

## MASTER'S THESIS

# Virtual worlds, non humans and power beams: a neoformalist analysis of the digital animation aesthetic in Hong Kong's mythical martial arts films

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**Virtual Worlds, Non Humans and Power Beams:  
A Neoformalist Analysis of the Digital Animation Aesthetic  
in Hong Kong's Mythical Martial Arts Films**

**MEACHEM, Dhugal**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Philosophy**

**Principal Supervisor: Dr. CHEUK Pak Tong**

**Hong Kong Baptist University**

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## Abstract

Hong Kong's mythical martial arts genre has a long and colourful history. Classic moments of Hong Kong movie history like *Buddha's Palm* (Rulai Shenzhang, 1964), *Zu: The Warriors from the Magic Mountain* (Xin Shushan Jianxia, 1983) and *Green Snake* (Qing She, 1993) are works treasured by film aficionados around the world. These movies have always wowed audiences with their special effects and their animation 'wee won won' power beams. Today, digital animation has become a key part of this genre, with over half of the shots in many movies being either partially or fully animated.

It has been suggested that digital animation technology has changed the cinema viewing experience. This thesis aims to examine this possibility with regard to Hong Kong's mythical martial art genre and provide scholars with a greater understanding of the genre as a whole.

Specifically, this thesis aims to understand how mythical martial arts movies are put together, tell their stories and create their action scenes, and how their iconography has developed. This thesis aims to understand why particular transformations have taken place and examine digital animation's role in the changing landscape. This will lead to a contextual comprehension of digital animation's role in the genre and its effect on today's digital cinema encounter.

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