

JOURNAL OF EUTOPIA

ART AND CULTURE

05/2025
VOLUME 01



QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST

Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture

VOL. 1, NO. 1 (MAY 2025), ISSN 2978-0721

Printed in the United Kingdom by Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture, May 2025

Ordering Information: To request additional copies, please direct enquiries to:

Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture

25 University Square,

Belfast

BT7 1NN

Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

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Editorial Team:

Issue Editor in Chief: Siyang Gu, sgu06@qub.ac.uk; gordongubbbc@gmail.com

Managing Editor: Xiaoxiang Ma, xma04@qub.ac.uk

Deputy Editor: Tianpeng Yao, tyao03@qub.ac.uk

Lauren McShane, lmcshane09@qub.ac.uk

Ziheng Wang, zwang83@qub.ac.uk

Helena Cunningham, hcunningham03@qub.ac.uk

Wejdan Alawad, walawad01@qub.ac.uk

Special Thanks

The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture is proud to announce that it has received generous sponsorship from the Queen's University Belfast Annual Fund 2025. This invaluable support has been instrumental in advancing the journal's mission to foster interdisciplinary scholarship and critical dialogue within the fields of modern and contemporary art, film, humanities, and cultural studies. The funding has enabled the journal to enhance its editorial processes, expand its reach, and continue providing a platform for innovative and thought-provoking research. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Queen's University, Belfast for their commitment to supporting academic excellence and their contribution to the ongoing development of this dynamic scholarly endeavour. Their sponsorship underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in nurturing intellectual inquiry and cultural understanding.

We also thank the Eutopia Arthouse Film Festival, which has been a source of immense encouragement and validation for its efforts to champion independent, experimental, and artistically daring cinema. This recognition not only amplifies the journal's visibility but also reinforces its commitment to fostering a vibrant space for creative expression and cultural exchange. We are deeply honoured by this support, which highlights the importance of celebrating diverse voices and innovative storytelling in the world of cinema.

In particular, the journal would like to extend its deepest gratitude to Dr. Aglaia De Angeli, Dr. Rosalind Silvester and Dr. Emma Reisz for their generous endorsement. We are profoundly inspired by their commitment to advancing artistic and intellectual exploration and are truly honoured by their belief in the vision of the Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture.

Founder

Siyang Gu 顾思阳



Aims and Scope

The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture is a general-circulation academic journal dedicated to exploring the diverse intersections of modern and contemporary film, art, humanities, and cultural studies. Founded with the vision of fostering critical inquiry and intellectual dialogue, the journal provides an innovative platform that supports interdisciplinary approaches, bridging traditional boundaries between academic fields and scholarly methodologies.

The journal encompasses a broad spectrum of themes and topics within contemporary arts and humanities, including- but not limited to- history, media studies, literature, visual art, performance art, cinema, cultural theory and critical studies. By actively encouraging submissions that engage multiple disciplinary perspectives, *the Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture* strives to deepen academic understanding and stimulate insightful conversations about the evolving landscapes of global contemporary culture and artistic practices.

Central to the journal's editorial philosophy is the belief that rigorous scholarship and critical reflection illuminate the complex relationships between artistic expression, cultural contexts, and social transformations. The journal remains committed to publishing high-quality, empirically grounded research that is theoretically robust and culturally relevant. In doing so, it aims to provide readers with nuanced analyses and fresh perspectives that enrich their understanding of contemporary cultural phenomena and artistic innovations.

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Correspondence should be sent to: Xiaoxiang Ma, School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland, UK
(email: xma04@qub.ac.uk)

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Preface

The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture aims to foster scholarly inquiry and interdisciplinary dialogue across the fields of film, art, literature, history, media, and the humanities. Through rigorous internal peer review, we are committed to publishing high-quality articles that offer empirically grounded and theoretically insightful analyses of contemporary cultural phenomena. Our goal is to deepen understanding of art and society through thoughtful academic exploration and critical reflection.

This current issue features diverse and original research contributions, each of which exemplifies the journal's commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and rigorous cultural analysis. With topics ranging from cinema and visual arts to societal challenges and cultural diplomacy, the articles presented here provide readers with fresh insights into the intersections between art, culture, and contemporary society. Through a lens that prioritizes cultural, literary, and historical perspectives, the journal explores how these domains shape and are shaped by the evolving dynamics of human experience and expression.

The journal's first issue is the result of a meticulous editorial process, beginning with an open and targeted solicitation of original research articles from academic scholars and specialists worldwide. Submitted manuscripts undergo a thorough internal peer-review process conducted by subject-matter experts and senior scholars on our editorial board. This careful review ensures each contribution's empirical grounding, theoretical robustness, clarity, and scholarly quality. Our editorial team maintains strict professional standards throughout the review and publication processes, providing constructive feedback designed to refine and strengthen the scholarly contributions we publish. In line with this professional vision, the present issue offers readers insightful analyses across diverse research topics, underscoring the journal's interdisciplinary commitments and dedication to academic excellence.

The issue opens with the article, *The Two Faces of the Female Ghost: Female Images and Cultural Expression in Asian Horror Cinema—A Comparative Study of the 1960 Version of A Chinese Ghost Story and Kwaidan*. This study compares two landmark films from China and Japan, analysing how female ghost imagery reflects cultural attitudes toward gender, identity, and societal fears. By examining the portrayal of female spirits in these cinematic works, the author reveals how traditional beliefs and modern ideas intersect, demonstrating cinema's powerful role in expressing cultural anxieties and evolving gender roles in East Asia.

Following this exploration, the article *The Transformation of the Ghost Image in Modern China* investigates the evolution of ghost imagery within Chinese culture, situating these changes against the backdrop of China's

rapid modernization and social transition. The author demonstrates how contemporary representations of ghosts in visual arts and media offer deeper insights into collective memories, social anxieties, and cultural identities.

Continuing our interest in the intersection of identity and visual culture, Rotimi Fani-Kayode's *Influence on Sexuality, Race, and Identity in British Art* examines the legacy of photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode. This research analyses his groundbreaking artistic practice, highlighting how Fani-Kayode's provocative imagery reshaped discussions surrounding race, sexuality, and identity within British contemporary art, offering new perspectives on representation and cultural politics.

Addressing the importance of culture in international relations, *'Soft Cooperation': The Necessity of Strengthening Cultural Cooperation Between China and Russia* argues for the critical role cultural dialogue plays in international diplomacy. This article emphasises how cultural exchange fosters mutual understanding and cooperation, contributing to the broader scholarly discussions on the intersection of culture and global politics.

Our engagement with popular culture continues in the article, *Exploring Genre Conventions and Audience Reception in Breaking Bad and The Wire*. Through a comparative analysis, the authors examine how these groundbreaking television series utilize genre conventions to engage audiences and reflect societal anxieties. This piece underscores the importance of critically examining popular narratives and their broader cultural implications.

The historical analysis, *2003: Hong Kong's Breaking Point*, revisits a pivotal moment in Hong Kong's recent history. The author investigates this critical year's cultural and social dynamics, analysing how events from 2003 continue to shape Hong Kong's contemporary identity and ongoing debates about autonomy and cultural memory.

Finally, *The Forgotten People—China's Mentally Ill* provides an insightful analysis of a marginalised group within contemporary Chinese society. Drawing on empirical research, this article highlights systemic challenges, social stigmas, and human rights concerns faced by mentally ill populations in China, contributing to broader conversations about social justice and cultural ethics. The survival dilemma of these groups is examined through photographic works.

As is our tradition, this issue concludes with a comprehensive annual review of independent cinema. Through critical commentary, we provide readers with a deeper understanding of recent artistic trends, innovative filmmakers, and significant cultural themes emerging in contemporary independent film.

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the editorial team, whose professionalism, dedication, and careful oversight have been instrumental in ensuring the academic quality and timely publication of this issue. Special thanks go to editors Wejdan Alawad, Lauren McShane, Ziheng Wang, and Helena Cunningham for their meticulous attention to detail, thoughtful oversight, and insightful editorial guidance. We also sincerely thank Xiaoxiang Ma, Managing Editor, for exceptional leadership and coordination, and Tianpeng Yao, Deputy Editor, for diligent manuscript management and editorial support. Their collective commitment and expertise continue to uphold the rigorous standards and scholarly excellence for which *The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture* is recognised.

I extend sincere gratitude to our authors, reviewers, and editorial board members for their dedication and scholarly rigor, which continue to uphold the academic quality of *The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture*. We encourage our readers to engage thoughtfully with the articles presented here, confident that they will stimulate meaningful dialogue and enrich our understanding of contemporary art and cultural expression.

Founder and Editor-in-Chief

Siyang Gu 顾思阳

PhD Candidate in History, Queen's University Belfast

The Journal of Eutopia Art and Culture

The Two Faces of the Female Ghost: Female Images and Cultural Expression in Asian Horror Cinema—A Comparative Study of the 1960 Version of A Chinese Ghost Story and Kwaidan

Xiaoxiang Ma

ABSTRACT

This article explores the representation of female ghosts in Li Han-hsiang's *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1960) and Masaki Kobayashi's *Kwaidan* (1964), analysing the ways in which gendered identities are shaped by cultural, social, and cinematic contexts. Through a comparative study of adaptation strategies from Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* and Lafcadio Hearn's retellings of Japanese folklore, the paper highlights divergent portrayals of female agency and power. While the Chinese film reaffirms patriarchal ideals through romantic redemption, the Japanese counterpart offers depictions of vengeful female spirits with greater autonomy, revealing broader tensions surrounding gender, tradition, and national identity in East Asian horror cinema.

Keywords: Female ghosts, East Asian cinema, horror cinema, cultural adaptation

INTRODUCTION

Asian horror cinema often boasts a distinctive aesthetic and narrative style, with portrayals of 'female ghosts' or 'female demons' deeply reflecting gender norms and values shaped by different cultural and social backgrounds. The 1960 version of *A Chinese Ghost Story* (directed by Li Han-hsiang, adapted from Pu Songling's 'Nie Xiaoqian' in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*) and Masaki Kobayashi's 1964 Japanese film *Kwaidan* are two emblematic examples. The former carries a pronounced Chinese cultural tone and the director's nationalist sentiment, while the latter fuses traditional Japanese ghost tales with Buddhist and Shinto elements, presenting female characters with stronger traits of *onryō* (vengeful spirits).

Xiaoxiang Ma is pursuing his PhD at Queen's University, Belfast specializing in Film Studies. Correspondence should be sent to School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: xma04@qub.ac.uk.

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This paper compares the female identities depicted in ‘Nie Xiaoqian’ from *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1960) and the ‘Kurokami (Black Hair)’ and ‘Yukki-Onna (Snow Woman)’ segments in *Kwaidan*, exploring the underlying cultural, social, and commercial factors. By examining original texts, adaptation strategies, and cinematic techniques, we can better appreciate the multifaceted and profound significance of female character portrayals in East Asian horror films.

I. CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the 1960s, Hong Kong’s film censorship was relatively relaxed, with limited official intervention¹, which gave director Li Han-hsiang considerable freedom to create. Drawing on ghostly folklore, romantic elements, and Huangmei opera, he shaped *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1960) into a work with a distinctively Eastern cultural flair.²

Li’s creativity was also influenced by his own nationalist sentiments and the leftist film movement of the time.³ Thus, while retaining the romantic-horror duality found in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, the film incorporates themes of national crisis and identity crisis, adding depth to its fantastical storyline.

However, a society shaped by Confucian values weakened the original satire on feudal customs found in *Strange Tales* and emphasized ‘romance’ and ‘loyalty’ instead. Hence, the ‘love between human and ghost’ was rendered more tender and aligned with mainstream audience tastes. Consequently, *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1960) retained its horror elements but placed greater focus on the conflict between good and evil and on the heroine’s transformation from demon to virtuous woman. This approach matched the market’s interest in national traditions and romantic plots, achieving broad cultural resonance and box-office success.

At the same time, based on the development of the post-war Japanese New Wave cinema movement and its continuity with traditional cultural principles (such as haiku, picture scrolls, noh, kabuki, Shinto, or Zen)⁴,

¹ Shumin Li, *Cold War Shadows: Hong Kong Film Censorship under Geopolitical Influence* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2010)

² Xiao Lu, ‘Hollywood Genre, Cultural Hybridity, and Musical Films in 1950s Hong Kong,’ *Arts* 12, no. 6 (November 2023), p. 237. MDPI

³ Hongjian Wang, *A Chinese Ghost Story: A Hong Kong Comedy Film's Cult Following in Mainland China* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2013)

⁴ Tadao Satō, *Currents in Japanese Cinema*. Translated by Gregory Barrett (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982)

Japanese cinema during the same period also showcased more diverse aesthetic characteristics through the exploration of local folklore and traditional culture.

From the 1950s to 1960s, Japanese cinema experienced a golden age. The emergence of the New Wave and domestic humanist thought allowed accomplished directors to develop personal styles within genre films, drawing on folklore and traditional culture to shape cinematic themes⁵. It was in this environment that Masaki Kobayashi released *Kwaidan* in 1964, a work widely regarded as a classic. Adapting Lafcadio Hearn's *Kwaidan*, the film comprises four standalone tales, among which 'The Black Hair' and 'The Snow Woman' are particularly notable.

Although Japan had its own censorship requirements at the time, the primary concern was whether a film violated public morals or disrupted social order; the government did not strictly regulate the use of ghostly folklore. Benefiting from this, Kobayashi employed a richly stylized stage design and distinctive audio-visual techniques in *Kwaidan*, boldly portraying female vengeance and supernatural power. *Kwaidan* left a significant mark both in Japan and abroad, contributing to the subsequent trend of horror films centering on female vengeful spirits.

II. ORIGINAL TEXT AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

The story 'Nie Xiaoqian' in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* revolves around a female ghost enslaved by a demon to harm men, who eventually escapes that fate under the guidance of the scholar Ning Caichen. Initially, Ning Caichen's family life appears stable, but his wife's chronic illness confines her to bed, leaving household duties unattended. Nie Xiaoqian arrives and takes on the roles of both the wife and Ning's mother, only officially marrying Ning Caichen and bearing children after his wife's death.

In many of Pu Songling's stories, female ghosts or shapeshifting women are depicted as 'Others' whose victims are invariably men, echoing the traditional cautionary view of 'beauty bringing ruin.' Only by handling household chores and fulfilling the duty of bearing children can these supernatural women fully integrate into human society.⁶ This reflects how a woman with an independent identity navigates her entry into her husband's family, and Nie Xiaoqian's tale exemplifies this theme. The first wife's illness and

⁵Aaron Gerow. 'Japanese Film and Television.' in *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, edited by Victoria Bestor, Theodore Bestor, and Akiko Yamagata, 213-225. London: Routledge, 2011.

⁶Allan Barr, 'Disarming Intruders: Alien Women in *Liaozhai zhiyi*.' *Asian Studies Review* 18, no. 4 (1994): 57-74.

inability to bear children represent the invisible vacancy in the patriarchal household, which Nie Xiaoqian fills, demonstrating a social tendency to assign women firmly to domestic and reproductive roles.

Pu Songling states:

*‘Originally, Ning Caichen’s wife fell ill, and his mother was overwhelmed by the chores. When Nie Xiaoqian came to help, life greatly improved, so she was sincerely grateful. The mother realized Nie Xiaoqian had no ill intention but feared her influence on carrying on the family line. Nie Xiaoqian then said: ‘Children are blessings from Heaven. The young master is fated to have three sons who will bring honor to the family.’’*⁷

Hence, Nie Xiaoqian not only shoulders housework but also takes on the responsibility of continuing the family lineage. Although Ning Caichen’s sickly wife scarcely appears, her condition underscores his dedication to marriage. By story’s end, having passed the imperial exam, Ning Caichen raises three sons with Nie Xiaoqian and another concubine, further emphasizing the relegation of female characters to supporting male achievements and securing patriarchal lineage.

In Li Han-hsiang’s 1960 film adaptation, romantic elements are amplified, and Huangmei opera—a signature of Li’s style—bestows an almost musical-theater quality on the film. Meanwhile, Li omitted the latter half of the original text and excised the roles of Ning Caichen’s wife and mother, aligning the film’s emphasis more closely with contemporary audience taste. To resonate with the era’s socio-political atmosphere, the director incorporates historical background and nationalist themes, elevating the relatively minor character Yan Chixia into a wandering swordsman full of patriotic zeal. Ning Caichen—originally a straightforward, morally upright scholar—also gains lines reflecting patriotic sentiment, mirroring the leftist cinematic context in 1960s Hong Kong. For instance, in the following exchange;

Yan Chixia: ‘Master Ning, in your view, is there any hope for our nation’s restoration?’

Ning Caichen: ‘Our regular army numbers in the millions, and righteous bands led by heroes abound in the tens of millions. How can one say all is lost?’⁸

Such changes heighten the film’s nationalist tone, echoing the resurgence of leftist film culture in the 1960s. Consequently, both Ning Caichen and Yan Chixia gain more distinctive personalities than in the original. Their conflicts with the ghostly realm can be interpreted as allegories for the identity crisis in Hong Kong.

⁷ Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (1880), 124.

⁸ *A Chinese Ghost Story*. Directed by Li Han-hsiang. Hong Kong: Shaw Brothers Studio, 1960.

Meanwhile, the director enriches ‘Grandmother’ (‘laolao’) by depicting her as a forceful maternal figure that subverts the notion of ‘motherhood,’ revealing the tension between matriarchal authority and ‘the household.’ She shows outright hostility to Ning Caichen and Nie Xiaoqian’s private meetings, and in the end accuses Ning Caichen of ‘stealing my servant,’ demonstrating her possessiveness over Nie Xiaoqian—thus bestowing the patriarchal family structure with more complexity.



Figure 1: The ‘LaoLao’ gazed menacingly after defeating Ning Caichen, Still image, *A Chinese Ghost Story*, 1960.

Lafcadio Hearn (Koizumi Yakumo), who lived in Japan from the late 19th to early 20th century, made significant contributions by collecting, translating, and adapting Japanese ghost stories. In Masaki Kobayashi’s *Kwaidan* (1964), ‘The Black Hair’ adapts Hearn’s story ‘Reconciliation,’ depicting a samurai who abandons his impoverished first wife for a noblewoman, eventually mired in nightmares of guilt. The original tale, titled ‘Reconciliation,’ weaves a romantic theme while leaving the possibility of ghostly vengeance open-ended. In Kobayashi’s version, however, the ex-wife becomes a vengeful spirit whose long hair ensnares the samurai, causing him to age rapidly and die. The adaptation particularly highlights the scene where the samurai’s topknot unravels in fear and his eventual death at the hands of his ex-wife’s black hair. If analyzed through Lacan’s theory of the three orders⁹, this

⁹ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2006)

ending reveals profound aesthetic and cultural implications: first, the unravelling of the samurai's topknot, a symbol of his status as a samurai, transforms it into something akin to a woman's long hair, symbolizing the collapse of his masculine authority and social standing. The ex-wife's black hair, intertwined with her skeletal remains, further emphasizes the samurai's crisis of 'symbolic identity,' rooted in his familial obligations and social status. In Lacanian terms, the undone topknot signifies the collapse of the 'Symbolic Order'; the merging of the black hair with the wife's image reflects the intrusion of the 'Imaginary'; and finally, the vanishing boundary of reality signifies the emergence of the 'Real,' exposing the samurai's ultimate loss of his true self in the face of guilt and his ex-wife's vengeful resentment.



Figure 2: The samurai was terrified by his wife's long hair, leaving his own hair disheveled. Still image, *Kwaidan*, 1964.

Kobayashi's 'The Snow Woman,' adapted from the same Hearn collection, recounts how a young woodcutter, threatened by a yuki-onna in the mountains, survives by making a pact—only to suffer punishment later for breaking it. Though preserving the story's core, the film heightens the drama via stylized sets and symbolic visuals. For instance, the enormous eye in the mountains is read by Stephen Prince as symbolizing pervasive militaristic surveillance in Japan¹⁰, whereas Swarnavel Eswaran interprets it as a Buddhist metaphor of karmic insight¹¹. Considering the yuki-onna's demand that men honor their word, this 'giant eye' can also be seen as both the male gaze on the female's secret and her reciprocal scrutiny of his sincerity, revealing trust (or mistrust) and transcending the standard ghost story.



Figure 3: The gaze on the characters' actions and the audience's eyes runs throughout the entire story of the Snow Woman, Still image, Kwaidan, 1964.

The handling of the straw sandals at the ending accentuates the *yuki-onna*'s complexity: when she departs, the woodcutter sets her sandals in the snow, and though they get covered, one footprint remains, underscoring that she is at once pitiless and sympathetic. Compared to the 'redeemed heroine' pattern seen in 'Nie Xiaoqian,' the stories of 'The Black Hair' and 'The Snow Woman' highlight the female spirits' vengeful impulses. With striking sets, sparse soundtrack, and a bold depiction of female ghosts, Kobayashi grants women greater agency and power, reflecting Japan's *onryō* tradition while using intense cinematic imagery to explore gender power dynamics.

III. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN FEMALE IDENTITY PORTRAYALS

¹⁰ Stephen Prince, *A Dream of Resistance: The Cinema of Kobayashi Masaki* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017)

¹¹ Swarnavel Eswaran, 'Masaki Kobayashi's Kwaidan: Horror, History, and Culture.' *Journal of East Asian Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2018): 127-145.

The 1960 version of *A Chinese Ghost Story* broadly follows the original structure: Nie Xiaoqian's attempts to join Ning Caichen's family fail until she secures official permission. Though the film states her initial aim is to kill him for his life force, the plot soon reveals she admires Ning Caichen after he visits her dwelling, thus shifting the agency and dominance toward Ning Caichen. Additionally, the film repeatedly shows Nie Xiaoqian, dressed as a wealthy lady, entering Ning Caichen's ramshackle abode, imbuing their relationship with a 'class-transcending' romantic aura, especially given his lower social status. This approach resonates with patriarchal heroic tropes, where a male savior ultimately redeems a love story.



Figure 4: The stark contrast between Nie Xiaoqian's luxurious attire and Ning Caichen's dilapidated dwelling is highly pronounced. Still image, *A Chinese Ghost Story*, 1960.

Moreover, the gender lines are neatly divided: Nie Xiaoqian's side is entirely female, while Ning Caichen's side is entirely male, further emphasizing his heroic act of rescuing her from the ghostly den. For most of the film, Nie Xiaoqian is passive forced to kill, begging in vain for the demon to spare Ning Caichen, etc. Her lone act of initiative is aiding Ning Caichen in eluding 'Laolao,' thereby achieving her own return to life. This action underscores that women in the film rely significantly on men's protection and cannot independently claim freedom.

In contrast, 'Laolao,' as the primary antagonist, is portrayed as an overbearing 'Other.' Her overt hostility and manipulative control reinforce her symbolic role as a threat. Beyond the emotional bond between Ning Caichen and Nie Xiaoqian, other male-female interactions in the film are characterized by stark opposition. For example, the dynamic between Nie Xiaoqian and the lecherous scholar depicts her as a female demon and him as a lustful victim, while the relationship between Yan Chixia and Laolao reflects the struggle between an exorcist and a ghost. This life-and-death antagonism emphasizes the central roles of Ning Caichen and Yan Chixia as saviors and mediators, while rendering the actions and motivations of female characters shallow and dependent. The complexity of female characters is confined to their reactions to male characters. The primary actions of female ghosts such as Nie Xiaoqian and Laolao—including their interactions with Ning Caichen and their antagonism with Yan Chixia—ultimately subordinate their identities to the heroic male figures, leaving no room for their own growth or transformation. This approach not only limits the developmental space for female characters but also undermines their agency within the narrative. Overall, the 1960 *A Chinese Ghost Story* accentuates a patriarchal perspective on gender power while presenting a classic, male-centered heroic storyline.

In comparison, female characters in *Kwaidan* display greater multidimensionality. The female ghosts in 'The Black Hair' and 'The Snow Woman' often seek revenge as a means of justice or emotional catharsis. In 'The Black Hair,' the recurring image of the ex-wife grooming her long black hair underscores two aspects: on one hand, the hair is her solitary lingering presence in the mortal world; on the other, its continuous growth symbolizes deepening longing and resentment. Such treatment gives her final vengeance stronger emotional resonance. Additionally, in both Chinese and Japanese traditions, the concept of 'Jie fa (hair-bound spouses)'¹² enhances the symbolic weight of the samurai's entanglement in his ex-wife's hair.

Meanwhile, in 'The Snow Woman,' the *yuki-onna* transcends the usual ghostly depiction of women as powerless. She decides men's fates: she spares the handsome young woodcutter's life while mercilessly freezing an older man. In the final act, though she attempts to join a human family, she ultimately leaves when

¹² It refers to binding the couple's hair together, symbolizing their lifelong commitment in ancient China.

her husband breaks his promise. The ending balances the ‘otherness’ of her spirit and familial relations. She does not lose her agency due to motherhood, and at the same time, her children help mitigate the conflict with her husband, unlike the more absolute male-female opposition in *A Chinese Ghost Story*. This approach not only broadens the character’s complexity but gives the film’s themes added depth.

Additionally, though the two films differ in how they depict women’s social positions, both show female characters seizing male vitality to assert power. In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, a lecherous scholar dies after Nie Xiaoqian feeds on his blood; in ‘The Black Hair’ and ‘The Snow Woman,’ men similarly face threats or destruction at the hands of female spirits. Interestingly, all three stories align with Freud’s concept of male ‘castration anxiety,’ referring to men’s deep-seated fear of losing their genitals and the symbolic authority associated with them, while simultaneously embedding deeper layers of cultural significance.¹³



Figure 5: The lustful scholar’s foot is pierced by Nie Xiaoqian, causing him to bleed to death, symbolizing the loss of vital energy. Still image, *A Chinese Ghost Story*, 1960.

In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, the scholar’s death is only briefly depicted, functioning primarily to highlight Ning Caichen and Yan Chixia’s virtuous character. Their moral uprightness aligns with the patriarchal ethos of self-control—akin to China’s ‘abstaining from women’ tradition that preserves masculine integrity. By contrast, the samurai in ‘The Black Hair’ meets a more symbolically laden end. From the viewpoint of Lacan’s tripartite theory, his falling topknot signifies the breakdown of the Symbolic; the merging of his wife’s hair with her

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1927).

image indicates the Imaginary's invasion, unearthing deeply repressed remorse and dread; and his blurred boundary between reality and illusion, culminating in old age and death, corresponds to the Real's emergence—revealing his inability to reconcile guilt with reality.

In 'The Snow Woman,' the *yuki-onna* treats the elderly and young woodcutter differently: she swiftly drains the elder's life in a cold, curt manner, but subjects the younger man to seductive gazes and ominous smiles, demonstrating her initiative and power. The younger man is paralysed, symbolising her dominance during their encounter. She is not simply a menacing presence, but an intruder guided by her own will.

IV: CONCLUSION

In these two divergent Asian horror films—*A Chinese Ghost Story* (1960) and *Kwaidan*—the depiction of female ghosts or monstrous women reveals marked cultural contrasts. On one hand, *A Chinese Ghost Story*, shaped by a Chinese setting and a romantic plot, underscores patriarchal heroism and the female's passive 'redemption.' On the other hand, *Kwaidan*, merging Japanese ghost-lore with Buddhist reflections, casts female ghosts as potent avengers possessing stronger autonomy and vengeance.

Taken together, both works continue their respective cultural imaginations of 'female ghosts' while adapting them under various market and social conditions. Their heroines' positions, agency, and challenges to societal order differ significantly, yet both fuse horror and romance to present the complex ways in which women's identities and emotions unfold in an Asian context. Centering on these 'female ghosts,' they not only mirror divergent socio-political systems and value structures but also shed light on how East Asian cinema wrestles with issues of gender, power, and tradition through modern transformations.

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The Transformation of the Ghost Image in Modern China

Shibei Shen

ABSTRACT

This article explores the transformation of the ghost (鬼, *gui*) in Chinese literature from the late imperial to the early modern period, arguing that this shift reflects deeper cultural, political, and epistemological ruptures in modern Chinese history. In Qing dynasty fiction, ghosts often functioned as extra-legal arbiters of justice, reinforcing Confucian moral codes and aligning with the cosmological and social hierarchies of the time. With the introduction of Western science, rationalism, and the reformist ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ghosts came under intellectual scrutiny. Figures such as Chen Duxiu and Lu Xun recast the ghost not as a transcendent moral agent but as a metaphor for political oppression, societal decay, and psychological fragmentation. By tracing the ghost's descent from supernatural judge to object of critique, this study demonstrates how the spectral became a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity, superstition and science, and cultural identity and national reform.

Keywords: Ghosts, Chinese modernity, Qing fiction, New Culture Movement, superstition and science

INTRODUCTION

Richard von Glahn has argued that, ‘Arthur Wolf’s classic study of religion draws attention to the marked correspondences between popular images of supernatural beings and the categories of social identity and interaction. The tripartite division of the spirits into gods (*shen* 神), ancestors, and ghosts (*gui* 鬼) mirrored popular perceptions of the principal divisions of social life: officialdom, family, and the amorphous mass of “strangers” with whom one had no kinship ties.’¹⁴ In many cases, however, the images of these three are not so exact. Other people’s ancestors may be ‘ghosts’ and good ‘ghosts’ may be ‘gods’, so ‘ghost’ is still a very vague concept. Of course, ghosts are also believed to have changed from other living beings. In short, there are many different interpretations of ‘ghosts’.

Shibei Shen is pursuing his PhD at Queen’s University, Belfast specializing in Modern Environmental History of China. Correspondence should be sent to School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: sshen03@qub.ac.uk. © 2025 Shibei Shen. This publication and its contents are protected under UK law by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, as amended, and applicable international treaties.

¹⁴ Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 6.

‘The doctrine that the Universe is one compound of an infinite number of kwei (gui) and shen’.¹⁵ The ‘ghost culture’ in China has a long history. More than two thousand years ago, we could often find references to ghosts in Confucian and Taoist texts. After the Two Han Dynasty, the involvement of Buddhism enriched the cultural connotation of ghosts, and to a certain extent, ghosts even became the common theme and intersection of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Since then, Chinese folk tales of ghosts and monsters have been enriched in the process of integration with Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and became more perfect in the Qing Dynasty.

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However, by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the modernisation of the West and the introduction of scientism, the image of ‘ghosts’ underwent a great transformation. ‘Westernisation became the right new thinking. Compared to science, which was the basis of Westernisation, faith was a superstition that corrupted people's hearts and minds, and a demon that could not stand in the same place as science.’¹⁷ Ghosts, as the representative of traditional Chinese folk superstitions, were inevitably impacted by Westernisation at this time. When the so-called Western technological civilisation - sound, light, electricity and steam - gradually entered China, it seemed that traditional ‘ghosts’, who were afraid of the light, had become invisible all of a sudden.

Under such circumstances, the interpretative space and inherent system of ‘ghosts’ formed in traditional societies are bound to change. This paper aims to outline, from the perspective of literary works, how the image of ‘ghost’ has been reconstructed in modern societies, and what are the differences between the ‘ghost’ in

¹⁵ Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 166. As cited in J. J. M. De Groot (1892-1910; rpt.1964), Vol.4, 157.

¹⁶ Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 166. As cited in J. J. M. De Groot (1892-1910; rpt.1964), Vol.4, 157.

¹⁷ CHOI Chi-cheung 蔡志祥 Wei Jinxin 韦锦新 POON-shuk-wah 潘淑华, *Mixin huayu baozhang yu qingmominchu de yifengyisu* 迷信话语 报章与清末民初的移风易俗[*Superstitious Discourse, Newspapers, and the Transformation of Customs in the Late Qing Dynasty and Early Republican China era*], (HongKong: Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Huanan yanjiu zhongxin 香港科技大学华南研究中心, 2013), 1.

traditional societies and the ‘ghost’ in modern societies. Further, I will explore the underlying reasons for the shift in the image of ‘ghost’.

I. GHOSTS IN QING DYNASTY FICTION

In most of these ghost stories, be it ‘*Notes of Yuewei chaotang*’ (*Yuewei caotang biji* 阅微草堂笔记) or ‘*Confucius doesn't talk*’ (*Zi Buyu* 子不语), the plots are about wrongful convictions, heartless men, money-grubbers, and infatuated lovers. In these stories, the ‘ghost’ often plays the role of a ‘free judge’ who is outside the law, whose judgement is based on the traditional Confucian moral system, and Buddhist principle that ‘good and evil are rewarded.’ For example, there is a story about ‘an old scholars who did not get the first rank’ (*Laoru budi* 老儒不第) in the ‘*Autumn Lanterns Series of Stories*’ (*Qiudeng conghua* 秋灯丛话) written by Wang Jian (王械)¹⁸ of the Qing Dynasty. The story started with a very talented old scholar who forced his sister-in-law to remarry after the death of his elder brother. He did so because he was influenced by the gossip of the village people, and he was also afraid that his sister-in-law's behaviour would bring shame to the whole family, and as a result, she committed suicide in grief. Since then, this old scholar was haunted by the ghost of his sister-in-law every time he took an examination, and he failed to pass the examination time and again.¹⁹

Another example is that in the ‘*Records of Night Talks*’ (*Ye Tan suilu* 夜谭随录) written by the Master of Owner of Ji Garden (*Ji Yuan zhuren* 霁园主人), it is recorded that a filial daughter took care of her asthma-stricken father every day without resting or forgetting to eat and prayed every day for an early recovery of his illness, and in the end, her father's illness was cured by magic under her care, and she was married into a rich family with a dowry of no less than several thousand gold.²⁰ These two stories are about evil being rewarded for evil and good being rewarded for good, and this kind of ‘reward’ is actually outside of the law. It reflects certain simple moral standards of the folk, which incorporate Buddhist concepts such as ‘karma’ and, more importantly, Confucian standards of living. As expressed by Rania Huntington in their study of the Fox Fairy

¹⁸ Wang Jian (王械), He was a native of Fushan County, Shandong Province, during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, and the exact year of his birth and death is unknown.

¹⁹ Wang Jian 王械, *Qiudeng conghua* 秋灯丛话[*Autumn Lanterns Series of Stories*], (Yinchuan: Huanghe chubanshe 黄河出版社, 1990).

²⁰ He Bange 和邦额, Wang Yigong 王一工 Fang Zhengyao 方正耀 eds, *Yetan suilu* 夜谭随录 [*Records of Night Talks*], (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1998).

story: ‘In these tales the literatus has conspicuously taken the place of the professional exorcist, and the emphasis on morality and reasoning, rather than arcane arts.’²¹

As to why ‘ghosts’ appear in most of these novels as a kind of detachment from human society, or even as a judge above human society, I think it is firstly based on some ancient cultural traditions. The *Book of Rites* (*Liji Biaoji* 礼记·表記) mentioned, ‘The rule of the Xia dynasty was to respect life and serve ghosts and gods, but to honour them.’ (*Xiadao zunming, shi guishen jingeryuanzhi* 夏道遵命，事鬼敬神而远之). In *The Analects of Confucius*, (*Lun Yu* 论语) it is said, ‘How can one serve ghosts when one has not served men? How can one know death without knowing life?’ In these ancient texts, the image of ‘ghosts’ seems to be vague, isolated from human society, and to be ‘kept far away’ (*Yuanzhi* 远之). Meanwhile, In the texts, the concept that ‘ghosts’ are superior to ‘human beings’ has already been conveyed, otherwise, why would there be the saying that ‘one should first serve human beings’ before ‘serving ghosts’?

In addition, this concept of ‘ghosts are superior to human beings’ implies a certain kind of class, and in fact, it also has a hidden role in building up the rationality of the ethical programme of ‘kings and ministers, fathers and sons’ (*Junchen fuzi* 君臣父子) in the traditional Chinese society. ‘It has been noted by numerous writers in recent years that village religion in China mimics the imperial tradition. Deities are dealt with as if they were emperors and officials, and the priests behave like courtiers.’²² As Friedman argues, these ‘small traditions’ in the countryside were in fact not very different from the ‘big traditions’ of the Chinese dynasty.²³ Therefore, it can be said that people’s devotion to ‘ghosts and gods’ is also devotion to imperial power. In traditional Chinese society, ‘the state was itself involved in communication with the spirit world through many channels. It had its own cults of Heaven, Earth, and assorted nature deities, along with the welter of popular deities it had co-opted into its religious system.’²⁴ The interaction between these folk deities (including, of course, ghosts) and the state power extends, to some extent, the power of the state into the ‘capillaries’.

²¹ Rania Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 110.

²² David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 216.

²³ Maurice Freedman, *Lineage organization in southeastern China*. (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1965).

²⁴ Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 89-90.

Wei Yuan (魏源)²⁵, who opened his eyes to the world, also thought that ‘the talk of ghosts and gods was beneficial to the hearts of the people and the spread of the king's teachings.’²⁶ Therefore, to a certain extent, the ghosts and gods helped the royal power, or even replaced it, by entering the wider popular space. In the past, some scholars believe that ‘imperial power does not go down to the county’ (*Huangquan buxia xian* 皇权不下县), the clan and the gentry have a certain degree of autonomy in the folk space. The ‘ghosts and gods’ were likely an important means for the clans and gentry to maintain this autonomy. David Faure, in *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*, also mentions that ‘natural justice resided not in lineage theory, but in folk religion, in the world of the spirits.’²⁷ Ghosts, as C.K Yang defines them in their study as a diffused religion, are widely integrated with secular life.²⁸

ii. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF GHOSTS IN MODERN LITERATURE

When the Western ships and cannons ‘opened’ the door of the Qing Dynasty, the modern intellectuals seemed to have a brand new understanding of ‘ghosts’. Contrary to the Qing Dynasty's scholars attitude of treating ‘ghosts’ as judgemental figures, they even attributed the cause of the country's downfall to ‘ghosts’.

In the late 19th century, the Revolutionary Party and the Reformist Party protested against each other. Though their attitudes towards the Qing government differed, their attitudes towards the ‘ghosts’ were surprisingly the same. Tan Sitong (谭嗣同)²⁹ of the reformist school believed that ‘the falsehood of the last days, which is caused by the ghosts and gods, has made the people tired of their work and become slaves of foreign

²⁵ Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857) was a native of Shaoyang City, Hunan Province. He was an Enlightenment thinker, statesman, and literary scholar of the Qing Dynasty. He was a representative of the first batch of intellectuals who ‘opened their eyes to the world’ in modern China.

²⁶ Wei Yuan 魏源, *Mogu zhipian* 默觚. 治篇 [Wei Yuan's Epigraph. Regarding governance], Liaoning: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 辽宁人民出版社, 2000. Original text: “Guishen zhishuo, youyiyu renxin, yinfu wangjiaozhe shenda 鬼神之说, 有益于人心, 阴辅王教者甚大。”

²⁷ David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 11.

²⁸ C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*. (California: University of California Press, 1991).

²⁹ Tan Sitong 谭嗣同 (1865-1898) was a figure of the Hundred Days’ Reform in the late Qing Dynasty, one of the Four Gentlemen of the Reform and the Six Gentlemen of the Hundred Days’ Reform.

countries.’³⁰ On the other hand, the revolutionary Chen Huang (陈槐)³¹ said, ‘Observing the cause of the rise and fall of the nation, I know that it has a lot to do with the beliefs of ghosts and gods.’³² Their questioning and criticism of ghosts was, in fact, to a certain extent, a criticism of the ruler's policy of using ghosts to ‘educate the people’ as well as other kinds of policies to ‘educate the people’. The reason for starting with ‘ghosts’ may also be due to the extensive and universal nature of ‘ghosts’ in the perception of the civil society. ‘Ghosts’ in the civil society gradually became a sentiment for intellectuals to oppose the traditional ills and express their dissatisfaction with the reality. In the mid-1910s, when the New Culture Movement (*Xinwenhua yundong* 新文化运动) began, this became even more common.

Chen Duxiu (陈独秀)³³ published the ‘Ghost Skepticism’ (*Yougui zhiyi lun* 有鬼质疑论) in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年), he said, ‘So in the case of ghosts and gods that cannot be explained by science, I do not dare to judge whether they are there or not, but now I also adopt the doctrine of compliance with the skepticism, and before advocating the absence of ghosts, I have doubts about the existence of ghosts, and I hope that those who advocate the theory of ghosts will give me an answer.’³⁴ It can be seen that although Chen said that he remained sceptical, judging from his strong words and the questions he asked afterwards, it was obvious that he did not agree at all with the exist of ‘ghosts’, and he tried to explain the problem with the Western scientific system. At that time, there were many other articles like this one, such as Liu Xunyu's (刘薰宇)³⁵ ‘*Gossip in a Half-Manor House*’ (*Banjian lou xianhua* 半间楼闲话). He said, ‘In the midst of this

³⁰ Liu Zhongyu 刘仲宇, *Zhongguo jinguai wenhua* 中国精怪文化[*Chinese culture of elves and monsters*], (Shanghai :Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1997), 299. Original text: “Sufen moshi zhi wuwang, huoyu guishen zashi shi minfu weiweihushiye, zuowei yibang nuli 夙愤末世之诬妄, 祸于鬼神杂识使民弗亹亹乎事业, 作为异邦奴隶。”

³¹ Chen Huang 陈槐 (1872-1931) was a native of Yiwu. He joined the Guangfu Society and the Tongmeng Society, and participated in the revolutionary activities against the feudalism of the Qing Dynasty.

³² Wang Yousan 王友三, *Zhongguo wushenlun shigang* 中国无神论史纲 [*Outline of the history of atheism in China*], (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1986), 456. Original text: ‘Guan minzu guojia xinwang zhi gu, zhiqi yu guishen huofu zhi shuo, dayou guanxi 观民族国家兴亡之故, 知其与鬼神祸福之说, 大有关系。’

³³ Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879-1942), advocate, initiator and main flag-bearer of the New Culture Movement, ‘Commander-in-Chief of the May Fourth Movement’, one of the main founders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and a major leader of the Party in its early days.

³⁴ Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, ‘Yougui zhiyi lun 有鬼质疑论 [Ghost Skepticism]’. *Xin qingnian* 新青年 [*New Youth*], No.5, VOL.4. (15th-May-1918). Original text: ‘Sui yu buneng yi kexue jieshi zhi guishen wenti ,weigan qingduan qi youwu,jin yu yi caina zunyi zhuyi,yu zhuzhang wu gui zhi xian 遂于不能以科学解释之鬼神问题, 未敢轻断其有无, 今予亦采纳遵疑主义, 于主张无鬼之先, 对于有鬼之说多所怀疑, 颇期主张有鬼论者赐以解答。’

³⁵ Liu Xunyu 刘薰宇 (1896-1967), a native of Guiyang, Guizhou, a member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), graduated from the Mathematics and Science Department of the Beijing Higher Normal School, a member of the Chinese Democratic League, and the headmaster of Guiyang High School during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

pandemonium, I think: in order to talk about science, we must first talk about exorcising ghosts.’³⁶ It can be seen that ‘ghosts’ seem to have been pulled down from their lofty position as the judge. Chen's argument is to question the existence of such a judge as ‘ghosts’, while Liu goes one step further, saying that it would be best if they do not exist, and if they do exist, they have to be driven away and replaced by science. ‘Ghosts’ have changed from being the judge in ghost stories to being judged, questioned and even driven away.

The importation of Western thought and science is of course an important reason for the change in the image of the ‘ghost’. To some scholars, there seems to be a strong tension between Chinese ‘ghosts’ and Western science. They hope to use science to identify the truth and falsity of ‘ghosts’, to refute some of the so-called ‘superstitious’ things in traditional culture, and ultimately to achieve the ‘anti-traditional’ and the introduction of Western science. In addition to ghosts, there are also a large number of things that have been classified by scholars as ‘superstition’, ‘the pejorative and trivializing neologism *mixin* (superstition), by which the entire realm of popular religion was now characterized, brought with it a much more absolutizing distinction between the scientific and the primitive.’³⁷

Apart from making use of ‘ghosts’, opposing the tradition and introducing Western science, scholars have also taken another approach by comparing ‘human beings’ to ‘ghosts’ to express their dissatisfaction with the current situation and their accusation of the darkness of reality. Lu Xun (鲁迅)³⁸, in ‘*The Lost Hell*’ (*Shidiao de hao diyu* 失掉的好地狱), directly compared the people oppressed by the warlords to ghosts and the human world to ‘hell’. In ‘*The Sorrows of Ghost Talkers*’ (*Tan gui zhe de beiai* 谈鬼者的悲哀), Chen Zizhan (陈子展) said, ‘Nowadays, the darkness is so dark and the ghostly atmosphere is so eerie that it is about to complete a ghost country, and I myself have become a living ghost like a corpse walking on the street.’³⁹ ‘Ghosts’ are no longer something to be “kept far away”, but to be pulled into the crowd. Writers try to use this literary method to connect “ghosts” with people, so as to express that in reality, the darkness and horror of the ‘human’ world has turned people into ‘ghosts’.

³⁶ Xu Hualong 徐华龙, *Guixue quanshu* 鬼学全书[*The Complete Book of Demonology*], (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe 中国华侨出版社 1998, Vol.4), 2257. Original text: ‘Zaizhe wuyanzhangqi de jingkuang Zhong,woxiang: yaotan kexue de tan qugui 在这乌烟瘴气的景况中,我想:要谈科学先得谈驱鬼。’

³⁷ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press,1997), 97.

³⁸ Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936), formerly known as Zhou Shuren, pen name Lu Xun, a native of Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, was a modern Chinese writer, designer, and one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement.

³⁹ Chen Zizhan 陈子展 (1898-1990), a native of Changsha, Hunan Province, was a Chinese writer and scholar, and a member of the Jiu San Society.

CONCLUSION

From the case of Qing Dynasty fiction to the literary works of the New Culture Movement, the transformation of the image of ghosts reflects the transformation of modern Chinese culture and intellectual consciousness. In traditional societies, ghosts were agents of morality, judges who transcended human law, reinforcing moral norms and reflecting the hierarchical structure of imperial China. Since ghosts originated from people's worship of their ancestors, and everyone has ancestors, ghosts have always been widely integrated with civil society, and the melding of ghosts and folk religion is also a manifestation of the extension of state power into the daily lives of the people, whereby the mainstream precepts of the state can be carried out to a more nuanced area through ghosts and related folk religions.

However, with the emergence of modernity, Western science, and intellectual movements like the New Culture Movement, the ghost has walked off the pedestal and become a symbol of superstition and a relic of a lagging tradition. Modern intellectuals have questioned or outright rejected the existence of ghosts, arguing that widespread belief in ghosts has hindered state progress and scientific enlightenment. This shift can also be understood as part of the broader narrative of Sino-Western interaction in modern China. At the same time, this shift also meant that after the introduction of Western technology and culture, the Chinese began to doubt and rethink their traditional culture and religion.

Meanwhile, like traditional intellectuals, modern writers and thinkers have utilised the metaphor of ghosts to express inner aspirations. However, unlike traditional intellectuals, modern intellectuals are more inclined to use the metaphor of ghosts to criticise the socio-political reality of the period. They pulled ghosts into the physical world and equated them with the oppressed and the disillusioned highlights the darkness and decadence of society, and by depicting this darkness, expressing the desire for modernity.

In short, the two main paths of change in the image of ghosts in modern China are: first, from the transcendent, which needs to be kept away from, to the earthly, figurative; second, from the judge of morality to the object to be criticised. Behind the transformation of the image of the ghost is a certain scepticism and re-understanding of its own traditional culture in the face of globalisation and Sino-Western interaction in modern China. Thus, the transmutation through the image of ghosts may provide some possible valuable lessons for other cultural or folk religious fluxes in modern China.

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Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Influence on Sexuality, Race and Identity in British Art

Hongxuan Li

ABSTRACT

This article examines the photography of Rotimi Fani-Kayode in the context of late twentieth-century British art, exploring how his work addresses issues of sexuality, race, and identity. Fani-Kayode's images challenge dominant narratives by intertwining Yoruba cosmology with queer aesthetics, confronting homophobia, racism, and the AIDS crisis. Through an analysis of selected works, this article highlights his subversion of gender binaries, reclamation of black subjectivity, and critique of Western cultural hegemony. In doing so, it argues for Fani-Kayode's vital role in reshaping the boundaries and discourse of British art.

Keywords: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, British art, queer theory, race, Yoruba culture, postcolonialism

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this essay will focus on Rotimi Fani-Kayode's photographs, analysing how his art influences the narrative of British art in terms of sexuality, race and identity. Firstly, according to Lewis and Stephenson, between 1885 and 1967, British art was enriched by artists' attention to the LGBTQ community and the homoerotic tendencies embedded in the concept of artistic production.⁴⁰ In addition, this period also coincided with global transformation, and the multiculturalism brought about by global expansion led to the emergence of a multi-layered cross-cultural complexity in Britain.⁴¹ In this context, Fani-Kayode's artistic practice engaged in an exploration of sexual, racial and cultural diversity and difference based on his sense of the otherness.⁴² His art not only enriches the narrative of queer experience and black visual culture in the 1980s, but also challenges the definition of boundaries and

Hongxuan Li is pursuing their PhD at Queen's University, Belfast specializing in European visual culture and art history. Correspondence should be sent to School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: hli69@qub.ac.uk.

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⁴⁰ Reina Lewis and Andrew Stephenson, 'Introduction: Queer Visual Historiographies', *Visual Culture in Britain* 18:1(2017):1.

⁴¹ Rasheed Araeen, 'A very special British issue? Modernity, art history and the crisis of art today', *Third Text* 22:2 (2008) :127-130.

⁴² Rotimi Fani-Kayode, 'Abiku—Born to Die', in *The Invisible Man*, ed. Kate Love and Kate Smith, exhibition catalogue (London: Goldsmiths Gallery, 1988), page unknown.

expands the category of British art. However, it is worth noting that the existing literature on Fani-Kayode is largely based on his homosexuality and the impact of geographical dislocation on his artistic creation, lacking a concern for his connections to British art. At this point, this essay will address the importance of Fani-Kayode's art by placing it in a British context. The first part of the essay will analyse the artist's response to queer culture and the issue of AIDS and consider the relationship between his art and the British social context. The second part will look at issues of race and identity as devised by his photographic works and discuss the effect his art and concepts have had on British art. I will argue that Fani-Kayode's black and gay identity gives his art a duality. He visualizes queer self-expression and the impact of AIDS on the queer community, addressing the homophobia and discrimination prevalent in Britain at the time. Then, the artist introduces notions of race and identity into his work, countering the marginalisation of black and African culture in Britain by presenting black subjectivity and Yoruba religious culture. Therefore, Fani-Kayode's art not only challenges stereotypical discourses and prejudices against queer and race in British social perceptions but also contributes to enriching the aesthetic orientation and cultural diversity of British art.

I. PUBLIC DISPLAY OF HOMOSEXUAL POWER

As Nelson argues, a distinctive feature of Fani-Kayode's art is the demonstration of the power of homosexuality.⁴³ In this respect, the work titled *Bronze Head* (1987) (Figure 1) serves as a prime example of the display of homosexual erotica. In the work, the artist intercepts a scene of a black male placing his buttocks above a bronze head. The visual misalignment between the figure's buttocks and the bronze head as a sexual suggestion evokes the viewer's association with anal sex. But Fani-Kayode's symmetrical compositions and tonal adjustments to the photographs suppress the provocative nature of partial close-ups of the human body, creating a more subtle and aesthetic expression of sexuality and desire.⁴⁴ In this case, his aesthetic depiction of sex and sexuality can contribute to a change in the public's preconceived impressions of homosexuality, thereby repairing the group's absence from the mainstream narrative.

⁴³ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', *Art Journal* 64.1, (2005): 6.

⁴⁴ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 5.

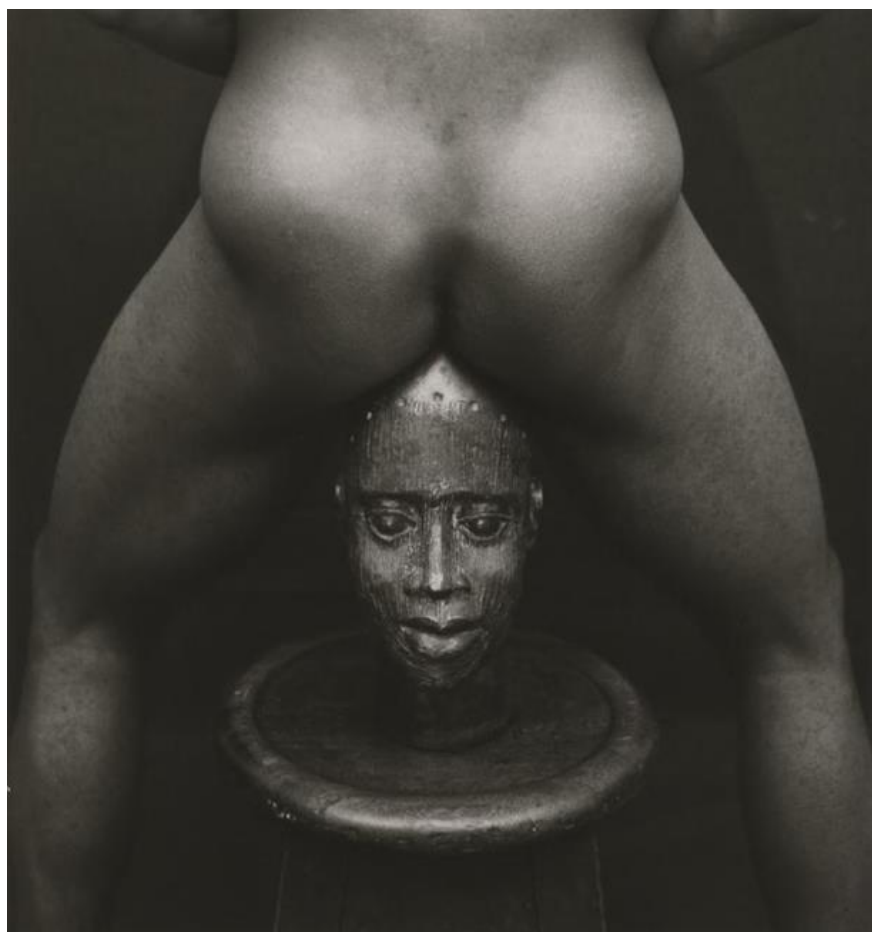


Figure 1: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *Bronze Head*, 1987, Photograph, Gelatin silver print on paper, 403mm × 388 mm, Tate.⁴⁵

However, it is worth noting that although the decriminalization of homosexuality in England in 1967 provided a more open environment for artistic creation and expression, social opinion at the end of the twentieth century was still pervaded by a rejection of homosexuality. On this occasion, as the artist states, I

⁴⁵ Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *Bronze Head*, 1987, gelatin silver print on paper, 403 mm × 388 mm, Tate.

am an outsider on three levels, and one of these aspects is sexuality.⁴⁶ In the *Bronze Head*, Fani-Kayode's elimination of colour from the photograph diminishes the difference between the figure and the background, creating the illusion that the figure's limbs are about to be swallowed up by the shadows in the background. The oppressiveness and composure of this slight colour difference are paired with the image of the figure with his back to the viewer to convey a sense of detachment from what is around him. In this way, the artist cuts off the possibility of communication between the male and the audience, emphasising the marginalisation of homosexuals in society and their own situation as outsiders. Moreover, Fani-Kayode also narrates the sense of disconnection between himself and his family of origin in this work. At the time, homosexuality was still considered a crime in Nigeria. The bronze head as a symbol of Yoruba tradition facing the viewer and the figure facing back create an opposite form, suggesting Fani-Kayode's separation from his past home. The incompleteness of the male body in the photograph may signify the loss, turmoil and threat of violence to the artist as a result of his sexuality.⁴⁷ His art embodies the tension between his desire to openly display the power of homosexuality and social barriers.

In addition, the artist's work also reflects his challenge to the dichotomy of gender. According to Drewal, the head occupies an important place in Yoruba culture, symbolising the spiritual centre of a person.⁴⁸ In *Bronze Head*, Fani-Kayode incorporates this religious concept by placing the bronze head under the buttocks of the body to convey the idea of the head as a "higher phallus". This approach elevates sexuality to the level of the spirit and the self, reflecting the transcendence of sexuality over the binary concept of gender. Furthermore, Mercer argues that the androgynous nature of the bronze mask is indicative of the universal human tendency towards bisexuality.⁴⁹ In conjunction with this view, this subtle position between the male body and the mask in the picture creates a sense of ambiguity. It can express both the moment when the bronze head enters the body and the moment when the body gives birth. By simultaneously simulating sodomy and pregnancy, the artist shows the possibility of the feminisation of the male, thus expressing the concept of gender integration.⁵⁰ In this respect, his disruption of gender dichotomies not only critiques the homophobic and misogynistic ideas in society at the time but also shows other possibilities

⁴⁶ Rotimi Fani-Kayode, 'Traces of Ecstasy', in *Rotimi Fani-Kayode & Alex Hirst, Photographs*, ed. Mark Sealy and Jean Loup Pivin (London, 1996): 5.

⁴⁷ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 6.

⁴⁸ Margaret Thompson Drewal, 'Projection from the Top in Yoruba Art', *African Arts* 11: 1 (1977): 43.

⁴⁹ Kobena Mercer, 'Mortal Coil: Eros and Diaspora in the Photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', in *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practices Since the 1980s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): 116.

⁵⁰ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 10-12.

outside the mainstream.⁵¹ Consequently, Fani-Kayode's art expands the definition of queer in British society and provides an opportunity and platform for the voices of more sexual minorities.

II. THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

Fani-Kayode's artistic practice addresses the AIDS crisis, discussing the threats and dilemmas faced by the queer community in this context. Firstly, as Moffitt asserts, the AIDS epidemic broke out worldwide in the late twentieth century, but the neglect of the AIDS death toll by the British government under Thatcher exacerbated the spread of the disease among marginalized groups, such as homosexuals.⁵² And as a result of media agitation, a dominant perception emerged in British society during this period that homosexuality was a threat to public health.⁵³ In the face of popular condemnation of homosexuality and the fear of death caused by AIDS, the artist incorporates Yoruba cosmology into his artistic themes, trying to transform and eliminate the negative effects of AIDS through the power of religion and sexuality. For example, in the work titled *Every Moment Counts II (Ecstatic Antibodies)* (1989) (figure 2), he attempts to transcend the bondage of matter and death by simulating the "technique of ecstasy" of the Yoruba priests. He first introduces an animal mask into his work as a symbol of the spiritual world. The proximity of the figure's body to the mask may suggest a fusion between the physical and the spiritual. At the same time, the hand placed on the buttocks and the male touching of the bulb convey a quest for physical pleasure.

The baroque visuals created by the combination of brown and dark brown backgrounds and the stark contrast between light and dark gives the nude body an 'irrational power'.⁵⁴ On this occasion, the flickering electricity in the light bulb serves as a metaphor for time and vitality, still indicating the threat of AIDS that the figure is carrying. However, the hand pushing the body closer to the mask in the image symbolizes the figure's passage into a transient state of spiritual ecstasy through sexual desire. Fani-Kayode achieves Yoruba's ritual possession through the subconscious energy of sexuality, thus escaping death by placing himself between the spiritual and the mundane. This self-reconciliation transforms social hatred and disease into love and sex, freeing AIDS patients and homosexuals from the mental devastation caused by the illness and social exclusion.⁵⁵ And for the public, Fani-Kayode not only confronts the problems that exist in reality, but his artistic approach changes the traditional way of promoting AIDS through humor and

⁵¹ W. Ian Bourland, *Bloodflowers: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Photography, and the 1980s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019): 7-9.

⁵² Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', *Transition: An International Review* 118 (2015): 74-75.

⁵³ Matt Cook, 'Archives of Feeling: The AIDS Crisis in Britain 1987', *History Workshop Journal* 83:1 (2017).

⁵⁴ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies'. 78.

⁵⁵ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', 75-82.

documentary technique, thus avoiding the demonization of homosexuality that occurs through the direct depiction of death and disease. As a result, his artistic themes delve into the broad socio-political realm, critiquing the prejudiced discourse on sexuality in 1980s Britain.



Figure 2: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Every Moment Counts II (Ecstatic Antibodies), 1989, Chromogenic print, 62.7 cm x 60.6 cm, Autograph ABP.

III. RETHINKING RACIAL DISCOURSE

Meanwhile, Moffitt highlights that in Nigeria the artist's sexuality makes him a pariah and in Britain he is seen as the Other due to his race.⁵⁶ Fani-Kayode is aware of the racism that lies beneath the British narrative. His art visualizes the black male body as a site of interchange between race, sexuality and desire, exploring the black queer cultural politics of this period in Britain. In his 1989 work titled *The Golden Phallus* (Figure 3), he photographs a crouching male figure. The white mask worn by the man and his painted gold phallus echoes each other in the image, dominating the viewer's gaze. In the details, the artist draws on the symbol of the Venetian plague doctor mask to allude to the disease-infected body of the black male. The large shadows that appear in the image indicate that he is overwhelmed by fears of AIDS and death. But because the mask covers the face, the subjectivity and voice of the figure are deprived. The illness has caused him to be objectified and alienated from society, becoming the face and source of the plague. In response to this, in the late twentieth century, the black community was severely affected by AIDS due to the Thatcher

⁵⁶ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', 74.

government's curtailment of black welfare and the marginalisation of black people in society.⁵⁷ In this work, Fani-Kayode indicts the unequal treatment of people based on race in Britain.



Figure 3: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *The Golden Phallus*, 1989, Archival c-type print, 51cm x 61 cm, Autograph ABP.⁵⁸

Moreover, in the photograph, it is worth noting that there is not only a visual similarity between the white mask and the male phallus, but also compositional proximity. In this way, the artist responds to the prevalent societal notion of linking AIDS to race and sexuality. By showing the mask as a symbol of death and the image of the repressed black man, he reveals the social violence suffered by the black queer community under this concept. On the contrary, according to Moffitt, the mask in the picture mimics in form the *ororo* of Yoruba culture and is the source of the individual's inner spirit.⁵⁹ In other words, Fani-Kayode uses the mask as a site of cohesion and displacement, confronting AIDS through the exercise of his own creativity and agency, thus achieving a transformation between death and life. And then, his evocation of ancestral memories also takes him to a place beyond the material plane. The expansion of the boundaries of the self frees him from Christian oversight and the politicisation of the body.⁶⁰ On this occasion, the artist's

⁵⁷ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', 75.

⁵⁸ Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *The Golden Phallus*, 1989, archival c-type print, 51 cm × 61 cm, Autograph ABP.

⁵⁹ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', 80.

⁶⁰ Kobena Mercer, 'Eros and Diaspora', in *Rotimi Fani-Kayode & Alex Hirst, Photographs*, ed. Mark Sealy and Jean Loup Pivin (London, 1996), 116.

insistence on his African cultural and ethnic identity effectively resists Western hegemonic asceticism and social hatred.

In addition to the inequalities displayed in Britain's handling of AIDS, Fani-Kayode also attacks racial objectification and exploitation under the Western narrative. An obvious manifestation of this in the work *The Golden Phallus* is the string that surrounds the figure's body. Its tautness seems to indicate that there are two different forces pulling at either end of the image. In the process, the male phallus is manipulated and displayed. At this point, the title of the work creates an ironic narrative. It responds to the symbolization of black males in Western discourse that their autonomy comes from their phalluses.⁶¹ The artist enhances the visual appeal of the phallus by painting it gold to create a strong visual contrast with the surrounding hues. This artistic technique replicates the racial stereotypes of black male fetishism and the Western fear of the black phallus.⁶² Furthermore, in Western visual culture, the black male body is often positioned as an object of the white male gaze and sexual fantasy.⁶³ The artist's tailoring of the photographic composition closes the distance between the viewer and the figure. The audience's gaze is drawn to the string in the picture and is thus guided between the body of the male and between the mask and the phallus. Through the deliberate display of black eroticism, Fani-Kayode invites the viewer into this field of power between subject and object in relation to desire and gaze, recreating the act of queer voyeurism.⁶⁴ Therefore, it can be found that this artwork reflects the oppression and objectification of black males in Western racial discourse.

In response to the issues mentioned above, Fani-Kayode reinvents black subjectivity in his art, creating a more diverse black experience under British society. For instance, this photographic work titled *White Bouquet* (1987) (Figure 4) presents a subversive racist narrative. Fani-Kayode imitates the relationships and composition of the figures in Edouard Manet's representative painting *Olympia* (1863) (figure 5). However, in contrast to the original, the artist transposes the gender of the two painted subjects and the position between them. The image becomes a black male reclining on a bench, while the white male stands behind him, holding a bouquet of white flowers. At this point, the bouquet serves as a symbol of affection. The act of the white man delivering flowers reverses the relationship between these two figures and the

⁶¹ Kobena Mercer, 'Eros and Diaspora', 118.

⁶² Octavio Zaya, 'On Three Counts I Am an Outsider: The Work of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 4.1 (1996), 24-72.

⁶³ Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2013), 224-6.

⁶⁴ Evan Moffitt, 'Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies', 83.

white-dominated visual code of Manet's painting.⁶⁵ The black man is no longer presented as a marginal figure to highlight the visual centrality of the white body but takes control of subjectivity and sexuality himself.⁶⁶ Also, according to Clark, the nude body of the woman and her direct gaze at the viewer in *Olympia* is a sign of her class, and commodification.⁶⁷ In conjunction with this view, the men in the *White Bouquet* turn their backs on the viewer, thereby blocking the involvement of external factors such as power and capital in their relationship. In this work Fani-Kayode conveys a desire to bridge the boundaries between races and genders. He deliberately adjusts the figures in the image to a translucent state. So, viewers can see part of the black body through the white male. This fusion of bodies brings about an erotic atmosphere.⁶⁸ And then, the bouquet and the overall blurred tones of the picture also reinforce this sense of romance. In this respect, the artist's portrayal of interracial and same-sex emotions and desires achieves a dual challenge to normative heteronormativity and racism.⁶⁹ His notion of equality and the integration of difference offers new possibilities for the British narrative.



Figures 4: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *White Bouquet*, 1987, Gelatin silver print, original dimensions unknown.

⁶⁵ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 6-7.

⁶⁶ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 7.

⁶⁷ Timothy J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the art of Manet and his followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015): 79-146.

⁶⁸ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 8.

⁶⁹ Steven Nelson, 'Transgressive transcendence in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 8.



Figure 5: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, Oil on canvas, 130,5 cm x 191,0 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Furthermore, Fani-Kayode's intercultural background and sense of being an outsider also bring new definitions of culture and identity to Britain. According to Mercer, influenced by the post-modern and post-colonial context, the artist's art is characterized by hybridity and diaspora, assuming the role of being a “border rider for cultural difference”.⁷⁰ Take the artwork *Bronze Head* as an example. In this photography, the artist shows a head of a Yoruba god. As an exile, Fani-Kayode positions this mask as the embodiment of what has been lost through exile, and as a vehicle for his past memories. The physical contact between the figure and this mask in the picture implies an attempt by Fani-Kayode to recreate the Yoruba “technique of ecstasy”. In this way, he attempts to achieve communication with the deity and thus find his freedom and salvation in his own lost origins.⁷¹ Therefore, it can be seen the artist's reliance on and attachment to his Yoruba cultural identity and the profound influence it has had on his construction of identity. On the other hand, the pose of the male sitting on top of the bronze head in the work reflects Fani-Kayode's criticism and insult to the Yoruba power. In this case, his ambivalent attitude towards Yoruba culture reveals his challenge to the fixity of identity and the notion of boundaries. At the same time, as Zaya argues, influenced by the hegemonic position of white culture, non-Western culture is often appropriated and overshadowed by white-dominated narratives.⁷² On this occasion,

⁷⁰ Kobena Mercer, ‘Eros and Diaspora’, 109-111.

⁷¹ Kobena Mercer, ‘Eros and Diaspora’, 110.

⁷² Octavio Zaya, ‘On Three Counts I Am an Outsider: The Work of Rotimi Fani-Kayode’, page unknown.

the artist's exploration of Yoruba history and civilization not only compensates for the absence of African culture in contemporary discourse, but also effectively contributes to diversity within the British cultural system. Moreover, he subversively applies African cultural symbols to the theme of demonstrating the power of homosexuality. In this regard, the artist achieves a renovation of old cultures and old values, giving them a new role in the contemporary Western context.⁷³ As shown, Fani-Kayode's breach of boundaries has facilitated intercultural, inter-historical and inter-ethnic exchange and integration, contributing to the construction of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society in Britain.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this essay was to focus on Rotimi Fani-Kayode's art and analyse the relationship between his artistic production and the British social context of the late twentieth century. The essay has demonstrated that his art addresses some of the issues in British society, critiquing prejudicial discourses about race and sexuality in Britain. Firstly, the artist's portrayal of homosexuality not only enriches the narratives related to the queer experience in Britain at the time, but also expands the definition of the concept of queer by breaking down the gender binary through the idea of gender integration. In the field of race and AIDS, his art revealing the social marginalization and unequal treatment of the black queer community. In this regard, Rotimi Fani-Kayode draws on Yoruba culture to realize a transition between death and life, thereby reducing the physical pain and mental suffering of AIDS patients. The artist's use of Yoruba culture and his portrayal of black subjectivity also effectively confront the white cultural hegemony and the objectification of non-white people, helping to reshape critical discourse on race in Britain. Further, his integration of multiculturalism and the breaking of boundaries contribute to a new paradigm of racial integration and cultural diversity in Britain.

⁷³ Kobena Mercer, 'Mortal Coil: Eros and Diaspora in the Photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode', 116.

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Fani-Kayode, Rotimi. *Bronze Head*. 1987. Gelatin silver print on paper, 403 mm × 388 mm. Tate.

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‘Soft Cooperation’: The Necessity of Strengthening Cultural Cooperation between Russia and China

Ziheng Wang

ABSTRACT

This article examines the growing but underdeveloped role of cultural cooperation in Sino-Russian relations, arguing that it is essential for deepening political trust and enhancing economic collaboration. While political and economic ties between China and Russia are robust, cultural exchange remains limited. The article explores how mutual understanding through cultural initiatives can break down barriers, boost public engagement, and complement strategic objectives like the Belt and Road Initiative and Eurasian partnerships. It also assesses current efforts and future prospects in fostering meaningful people-to-people and institutional exchanges.

Keywords: Sino-Russian relations, cultural cooperation, Belt and Road initiative, economic collaboration, diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

China and Russia are each other's largest neighbours and have established close cooperation over the course of a century of dialogue. In 2013, the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative made cooperation between the two countries more concrete and diverse by expanding energy trade and setting economic corridors.⁷⁴ The two sides have reached comprehensive cooperation in the fields of energy, economy and trade, transportation, humanities, infrastructure and other fields, and have achieved a series of important results. Russia is an active supporter, important participant and major partner of the Belt and Road Initiative and is also an important object for China to achieve political mutual trust.⁷⁵

Ziheng Wang is pursuing his PhD at Queen's University, Belfast specializing in Sino-Russian political relations and how Chinese leaders have shaped their country's relationship with Russia through their speeches. Correspondence should be sent to School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: zwang83@qub.ac.uk.

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⁷⁴ Jane Golley and Adam Ingle. 'The Belt and Road Initiative: How to win friends and influence people.' In *Prosperity*, edited by Jane Golley and Linda Jaivin, 42–60 (Canberra: ANU Press, 2018)

⁷⁵ 'Interview with Li Hui, Chinese Ambassador to Russia 访中国驻俄罗斯大使李辉.' *Official website of the Chinese Embassy in Russia 中国驻俄罗斯大使馆官网*, 22 Apr. 2019. Accessed Sep 20, 2024. www.ru.china-embassy.gov.cn/gdtp/201904.

China and Russia have formed a “comprehensive strategic collaborative partnership for the new era” at the political level and are experiencing the “best period” in the development of political relations between the two countries.⁷⁶ In terms of economic cooperation, a growing number of enterprises and products from both countries are entering each other's markets, and the total volume of bilateral trade imports and exports has been rising steadily, exceeding the 100 billion US dollar mark for three consecutive years and heading towards the goal of 200 billion US dollars.⁷⁷

As part of bilateral cooperation, cultural cooperation has not received the attention it deserves in Sino-Russian relations. Although in recent years, under the leadership of the two governments, cultural exchanges between China and Russia have become more frequent, the scale of exchanges and cooperation has continued to expand, and series of ‘theme year’ events have been held.⁷⁸ However, compared with political and economic cooperation, bilateral cultural cooperation requires more mutual understanding, longer-term cooperation and broader public participation.

Using cultural cooperation to further develop political and economic cooperations between China and Russia is not only a chance to be seized, but also necessary for the comprehensive development of relations between the two countries. This article will discuss the necessity of strengthening cultural cooperation between China and Russia from three aspects: cultural cooperation enhances political mutual trust, cultural cooperation promotes economic and trade cooperation, and the current situation and prospects of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

I. CULTURAL COOPERATION ENHANCES POLITICAL TRUST

Political mutual trust is a term that has been repeatedly mentioned in the development of Sino-Russian relations, and it is an important part of political cooperation in Sino-Russian relations. The foundation of mutual trust lies first in the fact that the two countries share common pursuits and interests in international

⁷⁶ Allison Graham, ‘China and Russia: A Strategic Alliance in the Making,’ The National Interest, December 14, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-and-russia-strategic-alliance-making-38727>.

⁷⁷Rong Bao 暴蓉, Li Zongjuan 李宗娟, and Cao Guangwei 曹广伟. 《‘Yidai Yilu’ kuangjia xia Zhong’E jingmao hezuo zhuangkuang fenxi》‘一带一路’框架下中俄经贸合作状况分析 (Analysis of Sino-Russian Economic and Trade Cooperation under the Framework of the Belt and Road) . *Shangye jingji* 商业经济 (Buinese and Economy), 09(2020):87-90+128.

⁷⁸ Guanghui Shi, 石光辉. ‘中俄举办过哪些‘年’’, ‘what ‘years’ have China and Russia held,’ *PLA Daily*, March 23, 2013.

affairs. At the same time, this mutual trust is also based on a good understanding between the two sides. Contemporary China and Russia have many areas of common understanding, such as supporting each other's independent exploration of national construction and the flexibility to adjust their own economic policies. The importance of cultural cooperation, an area that cannot be fully expressed in figures, is often overlooked in terms of enhancing political mutual trust.

Culture is a very broad concept that is often interpreted in various ways. Broadly speaking, culture refers to the sum of human wealth formed through participation in society, including both the material and spiritual aspects.⁷⁹ Culture in the narrower sense refers to the complex of shared experience, shared perceptions and shared values.⁸⁰ History, content and stories are the characteristics of cultural expression. They represent the traditional customs, habits, behaviours, thinking and religious beliefs of a country or region, and reflect the differences between regions. It is precisely because of the differences in culture that closer cultural cooperation is particularly important in enhancing mutual trust between the two countries. There are two reasons to support this viewpoint.

Firstly, strengthening cultural cooperation can promote the establishment of positive cooperative relations between China and Russia at the government level. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Russia in 1991, the relations between the two countries had been improving in the 1990s, which had provided a solid foundation for the development of cultural exchange activities between China and Russia.⁸¹ The China-Russia Friendship Association, the China-Russia Committee for UNESCO and the China-Russia Committee for Education, Science, Culture and Health have been established one after another.⁸² Strengthening cultural cooperation can also enable the two governments to have a deeper understanding of each other's core interests, thereby providing solid and effective support in dealing with key issues. For example, Russia supports China's defence of national unity, and China supports Russia's

⁷⁹ Xiaoguang Bai 白晓光. 《Zhong'E wenhua chayi dui liangguo jingmao hezuo de yingxiang》中俄文化差异对两国经贸合作的影响 (Influence of Cultural Differences between China and Russia on Economic and Trade Cooperation of Both Sides). *Xiboliya Yanjiu* 西伯利亚研究 (Siberian Studies), 5(2012):30-33.

⁸⁰ George F. MacDonald, 'What Is Culture?' *The Journal of Museum Education* 16:1 (1991): 9-12.

⁸¹ Wishnick, Elizabeth. 'Russia and China', *Asian Survey* 41:5 (2001): 797.

⁸² Hongbo Zhao 赵洪波. 《Tisheng Zhong'E wenhua waijiao zhanlue de zaisikao》提升中俄文化外交战略的再思考 (Re-thinking on the Elevation of Sino-Russia Cultural Diplomacy Strategy). *Dongbeiya Luntan* 东北亚论坛 (Northeast Asia Forum), 06(2013):107-112, 127.

handling of its own internal affairs in its own way. This is the most important political foundation for the vigorous development of friendly relations between China and Russia.

Secondly, closer cultural cooperation can enable the two peoples to enhance mutual understanding and trust through cultural contact and exchange between the two countries, providing a good foundation for the two peoples to establish cooperative relations in other fields. Through mutual cultural understanding and acceptance, the two peoples can also help to realise various government cooperation plans, creating a beneficial cycle. The promotion of bilateral cultural exchange projects promoted by the Chinese and Russian governments can expand the scope of participation by the people of the two countries, increase the popularity of the projects, and gain more public recognition of cultural cooperation between the two countries, thereby enhancing mutual trust from the bottom up and shaping a positive national image among the people of the other country.

II. CULTURAL COOPERATION PROMOTES ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The cultural differences between the two countries mentioned in the previous section not only negatively impact on enhancement of political mutual trust but also lead to the existence of a ‘cultural barrier’ in economic cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, strengthening cultural cooperation is also necessary to enhance Sino-Russian economic cooperation.

Cultural exchange and cooperation not only allow for a fuller understanding of each other's history, culture, traditions and customs, and the elimination of cultural barriers where possible, but also allows for the identification of cultural commonalities and similar needs and preferences, leading to the establishment of a win-win economic cooperation mechanism. For example, there is a high degree of similarity between China's Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's proposed concept of ‘building partnerships in Eurasia’, especially in terms of economic and trade content.⁸³ Both initiatives advocate the development of Eurasian transport corridors, strengthening the process of trade and economic integration, removing barriers to economic exchange, and promoting regional interaction. This shows that China and Russia have more common aspirations than differences in terms of future economic development needs, and there is huge potential for cooperation.

⁸³ Sebastien Peyrouse, ‘The Evolution of Russia’s Views on the Belt and Road Initiative,’ *Asia Policy*, 24 (2017): 96–102.

The positive impact of close cultural cooperation on economic cooperation between the two countries is even more obvious when it comes to the market. Cultural understanding is inextricably linked to the market environment. The cultural environments of China and Russia are influenced by historical traditions and the current state of development, and each country displays different characteristics, that directly affect market demand in the two countries.

On a macro level, factors such as the investment environment rooted in the country's history and culture, administrative efficiency, the stability of economic policies, and the robustness of the legal and regulatory systems, and on a micro level, cultural tendencies in different countries and consumer preferences, all these factors can have a significant impact on an investor's choice of market. Cultural exchanges are conducive to understanding the market environment of other countries, enhancing market competitiveness and more accurately positioning market demand, thereby improving the level of bilateral economic cooperation.

III. CURRENT SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF CULTURAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA

Although cultural cooperation has a positive impact on strengthening political mutual trust between China and Russia and improving the level of economic cooperation between the two countries, compared with the close political cooperation between the two countries and the increasing trade volume over the years, cultural cooperation between China and Russia still has certain limitations. Cooperation between the two countries in the cultural field is still dominated by government-promoted projects, and there is not much interaction between the public and the commercial sectors. Although official endorsement increases the popularity of bilateral cultural cooperation to a certain extent, it still does not sufficiently guide public exchanges and has not formed an effective interactive mechanism. There is also a lag in following up on market cooperation, which has prevented the influence of cultural cooperation from being expanded, thus reducing the motivating effect on economic cooperation.⁸⁴

Both China and Russia attach insufficient importance to the promotion of each other's modern literary and artistic works in their respective countries. Cultural exchanges between the two countries were once close

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Wishneck, (2001): 811.

during the Soviet era, and a large amount of Soviet literature had a significant impact on Chinese youth and society at the time.⁸⁵ However, at the current stage, the literature of the two countries has not been fully translated and published. Chinese audiences rarely see modern Russian literary works, and they know very little about modern Russian books, movies, and music. At the same time, the knowledge of Russian audiences on Chinese literary field is also quite limited. The lack of understanding of each other's cultural development status by the peoples of the two countries is not conducive to exchanges between the peoples of the two countries, nor is it conducive to public market cooperation.

To deal with these limitations, the two countries have first increased bilateral cultural cooperation at the government level. However, unlike the previous more macroscopic intergovernmental cooperation, the focus in recent years has been on strengthening local cooperations which cultural cooperation is also one of the priorities. The two heads of state have designated 2018 and 2019 as the 'Year of China-Russia Local Cooperation and Exchange'.⁸⁶ The two sides will make full use of the intergovernmental and local cooperation mechanisms between the two countries to further explain economic policies and create a business-friendly environment. At the same time, they intend to stimulate the enthusiasm of enterprises in both countries to cooperate, and to drive more enterprises and people to join China-Russia cooperation to realise the potential of bilateral cooperation.

At the level of Sino-Russian public cultural cooperation, more specific cultural projects are being promoted, such as planning of tourist routes, co-production of film and television works, promotion of language schools and cultural publicity platforms.⁸⁷ Among these initiatives, the achievements of Sino-Russian cross-border e-commerce cooperation are particularly notable. About 90% of Russian cross-border goods come from China, and the Russian Post has increased the number and frequency of flights to China for this

⁸⁵ Bingshuang Han 韩冰霜. 《Zhong'E wenhua jiaoliu wenti yanjiu chutan》中俄文化交流问题研究初探 (A preliminary study on the issue of Sino-Russian cultural exchange). *Xiandai Jiaoji* 现代交际 (Modern Communication), 07(2015):59.

⁸⁶ 'Interview with Li Hui, Chinese Ambassador to Russia 访中国驻俄罗斯大使李辉.' *Official website of the Chinese Embassy in Russia* 中国驻俄罗斯大使馆官网, 22 Apr.2019. Accessed Sep 20, 2024. www.ru.china-embassy.gov.cn/gdtp/201904.

⁸⁷ Xiaoqian Sun 孙晓谦. 《Heilongjiang Sheng dui E lvyou jinianpin shichang kaifa wenti yanjiu》黑龙江省对俄旅游纪念品市场开发问题研究 (Research on the development of the Russian tourism souvenir market in Heilongjiang Province). *Xiboliya Yanjiu* 西伯利亚研究 (Siberian Studies), 1(2012):11-13.

purpose.⁸⁸ In China, more and more Russian goods such as flour, sausages, pickles, juice, cheese, honey and vodka, are becoming well-known to the public through cross-border e-commerce.⁸⁹ Close cultural cooperation can provide a broader channel of communication between the e-commerce platforms of the two countries, allowing China's e-commerce experience to help Russia develop its own e-commerce services, thereby improving the efficiency of cross-border e-commerce cooperation between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

Many limitations need to be broken through in the development of cultural cooperation between China and Russia for historical and cultural reasons. Nevertheless, relatively lagging cultural cooperation needs to be given more attention, which can not only enhance political mutual trust between China and Russia but also promote bilateral economic cooperation. More importantly, strengthening cultural exchanges between the two countries can promote a better understanding of each other's domestic situations and lay a good foundation for the subsequent comprehensive development of Sino-Russian relations. China and Russia should, under the guidance of the governments of both countries, be aware of the need to enhance cultural cooperation, to increase public participation, enrich the content of cooperation, give full play to the potential of cooperation, and thus form a mutually beneficial cycle with the political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

⁸⁸ Litao Tan 谭丽涛. 《‘Yidai Yilu’ changyi xia Zhong’E kuajing dianshang fazhan de tiaozhan yu celue》 ‘一带一路’倡议下中俄跨境电商发展的挑战与策略 (Challenges and strategies for the development of cross-border e-commerce between China and Russia under the Belt and Road Initiative). *Shangye Jingji Yanjiu* 商业经济研究 (Journal of Commercial Economics), 22(2020):149-152.

⁸⁹ Daye Chu, ‘30% More Chinese Tourists Expected to Visit Russian Capital in 2024: Moscow Tourism, Official - People’s Daily Online,’ People.cn, May 25, 2024, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2024/0525/c90000-20174073.html>.

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Narrative Complexity, Genre Conventions, and Audience Reception in Contemporary Crime Television Shows

Hanling Cao

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the role of genre conventions in shaping audience engagement and cultural understanding through a comparative analysis of *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*. It explores how both series innovate within and subvert the crime drama genre by employing textual analysis of narrative form, mise-en-scène, editing, and sound design. By destabilising traditional genre expectations, this study examines how each text fosters complex representations of crime, morality, and institutional power, contributing to broader cultural discourses. The article underscores genre's centrality to media production and reception, offering insights into evolving audience interpretations within contemporary television narratives.

Keywords: crime drama, audience reception, media production, cultural discourse, genre theory

INTRODUCTION

Genre, as a fundamental aspect of media production and consumption, plays a crucial role in shaping audience expectations and interpretations of media outputs.⁹⁰ Particularly, the crime drama subgenre has developed through time, adopting a number of patterns and motifs to captivate audiences with tales of crime, police enforcement, and morality. *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* are two TV shows that have pushed the frontiers of the crime drama genre in recent years, presenting deep and nuanced representations of crime, narcotics, and law enforcement that engage viewers while challenging established genre norms. *Breaking Bad* was created by Vince Gilligan and aired between 2008 and 2013 on AMC. The show tells a narrative of a high school chemistry teacher, Walter White, who turns to methamphetamine manufacturing to support his family after being diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. On the other hand, *The Wire* is a show that aired on HBO between 2002 and 2008. The show, produced by David Simon, is a multi-faceted exploration of the city of Baltimore that

Hanling Cao graduated with a Master's degree in Media and Broadcast Production from Queen's University Belfast and is currently participating in a doctoral research project in media. She is a performance artist and was part of the BAFTSS award-winning film, *Zen's Faraway Verse*. Correspondence should be sent to the School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland.

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⁹⁰ Daniel Bilteryest and Philippe Meers. 'Film, cinema and reception studies' in *Reception studies and audiovisual translation*, pp.21–42 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018)

focuses on the intertwined lives of numerous institutions such as the police department, drug trade, and political system.

By evaluating the case studies of *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*, this essay aims to investigate how genre plays in determining audience engagement with media. This study will discuss the ways in which genre has been used to create distinct and engaging stories that captivate audiences and contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between genre, media production, and audience engagement through a close analysis of the narrative and stylistic characteristics of each series, as well as an examination of audience reception.

I. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

This section will concentrate on a thorough textual examination of the formal components of *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*, including mise-en-scene, editing, and sound, in order to further investigate the effects of genre norms on viewer engagement and cultural knowledge.

Breaking Bad

Breaking Bad has a distinct visual aesthetic that is marked by a vibrant colour scheme, sharp contrasts, and dramatic lighting. The characters' emotional states and the moral choices they must make are reflected in the mise-en-scene.⁹¹ For instance, Walter White's progressive switch from bright to dark attire, which employs colour symbolism, graphically depicts his moral decline into criminality. The editing in *Breaking Bad* is used to create a sense of tension and suspense, keeping the audience engaged in the narrative. Key sequences often employ cross-cutting between parallel storylines, increasing the emotional intensity and highlighting the interconnected nature of the characters' lives.⁹² Additionally, the series features several memorable montage sequences, which serve to condense time and convey the characters' growing proficiency in the drug trade.

⁹¹ Siobhan Lyons, 'The (Anti-)Hero with a Thousand Faces: Reconstructing Villainy in *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Better Call Saul*,' *Canadian Review of American Studies* 51: 3 (2021): 225–46.

⁹² John A. Bateman, 'Triangulating Transmediality: A Multimodal Semiotic Framework Relating Media, Modes, and Genres,' *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20(2017): 160–74.

Breaking Bad's sound design is characterized by the strategic use of silence and ambient noise, which enhances the show's tension and atmosphere. The series also employs a diverse and eclectic soundtrack, ranging from rock to electronic music, which adds to the overall mood and tone of each episode.⁹³

The Wire

In contrast, to accentuate the gritty reality of its urban environment, *The Wire*'s mise en scene uses genuine places and a naturalistic visual aesthetic to provide a documentary-like feeling. Wide views are regularly used in the programme to set the scene and emphasize how linked the city's numerous social systems are.⁹⁴ The series also makes use of a muted colour scheme and subtle lighting, which further supports its melancholy and grounded tone.

The Wire avoids using showy or spectacular approaches, and its editing is known for its patient pace. Long takes and continuous shots are frequently used in the series, which helps situations develop in a more subtle and natural way.⁹⁵ This strategy emphasizes the show's dedication to realism and authenticity while also drawing the viewer further into the narrative. Diegetic sound, which includes ambient noise, police radios, and street noise, is used extensively in *The Wire*'s sound design, adding to the show's immersive and realistic atmosphere. The programme also has a minimalistic original score that blends well with the overall tone of the show without standing out.⁹⁶

Overall, the textual analysis above shows how *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*'s narrative and aesthetic features attract audiences. *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* use their genres to tell compelling stories that illuminate their social surroundings. *Breaking Bad*'s rich colours and dramatic lighting depict Walter White's morality and emotional state as he turns to crime. Cross-cutting between parallel storylines and famous montage sequences that show the protagonists' drug trade skills creates tension and suspense in *Breaking Bad*. *Breaking Bad*'s sound design uses quiet and ambient sounds to build tension and diverse music to set its mood. *The Wire*'s

⁹³ Hallvard Moe, Tony Valenduc, and Sofie Van Bauwel, 'Rearticulating Audience Engagement,' *Television & New Media* 172 (2016): 99–107

⁹⁴ Majid Yar, 'Screening Crime: Cultural Criminology Goes to the Movies,' in *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image*, ed. Keith J. Hayward and Mike Presdee (Abingdon, UK: Routledge-Cavendish, 2010), 80–94.

⁹⁵ Kim Chistian Schröder, 'Audience Reception Research in a Post-Broadcasting Digital Age,' *Television & New Media* 20:2 (2018): 155–69.

⁹⁶ Jonathon N. Anderson, *Genre and Audience Reception in The Rake's Progress* (PhD diss., University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2019).

genuine mise-en-scene emphasizes its commitment to realism and authenticity in presenting urban life's grime. *The Wire*'s slow, natural editing uses extended takes and continuous shots to lure viewers into the story. *The Wire*'s deep and realistic sound design uses diegetic sound and a minimalistic original soundtrack that matches the show's tone. *The Wire*'s genre conventions allow for a more detailed investigation of urban social structures while *Breaking Bad*'s concentration is on its protagonist's metamorphosis. Both shows use their genres to tell compelling stories that illuminate their social surroundings. The textual analysis above shows that genre conventions are crucial to telling compelling stories that engage viewers and deepen social awareness. *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* combine mise-en-scene, editing, and sound design to create immersive storylines that appeal to audiences and illuminate complicated social systems.

II. GENRE CONVENTIONS AND NARRATIVE DEVICES

Breaking Bad follows the story of Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher turned methamphetamine manufacturer, as he navigates the criminal underworld in an attempt to support his family financially. The show utilizes various genre conventions, including an anti-hero protagonist, morally ambiguous characters, and heightened suspense, to create a complex and problematic narrative that goes beyond crime drama conventions.⁹⁷ One key genre convention employed in *Breaking Bad* is the use of the anti-hero protagonist. Walter White is a character who exhibits both good and evil traits, making it difficult for audiences to categorize him as either a hero or a villain. This complexity is further emphasized by the show's narrative structure, which explores the gradual transformation of Walter White from a sympathetic character to a ruthless and dangerous criminal.⁹⁸

Breaking Bad uses ethically dubious characters in addition to the anti-hero protagonist to subvert accepted crime drama tropes. Characters like Hank Schrader, a DEA agent and Walter's brother-in-law, and Jesse Pinkman, a former pupil of Walter's and co-conspirator, are shown as multidimensional people who cannot simply be classified as "good" or "bad".⁹⁹ This complexity gives the story depth and makes it easier for the audience to connect with the characters. Additionally, *Breaking Bad* makes use of a number of stylistic devices to up the tension and emphasize the protagonists' moral dilemmas. Extreme close-ups are regularly utilized to

⁹⁷ Siobhan Lyons, 'The (Anti-)Hero with a Thousand Faces: Reconstructing Villainy in The Sopranos, Breaking Bad, and Better Call Saul,' *Canadian Review of American Studies* 51:3 (2021): 225–46.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 232.

⁹⁹ Siobhan Lyons, 'The (Anti-)Hero with a Thousand Faces: Reconstructing Villainy in The Sopranos, Breaking Bad, and Better Call Saul,' *Canadian Review of American Studies* 51:3 (2021): 225–46.

highlight the characters' inner torment as they traverse the risky world of drug production and delivery, especially Walter White.¹⁰⁰ A stressful and intense viewing experience is also produced through the show's mise en scene, editing, and sound design.

Breaking Bad has been praised for its innovative approach to the crime drama genre and its exploration of complex moral themes. The show's use of genre conventions like the anti-hero protagonist has been particularly lauded. *The Wire* has also been praised for its nuanced portrayal of urban life and its realistic approach to the genre. The show's emphasis on interconnected characters and complex moral themes has been particularly well-received.

The Wire

Another well-regarded criminal drama that makes use of a number of genre cliches is David Simon's *The Wire*. The programme presents Baltimore's drug-infested inner city while emphasizing the complex connections between police, elected officials, drug dealers, and common citizens. *The Wire*, in contrast to *Breaking Bad*, avoids utilizing conventional criminal drama cliches in favour of a more humanistic approach and makes use of a huge ensemble cast to explore the intricacies of urban life.¹⁰¹

The employment of a sizable ensemble cast is one of the most important genre conventions in *The Wire*. This strategy enables the program to examine the intertwined lives of its characters, highlighting the complicated and frequently devastating effects of crime and drug abuse in Baltimore. The show's ensemble cast also enables it to examine a variety of facets of urban life, such as the political landscape, the media, and the criminal justice system.¹⁰² The use of hand-held cameras to provide the audience with a realistic and immersive experience is another important genre cliché used in *The Wire*. Long shots and naturalistic lighting are frequently used in the show's cinematography, giving it a documentary-style look that highlights its dedication to realism.¹⁰³ *The Wire* stands apart from other crime dramas because of its distinctive visual aesthetic, underlining the show's original take on the genre.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 232.

¹⁰¹ John A. Bateman, 'Triangulating Transmediality: A Multimodal Semiotic Framework Relating Media, Modes, and Genres,' *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20 (2017): 160–74.

¹⁰² Ibid., 163.

¹⁰³ Hallvard Moe, Tony Valenduc, and Sofie Van Bauwel, 'Rearticulating Audience Engagement,' *Television & New Media* 17:2 (2016): 99–107,

Additionally, *The Wire* challenges conventional the crime drama tropes by eschewing binary depictions of “good” and “bad” characters. Instead, it offers a complex and humane examination of the lives of its protagonists, who frequently encounter moral conundrums and the repercussions of their decisions. The programme may explore issues of poverty, corruption, and the shortcomings of organizations set up to serve and protect the community more thoroughly thanks to this strategy.¹⁰⁴

III. AUDIENCE RECEPTION

To examine the ways in which genre conventions shape audience expectations and interpretations of media outputs, this study employs a combination of textual analysis and audience reception research. Reception theory posits that the meaning of media is not fixed but rather is constructed by the audience through their interpretation and engagement with the media text.¹⁰⁵

Breaking Bad

Fans of the television series *Breaking Bad* are drawn to its complicated characters and ethically murky storyline. Because Walter White’s descent into crime is motivated by understandable desires like the need to support his family, they find Walter White to be both compelling and relatable.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, viewers are enthralled and inspired to engage with the series on a deeper level by the show’s creative use of genre conventions like extreme close-ups and increased suspense.

Additionally, audiences seem to appreciate how Walter White and other important characters, like Jesse Pinkman, played by Aaron Paul, have changed and grown as people. The way these characters develop over the series, showing complicated motivations, internal conflicts, and shifting alliances, is well-liked by viewers.¹⁰⁷ *Breaking Bad* stands out from other crime dramas and offers a more compelling viewing experience thanks to its focus on character growth and the human cost of criminal activity.

¹⁰⁴ John A. Bateman, ‘Triangulating Transmediality: A Multimodal Semiotic Framework Relating Media, Modes, and Genres,’ *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20 (2017): 160–74.

¹⁰⁵ Mathieu, David. ‘The Continued Relevance of Reception Analysis in the Age of Social Media.’ *Trípodos* 36 (2015): 13–34

¹⁰⁶ Kim Christian Schröder, ‘Audience Reception Research in a Post-Broadcasting Digital Age,’ *Television & New Media* 20:2 (2018): 155–69.

¹⁰⁷ Hallvard Moe, Tony Valenduc, and Sofie Van Bauwel, ‘Rearticulating Audience Engagement,’ *Television & New Media* 17:2 (2016): 99–107.

Moreover, viewers identify with the show's depiction of the methamphetamine trade and its effects on individuals, families, and communities and value its examination of the social and economic repercussions of drug production and distribution.¹⁰⁸ The show's popularity is further enhanced by *Breaking Bad*'s investigation of these topics, which challenges viewers to consider the larger effects of criminality and drug abuse.

The Wire

The realistic depiction of urban life and the devotion to examining the complex links between many social organizations are valued by viewers, according to studies on *The Wire*'s audience reaction. The ensemble cast makes it possible for viewers to identify with a diverse variety of individuals, emphasizing the urban environment's complexity. Further immersing the spectator in the universe of the series is the programme's inventive use of genre clichés like the hand-held camera and documentary-style look.

The Wire's emphasis on how many social institutions, including law enforcement, politics, education, and the media, are interrelated and how they affect the continuance of crime and poverty in urban settings particularly appeals to audiences.¹⁰⁹ This holistic approach fosters viewers' critical thinking skills by challenging them to consider the underlying causes of crime and the shortcomings of conventional crime-fighting tactics, which results in a more engaging viewing experience.

The commitment to realism and the presentation of the various viewpoints of those involved in and impacted by crime, from low-level drug traffickers to senior police officials and politicians, are also valued by viewers.¹¹⁰ This multilayered strategy enables *The Wire* to dive deeper into the real-life tales that lie behind crime statistics, producing a story that is more compelling and emotionally resonant.

IV: THE IMPACT OF GENRE ON AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The case studies of *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* demonstrate how genre conventions can be utilized and subverted to create unique and engaging stories that captivate audiences. These genre conventions provide a

¹⁰⁸ Anne Morey, *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the 'Twilight' Series* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Majid Yar, 'Screening Crime: Cultural Criminology Goes to the Movies,' in *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image*, ed. Keith J. Hayward and Mike Presdee (Abingdon, UK: Routledge-Cavendish, 2010), 80–94.

¹¹⁰ John A. Bateman, 'Triangulating Transmediality: A Multimodal Semiotic Framework Relating Media, Modes, and Genres,' *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20 (2017): 160–74.

familiar framework for audiences to interact with the narrative, allowing them to make sense of the complex storylines and characters.¹¹¹

Additionally, each series' use of genre conventions enables the exploration of more complex and truthful portrayals of crime and morality, resulting in a more compelling and impactful viewing experience. Both *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* push viewers to reconsider their own beliefs about crime, law enforcement, and the nature of morality by upending established crime drama clichés and offering more humanistic and ethically nuanced plots.

The analysis of audience response also sheds light on how genre norms influence how audiences interact with media. Audiences are drawn to *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* because of their inventive use of genre conventions, examination of complicated characters, and ethically ambiguous storytelling. Our cultural view of issues pertaining to crime, drugs, and law enforcement is subsequently shaped by this involvement.¹¹²

The way that these shows have impacted public conversation about crime and law enforcement is another method to see how genre affects audience involvement and cultural knowledge. The criminal justice system, the drug war, and the social and economic reasons that contribute to crime have all been discussed in relation to both television shows.¹¹³ *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* have given audiences fresh views on crime and law enforcement by questioning standard depictions of these topics, promoting a more critical and informed public discourse.

These shows' transgression of genre norms, which pushes the limits of what is thought to be feasible in the crime drama genre, also contributes to their influence on culture more broadly. *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* have encouraged other television programs and filmmakers to play with genre norms, examine difficult moral dilemmas, and provide more accurate representations of crime and law enforcement as a result.¹¹⁴ Due to this impact, crime drama narrative has had a resurgence, with new shows continuing to push the boundaries and subvert audience expectations.

Furthermore, *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* both contributed to a rise in awareness and interest in the social issues covered in the series, demonstrating the effect of genre on viewer engagement and cultural understanding. For

¹¹¹ Majid Yar, 'Screening Crime: Cultural Criminology Goes to the Movies,' in *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image*, ed. Keith J. Hayward and Mike Presdee (Abingdon, UK: Routledge-Cavendish, 2010), 80–94.

¹¹² Majid Yar, 'Screening Crime: Cultural Criminology Goes to the Movies,' in *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image*, ed. Keith J. Hayward and Mike Presdee (Abingdon, UK: Routledge-Cavendish, 2010), 80–94.

¹¹³ Jonathon N. Anderson, *Genre and Audience Reception in The Rake's Progress* (PhD diss., University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2019).

¹¹⁴ John A. Bateman, 'Triangulating Transmediality: A Multimodal Semiotic Framework Relating Media, Modes, and Genres,' *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20(2017): 160–74.

instance, *The Wire* has received praise for examining systemic corruption and socioeconomic injustice in urban settings, while *Breaking Bad* has been credited with drawing attention to the methamphetamine crisis in the United States.¹¹⁵ These programmes have not only entertained viewers but have also increased public awareness of important social issues and sparked debates about them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has shown how genre norms have a big impact on how audiences interact with media and how we as a society perceive crime and law enforcement. The case studies of *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire* demonstrate how inventive and subtle application of genre principles may produce engrossing tales that defy established criminal drama clichés and promote greater viewer involvement. This study has advanced knowledge of how genre, media production, and audience engagement are related by analyzing the narrative and aesthetic elements of each series as well as audience reception studies. To get a deeper understanding of the function of genre in influencing audience expectations and interpretations across numerous media platforms, future studies may investigate how genre norms are applied and subverted in other media forms, such as cinema or literature. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate how shifting social and cultural settings could affect the development of genre norms and audience response. Understanding how these changes affect how audiences interact with and perceive media messages is vital as society continues to develop.

¹¹⁵ Anne Morey, *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the 'Twilight' Series* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

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2003: Hong Kong's Breaking Point

Helena Cunningham

ABSTRACT

This article examines the pivotal significance of the 2003 Hong Kong demonstration in shaping the region's distinct post-handover identity. It analyses how widespread societal grievances, proposed legal reforms, the SARS epidemic, and opposition to the enactment of Article 23 of the Basic Law coalesced to trigger an unprecedented mobilisation of public dissent. The protest not only exposed profound structural tensions between Hong Kong and Beijing but also inaugurated a new era of civil society activism, fundamentally reshaping the political landscape. In addition, the article assesses Britain's limited engagement in the post-handover period, highlighting the discrepancy between its moral and legal obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and its subsequent diplomatic posture. Ultimately, the 2003 demonstration represented the genesis of an enduring struggle for democratic expression in Hong Kong, with its legacy reverberating through the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 protests, and defining an evolving culture of resistance alongside a deepening distrust toward both mainland China and former colonial powers.

Keywords: Hong Kong, diplomacy, One Country Two Systems, Sino-British relations, British foreign policy, Beijing-Hong Kong relations

INTRODUCTION

Though the 2003 demonstration may not be as well-known as its 2014 or 2019 counterparts, it is as, if not more important, to understand this breaking point in Hong Kong society. It provides a perfect example of how Hong Kong adapted to the many societal changes that greeted it in a post-handover culture, cementing a separate Hong Kong identity that only grew under the guidance of 'One Country, Two Systems'. This can be seen in how several pivotal events that featured and sparked anti-integration, anti-hegemony, and pro-heritage claims, successfully mobilized all facets of society to join collective action.¹¹⁶ This was partly caused by a loosening of the 1967 Public Order Ordinance, which controlled public gatherings and processions and outlawed events involving more than three people without police permission. It became even more liberal in 1995 when the

Helena Cunningham is completing her PhD studies at Queen's University Belfast, specialising in Hong Kong's place in Sino-British relations between 1949 to present day. Correspondence should be sent to School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: hcunningham03@qub.ac.uk.

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¹¹⁶ Tai-Lok Lui, Stephen W.K. Chiu and Ray Yep, ed., *Routledge handbook of contemporary Hong Kong* (London: Routledge, 2018), 210.

United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights served as the model for the Bill of Rights ordinance. This was crucial in the development of the 2003 demonstration because it made it simpler for the public to plan and carry out large-scale protests, ultimately paving the way for the watershed moment.¹¹⁷

I. AN OVERVIEW OF 2003

Overall, the 2003 protest took root as the frustrations of the city reached a breaking point. Hong Kong residents took to the streets as a lack of official channels resulted in public action being viewed as the only viable way to advocate for change.¹¹⁸ This would result in a large-scale demonstration by 500,000 Hong Kong residents on July 1st to express their displeasure with the governance of the region.¹¹⁹ The movement garnered support from all spheres of society, the Christian denominations' support being essential for organizing such a large-scale protest and contributing to its unanticipated reach.¹²⁰ This demonstrated how deeply passionate all facets of Hong Kong society felt on the issue, the massive turnout not being deterred by the various measures the government attempted to use to discourage participation. Ten thousand complimentary passes to matinee films at theatres during the time the protest was planned were given out, it also being announced that all public swimming pools and museums would be free that day.¹²¹ However, a study based primarily on a random-sample survey conducted in June 2003 revealed that 73.5% of respondents indicated either dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction with the government's actions, indicating that such tactics could not undo the people's upset. What's even more telling is that in a July 2003 representative-sample survey, 75% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current government, indicating that Hong Kong's political system was going through a crisis of legitimacy.¹²²

In addition to this, it was no surprise that the epidemic heightened the tense atmosphere that pervaded Hong Kong society at the time, consequently strengthening support for the pro-democracy movement. In total, 299 people had died because of the SARS outbreak, provoking widespread criticism of the top health official

¹¹⁷ Marcelo Duhalde and Han Huang, 'History of Hong Kong protests: riots, rallies and brollies,' *South China Morning Post*, July 4, 2019, [History of Hong Kong protests: riots, rallies and brollies \(scmp.com\)](https://www.scmp.com/history/hong-kong-protests-riots-rallies-and-brollies).

¹¹⁸ Anthony Dapiran, *City of Protest: A recent History of Dissent in Hong Kong* (Australia: Penguin Random House Australia, 2017), 30.

¹¹⁹ Ming Sing, 'Public Support for Democracy in Hong Kong,' *Democratisation* 12, no. 2 (2005): 244, [Public support for democracy in hong kong: Democratization: Vol 12, No 2 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10439860500056888).

¹²⁰ Nancy Ng and Andreas Fulda, *The Religious Dimension of Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement*, *Journal of Church and State*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 388.

¹²¹ Keith Bradsher, 'Hundreds of Thousands in Hong Kong Protest Security Laws,' *The New York Times*, July 1, 2003, [Hundreds of Thousands in Hong Kong Protest Security Laws - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/01/asia/01hk.html).

¹²² Sing, 'Public Support for Democracy,' 244.

in charge. Such anger was only exacerbated by the chief executive's demand that the same principal official head an investigation team following the outbreak. This move furthered the perception that the Hong Kong government was unaccountable and insensitive to public sentiment, and it aroused widespread suspicions of a cover-up.¹²³ Even though the outbreak was contained in two months, the government had to deal with a society that had changed. It became evident that following the SARS outbreak, the people of Hong Kong were unable to contain their resentment towards the Tung administration, which resulted in significant public uproar.¹²⁴ This could be seen in how 45-year-old construction worker Paul Chan, who called Tung a traitor, felt compelled to join the protest despite never having attended one before, not even the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest, claiming, 'what he does is not good, and the Chinese government is losing face.'¹²⁵ In addition to this, Tung's effigy was carried through the streets during the demonstration to the sound of jeers by multiple individuals, as tensions continued to soar between the government and the public.¹²⁶

Such staunch backlash had never been anticipated by Beijing, and it became clear after their announcement in 2003 that the Hong Kong government would give national security law establishment top priority, that it was to become the first test of vulnerability the 'One Country, Two Systems' model would face.¹²⁷ Due to Article 23 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong was required to create a national security law of its own, outlawing treason, subversion, secession, and sedition against the Chinese government.¹²⁸ Such necessity was born from the fear that a recurrence of the events following 1989 would occur, resulting in the Chinese government's desire to possess more control over Hong Kong's political protests.¹²⁹ Consequently, following the announcement of the Tung administration's reappointment, it was declared that resolving the affair of Article 23 would be of utmost importance.¹³⁰ In an attempt to soothe any concerns, the Chief

¹²³ Sing, "Public Support for Democracy," 253.

¹²⁴ Stan Hok-Wui Wong, *Electoral Politics in Post-1997 Hong Kong: Protest, Patronage, and the Media* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2015), 66.

¹²⁵ Keith Bradsher, 'Hundreds of Thousands in Hong Kong Protest Security Laws,' *The New York Times*, July 1, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/01/international/asia/hundreds-of-thousands-in-hong-kong-protest-security-laws.html>.

¹²⁶ Keith Bradsher, 'Hundreds of Thousands in Hong Kong Protest Security Laws,' *The New York Times*, July 1, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/01/international/asia/hundreds-of-thousands-in-hong-kong-protest-security-laws.html>.

¹²⁷ Peter van Wingerden, 'The National Security Law, 'One Country Two Systems,' and Hong Kong's National Security Apparatus: The Coup De Grace to Hong Kong's Ideological Independence and Democratic Autonomy,' *The Yale Review of International Studies* (Spring 2022), <http://yris.yira.org/essays/5696>.

¹²⁸ The Foreign Secretary's report on Hong Kong, 'Six-Monthly Report on the Implementation of the Joint Declaration on Hong Kong, January-June 2003,' *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, 3-4, [874308 Cm5864 HongKong](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274308/Cm5864_HongKong.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk).

¹²⁹ Christine Loh, 'Hong Kong's Relations with China: The Future of 'One Country, Two Systems,' *Social Research* 73, no. 1 (2006): 296, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971821>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2022.

¹³⁰ Wingerden, 'The National Security Law'.

Executive was quoted as saying ‘I have full confidence that after the law is enacted, the public will find that their freedoms, including the freedom of speech, press, procession and assembly, and so on which they currently enjoy, will remain fully protected.’¹³¹ Indeed, the Hong Kong government claimed that the majority of the public supported the proposal when it submitted the first draft of the aforementioned legislation to the legislature in February 2003.

Independent academics, however, refuted this assertion, citing data from Hong Kong University’s Public Opinion Programme, which indicated that most people were opposed to the proposed national security laws.¹³² A second study, which was released by academics on May 26th, further refuted the government’s assertion that the proposal has the support of the public. Moreover, they stated that although the people agreed that Article 23, as required by the Basic Law, had to be put into effect, they disagreed with each of the specific recommendations included in the consultation document.¹³³ Among other things, this included ‘providing no public interest defence to protect press freedom in cases related to state secrets’ and ‘granting police power to enter private premises to search without a court warrant.’¹³⁴ The security secretary, Regina Ip, rejected the public’s request for additional time to review the draft bill and instead scheduled the final debate and passage for July 9th. This was due to the false belief that the legislature could disregard popular demands for more time and amendments simply because it had a pro-government majority.¹³⁵ In addition, the ambiguity of Article 23 was another significant issue that further heightened public concern. This was due to the bill making no clear definition of what exactly qualifies as treason, subversion, sedition, or secession; instead, it was delegated to the Hong Kong government to define and punish such offenses.¹³⁶

II. THE LEGACY OF 2003

Thus, the 2003 demonstration turned out to be a turning point in Hong Kong’s history. In the years that followed, Hong Kong CSO activism increased as they attempted to be involved in the policy-making process, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of recorded ‘public order events,’ which went from 1,975 in 2004 to 6,029 in 2015. It appeared that the 2003 protest was a watershed moment for Hong Kong

¹³¹ The Foreign Secretary, ‘Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong, January-June 2003,’ 5.

¹³² Wingerden, ‘The National Security Law’.

¹³³ The Foreign Secretary, ‘Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong, January-June 2003,’ 5.

¹³⁴ Wingerden, ‘The National Security Law’.

¹³⁵ Loh, ‘Hong Kong’s Relations with China,’ 297.

¹³⁶ Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Gilles Guiheux, ed., *Social movements in China and Hong Kong: the expansion of protest space* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 83-84.

residents in realizing that, in the wake of the handover, public demonstration was the most effective way to express their political beliefs.¹³⁷ It is not surprising that the pro-Beijing media bemoaned the growing phenomenon and referred to Hong Kong as ‘the capital of protest,’ indicating that the conservative population of the city was unhappy with the regular demonstrations.¹³⁸ Indeed, Ambrose Lee Siu-kwong, the Secretary for Security, criticized young activists for their increasing inclination toward street politics and for ‘seriously undermining’ the rule of law.¹³⁹ In fact, since 2003, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of young people participating in these types of protests. This was due to widespread internet usage which facilitated political discourse and decreased the expense of planning such large-scale demonstrations. As a result, street politics came to be seen by youth activism as the most effective means of opposing what many saw as an authoritarian government.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, following the July 1st demonstration, Beijing would demonstrate a fresh level of interest in issues pertaining to the territory.

However, despite this, Chinese officials did not completely realize the magnitude of the shift in Hong Kong society brought about by the 2003 protest. Beijing therefore initially focused on finding an economic solution to the upheaval, thinking that everything would work itself out if they made sure Hong Kong's economy bounced back. Thus, the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was accelerated at the end of June 2003 because of this economic viewpoint on Hong Kong's frustrations. The Chinese government saw CEPA as a boon for Hong Kong that would arrive just in time to quell the public's growing anti-Tung fervour.¹⁴¹ Regretfully, although the main complaints of the July 1st demonstration were economic hardship and rising unemployment, Beijing failed to see the bigger picture. Thus, contrary to Beijing's expectations, the democratic spirit of the city grew even stronger after July 1st, with calls for reform continuing as Hong Kongers grew more and more disenchanted with China's economic determinism argument.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Dapiran, *City of Protest*, 30.

¹³⁸ Joseph Yu-shek Cheng, ‘The Emergence of Radical Politics in Hong Kong: Causes and Impact,’ *China Review* 14:1 (2014): 217, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23723007>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2024.

¹³⁹ Joseph Yu-shek Cheng, ‘The Emergence of Radical Politics in Hong Kong: Causes and Impact,’ *China Review* 14:1 (2014): 217, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23723007>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2024.

¹⁴⁰ Vitrierat Ng and Kin-man Chan, ‘Emotion Politics: Joyous Resistance in Hong Kong,’ *China Review* 17:1 (2017): 85, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44160410>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2024.

¹⁴¹ Zheng Yongnian and Tok Sow Keat, ‘Beijing Responds to Hong Kong's Democratization Movement: From Bureaucratic Control to Political Leadership,’ *Asian Affairs* 33: 4 (2007): 243, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172656>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2024.

¹⁴² Zheng Yongnian and Tok Sow Keat, ‘Beijing Responds to Hong Kong's Democratization Movement: From Bureaucratic Control to Political Leadership,’ *Asian Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2007): 243, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172656>. Accessed 8 Jun. 2024, 243-244.

Indeed, the Chinese government would come to see just how much they had underestimated the effects of the protest. In the aftermath, many of the Hong Kong public were convinced that the large-scale march was a successful means of achieving political objectives due to the national security legislation being later withdrawn and prominent government figures resigned.¹⁴³ If anything, its triumph gave Hong Kong society a fresh boost of determination; four representative-sample surveys carried out between March 2003 and January 2004 revealed that between 70 and 80 percent of Hong Kong residents desired complete democracy by 2008.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, the incident increased public mistrust of the Hong Kong government, political trust hitting a record low not seen since the handover of 19.4% in October 2003. Such distrust would lead to an unprecedented turnout for the municipal elections in November 2003, leading to the pro-democracy camp's resounding victory, and the subsequent remarkable pro-democracy demonstration that would follow the year after on July 1st, 2004. These events amply demonstrated how Hong Kong's populace desired a democratic future for the region, and their willingness to employ collective action to achieve such ambitions.¹⁴⁵

III. BEIJING'S RESPONSE

Beijing made some major changes in response to these developments as fear became increasingly instilled in the Chinese government over the potential of the Hong Kong people. First, they increased the People's Liberation Army and Liaison Office's capacity and presence in Hong Kong. After that, Beijing formed the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Work Coordination Group, which provided the way for the Chinese government to give up on its 'non-interventionist' strategy for handling Hong Kong's legislative and political issues. The fact that Beijing intervened in Hong Kong's political development because of these actions resulted in a hastening of Tung's retirement. When comparing Macao's return to China with Hong Kong, Chinese President Hu Jintao stated in a meeting held in Macau in December 2004 that 'the officials must turn back and look over the past seven years and find out what has gone wrong.'¹⁴⁶ Given that Beijing saw Tung as a political liability, he would ultimately resign in March 2005 citing poor health.¹⁴⁷ Since then,

¹⁴³ Ng and Chan, 'Emotion Politics,' 109.

¹⁴⁴ Sing, 'Public Support for Democracy,' 244.

¹⁴⁵ Sing, 'Public Support for Democracy,' 257.

¹⁴⁶ Peter van Wingerden, 'The National Security Law, 'One Country Two Systems,' and Hong Kong's National Security Apparatus: The Coup De Grace to Hong Kong's Ideological Independence and Democratic Autonomy,' *Keck Summer Fellowship*, 2022, 12.

¹⁴⁷ Peter van Wingerden, 'The National Security Law, 'One Country Two Systems,' and Hong Kong's National Security Apparatus: The Coup De Grace to Hong Kong's Ideological Independence and Democratic Autonomy,' *Keck Summer Fellowship*, 2022, 18.

and until recently, July 1st has become an annual occasion for the people of Hong Kong to express their discontent and make demands for greater democracy, among other political causes, with large-scale protests held on the anniversary of the handover. In essence, it has evolved into a tradition.¹⁴⁸

The yearly demonstration's core principles are still anti-Hong Kong government sentiments and democratic demands, but it now covers a wider range of political and social issues. All things considered, the July 1st, 2003 protest signalled a significant turning point in Hong Kong's protest culture and the beginning of a wave of political dissent that would only deepen the divide between Hong Kong and mainland China.¹⁴⁹ This could be seen in how the Chinese government viewed such a tradition as a sign of disloyalty and 'that Hong Kong people's hearts haven't returned to the motherland.'¹⁵⁰ Indeed, except for the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre protest, the majority of protests held before 2003 were small-scale, with attendance only amounting to a few hundred. Due to its effectiveness and large turnout of 500,000 people, the 2003 protest was a turning point that inspired more people who would not have otherwise joined such movements to participate in future protests.¹⁵¹

Beijing would take note of this, and as a result, China's top decision-makers were once again given authority to decide on matters pertaining to the city, replacing its bureaucracy.¹⁵² It became evident to the Chinese government that a more intimate approach to handling the region was needed. Beijing would therefore start implementing a new plan for Hong Kong. This new strategy would emphasise several topics, including the constitutional authority of the central government and its guiding of Hong Kong's political reform. It also highlighted how the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region had a duty to promote national education and patriotism, as well as the adoption of a pragmatic approach to dealing with the pro-democracy forces over constitutional reform.¹⁵³ However, contrary to China's hopes that such constraints would help restrain the democratic movement, the rate of successful riots and protests organized by the people of Hong Kong remained equal to those that failed. This proved that the effects of the 2003

¹⁴⁸ Duhalde and Huang 'History of Hong Kong protests: riots, rallies and brollies'.

¹⁴⁹ Dapiran, *City of Protest*, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Wingerden, 'The National Security Law'.

¹⁵¹ Ng and Chan, 'Emotion Politics,' 92.

¹⁵² Yongnian and Keat, 'Beijing Responds,' 236.

¹⁵³ Brian C.H. Fong and Tai-Lok Lui, ed., *Hong Kong 20 years after the handover: emerging social and institutional fractures after 1997* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 256.

demonstration could not be contained, even with tighter control. As a result, the people of Hong Kong became even more vocal in their demands for democracy and freedom of speech.¹⁵⁴

Overall, the Democrats would remain more disposed to perpetuating their ideas and beliefs on the populace as the territory's politics developed after 2003, the hope for democracy in the face of rejection only growing stronger as time passed.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the rise in Hong Kong emigration was indicative of as much. The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies conducted a telephone survey from December 11th to December 17th, 2018, to collect information on the subject. They conducted successful interviews with 708 respondents, of whom 33% stated they would emigrate if given the opportunity, with 16% having prepared to do so in advance. 'Too much political dispute / social cleavage' (25.7%), 'overcrowded living conditions' (25.7%), and 'dissatisfied with the political institutions' (17.4%) were the top three reasons cited by respondents for wanting to leave.¹⁵⁶ It was obvious that Hong Kong's political situation would not go away quietly. Rather, it would continue to be a source of conflict between the city and its future with the mainland for many years, despite Beijing's best efforts to prove otherwise.

IV: WHERE DOES BRITAIN FIT?

Examining the aftermath of the 2003 protest, it is evident that tensions between China and Hong Kong were rising, a direct result of the Chinese government seriously underestimating the regions desire for democratic rule. However, since Britain is no longer as involved in the region as it was prior to 1997, how does it fit into this relationship? According to various reports and accounts, the nation's answer was to simply not. When Britain's involvement in Hong Kong came to an end, many criticized the 1984 Joint Declaration for not giving the people of Hong Kong enough control over their own future. In fact, the expression 'Britain had sold Hong Kong down the river' gained popularity after 1989.¹⁵⁷ This disregard for accountability has continued into Britain's relationship with Hong Kong following the handover, as it ignores the ongoing unrest and demonstrations. Whether it likes it or not, Britain, as the former colonial leader of Hong Kong, has legal and moral responsibilities to the city. The moral obligations originate from the fact that Hong Kong was returned to China in its entirety by Britain in 1997. This return of land also meant the return of its people who had

¹⁵⁴ Duhalde and Huang 'History of Hong Kong protests: riots, rallies and brollies,'.

¹⁵⁵ Yongnian and Keat, 'Beijing Responds,' 243.

¹⁵⁶ Communications and Public Relations Office 'Survey Findings on Views on Emigration from Hong Kong Released by Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at CUHK.' CUHK News Centre, October 6, 2020, <https://www.cpr.cuhk.edu.hk/en/press/survey-findings-on-views-about-emigration-from-hong-kong-released-by-the-hong-kong-institute-of-asia-pacific-studies-at-cuhk/>.

¹⁵⁷ Dapiran, *City of Protest*, 22.

become subjects of the Queen and thereby were under Britain's jurisdiction. In fact, a number of these individuals were refugees who had risked everything to come to live in Hong Kong and leave Communist China behind. This placed a special responsibility on Britain to support democracy in the region, or at the very least, the rights of the people who call it home.¹⁵⁸ With regards to legal responsibilities, those stemmed from the fact that the United Kingdom is one of the two signatories of the Joint Declaration, an international agreement registered at the United Nations that guarantees human rights, freedom of expression, and that the rule of law in Hong Kong will all remain unchanged until 2047 under the concept of 'One Country, Two Systems.'¹⁵⁹

However, it would be inaccurate to state that Britain has said nothing at all about Hong Kong's predicament; rather, it has only re-entered the story to refute China's assertions. Having a dedicated page to counter claims made by Chinese media about the British Government's stance towards Hong Kong, the UK Government's website maintains a precarious balance between wanting to support the territory and not draw the ire of Beijing. This includes assertions such as that Britain supports Hong Kong's desire for self-determination, an allegation that was immediately denied as the UK government stated that, in accordance with the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework, Hong Kong is a part of China.¹⁶⁰ The assertion originated from the Chinese newspaper *The Paper*, which discussed the controversial topic of the British governments offer to permit Hong Kong citizens who possessed British passports to relocate permanently to the UK, as a result of China's increasing influence in the city.¹⁶¹ The article stated that 'British politicians are keen on the words of 'human rights' and 'freedom' and direct themselves to play the drama of 'political asylum', which is nothing more than to package themselves as 'saviours'...'¹⁶² Unsurprisingly, Britain and China's relationship remained one of backhanded comments and finger pointing; characterized by a never-ending dispute over who is responsible for what in terms of Hong Kong's future.

Such contentiousness was only heightened by Britain's need to take somewhat of a stance against Beijing to maintain this precarious balance, one instance being the *China News Agency's* claim that the Sino-British Joint

¹⁵⁸ Milia Hau, 'Britain Failed Hong Kong,' *Foreign Policy*, June 12, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/12/britain-failed-hong-kong/>.

¹⁵⁹ Milia Hau, 'Britain Failed Hong Kong,' *Foreign Policy*, June 12, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/12/britain-failed-hong-kong/>.

¹⁶⁰ British Embassy Beijing 'UK and Hong Kong: refuting disinformation,' GOV.UK, June 23, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hong-kong-hong-kong-myth-busting-article>.

¹⁶¹ Established on July 22nd, 2014, *The Paper* has, as of June 2022, 200 million download users on their news app, more than 30 million Weibo fans, more than 3 million WeChat public account users, 437 million daily users across their entire network, and an English language sister publication called 'Sixth Tone' which was published in 2016. It is a pro-Chinese Communist Party online newspaper that speaks on topics such as China's current politics, finance, culture and thought, receiving approximately \$14,500,000 in funding from the Cyberspace Administration of China.

¹⁶² Liu Siqi, 'Britain opens its doors to welcome 'Hong Kong independence'? Leung's response lit up,' *The Paper*, June 6, 2020, [Britain opens its doors to welcome "Hong Kong independence"? Leung's response lit up with The Paper](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetailDefault.do?categoryId=41&contentId=1312444).

Declaration had become irrelevant. The article stated that ‘The (Chinese) Foreign Office stressed that the Sino-British Joint Declaration did not give Britain the right to assume any responsibility for Hong Kong and intervene in Hong Kong's affairs after Hong Kong's return to the motherland. The British side has no sovereignty, no right of governance or no right of supervision over Hong Kong after the reversion.’¹⁶³ In response, the British government declared that the Sino-British Joint Declaration remained a legally binding international agreement. It was unwaveringly declared that no changes to these matters should be made before 2047 as promised, the agreement guaranteeing Hong Kong's right to a high degree of autonomy, rights, and freedoms for that period.¹⁶⁴ This shows that Britain can defend its ongoing obligations to Hong Kong. Still, regrettably, many Hong Kong residents remained dissatisfied with the lack of concrete steps from the UK to accompany such statements. Indeed, Britain made its stance clear in the Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, ‘For our part, we can only restate what we said in earlier evidence to the Committee. We hope that Hong Kong will move as rapidly as possible towards the goal of universal suffrage provided for in the Basic Law.’¹⁶⁵ In other words, the Hong Kong people could and should expect no physical intervention from Britain in their future.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the 2003 demonstration was one of extreme importance to the development of Hong Kong as a society that relied on public action to facilitate substantial change. It highlighted the divide that existed between the region and Beijing in terms of ideology and culture and how there was a true disconnect between the wants of the city's people and that which the Chinese government felt was in their best interest. Though unknown at the time, this event was to be only the beginning of Hong Kong's struggle to adapt to the ‘One country, Two systems’ model, its culture and society continuously being caught between East and West. This would eventually lead to the 2014 Yellow Umbrella Movement and the more violent 2019 protests as collective action became more popularised as the only way for the Hong Kong people to have their voices heard. Without the precedence set by the 2003 demonstration, such developments would not have transpired in Hong Kong society and the position of China and Britain on the developments in Hong Kong would not have been cemented so early on. For China, it was that the city could expect more interventions from Beijing, and for Britain, it was that they could expect nothing at all. As a result, the Hong Kong people were left with a feeling of abandonment

¹⁶³ Huang Yuhan, ‘Foreign Ministry: The Chinese government's legal basis for governing Hong Kong has nothing to do with the Sino-British Joint Declaration,’ *China News Agency*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2020/06-10/9208845.shtml>.

¹⁶⁴ British Embassy Beijing, ‘Refuting Disinformation.’

¹⁶⁵ *Third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee. Hong Kong. Further response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, 4, [Cm 4331], H.C. 1998-9, 4.

come the end of 2003. The demonstration had been successful but only due to their own efforts, Hong Kong looking out upon the faint afterglow of a long-gone imperial sunset, one that would never rise on the city again.

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The Forgotten People: China's Mentally Ill

Ni Yang

ABSTRACT

This article analyses Lü Nan's series of photographic works, *The Forgotten People*, through the lens of the history of psychiatry and mental health stigma in China during the post-1949 period to the early twenty-first century. It explores how Lü's humanizing approach challenges public perception of patients with psychiatric conditions and how they are portrayed with dignity and empathy amidst systemic marginalization and neglect. Against the backdrop of China's shifting political, social and medical landscapes at the time, subject to rapid transformations, this article argues that Lü's work was groundbreaking and continues to highlight the intersection of stigma, violence and isolation, offering a powerful critique of societal attitudes. His photography reaffirms the humanity of these 'forgotten people' and through a compassionate lens, he calls for a deeper, more compassionate insight into mental illness and a greater understanding of human rights issues for the mentally ill. Lü Nan's photography calls for a critical rethinking of cultural perceptions, social responsibility, and the meaning of dignity within Chinese society.

Keywords: Lü Nan, Chinese psychiatry, mental health stigma, documentary photography, cultural history

INTRODUCTION

The history of psychiatry has been described by Edward Shorter as 'a minefield'.¹⁶⁶ In China, the history of psychiatry stretches back thousands of years, with mental illness historically viewed as a manifestation of both physical and spiritual imbalances. Treatment often involved a combination of traditional therapies, such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, and religious rituals. The collective social mindset placed strong emphasis on an individual's responsibility for their actions, including that of the mentally ill, who were expected to be accountable for their behaviour. The body was regarded as a vessel of moral principles, embodying a space for

Ni Yang is currently pursuing their PhD at Queen's University, Belfast specializing in the history of Modern Photography in China. Correspondence should be sent to School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: yn01@qub.ac.uk. © 2025 Ni Yang. *This publication and its contents are protected under UK law by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, as amended, and applicable international treaties.*

¹⁶⁶ Edward. Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: Wiley, 1997), ix.

the practice of ethical behaviour and societal norms. As Li Yaming notes, ‘a mind that failed to control the body's actions effectively was still considered a moral failure.’¹⁶⁷

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the new government made the construction of public health and medical systems a top priority in national reconstruction. In August 1950, the PRC government established four guiding principles for healthcare at the First National Health Conference:

- 1. Healthcare workers should serve the broad masses, such as workers, peasants, and soldiers.**
- 2. The primary focus should be on prevention.**
- 3. Traditional Chinese and Western medicine should be closely integrated.**
- 4. Health work must be integrated into mass movements.**¹⁶⁸

Mental health, as an integral part of public health, gradually began to gain attention in national policies. However, political movements continued to in 1958, during the ‘Great Leap Forward’ campaign, discussions at the First National Conference of Psychiatric Specialists in Nanjing ultimately concluded with an agreement to abandon Western-style medical treatment, which was seen as a form of individualism. Mental health treatment shifted focus towards political education.¹⁶⁹ During the Cultural Revolution, mental illness was imbued with a different political significance. The label of mental illness became synonymous with incorrect political thinking and a lack of enthusiasm for the communist agenda, making it a potentially dangerous designation for anyone.¹⁷⁰

After the Four Modernisations under Deng Xiaoping from 1977, China's gradual reintegration with the international community and rapid industrial and technological advances spurred economic growth at an unprecedented rate. Alongside this rapid development, sweeping social changes heightened ‘psychological pressure and stress’,¹⁷¹ creating new needs for mental healthcare to meet. Market reforms such as the

¹⁶⁷ Li Yaming 李亚明, ‘“Tianren heyi” yu zhongguo gudai de jingshen jibingguan’ ‘天人合一’与中国古代的精神疾病观, ‘Universe and Human in One’ and the View of Mental Illness in Ancient China’, *Medicine and Philosophy*, 9 (2013): 33.

¹⁶⁸ Sophia M.R. Leung, Milton H. Miller, and S. Wah Leung, ‘Chinese Approach to Mental Health Service’, *Canadian Psfychiatric Association Journal* 23: 6 (1 October 1978): 358.

¹⁶⁹ Kam-Shing Yip, ‘An Historical Review of the Mental Health Services in the People's Republic of China’, *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 51, no. 2 (2005): 108.

¹⁷⁰ A. Kleinman and P.A. Kleinman, *Social Origins of Distress and Disease: Depression, Neurasthenia, and Pain in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 161.

¹⁷¹ Huang Yueqin et al., ‘Prevalence of Mental Disorders in China: A Cross-Sectional Epidemiological Study’, *The Lancet. Psychiatry* 6:3 (2019): 222.

decollectivisation, privatisation, and marketisation of institutions fostered the rise of what Kleinman *et al.* call ‘a new moral person who is both more autonomous and unstintingly affirmative of his or her personal happiness’.¹⁷²

Simultaneously, the photography world saw a growing interest in marginalised communities. Reacting against the highly ideological nature of previous photography, photographers worked to free the medium from its narrow role in serving state propaganda and political interests. Instead, they aimed to return photography to a more personal and experiential practice, allowing photographers to focus on these groups with a professional rationale.¹⁷³ In this context, Lü Nan used his *The Forgotten People: The Condition of China’s Psychiatric Patients* to raise critical questions: Is the suffering of those facing mental health challenges truly understood and adequately cared for by society? Do their struggles reflect deeper societal and structural problems? Has society provided enough support and resources for mental health patients? By documenting these individuals in their everyday realities, Lü Nan directly confronted the marginalisation of mental health patients within the social fabric, exploring society’s attitudes and responses, and exposing the complexity and profound implications of these issues.

I. LÜ NAN (1962-)

Lü Nan, born in Beijing in 1962, graduated from the Department of Journalism at Beijing Television University (now Open University of China). Through an introduction by a neighbour who was a magazine photographer, Lü joined *Nationalities Pictorial* 民族画报 in 1986, working for five years as a darkroom technician.¹⁷⁴ *Nationalities Pictorial* first launched in February 1955 under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. It serves as an essential medium for ethnic and united front work,¹⁷⁵ with a mission to ‘influence, indoctrinate, and mobilize non-CCP persons and organizations to serve the Party’s objectives.’¹⁷⁶ It employs strategies domestically to win over ‘citizens that are not Party members; members of non-communist parties; intelligentsia outside of the CCP; ethnic minorities; [and] religious groups’.¹⁷⁷ However, Lü Nan showed little interest in this job, often arriving

¹⁷² Arthur Kleinman, Jing Jun, Sing Lee, and Yunxiang Yan. *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 11.

¹⁷³ ‘Liu Shuyong: What Can Photography Change?’, *Douban*, 5 Aug 2008, https://www.douban.com/group/topic/3141664/?_i=7316104c2ufH8h.

¹⁷⁴ ‘“Suffering, Purification and Peace of Heart” - Lü Nan’s Trilogy’, *Magnum Photos*, accessed 3 Oct. 2024, <https://www.magnumphotos.com/arts-culture/society-arts-culture/lu-nans-trilogy/>

¹⁷⁵ Li Xin 李欣 *et al.*, ‘Visual Representation: A Study of the *Nationalities Pictorial*’: 30.

¹⁷⁶ Russell Hsiao, ‘A Preliminary Survey of CCP Influence Operations in Japan’, *China Brief* 19:12 (June 2019): 2.

¹⁷⁷ Toshi Yoshihara, ‘Evaluating the Logic and Methods of China’s United Front Work’, *Orbis* 64: 2 (1 January 2020): 233.

at work late after sleeping in. Although he accepted his superiors' criticisms without resistance, his behaviour did not change, as he was already preparing to become an independent photographer.¹⁷⁸

Mental health issues had long been overlooked in China's health and development policies, as discussed above, whereas the burden of physical illness was much more extensively documented.¹⁷⁹ From 1989 to 1990, driven by curiosity about the lives of the mentally ill and in consideration of 'some kind of social function'.¹⁸⁰ Lü Nan embarked on his project. He worked closely with 14,000 people suffering from various mental disorders in 38 hospitals across 10 provinces and cities in China. In his effort to provide a thorough and comprehensive portrayal of the living conditions of the mentally ill, Lü extended his work beyond hospitals, photographing in private homes and even among the homeless.

Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography* states of Diane Arbus's photographs of 'monsters and borderline cases' that 'though most viewers are ready to imagine that these people...are unhappy, few of the pictures actually show emotional distress...but, rather, their detachment and autonomy'.¹⁸¹ Lü Nan shared a similar view, explaining in 2008: 'I regard them as people. For me, there is no difference between rich and poor, no classes or social divisions. First and foremost, they are 'people'. In any given environment, I focus on what it means to be human, and whether every gesture can reflect their mental state... my emphasis is always on the person'.¹⁸²

Guided by this perspective, Lü Nan aimed to capture the profound humanity and dignity of each individual in his photographic work. As Peter Barritt has observed, 'compassion is at the very core of humanity in medicine',¹⁸³ Lü Nan similarly approached his subjects with deep empathy and respect, viewing them as emotional individuals with their own stories, rather than simply as cases. Through his lens, each gesture and expression of the psychiatric patients offered a subtle reflection of their inner world, with each scene portraying their story as 'people', not merely 'patients', thereby affirming their dignity within the social framework. This perspective, rare in the medical and social environments of the time, afforded psychiatric patients a level of respect and understanding that was seldom seen. On a broader societal level, misunderstandings and negative labels surrounding psychiatric patients within traditional Chinese culture often subjected both them and their

¹⁷⁸ 'Interview with Lü Nan: 'I wish my works could outlive me'' - *The Bund*, Guangdong Museum of Art, 9 Apr. 2008, https://www.gdmoa.org/Exhibition/Exhibitions/2008/xgwd_2008/200804/t20080409_6949.shtml.

¹⁷⁹ Pengcheng Liu et al., 'How to Deal with Burden of Critical Illness: A Comparison of Strategies in Different Areas of China', *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences* 30:3 (2014): 659.

¹⁸⁰ 'Lü Nan', *Aperture* (Winter 1993): 12-17,.

¹⁸¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 38.

¹⁸² 'I Am Lonely, But Not Alone - Lü Nan's Interview with *Southern Weekly*', Guangdong Museum of Art, 20 March 2008, https://www.gdmoa.org/Exhibition/Exhibitions/2008/xgwd_2008/200803/t20080320_6948.shtml.

¹⁸³ Peter Barritt, *Humanity in Healthcare: The Heart and Soul of Medicine*, First edition. (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor and Francis, an imprint of CRC Press, 2017): 202.

families to social exclusion and discrimination.¹⁸⁴ Lü Nan's photography takes on a challenging role in such a context; his images dismantle prejudices and labels, seeking to shift societal perceptions of psychiatric patients. By adopting a more human-centred perspective, he encourages a deeper, more empathetic understanding of this group.

II. STIGMA AND VIOLENCE

The stigma of mental illness is widespread across cultures and societies,¹⁸⁵ with family and employment environments being two of the main sources of negative attitudes.¹⁸⁶ In numerous societies, mental health patients often avoid disclosing their conditions due to the fear of discrimination and may refrain from seeking professional assistance. Such stigma pressures patients into missing early-stage treatment and rehabilitation opportunities, leading to further deterioration of their conditions. In Asia in this period, these effects were particularly acute, with a 1982 study finding an average delay of 1,078 days between recognising initial symptoms and seeking help from mental health professionals—compared to just 324 days for Western patients.¹⁸⁷ This bias impacted patients' health choices and significantly hindered family acceptance and social support networks. In China, mental healthcare faced complex challenges. Society generally regarded psychiatric patients as individuals to be managed and controlled, rather than as autonomous individuals with needs and dignity.¹⁸⁸ Patients and their families frequently endured considerable social pressure, fearing ostracisation due to the 'family stigma'.¹⁸⁹ This traditional perspective on mental illness often isolated patients from broader society, depriving them of equitable access to education, employment, and healthcare services. Violent behaviour exhibited by psychiatric patients is a significant factor contributing to their stigma and discrimination, with direct caregivers—including nurses, doctors, and family members—often being the main targets.¹⁹⁰ A 2015 study in Europe and North America found that between 75% and 100% of psychiatric nurses

¹⁸⁴ Liu J. et al., 'Perceptions of Public Attitudes towards Persons with Mental Illness in Beijing, China: Results from a Representative Survey', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 51, no. 3 (1 March 2016): 446.

¹⁸⁵ Yuzhu Hao et al., 'Stigmatizing Attitudes toward Mental Illness among Caregivers of Patients with Mental Disorders in China', *Frontiers in Public Health* 11 (2023): 02.

¹⁸⁶ Antonio Lasalvia et al., 'Global Pattern of Experienced and Anticipated Discrimination Reported by People with Major Depressive Disorder: A Cross-Sectional Survey', *The Lancet* 381:9860 (5 January 2013): 59.

¹⁸⁷ Keh-Ming Lin et al., 'Sociocultural Determinants of the Help-Seeking Behavior of Patients with Mental Illness', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 170: 2 (1982), 84.

¹⁸⁸ Fang Yang et al., 'Stigma towards Depression in a Community-Based Sample in China', *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 97 (1 February 2020)

Debbie Huang, Lawrence H. Yang, and Bernice A. Pescosolido, 'Understanding the Public's Profile of Mental Health Literacy in China: A Nationwide Study', *BMC Psychiatry* 19:1 (14 January 2019): 6.

¹⁹⁰ Lu Wang et al., 'Violence against Primary Caregivers of People with Severe Mental Illness and Their Knowledge and Attitudes towards Violence: A Cross-Sectional Study in China', *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 33:6 (1 December 2019):

experience patient aggression at some point in their careers. Furthermore, 28% of patients display violent behaviour prior to admission, while 31% continue to exhibit violent tendencies following discharge.¹⁹¹ Public fear and prejudice towards psychiatric patients frequently arise from concerns over potential violence. Violent behaviour among psychiatric patients is complex, with causes that can include worsening symptoms, emotional instability, and communication challenges. These actions are seldom intentional; rather, they are often beyond the patient's control, a by-product of their condition. Nonetheless, such incidents heighten societal fears, casting psychiatric patients as 'dangerous' or 'unpredictable', thus deepening their stigma and discrimination.

In rural China, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, most individuals with mental disorders (over 90%) lived with their families, who typically served as their main caregivers.¹⁹² Limited medical resources, social stigma, and financial barriers in these areas created significant obstacles to adequate care and treatment for psychiatric patients. A Chinese study from 2001 looking at schizophrenia indicated that financial hardship was the primary reason why 35.3% of these patients remained untreated, suggesting that medical costs exceeded what their families could afford. Additionally, 29.5% of patients received no treatment because their relatives did not acknowledge the presence of mental illness.¹⁹³

This underscores the limited understanding of mental health issues and common misconceptions surrounding mental disorders in rural communities at the turn of the twenty-first century. In these areas, individuals with mental illness were frequently seen as a "family issue" rather than as patients in need of specialised medical care. Such views prevented many from receiving timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment, often leading to deterioration in their condition. Furthermore, the lack of scientific awareness about mental illness meant that family members often overlooked or misinterpreted symptoms, viewing them as 'personality flaws' or 'domestic conflicts. This neglect not only delayed necessary treatment but also severely impacted patients' mental and emotional well-being, heightening their sense of isolation and helplessness.

¹⁹¹ Laura Iozzino et al., 'Prevalence and Risk Factors of Violence by Psychiatric Acute Inpatients: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis', *PloS One* 10: 6 (2015): 2.

¹⁹² Ran Mao-Sheng et al., 'Family Caregivers and Outcome of People with Schizophrenia in Rural China: 14-Year Follow-up Study', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 51: 4 (1 April 2016): 513.

¹⁹³ Ran Mao-Sheng et al., 'Natural Course of Schizophrenia: 2-Year Follow-up Study in a Rural Chinese Community', *British Journal of Psychiatry* 178: 2 (2001): 155.

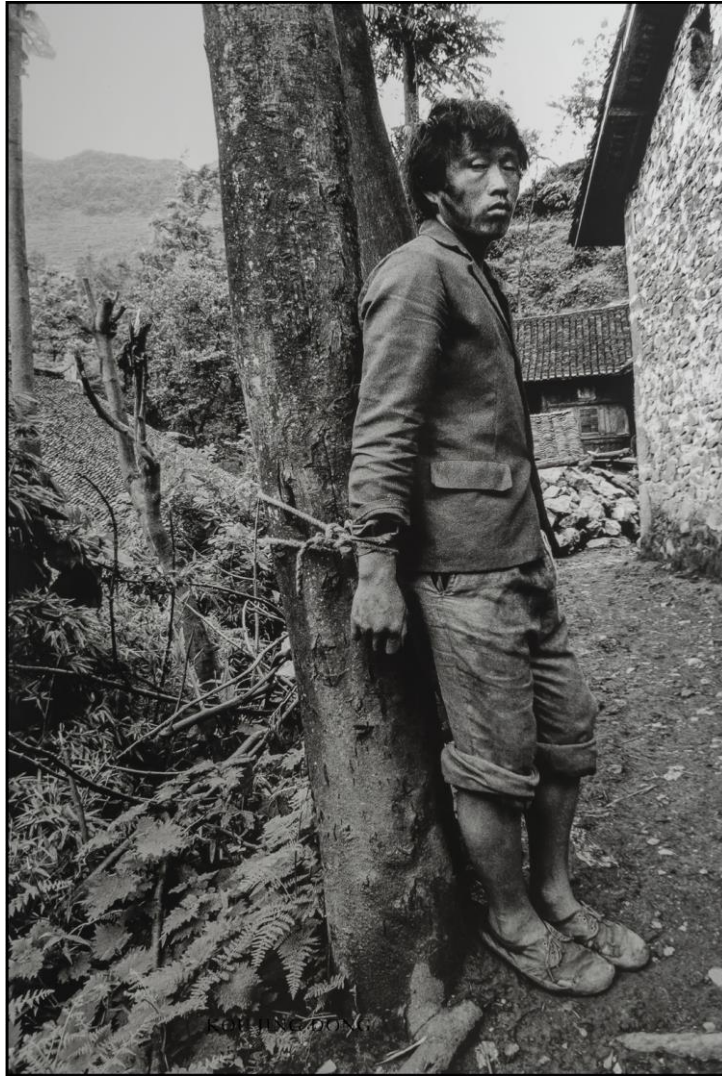


Figure 1: Lü Nan, *Wang Mingcai*, aged 28, has struggled with his illness for five years, during which his family admitted him to a hospital for treatment once. Due to his violent tendencies, his family ties him to a tree during the day and to his bed at night. This practice has continued for the last two years (Guizhou, 1990, in his *Bei yiwang de ren* 被遗忘的人 [*The Forgotten People*].)

In the foreground of the image, Wang Mingcai is positioned near the right, with the direction and placement of the tree trunk guiding the viewer's attention toward his body and the rope binding him to the tree. The vertical lines of the trunk add a sense of depth to the composition, symbolising both confinement and restriction—the tree trunk itself has become a tool of his restraint. The natural environment in the background starkly contrasts with his predicament, suggesting that despite being surrounded by nature, his life is filled with limitations and restrictions. Light plays a critical role in this photograph, illuminating Wang's face and upper body while creating expressive textures and shadows on the tree trunk and his clothing.

Wang Mingcai's posture and gaze are at the heart of the photograph's emotional impact. He stands with a fatigued stance, his left leg bent and his body leaning against the tree. His gaze conveys hostility and despair, suggesting an apparent animosity toward the photographer. However, his relaxed right hand, not clenched into a fist, indicates that he does not intend to attack. The subtle droop in his eyes and his furrowed brows reflect the fatigue brought on by prolonged mental strain and physical confinement. This expression reveals the burden he endures due to his ongoing mental suffering and the family and societal approaches to managing his condition.

This photograph reveals the societal attitudes and practices surrounding mental illness, particularly in a resource-limited environment. Wang Mingcai's method of 'treatment'—being tied to a tree during the day and to a bed at night—demonstrates a severe disregard for his basic human rights, yet it also appears as his family's final resort. This powerful image highlights the complexity of caring for individuals with mental illness in a society where understanding and resources are limited, casting light on the tension between care and control.



Figure 2 : Lü Nan, *Tao Shimao*, aged 22, is the only university student from his village. During a winter break, he suffered his first mental health crisis, tragically killing his mother and injuring his father (left). In great fear, his family confined him to a stone house. His meals are brought daily by his 85-year-old grandmother (right), who, despite everything, remains the one who cares for him most deeply, (Sichuan, 1990), in his *Bei yiwang de ren* 被遗忘的人, [*The Forgotten People*].

Brendan Kelly argues that ‘the historical experiences of the mentally ill, however, repeatedly highlight the need for pro-active consideration of protections for their human rights and dignity’.¹⁹⁴ In some impoverished areas, balancing human rights with safety often proves challenging, forcing families to adopt extreme measures to protect their members. In this photograph, the stone house, more accurately described as a stone prison, becomes a barrier between the family and Tao Shima, symbolising both the fear of his condition and the helpless isolation it entails. The house’s rough texture exudes a heavy sense of oppression, and this enclosed environment not only physically confines Tao within but also metaphorically reflects the family and society’s isolation and alienation of people with mental illness. The house structure resembles a cage, locking Tao within a solitary space, embodying his loneliness and helplessness amid mental illness.

Outside the wall, two figures sit—Tao’s father and his 85-year-old grandmother. The father sits on the ground with his head lowered, fists clenched, conveying a tense and pained posture. This stance reflects his complex emotions toward his son, filled with both fear of Tao’s loss of control and perhaps a mixture of sorrow and powerlessness. This posture reveals his helplessness in facing Tao’s uncontrollable condition and the inner struggle between familial duty and personal fear. The grandmother, with her hand on his shoulder, seems to be consoling him, her expression one of care and concern. Her posture radiates warmth and acceptance, indicating a deep affection for Tao despite his behaviour. As the eldest family member, she may exhibit greater tolerance toward him, conveying a love that transcends fear. This warmth stands in stark contrast to the cold house and the oppressive atmosphere.

One of the photograph’s most striking details is the hand reaching out from the stone house on the left side of the frame. It is both hidden and prominent, symbolising Tao’s confinement within the house, unable to experience freedom, while subtly hinting at his longing for connection with his family and the outside world. The position and gesture of the hand seem to be a struggle to reach beyond the wall, expressing a yearning for connection and a need for familial and societal support. This hand enhances the image’s dramatic and emotional tension, embodying a conflicted sentiment: it highlights Tao’s profound loneliness and inner struggle, while simultaneously evoking the paradox of longing and separation, symbolising an unbridgeable distance within the family.

¹⁹⁴ Brendan Kelly, *Dignity, Mental Health and Human Rights: Coercion and the Law* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015): 11.

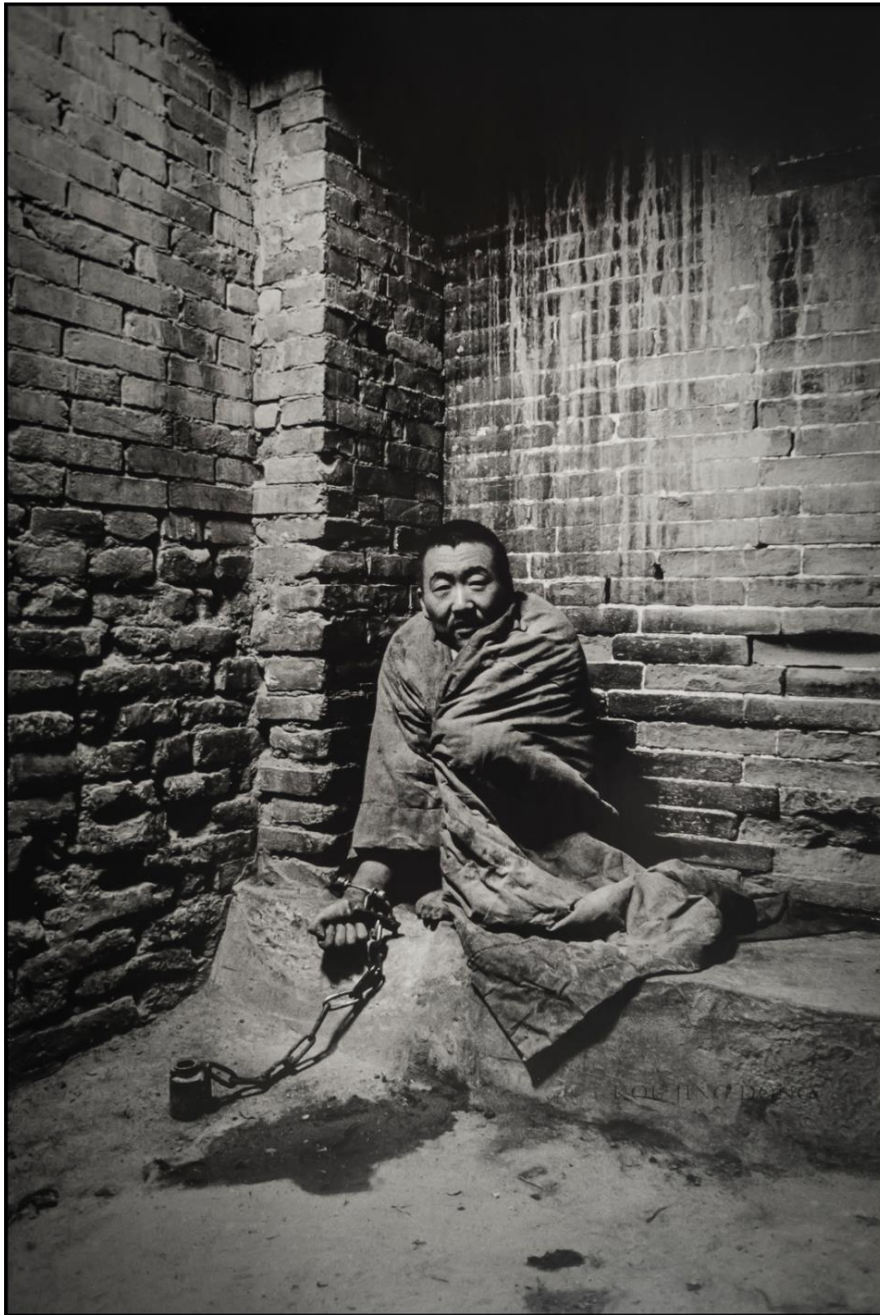


Figure 3: Lü Nan, *Miao Yujiu*, aged 33, has been suffering from mental illness for nine years, with one hand chained for four years. During the first five years of his illness, the family relied on selling possessions and borrowing money to hospitalise him six times in hopes of a cure, but saw no improvement and eventually abandoned further treatment. Due to his destructive tendencies, his family had no choice but to restrain him with a chain. (Shanxi, 1989), in his *Bei yiwang de ren* 被遗忘的人, [*The Forgotten People*].

In many Asian countries, including China, a cultural model profoundly influenced by Confucian ideology prevails.¹⁹⁵ This framework prioritises family duties, interdependence, and a collectivist approach, where personal well-being and success are intrinsically tied to family harmony.¹⁹⁶ In such a value system, the family is seen as the most critical support structure, with strong reliance on material, social, and emotional support between members, particularly during times of illness or adversity.

In Miao Yujiu's case, his family provided nearly every form of support, from essential daily care to emotional reassurance. They took on the primary role in managing his mental health, attempting to aid him through the strength of family ties. Yet, despite their committed efforts, they ultimately had to give up. This decision underscores the intense pressures and helplessness that families face when confronting mental health challenges. Lacking resources and effective healthcare support, even the most devoted families find it hard to sustain the long-term care demands of a patient. In the end, their choice was not a matter of apathy but an acknowledgment that they had reached their limit.

Miao Yujiu sits at the centre of the frame, flanked by two brick walls forming an angle behind him that heightens his sense of confinement. The linearity of the walls defines the frame's boundaries, intensifying the spatial constraints and conveying his inescapable predicament. Light streaming in from the upper left illuminates Miao Yujiu's face and upper body while casting strong shadows on the walls, creating a dramatic contrast in black and white that accentuates his isolation within the setting.

His attire is worn and unkempt, and he is wrapped in an old blanket, which reflects the harshness of his living conditions and his abandonment by society. A chain binds his wrist, extending downward to an iron ring, a detail that underscores his bleak confinement. Miao's expression is a mix of resignation and detachment, as though he has become accustomed to this restrained existence. His gaze shows a profound fatigue, seemingly accepting his fate without resistance, reflecting both his inner loneliness and his suffering.

The brick wall behind him plays a vital visual role, with water stains and marks that enhance the image's texture and symbolise coldness and indifference. This enclosed space isolates Miao Yujiu entirely from the outside world, transforming his dwelling into a place that resembles a prison cell rather than a home. Ran Mao-Sheng argues that housing instability is a significant indicator of risk, increasing the likelihood of hazardous behaviour

¹⁹⁵ Lawrence H. Yang et al., 'Effects of Labeling and Interpersonal Contact upon Attitudes towards Schizophrenia: Implications for Reducing Mental Illness Stigma in Urban China', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 47: 9 (1 September 2012): 1469.

¹⁹⁶ Ran Mao-Sheng et al., 'Family Caregivers and Outcome of People with Schizophrenia in Rural China: 14-Year Follow-up Study', 514.

and medication non-compliance among mental health patients.¹⁹⁷ In Miao Yujiu's case, this isolating environment only intensifies his solitude and suffering; he is confined not only by his illness but also by the unfortunate abandonment of his family and society.

CONCLUSION

Through his portrayal of the oppressive, isolated, and impoverished conditions faced by psychiatric patients, Lü Nan delves into the complexities of violent behaviour among them. Rather than merely being seen as perpetrators of violence, these patients are positioned as victims within a broader societal context. Lü Nan also challenges the stereotypes often associated with mental illness, pointing out that the stigma surrounding psychiatric conditions often neglects the underlying social hardships and psychological anguish experienced by the patients. He brings to light their dignity and complexity as individuals, not just as medical cases, but as people full of vitality, emotion, and hope. Lü Nan never portrays them as 'inhuman' or 'other', always honouring their uniqueness and intrinsic worth. This approach is deeply connected to his understanding of 'what it means to be human', he is not just concerned with the patients' conditions, but with their wholeness as human beings. In Lü Nan's work, the gazes and postures of psychiatric patients often convey a profound inner pain and struggle, yet they also hint at an unspoken hope, however brief or fragile it may be - 'all human wisdom is summed up in two words? - waiting and hope.'

¹⁹⁷ Ran Mao-Sheng et al., 'Prevalence and Course of Schizophrenia in a Chinese Rural Area', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 37:4 (2003): 456.

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Eutopia Arthouse Film Festival Annual Film Review: Zen's Faraway Verse and the Audiovisual Practice of Philosophy

Tianpeng Yao¹⁹⁸

INTRODUCTION

The Eutopia Arthouse Film Festival (EAFF) is a non-profit international film exhibition dedicated to fostering artistic exchange and development among emerging filmmakers. Organized by Queen's University Belfast and supported by the Queen's Annual Fund, EAFF places a special emphasis on supporting independent filmmakers who lack substantial financial backing. The festival seeks to highlight films that demonstrate a strong artistic vision and innovative filmmaking techniques, offering a platform for creative works that may otherwise struggle to find exposure in mainstream venues. Through this initiative, EAFF aims to nurture emerging talents who are driven by artistic ambition and innovation. The 2025 edition of the festival was held at the Grand Opera House in Belfast, drawing nearly one hundred attendees to in-person screenings on March 12 and 13. EAFF was honoured to host filmmakers from the UK, China, Italy, Ireland, Japan, and the United States, who engaged in post-screening Q&A sessions and direct exchanges with the audience.

As Frank Delaney, the Festival Supervisor and Head of Media and Broadcast at Queen's University Belfast—as well as a renowned BBC director—remarked during the festival's opening ceremony, the Eutopia Arthouse Film Festival is deeply rooted in the open and diverse cultural environment of Belfast. It welcomes works from across cultures and creative traditions to gather and connect in Belfast. In this context, the following review highlights one of the most representative films featured during the 2025 festival programme.

Zen's Faraway Verse, directed by Tianpeng Yao and featuring Hanling Cao, offers a meditative engagement with Zen philosophy through the formal and affective language of cinema. Produced as part of a doctoral practice-as-research project at Queen's University Belfast, the film was selected by the Eutopia Arthouse Film Festival committee as a Special Presentation and featured at the festival's opening ceremony. The film was also screened at the 2025 Annual Conference of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies

¹⁹⁸ Tianpeng Yao is currently pursuing his PhD in Film Studies at Queen's University Belfast, specializing in audiovisual representations of Eastern philosophical symbolism. Additionally, Tianpeng is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and curator supported by the Queen's Annual Fund, with works showcased at the Independent Days International Film Festival in Germany, Shanghai International Film Festival and a runner up at the British Association of Film and Television and Screen Studies 2025 Practice Research Awards for Doctoral Practice Research. Correspondence should be sent to School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland. Email: tyao03@qub.ac.uk.

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(BAFTSS), held at the University of Warwick, where it was named runner-up in the BAFTSS Practice Research Awards. The evaluative panel noted that ‘An exploration of the embodiment of zen through cinema, this short film offers stunning cinematography and skilful application of ‘slow cinema’ to evoke the sense of peacefulness and balance.’

This review explores the multi-layered dimensions of *Zen’s Faraway Verse* as both creative and theoretical research. It investigates how film can translate Zen philosophy—particularly its elusive concepts such as emptiness (śūnyatā), stillness (jing), and the interconnection between human and nature—into experiential cinematic language. As Alan Watts observes in *The Way of Zen*, Zen resists intellectualism, favouring a direct, experiential mode of knowing—precisely what the medium of film, in its sensual immediacy, is able to channel.¹⁹⁹ Traditionally transmitted via scriptural texts, oral teaching, and meditative practices, Zen’s abstract teachings here find new resonance in the audiovisual domain, offering a contemporary, cross-cultural path to spiritual understanding.

I. THE AESTHETIC OF SLOW CINEMA AND LONG TAKES

Zen’s Faraway Verse explores two main concerns: first, it reflects on how cinema might serve as a spiritual and therapeutic medium; second, it engages with cross-cultural theory by examining how Eastern philosophical traditions can be articulated through modern film language.

Zen’s Faraway Verse aligns itself with the aesthetics of slow cinema through its extensive use of long takes and deliberate pacing, crafting a meditative filmic rhythm that stands in direct contrast to the accelerated visual regimes of mainstream media. This extended temporality aligns with Tarkovsky’s conception of cinema as “sculpting in time,” in which the long take becomes not just duration but substance, allowing time to be felt as material.²⁰⁰ This stylistic orientation resonates strongly with Tsai Ming-liang’s *Walker* (2012), in which the protagonist performs ultra-slow walking through public spaces, challenging the viewer’s perception of time, presence, and cinematic motion. Similarly, in *Zen’s Faraway Verse*, Hanling’s slow traversal of Belfast’s streets, forest paths, coastal cliffs, and remote mountain trails becomes a temporal ritual that exceeds representation—it becomes a form of cinematic *kinhin* (Zen walking meditation).

Where *Zen’s Faraway Verse* diverges from *Walker* is in its dynamic use of slow shutter cinematography. It employs motion blur effect to emphasise a phenomenological contrast between the clarity of the meditating

¹⁹⁹ Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957)

²⁰⁰ Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986)

subject and the distortion of her surroundings. In this regard, the visual strategy draws parallels with Wong Kar-wai's iconic slow shutter sequences in *Chungking Express* (1994), where sharply focused protagonists are visually isolated from a world rendered ghostly, ephemeral, and dislocated.

This technique in *Zen's Faraway Verse* is not merely aesthetic; it is ontological. The blurred backgrounds—cars, pedestrians, ambient movement—serve as a visual metaphor for the distractions, attachments, and mental chatter that the Zen practitioner seeks to transcend. In contrast, Hanling remains in sharp focus, embodying clarity amidst flux, stillness amidst chaos. Her walking is not an act of destination, but of presence. It is a gesture of internal purification, an embodied expression of *letting go*—what Zen teachings describe as detachment from illusion (*māyā*) and clinging (*rāga*).

Moreover, this compositional tension between clarity and motion invites the viewer into a haptic intimacy with the walking figure. As the background dissolves into abstraction, the viewer is drawn toward Hanling's interior state, guided by visual cues to feel rather than interpret. This aligns with Laura Marks's theory of haptic visibility, wherein image reception becomes tactile, affective, and multisensory.²⁰¹ Through slow time, blurred peripheries, and long-duration shots, the film constructs not only a space of reflection, but a space of 'cinematic zazen'—a silent sitting-through of filmic time.

In this way, *Zen's Faraway Verse* transforms the apparatus of cinema into a practice of mindfulness. The long takes do not seek narrative progression, but temporal immersion. They offer a visual corollary to breath awareness: repetition without redundancy, motion without goal. Echoing Teng-Kuan Ng's reading of *Walker* as a form of cinematic ritual,²⁰² this film likewise reorients cinema toward slowness as spiritual act, where each frame becomes a site of meditative attention.

II. THE WALKING BODY AND SONIC MEDITATION

The central motif of the film is the walking body: Hanling's slow, deliberate steps unfold along Northern Ireland's cities and coastlines, beginning at Black Mountain Zen Centre. These movements are intercut with another narrative strand—her performance within Anthony McCall's *solid light* installations—forming a

²⁰¹ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000)

²⁰² Ng, Teng-Kuan. "Pedestrian Dharma: Slowness and Seeing in Tsai Ming-Liang's *Walker*." *Religions* 9:7 (2018): 200.

structure of contrapuntal montage rather than linear development. These two threads are not separate acts but interwoven expressions of a unified spiritual search.

Hanling's ritual of walking is accompanied throughout by the consistent use of the singing bowl, a sonic motif deeply rooted in Zen practice. With each strike, a resonant tone—oscillating between stillness and tremor—lingers and fades into birdsong, flowing water, rustling leaves, and the sound of footsteps. This soundscape becomes an immersive meditation, guiding not only Hanling's rhythm but the viewer's auditory attention. The tonal quality of the bowl—rich, shimmering, with subtle overtone harmonics—evokes a form of sonic *zazen*.

Crucially, the film contains no spoken dialogue or narration. This refusal of linguistic framing allows a sensory continuity akin to Ron Fricke's *Baraka* (1992), where the absence of words opens a contemplative field. As with *Baraka*, the sound design functions as a vehicle of spiritual perception: nature's resonance replaces exposition; bodily movement supplants drama.

III. HAPTIC VISION

Visually, the film adopts a haptic style of cinematography that echoes Laura Marks's theory of touch-based seeing. When Hanling walks through bustling city streets, the use of slow shutter speeds renders pedestrians and vehicles into ghostly trails, while her body remains in focus. This technique recalls Wong Kar-wai's iconic slow-motion blurs in *Chungking Express* (1994), where stillness and speed coexist in expressive contradiction. However, in *Zen's Faraway Verse*, this aesthetic strategy has ontological significance. The blurred crowd is not simply visual texture—it signals Hanling's inward withdrawal from distraction, her turn toward emptiness. This contrast enacts the Zen principle of 'letting go of attachments.' Her solitude, underscored by the visual dissolution of others, reveals an inner spaciousness that visual abstraction helps to perform. Sobchack's phenomenology of film experience reinforces this shift, describing the act of viewing as 'being with one's own eyes' rather than passive seeing.²⁰³ The viewer in *Zen's Faraway Verse* is thus called into embodied perceptual engagement.

IV: ZEN'S SPIRITUAL CORE: LIGHT, EMPTINESS AND ABSTRACTION

A sequence set in the Tate Modern sees Hanling performing a site-specific interaction with Anthony McCall's *Solid Light* installation—an encounter that subtly echoes the film's concern with embodied perception. Her

²⁰³ Vivian Sobchack. "The Act of Being with One's Own Eyes." In *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

movement through the beams of projected light is neither choreographed nor theatrical; instead, it is meditative and exploratory, unfolding as a ritual gesture that transforms light into a metaphysical partner. She does not merely inhabit the installation—she becomes part of its fluctuating geometry. Passing through the sculpted light with slow, deliberate gestures, Hanling engages with the medium as if playing an invisible zither, brushing her fingertips through immaterial threads, enveloped in a luminous void. These images evoke a primordial Zen iconography—circular enclosures, flickering thresholds, moments of dissolution—and operate less as symbols than as phenomenological experiences.

This sequence does not illustrate Zen philosophy; it performs it. Light becomes a visual manifestation of *śūnyatā*—emptiness—not as absence, but as a field of contingent transformation. The shifting planes of light recall the impermanence of form; the dissolving outline of Hanling’s body visualises the Zen notion of non-self; and the refusal of narrative logic mirrors the practice of silent meditation. These visual metaphors are not decorative—they are ontological, functioning as embodied koans that invite the viewer into direct perception rather than conceptual deduction.

The abstraction of this scene is never evasive or overly symbolic. On the contrary, it creates a space in which the viewer can participate in the dissolution of boundaries—between self and world, subject and medium, presence and void. In this sense, the film draws upon what Deleuze calls the ‘time-image’: an image in which thought itself becomes visible, not through representation, but through sensation and affect.²⁰⁴ Here, Hanling’s body flickers in and out of materiality, foregrounding not an identity, but a state of becoming. Light is not used to illuminate meaning, but to suspend it—to dwell within the very ungraspability of Zen insight.

In this extended moment of embodied abstraction, *Zen’s Faraway Verse* achieves one of its most profound gestures: it relinquishes the security of signification and opens a luminous space where being and non-being are held in delicate tension. Rather than depicting enlightenment, it performs its conditions of possibility.

V. BLACK AND WHITE IMAGERY

The film’s use of black-and-white imagery plays a critical symbolic role in Hanling’s meditative walk. At one point, the slow, deliberate progression of his journey comes to a sudden halt within a monochromatic sequence. This pause occurs in front of a war memorial—sculptures commemorating those who perished in past conflicts—followed by a solemn gesture: raising a white rose in the Garden of Remembrance. Other monochrome scenes depict the stupa complex housing the remains of deceased monastic elders. The visual

²⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989)

motif of black and white evokes death—not merely as an end, but as a liminal state filled with mourning, memory, and the longing for peace.

This visual elegy resonates poignantly with the contemporary global context. In an era still marked by geopolitical unrest, mass displacement, and ongoing armed conflicts, the film subtly gestures toward the cyclical nature of human suffering. Hanling's walk, though quiet and solitary, takes on the form of a ritualised act—a meditative expression grounded in Zen Buddhist contemplation. It is as though, through the slowness of embodied movement, he carries a silent prayer for a fractured world. Thus, the black-and-white sequence becomes more than a formal device: it articulates a moral and spiritual yearning for cessation—not only of motion, but of violence, desire, and conflict.

VI. NARRATIVE WITHOUT CLOSURE: THE ENSŌ AS STRUCTURAL PHILOSOPHY

Zen's Faraway Verse adopts a narrative architecture inspired by the ensō—the Zen ink circle traditionally drawn in a single breathstroke, often left open-ended and asymmetrical. As Seo explains, the ensō symbolises not only enlightenment, wholeness, and the void, but also a radical acceptance of imperfection, fluidity, and ongoing transformation.²⁰⁵ It is at once complete and incomplete, capturing a moment of spiritual realisation without claiming finality. In the context of cinematic narrative, this principle becomes the underlying formal logic of *Zen's Faraway Verse*. Rather than following a teleological arc with climax and resolution, the film loops back upon itself, ending where it began—in a forest, in stillness, in breath—yet subtly transformed. This logic of continual return without finality resonates with Deleuze's notion of repetition not as sameness, but as difference in becoming. As he articulates in *Difference and Repetition*, true repetition is never static but always transformative—a process through which newness emerges precisely through variation.²⁰⁶

This ensō-like circularity marks a refusal of closure in favour of spiritual recurrence. Hanling's pilgrimage begins in the urban spaces of Belfast, traversing mountains, forests, and coastal landscapes, and seemingly culminates at the ancient Mussenden Temple, a site infused with historical and metaphysical resonance. Yet just as the viewer anticipates an ending, the final image offers a gentle rupture: Hanling reappears in London, standing beneath the London Eye, facing a new, unknown direction. What appeared to be an arrival is revealed as yet another departure. The return is not a repetition, but a renewal—a continuous opening into further

²⁰⁵ Audrey Yoshiko Seo, *Enso: Zen Circles of Enlightenment* (Boston: Weatherhill, 2007)

²⁰⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)

becoming. Her journey re-circulates, embodying the Zen logic of the *endless beginning*, where every point of arrival is simultaneously a new point of departure.

In this way, the film challenges conventional cinematic linearity, embracing instead a cyclical model of narrative grounded in the Zen understanding of time as recursive and experiential. Echoing Deleuze's "time-image," where temporality folds rather than advances,²⁰⁷ *Zen's Faraway Verse* proposes a model of storytelling based not on resolution but on presence. Each loop is unique; each repetition, a variation. The narrative becomes an ontological mirror to the Zen path itself: infinite, open, and suspended in the now.

CONCLUSION

Zen's Faraway Verse does not represent Zen—it performs it. In rhythm, in silence, in breath and image, it asks the viewer to be with, not read into, the frame. In this, it aligns with Laura Marks's conception of intercultural cinema as an embodied, ethical encounter with the other.²⁰⁸ This is not merely an experimental film—it is a koan in light and sound. It is a meditation that requires no temple, only attention. As both creative artefact and scholarly contribution, it proposes a new language for the cinematic transmission of contemplative traditions.

²⁰⁷ Gilles Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989)

²⁰⁸ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000)

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