

FILMING MARGINS
TANG SHU SHUEN
A Forgotten Hong Kong Woman Director

Yau Ching



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Hong Kong University Press is honoured that Xu Bing, whose art explores the complex themes of language across cultures, has written the Press's name in his Square Word Calligraphy. This signals our commitment to cross-cultural thinking and the distinctive nature of our English-language books published in China.

"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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INTRODUCTION: FRAMING A HONG KONG CHINESE FEMALE AUTHORSHIP IN HISTORY

THIS BOOK SEEKS to fill a gap in the development of international cinema studies by producing a critical discussion of a key woman director working in the Hong Kong cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, on whom scholarship has been, until now, respectful but limited. My study incorporates theories of authorship, feminist film criticism, and cultural studies to interrogate how a body of work has been marginalised in history by the operations and limitations of certain cinematic and social discourse in the changing contexts of Hong Kong. This project is addressed to film scholars, cultural studies scholars, and any serious reader interested in issues of gender and sexual politics, colonial and post-colonial discourses, Hong Kong cinema, and the cultural history of Hong Kong.

Reclaiming an Author

When Roland Barthes paraded the coffin of the Author, he probably would not have envisioned that the author would soon be resurrected and was sneaking in from the back door called identity politics, all ready to make a scene. When I graduated from the University of Hong Kong in the late 1980s with structuralism and post-structuralism under my (black leather) belt, and was all ready to come out as a full-blown artist in New York, I would never have guessed that my work was soon to enter a community of a new generation of artists, many of whom were self-proclaimed lesbian, gay, and people of colour — self-proclaimed being

the key word. Although the subjectivity of the Eurocentric, white, male author might seem to be buried (repressed perhaps but certainly also as alive as Nosferatu looming everywhere), the historically marginalised ones are as alive and kicking as ever. Andy Medhurst (1991, 198) caught in this crossroad of auteur theory seemingly buried on one side, and on the other, identity politics in full swing, encapsulated the dilemma in 1991:

I became increasingly interested in gay men's specific ways of seeing the world — what one might call, to use a now fashionable phrase of Raymond Williams, male homosexual structures of feeling — but to qualify for inclusion in this framework, texts had to pass an 'authorship test' (is/was he gay?) that harked back to the bad old days of crudely biographical criticism. There seemed to be a double standard at work, albeit one rooted in political expediency — Authorship was bad, Gay Authorship was good.

Through recontextualising the work of the gay auteur Noel Coward, within a historical account of homophobic film criticism, Medhurst (1991, 202–3) seeks to bring in one of the key insights of contemporary cultural studies into film theory:

[...] a biographical approach has more political justification if the project being undertaken is one concerned with the cultural history of a marginalised group.

So it seems what has been buried is not so much authorship itself but its claims to universality and dominance. A lesbian or gay author of course suffers from invisibility more severely, and in more subtle ways, than a female author does. But in a context such as Hong Kong, where both female and queer authorships have been historically marginalised without apologies, the applicability of Medhurst's position to our context is strategically significant. To paraphrase and elaborate on his argument for my own purpose, the importance of such revisionism is multi-varied:

1. To discover in what ways an author who has been written out of film history has shared and contributed to an otherised culture that has always been an integral component of our history.
2. To move away from a stereotypical version of reading exclusively through fixed identities (gays write only about gayness; women write

only of womanhood) and toward a fuller understanding of how the sexuality, gender, textuality, and other social formations of writers inform one another (How do a gay writer's insights of heterosexuality, a woman writer's insights of masculinity, transgender, race, and/or class enrich our understanding of these constructions and her subjectivity, for example?).

3. To empower a marginalised community by openly registering the possibility of identification from a marginalised reader and therefore deepening the material dimensions of that lineage.
4. Borrowing from Foucault (1977) the idea of assigning authorship as a means of allocating and redistributing power, this project also seeks to interrogate the ways in which certain authorial discourses are absorbed, appropriated, manipulated, suppressed or disintegrated, narratively, ideologically, and institutionally in the media culture of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong as a Sexy Topic

The attention given to Hong Kong cinema in the Euro-American academy and in the popular press recently provided a welcoming yet problematic context to speak in for the student in this field. During the 1990s, when I was teaching film and video studies in Michigan, if I happened to meet anyone who knew anything about Hong Kong cinema, chances were that she or he would not be able to tell me anything about Hong Kong cinema 'movements', the studio system, film genres, or film-spectator relations in Hong Kong. Instead, she or he would be able to identify with ease a few male auteurs of Hong Kong cinema: Bruce Lee, John Woo, Jet Li, Tsui Hark, and Sammo Hung. An impression well circulated internationally in the past two decades has been exemplified by books like *Hong Kong Babylon: An Insider's Guide to the Hollywood of the East* (Danjen and Long 1997). Its introduction characterises Hong Kong cinema as 'a cinema of incessant action, eye-popping effects, and cartoon-like violence' (5–6). Even in publications that aim at a more analytical study of Hong Kong cinema, we still see the ideology of Hong Kong cinema as specialising in action and in producing a few personalities who become 'action auteurs', be it kung fu or gangster, largely unchallenged and recycled. Hence, the period that witnessed the

production of such auteurs in the largest quantity has been called the 'Golden Age of Hong Kong cinema' (Wood 1999).

The need for a historical and social perspective that encompasses diversity and complexity has been carried over in recent years to the suddenly prolific field of 'Hong Kong studies', no doubt an effect created by the high profile of the 1997 handover, another good selling point in the Euro-American circuit. Several years before the handover, critics started to read everything from Hong Kong as related to the 1997 issue. Ackbar Abbas (1997) chose to circumscribe the entire discussion of Hong Kong cinema before the 1990s into 'the New Hong Kong Cinema' that began with *Father and Son* (Allen Fong, 1981). According to Abbas, the arrival of this 'new cinema' is directly related to Thatcher's visit to Beijing in 1982. Such an analysis refused to adequately account for a historical contingency of socially conscious filmmaking already in evidence long before Thatcher's visit: works by Tang Shu Shuen, Lung Kong, and Chor Yuen in the 1960s and 1970s for example.

It seems to be common practice now to study the Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s from within a context that seriously undermines the intercultural, social, aesthetic, and thematic spaces carved out by earlier filmmakers. I share Alison Butler's (1992, 420) concern at the danger of decontextualising cinemas of a certain place and time for purposes of imperialism and canon construction, resulting in a global homogenisation of film history and theory. As a student of Hong Kong cinema writing in Hong Kong, I begin to wonder: how much of such a prioritising of the action genre over others in the Euro-American (re)construction of Hong Kong cinema is based on this particular genre's accessibility to the West because of language barriers, thus privileging a genre that is visual or action-oriented? It is, after all, Jackie Chan's uninsured, life-risking body gimmicks — and not the primarily overseas-educated Hong Kong New Wave directors or Tang, who were concerned with a localised modernity and the limits of modernization — that mark their absolute difference from Western cinemas and therefore catch the 'imperial gaze'. Such structures of looking and to-be-looked-at-ness ultimately reinforce the binary opposition between the 'East' and 'West', and the hegemony of a Eurocentric discourse. I also wonder how much of this 'masculinising' of Hong Kong cinema ('An/other cinema') is illustrative of a chauvinistic reading no longer considered politically correct when applied to the

cinema of one's own context? In other words, how much of one's comfort in openly applauding Jackie Chan's image in the US, in spite of his overt sexism, is grounded on the fact that he is, after all, not white and/or American? This is where sexual and cultural politics inevitably intersect. I would argue that this co-opting of Hong Kong cinema into a pre-modernity, refusing to subject it to critical and historical inquiry, serves certain ideological functions in Euro-American cultures, particularly when gender and sexuality are concerned.

As Claire Johnston (1973) has noted, a strategic study of female auteurism could challenge the entrenched view of Hollywood as a monolithic and closed system of representation. Through rewriting female auteurs into the history of Hong Kong cinema, I seek to challenge the popular discourse of Hong Kong cinema in the English media as a monolithic 'Hollywood of the East', its Golden Age invariably set in the 1980s, exclusively dominated by phallogentric and inimitable kung fu or gangster action. Constructing the canon of this 'Hollywood of the East' naturalises the dominance of the Hollywood of the West and subjects all non-Western cinemas into the perpetual binary of East/West, body/technology. Studying an always already westernised, female subject like Tang Shu Shuen, and her problematic relationship with Chinese cinemas and with 'Chineseness', particularly calls some of these assumptions into question. Through discussing the case study of this one director's work, this book seeks to draw more attention to gendered representation and subjectivity in our media culture, the precarious and changing cultural identity of Hong Kong, the cultural policies that have shaped cinema, films that were made outside the Hong Kong studio system, and the relationship between filmmaking and film critics, all that has been lacking in the field of Hong Kong cinema studies.

Theories of Authorship

Tang Shu Shuen (*Tang Shuxuan*) was the only woman film director working in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s and one of the very few Chinese woman directors during this period. In what ways did her films address this special position of hers, explore and/or challenge the male-dominated conditions of her times? What strategies could be found in her films and media representations of her, from which a sense of her

subjectivity and agency is formulated? What are the implications of these strategies in redefining theories of authorship, feminist authorship in particular? In addition to answering these questions, my goal is to explore how Tang's work from 1969 to 1979 has constructed her authorship in relation to a history and a cultural identity specific to Hong Kong. From studying her filmic career chronologically and tracing her shifts of identity from a so-called 'art' film director to a so-called 'commercial' film director, I seek to shed some light on the ways in which various systems of power function in relation to feminist subjectivity, including the stratified relationship of élite to popular culture. In what ways does her work help me further explore the cultural identity of Hong Kong according to its racial, sexual, gender and class politics?

I answer these questions by analysing the theoretical and historical implications of Tang Shu Shuen's body of work, including her films and her involvement in publications, and media representations of her as an *auteur*. I was drawn to auteurism as a critical practice more than a theory: a series of tools to personalise the experience of decoding a film text and to offer various methods of reading the complex relations between viewer/critic, filmmaker and text. The intentionalist auteurism presumes a 'real', biographical author and privileges this person as the unproblematised source of meaning, presuming a consistency from personality to films. This intentionalist auteur, considered outdated by academic trends for a while, has been rewritten and reclaimed by studies of marginalised spectatorship, which I have found useful. Auteur-structuralism questions the validity of the biographical approach and re-establishes the author as an effect produced by a body of texts. It helps me to study issues of intertextuality: how the author's place within a social history could be written into the text through the reader, and how texts speak to each other, also through the reader.

Auteur-structuralism brings semiology into film studies, reconfiguring film as a signifying practice and the shifting relationship between the spectator and the enunciating subject. But I seek to take auteurism one step further and to reconsider issues of social relations, including political control, commercialisation and spectatorship, *within* authorship. For me, the involvement of the reader might decentre the absolute authority of the author, reconstruct him or her in a different light, but it does not kill the author. The enunciating subject within the text might seduce the

reader/viewer to ideological positions she or he might be previously unfamiliar with. I adopt Foucault's notion of the author as an initiator of discourses (Foucault 1969, 132) and interrogate the ways in which Tang Shu Shuen establishes and expands the discursive possibilities previously unavailable. I have reconsidered the film-text as a play of forces of discourses, an open field of power relations to be negotiated by the author, performers, and viewers within contexts of production and consumption; at the same time, however, perhaps departing from Foucault, I also seek to repoliticise the notion of authorship according to its identity and sexual politics by bringing in a question of agency that contests the Euro-American, male-dominated canons and their cultural dominance and by re-addressing issues previously ignored, like issues of cultural hybridity, the family, and the body.

Cultural studies is used as a way to 'talk back' to film studies, by foregrounding the reader as one of the authors who determines the meanings of the text while the 'original' author, as a critical construct of representation, will remain one of the sources of meaning. My own personal history is employed to interconnect with the inevitably fragmented and limited socio-political history. My partial use of history is in no way used to reinforce the 'truth' claims of history but rather to highlight the notion of history as a form of representation, as much as any other form of cultural formation, including cinema, and therefore always subject to scrutiny, political construction, and rewrites. Through my structural, theoretical, and literary devices, I seek to use my own authorship and spectatorship as a point of reference to address issues of self-reflexivity, representation, and identity formation pertinent in discussing Tang's authorship.

Dialogue Between Subjects: Author, Me and Text

It is, first of all, important to understand how Tang Shu Shuen has been written out of the histories of Chinese and Hong Kong cinemas, locally and internationally. I pay special attention to areas where Tang uses her work to particularly challenge an essentialised view on her authorship, to the ways she manipulated and subverted the expectations of her being a 'Chinese' or a 'female' director and how these strategies together inform and assert her subjectivity. By doing this, I hope to speak not only of Tang but also of the traditions of Chinese, Hong Kong, female and

feminist authorship and spectatorship long suppressed in studies of Hong Kong cinema, and open up new historicised territories for interrogation.

Gayatri Charkovarty Spivak (1990) taught me that 'strategic essentialism' could be employed to negotiate social constructivism (of identity) with a pragmatic, political urgency for historically suppressed identities to assert agency, however performative that agency need be. According to Spivak (1990, 51), it is not possible, within discourse, to escape essentialising somewhere:

The moment of essentialism or essentialization is irreducible. In deconstructive critical practice, you have to be aware that you are going to essentialize anyway. So then strategically you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything.

The theoretical possibility of 'strategic essentialism' helps me to establish the notion of the subject, spectators and authors included, as an agent capable of producing a selective tradition while being produced by it. As a spectator, Medhurst (1991) reformulates authorship according to selective tradition, a recognition and reorganisation of 'shared structures of feelings'. This could also be conceived as a strategy to foreground the inadequacies of the critical theory of our time, essentialism or not:

[...] authorial intention is here surrendered in favor of a sort of subcultural authorship, a collective 'special thrill', a method of analysis based on a recognition of shared structures of feeling... Hunches these may have been, but they were almost always right — critical theory may not have the language to describe this method of discovering homosexually-relevant material, but as a subcultural practice, a particularly attuned set of decoding skills, it undoubtedly exists, as I and any other gay person can testify (205).

I have to admit that my study of female authorship in Hong Kong cinema also starts off, to a certain extent, with a sense of this 'special thrill'. It is the 'special thrill' of my readership that becomes an underlining factor in reconstructing Tang's authorship, marking and reading it in my special ways. It is also this special thrill that renders my study and reconstruction of the cultural history of Hong Kong inevitably and strategically *selective* and *limited*. Browsing through gossip magazines, film reviews, trivia

writing, interviews, film and television works of the 1960s and 1970s, I was shocked by the independence and differences embedded in the potential authorship of many women, how far they have gone in their own contexts, and how much of that speaks to me specifically as an artist and writer living in Hong Kong today. Unlike certain examples of woman writers in China who have been identified by Western critics as 'feminist', like Qiu Jin and Ding Ling, Hong Kong female and feminist authorship has largely gone unnoticed.

Writing Within and Without

Unlike the French male auteurs who define themselves as vehemently opposed to dominant forms of mass culture, Tang redefines her authorship by working *both without and within*, that is, at the interstices of dominant languages, including melodrama, slapstick comedy, heterosexual love story, and television aesthetics as well as outside them, by working simultaneously across various cultures while her work belongs to none of them, by laying claim to everything and yet having nothing.

In studying *The Arch* and *China Behind*, I argue that the works foreground the irreconcilable gap between the collective and the individual, between the desires and limits of cultural and political ethics and the desires and limits of selfhood, between male-defined lineage/ownership and female subjectivity, and between being Chinese and being British (colonised and westernised). The complexity and plurality of these works reside precisely in their refusal to privilege any of these positions over another, but instead inventing in-between spaces for identifying with and/or aspiring to be in both ends while distancing oneself and/or experiencing the exclusion of self from both at the same time. But since her earlier works are not 'given a chance' in distribution, which limits their social intelligibility, Tang reinvents new in-between spaces to speak from by othering dominant structures. The later works create a space between art and commerce, a rare space in Hong Kong cinema, a space that signifies a female auteur's otherness and outsidership from both art and commerce. Studying her work as a whole, I argue that the level of social engagement and consciousness as embedded in her later works have evolved into more dialectical directions than her earlier works did. These later works assume a much stronger socio-historical

knowledge from the viewer and seek to work *within* and *simultaneously outside* that knowledge, 'a sense of non-belonging, non-identity with the culture' they inhabit, to borrow from Willemsen's (1989, 28) notion of 'Third Cinema'.

Tang Shu Shuen in the 1960s and 1970s

Keeping in mind that both French auteurism and the American 'auteur theory' advocated by Andrew Sarris avoided examining filmmaking as a social practice, I seek to study an authorship that is socially and culturally specific. The belief of *Cahiers* critics in a subjectivity that transcended history was a reflection of the 'apolitical nature of much of French intellectual life in the 1950s' (Hillier 1985, 7). Sarris also claimed that an auteurist was in no position to object to an auteur's lack of ideology, because 'elucidation' transcends 'evaluation' (1978, 11). How much of this inability within auteurism in addressing ideological issues account for its inability to comprehend a feminist, politicised authorship?

Tang Shu Shuen was born in 1941 in Hong Kong.¹ Her grandfather, Tang Chi-Yoa, was the Governor of Yunnan who was instrumental in overthrowing the military government of Yuan Che-kai (*Yuan Shikai*). Due to that family lineage (from which Tang herself also fiercely dissociates, to the extent that she dropped her family name in representing herself in most English publicity materials throughout her filmmaking career),² her father was 'recruited' by the Taiwanese Kuomintang government when Tang was 16. After living in Taiwan for three years, Tang left for the US to study filmmaking at the University of Southern California. When she returned to Hong Kong in the 1960s, the colony was going through massive industrialisation and commercialisation and was turning into a money machine. The late 1960s was a period of crisis in Hong Kong. Politically, it witnessed unprecedented class struggles highlighted by the anti-colonisation protests of students and workers in 1966, which widened to become anti-imperialistic demonstrations in 1967, later co-opted by Maoists. Generally speaking, the late 1960s and early 1970s was a period when Hong Kong underwent intense social dichotomisation between colonial oppression and nationalistic sentiments. Cinematically, the production of Cantonese cinema was also in crisis. Struggling to recover from the

social movements of the late 1960s, Cantonese film studios in the early to mid-1970s faced a combined threat of television and Mandarin cinema which, in order to compete with television itself, employed short-term tactics to mass produce macho-oriented kung fu drama and pornography.

Culturally, Hong Kong was at a crossroads in the 1970s. Youth publications and social clubs flourished. Importation of Western counter-culture happened concurrently with debates about Chinese nationalism and the use of Chinese language. Under the dominance of television, Hong Kong went through a process of gradual homogenisation into a Cantonese-specific culture from the mid-1970s on. The 1970s was a period of rapid economic growth, mass industrialisation and capitalisation, coupled with a series of government policies that sought to appease social unrest through increasingly sexualising women's bodies and encouraging mass importation of western popular culture.

In the process of negotiating with social givens, Tang pushed the boundaries of the conventions of filmmaking in Hong Kong and offered new discursive possibilities for New Wave directors to come. The Hong Kong New Wave emerged as an exploratory movement of author-centred, socially conscious filmmaking in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This study of Tang's authorship could be seen as an attempt to interrogate some of the missing links between the didactic social realism as seen in the Cantonese cinema of the 1950s and the realism-informed, issue-based Hong Kong New Wave of the late 1970s as well as between the highbrow Mandarin cinema supported by a studio-monopolised production and distribution system of the early 1970s and the relatively low budget, semi-independent productions that emerged in the late 1970s.

Differences as Points of Departure

Tang Shu Shuen directed, wrote or co-wrote³ four films in four different genres, styles, and aesthetics. She concerned herself with quite different issues in each one. Tang's debut feature, *The Arch* (*Dong Furen*, 1969), was produced during 1966–67 and premiered in Hong Kong in 1969. It was invited to the Cannes Film Festival's Directors' Fortnight Section, and was awarded Best Actress, Best Cinematography, and Best Art Direction at Taiwan's Golden Horse Film Awards. Using a black-and-

white period drama and primarily studio shooting and some professional actors, Tang's award-winning and eyebrow-raising debut, which posed a critique of the oppressiveness of the Chinese tradition toward women, generated a significant amount of critical attention but was considered a commercial failure in Hong Kong. Tang's second film was first entitled *The Dissidents* and later evolved into *China Behind* (*Zaijian Zhongguo*, 1974). It was focused on a heated but highly repressed topic of the 1960s and 1970s — the Chinese Cultural Revolution — and chose to adopt a largely black-and-white, realist, almost 'documentary-like' photographic style with a main cast of non-professional cast and crew, shot in Taiwan and set mostly in China. *China Behind* (1974) was banned from release in Hong Kong for 15 years because of its political content. *China Behind* was awarded a Special Jury Prize at the First China Times Evening News Film Awards in Taiwan in 1990. These two films established Tang as one of the most important 'art film' directors in Hong Kong's cinema history.

Tang spent the rest of her filmic career in Hong Kong, directing two genre films, *Sup Sap Bup Dap* (1975), a social satire/comedy on Hong Kong people's obsession with gambling, shot in a style of short TV vignettes and set entirely in colourful contemporary Hong Kong, and *The Hong Kong Tycoon* (1979), a character-driven melodrama that studied the life of a Hong Kong 'everyday man' climbing up the class ladder. Although Tang seemed to reject a thematic or aesthetic consistency, if one reads between these texts with care, without a simplistic presumption of looking for consistency in style or motif, one might find that these texts — as a body of texts — inform, supplement, and frame one another in the way that they articulate a voice which embodies a strong feminist subjectivity and agency.⁴

Chinese Female Authorship as a Problem

The lack of female directors in Chinese film history is a sometimes acknowledged but seldom discussed fact. Introducing Tang Shu Shuen as a 'female director' in 1975, a poignant Hong Kong film critic Sek Kei (1975, 201–2) tries to paint the following picture of intercultural film history before Tang's emergence:

Recently several female directors have appeared in Europe and U.S., but the number is small, and most of them can only work at the peripherals of the film industry. [...] In Hong Kong, our situation is actually better. Among the professional directors we had Ren Yizhi in the early days, recently we have Kao Pao-shu [...].

Is the situation in Hong Kong *really* better? Sek Kei here speaks as if there had been no Chinese female director before Ren Yizhi, which seems to be a widely circulated impression among Hong Kong film historians. But according to my research, Xie Caizhen was the first Chinese woman director, a mainland Chinese actress, who directed one film in the 1920s. Esther Eng (Ng Kam Ha/*Wu Jin Xia*), a Chinese-American, was the first woman director working in Hong Kong. Her biographical information from various sources is sparse and confusing. Twenty years after her death, *Variety* (McCarthy 1995, 10) mistakenly reported her as the 'first and for many decades only female Chinese film director'. According to *Variety's* London correspondent, Derek Elley, quoted in this article, Eng's first movie was *National Heroine*, shot when she was 22. However, according to the *Shanghai Film Historical Materials* volumes 2 and 3 (Office of Historical Studies in Shanghai 1980) and confirmed by Hong Kong newspaper clippings during the 1930s, Eng's first movie was the Chinese-American production *Iron Blood, Beautiful Soul* in 1935, released in Hong Kong as *Heartache*:

Upon completing this film, Ng took it to China where it created a sensation. She then launched her own production company for which she directed more than 10 films, beginning with *National Heroine*, followed by *Husband and Wife for a Night*. She remained single throughout her life, retiring from the film business in 1939. She died in 1970 (Kwan 1938).

Eng's groundbreaking work, *It's a Women's World*, also known as *The Thirty-Six Amazons*, the first Hong Kong film to feature an all-female cast, is dated 1939. But Eng has clearly continued to direct after 1939. *The Motion Picture Guide* has an entry of her *Golden Gate Girl*, dated 1941. Moon Quan (Kwan Man Ching/*Guan Wen Qing*) was credited in this film as writer and editor. Quan was one of the two Chinese 'technical advisers' to D.W. Griffith on *Broken Blossoms* in 1919. *Variety* (1995,

10) recalled Eng's last film as *Blue Lake Green Jade*, 'a 1949 tale about an American-Chinese woman's love affair'.

Ren Yizhi, whom Sek Kei named as occupying a pioneer position, was the director of *wuxia* films Ren Pengnian's daughter. She was not granted a directorial position until 1957, ten years after she entered the film industry first as an actress, then a scriptwriter, a co-director and finally a director (HKIFF 1985, 113–4). It is debatable whether it was Tang Shu Shuen or Kao Pao-shu who directly followed Ren Yizhi. One of the major movie gossip magazines at the time, *Hong Kong Movie News* (May 1970, 34–5), reported the making of the film *Feng Fei-fei* by 'Hong Kong's first woman director' Kao Pao-shu in May 1970 (Figure I.1), three years after the actress Lisa Lu (*Lu Yan*) was documented to have arrived in Hong Kong to star in *The Arch* (1969), reported in another major gossip magazine, *International Screen* (April 1967) (Figure I.2). *Hong Kong Movie News* printed this report six months after *The Arch* had had its Hong Kong premiere at the Hong Kong City Hall, on 20 September 1969, a screening organised by a local cine-club, the Hong Kong Film Society. Not only did the omission in *Hong Kong Movie News* wilfully ignore an announced fact of only a few months previously, it also erased entirely from the record at least three significant Chinese woman directors before Kao.

It is an intriguing fact that woman film directors in Hong Kong appeared so few and far between, and even when they did appear, 'female authorship' as an issue seemed to be something our global and local media culture had trouble registering. How are female authorships registered even when they are recognised? As *female* authorships? A glossy pictorial history of Hong Kong cinema published by the Hong Kong Regional Council, *Eighty Years of Hong Kong Cinema* (Yu 1994, 47) listed *The Arch* as one of the most important Hong Kong films to mark the breakthrough of Hong Kong cinema into the world film market in the 1970s, since it was one of the earliest Hong Kong movies to be invited to Cannes and was theatrically released in France soon after. After speaking of King Hu and before Bruce Lee, the film historian Yu Mo Wan (1994, 47) said:

Another example of Hong Kong cinema breaking out of Asia is the fact that *The Arch*, directed by a *female* director, won wide applause in many places of Europe and America; she also won the Most Creative Special Prize at the 9th Golden Horse Film Awards. (*italics mine*)

Whenever Tang Shu Shuen's work was hailed as important in the history of Hong Kong cinema, one of the presumptions that many film scholars and critics shared was that she was 'ahead of her time'. Mel Tobias (1986, 12 and 74) in lamenting a 'dying tradition' of Hong Kong's women directors in the mid-1980s, seemed to believe that:

Once upon a time in Hong Kong women directors were in fashion, as inspired by Tang Shu Shuen (Cecille). That was many years ago when she made the critically acclaimed *The Arch* and then slipped into obscurity. She was indeed ahead of her time and the themes she selected were not yet acceptable by the general public (12).

It would be an exaggeration to say that Tang Shu Shuen 'slipped into obscurity' after *The Arch*. She in fact threw herself right into production of her second film soon after she left *The Arch* 'in the hands of an influential French distributor' (Fong 1974, 20). Pierre Rissient, an established film critic, arranged for its theatrical run in France, 'from cities to villages', apparently achieving a 'continuous full house for four months' in Paris.⁵ What fascinates me in the above Mel Tobias article is also how he manages to name all of the Hong Kong women directors of the 1970s and 1980s in one breath — seven of them in all — including Tang Shu Shuen. Only three of these women had made features of their own then, whereas he seeks to mythologise a history of women directors *simultaneously*, with Tang Shu Shuen as the imaginary origin of this lineage, without interrogating the irony of it all. Doesn't his ability to name all of Hong Kong's women directors plus the co-directors within the past two decades in such a compact manner contradict his argument that Hong Kong women directors were ever 'in fashion' to start with?

Perhaps we can also read this kind of hypothetical proclamation the other way round: is it *because* woman directors are such rare birds that they could be considered 'in fashion', relegated to the status of the spectacle? After all, for something to be in fashion, it would have to assume a position different from that of the current majority, to 'stand out' so to speak, but also to be ephemeral and insubstantial. To be chic is to be exotic, and most importantly, to be 'ahead of one's time'. To be *in* fashion, one actually has to be *ahead of* fashion. With such logic, Tang Shu Shuen could be seen as both 'ahead of her time' and a trendsetter. This kind of rewriting film history perpetuates the marginalisation of

women directors, including Tang Shu Shuen, as a fashion commodity ready to be consumed by a 'general public' later in time. To relocate the work of these directors in a history of fashion serves as a systemic strategy both to further otherise them and to legitimise their otherness. 'Woman director' then becomes a category for curious historical and cultural artefacts.

Fashion, of course, has always already been related to the history of 'women's cinema'. When Dorothy Arzner, Hollywood's first successful woman director, threatened to leave Paramount after having worked there as a successful film editor for seven years, in order to become a director at Columbia Pictures, the only directorial role that Paramount could come up with as a counter-offer was *Fashions for Women*, a melodrama with a long fashion show sequence. Female authorship and spectatorship have always been contained and defined historically in their fixed gender role of femininity via fashion. I would further argue that the strategic employment of female authorship in this case serves a legitimising and authenticating function in fetishising the female body. Bouncing off Mulvey's now classical paradigm of classical Hollywood's embodiment of the male gaze in the cinematic apparatus, Mary Ann Doane (1988, 216) ponders on the difficulty of constructing the feminist representation of the female body:

For the cinema, in its alignment with the fantasies of the voyeur, has historically articulated its stories through a conflation of its central axis of seeing/being seen with the opposition male/female ... Cinematic images of women have been so consistently oppressive and repressive that the very idea of a feminist filmmaking practice seems an impossibility. The simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act.

If the cinematic apparatus has always already represented the woman's body as the signification of the lack, as a projection of the male castration anxiety that therefore needs to be fetishised as the spectacle of the Phallus, the co-opting of a female 'author' into this system of representation might not (only) serve to challenge or subvert the system. Instead, it could be argued that the film industry could have very well found yet another way to further violate women's subjectivity by using this token female 'author' to mask and normalise the violence of the

gaze. *The Moving Picture World* (9 April 1927, 14) reviewed *Fashions for Women*:

The production is the first offering of Dorothy Arzner, Paramount's new woman director. She seems to have been over-eager to direct, and some of the scenes show this in their lack of spontaneity. The action is directed, rather than natural, but as a whole the novice has done well. She has produced a colorful background and introduced bales of charming frocks. Between dress and undress the play should please both sexes.

Apart from his skilful combination of a patronising ('the novice has done well') and critical tone ('She seems to have been over-eager to direct ...'), it is most productive here to note how this male critic is consciously appropriating Arzner's gender to market the film both to a female and male spectatorship. He seems to be saying: the fact that the director is a woman might arouse a greater identification from the female audience via shared femininity ('dress') while at the same time her female point of view, that is, her special relationship to the display of the woman's body, would also make the image more desirable to the male spectator (would he like 'dress' or 'undress' more?). In other words, putting a woman behind the camera suddenly introduces to the image of the female body a claim to authenticity that serves to legitimate a greater fetishisation and objectification.

In an environment like (yet different from) that of Dorothy Arzner some 40 years earlier, Tang Shu Shuen emerged as one of the first woman directors in the history of Hong Kong cinema. Although I had heard of her work when I started going to the cinema in the late 1970s in Hong Kong, which coincided with the flourishing of the Hong Kong New Wave, I had never seen any of her work until *China Behind* was first shown at the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 1984, long after her directorial career had ended and she no longer lived in Hong Kong. Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, I remember catching glimpses of her name often in chic cultural magazines, in which she was always idolised as a cult icon: underground, avant-garde, westernised. For what reasons has she been constructed as such, and what influences did this construction of a cult have on Tang's authorship?

Problems of Western Auteurism

Researching the reception of Tang Shu Shuen's work of the 1970s, I was intrigued to discover that she was *always* categorised as an individualised, 'special' Chinese woman director or Hong Kong woman director, therefore never in relation to any of the other Chinese women directors in film history. Tang Shu Shuen as a media persona was always genderised, but her gender was seldom discussed in relation to a historical lineage. A similar problem occurred in discussing Arzner's work: she was often used as a benchmark figure in Western feminist film discourse, but there is a general lack of discernment about the relation of her work with the work of other women, except in earlier discussions when she was bracketed with Ida Lupino for no particular analytical reasons (Johnston 1973, 29–30; also in *Action* 1973, 8.4: 9–14).

Anneke Smelik (1998) uses the example of New German Cinema to analyse the ways in which 'women's cinema' is disqualified by auteurism, and the work of women directors is underrepresented by markers like 'women's cinema':

A distinctive trait of the New German Cinema is personal statement; Elsaesser calls it a 'cinema of experience' and he stresses that women's cinema is in some respects the best example of this because it combines personal self-statement with social responsiveness (1989, 183). As such, women's cinema could qualify as a perfect example of auteurism. This, however, is not the case. Knight (1992) argues that the characterization of New German Cinema as an auteur cinema has resulted instead in a marginalization of women's films. This is partly because of an implicit norm of masculinity behind the idea of a creative individual. [...] Where in the case of male directors all the emphasis is focused on the individual filmmakers, in the case of women they all get lumped together (37).

In the course of this project, I would propose the various ways in which Tang Shu Shuen's work is marginalised by being subsumed into the category of 'women's cinema', how her authorship is always discussed in relation to her 'femaleness' in ways that not only limit the originality and singularity of her work but also undermine her subjectivity, historical significance, and 'social responsiveness'. When Tang Shu Shuen's work gradually moves from the imaginary site of the Chinese ancient past to the here and now, with more direct references to her lived experience of

migration, dislocation, and her reality of living in Hong Kong, her efforts are increasingly dismissed as a sign of compromise and lack of 'artistic vision', similar to the treatment of women directors like Helke Sander *vis-à-vis* the New German Cinema that Smelik discussed (1998, 37):

Whereas in the case of celebrated male authors like Fassbinder, self-statement was taken as a sign of genius, when it came to women directors like Sanders, the representation of personal experiences was seen as a sign of lack of inspiration which gets compensated for by references to lived experience or reality.

The inabilities and the problems in recognising female authors in their own right inevitably confront us with the issue that our assumptions of what marks authorship in general might have been problematic throughout, in a way that it might have served to exclude women from being considered as 'serious directors', 'good directors', in other words, as *auteurs*. Inherent assumptions supported by chauvinism within auteurism have prevented women's directorial roles to be taken seriously. When Alexandre Astruc (1948) chose the 'pen' as the metaphor for the camera, he was certainly unaware of the pen's phallic connotation, but he did pave the way for a 'new avant-garde', the French New Wave, which was almost exclusively headed by a community of male directors, also known as Truffaut, Godard and their buddy friends — perhaps with the only exceptions of Duras and Varda (Grenier 206–9). In the 200 film personas Sarris discusses in his book of pantheon (1968, 1996), only two women are included: Ida Lupino and Mae West. Despite her being included, Lupino's directorial skills were seriously undermined when Sarris quoted Lillian Gish as saying that 'directing was no job for a lady' (216). In spite of Wollen's later interest in feminist filmmaking, his work in auteur-structuralism also presumed the director as male. He quoted Renoir as example to illustrate the 'structure' in his theory: 'Renoir once remarked that a director spends *his* whole life making one film' (1972, 599) (emphasis mine).

If female authorship is incomprehensible to the male auteurist, how do female authors invent strategies to have their voices heard, and dialogue with patriarchal and capitalistic assumptions within dominant modes of production and spectatorship? Like Sarris (1990), I am interested in an auteurism that is 'history, not prophecy' (20), a selective

tradition composed by structures of power relations but would not close off possibilities to be reinvented and therefore subject itself to further (re)discovery. Unlike Sarris, I am not interested in using my own critical position ideologically in relation to canon construction; I am more interested in the operations of that formation in the name of value judgement and truth: how certain films and/or directors are considered 'bad', unskilled, marginalised. While the *Cahiers* critics, Truffaut and Bazin in particular, privileged a specific 'worldview', a depoliticised humanitarism and spirituality, Sarris prioritised thematic and stylistic proficiency over ideological content:

This meaningful coherence is more likely when the director dominates the proceedings with skill and purpose (1962, 64).

Bergman, particularly, seems to be penalized for his lack of ideology. In the relatively passive view of auteurism, this lack of ideology would constitute part of his stylistic and thematic signature. For an auteurist there is no more point in objecting to Bergman's lack of ideology than in objecting to Hawk's rootlessness. [...] In auteurism, elucidation not only precedes evaluation; it very often transcends it (1978, 11).

While I strategically use auteurism as a tool to illuminate a female author's reconstruction of her professional and artistic languages to expand and express her subject positions and critical thinking in various contexts, ideological analysis is for me crucial in evaluating an author's subject positions and agency. I use notions of authorship as points of departure, because as a range of theoretical possibilities they leave a lot of room for politicisation.

A common feature of various forms of Euro-American auteurism, from the French *Cahiers*, Sarris's pantheon to auteur-structuralism, is their concern with continuity and coherence across the body of a director's work. This notion of coherence is also used as a key qualifying factor for the director to be considered an 'auteur':

Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurring characteristics of style, which serve as his signature (Sarris 1962, 64).

The auteur critic is obsessed with the wholeness of art and the artist. The parts, however entertaining individually, must cohere meaningfully. This meaningful coherence is more likely when the director dominates the proceedings with skill and purpose (Sarris 1963, 65).

The great directors must be defined in terms of shifting relations, in their singularity as well as their uniformity. Renoir once remarked that a director spends his whole life making one film; this film... is the task of the critic to construct [...]. Everything irrelevant to this, everything non-pertinent, is considered logically secondary, contingent, to be discarded (Wollen 1972, 599–600).

The emphasis on repetition (the 'author-code' traced from film to film) is what marks off versions of auteurism and auteur theory from other views of cinema which acknowledge and celebrate the central creative role of the director. Auteurism does not just observe or welcome continuity from film to film; it insists on continuity (Perkins 1990, 57).

What supports this emphasis is the assumption that 'art ... can only be the statement and vision of a single man, the creative artist' (Perkins 1990). This echoes what Smelik (1998) points out: the realm of canon formation is enforced by the 'culturally induced bias that equates genius with men and acts accordingly'. The inability to account for a politicised notion of gender and sexual differences in authorship is interrelated to the inability to account for differences *within* a body of work. If we look at the work of women directors, especially the work of Hong Kong women directors, what strikes us are indeed the *discontinuities* and *incoherences* in their body of work, many of which are the result of the authors' constant negotiations with *various* and always *changing status quos*, translated into *diversified* and *variable* strategies to manipulate identification, hybridise genres and/or produce complex intertextuality *within* their body of work. Part of the failures of male-centred auteurism to account for female authorship, therefore, comes from ignorance, especially ignorance of feminist filmmaking in which the most innovative elements have been shifts in consciousness and redefinition of a politicised subjectivity (Smelik 1998) and, I would add, spectatorship. Bazin (1957, 249–50) stated that 'the film-maker and his films are one'; therefore, the film 'will always be in the image of the creator'. Sarris (1996, 35) asserted that auteurism necessarily required a suppression of spectatorship: 'The ideal auteur critic should sacrifice his own personality to some extent for the sake of illuminating the personality of the director'. Both parties ignored the role the spectator plays in constituting the film. The fluidity, disjointedness and hybridity often found in the work of

women directors and the assertion of a spectator-concerned agency in feminist work become disqualifying factors in their being formulated into the status of 'auteurs' or 'film authors'. Ann Hui, the most active Hong Kong woman director since the Hong Kong New Wave, articulated this incompatibility as part of her own lack, a style of apologetic self-positioning which sounds so familiar to many of us women:

[...] but she has a regret: there isn't a film style called Ann Hui's from her work.

I don't usually care about style very much. I never used to care (about other things), as long as the subject matter is appropriate, and the film when produced would not lag behind the times. [...] I didn't create my own form, so I don't qualify (as having my own style) (Chow 1999, 34–5).

While one can distinguish consistent concerns, recurrent subject matter, and even familiar *tones* across the 14 film features Hui directed over the past two decades, she judges her body of work to be flawed because of its lack of consistency in 'style' and 'form', an internalisation of classic auteurism in full swing. What she is most concerned about is film as a social practice, the spectatorship of the film in a given socio-historical context ('the film when produced would not lag behind the times').

At the beginning of her career, after she had just made one film, Tang Shu Shuen comments on the possibility and limitation of studying her work from an auteuristic perspective, during an interview in 1972:

Q: (Directors like) Bergman and Kazan are good examples of what 'auteurism' means. They have an obsession. One might find it incomprehensible if viewing only one of their works. One needs to watch a whole series of works in order to understand.

Tang: I have only made one film (*The Arch*), but I believe my second film is bound to have things that could be compared with the first, because my work is a part of me, and these two films are entirely my creation; of course there are similar traces.

Q: The typical 'auteurs' we just mentioned, some of their subject matters are very limited, for example, some only focus on religious topics...

T: I am afraid I won't limit myself to a small area (Lin 1972, 161).

While Tang chose to discuss her work in an auteurist light in control and vision, she also highlighted the limits of auteurism when it comes to suggesting repetitive subjects or themes. Note the almost physical imagery she used to describe her relationship to her films ('part of me') and her emphasis on 'traces', as if they were not meant to be obvious, would 'cover a large area', needed to be researched on, studied, mapped, and reconstructed ('tracing'). Issues like those of the body have been suppressed in both French and American auteur criticism. In what ways has the female authorship of Tang Shu Shuen addressed the (gendered) body throughout her work? How is that address defined by relations between female subjectivity within the work and by spectatorship, giving rise to multiple layers of intersubjectivity during the processes of production and reception?

One of my tasks here is (re)constructing women as discursive subjects through (re)uniting fragments of their 'selves' or 'bodies' from the literature and representations available, declared irreconcilable by the laws of auteurism. I should emphasize that my aim of forging a dialogue between fragments is not to produce an image of humanitarian unity. Tang's insistence on and demonstration of female authorship as articulated through an investment in diversity, ruptures, contradiction, spectatorship, and the body highlights various possibilities in which that adjective 'female' could inflect on the noun authorship in ways 'significant enough to challenge or displace its patriarchal implications' (Mayne 1990, 95).

Again, the case of Arzner reminds us:

Sometimes this discovery has led to an overevaluation of the work of those women directors who managed to survive and a tendency to construct their films as positive feminist statements, or as 'feminist' art, as in the case of Dorothy Arzner [...] what was required was a theoretical understanding of the complex relationship between ideological, technological and institutional factors which precisely make it impossible for positive feminist statements to emerge from the Hollywood system of production (Cook 1985, 187).

The questions have been these: (1) What are her (unique? uniquely woman's?) strategies in handling genre, narrative, character, spectator relations? (2) How can she be not simply added to a list of 'important people of film industry' but positioned in a history of film that is the history of the structure and development of its institutions and practices? (Houston 1994, 271).

I hope my project, following Cook, is not to overevaluate Tang's work but to understand the complex relationship between her authorship and the social, commercial, political, cinematic, and critical institutions that informed and limited the female author. In response to Houston's questions, this book explores Tang's unique strategies in each film, including appropriating the Chinese tradition of social realism, exploring the woman's time through montage, deliberately choosing an anti-orientalist, censored political subject matter, adopting and subverting the convention of Hong Kong Cantonese cinema in using stereotypes, and choosing specific stars. To have a fuller view of her authorship, I discuss the shifts in strategies in her body of work as a whole. My task would be to illuminate, reassess, and reconstruct the contributions of Tang Shu Shuen to the history of media culture and to the formation of a cultural identity in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s in relation to the institutional structures of ideology and representation, and the ways in which these structures render some of her authorial inscriptions possible and some others impossible.

Hybridity of Methodology

It is difficult for me to rely on one approach in disentangling various issues on film, authorship, feminism, spectatorship, culture and politics. Recognising the partiality of any single methodology in studying cinema, I have pragmatically chosen to utilise a variety of tools. The methodologies applied are multiple, ranging from paradigms established by traditional area studies, national cinema studies to cultural, sociological and historical studies informed by theories of identity politics, political economy and historical criticism. Canons and variants of auteurism, structural auteurism and theories of authorship are discussed alongside with tools of feminist film criticism and comparative feminism. Dialogues are forged among critiques of realism, auteurism, psychoanalysis and its discontents, and theories of spectatorship. While recent theoretical tendencies in transnational politics and intertextual readings illuminate my analysis, theories of affective empowerment, colonial and post-colonial discourses help to set the framework of my interrogations.

Implicit and explicit references are also made to semiotics, *mise-en-scène* criticism, studies on narrative, suture, distanciation, and genre

criticism. I have consulted various historical documents, biographical and textual representations of the period including media trivia, gossip magazines, newspapers, Hong Kong government publications, inter-government correspondence, and cinema publicity materials in ways that will help me access and reconstruct some repressed and/or forgotten attempts of a Hong Kong Chinese, female and feminist discourse, which for me has remained inaccessible by other means.

Different methodologies are applied in different chapters for specific goals. My discussion of *The Arch* in Chapter 1 is engaged with the emergence of Tang's image as an auteur in the Hong Kong of the 1960s and a primarily textual analysis of *The Arch* utilising tools of feminist psychoanalysis, semiotics, and *mise-en-scène* studies. Although textual analysis seemed to have gone out of fashion in academic film studies, I have chosen to use this methodology to call 'Open Sesame' to my subject after having considered its particular usefulness. Despite the considerable amount of media attention *The Arch* has received in the past four decades, attempts of textual analysis of this meticulously crafted film remain rare. The study of *China Behind* in Chapter 2 uses a variety of historical documents supported by references to orientalism and film censorship to frame and disentangle the specific historical, political, and theoretical issues the film poignantly raises. Chapter 3 discusses the issue of stylistic departure and how Tang's extra-textual engagement in cultivating an active intellectual community for film culture in ways other than being a film director could also be seen as an integral body of her authorship, while providing a further analysis on the changing historical and cultural framework for Tang's work in the mid- and late 1970s. Chapter 4 draws from feminist criticism, post-colonial studies, psychoanalysis, studies on cultural identity, race and pornography, contextual studies, and formal criticism to interrogate the ways in which *Sup Sap Bup Dap*, Tang's third film, appropriates and subverts conventional film genres to construct a self-reflexive critique of class, gender, ethnicity, and cultural specificity. These tools help me to study the ways in which *Sup Sap Bup Dap* skilfully calls attention to the workings of the cinematic apparatus and its ideologies through employing various formalistic devices to destroy the realist illusion to the extent that filmmaking becomes just another form of fantasy and gambling, and the ways in which the representation of gambling in the film also become an analogy to filmmaking itself. The

final chapter on *The Hong Kong Tycoon* follows and expands on many of the interests mobilised in the previous chapter, including spectatorship studies, feminist psychoanalysis, and queer studies, but it uses them to particularly focus on Tang's employment of stereotypes and her collaboration with other female authorships of Tina Leung and Lisa Lui. The chapter continues to examine the issues of fantasy and femininity and their subversive relations to the presumptions of the monogamous heterosexual matrix, as represented in *The Hong Kong Tycoon*. In the end, I seek to understand the various ways that *The Hong Kong Tycoon*, as the last film Tang made before her immigration to the US, marking the end of her directorial career, signals a sense of 'failure' in her authorship and what that means to the cultural history of Hong Kong.

The hybridity of the paradigms used is intended to reflect a hybridity of the filmic strategies involved. Variable strategies of Tang's authorship call for variable strategies of reader/spectatorship. All in all, this book argues for an interdisciplinary, intertextual approach in studying culturally, historically specific, 'othered' authorships such as Tang's, paying special attention to identity and sexual politics in light of the complexity of a hybrid, westernised, and colonial Hong Kong.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. All biographical data were collected through personal interviews with Tang Shu Shuen in Los Angeles in 2002 and 2003. Some of this information is different from that provided by previous sources. She was 'a native of Yunnan', according to her biography in *A Comparative Study of Post-War Mandarin and Cantonese Cinema: the Films of Zhu Shilin, Qin Jian and Other Directors* (Hong Kong Urban Council, 1983), for example.
2. After careful consideration, I have chosen to use Tang Shu Shuen's full name in this book instead of 'Shu Shuen', which she apparently preferred, mainly because her full name has been widely and historically known in the Hong Kong context.
3. Tang was credited as the sole screenwriter of all of her films, except the last one, *The Hong Kong Tycoon*, in which she had a co-scripting credit.
4. This claim, like most others in this book, was done without Tang's approval. During my interviews with her, Tang clearly stated that she was not a feminist and did not necessarily identify with feminist politics.
5. I am quoting from the newspaper advertisement of *The Arch* when it had its theatrical run in Hong Kong in 1970.

CHAPTER 1

1. Tang recalled in interviews how Subrata Mitra had conflicts with the Hong Kong film crew. One of the examples she cited was that Mitra, in order to achieve a certain kind of cinematic look, rejected the conventional lights available at Cathay Studios and chose to build his own lights with paper

mounted on wood instead. The Hong Kong film crew members looked down upon these cheaply built lights and threw them down from a slope in the middle of the shoot. The crew members called Mitra 'Ah Cha', the derogatory term for South Asians living in Hong Kong, many of whom were seen as associated with jobs like security guards, according to Tang's recollection of those common prejudices.

CHAPTER 2

1. *China Behind* was shown in film festivals in Hong Kong and Taiwan several times, including at the 8th Hong Kong International Film Festival in 1984 and at the 1st China Times Evening News Film Awards in Taiwan in 1990.
2. Interview conducted in Taipei in September 2002. *China Behind* was the only 35mm black-and-white film Chang Chao-tang has ever shot.
3. Tang told me in an interview that she had to smuggle some of the Communist-looking props, which included the *Little Red Book*, into Taiwan by hiding them in tight film cans. She recalled fondly how she 'snatched the cans from the hands of the Taiwanese customs officers while yelling at them that the film would be exposed should they open them for investigation'. This imagery of the filmmaker fighting with the customs officer over a film can with no film in it left a particularly strong impression on me. It has become for me an imagery that speaks to Tang's relationship to her own work and her self-positioning in that context, among other things.
4. In an interview with Chang Chao-tang, I asked him, in retrospect, why he would think Tang, of all people, would become the first Chinese director who made a film examining the Cultural Revolution. He replied by saying that perhaps because Tang was partly an outsider, that she, unlike 'the people who were caught up in the middle of the typhoon', could see more clearly the historical significance of making such a film.
5. Information on crew and funding was gathered from an interview I did in December 1997, Hong Kong, with Cheuk Pak-tong, one of the assistant directors of *China Behind*.

CHAPTER 3

1. The total estimated population at the end of 1974 was 4,345,200.

CHAPTER 4

1. *The Private Eyes* was the top grosser of 1976, and *The Contract* was the top grosser of 1978.

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