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Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: (Re)packaging China and Selling the Hybridized Culture and Identity in an Age of Globalization¹

I. Introduction:

In the past year, numerous international awards garnered by Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, together with its resounding box office success,² mark an age of globalization in Chinese film culture and identity. When observed as the flow of culture and the dynamics of the world economy, the concept of globalization embraces the inclusionist ideals of

1 For recent views of globalization, see Chow (2001) and Li (2000). Rey Chow criticizes Derrida for "recycled clichés" that run counter to the "euphoria of inclusionist, boundary-crossing thinking in current talk about globalization" (Chow 2001: 70). Because there is a disparity between material reality and the rhetoric of globalization, Victor Li wants to "forget globalization" as a global concept (Li 2000: 3).

2 By March 2001, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* became the highest grossing foreign-language film in American history. Out of ten Oscar nominations, the highest number for a foreign language film, it won in four categories: Art Direction, Cinematography, Original Score, and Foreign Picture. The film also received Golden Globe awards for Best Director and Best Foreign Film. At Cannes, it took home four of the top prizes; in England, the awards included Best Director. The Best Director's award eluded Ang Lee in Taiwan, but in the Hong Kong awards, occurring a month after the Oscars, his film won eight awards, including Best Director and Best Picture categories.

cross-culturalism and boundary-crossing. The dominance of western culture inevitably makes westernization a part of the globalization process, as seen in the making and reception of the film, variously described as a Chinese fairytale, a tragic love story, and the auteur's boyhood fantasy world of *wuxia* (martial chivalry). In order to examine the question of cross-culturalism, border-crossing, and westernization, we first need to have a handle on what Chinese identity and culture are portrayed in the film. In this paper I look at how Ang Lee rounded up the talent among the Chinese diaspora and China, to construct a transnational China of individual turmoil, family tensions, social conflict, and a Confucian patriarchal ideology—all present in his *Pushing Hands* (1992), *Wedding Banquet* (1993), and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994).³ I argue that this transnational China of hybridized western feminism and dialogue is marketed as the conglomerate Chinese culture that derived from the *wuxia* genre of popular culture, fantasies of gravity-less martial capabilities, and a landscape of varied geography and blurred ethnicities.

II. Creating (Transnational) China: Rounding up the Diaspora Talents

The \$15 million budget for *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* amounts to the biggest budget for a Chinese film (Schaefer 2001), but it is modest by Hollywood standards and certainly by itself would not have been adequate to recruit the film's large pool of talents from the Chinese diaspora and China. These individuals, of Chinese ethnicity but most living outside China, welcomed the opportunity to work with the Taiwan-born auteur who made no secret of his commitment to win an Oscar. When *Sense and Sensibility* did not get nominated for directing in 1996, Ang Lee had apologized to Taiwan, promising that his next Chinese film would win international awards (Shih 2000: 94 citing *Chinese Daily News*). Indeed *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* brought home the Golden Globe's Best Director and Best Foreign Picture awards. Although the film was the official entry from Taiwan, Ang Lee shared the honor with the Chinese film industry from Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong: "I think the achievement is an accumulation of all the endeavors that all Chinese filmmakers have put

3 *Wedding Banquet* won the Golden Bear, best picture in Berlin International Film Festival, and shared the Palme d'Or at Cannes. *Eat Drink Man Woman* was the best picture at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival and was nominated for Best Foreign Film at Oscars. Ang Lee's other films are *Sense and Sensibility* (1995); *Ice Storm* (1997); *Ride with the Devil* (1999).

in over the years. I think it is a great thing that such a cross-cultural event can happen... and I'm just very happy I'm participating in that." (CNN.com 2001)

With the exception of the scriptwriter James Schamus, the production team and actors who created *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* hailed from the Chinese cultural zone that includes the overseas Chinese diaspora. Tim Yip (Oscar for art direction), Peter Pau (Oscar for cinematography), and Yuen Wo Ping (martial arts direction) are from Hong Kong; together the three designed a continuous landscape with the aesthetics of traditional Chinese paintings. Pulsating from the landscape is the rhythm and music composed by Tan Dun (Oscar for original musical score), who was born in China, worked in Hong Kong, and now makes his home in the United States.⁴ Taiwan/American Yo-yo Ma's cello and Hong Kong/American Co-Co Lee's title song enhanced the beauty of the landscape and heightened the poignancy of the plot.

Film critics on location in China have commented on local technicians communicating in Mandarin Chinese while the art direction and martial arts teams shouted their instructions in Cantonese. At the Oscars ceremony Peter Pau and Tim Yip acknowledged some names in Cantonese. Mandarin is the language of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, but the presence of different accents of the principal actors, rather than seen as a weakness of the film, is actually quite appropriate, given the fact that the characters they play come from various parts of China. The popular Hong Kong star Chow Yun Fat (Li Mu Bai) lives and works in Hong Kong, but has already ventured into Hollywood in *Anna and the King* (1999). Born in Malaysia and now living in Hong Kong and in the United States, Michelle Yeoh is known as a *gongfu* film star in Hong Kong and American box offices (*Tomorrow Never Dies*, 1997). Both labored through their lines with a Cantonese accent, but Michelle Yeoh had a more difficult time because, not reading Chinese, she learned her lines through *pinyin* romanization. Taiwan's Chang Chen has a Taiwanese accent and Beijing's Zhang Ziyi (Jiaolong) speaks Mandarin with the same Beijing accent used by the minor characters.

The fact that the production team and the actors came from the Chinese diaspora and China is nowhere more evident than in the

4 In May 2001, an associate professor of music in Guangzhou launched a plagiarism suit against Mao Dun for what he believed to be unauthorized use of the musical score played during the desert fighting scenes with Zhang Ziyi and Chang Chen. Mao Dun's responded to the media that he believed that Shanghai Orchestra had paid for the rights to use the score.

appearance of the names in the film credits and film reviews. The Chinese order of names is consistent, with the surnames appearing before the personal names. But the English listing varies according to the romanization system chosen, and the order of the surname depends on the country where the individual currently works. Ang Lee, born in Taiwan and living in the United States, has a Taiwan romanization and lists his surname last; Chang Chen, born in Taiwan and working in Taiwan, uses the standard Wade-Giles romanization and lists his last name first, as do the Taiwan scriptwriters Wang Hui Ling and Tsai Kuo Jung. China's Zhang Ziyi, similarly, lists the last name first but the *pinyin* romanization adopted is different. Chow Yun Fat and Yuen Wo Ping apply the Cantonese romanization, as used in Hong Kong, and they list their surnames first; but Tim Yip and Peter Pau, who also live in Hong Kong, list their surnames last because of their Christian personal names. Living in the United States, Michelle Yeoh and Yo-yo Ma list their surnames last, but Tan Dun has chosen to continue using the traditional Chinese order of his surname, although he now works in New York.

In this wide assortment of principal talents, all are identifiably of Chinese ethnicity, but only Zhang Ziyi and Tan Dun have actually lived in China. The director, art director, cinematographer, and other principal actors constructed and articulated a China of stunning landscape and martial chivalry through the shared experience of popular culture, derived from reading *wuxia* novels and/or watching and/or making previous martial arts films. Martial chivalry is based on the imagination of an underworld, or Jianghu, where moral fighters call upon justice and righteousness to rid the public of bandits and corrupt fighters, support the underprivileged, and avenge personal wrongs. Because the Jianghu world operates with its own principles of vigilante justice, it often collides with government authority and can be considered a culture of resistance. But in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, there is no tension or collision between the Jianghu underworld and government authority. The China portrayed here is not plagued by domestic or international politics; instead, it is a transnational China with fantasized superhuman strength and gravity-less walks on walls, balances on bamboo trees, and leaps over water and rooftops—martial skills believed to be acquired through transmission from masters and/or from secret manuals.

III. Constructing/Configuring a Transnational China

From Novel to Screenplay: Characters and Plot

In his acceptance speech at the Oscars, Ang Lee describes his team pursuing "...a China that is fading away in our heads." This China is

derived from Wang Dulu (1909-77), a native of Beijing whose *wuxia* novels have been noted for the intensity of emotions rather than by martial arts.⁵ The novel *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (*Wohu canglong*) is the fourth part of a five-part saga of four entangled relationships that took place in three generations. The relationship between Yü Xiulian and Li Mubai is dealt with in the second and third parts of the saga, so the *Wohu canglong* focuses on Yü Jiaolong (Delicate Dragon) and Luo Xiaohu (Little Tiger), whose names and secrets provide the title for the novel and film. After reading the novel, Ang Lee wrote the précis and gave it to his regular scriptwriter, James Schamus, who worked with two writers from Taiwan to turn the novel into a script. An academic who does not know Chinese but who understands Hollywood and film critics, Schamus is valued for his intuitive grasp of the Chinese script (Ma 1998: 168).

The resulting screenplay is generally faithful to the original novel in characterization. The principal and minor characters are portrayed with remarkable accuracy, particularly in holding back emotions and hiding secrets. The love between Xiulian and Mubai is doomed by traditional social values and martial chivalry, and the relationship between Jiaolong and Xiaohu is destroyed by class differences. Jiaolong's theft and pursuit of the Mubai's Green Destiny Sword serve as the unifying sub-theme in both the novel and the screenplay.

But to transform Wang Dulu's complex 763 page Shakespearean tale into 120 minutes of screen time, Ang Lee and his scriptwriters had to adjust the plot. One change involves omitting sub-plots, for example, Xiaohu's tragic family background and his Han Chinese ethnicity. The number of characters is reduced by blending personalities, as in the character of Biyan huli being combined with that of her husband Gao Langqiu, who was actually Jiaolong's literary and martial arts tutor in Xinjiang. Another example is the combination of Mubai's master, Jiangnan He, with the latter's sworn brother, Yaxia (Mute Fighter), who was killed by Biyan huli. Mubai's death and Jiaolong's leap from the mountain represent the most drastic changes from Wang Dulu's novel. In the novel Biyan huli dies early, killed by Xiulian and not by Mubai (Wang Dulu 2000: 3.129). In fact, Mubai

5 Wang Dulu was an elementary school teacher who wrote serialized novels to supplement his income. Author of twenty novels, he is known as one of the four representatives of the northern school of *wuxia* novels (Hong 1994; Liang 1990; Pei 1991).

survives the other three principal characters twenty-one years later, at the conclusion of the five-part saga (Wang Dulu 1985:17.1132). But Mubai's screenplay death is a more powerful symbolic statement of the same tragedy—the impossibility of intimacy between Xiulian and Mubai, plagued as they were by guilt and repression.

The screenplay has Jiaolong jumping off Wudang Mountain in south China, leaving open the question whether she has committed suicide. In the novel, however, Jiaolong jumps off Miaofeng Mountain, outside Beijing, to perform ritualistic filial piety to bring about the recovery of her father from illness. The jump here is just a way to leave the family that she had shamed; as she had planned, she survives her jump, has a last rendezvous with Xiaohu before disappearing and giving birth to their son in Xinjiang (Wang 1985).

Inclusionist Geography and Ethnicity

Apart from the characterization and plot, Ang Lee has also preserved Wang Dulu's expansive and inclusionist view of China's diverse regions and ethnicities. Although much of the plot takes place in the capital of Beijing, the characters traverse the deserts and oases of Xinjiang's Taklamakan in the northwest, and climb the mountains and bamboo trees of Anhui and Hubei provinces in the south. In addition, Wang Dulu's novel has Biyan huli operating her banditry from Yunnan province in the southwest.

It is not surprising that multiple ethnicities should exist in a diverse geography such as China. Indeed we observe a bandit gang composed of ethnic groups in Xinjiang, and in Beijing we see ethnic differentiation of Manchu and Han groups. Both Wang Dulu and Ang Lee blur the ethnic differences and focus on the similarities in rituals, for example, those of marriage. Although the Han women bound their feet as an ethnic and civility marker (Ko 1997: 9), both Han and Manchu women sport natural feet in the film and much of the novel. Another case in blurring the lines of ethnic differences is in Ang Lee's conversion of Xiaohu into an unspecified non-Han minority. He also appropriates the Beijing superstition of jumping off a mountain to bring about the recovery of sick parents and recycles it as a non-Han myth that Xiaohu describes to Jiaolong. In both the novel and screenplay, the Manchu, Han, and Xiaohu's unspecified ethnic group are shown with mutual trust and without the racial and ethnic tensions one would have expected in Qing China. Thus we see Xiulian and Mubai in close friendship with a Manchu aristocrat, entrusting him with a valued Han Chinese sword. Such incidents can be seen as examples of border-crossing

in the inclusionist view of China's ethnic diversity in both the novel and the screenplay.

Chinese Identity and Culture: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism

In an inclusionist China of blurred ethnicities, the core culture embraces Confucianism as the dominant ideology. Despite being set in 18th century China, where minority conquest and political tension occurred, the story has no wars or natural disasters that exert external pressure on the characters. The conflict is in the individual mind as it relates to family and social norms, as dictated by the dominant ideology that cuts across the lines of ethnicity, class, and gender. In negotiating their way through Confucian norms and Buddhist and Daoist alternatives, the characters become the architects of their own tragic circumstances.

In the Confucian social order that we observe in the film, the principal characters are subjected to Confucian conformity and hierarchy. For example, marriages are arranged by parents and elders, who must be obeyed according to Confucian obligations of filial piety. After being enticed by the Jianghu underworld and acquiring martial skills, Jiaolong could not live the prescribed life of an upper-class wife, nor could her aristocratic upbringing allow her to defy her parents and marry a former bandit, Xiaohu.

Equally doomed is the long enduring love between Xiulian and Mubai, both belonging to a lower class than Jiaolong. Xiulian's betrothal to a man she had never met, but who later became Mubai's friend and who died in the Jianghu underworld before the marriage took place, destroyed any chance of a union with Mubai. With the Confucian patriarchy treating the betrothal as an actual marriage, Xiulian becomes an unmarried widow who offers incense to her late betrothed's altar at her home. Whenever Xiulian and Mubai meet face to face, the intersecting values of the individual (love), and family (filial piety) and society (*yi*, righteousness) reaffirm Xiulian's ambivalent status, as reflected in her hairstyle. Her hair is piled up in a chignon as characteristic of married women, but one thin braid brushes against her shoulder, perhaps to show her maiden status.

In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Buddhism and Daoism are offered as alternative ideologies, but although they bring psychological relief, they are not effective in overturning the dominant Confucian rules. Daoist notions of harmony, peace, and balance seem to pervade through the natural beauty and the tamed discipline of animals in the landscape. Daoism is brought to us disjointedly as bits of philosophical aphorisms, as shown in the following examples: "Be strong yet supple, that is the way to govern"; "The more you want to repress it, the stronger it gets"; "Sharpness comes from dullness."

Although Xinjiang and the Jianghu underworld seem to offer freedom from the constraints of Confucian rules, allowing untrammelled exercise of emotions, such freedom is ultimately unattainable in the experience of all four principal characters.

Mubai in particular is in the deepest conflict with his emotions, despite drawing upon Buddhism and Daoism as alternative ideologies. Confucianism makes intimacy with Xiulian impossible, but Confucian public obligations still involve him and his Qingming sword in military chivalry against corrupt bandits in the Jianghu underworld. At Wudang Mountain he engages in physical exercise and practices the Daoist style of martial arts, but the Buddhist discipline and the philosophy that he dispenses prove unable to remove his inner turmoil of emotions. The following are examples of Buddhist aphorisms in the film: "The things we possess have no permanence"; "What we do not possess is real"; "Mubai, the name, sword, martial skills, manuals, everything is illusory." He describes to Xiulian that during meditation he had once reached a realm where space and time faded, but he could not let go because he was held back by a matter of the heart, or his unspoken love for Xiulian.

The strong prevalence of Confucianism is the reason why no one in the film could defy Confucian social norms, and achieve Daoist freedom and Buddhist discipline, to resolve the inner and social conflicts without tragic consequences. But the presence of all three ideologies, which are often seen as markers of Chinese identity and culture, also construct the core components of a transnational China.

IV. Globalizing Transnational China

Marketing and explaining the Film

In portraying this transnational China, Ang Lee sought to "respect the promise that wu xia makes to the Asian audience, which is a fantasy of power, romance and morality" (Chute 2001). However, this high-brow martial arts film did not overwhelm the lukewarm audience in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The criticism against the film ranged from the non-standard Mandarin spoken by three of the principal actors, to the plot being too complicated and the martial arts being too boring when compared to the fast and violent Hong Kong *gongfu* films. Another comment is that the film is too westernized, and indeed Ang Lee admits that serving up *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is like educating the western diet with chop suey before introducing genuine food in a Chinese-American restaurant (Chute 2001). But it is this westernizing touch that has generated a more enthusiastic global audience in North America and Europe.

Marketing the film early was the first step in enticing the western audience; this was done by inviting foreign film critics to the shooting in Beijing and the Gobi desert a year before the film screened commercially in the west. The importance placed on publicity can be seen by a \$7 million advertising budget in a film that cost only \$15 million to make (Liu 2001). Sony Picture Classics hired a 13 year old to construct the film's impressive official website; the bonus is the additional advertising by the boy himself, who advises that people his age should come and see the film (Liu 2001).

But much of the publicity was done by Ang Lee himself, according to Michael Barker, co-president at Sony Picture Classics: "...Ang went around the country and spoke to everyone.... One of the keys to success was that he put as much work into promoting the film as he did into directing it." In an interview, Ang Lee challenges the western audience to accept *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a global film and culture, as he speaks about a more inclusionist world: "I think as globalization is happening more and more, at the same time people cherish their individual cultures more.... In the course of 15 years, I find the world has become more embracing. It's progressing. Now we'll see if we can break into the multiplexes" (Kirkland 2000).

From Screenplay to Translation and Subtitles

One crucial step in selling *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a global film and culture involves using western notions to translate the dialogue into English subtitles. The subtitles could not simply be literal translations, as James Schamus states: "There are so many layers and echoes and meaning and poetry that are simply nonexistent for westerners, and it was really important to avoid that to keep the flow of the movie going" (Kaufman 2001). To make the subtitles user-friendly, Schamus used the minimum of English words so that the viewer's interest remains focused on the screen action. The reduction is achieved by simplifying both the names of the characters and the dialogues, at the sacrifice of accuracy. Those who understand Chinese may read the resulting subtitles as describing not a transnational China, but a westernized hybrid China.

The translation and simplification of the names reflect a flexibility in pronunciation and romanization. Yü Jiaolong becomes Jen and Luo Xiaohu is translated as Lo, Liu Taibao as Bo, Cai Xiangmei as May, and Biyan huli (Jade-eyed Fox) as Jade Fox. Perhaps in order to retain some Chinese touch, Xiulian and Mubai are not translated, but they appear as Shu Lien and Mu Bai, in transcriptions that are easier for the western audience to pronounce.

Jiaolong's husband Lou becomes Gou in the subtitles, in order not to confuse this name with Lo, her lover from Xinjiang.

Simplification and reduction are also applied to the translation of the dialogues, which turn out to be rather accurate in tone and intent, but not in literal meaning. For example, in the scene under the bamboo trees, after Mubai has just taken away the Green Destiny sword from Jiaolong: he hollers: "拜師 bai shi" (literally, kneel and recognize me as your teacher) is translated as "Kneel!" and "作夢 zuomeng" (literally, you are dreaming) is translated as "Never!" In another case, when Xiulian congratulates her employee on the birth of his daughter, he replies: 有一個腳指頭像你就好了 you yege jiaozhitou xiang ni jiu haole" (literally, it would be good if she has one toe like yours) is translated as "I'll be happy if she's half as strong as you are." The most westernized rendering of the dialogue occurs when Mubai, dying in Xiulian's arms, says: 我寧願遊蕩在你的身邊，做七天的野鬼，追隨你。就算落進最黑暗的地方，我的愛，也不會讓我成爲永遠的孤魂。

Literally, this exchange translates into:

I would rather wander at your side, be a ghost in the wilderness for seven days; and even as I drift into the darkest place, my love will not let me be an eternal lonely spirit.

The subtitles render a very free English translation:

I would rather be a ghost drifting by your side as a condemned soul than to enter heaven without you. Because of your love, I will never be a lonely spirit.

A literal translation would be too cumbersome for the western audience, not familiar with the Daoist and Buddhist concepts of ghosts and the dead. But bringing in the western notions of the condemned soul and entering heaven without a loved one is too foreign to traditional Chinese thought. This translation appeals to the western audience, providing an obvious example of westernized hybridity in the film.

Another hybridity that appeals to the western audience is the three-minute long title song, "The Love Before Time," with music by Tan Dun and lyrics by James Schamus. Sung in English by Co-Co Lee in the middle of the procession of film credits, the song is a moving testimony of unforgotten love in the expansive backdrop of the north star, sky, mountains, and oceans. The fact that it is sung in English in a film that is totally in Mandarin Chinese is a hybridity in itself. In the Cantonese version

of the film, the song is titled “yueguang airen 月光愛人” (Lover in the Moonlight) and sung by Co-Co Lee in Mandarin. The song portrays a sleeping lover who wakes up in the moonlight; the lyrics bear no resemblance to the English version. Since it is the same film, one wonders why translation is not used, as in the case of the subtitles. Could it be that the English version could not appeal to the Chinese audience and so new lyrics had to be written in Mandarin?

Women, Feminist Sensibilities, and Sexuality

In the globalization of transnational China in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, another westernizing process can be observed in the focus on women, the depth of emotions, and feminist sensibilities—a combination found in Wang Dulu’s novel but made much more emphatic in the film. Indeed, as Schamus states, “From an Asian point of view, the emotional content is quite new for the genre. And the emphasis on female subjectivity and the concerns of the women characters are absolutely revolutionary” (Kaufman 2001).

Women dominate the film with their presence and strong personalities, and the principal and minor characters all display their own emotions and unique life experiences. The characters include a cross-section of society and reflect several generations: a baby girl just born, a girl acrobat in the market, the teenaged Jiaolong and Xiangmei, Xiulian in her late twenties, Jade Fox and Jiaolong’s mother in their middle age, and Xiulian’s housekeeper in her old age. Trapped in emotional turmoil, Xiulian still functions effectively as a successful career woman managing a security courier service. Jiaolong’s mother is shown as an upper-class wife conducting herself with dignity, but her emotions could be as repressed as those of Xiulian.

We could say that the film minimizes gender differences, or even that gender crossing has occurred in the portrayal of these women as equal, if not superior, to the men in physical strength. Physical endurance can be observed in Jiaolong and Xiulian, who engage in the longest fighting sequences of the film; another example is seen when Jiaolong sends dozens of male fighters into defeat at the restaurant. When Jiaolong emerges dressed as a man, even Xiulian does not know of the disguise until she pulls a woman’s hairpin from her head.

Although no physical frailties of women are shown, femininity and tenderness are still communicated through traditional roles of women, as when Jiaolong lies in bed with Tiger, and Xiulian drinks tea with Mubai. And despite their strong personalities, the women weep and cry profusely,

as shown in Cai Xiangmei when her father is killed, in Jiaolong when she visits Xiulian to get a change of clothes, and in Xiulian when Mubai dies.

No character in the film intrigues the western audience more than the feisty Jiaolong, whose embedded name of “dragon” is masculine and unusual for a girl in traditional China. The courtship fighting sequences with Xiaohu in Xinjiang brought out the rare chuckles in the film audience. Jiaolong’s pursuit of her comb and the symbolism of love that the comb represents in the film are not found in Wang Dulu’s novel; by writing the comb into the film, Ang Lee succeeds in making the character of Jiaolong more innocent and more like a spoiled teenager in the west. Her range of personalities certainly invites Freudian analysis: gentle, unmarried upper class young lady trained in artistic and literary talents; passionate lover with Xiaohu; and cold, calculating thief and fighter against her tutor (Jade-Fox), friend (Xiulian), and strangers. In the film Mubai fears that Jiaolong’s lack of moral discipline, when combined with the martial techniques that she had hidden from even her parents, would turn her into a poisonous dragon, or an evil force, bringing disaster and chaos to both society and the Jianghu underworld. We observe a hint of this ruthlessness when Jiaolong cuts Xiulian’s arm and continues the attack, after Xiulian gives her a chance to return the sword and escape unharmed. So in sum Ang Lee has made Jiaolong into a more innocent and likable personality than what had been intended in Wang Dulu’s novel.

The flexibility of the script is demonstrated by adapting the original roles to the strengths of the actors. Chow Yun Fat had agreed to do the film when the role of Mubai was rather small, but Ang Lee later carved out a larger and more mature role, but cut the fighting scenes because Chow is not trained in martial arts (Schaefer 2000). Jiaolong’s role became more sexy, as Ang Lee perceived that Zhang Ziyi, despite being a neophyte, could handle sexuality in film well. These changes led to the creation of a subconscious and mutual attraction between middle-aged Mubai and the teenager Jiaolong. This relationship is shown in the scene in the cave, when the disheveled Jiaolong challenges Mubai: “Is it the sword you want, or me?” An agitated Xiulian, who feels that her relationship with Mubai is threatened by Jiaolong, implores Mubai: “She is not our concern. This will pass very quickly. She’ll get married.” Xiulian betrays her jealousy and possessiveness in the fighting sequence with Jiaolong, when she sternly warns: “Don’t touch it. It’s Li Mu Bai’s sword!” The sword here is heavily charged with the western notion of phallic symbolism; Xiulian here is seen fighting for her relationship with Mubai rather than for the sword.

The tragic unfolding of the relationships between Mubai and Xiulian, and between Jiaolong and Xiaohu, constructs the epic love story that the western audience extracts from the film. The keen observer will notice that Ang Lee squeezed in a more simple love that can be actualized. This is the relationship between Liu Taibao and Cai Xiangmei, whose paths crossed when her father tried to arrest Jade Fox. Taibao and Xiangmei occupy much larger roles in Wang Dulu's novel than in the film.

V. Conclusion

When *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* won the mainstream awards, Ang Lee and Tan Dun attributed the success to crossing boundaries and popular film critics talked about the "marriage between translatable cultures." In discussing Ang Lee's other films, literary critics have referred to "the politics of flexibility" and "flow" (Shih 2000: 86). According to Shih, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Ice Storm* did not receive recognition, because "racism disregards Ang Lee's strategic flexibility and universal appeal as irrelevant at crucial moments in the production of meaning. The Academy Awards' exercise of gendered and racialized minoritization is the moment of arrest, a nodal point, in the process of flow" (Shih 2000: 98). Now that Ang Lee's film has taken home four Academy Awards, the break-through or flow has certainly taken place. What flows through the film is the transnational China created by Ang Lee's team of largely diaspora talents; what propels the flow is the process of westernization associated with marketing transnational China as a global film culture. What is marketed remains identifiably Chinese, with the dominant Confucian culture and actors of Chinese ethnicity acting out a *wuxia* epic of doomed love and emotional turmoil. Indeed this transnational China, despite being westernized and hybridized, retains its Chinese identity and culture in the eyes of the global film audience—approachable but still exotic, intriguing but accessible through subtitles.

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