

Film Criticism in *The 70's Biweekly*

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Introduction

This chapter will examine the political and ideological perspectives of the film criticism in *The 70's Biweekly* (70年代雙週刊) to locate the ideas and values that motivated this critical practice. Many of the writers in this magazine carved out a relatively unique space for film criticism in 1970s Hong Kong, since their perspectives often paralleled the publication's own countercultural, internationalist left-wing position and concerns, which shared much with the New Left. Its contributors made explicit their personal, political, and ideological perspectives in their focus on how films can negotiate, and at times resist and critique, the ruling ideology and patriarchal capitalism. They sought to explore how film related to larger social and political issues in Hong Kong and the world. This radical pocket of critical film practice in 1970s Hong Kong and the issues it raises in relation to the destructive and dehumanizing aspects of (colonial) capitalism is still extremely relevant to our present moment. For this reason, alongside film criticism playing a considerable role in the endeavors of *The 70's*, and in terms of analyzing how this criticism contributes to reassessments of Hong Kong society and diversifies narratives about Hong Kong history, it is very much worthy of study.

The film criticism in *The 70's* is almost completely unknown; I have not once seen any reference to it. There are several causes for this invisibility. The magazine only ever had a very limited distribution, and until it was digitized and published online by Hong Kong Baptist University in 2020, it was only officially available in specialist libraries. This naturally made it largely inaccessible. Second, although most issues of *The 70's* contain some English-language articles alongside the Chinese-language articles (in each issue roughly 75–80 percent of articles are in Chinese and the rest are in English), almost all of the articles related to film are in Chinese, so lack of translations also closes this film criticism off to anybody who does not read Chinese. One also notices more generally that in discussions of Hong

Kong history there tends to be a repression or marginalization of non-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) affiliated left-wing thought and action, and this could perhaps partially explain why *The 70's* has for so long been neglected. Reading through the issues of *The 70's* gives a vastly different impression of Hong Kong society in the 1970s than one gleans from general histories on Hong Kong that tend to be written from fairly liberal perspectives. Furthermore, some of the film articles I discuss below demonstrate that there was an overtly political form of film criticism practiced in Hong Kong in the 1970s that deserves more recognition

An anecdote in Issue 10 of *The 70's* reinforces the magazine's whole political approach and attests to Hong Kong's contested political arena: a short note mentions rumors that police officers had bought up all the issues of *The 70's* at newspaper stalls and told the hawkers not to sell them anymore, while newspaper stalls outside (pro-Beijing) left-wing banks also refused to sell the magazine. For *The 70's*, this rejection by forces aligned with the colonial government (the police) and the pro-Beijing leftist establishment was worn as a badge of honor: "To be attacked by the right and the left is surely the highest honour of an independent newspaper."¹ *The 70's* held a left-wing position outside of the established leftist institutions in Hong Kong, and the term *zuopai* that designates the pro-Beijing Left in Hong Kong does not apply to them. The left-wing position of *The 70's* was not unified, split mainly along Trotskyist and social libertarian/anarchist lines, with these two tendencies later causing internal disagreements and splits.² The writing in *The 70's* shared many of the political, hedonistic, and hippie elements of the countercultural movement that inspired the youth in cities in France, the United States, the UK, and elsewhere to revolt against the status quo in the 1960s. However, while many in the West at that time were swept up in the revolutionary rhetoric and romanticization of the Cultural Revolution taking place in China, *The 70's* was deeply critical of the CCP and the Cultural Revolution because its vantage point in Hong Kong gave it clearer insights into what was happening in China. The rehabilitation of *The 70's* at this present moment reflects more generally a desire to reevaluate Hong Kong history, society, and politics during the colonial era from a more critical perspective toward the colonial government than the liberal histories of yesteryear.

Of the thirty-five available issues in *The 70's* online archive digitized and published by Hong Kong Baptist University, twenty-two by my count contain film-related articles that number between one and four per issue. As well as original essays, they included Chinese translations of essays on film written in non-Chinese languages that interested *The 70's* collective. This relatively large number shows that cinema discussions formed a considerable part of the magazine. To be very schematic about it, the film articles that appear in the first and last issues of *The 70's* have

1. Responder, "Attacks, Right and Left," *The 70's*, no. 10 (July 10, 1970): 15.

2. Promise Li, "The Rise and Fall of the 70's Biweekly," *Lau san*, May 15, 2020, <https://lausancollective.com/2020/rise-and-fall-of-70s-biweekly/>.

something to tell us about the overall political focus of the magazine's film criticism. In the first issue the editors published a Chinese translation of an article written by Jim Spiegelman titled "Film as a Tool for Social Action," which was originally published in the *Australian Quarterly* in 1969. This article analyzes the National Board of Film of Canada's experimentation with a new program intended to screen films to facilitate discussion among communities and inspire social action to deal with problems including poverty. The decision to translate this article into Chinese demonstrates the interest at *The 70's* in the possibilities that film could have in instigating social change. The final issue contains the third part of a Chinese translation of the chapter "Godard and Rocha at the Crossroads of *Wind from the East*" from James Roy MacBean's book *Film and Revolution*, originally published in 1976. This chapter focuses on the committedly Marxist *Vent d'est* (*Wind from the East*, 1970) that dealt with class struggle and concerns itself with how a revolutionary film can be made. This focus on the intersection between film and politics marks much of their film criticism and because of this interest in how film connects to larger issues in the world, their writing tilts far more heavily in favor of socio-political and ideological analysis than formal and aesthetic analysis. A strong vein of humanism also guides the film criticism at *The 70's*, but it was not an abstract liberal humanism. Rather, it is what we might call a socialist humanism, from which perspective the writers sought to analyze how cinema and filmmakers dealt with the oppression of humanity within the structures of merciless capitalism, authoritarianism, or the increasing combination of both, but also at how humanity could resist such oppression. Below, I will also situate their film criticism in the broader context of film culture in Hong Kong to demonstrate that while *The 70's* shared certain commonalities with other major venues of film criticism, it also carved out a space that placed ideological critique and politics at the forefront.

Take a Political Position!

We could call the film criticism in *The 70's* "committed" criticism, in the sense Lindsay Anderson used the term, arguing that film critics should be upfront about their political positions.³ Anderson's article was written in the context of debates happening in *Sight and Sound* and British film culture in the 1950s about what a film critic's role precisely was; some believed it was solely to analyze aesthetic qualities and maintain an apolitical position, while Anderson advocated the opposite view. As an example of how this extended to the political position of the film itself, Mattias Frey highlights Gavin Lambert's negative review of Vincente Minnelli's *The Cobweb* (1955) in *Sight and Sound*, which criticizes the film's lack of clarity about where the director stood in relation to his subject, which results in the film

3. Lindsay Anderson, "Stand Up! Stand Up!," *Sight and Sound* 26, no. 2 (1956): 64–71.

remaining “tentative, uncommitted.”⁴ Frey argues that “for the ‘committed’ wing of *Sight and Sound*, films should take a clear position towards their subject, just as critics should be clear about their motives and politics.”⁵ I draw attention to these debates because *The 70's* writers were very much concerned with connecting various sociopolitical struggles and problems in their magazine, including civil rights, feminism, poverty, and the severe injustices of the colonial regime, to assess the problems generated by the entire status quo in Hong Kong. As we shall see, the anti-capitalist, left-wing political commitments of the writers are often clearly stated in their film articles, with frequent discussions about how films depict, resist, or negotiate problems generated by the systems of colonial and patriarchal capitalism, which is very much in line with the political outlook of the entire magazine. This guided their choice in the films they focused on, with articles often appearing on films that took explicitly political positions including those of Costa-Gavras, *Zabriskie Point* (1970), the Czech New Cinema, and *Vent d'est*.

This meant, however, that they generally avoided the (at least on the surface) “tentative, uncommitted” type of commercially oriented film criticized above, which is why there is practically no discussion of popular cinema made in Hong Kong or elsewhere in the magazine. The writers at *The 70's* generally wrote only about films that would be classified on the “high end” of the artistic spectrum, which contrasts sharply with one of the major venues of film criticism in Hong Kong in the 1960s to mid-1970s, the *Chinese Student Weekly* (中國學生週報, *CSW*), whose writers happily defied the bourgeois distinctions between high and low art and wrote about both with equal verve, recognizing that distinct artistry, and ideological critique, could flower within the walls of regimented studio systems as well outside them. The *CSW* introduced European directors like Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, and Robert Bresson to readers in Hong Kong in the 1960s, and *The 70's* also discussed these directors. However, while in the *CSW* we can see a critic like Kam Ping-hing discussing the famous opening line of Robin Wood's 1965 book on Alfred Hitchcock, “Why must we take Hitchcock seriously?”⁶ as well as frequent discussions of other popular cinema from both Hong Kong and elsewhere, this attitude toward taking popular cinema seriously is almost entirely absent from film writing in *The 70's*.

David Bordwell discusses how the status of film criticism in the 1960s United States was enhanced by intellectuals' interest in cinema, especially foreign imports by directors such as Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Akira Kurosawa, Godard,

4. Gavin Lambert, “The Cobweb,” *Sight and Sound* 25, no. 4 (1956): 197, quoted in Mattias Frey, “The Critical Question: *Sight and Sound's* Postwar Consolidation of Liberal Taste,” *Screen* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 198.

5. Frey, “The Critical Question,” 198.

6. Kam Ping-hing, “Xizhige ‘zhuozeiji’ cong tanqi” [Talking about Hitchcock from *To Catch a Thief*], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 751 (December 9, 1966): n.p.

and Francois Truffaut, as well as new American cinema including *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *The Graduate* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and *Easy Rider* (1969). Bordwell writes that “such unusual movies demanded commentary, even debate [and this] was the moment that made the movie review or the longish think piece a respectable literary genre.”⁷ This was very much the type of cinema that attracted *The 70’s* writers too, with articles on Antonioni, Bergman, and Godard appearing, among others. The short-lived New Hollywood era also appealed much more to *The 70’s* writers compared to classical Hollywood, largely because the films that emerged out of this movement, while commercially oriented, were also aesthetically more closely related to various global New Waves, espoused values connected to the New Left and hippie movements, and had a stronger independent spirit compared to the films made in Hollywood’s studio system. Articles or interviews on films like *Easy Rider*⁸ and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) appeared, as well as an interview with Mike Nichols translated into Chinese.

It is worth briefly discussing Robin Wood’s political approach to film criticism since it shares a great deal with the approach at *The 70’s*, albeit with one crucial difference. In 1993, Wood published an article outlining that, within the context of the ongoing destruction of civilization and the world, he saw hope in the proliferation of left-wing liberation movements including “feminism, environmentalism, anti-racism, native rights, the gay/lesbian movement, [and] the work (both practical and theoretical) on gender and gender relations,” but what was needed was a drive toward unity that could bind these disparate movements together to “achieve the potency they need if they are to transform and save our world.”⁹ This unity, in Wood’s view, would come from “what one is effectively prohibited from realizing” in North America: “that change—*real* change—can come only with the overthrow of Capitalism: Government by the rich and powerful, for the rich and powerful, *must* perish from the earth.”¹⁰ It is in this context that Wood asserts:

There is only one valid remaining function, today, for the North American intellectual: to contribute in whatever way s/he can, within his or her field of expertise, to the development of a potent and unified American left. For the responsible film critic/teacher, this entails using the cinema (for works of art exist to be *used*, and used positively and creatively, not relegated to either the museum of “scholarship” or the dissecting table of deconstruction) as the means

7. David Bordwell, *The Rhapsodes: How 1940s Critics Changed American Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3.

8. This is an English-language interview with Henry Fonda about *Easy Rider*. An anonymous writer offers a short overview of the interview in Chinese and mentions that *Easy Rider* was banned in Hong Kong and that the reviewer caught it in America, reminding us of the strict colonial censorship system in Hong Kong. See “Interview about *Easy Rider* from *Take One*,” *The 70’s*, no. 11 (August 1, 1970): 6.

9. Robin Wood, “Critical Positions and the End of Civilization,” *Film Criticism* 17, nos. 2/3 (Winter/Spring 1993): 87–88.

10. Wood, “Critical Positions,” 88.

of mounting a radical and explicit critique of our culture, exposing the roots of its sickness and injustices.¹¹

Much of the film criticism in *The 70's* took precisely this approach, and issues related to feminism, anti-racism, gender, and other related issues all frequently appeared in its film criticism, sometimes in relation or reaction to Hong Kong's own unique form of colonial capitalism and sometimes in relation to broader worldwide capitalist processes that suppress humanity. Where they differed is in the high/low dichotomy mentioned above: while Wood would often analyze popular, classical, studio-made Hollywood films to explore what was progressive in them and the critiques of the dominant ideology that they could contain, writers at *The 70's* generally stuck with cinema on the higher end of the artistic spectrum.

This attitude toward taking independent or more arthouse-style films seriously while dismissing or neglecting popular genre cinema largely relates to the independent spirit of *The 70's* drawing them toward films made outside of corporate studio systems, but it also opens them to criticisms of elitism. This elitism is founded on the supposed binary between high and low in which arthouse, New Wave, or experimental films earn a privileged political position since they are taken to be those that speak to the nation and sensitively negotiate social issues, while popular cinema is viewed as lowest common denominator stuff that is made merely for profit and cannot have any larger political or oppositional significance. There is also an implied separation of potential audiences for these different types of cinema. The selection of films covered in *The 70's* does betray this elitist perspective, which leads to the question of the extent to which this kept them detached from the popular and the public in Hong Kong. Given that the majority of the films they discuss would have been seen by only a small group of people in Hong Kong, how interested was *The 70's* in engaging with local audiences? We could view the films they selected to analyze as attempts to introduce or emphasize noncommercial or independent modes of filmmaking, but the contradiction here is that while *The 70's* focused on issues pertinent to the livelihoods of "the people," it ignored the cultural priorities of "the people." While there is not space to delve into this question in any detail here, what prevented *The 70's* from engaging more with popular culture and popular film genres, especially those made in Hong Kong, which, as popular cinemas do everywhere, contain important meanings about the local situation? As I will discuss below, their insights into the two idiosyncratic Hong Kong films they write about are very rich, which makes it all the more unfortunate that they neglected popular cinema as a whole.

The type of "committed" New Left-infused criticism at *The 70's* led to, among other things, a Chinese translation of the hugely influential article "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" written by Jean-Louis Comolli and Paul Narboni in the wake

11. Wood, "Critical Positions," 88.

of the May 1968 protests, which helped develop a Marxist approach to the critical analysis of cinema.¹² It was the journal *Screen* in the UK that first translated this article into English, and although *The 70's* was much less theoretically oriented compared to *Screen* in the 1970s, the interest in how film and politics intersect was shared in both venues' film criticism. It was only three issues after publishing this translation that *The 70's* stopped publication, aborting this move in a more poststructuralist theoretical direction. Small ads for a bookshop called Red and Black Bookshop (*Honghei shudian*) in the Wan Chai District on Hong Kong Island also appeared in *The 70's*.¹³ The ad lists a range of journals published in different countries focusing on different schools of leftist politics stocked by the bookshop, as well as several film journals and magazines including *Take One*, *Film Journal*, and *Cahiers du cinéma*, which also speaks to this interest in the intersection between politics and film.¹⁴ Another example of this focus is an interesting interview *The 70's* published with an art cinema proprietor in Hong Kong, Mok Yuen-hei. Mok discusses how several films were banned by the colonial government, including *Easy Rider* and *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), without any reason given. He lodged an appeal to find out why the latter was banned. However, there was a bureaucratic rule that appeals could only be made within twenty-eight days, and Mok unfortunately made his appeal on the twenty-eighth day. He was subsequently told by the censorship officer that his submission was late and he could not lodge an appeal. Mok's description of this appeal process makes it sound like it was more for show than actually enabling anybody to check the censor's power, and it is unlikely he would have gained any more information even if he had submitted his appeal earlier. To enable a more transparent appeal process if a film was unjustly banned, Mok states that he wished the censorship board would make its rules and regulations public so that it would be easier to know what might be banned and why.¹⁵ The colonial government clearly wanted its censorship standards shrouded in mystery so that it could not be held accountable and also perhaps to induce local filmmakers to self-censor. Kristof Van Den Troost points out that it was only in May 1973 that for the first time newly drafted film censorship standards were presented to the public.¹⁶

12. Part 1 of this translation appeared in the first issue of the resumption of *The 70's*, published in July 1978 after a two-year hiatus. Part 2 of this translation appeared in Issue 2 of the resumed series in August 1978. This issue also includes an article on Comolli's film *La Cecilia* (1975).

13. This bookshop was run by some of the editors of *The 70's*.

14. See pages 6 and 8 of *The 70's*, Issue 31 (August 1975) to check the full list of journals listed for sale at this bookshop.

15. Yu Sau, "Mo Xuanxi tan jinbian ji qita" [Mok Yuen-hei discusses banned films and other topics], *The 70's*, no. 17 (January 1, 1971): 30.

16. Kristof Van den Troost, "Genre and Censorship: The Crime Film in Late Colonial Hong Kong," in *Renegotiating Genres in East Asian Cinemas and Beyond*, ed. Lin Feng and James Aston (Chan: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 201.

Owing to issues of space, I devote most of the analysis in this chapter to the three articles on film criticism in *The 70's* related to Hong Kong cinema. This is a good base to proceed from since many of the concerns detailed in these articles are common to their approach to cinema made outside Hong Kong too, but since they are writing in Hong Kong we gain some unique insights into their thoughts on cinema's place within Hong Kong society. Starting by analyzing the small amount of writing on Hong Kong cinema will also help to sketch out the political positions held by writers in their film criticism at *The 70's*, because their approach to these two Hong Kong films are quite different from other critics' writing on these films at the time, which relates to their own New Left political approach. Thus, from this starting point, we can place the criticism in *The 70's* into a broader cultural critical context, before ending with a coda briefly assessing some of their work on cinema made outside of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Cinema

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, among the many film articles published in *The 70's* there were only three on Hong Kong cinema, one criticizing the state of Hong Kong cinema from the writer's perspective in 1971, and the other two on highly idiosyncratic Hong Kong films: *The Arch* (董夫人, 1969) and *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (昨天今天明天, 1970). These numbers demonstrate that the writers had no real interest in popular Hong Kong cinema, which significantly differed from the aforementioned *CSW*, wherein critics rigorously discussed, debated, analyzed, and critiqued popular Cantonese- and Mandarin-language films from auteurist, ideological, aesthetic, and other perspectives.

I will start by analyzing Longzi's¹⁷ article on *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* that appeared in Issue 17, because it can help us roughly map out the political perspective contained in many film articles in *The 70's*. I will begin with a generalization that, although misguided as all generalizations are, helps us roughly locate the collective political and ideological perspective of the publication's film criticism. *Yesterday* allegorizes the political violence of the 1967 riots as a plague that hits Hong Kong. Because of the political sensitivity of the 1967 riots, this film was edited from an original running time of more than two hours down to around seventy minutes. This cut version was the only version ever released officially, and the film received sharply different critical reactions from *The 70's*, the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers, and the *CSW*. In short, *The 70's* article was highly critical of the film because it did not denounce the injustices of the colonial government alongside the leadership of the pro-Beijing leftists, the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers denounced the film for its allegorical attacks upon them, while the *CSW* reviews were generally positive, or at

17. The rough meaning of this Chinese pen name is a dandy-type playboy.



Figure 6.1: Longzi, “Zuotian, jintian, mingtian” [Yesterday, today, tomorrow], *The 70's*, no. 17 (1971): 29. Courtesy of Mok Chiu-yu.

the very least did not criticize the ideology of the film. It is worth exploring each of these takes in a bit more detail.

In *The 70's* essay on the film, Longzi makes clear he is vehemently against both the colonial government and the pro-Beijing leftist faction in Hong Kong. Longzi describes the *baodong* (1967 riots) as simply a struggle between the *zuopai* (pro-Beijing leftists) and *zhengfu* (Hong Kong government), vividly describing it as “like two poisonous beasts fighting before their eyes.”¹⁸ *The 70's* must have sympathized with the original labor disputes that started the riots, and also with the resistance against colonial exploitation that partially motivated the riots. Accounts vary, but the general consensus is that the 1967 riots were increasingly orchestrated by the Hong Kong and Macao Work Committee, which served as the local communist branch in Hong Kong, out of fear that if they did not act “revolutionary” enough in Hong Kong they would become targets of the Maoist purge then happening on the Mainland.¹⁹ Longzi's denunciation of the *zuopai* here is in response to the political violence that resulted from political control of the riots from the top leadership and the resultant increasing disassociation with local issues in Hong Kong. Longzi says he was initially very excited to see Lung Kong's film because he thought that the pro-Beijing leftist attacks against it must mean that an artist had finally dared to expose their ugly behavior (*choulou*). However, the review becomes deeply critical of *Yesterday* because, for Longzi, the film should have denounced colonial rule as well as the pro-Beijing leftists. Instead, Longzi argues that the film mutes any sign of the oppression and human exploitation that existed in Hong Kong under the colonial government's regime.

Because Lung's film allegorizes the political violence of the 1967 riots as a plague that hits Hong Kong, it is no surprise that the major leftist newspapers attacked the film, with the *Wen wei po's* concerted campaign against the film while it was still being shot leading to its censorship.²⁰ It denounced the film for being pro-colonial government and being resolutely against its compatriots' anti-colonial struggle, and it singled out specific characters and plot details that they argued were clearly allegorizing the 1967 riots. We must remember that at this time both the pro-Beijing newspapers and the Hong Kong and Macao Work Committee were operating under the guidance of the Xinhua News Agency, which after 1949 represented the PRC in places it had no diplomatic presence. Thus, we can fully

18. Longzi, “Zuotian, jintian, mingtian” [Yesterday, today, tomorrow], *The 70's*, no. 17 (January 1, 1971), 29. All further quotes from this article are from this page.

19. Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 183–85.

20. See Tom Cunliffe, “Lung Kong's *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*: The 1967 Riots and the Politics of Cultural Production in the Hong Kong Film Industry,” *Screen* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 47–74, for more information on the pro-Beijing leftist newspaper campaign against the film and details of its censorship.

understand why such an orchestrated campaign against the film was carried out by pro-Beijing leftist newspapers.

Meanwhile, the reviews in *CSW* took a different approach. Law Wing-sang has described the *CSW* as being “part of the liberal democracy camp” that took a “heaven and hell” approach to life in mainland China compared to the “free world” in Hong Kong, and its articles tended to conceal the repression of Hong Kong colonial society in the 1950s–1960s.²¹ Roughly following this description, the several reviews of Lung’s film that appeared in *CSW* contained no critique of the ideology or political position of the film. One reviewer did express disappointment that the allegory of the plague was fairly unclear, although they admitted that this was partially because of the numerous obvious cuts,²² while another reviewer stated that they could not see any allusions to the 1967 riots but mitigated this by blaming censorship and also mentioning that many had praised Lung for making the film under pressure from the leftists.²³ Another reviewer, however, said that despite the severe cuts, the film still provided a powerful reminder of the chaos, bombs, and hatred during the 1967 riots.²⁴ These differing views and interpretations of the film speak to how the cut version lost much of its allegorical power as originally conceived by Lung Kong (the original uncut script is still available to read).

Hence, we have three largely separate ideological approaches to Lung’s film: (1) the position of *The 70’s*, which was clearly both vehemently opposed to the pro-Beijing leftists and the colonial government, leading to a severely critical review of the film for its perceived procolonial government stance in the face of the 1967 riots. (2) The anti-colonial government position of the pro-Beijing leftists and a natural all-out denunciation of the film for the clear (in their eyes) allegory against them in the film. (3) Largely positive responses, or at least no major criticisms of the film’s ideological and political perspective, from the *CSW* that one could argue reflects the liberalism of that magazine.

This generalization places preimposed ideological frameworks around *The 70’s*, the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers, and the *CSW* to help locate *The 70’s’* ideological and political position, but this generalization is misguided. Law Kar for instance, the lead editor of the film section of the *CSW*, also edited a magazine called *Intellectual Biweekly* (知識分子雙週刊) from 1970; since Law Kar was quite close with Ng Chung-yin, one of the core members of *The 70’s*, sometimes an article originally

21. Law Wing-sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 143–46.

22. Lan Ning, “Na yi chang wenyi” [That plague], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 961 (January 1, 1971): 54.

23. Qing Ting, “Cantan de ‘zuotian” [A gloomy “yesterday”], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 961 (January 1, 1971): 57.

24. Huo Niu, “Zuotian, jintian, mingtian” [Yesterday, today, tomorrow], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 961 (December 18, 1970): 59.

intended for the *Intellectual Biweekly* ended up in *The 70's* instead.²⁵ Similarly, the famous writer and poet Yesi (Leung Ping-kwan), contributed a couple of short articles on film in *The 70's*, as well as articles related to poetry. Augustine Mok Chiu-yu stated that *The 70's* came into contact with a whole string of writers, photographers, poets, and film buffs, and Yesi was among them.²⁶ In Mok's recollection Yesi was much more literary than political, which shows that writers in *The 70's* were also writing about culture from different perspectives that were not always political.

In terms of how preimposed ideological frameworks can also limit understanding of the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers and the *CSW*, Law Kar stated that some of the leftist newspapers like *Ta Kung Pao* and the *New Evening Post* had different policies in the postriot period and could make connections with people from different backgrounds, including liberals and students who could write articles in leftist newspapers, so the leftist newspapers themselves were full of changing political positions and policies too, with writers holding different political perspectives.²⁷ In relation to the *CSW*, as Law Wing-sang points out, although the *CSW* collective did lend vocal support to the colonial government's tough enforcement of law and order in the wake of the 1967 riots, some of the "members of the editorial board suggested that they should organize essays to write about the social causes of the riots." The senior member refused, but this demonstrates that some of the *CSW* writers did want to discuss the deep-rooted problems caused by colonial capitalism that led to the 1967 riots.²⁸

A positive review of the social-realist melodrama *The Younger Generation* (小當家) also appeared in the *CSW*. This film was produced at the leftist Hong Kong studio Great Wall in 1971, a studio that was in the same leftist circles as the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers. Considering the general academic critical consensus is that post-1967, leftist studios in Hong Kong declined and began producing solely propaganda films divorced from reality in Hong Kong,²⁹ Lilian Lee Pik-wah's (future novelist and scriptwriter of *Rouge* [胭脂扣, 1988] among others) review in *CSW* stands out as very open minded in its exploration of how the film negotiated problems generated by colonial capitalism, and she links the struggle of the female factory workers who strike over deeply exploitative working conditions in this film

25. Tom Cunliffe and Raymond Tsang, "Interview with Law Kar," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* (forthcoming).

26. Personal correspondence with Augustine Mok Chiu-yu.

27. Cunliffe and Tsang, "Interview with Law Kar."

28. Law Wing-sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, 146.

29. See for instance Ying Du, "Hong Kong Leftist Cinema in the Cold War Era: In-betweenness, Sensational Success and Censorship," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 13, no. 1 (2019): 97; Vivian Lee, *The Other Side of Glamour: The Left-Wing Studio Network in Hong Kong Cinema in the Cold War Era and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 11; Yuping Wang, "Alternative New China Cinema: Hong Kong Leftist Cinema during the Cold War: A Discussion of the Hong Kong Leftist Film *The True Story of Ah Q*," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 9, no. 1 (2015): 144.

to important (anti-colonial) social movements happening in 1970s Hong Kong, including the Chinese as Official Language Movement, the Defend Diaoyutai Movement, and the blind factory worker strikes.³⁰ Indeed the argument in Lee's essay is similar to the one in the pro-Beijing leftist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao*, which argued that "in an unjust social system, the consciousness of persecuted people must be raised and they must band together and determinedly fight against this injustice. The elder sister in *The Younger Generation* by the end walks along this bright path."³¹ As Promise Li notes, members of *The 70's* played a substantial role in the Chinese as Official Language Movement in Hong Kong, which Lilian Lee links to the depiction of the female factory workers' strikes in *The Younger Generation*, and by the late 1970s members of *The 70's* had created the student-worker alliance and "hoped to connect the campaign to make Chinese an official language with other Hong Kong issues."³² *The 70's* was also heavily involved in the Defend Diaoyutai Movement, even organizing the making of a short 16 mm documentary about it, which was partly shot by Law Kar, and articles were also published about the blind factory strikes in *The 70's*.³³ *The Younger Generation* in fact accords with many of the issues about labor and colonial capitalist exploitation that appeared in *The 70's* and likely the only place with the resources available to produce such a film in the early 1970s was a leftist studio, yet the general neglect in *The 70's* of all commercial/studio-system-made Hong Kong cinema, alongside, one presumes, art and culture produced in the pro-Beijing leftist establishment in Hong Kong, meant it did not discuss such films. This disassociation from the official leftist circles in Hong Kong, even when they produced work that strongly linked to the concerns of *The 70's*, simply displays the fractures among the Left in Hong Kong. This brief discussion of the many contradictory, varied, or overlapping political positions of writers and the different media they published in demonstrates that reducing a critic's political position to the publication they write for is fraught with problems.

So, although the generalization above is partially inaccurate when placing film criticism in *The 70's* in relation to other Hong Kong media in the 1970s, broad partisan lines did exist, and *The 70's* was one of the publications that was most outwardly critical of both the colonial government and pro-Beijing leftist groups. This internationalist left-wing political stance colors many of its discussions on film, and we can here turn again to the article on *Yesterday*. Longzi argues that it would not matter which side won the battle between the colonial government and the

30. Lilian Lee Pik-wah, "Wo kan 'Xiao dangjia'" [My view on *The Younger Generation*], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 1007 (November 5, 1971): 47.

31. "'Xiao dangjia' de qifa—yaosi" [Inspiring *The Younger Generation*—food for thought], *Ta Kung Pao* (October 14, 1971): 8.

32. Li, "The Rise and Fall."

33. See, for instance, Wei Wei, "Shiming gongren de douzheng" [Struggle of the blind factory workers], *The 70's*, no. 24 (October 1971): 17.

zuopai during the 1967 riots since either would forcibly swallow “us” (*women*) up: “What is the government? A colonialist tool to enslave and imprison people. What are the *zuopai*? The running dogs of totalitarianism, who also want to enslave and imprison people.”

As mentioned, while Longzi was initially very excited to see the film because it had riled up the pro-Beijing leftist newspapers, he then goes on to denounce the film in the starkest of terms by stating that Lung Kong and Xi Xi, who adapted Albert Camus’s *The Plague* into the film’s script, had sold their souls to the colonial Hong Kong government, or “the colonial Hong Kong government of the English people [Yingguoren],” as he puts it. Longzi argues that the film propagates the colonial government’s ideology of Hong Kong being a “prosperous and stable” place, while completely avoiding showing any Westerners in the scenes that depict the Hong Kong government in the film³⁴ or any social problems. Longzi goes on to argue that far from showing any of the Hong Kong government’s exploitation of human rights, oppression, or discrimination, Lung Kong’s Hong Kong is instead portrayed as a kind of utopia. Longzi goes into more detail about the political conditions of the time, which is characteristic of their articles on film, and this short paragraph is worth quoting here in full to get across the anger of the review:

Luckily, the Chinese as Official Language Movement shows the true face of the colonial government.³⁵ Luckily, everybody in Hong Kong knows how many millions the Hong Kong government sends back to the impoverished UK.³⁶ Luckily, everybody knows that the Urban Council [*shizhengju*] is meaningless. Luckily every child understands that there is no democracy in colonialism. Luckily, Chinese people with a conscience all understand that the Hong Kong government is not our government, but is a colonial government.

Longzi goes on to deride *Yesterday* as being like a piece of propaganda to deceive people similar to a propaganda short film produced by the governmental

34. Almost no Hong Kong films showed Westerners in positions of power representing the colonial hierarchy at this time, perhaps partly because of censorship, although Lung Kong attempted to do this in his first film as director, *Prince of Broadcasters* (1966), in a scene set at a cocktail party. Lung also clearly shows the British flag above Stanley Prison in his second film, *Story of a Discharged Prisoner* (1967), which implicates the colonial government in the main character’s downward spiral.

35. Here, Longzi implies that this campaign (which, as mentioned above, *The 70's* was heavily involved in organizing) shows peoples’ desire to resist the colonial government that implemented English as the official language in Hong Kong.

36. Jon Halliday illustrates that out of its total expenditure in 1970, the Hong Kong government spent only 1 percent on social welfare in Hong Kong, which amounted to HK\$19,204,686, while most of the vast budget surplus of HK\$618,670,000 was sent back to London. See Jon Halliday, “Hong Kong: Britain’s Chinese Colony,” *New Left Review*, nos. 87/88 (1974): 108. Longzi’s point here is that Hong Kong was an exploited colony, while calling the UK impoverished could be referring to a number of things, perhaps a dig at the rapidly crumbling British Empire or a reference to the strength of Hong Kong’s economy in comparison to the UK’s at this time.

information service, before ending with one final denunciation of Lung Kong and Xi Xi for good measure: “To Lung Kong and Xi Xi, these two ‘Chinese people,’ I say again, ‘They definitively won’t have any tomorrow,’” a play on the title of the film implying that there was no space in the future for such, in Longzi’s eyes, progovernment cinema. While I won’t go into my own opinion about the film, I do think Longzi’s review is too harsh and lacks context: *Yesterday* undoubtedly displays a pro-establishment/elite perspective, which I think occurs partly in reaction to the politically orchestrated violence of the 1967 riots, but a lot more is also going on in the film that challenges this view too: no mention is made of the on-location shots of poverty where the plague emanates from or of the slow reaction of the colonial government, which worsens the spread of the virus. We must also remember that the version Longzi saw is the heavily cut version of the film, which originally had a running time of more than two hours. The films Lung made before *Yesterday* are also more critical toward the establishment, colonial government, and social order and stand more on the side of the people, yet as Longzi points out in his review, he had not seen any of Lung’s other films up to this point, which again highlights the general disinterest the writers of *The 70’s* had in popular Hong Kong cinema during this period. Longzi also makes no mention of the strict censorship system that made it difficult for any filmmaker around this time to be outright critical of the colonial government.

However, Longzi’s intense criticism of the film showcases the anger felt toward the colonial government and the oppression it created and a desire to see more critical perspectives in cinema on the problems caused by colonial capitalism. The review was so harsh that the editors felt moved to add a note at the end, the single instance in which this happened in relation to a film article in *The 70’s*. The editors note that they agree with Longzi’s incredibly severe criticism toward Lung Kong and Xi Xi, but that each party does not know the other, so Longzi’s review is not based on any kind of personal grudge. They then invite Lung Kong and Xi Xi to write an article in rebuttal or even to call their office for an interview if they think the review is too unreasonable or extreme, but they finish off by adding that if they think the article is reasonable then they can just ignore this editors’ note. Unfortunately, no reply from Lung or Xi appeared in later issues.

Yu Sau’s (the pen name of Augustine Mok Chiu-yu) article on Tang Shu-shuen’s *The Arch* displays a particularly keen interest in gender and feminism in the Hong Kong context and reads the film’s Ming dynasty (1368–1644) setting as allegorizing conditions in contemporary Hong Kong.³⁷ The final sentence of this article provides a good base to open up discussion on how Yu analyzes the ways *The Arch* relates to, negotiates, and challenges gender oppression and colonialism within the structures

37. Yu Sau, “Cong Tang shu xuan de dongfuren shuodao funü jiefang” [From Tang Shu-Shuen’s *The Arch* to women’s liberation], *The 70’s*, no. 15 (November 16, 1970): 13. All further quotes from this article are from this page.

一九七〇年十一月十六日

從唐書璇的董夫人說到婦女解放

題外的話：買了董夫人的場刊，看了法國世界報，實加羅文時，與金山報，李則，米勒，徐許等，竟載十幾有關夫夫人的影評和感想，再看了董夫人運動電影，有些印象就是硬要說的幾乎全給別人說過了。戲院的演技很好。

攝影和畫面很美。印度的蘇布拉蘭、米達拉和合伴的部份和歐文的合伴要算是無懈可擊。在馬尼拉中，發源蘇有印國版或是印度電版大師 Satyajit Ray 宣講的人，心機極佳與近期電版浮現了 Satyajit Ray 的作品 *The World of Apu, Devi, ...* 的對象，心裏難著，可以以回香港的印度使節來個 Satyajit Ray 電影節！

說起 Satyajit Ray 的電影，自不難想起 Ravi Shankar 和 Ali Akbar Khan 的得他由Tabla 奏出的古曲印度音樂。假如 Ray 的電影沒有了 Shankar 和 Akbar Khan 的音樂，是不完全的。同樣地，要是唐書璇的董夫人沒有了呂振聲的古琴琵琶，恐怕就沒有那麼完美吧？



Ray + 米達拉 + Shankar 和 Akbar Khan → 很有印度精神的電影。
唐書璇、郭和熙 + 呂振聲 → 很有古中國精神電影？

70年代

婦女解放：從一個曾經訪問過唐書璇的朋友口中得知，唐書璇說：「女孩子可以 Vain，可以虛榮，但男孩子一定要充實，要有實學，聽他心裏不以為然，因為要是唐書璇的曾這麼說過，顯然她並不覺得婦女的解放，實在十分迫切。」

黃芳儀（巴黎大學比較文學系教授，以宗教哲學著作及翻譯老舍名著）說董夫人這部電影富有中國民族風格，大導演李立宏、胡格也說：「董夫人」是借用中國傳統神完成的某種道德劇。」

中國的舊社會，是一個壓迫女性的社會。中國千古不變的文化，是以男性為中心的文化，數千年來的文化傳統，幾乎沒有一點兒的男女平等，女子說：「女人與女人難免也。」以女人作小人。妻子難不助夫休妻。甚麼的大清洋例，三妻四妾，簡直就是「合法強姦」，女孩子便只能處於中間，燒飯，作女紅，織布。董夫人的女兒維玲不說說：「如果我不是女孩子就好了，我可以參軍，我可以到處遊歷，可以到京都！」

楊財官與董老太太下棋的時候，維玲在旁觀看，忍不住替老太太下了一盤棋。楊財官說：「懶棋不動我兒子！」維玲答說：「我可不是君子呀！」董老太太說：「手不回天丈夫！」維玲也答道：「我也不是大丈夫啊！」

中時節實月，楊財官，張二叔和這個電語，行誼令時作對，只聽見羅英、楊財官你一句我一句的，維玲和董老太太在旁睜眼而已。

在「董夫人」這齣戲裏，男人和女人在日常生活中演演的，是確定清楚劃分了的，男人當兵，割禾，運磚呀，還得陪官。女人嗎，便只不斷地來回她們織布，織呢，在可說洗衣機，作女紅。「董夫人」的時代是文明，但在今時今日的香港，女人不仍然是被壓迫嗎？在政府工作的女公務員到一九七五年始能得與男同事同酬，在政治上，除梁錫恩和李秀華二兩位女議員外，香港的女人絕無政治權力；在大機構，社團及各種組織的主要負責人有多少個是女人？我們有多少個女醫生？有多少個女導演？有多少個女編劇？有多少個女牧師？為甚麼女人只配在家料理家務，買雜貨？為甚麼女人只能在寫字樓裏打字、作速記？為甚麼電子廠的女工薪水特別低呢？

雖然沒有確實的數字，可以肯定的是：接受過上層教育的男孩子比女孩子多！有機會到外國讀書的男孩子比女孩子也多！在香港，女人與男人接受教育的機會不平等，就業機會不平等，這是因為男人的智力不如男人嗎？（有小部份人會說是的，但他們那是「性主義者」，一如「種族主義者」一樣不應存在。）不，這是以男人為中心的社會對女性的壓迫，用以保存他們在社會上的特權地位的！

羅許人說：「女人打理家務是她的特長呀，這也是她們所喜愛的。」這也是在「董夫人」這齣電影裏，張二叔在董老太太死後



「替董夫人弄了一頓飯，董夫人不是說——「我習慣了吃西餐，應由我自己來好了」，但我想起這句話的正確性實在值得再想想。」

男人不一樣可以燒飯煮食，洗熨衣服嗎？為甚麼一生下來女孩子的玩的就是洋娃娃，換洗衣車，使她們心理上根深蒂固地相信她們長大之後，就只能消閒一生在廚房裏，在屋子裏？為甚麼沒有女政務科男牧師呢？要知道天天燒飯煮食，打掃清潔地方，洗熨衣服，並非甚麼的真心樂事，要不然，我們便不須要發明電飯煲，電動洗衣機，電動洗碟機去減少家庭主婦的悶悶不樂。因為甚麼男人不可以分以半，半家庭，讓女人們能夠發揮她們在各方面——文學上、政治上、藝術上、電影上、科學上——的潛能？發揮她們的天才，幹些有前途性的工作。

問題不是女人有沒有潛能，答案是肯定的，問題的確在：在一個以男性為中心的社會，女人受壓迫，她們根本沒有機會發揮她們的才智呀！

話說回唐書璇的「董夫人」，賣電影票的董夫人，在某一角度看去，也似乎是頗為解放的哩！不是吧，董夫人是個體面的老師，每天教村小孩子讀書寫字，她也是村中的董大夫，替患病的孩子看診呀。還有她主動地追求楊財官。這些現象在一般壓迫女性的中國傳統社會下，恐怕是很稀有的吧？這會不會是唐書璇意識地要求男人的解放？

然而顯然，董夫人都過了內心的種種矛盾，甘願接受單苦悶的單生生涯，接受了別人為她的良苦用心的牌帖，接受了一個壓迫女性的社會為她的命運——不是嗎？歐陽中世時時代的貞貞烈女，咱們中國用的那貞貞節牌帖！

董夫人的牌帖上說：「只此可風。」

我說：「甚麼吧！（不別別忘的離字離。）」

※

後記：在董夫人的日子裏，女人被壓迫，男人也同樣被壓迫，不同的只是程度上有異吧了。可有留意，皇上的使節出使官的時候，董夫人在，董夫人在，董夫人壽的男人，不同樣地要下跪叩首嗎？

在香港的中國人都是二等公民，只不過中國女人們是三等公民吧了。

Figure 6.2: Yu Sau, "Cong Tang Shuxuan de Dongfuren shuodao funü jiefang" [From Tang Shu-Shuen's *The Arch* to women's liberation], *The 70's*, no. 15 (1970): 13. Courtesy of Mok Chiu-yu.

of Hong Kong society: "In Hong Kong, Chinese people are second-class citizens, but Chinese women are third-class citizens." This blunt statement attacking the colonial government, its racist status quo, and more broadly the place of women within a patriarchal society results from how Yu's discussion of *The Arch* prompts and directs criticism at the overlapping or interrelated strands of colonial capitalism and Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong's local conditions. Yu begins by outlining how Chinese society and culture had long placed men at its center while women were expected to stay in the home to cook, sew, and weave. Yu then discusses how in *The Arch* men's and women's roles are in general clearly separated, with men serving as soldiers and in paddy harvesting, building arches, and transmitting imperial edicts, while women consistently see women in the film cooking, sewing, weaving, and washing clothes in the river. However, Yu then offers a countermove by arguing that Tang challenges this socially constructed division of gender roles by analyzing how, from a certain angle, Madam Tung is quite liberated because she teaches the children in the village how to write; she is the village doctor and treats sick children and so moves beyond the confines of the home. Yu also points out that Madam

Tung's daughter Wei Ling rebels against traditional social expectations by pursuing the male soldier Yang Kwan in one scene, while in another, after contextualizing how women were oppressed in feudal China, gives an example of this when Wei Ling says, "It would be so much better if I wasn't a women, so then I could join the army, roam around to my heart's content, and go to the capital city!" Yu asks whether Tang's choice to represent women in a more progressive way, especially in the context of feudal China, is an expression of her subconscious demand for female liberation within the context of contemporary Hong Kong.

Yu links the Ming dynasty setting of *The Arch* to contemporary Hong Kong, and asks, "Aren't women still oppressed in Hong Kong today?" A large section of this article is then devoted to outlining how Hong Kong society is structured around men at the center and questions why so few women are in prominent positions, including as filmmakers, lawyers, and politicians, and also why women are always assigned roles such as typist, housewife, and receptionist before questioning why the salaries of female electronics factory workers are the lowest of all. Many other issues are raised in relation to the inequality of men and women in society before Yu asks why men cannot also take half the burden of housework so that women can also flourish in literature, arts, film, politics, science, or in whatever other area they would like to. This attention to the allegorical potential of *The Arch* in consistently relating its meaning to contemporary Hong Kong seems to be largely justified in view of Tang's next three films, which all to varying degrees depict (patriarchal) capitalism in contemporary Hong Kong in critical and negative terms.

To highlight how rare this critical approach to patriarchal society in Yu's reading of Tang's film was during this period in Hong Kong film criticism, we can turn to Yau Ching's definitive study of Tang Shu-shuen. Yau Ching argues that the start of *The Arch* contains a "juxtaposition between a male-dominated exterior marked by action, community, violence, and mobility versus a female-centred interior overlaid with a sense of confinement, stagnancy, and solitude," before the remainder of the film's narrative finds space to constantly challenge this dualism.³⁸ Yau Ching, however, singles out the way many critics in Hong Kong at the time in their discussions on Tang and *The Arch* "fail to register not only the critique of patriarchy but also that of nationalism in her work, and therefore also miss her interrogation of the relationship between the two."³⁹ She also notes that critics took many different approaches to *The Arch*, including humanistic, racialized, Westernized, feminized, and aesthetic, but none utilized a feminist framework.⁴⁰ As discussed above, however, the article on *The Arch* in *The 70's* does take into account the issue of women's oppression in Hong Kong society and how Tang negotiates it allegorically

38. Yau Ching, *Filming Margins: Tang Shu Shuen, a Forgotten Hong Kong Woman Director* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 48.

39. Yau, *Filming Margins*, 65.

40. Yau, *Filming Margins*, 30.

in *The Arch*. It is a sign of the marginalization of *The 70's* that this review does not appear in Yau Ching's overview of film criticism on *The Arch*, which more broadly reflects the complete invisibility of the film criticism in *The 70's*. Yau Ching analyzes in far more detail Tang's treatment of notions of female desire, subjectivity, and the female gaze aesthetically, but it is interesting that it was in *The 70's* that we find an analysis of *The Arch* closest to Yau Ching's anti-patriarchal perspective. This is another example of how many of the writers in *The 70's* were pursuing a committed film criticism that saw feminism as being a vital component in the broader struggle against the colonial capitalist status quo in Hong Kong, which was often neglected in other venues of film criticism during this period.

Based on how illuminating these two articles are, the neglect in *The 70's* of popular Hong Kong cinema seems all the more disappointing. If it had performed similar political readings of popular Hong Kong films within the sociopolitical contexts they emerged in, it would undoubtedly have contributed much to our understanding of the historical and ideological development of Hong Kong cinema.

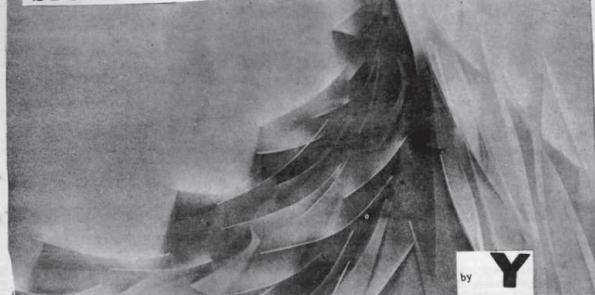
The title of the final article on Hong Kong cinema that appeared in *The 70's* is fairly self-explanatory: "Invitation to HK's Young Filmmakers: Stop What You Are Doing!"⁴¹ It is one of the only articles on film that was written in English, although the reasons for this are unclear. The author, Y, is deeply critical of filmmakers in Hong Kong copying Western cinema to the extent that Hong Kong people are losing their Chinese identities under the influence of this Westernization. It is not entirely clear what type of film Y is talking about since he or she names no names, but alongside popular Hong Kong cinema being implied, Y does particularly emphasize the HK College Cine Club's screening of films in September 1970 at City Hall, a series that focused on independently made experimental Hong Kong films by mainly young filmmakers. In relation to Hong Kong filmmakers, Y argues, "Not only are they copying in their interpretation of their stories; they also copy in the contents of their stories. In other words, except for the fact that the faces in the films look Chinese, I can see nothing in them that's Chinese. The worlds these filmmakers create in their films are not Chinese; they bear, instead, a closer resemblance to the Western filmmakers, whose work these films are copied upon. It is not even the actual world of these young filmmakers from HK: I do not see HK in their films."⁴² Y further elaborates on this disconnect from the realities of Hong Kong society in cinema:

What do our young filmmakers tell us in their films? Not HK as it is. Their films touch only the superficial surface of their subject matter. Are they afraid to look deeper into it? . . . I feel that our filmmakers, if they continue to live in

41. Y, "Invitation to HK's Young Filmmakers: Stop What You Are Doing!," *The 70's*, no. 16 (December 12, 1970): 14–15.

42. Y, "Invitation," 15.

INVITATION TO HK'S YOUNG FILMMAKERS: STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING!



by

Y

The fact that people in Hong Kong do find movies, Hollywood style, and their corrupting by-products such as the movie-star world of the major production companies agreeable—even admirable—is nothing unusual. After all, the movie industry is just one more business concern in HK with profit as its sole aim and purpose. (At whose expense such profits are arrived at, however, is not one of their concerns.) And anyone looking into the staggering success of the British colonization of 4 million Chinese cannot ignore the major contribution to it from the movies imported into HK and made locally there. From a Chinese point of view, however, the movies in HK have actually done more harm than good to this society of once-recognizable Chinese persons.

Over the past few years, in HK, a growing number of young persons are demanding that the movies they pay to see make "sense", have something to "say", and be relevant to life. Of this growing number, one thing has emerged: a number of them have taken to making their own movies. This evolution is a significant event for HK, since motion picture is the most powerful of all media of mass communication. It is these serious young filmmakers of HK, I feel, who will be able — if they should choose to commit themselves to it — to turn HK around on its feet one day and bring the people of HK to face themselves: to face the fact that they are dangerously losing their identity as Chinese persons, getting closer with each day to becoming a faceless 4 million "persons".

But when I think of what these young filmmakers are producing to date, I do not feel the first joys of any beginning hope. I feel only fear, fear that instead of helping the people to recognize a damning danger in time, they are leading us further into the doom of becoming a faceless society, such as that of modern Japan.

My fears are confirmed when I sat through the HK College Cine Club's presentation of films this summer (City Hall, 11th Sept. 1970. ed.). In what follows, I will try to analyse the present situation in HK with particular emphasis on the HK College Cine Club.

First, and the gravest mistake we are making is to again follow the ways of the West with an undoubting blindness. This is nothing unusual, coming from young persons growing up in HK and going through those years of Westernization both in school and at home. We see its results manifested everywhere we turn our eyes: in the pop music in HK (rock as well as folk music), in the fashions, in the ways people spend their leisure time. Western ways are not necessarily bad throughout. Westernization is. For it becomes poison when it dominates the mind of a non-Westerner. And in the HK youths, it has already made its way to their minds. We think Western! We don't question what we, Chinese by blood, are becoming. This is equally true in the films presented by the College Cine Club. Filmmaking in HK has been synonymous with film-copying of the Western cinema. There is a distinct difference between copying and borrowing from other people's works. But our young filmmakers of HK are also copying from European films. (Here I must say I am glad they at least are not copying from Hollywood.) Not only are they copying in their interpretation of their stories; they also copy in the contents of their stories. In other words, except for the fact that the faces in the films look Chinese, I can see nothing in them that's Chinese. The words these filmmakers create in their films are not Chinese; they bear, instead, a closer resemblance to the Western filmmakers, whose work these films are copied upon. It is not even the actual world of these young filmmakers from HK. I do not see HK in their films.

What then is the matter with us? Are we so lacking in self-confidence, of our ability to create something original? Or is it our subconsciously feeling ashamed for our Chinese face and blood that we feel we have to create in the Western vein in order to be recognized as creative artists? Then I should inform you now that the movies HK and Taiwan, and other areas in Southeast Asia, have been producing to date are a laughing stock in the film world. For there is nothing more worthy of being looked down upon than another race of people trying so hard to be what they are not, to make themselves

Second, these filmmakers are not being honest to the medium of film. I have the impression that most of them do take the cinema as an art, and that they seriously want to produce works of art. It is therefore in this context that I consider them dishonest: to the audience, and most of all, to themselves, as filmmakers. Too often is their love of gimmicks, playing with bizarre camera angles, etc. Experimentation can be the way to new realms in the world of cinema, and many of HK's young filmmakers have taken an interest in the so-called Experimental films. But as "experimented" by our filmmakers, it becomes another instance of HK youths trying to be cool. One possible explanation is that they have been feeding themselves with the wrong films, and then running home afterwards to reproduce, to re-gurgitate, these "something new from the West!" Another possible explanation is that they have been playing the scientist without understanding the concept of experimentation in the films they see. The truly creative filmmakers do not experiment with new ideas for the sake of excitement. They experiment out of the need for new forms of expression. And when they do make use of the new idea, it is because its use is justified with respect to the context of that particular film.

It is frightening, how we have let advertisements and the reviews written for commercial interest forge our opinions. So much so that we don't even feel shame or disgust — not enough for us to come out in protest — for the kind of "art" that's been pouring out of HK. Its Asian Film Festival, its formidable-sounding (but only in sound) photographic exhibitions, its likewise formidable-sounding pop music. Instead, even our filmmakers have joined in the parade.

Third, the filmmakers, in their films, have demonstrated a ghastly lack of life experience. HK in a terribly complicated society — though also an equally corrupt one — and anyone who wants to cannot fail to be exposed to the realities of life no matter where he happens to be in HK: in the upper, middle, or lower class, in school, at home, or just anywhere. And he doesn't have to be over 30 to have tasted enough to understand the facts of life. People

realize how ignorant they are. Because if you want, and if you have the courage, to confront reality, you don't need to go to college abroad: you have it, right in front of your eyes, in HK! But what do our young filmmakers tell us in their films? Not HK as it is. Their films touch only on the superficial surface of their subject matter. Are they afraid to look deeper into it? Or are they so very insensitive to life? They who, by their age, are among the young people in today's world who are demanding and instituting changes in social, economic, as well as political systems, who cry foul at the hypocrisy of the adult world?

I feel that our filmmakers, if they continue to live in the self-centered, self-indulgent world their films reveal, are doing themselves more harm than good. They are trapping themselves in the bourgeois world. (Yes, even the student world can be terribly bourgeois!) The bourgeois experiences enable only the superficialities of life, unable to feel, unable to understand the life of anyone who has not his bourgeois mentality and material trappings. Our filmmakers have further alienated themselves from the HK society at large. It seems that in the arrogance so typical of the "educated" scholars, they have built around themselves the ivory towers of the "intellectual". As a result, their works are irrelevant to their society. If we look at the truly great filmmakers of today, we find that they achieve their greatness by virtue of living and creating in a real world. It is for this that people like Bergman, Godard, Chabrol, P. Gervi, etc. are admired: not because they give us beautiful images on film, but because they have gotten through to the human substance in their films.

This brings me to what seems to be plaguing the young people of HK most: they hear about who is being hailed as "great" in the Western world, either from magazines or from newspaper stories, and they simply echo the same words of praise, without understanding why, without doubting if that Mr. So-and-So is really that "great." This is why, for instance, HK's Studio One has so far been unchallenged — not to say criticized — in its selection of films, particularly in its over-all low quality reviews of those films in its mostly bulletin. (Most of these reviews were lifted straight out of film magazines.)

And even there, they are poor select-

ing, reflecting no doubt the taste of



Figure 6.3: Y, "Invitation to HK's Young Filmmakers: Stop What You Are Doing," *The 70's*, no. 16 (1970): 14–15. Courtesy of Mok Chiu-yu.

the self-centered, self-indulgent world their films reveal, are doing themselves more harm than good. They are trapping themselves in the bourgeois world. (Yes, even the student world can be terribly bourgeois!) The bourgeois experiences only the superficialities of life, unable to feel, unable to understand the life of anyone who has not his bourgeois mentality and material trappings. Our filmmakers have further alienated themselves from HK society at large.⁴³

There were similar, although slightly less critical, discussions taking place in the CSW, which also related more directly to popular cinema. For instance, Xing Yun, writing in 1966, welcomed the new popular wave of youth movies from around 1965 starring Cantonese film idols such as Connie Chan and Josephine Siao, since the themes and subjects of these films related more directly to modern life and reality in Hong Kong compared to the overproduction of *wuxia* and period costume movies that were “completely divorced from reality,” although Xing still criticizes the new youth films for containing stereotyped generic formulas that were often superficially naive and sentimental.⁴⁴ Xing’s argument is that since youth movies were set in contemporary times at least a little of the reality of the times filtered into some of these films, although if Y had actually seen any of these films he or she would likely have been highly critical of them too for being too Westernized and lacking a true sense of what Hong Kong was actually like.

In 1965, Sek Kei had a tentatively more hopeful, although still critical, argument than the one articulated by Y, but again with the emphasis on commercially popular genre cinema rather than independent experimental cinema. Sek argued that Cantonese films, when compared to Mandarin films, belonged to the (Hong Kong) locals and so catered to the tastes of mass audiences, and that the way they took their cues from the audiences’ lives and emotions was a naturalistic path. “If the directors of such films can keep conscientiously exploring in this direction, the fruits of such exploration could become part of the local culture, which is the basis for art. If these films are separated from real life, they cannot be said to belong to [local] culture.”⁴⁵ The latter part of this argument is similar to Y’s, which Sek further confirms when he argues that the majority of recent Cantonese films “have devolved into cliché, vulgarity, and formulaic content. They also contain outdated thoughts and are quite distanced from today’s reality.” However, Sek has clearly seen far more contemporary Hong Kong films than Y has and takes a more conciliatory approach by arguing that despite gimmicks being added to their old fashioned formulas for commercial reasons, Cantonese films “depict ordinary things like the reality of the

43. Y, “Invitation,” 15.

44. Xing Yun, “Caise qingchun: Xianjieduan yue pian” [*Colourful Youth: Current period of Cantonese films*], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 736 (August 26, 1966): 73.

45. Sek Kei, “Yueyu pian de zaipingjia” [Reevaluating Cantonese films], *Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao* [Chinese student weekly], no. 699 (December 10, 1965): 71. All further quotes from this article are from this page.

huge disparity between the rich and the poor, the contradictions in family life, and the relationships between people in society, [within which] one can see signs of a critique directed at society and a satire of everyday reality.” Sek argues that under these conditions, “there is a great possibility for Cantonese films to develop local characteristics, but if the initiative to consciously take action does not occur, then Cantonese films will be caught in a double bind between forced local sentiment and a fake foreignness.” This “faked foreignness” is also what Y is criticizing above, both writers taking the view that imitation of films from the West was damaging Hong Kong cinema’s development.

Sek’s conclusion to his article also overlaps with one of Y’s arguments about how Hong Kong filmmakers could go about depicting Hong Kong in film in a more realistic, or lifelike, way. Sek suggests that commercial radio broadcasting in 1965, which was flourishing and popular with Hong Kong people, was more successful than Cantonese cinema, and the themes of these radio plays “are mainly drawn from ordinary, everyday life or from real-life dramas taken from current news stories. . . . [Cantonese filmmakers] should study the way the style of the radio plays is created in more depth. [Not doing this] is currently the biggest deficiency in Cantonese cinema.” Dovetailing with this argument, Y argues that “if we look at the truly great filmmakers of today, we find that they achieve their greatness by virtue of living and creating in a real world.”⁴⁶ Y continues that filmmakers should open their eyes and tune their ears to the life going on around them from cafes and streets to rich homes or slum areas. “Look and see what real people are like. Look at their face, their hands, their feet: when they laugh, when they cry, when they are hungry, when they are angry. Don’t do anything now: don’t go running for your camera or your typewriter. Just look and listen. And then, when you honestly force yourself to live in the world of real people, one day a story will come to you—a story you really want to tell because you have lived through it.”⁴⁷ This is similar to Sek’s point about radio dramas focusing on ordinary everyday life, although Y becomes more political in a characteristic way for a film article in *The 70’s*, asking, “Are the films we make justified in the money and time spent on them when so many people in HK are paying for a bowl of white rice with blood, sweat, and tears of humiliations at the hands of heartless exploiters?”⁴⁸ Y also makes it clear that filmmakers should give great thought to the masses in Hong Kong society, the working people, and suggests that filmmakers should seriously consider how they relate to people in different walks of life in Hong Kong society. Y concludes by arguing that the filmmaker must “de-educate himself and learn anew from the People. He must now begin to live in the world of the People; and it is from their world that he must create.”⁴⁹ It is

46. Y, “Invitation,” 15.

47. Y, “Invitation,” 14.

48. Y, “Invitation,” 14.

49. Y, “Invitation,” 14.

interesting to note that several years later some Hong Kong New Wave filmmakers rigorously took up this call in their television work and films. Allen Fong especially seems to have answered this call with his television work depicting the lives of the poor and marginalized in a more neorealist manner. In his film *Ah Ying* (1984), a filmmaker who is struggling to write a script for his debut film asks the titular working-class character Ah Ying if he can go and see where she works selling fish at a market stall, almost as if in direct reply to Y's article about the need for filmmakers to spend more time in different environments to experience life as it is lived.

Coda: Films from outside Hong Kong

The 70's discussed a wide variety of films made in Europe, Japan, and America; alongside those mentioned near the start of this article, they included articles focusing on films directed by Robert Bresson, Claude Chabrol, Federico Fellini, Werner Herzog, Masaki Kobayashi, Roman Polanski, Alain Resnais, Ken Russell, and Hiroshi Teshigahara. Because of issues of space, in this final section I will concentrate on two articles that relate to Michelangelo Antonioni, since the focus of these articles on how cinema interacts with capitalism and Chinese Communist Party politics outline many of *The 70's*' concerns with cinema and society. Yu Sau's article on *Zabriskie Point* that appeared in Issue 9 is fascinating for the attention it pays to the violence in capitalist societies.⁵⁰ Yu pays great attention to the controversies of *Zabriskie Point's* production, detailing the pressures filmmakers in Hollywood faced if they attempted to make progressive films dealing with left-wing politics. For instance, Yu illustrates that because rumors were spread around Hollywood that Antonioni was planning to shoot "a dirty, anti-American film about hippies making love, many of the people working on the film received threats and warnings, with some train companies refusing to transport equipment or staff working on the film!" Yu also mentions that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) began tapping the lead actors' phones as well as checking their mail after somebody working on the film was accused of inciting a riot during the shooting of the university demonstration on location. This attention to the production context is a welcome reminder of the censorship and self-censorship that exists in Hollywood, especially in the aftermath of the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings and the blacklisting and imprisonment of left-wing film workers in the United States. It is surprising then that the writers at *The 70's* did not pay more attention to this type of context in Hong Kong in their writing on Hong Kong cinema.

50. Yu Sau, "Antonioni's America: Meiguo wenming de miewang" [Antonioni's America: The destruction of American civilization], *The 70's*, no. 9 (June 16, 1970): 7. All further quotes from this article are from this page.

ANTONIONI'S AMERICA

(安東尼奧尼的Zabriskie Point 崇拜者已無遺漏餘味，莫寧靜)

從大導演安東尼奧尼繼「春光乍洩」(Blow-up)之後，花了六百萬美元，費了兩年時間，拍攝了Zabriskie Point。Zabriskie Point 是安東尼奧尼的第三部彩色電影，第二套全在外國拍攝的影片。三年前的 Blow-up 在倫敦得過，今年的 Zabriskie Point 卻沒能得過「英國藍電影獎」(Time) 一類文化的「凱旋」(Wall St. Tounai)，「非常令人反感」(New York Post)，「使人憤憤不成熟」(Judith Crist)，「令人厭惡及奇劣的作品」(Women's Wear Daily)。然而 Zabriskie Point 可能是你一生中所能看到的最佳電影。無論如何，要是你對學生運動有興趣和對社會有所不滿，Zabriskie Point 便是一部非看不可的電影！

製作中的重重困難

Zabriskie Point 是安東尼奧尼眼中美國社會的形象，給美國的社會帶來了一個嚴厲的大批判。雜誌「一些自由保守派的雜誌」對 Zabriskie Point 絕無好評！

由於安東尼奧尼這套電影不留餘地地攻擊美國現社會，拍攝過程十分艱巨，受到各方面千方百計地阻撓。甚至攝影器材運到用的時候機頭已經拆壞了。一位安東尼奧尼的副本，部份竟然在美商公司深處的辦公室裡竊去。一間，在整個荷里活和南加里福尼亞州又傳遍了安東尼奧尼在籌拍一部內閣國難，總統生命危殆的政變反美電影。於是乎電影的工作人員受到種種的威脅、警告、警備、軍備路公司也拒絕搬運器材或接洽工作人員。

電影的主要外景，必須在死亡谷(Death Valley)的 Zabriskie Point 拍攝，因為它有如月球表面的景象，產給一種孤寂之感。然而由於導演安東尼奧尼死流二萬哩安東尼奧尼連帶一羣，當地人拒絕在初允許安東尼奧尼使用該區拍攝外景，致使外景隊損失數星期的工作時間。經過一番唇舌，最後才得到救人的同意。

在拍大馬示威實景的時候，該片的工作人員竟被指為煽動暴亂，聯邦調查局甚至時時跟蹤該片的男女主角，偷錄他們的電話，強拆信件。更荒唐的主角Mark Frechette，影片人 Harrison Starr 最可笑的，卻是 Sacramento 的高法法庭去研究該片工作人員有沒有觸犯一條禁止「白奴」輸運的法律！

然而克服了困難，所有都拍好的時候，「被拆又再起」——前任美國總統林登(Louis J. Folk 要求把所有「有關的」的計數全部剪去！幸而美國的新報章 James I. Aubrey 是位開明之士，對安東尼奧尼甚為尊敬，力促後者根據自己意願，重新整理電影影片。及至安東尼奧尼再度完成剪接之後，Aubrey 熱烈欣賞安東尼奧尼：「這可能是我一生中看到的最佳影片！」

對「既成制度」的反抗

在 Zabriskie Point 這套片子裏，安東尼奧尼很明顯地表現他對美國社會的不滿。無可否認，他是站在「反對既成制度」(anti-establishment)的隊伍之中的；他相信這個社會必須改變，而且必須急劇的改變！Zabriskie Point 是屬於美國社會，現代社會與現代人的一齣電影。它是鬧乎年有的，割離的(alienated)一代的電影。安東尼奧尼的靈感，得自一段小小的新聞故事——一個年青的嬉皮士，在一個機場租了一架私人飛機，把它塗上了花朵，與「和平」和「愛」的標號，然後飛往西貢，但回航時撞機身亡。

Zabriskie Point 的主人翁馬可(Mark, Mark Frechette 扮演，很像當年的古士甸！)是一個大學生，在一次大學示威事件中，目睹警察(別稱 Pigs「豬豬」)強用暴力對待示威者，他們用高壓水龍砲後一連串破壞校舍的學生弄出建築物，無理射殺了一個黑人學生。馬可憤怒之餘，幾乎用槍射死那個殺害同學的警察。然而馬可

美國文明的滅亡

如 秀

俾即先他發射，警察因之倒地而死，可是馬可受傷；他使他的女人在飛機上偷了一架小型飛機，朝西貢死亡谷飛去。在死亡谷的上空，那這一位紅色的女子(Osra Hartin)正在駕車往她的丈夫老在沙漠地區建成的豪華寓所。馬可落在死亡谷的 Zabriskie Point 不久之後，在千萬年的靜石叢中，熱沙之上兩人便愛愛起來，這些如夢的優美結局，極富想像之前，十分純潔；銀幕上用疊及分別開頭映出一對一對對及三對及無數對的男女！在荒蕪蒼涼的死亡谷裏，象徵着在美國唯一剩下的愛及自由。

馬可決定了嚴厲的軌。她藉協助他在機上塗上一些迷幻彩色，然而當他降落的時候，該架的警察卻可能亂槍打死，她對症以車頭裏的收音機聽到馬可被殺的消息。她愉快地走到她的豪華寓所，發現老板將近成一般大生意。她利亞羅米站在墳墓之下，僵直了身，又駕車離去，在電影的最後三分鐘，我們看到了她的死——好一座荒蕪中的豪華寓所，激烈地爆炸了。攝影師很技巧地用幾鏡頭，從不同的角度，以燦爛的七彩，拍攝了冰櫃，電氣機，及整座屋宇變為廢墟！

裡映人性的社會

Zabriskie Point 是一部很美麗的電影，它的每一個鏡頭，每一個片斷都強調了安東尼奧尼的主題——美國社會是一個殘酷的，可怕的，非理性的，埋沒人性的社會。安東尼奧尼藉着 Zabriskie Point，指出了在今日的美國社會，人只不過是機器裏的螺絲釘，個人英雄主義機會發展，人感覺被強迫，感覺得軟弱無力，對自己的工作感到完全沒有控制力，完全感到恐懼。片子中的主角利亞羅米是一個很好的例子。他幾千萬萬的藍領及白領工人，完全受到一小塊人的操縱，然而在片中他利亞羅米的老婆就是自由的人嗎？當他出入豪華酒樓，參加賭博酒會，擁有著富有的住宅，與及流動的積蓄，他是自由的個人嗎？不在一個資本主義的工化社會的奴才，人只為了爭取豐厚的利潤，最大的效率，最高的消費而存在，利亞羅米的老婆，亦不過是金錢，汽車和消費品的奴隸而已！她這類的奴才不過是一個龐大的「米格機器」Megamachine 的齒輪吧！在這樣的一個混濁的社會下，便只有由一些受過教育而又願意思想的學生和知識份子，與及二百多年來備受壓迫的黑人，領導及促成「反對既成制度」的運動。

安東尼奧尼很喜歡並讚美美國社會階級後的暴力。先是大學中或黑人學生被射殺，後是馬可機中伏，都被美國社會「既成制度」(establishment)暴力政策的原形暴露。這些暴力的表現，在美國社會無時無刻不在上演着，早在丁爾斯婦女於蒙哥馬利領導民權運動時，千百名黑人軍人給警察打傷流血。最近的芝加哥黑豹黨員被亂槍射殺及 Kent State College 四名學生被國防軍殺害，亦是種在美國社會的暴力底表演！安東尼奧尼以馬可與他後用以對付警察，指出警察無用暴力，學生生命更加危險。然而在資本主義工化社會裏的警察，也是機器裏的螺絲釘，他們可會改變的嗎？

馬可空機飛抵死亡谷，邂逅利亞羅米，在幽谷熱沙之中赤身愛愛，表現出美國年青人在尋找新的價值觀念，而在學生鬥爭風潮中，性的解放與非常重要的。還在十年前，跟隨着中國的五四運動，就是女權的運動，當時學生運動力取男女平等，當今美國學生爭取的，同樣是女權、男女平等、還加上性的解放。他們發覺到一個強而無威的社會，用性的關係來控制它的一份子！教育普及及父母不去輸送種種的性教育，卻以時刻監視年青人，給予種種錯誤的恐懼，培養種種無理的禁忌，所以他們要求的是絕對自由！

安東尼奧尼在 Zabriskie Point 最後給予我們的答案是全盤的毀滅，他的願望是否真的如此，我們不用去猜測——但安東尼奧尼的表現手法是強烈的：豪華寓所的爆炸情景，一個角度的景象緊接着另外一個角度的景象，觀眾在螢幕上看到了我們這個工化社會——既成制度的崩潰，零碎的殘骸在銀幕上飄浮、埋葬……

Zabriskie Point 可給予我們一些生於



Figure 6.4: Yu Sau, "Antonioni's America: Meiguo weming de miwang" [Antonioni's America: The destruction of American civilization], *The 70's*, no. 9 (1970): 7. Courtesy of Mok Chiu-yu.

Yu argues that every shot and sequence in the film emphasizes Antonioni's themes: that US society is horrifying, lacks rationality, and stifles humanity. "*Zabriskie Point's* depiction of American society points toward people just being cogs in the machine, without the conditions to foster personal growth, where feelings are shattered and hopeless, people have no control of their jobs or the goods they produce, and feel isolated or separated from one another." Yu points out that this critique also extends to the bosses and rich characters, who are also depicted as not being free. Yu's reading of the film argues that the reason for this is because "in a capitalist society, people live only to fight over the largest profits, greatest efficiency, and to consume great amounts, and [the boss in the film] is just a slave to money, efficiency, and consumer goods."

Yu then demonstrates the appeal of *Zabriskie Point*: "The film shows in this chaotic society that only students and intellectuals who have received an education and are willing to think [*sixiang*], as well as Black people who have been oppressed for over 200 years, can lead and facilitate a movement that will oppose this system [the establishment]." This is precisely what *The 70's* writers attempted to do themselves with their magazine: critique and organize against, to the extent they could under a severely strict colonial regime, anything that stifled or exploited humanity in Hong Kong's colonial capitalist conditions.

Just like his article on *The Arch*, Yu attends closely to how *Zabriskie Point* negotiates oppression in patriarchal capitalist society. Yu writes that Antonioni's attention to revealing the hidden violence in American society can be seen when the Black student is shot and killed near the start of the film. Yu compares this to the type of violence that is constant in US society, including the thousands of Black people brutally beaten by police during the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. Yu also mentions that four students were killed by Ohio National Guard troops at Kent State University and that recently a Chicago Black Panther was shot to death. Yu must be referring to Fred Hampton, who was assassinated by police in 1969. The Black Panther Party set up a free breakfast program to feed thousands of hungry children across the country. FBI head J Edgar Hoover claimed that this Breakfast for Children Program was "potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the Black Panther Party and destroy what it stands for."⁵¹ This is the type of hidden violence Yu refers to, and he asks whether the police can ever change when "the police are also cogs in the capitalist system."

Yu also connects the film to the sexual liberation movement. He analyzes the scene where the two young characters make love on the sand dunes as representing young Americans searching for new concepts of value, and in this process of student struggle, sexual liberation is extremely important. Yu compares it to the

51. Victoria M. Massie, "The Most Radical Thing the Black Panthers Did Was Give Kids Free Breakfast," *Vox*, October 15, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/2/14/10981986/black-panthers-breakfast-beyonce>.

May Fourth Movement in China that took place decades previously, when students were fighting for women's emancipation and equality between the sexes, just as the US students are fighting for here, but the US students have added the extra component of sexual liberation. Yu ends his article speculating on the extent to which cinema can also serve as a social tool or instigator of change: "Could *Zabriskie Point* give young people a little bit of inspiration?" The way Yu draws together issues around resistance against police/state violence, sexual liberation, and gender equality demonstrates how he sees them all as essential components of a resistance against the dehumanizing aspects of patriarchal capitalist society.

Yu's linkage of *Zabriskie Point* to the May Fourth Movement in China is also an example of the consistent focus on mainland Chinese society, culture, and politics in *The 70's*. As discussed already, *The 70's* was often highly critical of Beijing and was no supporter of the Beijing regime. In relation to film, and connecting back to Antonioni, we can see this interest in Chinese politics surface again in the decision to translate Michael Stern's 1974 interview article with Antonioni, "Antonioni: Enemy of the People," into Chinese, which was published in August 1975 in Issue 31 of *The 70's*.⁵² This article focuses on Antonioni's *Chung kuo* (1972) documentary that he shot in China. Upon the film's release in Italy and elsewhere, Stern's article outlines how Antonioni was accused of "imperialistic cultural espionage" by the People's Republic of China (PRC) for, in their argument, the distorted view he presented of China, which included its lack of economic progress.⁵³ Jiwei Xiao notes that the PRC press, including the *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*), denounced Antonioni as a reactionary revisionist and a fascist and berated him for his "hostility towards Chinese people."⁵⁴ As well as banning the film, Chinese diplomats attempted to block its release in different European countries.⁵⁵ In the interview with Stern, Antonioni stated, "It could be that the Chinese who invited me and assisted me in my work were somewhat liberal in their thought and comprehensive in their attitude. They approved footage that did not fit their orthodoxy. It might be rivalry between them and a more intolerant group. Or it could be the rivalry of men with ideas in a power struggle within the establishment. Or it may have served as an excuse to bring about a showdown between Chou En-lai and Chiang Ch'ing, the wife of Mao."⁵⁶ Xiao points out that this internal conflict between different factions of the CCP was part of the struggle to determine China's future development.⁵⁷ Interestingly, Xiao hypothesizes that it was perhaps the anti-capitalism embedded

52. This Chinese translation is on page 8 of Issue 31 of *The 70's*. I quote from the original English article: Michael Stern, "Antonioni: Enemy of the People," *Saturday Review/World* (May 18, 1974): 14–15.

53. Stern, "Antonioni," 14.

54. Jiwei Xiao, "A Traveller's Glimpse: Antonioni in China," *New Left Review*, no. 79 (January–February 2013): 103.

55. Xiao, "A Traveller's Glimpse," 103.

56. Stern, "Antonioni," 14–15.

57. Xiao, "A Traveller's Glimpse," 104–5.

in *Zabriskie Point*, as well as “the mainstream American outrage at the film [that] may have helped convince the Beijing authorities that Antonioni would be the right director for a documentary project about China.”⁵⁸ The decision by *The 70's* to translate and publish Stern's interview demonstrates its general interest in China's state politics that appears in many of its articles, and its particular interest in the CCP party machinations, as well as the possibilities of documentary filmmaking in mainland China during the Cultural Revolution.

Conclusion

This chapter has mainly focused in detail on the few articles that *The 70's* published on Hong Kong cinema to assess their politically infused film criticism, which was marked by a complete rejection of both the deeply exploitative colonial capitalism supported and upheld by the Hong Kong government and the authoritarian communism of the CCP. As authoritarian capitalist tendencies grow in our world today, many of the issues raised in this film criticism, from what we could call *The 70's* socialist-humanist perspective, are still burningly relevant. Its critical practice was guided by a humanist inquiry and a championing of the human spirit against any form of oppression. This humanist predilection is often balanced with contextualization of the production and ideological conditions governed by the social order that seeks to harness and guide consciousness, desire, and (sociopolitical) beliefs within the strictly defined boundaries of the status quo. Under these conditions, the film criticism in *The 70's* often seeks to analyze how filmmakers articulate, or could or should articulate, humanity struggling to break free from this straitjacket. In the academic context of “humanities” today, attacks on humanism are often considered politically progressive, largely because “humanism” has become an almost derogatory term associated with hypocritical Eurocentric discourses on liberty during the height of empire. However, a radical, left-wing humanism today could offer suggestions for a defense against the ongoing destruction of the world. In the setting of colonial capitalist Hong Kong, with the shadow of Beijing always looming, *The 70's* worked toward this kind of radical international solidarity in its writings and organizing, and its film criticism was a component of this. As discussed, there is a contradiction in the publication's position of valorizing mostly noncommercial modes of filmmaking and largely ignoring popular cinema and popular culture, because it is precisely in the realm of the popular that contestations about culture and politics takes place most rigorously. Much could have been gained for a progressive critical project if *The 70's* had tried to take into account popular cinema's relationship with politics or analyze the strands or traditions of popular narrative cinema that can be oppositional to or critical of the status quo. Nevertheless, *The*

58. Xiao, “A Traveller's Glance,” 106.

70's as a collective sought to question what kind of society we want and how a fairer, freer, more just world could be built. Much of its film criticism sought to assess how cinema played a role in this.

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