

Film Appreciation
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Lecture - 11

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Good morning. We continue with our discussion on traditions in world cinema, and today we are going to focus on Chinese cinema, rather what is transnational Chinese cinema. You understand what is transnational happening across the nation, we are talking not just about, because Chinese cinema and in China, but how it is leaving a kind of impact globally.

Chinese cinema is a force in world cinema and that is, in the era of globalization, that is what we are going to talk about. We are going to talk about the cross over, and subtitled Chinese cinema. And as we know transnational cinema is which is subtitled, which is more which is made basically for globalize, rather than local audiences and then, we will also talk about thus pivotal moments, or movements in Chinese transnational cinema. For example, Hong Kong action films, art house films also Wuxia films, we also talk about the major auteurs, and directors, and actors of Chinese transnational cinema. A brief background on Chinese cinema, the early Chinese film industry, thrived in Shanghai in 1920's and 30's. First in the form of supernatural martial arts, and then in left wing realists melodramas dealing with social issues, and patriotism. These two tendencies reflect different attitudes to the modern.

The former was a magical popular belief in science, the latter, a rationalist belief in political movements whose adherence was to super natural as a feudal quality, or feudal aspect. During the

1930, the government banned supernatural martial arts films, along with dialect cinema, the cinema which was not in the national language. Now, these bans and this certain political policies, they shifted martial arts and Cantonese cinema to Hong Kong.

So, you have main land China, you have Hong Kong island. So, we are talking about cinema in Hong Kong, and Shanghai at this period. During this period was occupied during the 1937 to 45 war of resistance against Japan. So, a second golden age developed in Shanghai after the war. The establishment of the People's republic in 1949 was followed by the nationalization of the film industry.

The government treated cinema as the vehicle of propaganda, while controlling the industry. It also established new studio throughout the country, and brought cinema to the masses. A Shift from social realism, to socialist realism, resulted in increase thematic changes. Where pre revolutionary films had raised issues, without offering solution, post revolutionary films, had heroes from the approved worker former and soldier classes, happy endings in which the communist party, headed the success, however there were exceptions.

Possibly the most famous post revolutionary film maker , Chusheng include, his film includes films about sports, heroics and opera in his repertoire.

Few cinemas have impacted contemporary popular culture, as deeply as the Hong Kong action cinema. Since, the 1970s, the genre has been staple in cinemas theaters, and on television and on video. Martial art stars such as Jackie Chan, all of us here I am sure are admirers of Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee and Jet li.

There house hold names idolized by the masses, and the films are remade even in number of Indian languages cinema, with major stars. Now, one of the first films of these martial arts category was Enter the Dragon with the martial arts experts 3 three of them, John Saxon, Bruce Lee, and Jim Kelly. The film was produced by Warner Brothers and it struck, and it called with the Indian film goes .

Also largely because of its entertainment values, spectacular action and of course, the famous Bruce Lee charisma, the plot is centered on the machinations of a cunning crime lord Mr. Han, who stages annual martial arts tournament, on an island. The film was dubbed, in every possible regional language in India, and spawned of several cinematic imitations. The martial arts schools, teachers and posters, wearing the figures of Bruce Lee played the major role for thousands of young man in India in learning, what it means to be a man in contemporary society. Bruce Lee's brand of cinema, influenced a generation of Indian film actors, and we have example from all

over. For example, we are in during 70s and the early 80s, we had Mithun Chakraborty who would often show echoes of the Bruce Lee persona.

Now, will talk about art house kind of films, of Chinese cinema, especially the fact that we are talking about transnational globalize cinema, in contemporary times. We have something as the fifth generations of cinema, and these of Chinese cinema, which came to global attention with Yellow Earth, which was made in 1984. And it was shot by someone called Zhang Yimou.

Now, we say someone called because he started off as a cinematographer and went on to become a major renowned figure, in world cinema. Zhang Yimou then moved in direction with something called Red Sorghum, which was public, which was released in 1987. The first post graduation, fifth generation film was one and eight directed by Zhang John Woo, and also short by Zhang Yimou.

But when yellow Earth screen at the night at 1985 Hong Kong international film festival, the people set up, and took notice. Because it was some different from the films, that had being coming out of the people republic of China before. While the 70s witness wildness, and manly dangerous exiting, and toughness emotional self control with globalization, in the late 1960s, India also along with the rest of the world, and awakened to the films, and outside the genre of the conventional Kung Fu from china.

Again I am talking about how Chinese cinema, as crossed boundaries over the decades. So, one of the early films in this category was Ringo lam, City on fire, which in a many ways is started, the trend of aesthetic and action. I am giving you the terms, which have been used by great films scholar David Bordwell, who uses the term aesthetics in action.

This movie City on Fire was remade, as Quentin Tarantino, Reservoir Dogs, which was an international cult classic City on Fire, also inspired Hindi film Kaante. The film had stellar casts, and capitalized on the theme of honor among thieves, masculine pride, and friendship among men. I am sure most of us familiar with Jet Li, Jackie Chan, and also we have art house actors such as Tony Leung, and Maggie Cheung.

We have John Woo from China, who has become a truly global icon, and as well as Ang Lee and more art house kind of directors Zhang Yimou, and Wong Kar Wai, and we would be referring to their films. Now, before I start, let me talk about Wuxia this is the genre in fiction in Chinese fiction in how it has become, so popular in contemporary Chinese cinema. Also Wushia is the genre of traditional Chinese martial arts, wu stands for martial arts, war and military, wuxia is the type of protagonist found in Wuxia fiction.

The constraints of everyday reality nature, do not apply in Wuxia film, warriors in Wushia films are able to fly through the hair, run a falls, shoot balls of mystical energy. We have example of Zhang Yimou, who is who I just told you, he was the first he belongs to the fifth generation of the Chinese trained in Beijing Film Academy, debut in 1987 with Red Sorghum, a critically acclaim film.

He also made several films, which we are going to talk about, but most importantly and one of the most important well loved film by Zhang Yimou, was is 2002 Hero starring Tony Leung, Maggie Cheung, Donnie Yen, and of course Jet Li. It is one of the more successful indigenously produce Chinese films, and what it was distributed by North America. It was marketed as Jet Li Hero obviously, because Jet Li was one of the most well known actors, in this film.

The style is Wuxia it is also historiography which is telling, retelling certain aspect of Chinese history, but in a fictionalized way. The stories told in terms of color coding, with cinematography by Christopher Doyle, and it also has a Roshoman kind of narrative structure, were the stories told through several versions.

We have the Jet Li, who plays the character called nameless, and his version were, he were the director use psychological methods, to discover the weak points of the person, who is his interlocutor. In Hero martial arts, genre transcends action in violence, and moves into sheer poetry bale, and philosophy, and makes great use of symbolism, and imagery.

Will talk about Ang lee who was trained in the US film industry, he has successfully collaborated with American screen writers such as James Schamus, with his diverse transnational filmography, Ang lee has established himself as most versatile, and commercially successful film maker of the new Taiwanese cinema. Cinematic filmmaker, along side Stan Lai, and Tsai Ming-liang works. These films can be categorized into a second way of new Taiwanese cinema characterized by fluid identities, and urban sensibilities.

This is necessary for understanding, Lee exploration of personal identity such as sexuality, gender generation, within a transnational Chinese framework and within other cultural, and historical context of displacement, and social change says the international success of his, The Wedding Banquet, which was made in 93 Lee's career has been characterized by different type by broader crossing. lee's career was launched by a ecology of Taiwanese American family comedy drama, such as Pushing Hand, The Wedding Banquet, and Eat Drink Man Women. One of his most cherished films, subsequently Lee directed four period films literary adaptation from diverse

cultural, and historical setting. You have to look at Ang Lee's versatility, here he adopted Jane Austen England in *Sense and Sensibility* in American suburbia of the 90s in *The Ice storm*.

The American civil war *Ride with the Devil* in the 98, and early 20, early nineteenth century China in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, which was such a massive international success released in 1999. Lee also director in the gangster film, *The Hire (The Chosen)* in 2001, and the comic book adaptation in 2002, *Hulk* in 2003, and later on he made is controversial western set in the 1970s, *Brokeback Mountain* which is about homosexuality, and gender identities in 2005, which was released in 2005.

Now, Lee's versatility places him in the distinguish category, of asian directors alongside Zhang Yimou, and Wong Kar Wai and also Takeshi Kitano. It is interesting to note how Lee has specialized, in popular genre film something that has won him audience in Asia, North America and Europe. One of the key aspects of his work that fascinate, that you will all find extremely fascinating is how, Taiwanese has moved in from telling family stories such as *Eat Drink Man Women* to the world of Jane Austen, and to the world of the western.

He was universally praised for his achievement, and is the way he has successfully established himself on the global forum. You considered *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*, and the wired action scenes, with a touch of an escapist fantasy, and magic realism and I strongly recommend that, you watch if you have *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*, and the heart of the film is coming of the age tale.

It is the girls story, it is the stole to the prospective of the young girl on the verge of women hood, and the parallel stories are there love story revenge, story of theme of Betrayal, but at the heart it is a coming of the age story, and perhaps that is what found resonance among the global audience. *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*, is also noted for the way tackles gender representation, where there is masculine, feminine, and vice versa.

Coming back to *Brokeback Mountain*, Lee won academy award for best direction, and which is you know great acceptance of foreigner in the main stream cinema main stream global cinema. He also has directed, very successfully *Lust, Caution*, which won the Golden Lion at Venice, and *Taking Woodstock* in 2009 is most recent successes *Life of Pie* which is based on Yann Martel's 2001 novel.

The film was as you all know was a critical, and commercial success, and won 11 academic awards including the best directors, for the Lee's work illustrate inevitable conflicts, and negotiation, between individual bound by familiar, and societal obligations. Lee's films now,

consistently negotiate among cultured nations generations, and genders illustrating the repressive, as well as rivitalising forces of Chinese tradition in the intersection of the residual past, and the emerging feature.

The next directors, that I would like to draw attention to is Wong Kar -Wai, who has famously made Days of Being Wild, Chungking Express, Ashes of Time, Happy Together, In the mood for Love, and My Blueberry Nights. Now, Chungking Express is one of his most beloved films, most cherish films of all.

Chungking Express is an interrogation of cultural authenticity, and critiques the Americanization of local conditions in contemporary Hong Kong. It operates as the study of masculine anguish, and Hong Kong post colonial urban culture of movement dislocation and transition. You have to watch the film, you have to watches, and you have to be attention to its sound track and you will understand, how important this film is if you look at the movie as a post modernist text in global times, another important films, film FallenAngels in 1995, which is about love, and desire that must be the tag line. It is about love and unfulfilled desires. It was originally intended t, to be the third story in Chungking Express. But then, decided to make it to an independent film and here, the protagonist struggle with the notion of dual identity.

You know Hong Kong Mainland China Hong Kong verses, Mainland China, and film actually the character aspire to create to localized identity, and the mood is very distinctive as is all Wong Kar-Wai film. There is an atmosphere of color, and emotion you have to know the Chinese cinema. Contemporary cinema is known, for this expressive colors expressiveness of color. Some of you would be interested if you are interested, these things mise en scene, and color and lights. then you need to watch a Wong Kar-Wai film FallenAngels, is a fractured tale, and fracture narrative of an unconsummated love between hired professional killer, and his female partner is very allusive. It has a very elliptic style, but that is the beauty of it.

Roger Ebert the great the late great film critic. He says that it will appeal to the kinds of people you seen in the Japanese animations section of the video store with there sleeves cut off. So, you can see that tattoos and to those who subscribe, to more than three film magazines, that is the intellectual types, the crunch types, and then to members of garage bands to and art students is not, for your average movie go. So, you know comes with the disclaimer that is not for everyone, but never the less highly enjoyable films, if you seriously into world cinema,

We'll talk about to John Woo, and his brand of heroic bloodshed. This is term coined by British journalist, Rick Baker heroic bloodshed, and John Woo, he is known for his films, such as A

Better Tomorrow, Hard Boiled, The Killer and Bullet in the Head. Also Hard Target, Face/Off, Broken Arrow, and MI 2 and as well as Paycheck is more recent, and Hollywood films Woo's films are characterized by social chaos, apolitical feelings, ...Hong Kong in 1997.

So, several spectacular actions scenes in Woo's films, if you are the type please watch John Woo's cinema highly entertaining, less arthouse as compared to Wong Kar Wai. So, were does all this leader to is Ang Lee and Zhang Yimou they are more like exotic film makers, but still doing extremely well with their brand of cinema in the global scenario.

You have John Woo known for this heroic bloodshed, and up course he is very successful mainstream kind of a film director. He had several blockbusters in Hollywood, then Wong Kar Wai and more post modernist their films are more hibrid, and fragmented kinds of narrates, there is no single cinema that is national cinema, but Chinese cinema at this moment several national cinemas.

The sixth generation that took off in the 1970s, but it had in uphill task of distinguishing itself, from the fifth generations in the aftermath of censorship. Some gave up and went straight from film academic in to the main stream industry, while others went underground, this means not submitting films for censorship prior to distribution, and exhibition inside China.

This leads to low budget and dependence on income from overseas. After making the first film drama about difficulty of disable children in china, which is Mama. For example, a film maker like Zhang Yuan went underground with Beijing Bastards, the film about the rock scenario, rock scene, this was followed by the documentary about everyday life in Tiananmen square called The Square, which was co-directed with Diao Yang, and feature is about gay life in Beijing called East Palace West Palace which was made in 1996.

In the fifth generation favored exotic locales, on the boarder of the country, they focused on history and high style, in contrast. Almost all the sixth generation films emphasize on urban youth, and contemporary life, and naturalistic realisms bordering on documentary mode many of them are dabbling in.

However the underground mode of production was not economically, and apolitically viable since the millennium, the sixth generations have been attempting to join the main stream, looking for investment at the domestic market. Some have found modest box office successes, but few have one critical success for their efforts so far.

So, the eyes of critics today are on the newest film makers, who no one as designated as the generations at in china. There is the culture of calling filmmakers according, to the generations. So, far we do not have generations, but Chinese cinema something that is very well established at Chinese film makers of the feature someone, to watch out for. So, this is one more addition in our talk on tradition in global cinema, world cinema we will continue this with more discussion on world cinema in our subsequent classes.

Thank you very much.