* (1967) and swordswoman roles in many costume supernatural martial-arts films of the