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Jerome Silbergeld. *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face: Cinematic Doubles, Oedipal Triangles, and China's Moral Voice*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. x, 146 pp. 100 illustrations, DVD. Paperback \$29.95, ISBN 0-295-98417-1.

The field of Chinese film studies has come a long way. English-language scholarship in the field has taken on a number of issues in a wide and healthy variety of forms, including encyclopedia entries, critical introductions, introductory surveys, and critical engagement with cinemas in the Chinese-speaking world (China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). However, despite rapid developments and a boom in both Chinese- and English-language studies of Chinese cinema in the past decade, a majority of scholarly inquiries focus on the relationships among nation building, nationalism, and national identity, as well as the perceived uniqueness of Chinese films (such as ethnographic cinema and cinematic realism with Chinese twists). Given the great number of Chinese-language films that focus on identity issues, it is understandable that scholarly debates were configured this way.

In this context, the fresh takes on three Chinese films in Jerome Silbergeld's *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* expand the horizon of inquiry. While the book joins such important works as *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes* (ed. Chris Berry, 2003), Yingjin Zhang's *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (2002), and *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (ed. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, 1997), it distinguishes itself from most publications through its unique format (single-film analyses in East-West comparative scopes) and features (comparative illustrations and the accompanying DVD). Silbergeld's groundbreaking book makes an important contribution to this burgeoning field through its scope (focusing on three post-1990 films, one from each of the highly contested locales within the triangulation of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), methodology (tracing the trajectories of imagery in both Chinese and Western visual cultures), and format (an elegant combination of textbook style and scholarly work).

While Western sourcing in modern and contemporary Chinese literature has become a worn topic, fresh angles on Chinese-Western cinematic exchanges have yet to be developed. *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* boldly and convincingly argues that Western sourcing in post-1990 Chinese-language films is far more complex and intricate than simplistic, secondary imitation of Western styles, as some critics have believed. Silbergeld addresses a paradox in one's viewing experiences of the three films in terms of their styles (appropriating film noir and others) and themes (deception and betrayal). As "markers of urban cultures," *Suzhou River* (dir. Lou Ye, 2000; PRC), *The Day the Sun Turned Cold* (dir. Yim Ho, 1994; Hong Kong),

and *Good Men, Good Women* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1995; Taiwan) “do not strike [a Western audience...] as the obvious product of an ‘other’ culture any more than do the films of Jean-Luc Godard or Ingmar Bergman” (p. 3). As such, these Chinese-language films are “comfortably familiar” to an Anglo-European audience. They are made in the “global here-and-now” even as “they [...] depict the there-and-then” (p. 3). These paradoxes are some of the central concerns of the book.

In addition to a clear and user-friendly structure (one film per chapter), readers unfamiliar with these films will also benefit from plot summaries at the beginning of each chapter. The book sheds new light on the metaphoric images in these films by focusing on the ways in which Lou, Yim, and Hou utilize and reinvent Hitchcock, Dostoevsky, Freud, Faulkner, and film noir. Throughout the book, narrativity and imagery are not seen as “oppositional” or even “alternatives,” but as “one and the same thing” (p. 8). At stake are not just parallels and borrowings across film cultures, but what Silbergeld calls interactive “dialogues” (p. 25). To demonstrate this, Silbergeld combines his discussion with useful comparative illustrations (for example, similar scenes in *Vertigo* and *Suzhou River* placed side by side). His analysis is also enhanced by a great number of actual frames from the films rather than the publicity stills that most film studies books use. Added bonuses include full-color versions of these illustrations and selected clips from each film that make for great teaching tools.

Further, as an art historian, Silbergeld uniquely focuses on the “visual artistry” (p. 8) of these films, bringing his profound knowledge of Chinese painting, in an accessible style, to bear on the imagery of these films. Short analyses of key Chinese paintings and imageries relevant to the ones deployed in the films help readers understand more fully the contexts and trajectories of appropriation of both Chinese and Western sources. For example, to elucidate the origins of Meimei’s mermaid act in *Suzhou River*, Silbergeld unpacks “a cluster of Chinese traditions that link female beauty with water, water with marriage-and-sacrifice or love-and-suicide, and these with a corporeal return-from-the-dead” (p. 25), citing Gu Kaizhi’s painting *Spirit of the Luo River* as an example (plate 23, p. 27). Similar analyses, enhanced by illustrations, can be found in this chapter (pp. 13–15) and another chapter. Chapter 3 uses Zhou Wenju’s famous painting known as the “Double Screen” (which has been analyzed from a different perspective by Wu Hung in *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting*, 1997) to illustrate the Chinese genealogy of doppelgängers, a device commonly recognized as being Western, strangely familiar, and homegrown (pp. 83–84). These features, together with the accessible introduction, which brings together these three films diverse in geocultural origins and geopolitics, make *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* a successful, if rare, crossbreed of textbook and scholarly monograph for students and scholars of both film studies and Chinese studies.

Deserving special mention is another aspect of the book’s methodology. Silbergeld begins his book with a modest claim, stating that the choice to analyze

these three films “began as a bit of self-indulgence” (p. 1) and that he wanted to find out the “inner vision” these seemingly disparate films share (p. 2). Yet the book makes it clear that there are good reasons to focus on these marginalized films that have not attracted foreign capital, have not been perceived to warrant critical attention, and have not gained popularity at home or abroad. The cinematic discourses in *Suzhou River*, *The Day the Sun Turned Cold*, and *Good Men, Good Women* problematize the notions of “China” and “Chineseness.” The making and reception of these films also exemplify new dynamics between the local and the global, and between “enforced consensus” and ambiguity (p. 2). Contributing to this diversification is Yim, Lou, and Hou’s transnational awareness and familiarity with both Western and Chinese master filmmakers and artists. However, Silbergeld also recognizes the films’ stubborn fixation upon local identity crises rather than global politics. Other than occasional visual references, these films do not cite Western films, nor do the directors acknowledge particular Western sources as their inspiration. Silbergeld justifies his comparative methodology, stating that it is “not always the *actuality* (that is to say, some explicit reference by the film artists) that calls forth particular comparisons [in the book] as much as it is the *aptness*” (p. 3).

Under this premise, chapter 1 explores the complex relationship between Alfred Hitchcock and Lou Ye and between the visual artistry of *Vertigo* and *Suzhou River*, with reference to other rich sources. Chapter 2 examines a different dimension of Hitchcock’s films, namely Freudian psychology, which is touched upon in chapter 1. This chapter provides a fascinating reading of the family allegory in *The Day the Sun Turned Cold*, carefully teasing out the parallels between the father-son conflict and Hong Kong’s “Chinese parentage” (p. 71). Chapter 3 begins with an uncanny repetition, two almost identical bicycle scenes in *The Day the Sun Turned Cold* and in *Good Men, Good Women*, and concentrates on the film-within-a-film feature (the pseudo-documentary portion and other doubles) of *Good Men, Good Women*. This chapter analyzes the “visual simultaneity of multiple selves” (p. 84), with reference to Dostoevsky and William Faulkner.

Deconstructing the problematic categories of “China” and the West is one of the central and most important goals of the book. Silbergeld is wary of various forms of essentialism both in the arts and in scholarly discourses. He usefully points out these filmmakers’ “wariness about China’s social disposition toward [...] a national ‘unity’ which would sweep Taiwan and Hong Kong into the all-embracing fold of a central Chinese population and Beijing authority, or which [...] would pave over the local distinctiveness of sites like Shanghai and deny them individual and alternate paths to the future” (p. 2). He argues that several features of these films enable them to counter this social disposition and to deconstruct “the narrative of a unitary Chinese mythos” (p. 2). As shown by the analyses, film clips, and illustrations, some of the most notable features include nonlinear temporal sequences, “an unusual affinity for ambiguity and unresolvable

situations,” “the unfolding of complex Oedipal relationships,” and dual personalities and doubles (pp. 2–3).

One of the most significant claims advanced by Silbergeld, explicitly in the introduction and implicitly in the subsequent chapters, is that the “Western component [...] of each of [the three] films [...] operates not as an uninvited global intrusion, forcibly colonizing or commodifying the Chinese subject for delivery to a foreign audience,” because while these films represent Chinese-speaking artists’ participation in the global culture, “they primarily address internal [local] concerns” (p. 6). In this sense, putting a “Chinese face” on Hitchcock (and other Western artists) constitutes “global engagement” rather than “Oriental submission” (p. 6). Like a number of scholars working on East-West cultural exchanges, Silbergeld makes it his priority to identify and address the pitfalls of both globalization and academic discourses of cultural politics. *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* reveals several caveats of the popular critical position that Western influence (in the form of Hollywood hegemony) “effectively ‘recolonizes’ Chinese film and culture” (p. 5). Silbergeld cites Rey Chow’s well-known study, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (1995), as an example of this tendency (p. 117 n. 2). He sees this position as implicitly “prescribing a cultural quarantine, primitivizes (re-Orientalizes) Chinese cinematic culture and denies it [an] interactive [...] place in world culture” (p. 5). The book’s approach to Chinese and world cinemas prompts readers to rethink the nature of cross-cultural appropriation in performance culture and to question the ethical terms of cultural exchanges (in cinema and scholarly inquiries).

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