

跨世纪定格

香港电影

Cross-century Frames:
Hong Kong Film (1914-2014)
第二十一届北京大学生电影节特辑

燕 周星 主编

CFP 中国电影出版社



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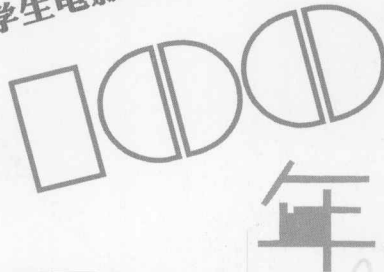
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序言：百年香江光影价值探究

周星

北京师范大学艺术与传媒学院院长、北京大学生电影节执行副主任

2014年是香港电影的100年历史节点，值此机会而早早筹划的北京大学生电影节专门展开纪念香港电影百年学术研讨和论文征集活动，也是较早掀开香港电影百年纪念序幕的创举。原因不仅是大学生电影节20余年始终关注华语电影的现实发展，而且专注于鼓励电影创作成为完整意义上的国家文化发展的重要内涵建设。而对于香港电影的不断关注研究，也是这一大目标下的重要部分。还有，对于电影历史演进的学术性把握，更是北京大学生电影节不同于其他电影节的自觉责任趋势所然，香港电影的演进和学术分析，自是我们认知的重要对象。

香港电影是独特的华语电影的存在形态，自成一体又千丝万缕地勾连中国电影百年历史。在和内地电影疏密联系的起伏中造就了自有风景。从最早中国电影的初生阶段，两地电影就几乎是先后创作而彼此相连，1905年《定军山》开启中国电影先河，而随后的1914年的《庄子试妻》则开启了香港电影的第一个创作。其实这只是地域上的先后。香港电影开拓者黎民伟后来在广州开创中国纪录片拍摄贡献，如关于孙中山阅兵典礼珍贵影像，为后世留下了罕有的影像资料。而在成立于上海的“民新”公司，他与内地早期重要电影人欧阳予倩、卜万苍、侯曜、孙瑜等的创作合作多有出色之作。几乎可以说两地电影源流一样，相互联系，人员流动。相当长的时间里，两地电影的映照也是自然的呈现。在抗战时期，内地一些电影人流落香港，自然和香港的关系更为紧密。新中国成立后，相互之间的制度差异而开始显露各自的发展路径，香港电影的自成一体风习得到地域文化凸显，在武打功夫、警匪故事的演绎中，形成具有世界影响的独特类型存在。这半个世纪来的分合，让香港电影不仅地域个性得到强化（独有的面向东南亚的电影传播和面向资本主义体制的交融创作等），也为本土风尚的强化获得格外的收获提供了背景。而实际上包括凤凰影业、银都机构的微妙联系，依然让香港电影的内地窗口隐约呈现。新的变化

来自于内地，随着内地改革开放的实施，两地电影的交流重新开始，再一次的互联势所必然。尤其是新世纪展开的内地电影市场改革，铺平了两地电影合作、交融的渠道。民间促发、政策鼓励、资金市场驱动等等造就了当下的局面：在中国电影的新景观中，华语电影的更大领域包容着三地的电影创作日趋紧密。

近期香港 107 岁世纪影人邵逸夫先生离世，其对于内地早期电影和后来香港影视业的卓越贡献被不断提及，我们再一次看到；历史与现实的紧密联系。显然，香港电影百年就回到更为紧密的两地电影关联的历史机遇中，本书相邀的多地专家对于香港电影的观察分析，证明香港电影既具有独特景观的创作研究对象，又是被多样文化的相互吸引和观照的对象。简言之，香港电影的百年风光造就了丰盛的文化现象，疏密联系之间、交融影响之中，包含了许多值得研究的内涵。研究者的不同角度分析，都在印证香港电影的价值。

无疑，作为再一次聚焦的华语电影的重要组成部分，香港电影的自身个性和文化承传值得更多分析。依存于世界视野的创作，必然还要有独特的文化本土性的存在依据，无论是现实表现还是电影梦幻创作，一种新的华语电影的面貌，也极大促进了中国电影多样变化，而在世界范畴，华语电影的丰富性理应得到更大的展现。问题显然突显，新世纪以来的自然接近、融合和消长彼此的变化，既有合理的所得，也似乎还有正在磨合中难免的不足。就“香港电影”而言，已经烙上地域文化和社会经济背景氛围的创作特色，是否得到更好的展示？当内地电影市场的巨大吸引和内地电影创作需要的人才支持与经验借鉴，使得香港电影和内地电影的关联度愈发明显时，香港电影自身的独特性如何发挥就成为问题。我们期望香港电影继续以地域传统和个性鲜明的风采展现于华语电影世界，也期望其市场经验和制作水平给予其它地域电影以影响，但这一切的前提是独有不能丢，特色增光彩。

于是在香港电影百年这个历史关头，进一步研究香港电影创作经验，聚焦香港电影文化情态、历史演变和创作类型，定位香港电影人所做出的历史贡献，进行不断的总结探究，便是大学生电影节学术思考所推出本书的目的。

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黑与红：战后香港黑色电影及与进步 电影的相互关系（1947 – 1957）

By Law Kar

Author's bio in brief: Law Kar 罗卡 had worked as a programmer for the Hong Kong International Film Festival and the Hong Kong Film Archive. His English publications include : Hong Kong Cinema- A Cross Cultural View (2004, co-author), From Art form to Platform, Hong Kong Plays and Performances 1900-1941 (1999, co-author), and a contributor to The Cinema of Hong Kong- History, Arts, Identity (2000), At Full Speed - Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World (2001) and Forever China (2008). He is now a project researcher for the Hong Kong Film Archive.

罗 卡

香港电影资料馆特约研究员

[Abstract] Movies on crimes and human vices flourished in postwar Shanghai from 1947 to 1949. This trend was later brought to Hong Kong by the Shanghai filmmakers but it was not well accepted nor to become a popular filmic style. However, under the influences of Shanghai and the Hollywood Noir, postwar Hong Kong cinema had developed its own noir, not as much a genre but rather, elements that infiltrated into several genres.

This paper is to discuss the postwar Hong Kong Noir in its contexts, tracing it back to the Shanghai origins, while contrasting it with the cultural and social settings of Hong Kong. I shall pay special attention to the femme fatal figure of Bai Guang; the development of the Noir into progressive film produced by the same Shanghai masters such as Zhu Shilin, Yue Feng, Li Pinqian; and the changing course in Cantonese film after 1949.

[Key words] Postwar Chinese cinema, Shanghai noir, Hong Kong noir, progressive film, Cantonese film, urbanity, femme fatale.

China's war against Japan (1937–1945) had scarcely ended in August 1945 when its people faced another “invasion” – movies from the USA.

Deprived of Hollywood pictures for almost 4 years, China's filmgoers re-embraced them as local filmmakers looked on helpless with envy and anxiety. Hundreds of American releases flourished in China throughout 1946–1949 with war, espionage, musicals, romantic love and crime the most popular genres.¹

Chinese cinema (including Hong Kong's) counter-attacked by producing many films of such genres or of mixed genres that combined melodramas, musicals and comedies with darker elements of murder, crime, suicide, horror and psychological dissociation. In no other comparable period were audiences of Chinese cinema so drawn to the dark side of human nature.

Some of these films can now be identified wholly or partly under the description of film noir (dark film). As we know, the term itself's' never clearly defined and it is not my intention to differentiate these films as a genre but rather as a “feeling” and “tone”. In this article I am going to examine the dark elements and pessimistic tone perceived in post-war Chinese cinema related to its social, economic and cultural background, and its extension from Shanghai to Hong Kong.

Emergent Shanghai Noir and its critics

Two Chinese postwar noir blockbusters, *From Dark to Dawn* (Chong heiye dao tianming, 从黑夜到天明, 1947) and *Secret Agent Sky No.1* (Tianzi diyi hao, 天字第一号, 1947), were produced in Peking by the government-owned China Film Studios and released China-wide in mid-1947. Both were directed by Tu Guangqi.²

1 According to *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* by Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai and Xing Zuwen (China Film Press, Beijing, 1963), American features shown in Shanghai in 1946–1949.

numbered 1083. In 1946 alone there were 352 compared to 16 Chinese features (see Vol.2, p.162). According to a government report in January 1950, of 356 features shown in China in 1948, 271 were foreign and 85 Chinese – see Ting Yaping's *Imaging China 1945–1949*, Culture & Art Press, 1998, Beijing, p.158.

2 China Film Studios (Zhongyang dianying sheying chang), re-organized as a commercial enterprise in 1947, was actually owned by the Nationalist Government,

The first was a love-hate drama about an engineer who falls in love with the daughter of his antagonist, a wealthy merchant who proves to have been a wartime traitor. The second, *Secret Agent Sky No. 1*, is a more complex story of spy versus spy set in Japanese-occupied Peking. A Nationalist (KMT) agent gains employment with a wealthy Chinese who is collaborating with the Japanese. The agent's real employer, the Chinese government, needs crucial information hidden in the traitor's house, which is well-guarded by the Japanese. The traitor's wife is actually a former lover of the agent who meanwhile falls in love with her daughter. Finally, the wife murders her husband to protect both the KMT spy and her daughter before revealing that she is the KMT's "Secret Agent Sky No.1"¹. It reportedly "broke all box office records for a Chinese film", leading to a series of spy movies produced in Shanghai and Hong Kong, making Tu one of China's most popular directors and a leading expert in film noir.

The years 1947-1949 thus witnessed a strong trend towards murder, detective, horror and thriller films made by big and small companies in Shanghai and Hong Kong. The films were released nation-wide and circulated among Chinese communities of Southeast Asia to both enthusiastic reviews and negative criticism that deplored Chinese pictures becoming increasingly sensational and, if greater numerically, certainly poorer in quality throughout this period. One critic complained that scriptwriters and directors too often ignored reality to churn out old formulas thus leading Chinese cinema nowhere as spy films aped *Secret Agent Sky No.1* while love stories were poorly constructed with paper-thin characterization. Reporting on Hong Kong cinema for 1948, one writer savaged its cheap, made-in-bulk Cantonese movies that pushed sex, violence, mystery and fantasy into the realms of obscenity and absurdity.²

Similar criticisms appeared overseas. Singapore's *Screen Voice* of 15 September 1948 with one studio set up in Peking (closed in early 1949) and two in Shanghai.

1 The film was adapted from the popular stage play, *Wild Rose*, which had received an award from the wartime government in Chongqing and critical success generally though the leftist press had roundly attacked it. The play's final scene where *Sky No.1* is killed was less explicit onscreen, leaving the audience to guess the outcome.

2 See Zhou Kelong's "The Chinese Film Scene Today", *Qing Qing Movie*, Shanghai, Jan. 1, 1949; and Xiang Zi's "Exploring the Hong Kong Film Scene", also in *Qing Qing Movie*, Sep. 15, 1948.

editorialised against postwar Chinese filmmakers who exploited sensationalism à la Hollywood for the totally inappropriate social conditions of China:

“People of the Dollar Country may crave such novelties, always needing newer sensations to stimulate and enrich their lives. They eat steak and fine bread so, naturally, look around for ice cream [eye candy] on top of the feast. But China is a poor country with serious problems everywhere. Most of our people are so poor they eat grass roots and tree skins and cannot afford this kind of enjoyment. Our urgent needs are freedom, sunshine and water. Seizing and transplanting Hollywood formulae for sex, fighting and killing is a cul de sac for Chinese cinema.”¹

Postwar Shanghai film industry

China was indeed in turmoil after the Sino-Japanese war during the immediate “handover” and “recovery” years. Crime and corruption abounded, innocent people were charged with treason while real wartime traitors retained power. Then came the civil war from mid-1946 between the Nationalists and the Communists. It brought great economic depression and soaring inflation while Chinese people lost confidence in an increasingly corrupt and incompetent Nationalist government. Rural people with no other hope fled to the big cities making urban life there even harder. Such pressures made Shanghai, China’s greatest city and the heart of its national economy, ripe for a “heart attack”.

However, people needed entertainment and Shanghai was the one mainland city still running a regular film industry that, oddly, flourished in spite of the great depression.² People undoubtedly needed to escape from their daily pains and anguish and movie-going remained the cheapest option, particularly for working-class and jobless people since there were second-, third- and even fourth-run venues with progressively cheaper tickets than

1 See the Editorial, “Sex, Fighting, Killing – Should Chinese Cinema Go This Way?”, in *Screen Voice*, No. 137, Sept. 15, 1948, Singapore.

2 In Peking, almost all productions were from China Film Studio whose total production numbered 17 features during 1946–48 before closing down in 1948; the government-run Chang Chun Film Studio produced just 3 features (1947–1948) before folding. In Nanking, just a few features, educational shorts and documentaries were made by government-run studios as well as educational films by Nanking University. Canton had very few productions. None are recorded from other cities.

first-run cinemas.¹

Progressive vs Noir

Meanwhile, pro-Communist or “progressive” filmmakers infiltrated post-war nationalist film studios and had their own film studio, Kun Lun, supported by “patriotic capitalists”. They tried to make films that reflected cruel reality but the censors strictly inspected all film productions and scripts so that social/political criticism was minimized forcing “progressive” filmmakers to convey messages by stealth. The most popular movie at the time, now regarded as a classic of postwar progressive cinema, was *The Spring River Flows East* (*Yi jiang chunshui xiang dong liu*, 一江春水向东流, 1947), a melodrama focussing on a family whose painful wartime experiences were in no way relieved by the 1945 victory. Logically, they wondered (aloud), would nothing ever get better? – the film typically sugaring the message with sensual women and mildly sensational love scenes. Another progressive film, *Night Lodging* (*Ye dian*, 夜店, 1948), dissected a cross-section of tenants in a low-class hotel for their inherent goodness or evil, their individual motives driven by love or hatred and their complicated relations leading to betrayal and murder:

“Eighty per cent of the scenes in *Night Lodging* take place at night. This makes it the first Chinese film to consist mainly of night scenes.”² In *The Devils* (*Qun mo*, 群魔, 1948), a group of Chinese bandits co-operate with the Japanese to control a small town. But



1 See for instance Wang Chaoguang's "Research on the Marketing of American Films in Republican China", *Film Art*, No.1, 1998, Beijing. To support this finding, the author, citing producer/distributor Wu Xingzai's data, notes that "lower class" Chinese increasingly provided cinema audiences throughout 1947-1948. A front page story in *Qing Qing Movie* of 20 October 1948 reports Chinese films doing good business and that first-run theatres formerly showing American movies had switched to Chinese product, drawing consistently full houses with long queues for tickets.

2 As quoted from *Qing Qing Movie*, May 16, 1948, in Jubin Hu's *Projecting a Nation, Chinese Cinema Before 1949*, Hong Kong University Press, 2003, p. 187.

conflicts of interest, lust for the same women and competition for power lead to their killing one another. It satirized wartime human vices while associating them with contemporary social and economic corruption.

In such “progressive” (leftist) films, significant noir elements and visual styles expressed the sufferings of ordinary people and their resentments against those in power, lightened by some onscreen sensual excitement. Non-leftist filmmakers focussed more generally on entertainments as diversions from the hardships of life, or vented personal frustrations through stories depicting human weaknesses, passions, crimes and struggles in a terrain somewhere between the extremes of good and evil. Thus emerged the murder, detective, horror, thriller and spy genre films throughout 1947–1949, many packaged with noir features to make them more competitive.

Shanghai Noir vs Hollywood Noir

This fashionable trend in postwar Shanghai might be considered as a reaction to American noir films, but it also grew out of society’s disappointments and anger vis a vis the establishment’s corrupt central government and unrighteous people of wealth and power in general. However, government-imposed censorship to eliminate “offensive” elements—political or “moral”—bound filmmakers to very strict rules. Forbidden were depictions of explicit sex and violence, or of social disorder and crimes portrayed in any great detail; criminals had to be punished or ultimately repentant, moral values to be reaffirmed and conflicts resolved. To avoid being banned or heavily cut, films turned from external social conflicts to internal emotional ones—many concerning illicit love foreshadowing crimes of passion via complicated plots and characterizations (rather than action as such) to grab attention. Sexual elements were cautiously handled – a woman in a swimsuit lying on a beach or one in pyjamas lying in bed beside a man was about as risqué as they got – and no blood could be visible in violent scenes. Even so, of 162 features submitted in 1948, 48 had to be cut.¹

Perhaps Shanghai noir was influenced by Hollywood in many ways, but it is difficult even now to analyze and compare their respective styles and scenes since almost all contemporary

1 Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai and Xing Zuwen, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, China Film Press, Beijing, 1963, p.159.

examples from Shanghai remain locked away in Chinese archives. But, from viewing those available and examining contemporary scenarios and stills, we find that Chinese filmmakers used many conventions familiar to Hollywood noir: low-key lighting; long flashback sequences; the confession of a prisoner or victim to introduce the story; a murder or gunshot in the opening scene; disposal of dead bodies on rainy days or foggy nights; a woman smoking and holding a gun confronting an unarmed man; a soldier returning from war to discover his wife involved with a secret admirer; or a climactic chase in which the bad guy falls from on high. US historian Jay Leyda saw *Doubt in the Boudoir* (Shen gui yiyun, 深闺疑云, 1948) to find that “it was an imitation of [Alfred] Hitchcock’s *Suspicion*. (US, 1941)”¹ In fact, the film as released adopted the same Chinese title used for *Suspicion* itself and proved an instant hit. But Shanghai and Hong Kong noir clearly also borrowed from local cultural traditions and were thus better geared to Chinese audiences whose social and economic conditions differed greatly from those in the United States – a point that is explored in more detail below.

At the time, Shanghai cinema was hampered by the severe constraints of poor facilities, strong external competition and rigid censorship. With the economic environment worsening consistently throughout 1948–1949, films had to be made cheaply and fast to recover costs in studios that were wartime leftovers with old facilities, and film stocks were difficult to obtain. From mid 1948, decreased importation of American films benefitted the industry but Chinese films were still not good enough in either quality or quantity to fill the gap.² Even government-run studios lacked adequate resources and reined in production while renting out space to independent companies. Despite all that, numerous films with complicated plots of crime, murder and illicit love appeared because they could be cheaply made and cheap thrills sold tickets.

Chinese films produced and released in Shanghai amounted to 67 in 1948 and 57 in 1949.³

1 Jay Leyda, *Dianying- Electric Shadows, An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, MIT Press, 1972, p.164.

2 See the front page article, “Chinese Movies Fill the Void: But Don’t Produce Cheaply in Bulk”, in *Qing Qing Movie*, Oct. 20, 1948.

3 According to estimates listed by *Qing Qing Movie* in its 1st January issues of both 1948 & 1949 – including films made in Hong Kong. The 1949 figure is a rough estimate of films already finished plus those then in progress.