

MASTER'S THESIS

Hong Kong auteurs in Hollywood: the case of John Woo

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Hong Kong Auteurs in Hollywood:
The Case of John Woo

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s, Hollywood began to actively co-opt Hong Kong film talents, formula and techniques. The migration of Hong Kong film talents to Hollywood not only marks a new page in Hollywood's incorporation of indigenous Asian film practice, but also signifies a pinnacle of transcultural and transnational exchange of commerce, industry, culture and entertainment. This assimilation also appears to be a continuous tendency for future development. The current study deals with the power relations between Hollywood cinema and Hong Kong émigrés, and selects John Woo, the most celebrated auteur, as an example to demonstrate the tension and politics involved in the cross-over. The auteur theory is employed as the analytical vehicle of this study in order to show that Woo's distinctive style is altered, in various amounts, after relocating to Hollywood. Furthermore, I conduct the institutional analysis to explain how Woo has to undergo numerous struggles and negotiation with the system. The constant tension between filmmakers and the studio system is in line with the central argument of the auteurist theology. In order to survive, Woo compromises to the norms and standards of classical Hollywood filmmaking. In addition, he needs to work within the existing modes of industrial practices (star, censorship, central producer system, etc.) In this way, both the hegemony of Hollywood and Woo's auteur status within are secured. Woo's transformation of auteurism unveils the ideological politics and power relations between the institution and the individual auteur.

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