



A good one or a bad one:

A comparison of US and Chinese reviews of the film

- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

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Bachelor's thesis in Political Science 15 ECTS

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Spring term 2012

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Abstracts

The aim of this thesis is to compare the different *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* film reviews from Chinese and American reviewers respectively, and to see how they evaluate and understand the film in the different ways. We use reception theory as our theoretical tool, and divide the film into four themes so that we can compare the different reviews in a more relative way. Meanwhile, we also present some brief ideas to explain the reason why the film gets the different response from both sides. Since our main purpose is to compare the different film reviews, so we choose the comparative design as our research design. The main findings of this thesis show that Chinese and American reviewers do have some distinct evaluations, understandings and views about the film. Besides, culture and aesthetic become the two major factors to influence the response from both sides.

Key words: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* | reviews | reception theory | culture | aesthetic

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank our supervisor Fredrik Sunnemark for all the valuable suggestion and support he has given us during the process of writing this thesis. We also want to thank all IPPE teachers, who have provided their knowledge to guide us for the thesis writing. Without their help, we are not able to finish our thesis in the right way. So thank you all, sincerely.

1 Introduction

In the past few decades, Chinese film (including Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan film) have made a big progress. With the national boundaries between cinematic images are increasingly blurred by globalization, Chinese film has been gradually Hollywood and Hollywood has been penetrated by Chinese film (Xu (2006):4). Some Chinese films have been recognized by Hollywood, such as *Hero*, *House Of Flying Daggers* and *Farewell To My Concubine*. But the response on these films in China is quiet reserved. This paradox is puzzling; meanwhile, it makes us have interest in doing a research project to explore film reviews in the US and China more in depth.

In this thesis, we focus on a specific film which called *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. It was directed by Ang Lee who is a very famous international director (another well-known work is *Brokeback Mountain*) around the world in 2000. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a transnational film which cooperated between four regions (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China and U.S.) and achieved a great international success. In 2001 Oscar Academy Awards, it won four awards especially the Best Foreign Language Film. It is still today the highest grossing foreign language film in American history. This is undoubtedly the best praise and honor for the film.

However, as we mentioned before, while it was very positively received in the US and the West, the Chinese responses were much more reserved. The responses of this film in China are mundane; even there are some critical voices. When we ask our friends, schoolmates and families, they all think it is just an ordinary film, even someone said it is “boring”. That is a strange phenomenon.

Therefore, the general aim of this study is to compare and analyze the different film reviews to see what the main points of the American reviews were and what the main points of Chinese reviews were. How they reviewed the film in different ways. Furthermore, we will try to find out and briefly explain the reason why the film got different responses from both sides. First of all, we want to introduce the overall structure of our thesis.

First of all, we want to introduce the overall structure of our thesis. The thesis starts with the literature review in the second chapter to discuss the previous literature in relation to thesis’s topic, besides, the scientific gap in the previous literature is figured out in this chapter. Then come after the theoretical chapter, we apply reception theory as our theoretical approach and construct four themes according to the reception

theory as our analytical indicates to help us make a more clearly film review comparison in the analysis part. The following chapter obviously states the specified aim and research questions of the thesis. In the fifth chapter, we present the choice of the research design and method for our thesis and explain the reason why they are suitable. Meanwhile, we point out the method for gathering and analyzing data in this chapter as well. After finishing these preparation works for the thesis, the analysis part is offered in the sixth chapter. In this chapter, we analyze and compare the different film reviews between Chinese reviewers and American reviewers according to our four themes, besides, the reason why the film get the different response is also discussed in this chapter. In the end, we summarize the findings from analysis, show a clear answer to the research question, and come up with some suggestion for the further research.

2 Literature review

In literature review, the main purpose is to find out what knowledge already exists and what knowledge is missing. In this thesis, we try to chase down the literature comparing film ideologies, characteristics, and genres between Hollywood film and Chinese film. Furthermore, after reviewing the previous scholarship, we discuss some gaps which are not covered by the previous research.

2.1 Film and Ideology

Many scholars focus on the film and its ideology (e.g.Hess (1978); Kellner (1991); Ross (2004)).

Ideology is a relatively systematic body of ideas, attitudes, values, and perceptions, as well as, actual modes of thinking typical of a given class or group of people in a specific time and place(Hess (1978):14).

Hess (1978) firstly gives his definition about ideology. Simply speaking, ideology is a collection of ideas, values and thoughts from one group. Meanwhile, in general, film is always a cultural product that spread ideology. Kellner (1991)points out that film ideology is transmitted through images, scenes, generic codes, and the narrative as a whole (Kellner (1991): 5), Ross (2004) also argues that the filmmakers can use editing, lighting, costuming, casting, choreography, makeup, and other techniques to convey film ideological messages without words (Ross (2004): 130). That means we can take through camera out of the screen to see the director's purpose, by shooting the subject and the screen changes, to feel the content that director try to express

through the lens.

Most of the scholarship looks at ideologies in US film (Papke (2001); Ying and Stanley (2010); Hess (1978)). Papke (2001) quotes Robert Ray's words who have asserted that American film is "*one of the most potent ideological tools ever constructed*" (Papke, 2001: 10). Papke (2001) in his article focuses on the large number of American legal film, he argues that these films glorified lawyers, courtroom trials, and the rule of law in general, thereby depicting a cinematic ideology, which presented a political ideology in nature (Papke(2001): 9). He looks into a lot of legal film in Hollywood, but he does not point out what kind of political ideology in particular.

Ying and Stanley (2010) and Hess (1978) also say that there are some political ideology like capitalism and bourgeois in Hollywood film. Zhu and Stanley analyze that the reason why some Chinese reviewers rejected American films is due to, "*Hollywood is the ideological champion of capitalism*" (Ying and Stanley (2010): 67). Hess (1978) considers that Hollywood films generally convey bourgeois ideology. But he also argues that the individualism is another general ideology in Hollywood film. As he says"

Hollywood films generally convey bourgeois ideology, but not solely or purely. Directors, actors and actresses, writers, the needs of audiences at a given moment all mediate between an aspect of the general ideology namely individualism. (Hess (1978): 15).

Therefore, as the previous research shows, Hollywood film ideology mainly includes some political ideology like capitalism and bourgeois along with the individualism.

There is also research on ideology in Chinese cinema but this body of scholarship is significantly smaller than that on US film (e.g. Semsel et.al (1993); Lau(1995)). Semsel et.al (1993) points out that in the latter half of the 1980s, Chinese film studies finally shifted from technological to ideological concerns. Some radical film writers in China saw the potential of contemporary Western theory to direct them away from issues of aesthetics toward issues of ideology and to enable them to treat film with a scientific and cognitive attitude (Semsel et.al(1993)).

Comparing to the Hollywood film ideology, the Chinese film ideology is different. Lau (1995) figures out that the fundamental Chinese film reflects the socialist ideology, which means the film must be first and foremost didactic. He looks into the

debate on whether Chinese entertainment film is adaptive or not in the mid and late 1980s. The debate proceeded with the discussion of Chinese film ideology. It diverged into two major camps. While one camp said that the entertainment film is in tune with the socialist ideology, but the other camp considered that the Chinese entertainment film was following the Hollywood film ideology like capitalism and bourgeois individualism. They thought that the Chinese film should follow the mainstream ideology, which reflect the socialist spirit and adhere to the Chinese tradition of “*moral elevation and emotional purification.*” (Lau(1995): 18-19)

In general, the previous literature demonstrates the different ideology between Hollywood film and Chinese film. While the Hollywood film reveals more capitalism and bourgeois along with the individualism ideology, but the Chinese film insists the socialist ideology for long time. In the next paragraph, we will check the previous literature review on both Chinese and American film characteristics.

2.2 Film characteristics

Apart from the difference of ideology, some of the scholarship compares US and Chinese film in terms of characteristics other than ideology (e.g. Nichols(2007); Semsel et.al(1993); Xu(2006)). Hollywood film and Chinese film have their own features. Nichols (2007) points out that Hollywood film borrowed a lot of ideas from the European art films. In the past, Hollywood film used the one-way narrative, but now, more flexible space conversion are fit for, they are no longer pursue the story's integrity and instead of the ending is openness. The movie character is not conventionalized, that is according to its own character development to show its natural quality. Virtuous and evil is no longer being a distinct standard of characters good or not. In addition, Hollywood film characters are no longer subordinate to the plot, but the plot highlighting the characters (Nichols (2007): 64-65).

Hollywood film also attaches great importance to develop technique of the camera language expression. They pursue the resemblance on the screen, but uses all kinds of technique makes film produce the certain alienation effect. As Nichols portrays

The techniques are 'transparent' because they seek to keep viewers focused on the story; they are therefore unobtrusive, so that audiences remain absorbed in what is happening, rather than become distracted by how the story is told (Nichols (2007):64)

Speaking of the Chinese film characteristics, the basic mode of structure in the Chinese films is the plot, the story, not the image. As Semsel et.al (1993) writes

It (Chinese film) does not deal significantly with image, the basic unit of film material, or photography, the basic method of filmmaking, but with story, the larger unit of film, and narrative, and the method of storytelling. (Semselet.al(1993): xxiii)

Moreover, Chinese films were used to focus on their distinct national culture and distinct national spirit. Wan and Kraus (2002) figures out that “*Most analyses of Chinese film follow the tradition of cultural criticism, where films are read as texts for insight about Chinese culture.*” (Wan and Kraus(2002): 419). The Chinese cultural spirit is ethical that makes the Chinese film theory pay more attention to the function of the film. Besides, a series of research of the relationship between film with the society, people, and politics has been reached. As Xu (2006) says “*They are produced through cross-cultural spectacles and cross-ethnic representations; they are also reflections of the copyright competition.*” (Xu(2006):28)

We describe the previous scholarships about contemporary Hollywood film and traditional Chinese film characteristics, because *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* either have a characteristic of contemporary Hollywood film or embody the style of traditional Chinese film. In the next section, we will talk about the previous literature on different film genre between Hollywood and Chinese film.

2.3 film genre

There are also some scholarships discuss the film genre between China and US (e.g. Zhang(2012); Grant(2007); Dixon(2000)). There are obviously a large number of film genres no matter in Chinese film industry or in Hollywood. Zhang (2012) mainly focus on the Chinese film genres including martial arts film, documentary film, women’s film, and urban film. She argues that some Chinese film genres such as marital arts film and opera film, “*they are created as amalgamations of indigenous and foreign genres that have nevertheless endures as Chinese cinematic genres*” (Zhang (2012): 4). So what is the possible reason for such a mixed Chinese film genre? Grant (2007) probably gives his answer to this question. He considers that with the international co-productions a common affair today, directors, actors and funding frequently come from multiple countries, a lot of films have produced by many regions (Grant(2007): 103). He takes *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as the example which brought the Chinese film to mainstream north American, but was funded by money from Taiwan, Hong Kong, the US and China.

Moreover, Zhang (2012) also quotes Stephen Teo’s arguments and writes

Chinese filmmakers look upon genre as an indispensable avenue of nationalistic expression in cinema while at the same time seeking to expand this expression as a transnational conceit (Zhang (2012): 4).

This quote is pretty true. Because we have seen a lot of “nationalism” film on the Chinese screen such as *Tunnel Warfare*, *Zhang Ga*, *The Soldier Boy*, and *Sparkling Red Star*. Even to this day, there are still many national themes active on the Chinese film screen, which now can be called as “red movie” or “mainstream movie”.

For the Hollywood film, since their filming technique is quite advanced, therefore, we nearly can see any film genres from Hollywood film. But speaking of the most popular film genre on Hollywood film, there is no doubt that the action film should be discussed in this topic. Lauren (2009) points out that American action films are full of many exciting elements such as car chases, explosions and old-fashioned fistfight. He argues the action film have dominated at the box office since 1970s. Nowadays, even they are not as popular as they were during the 1980s, they still dominated the box office (Lauren(2009)). Rovi (2012) considers that with the development of computer technology, Hollywood has continued to produce more action films than ever before (Rovi(2012)). Besides, Dixon (2000) makes a comparison between martial arts film and action film. He thinks that Martial arts film is very much a homo-social genre, like the action film in general (Dixon(2000): 103).

Additionally, Benshoff and Griffin (2009) also argue that some American film reviewers have shown their interest in some Asian film genres since the end of World War II. However, such interest have continued to this day, like the Japanese animated film and Hong Kong action films are still attracting many American film reviewers (Benshoff and Griffin(2009)).

2.4 gaps and contribution

In sum, a lot of previous scholarships focus on the Hollywood and Chinese film’s ideology, characteristic and genre separately. However, the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a special film which is cooperated by four regions including mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and US. There is rarely previous research concern such a specific transnational film with comparing the different film reviews in relation to the film ideology, characteristic and genre from China and America. Meanwhile, although a large number of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* film reviews have presented by both Chinese and American reviewers, there is still no academic

literature to compare those film reviews on a systematic way. So those are the major gaps we try to fill. With these gaps instruct, this thesis will contribute to compare the different film reviews from Chinese reviewers and American reviewers to see what were the main assessments of the film in Chinese and American reviews of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*? How they understand the film respectively? Besides, we also want to find out systematic differences of reception in US and Chinese reviews and chase down the simple reason why the film got the different responses.

3 Theoretical approach

3.1 Social constructivism

Theory is an explanation of observed regularities. It is important to the social research because it provides a backcloth and rationale for the research that is being conducted, it also provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted (Bryman(2008):6). The ontological position in this thesis is social constructivism. The central idea of social constructivism is that the reality or the world is not discovered, it is socially constructed. Constructivism claims that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors; it implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision (Bryman(2008):19). In relate to this thesis, this may suggest that the review of film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* are socially constructed and they may changed depends on the different time period when you watch the film.

3.2 Reception theory

Since the general aim is to compare and analyze the different film reviews and explore the reason why a specific film get the different responses between Chinese and US, the suitable theory are reception theory and reader-responds criticism in this thesis. These two theories can be taken together and are concerned with how people other than the author or creator contribute to the meaning and import of a work of art. In literary matters, they are concerned with the practice of making meaning on the part of a reader or readers. Reception in theatre or film is not specifically about readers but about reviewers (Fortier (2002):132). However, reception theory may be separated from reader-response criticism on the basis of lack of mutual influence. It can be understood as a more cohesive, conscious, and collective undertaking (Holub(1984): xiii). Due to the research project is more tend to film not literary works, the major attention will draw on reception theory.

Jenkins (2000) defines reception theory as interested in the intersection between text and viewer:

Reception theory and audience research ask basic questions about how we make sense of the movies and what they mean in out(r) lives. Within this paradigm, audiences are understood to be active rather than passive, to be engaged in a process of making, rather than simply absorbing, meanings.

(Jenkins(2000): 166)

Thus, for reception theory, it is primarily concerned with revealing how actual reviewer interacts with films. In *Interpreting Films* (1992), Janet Staiger (1992) overviews contemporary reception theory in film, dividing the field into three aspects: text-activated, reader-activated and context- activated theories (Stam andRaengo(2005):232).The centre thought of reception theory is that the different reviewers can create different meanings through the film.

Several classical film theorists concern that the reviewer always passively receive meanings and messages through the film text. Text is an important concept of reception theory. A text is an event, whose indeterminacies are completed and actualized in the reading (or reviewing) (Stam andRaengo(2005):10). Meanwhile, in classical film theorists way describe the reviewers, they posit that every reviewers are idealized, identical and ahistorical, they all react the films in the same way, and the reviewers have no influence on the creation of the meaning of the film (Wagner (2004)). Overall speaking, in classical film theorists' eyes, the film's meaning is always created in the film text automatically, and the film text determines reviewers' response (Wagner (2004)). That can be seen as the text-activated model.

However, the reception theory rejects this classical construction. Reception theory starts with the acknowledgment that media content (text) is not necessarily identical to media impact and meaning (Manuel (1993):17). That is to say reviewers should not simply accept the film meaning in a passive way. *"The individual film has no inherent meaning in and itself, meaning is created in the interaction between reviewers and film text. In other words, meaning is created as the reviewers watch and process the film"*(Wagner(2004)). Besides, reception theory also denies the recognition of the reviewers made by classical film theorists. Comparing to the idealized, identical and ahistorical recognition about the reviewers of classical film theorists, reception theory considers that the reviewers are different no matter on race, gender or other identifying factors. Reception theory argues that reviewers usually have different Social identities and individual subject positions as well as social, cultural and historical background (Wagner (2004)). That can be seen as the theoretical viewpoint

as reader-activated model and implies every reviewer have different understandings and experiences about one film based on their different natures.

Moreover, as Staiger (1992) proposed, the third approach of reception theory is context- activated model. Reception theory considers that contextual factors which include elements “*of the reviewer's identity as well as circumstances of exhibition, the reviewer's preconceived notions concerning the film's genre and production, and even broad social, historical, and political issues.*”(Wagner(2004)).Generally speaking, reception theory places the reviewers in context, considering every factor that might influence how reviewers will watch and create meaning from the film text. Therefore, synthesizing these three theoretical models of reception theory, we can conclude thatthe centre thought of reception theory is different reviewers can create different meanings through the film.

3.3 Four themes according to reception theory

As reception theory instructs, firstly, due to the thesis topic is to compare the **Chinese** and **American** film reviews, so the reviewers' race, social and cultural background are automatically different here. However, since it is nearly impossible for us to chase down a single reviewer's identity and circumstances of exhibition. Therefore, the context- activated model will not used majorly in this thesis. We instead look into how the different reviewers between China and America understand the film's meaning and evaluate the film performance largely combine with the text-activated model and reader-activated model. We construct four themes about the film according to the reception theory as our indicators

The first theme is film itself including film script and film characters since they are the fundamental elements of the film. The film script and film characters can be regard as the basic film text. As text-activated model implies that the film text can determines reviewers' response. So it is important to present the different reviewers' understanding and assessment about the film script and film characters.

The second theme is film director and actors. This theme is little bit related to the context-activated model. Because even if we are not able to chase down the single reviewer's identity or circumstances of exhibition. But one thing we can image is that the reviews on director Ang Lee and other actors from Chinese and American reviewers may be established on their preconceived notions about them. Since the director Ang Lee and some leading actors, they all had some amazing works before the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* released. Meanwhile, to understand the purpose

that director and actors try to express to reviewers is also another significant way to understand the meaning of the film.

The third theme is filming technique mainly includes shooting skill, martial arts design along with clothing and music design. Since the filming technique is also belong to the part of film text. The different reviewers will get their understandings about the film through the filming technique as well.

The last theme is film interpretation. It is obviously the centre thought of reception theory which considers the different reviewers can create different film's meaning. Comparing to the former three themes, this theme will compare the understandings about the film from a holistic perspective. Besides, since the reviewers are from distinct cultural background and their previous film experience is totally diverse. So we add a cultural factor discussion to explore some possible reasons for the different responses to the film.

3.4 Analytical framework

According to previous four themes, the analytical framework is showed in below. We will use these four themes as our indicators and analytical tools to analyze and compare the different film reviews from China and America in the analysis chapter.

Table 1 Analytical Framework

<i>“Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”</i> .	Chinese reviews of the film	American reviews of the film
Film itself including script, characters and dialogue	Chinese review of film itself	American review of film itself
Film director and actors	Chinese review of director and actors	American review of director and actors
Film technique	Chinese review of film technique	American review of film technique
Interpretations and cultural discussion	Chinese interpretations and cultural discussion of the film	American interpretations and cultural discussion of the film

4 Specified Aim and Research Questions

The specific aim of this thesis is to use reception theory to provide a comparative analysis of how the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was received by film reviewers in major newspapers and film review websites in China and the US. In order to make the analysis more clearly, the film reviews are separated into four themes on the basis of the indicators. They are the film itself including script and characters, film director and actors, filming technique and film interpretation.

More specifically, the thesis asks:

1. What were the main assessments of the film itself (script, characters), performance of director and actors and filming technique in Chinese and American reviews of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?
2. Do the Chinese and American reviewers understand the film in the different way?
3. Are there systematic differences of reception in US and Chinese reviews?

Moreover, although not part of the main aim, we will also discuss some of the possible reasons for the different responses to the film.

5. Research design and method

5.1 Research design

The possible choice of research design in this study could be a comparative design. A comparative design, as Bryman (2008) points out

Comparative design entails studying two contrasting cases using more or less identical methods, and it embodies the logic of comparison in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations. Moreover, comparative design is something of a hybrid, in that in quantitative research it is frequently an extension of a cross-sectional design, while in qualitative research it is frequently an extension of a case study design (Bryman(2008):58-61).

In this thesis, since the main purpose is to compare the different film review from the Hollywood and Chinese, and the Chinese reviews and American reviews can be seen as two meaningfully contrasting cases and situations. Therefore, the comparative design is the most appropriate design for this study.

In addition, a cross-sectional design could be another possible option of the research design in this study. The cross-sectional design is often called a survey design; “it entails the collection of data on more than one case at a single point in time in order

to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables which are then examined to detect patterns of association” (Bryman(2008): 44). So in this thesis, the survey or questionnaire could be able to be applied originally. The case can be separate into two which are Hollywood film review and Chinese film review. And the variables which can be used are age, gender, nationality, and film categories. However, since the cross-sectional design usually requires more than one case and even a lot more than one and its internal validity is weak, and, it is hard to find enough respondents, the lack of sample size will cause the statistic unconvincing which means the questionnaire might be pointless in relation to this study. Hence, this research design is rejected in this thesis. So the most appropriate research design is comparative design.

5.2 Method for gathering data

The possible methods for collecting data in qualitative research include interviews, participation/observation or through gathering documents. Qualitative research method is often characterized as the use of “thick’ description and analysis rather than broad, numerical generalizations (Marsh and Stoker (2010): 249,257-266). Interviews provide information on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings and the like (Marsh and Stoker (2010): 258). Since it is hard to find interview objects and the one-on-one interview cannot represent the entire perspective about the film, interview is not an option here. Meanwhile, participation/observation has its own limitation due to the thesis analyses the research question from an overall perspective not individual point of view. For this reason, the most suitable qualitative method used here should be the documents as sources of data.

The term “documents” covers a very wide range of different kind of source. Documents of the kind referred to be materials that can be read, are preserved so that they become available for analysis, are relevant to the concerns of the social researcher, and have not been produced specifically for the purpose of social researchers (Bryman(2008): 515). In this thesis, the documents refer to mass media outputs and virtual outputs such as internet resources. Newspaper, magazines, television programmes, films, and other mass media are potential sources for social scientific analysis (Bryman(2008):523). Furthermore, with the huge development of the internet, another type of documents which appear on the internet should be mentioned. The vastness of the internet makes it a likely source of documents for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. But there are two major problems with the documents from the internet. One is authenticity - Anyone can set up a website, so that some matters may be given by someone who is not an authority. The other one is

credibility, we need to be aware of possible distortions (Bryman(2008): 525).

Although the mass media documents may face a similar problem, relatively speaking, the documents collected from mass media are more reliable than the documents collected from the internet simply. Therefore, in this study, the major documents and data will be Chinese film reviews and American film reviews which are firstly collected from some big newspapers and magazines, then some authoritative and professional websites and film blogs. In the following paragraphs, we present our choice of data.

1): Newspapers and news agency like *Houston Chronicle*, *Deseret News*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*; *Beijing Youth Daily*, *Life Times*, *Beijing Evening News*, *Shanghai Morning post*, *Yangcheng Evening News* and *Xinhua news agency* are chose in this thesis. These newspapers all come from some major large cities between China and US, such as New York, Houston, Utah, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Besides, since they are all local authoritative newspapers, so their reliability and credibility will not be the problem.

2): The magazines *Time* and *Xinmin weekly*. As far as we know, the *Time* is the most influential magazine in US while the *Xinmin weekly* is also an influential magazine in China. Therefore, these two magazines are the best choice for us to present their reviews about the film.

3): some authoritative websites for instance *Chinese Sina.com*, *Chinese CCTV.com*, *Chinese 163.com* and *American filmcritic.com*, *American efilmcritic.com*, *American decentfilms.com*, and *American Culturekiosque.com*. The reason why we choose these sites are because of their authoritative and professional. *Chinese Sina.com* and *163.com* are the two biggest web portals in China. Their positions are just like *Yahoo* and *American online* in US. *CCTV.com* is the official website of Chinese national TV channel. Additionally, the selection of America websites are all formal and professional film review websites. Therefore, even the data from internet may lack of authenticity and credibility, we do our best to choose some famous and influential sites and blogs to make sure the authenticity and credibility of data is as possible as maximum.

Another possible method for gathering data in quantitative research method is self-completion questionnaire. As a method, the self-completion questionnaire can come in several different forms. Probably the most prominent of these forms is the postal or mail questionnaire, besides, it also covers forms of administration, such as

when a researcher hands out questionnaires to all students in a class and collects them back after they have been completed (Bryman(2008):216). According to the actual situation, the form of mail and administration appear to be the most feasible way to get the responds. However, as we mentioned in the design chapter, due to the possible lack of the sample size, the questionnaire may be short of persuasion. Furthermore, the design of questions may cause other problems. For instance, if we design a question like “do you like watch film?” or “have you seen Chinese film before?”, if the respondents answer “no”, the following questionnaire will not be able to carry on which means such a questionnaire will be insignificant. That is a huge problem we need to consider. Thus, this quantitative method would be rejected in this thesis.

5.3 Method for analyzing data

The possible method for analyzing data could be either qualitative content analysis or discourse analysis. Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seek to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner (Bryman(2008): 275). For qualitative content analysis which is becoming the most prevalent approach to the analysis of documents, it is rather than counting or measuring the occurrence of certain phenomena. It comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed and can be discerned in several of the studies referred to earlier. The processes through which the themes are extracted are often not specified in detail; the extracted themes are usually illustrated – for example, with brief quotations from a newspaper article or magazine (Bryman(2008):529).

Another possible method for analyzing data is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is an approach to language that can be applied to forms of communication other than talks, and it also can be applied to forms like texts, such as newspaper articles (Bryman(2008):499). It is a qualitative method that has been adopted and developed by social constructionists and a way of understanding social interactions (Fulcher(2002)). Discourse analysis can make more explicit the classical approaches to "content analysis." It can also stimulate a research paradigm within mass communication that sees textual analysis is not only as a method of research. In reality, much of the work in discourse analysis has concentrated on semantic structures (TeunandDijk(1983):20-24).

Thus, in this thesis, we will compare the film reviews which offered by the American and Chinese reviewers to see how they understand the film of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. According to the analytical framework, the film review can be

classified into four themes.

One is focusing on the film itself including film script and characters. What was the story told by the film, what are the features of the different characters?

One is paying more attention on the director and actor of the film, what kind of influence they have made to the film. How important is that the director Ang Lee to the film? How the actors' performance capability?

One is in regard to filming technique, how the martial arts have been presented in the film, what are the film's shooting skills, how is the film music?

The other one is based on the film interpretation and cultural discussion, how the film can be understood and interpret deeply by the reviewers, what the connection between culture and film is. Is the culture a key factor to affect the film review? We will use these four themes as our analytical tool to analyze and compare the different reviews of film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

6 Analysis

In this analysis chapter, we look into the entire film reviews offered by Chinese and American reviewers. We compare these different reviews based on the film script and characters, film director and actors, filming technique and film interpretation, and try to find how the Chinese and American reviewers evaluate and understand the film in the different ways. Besides, we will show some brief ideas to explain why the film gets the different response from China and US.

6.1 Background

As we mention in the introduction chapter, the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden dragon* attains a huge success overseas. A number of reviewers give this film an A even A+ grade. However, in its home country, China, there are some different voices. The Chinese responses on this film are more reserved. Here we put together each of five brief comments with one or two sentences about the film provided by American and Chinese reviewers.

American Voices

*You may never see a more beautiful movie and certainly no more majestic film has yet been made-----*By William Gallagher of BBC

*A nearly perfect film, and at this writing (December 17) it looks to me like the best of the year-----*By Bryant Frazer of Bryant Frazer's Deep Focus

*Even nonfans of martial-arts movies will want to cheer the fight scenes, which are sheer visual poetry-----*By Eric Harrison of Houston Chronicle

*Forget all your preconceived notions of what martial-arts films used to be like. This is what all future martial-arts films should be like-----*By Jeff Vice of Deseret News

*If you can't find something in this movie to set your heart aflutter, call the doctor-----*By Norm Schrager of Filmcritic.com

Chinese Voices

*A strong spirit of chivalry and deep philosophy of life are full of the film; it does not just show that kind of simple good and evil battle as the general martial arts film does, it is more about the thought of life. After watching this film, people would have an aftertaste-----*By Erwei Li of Beijing Youth Daily

*Aside from the Oscar, Just from our reviewers in China, Ang Lee's performance is just like a lyric written: "he thought he was very beautiful"-----*By Wei Hong of CCTV.com

*After watching the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, I can not tell how big the contrast is compared to my imagination, nothing surprise me-----*By Hang Yi of life times

*Compared to Ang Lee's past capability to use film language to deal with the emotions and ethics of eastern and western movie, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is somewhat thin and dull-----*By JinyuShu of Life times

Ang Lee's most failed movie----- By Fang Dai of Beijing evening news

These brief comments present here could represent the major public opinion about the film. In America, they are full of praise, but in China, it is mixed. We hear praising voices; however a lot of criticisms have been made as well. Before we start to review the film reviews, we provide a brief film script and character introduction so that you can know what kind of story was told by film.

6.1.1 Introduction about the film script and characters

The story sets in Qing Dynasty¹. There are four major characters fabled through the entire story. The male leading character is named Li Mu Bai. He is an unbeatable swordsman and disciple of the Wudan martial arts system². One day, he feels tired and unhappy about fighting in the Giang Hu world³. So he decides to give up his legendary sword which called Green Destiny and tries to quit the Giang Hu world to let his heart get some peace.

The female leading character is called Yu Shu Lien, she is also a martial arts master, and her another identity is Mu Bai's beloved friend. They do have some special feelings with each other, but due to the Giang Hu world principle, they never say "I love you" to each other. They just hide such emotion with each other in the beginning of the story.

As the story goes on, Mu Bai's plans are interrupted by his old foe Jada Fox, who betrayed and murdered Mu Bai's master. Jada Fox reappears as the governess of Yu Jen this time. Jen is another female leading character in the film. On the one hand, she is lovely and naughty as ordinary girl in daily life. She opposes a loveless political marriage and falls in love with a dashing barbarian bandit named Lo who is another male leading character. But on the other hand, she has a huge secret - she is a martial arts prodigy and Fascinated by the Giang Hu world. But all of her techniques are not used in the right way. She is tempted by Mu Bai's Green Destiny, one day, she steals the sword, and the entire story begins.

There are two main lines through the whole story. One is that Mu Bai wants revenge on Jade Fox, the other one is Mu Bai and Shu Lien try to make Jen using his amazing techniques in the right way. Mu Bai wishes to take Jen as disciple to be Wudan's first female student, because without Wudan discipline Jen will surely become an evil (Park (2001)).

In the end of the story, Li Mu Bai takes a fight with Jada Fox in order to save Jen's life (Jada Fox tries to kill Jen) and makes revenge for his master. Unfortunately, he suffers a poison sting, and dies. Before his death, Mu Bai finally speaks out his feeling to Shu Lien. After that battle, Jen comes to the Wudan Mountain with the guidance given by Shu Lien. Lo had been waiting for Jen in Wudan Mountain following by Mu Bai's suggestion. But Jen can not face to Lo any more since she has

¹ The last feudal dynasty in Chinese history, from 1644 to 1912

² A genre of Chinese martial arts

³ A fabled Chinese martial arts world

some feelings to Mu Bai. So after having an overnight and also the last intimate contact with Lo, Jen chooses to jump off the mountain in order to fulfill her wish, her elegant posture floating in the mist, and the scene freezes here.

6.2 Review of the film script and characters

We start with comparing the review of film itself including film script and characters as they are the fundamental factors of the film. The response of the film script and characters in China generally has been divided into two groups. One group thought the storyline is compact and meaningful; the characters are emotional. However, the other parts of the reviewers hold a different point of view. They consider that the plot is incompact and simple, the characters are dull even some are needless. These views also reflect the attitude of the majority of Chinese people on this film: half praise half criticism (Zhan(2001)).

However, in the American film reviews, reviewers basically give praise to these fundamental film factors. They think the story is complete, interesting and intelligent but in some way a little bit overstuffed. The characters are full-blooded and strong. We start with the review on film script from Chinese reviewers in the next section.

6.2.1 Chinese review of the film script

After reviewing a large number of the film reviews, we find that the most controversial plots of the film in Chinese reviews are Jen and Lo's emotional drama and the flashback scene to Xinjiang. In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: one woman, three sexual scenes*(Olympia (2009)). The author Olympia thinks that "*The film tells a beautiful and miserable eastern love story with western drama language.*" (Olympia(2009))

He focuses on the three sexual scenes appeared in the film, the first sexual scene happened in Xinjiang, Lo is a barbarian bandit in Xinjiang, and Jen has the first tastes of sex with this bandit. After coming to Beijing, Jen's horizons broadened, she becomes obsessed with Li Mu Bai, when the second sexual scene happens with Lo, she is obviously a bit absent-minded, in the last sexual scene, Jen feels she owes Li Mu Bai so much, so even Lo enjoys that sex to the full, he just looks like a rapist who is forcibly occupying a gentlewoman(Olympia(2009)). The author believes that though these three sexual scenes are not baldly, they play a vital role to describe the character's psychology.

In another review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: creating a new myth of the Chinese martial arts film* (Chinese 163 web portals (2009)), the author considers that

the twenty minutes flashback scene to Xinjiang as the narrative hub shows Chinese vast and mysterious, and this flashback reaches accordance to the last scene of the film which Jen jumps off the Wudan Mountain.

In the review *my view about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Yi(2000)), the author Yi has some distinct viewpoints. Comparing to the Olympia's view, Yi argues that

This film is a typical family drama pattern, based on the purport of 'steal the sword and recapture the sword', two men and two women unspoken emotional feelings throughout the whole storyline(Yi (2000)).

He feels this film lacks a sense of the unique mysterious to a marital arts drama. The story is too common, there is no difference compared to the family film. He also thinks that the subplot which portrays the emotional entanglement between Jen and Lo makes the script a bit incompact, memories are too long yet they do not have much connection with the purport. He considers that the story should start from Jen's Xinjiang story; this will make the entire story more thrilling and impact.

Meanwhile, in another review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author also argues that the flashback to Xinjiang is the weakest part of the entire film, far less than expected.

Another interesting script takes place in the end of the film which we mentioned before, "Jen chooses to jump off the mountain in order to fulfill her wish". It causes a widespread discussion. In the review *success all the way-comment on the success of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chen(2001)), the author presents his friends and colleagues' opinion in relation to this plot. One of his friends Howie says that the jump is a declaration of love from Jen to Li Mu Bai, the other one "e-walkman" argues the jump means a marginal youth on the return of family and social responsibilities, and another person "Mr. Big Bean" has a deeper thought, he says that the jump is a realization more than the return. Love, Family and Social responsibilities, those are the Chinese reviewers seen from that jump.

6.2.2 American reviews of the film script

The American film reviews focus more on the fight sequences in the rooftops between Jen and Shu Lien at the beginning of the film. Meanwhile, they have their own views and understandings about the script of flashback to Xinjiang and Jen jumps off the mountain which happens in the middle and in the end of the film respectively. First of

all, in the review *Year Of The Tiger* (Corliss(2000)), the author describes how the audiences react to the film in different ways based on the different plot. As he writes

Everywhere in the world--in Asia, during the film's original commercial run, and at the Cannes, Toronto and New York City film festivals--audiences have had the same response to Crouching Tiger--rapture. They gasped with glee as Jen and Jade Fox soar into the night. They misted up at the friendship of Mu Bai and Shu Lien, two brave warriors who haven't quite the courage to say I love you. They happily took the film's 20-minute detour to the Gobi, where Jen meets her bandit beau Lo (Chang). At the end, they sobbed farewell to an old warrior who gives a lovely valediction (Corliss(2000)).

A variety of complex feelings across the film, and it shows enough how absorbing the script of the film is. In addition, Corliss comes up with his own ideas about the combat between Shu Lien and Jen at the beginning of the film. As he portrays “*Once the sword disappears, everyone springs into frantic, purposeful motion and that motion has its own poetry*” (Corliss (2000)). He believes that the film's first action scene, with Shulien chasing the sword's thief Jen, sets the tone and the rules.

In another review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Mix-up all the words for 'brehtaking'* (Childress(2000)), the author shares a similar views as Corliss has. He also considers the fun begins when an attempt is made to steal the Green Destiny (the sword). Meanwhile, he points out that although Shu Lien is pretty sure of the thief she battle with (so is the audiences), its fun to watch her simple methods of discovery at drawing them out and letting the story unfold like a great novel.

In regard to the controversial “flashback to Xinjiang” plot in the Chinese reviews, the American reviews also have mixed perspectives about this plot. As Corliss portrays those reviewers feel happy to take the film's 20-minute detour to the Gobi, where Jen meets her bandit beau Lo (Corliss(2000)).

In the review *Fear Of Flying: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Jaffe(2001)), the author considers it is a good subplot. He thinks that the subplot corresponds well to the emotional entanglements between Li Mu Bai and She Lien; it also shows some philosophy about the romance. Childress argues that

this extended flashback detailing the romance between Jen and an outlaw Lo, they take foreplay to a new level, in essence realizing that they are no more than a couple of children trying to play adult games in an old world. And many great moments are displayed during this time(Childress(2000)).

But he also points out that this extended flashback temporarily interrupts the flow of the film, ostensibly lasting longer than some of the infamous Chinese dynasties. He believes that it is a flashback that should have either started the film chronologically or split-up throughout. Greydanus has a semblable idea as him. In his review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Greydanus(2000)), he analyzes that the storytelling may seem elliptical or obscure, as when the plot comes to an unexpected halt for an extended flashback, or when motivations seem unclear.

For the ending of the film which “Jen jumps off the mountain in order to fulfill her wish”, the American reviews have their own understandings. Obviously, it is a purposefully ambiguous ending. In the review *Review: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Park(2001)), the author thinks this kind of ending is consistent with the Taoist themes in film’s subject matter. Jaffe considers that the film’s final word on the tragic puzzle of love is the grand, superhuman achievements that make one love, and that love makes one dream of, can deprive lovers of the human joys of love’s fulfillment and endurance.

In Greydanus’s another review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Meaning* (Greydanus (2000)), he has a more specific analysis about the ending. First of all, he images that Jen herself making a different wish on behalf of Li Mu Bai, this is consistent with the Chinese review which Howie says that “the jump is a declaration of love from Jen to Li Mu Bai”. However, Greydanus quickly denies his image, he considers that nothing in the scene suggests that this is the case, and besides, that would make her invitation to Lo a rather strange red herring, not to say a cruel taunt. Secondly, he thinks that another possibility is that Jen might continue to be with Lo in some spiritual way in the desert of his wanderings; or that they might be reunited after death either in another incarnation or in some spirit realm beyond. Finally, he comes up with a more reasonable interpretation. He believes that Jen’s leap of faith seems to bespeak a desire to have a “faithful heart”. In some way it is meant to represent an attempt to atone for her past misdeeds, to somehow make things right; and it may even be possible to see an Christological allusion in the image of Jen suspended in space, arms outstretched at her sides. Therefore, comparing to the Chinese reviews’ Love, Family and Social responsibilities, Americans’ understanding of the film ending is about grand love, disloyal, redemption, reunion and Christological allusions.

6.2.3 Chinese review of the film characters

The discussion about the characters has some connection with the script since the characters are always subordinate to the story. Compared with several other major characters in the film, the character Lo causes some controversy in Chinese reviews.

In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: a Chinese dream* (Jason(2008)), the author thinks that Lo represents a world which is other characters can not reach. And he is a symbol of extreme and absolute freedom.

In another review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: creating a new myth of the Chinese martial arts film* (Chinese 163 web portals(2009)), the author considers that Jen and Lo represents the original desire of the younger generation, they have a distinct contrast with Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien who represents the repressed desire of the previous generation. This kind of contrast and collision of the idea is a good complement to the film.

However, some other reviewers in China have opposite perspectives about the character Lo. In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: He thought he was very beautiful* (Hong (2001)), the author thinks that Lo seems like a needless character, he do not play a real role in the film's overall expression. And this character is a little bit naive. He looks like a weak high school truant student who is disappointed in a love affair. Besides, Yi also considers that the appearance of Lo makes the original compact script become loose. Lo made a counterproductive effect to the film (Yi(2000)).

Moreover, Hong has other views of the two major characters. He considers that Jen and Li Mu Bai, these two major characters are somewhat monotonous. Jen is always like a little girl who never grows up. And Li Mu Bai is always a good guy. From naive to mature, narrow to board, they ought to collide a wonderful spark at a deeper level, but the fact is that they seem do not have real conflict without the sword. Their conflict about the personality and idea are too dull (Hong(2001)).

6.2.4 American reviews of the film characters

Unlike the Chinese reviews, the American reviews do not mention the Lo character so much. They discuss the feature of Lo more than if Lo is useful for the film or not. Park describes Lo as a dashing and likeable barbarian (Park(2001)). Jaffe alsomentions that Lo is incredibly sexy and, in his own irreverent way, a true gentleman (Jaffe(2001)). There is hardly controversy on Lo to discuss whether he is helpful for the film or not. Instead, many American reviewers excited about the female characters become the leading character in a martial arts movie. Because normally, the protagonist of the martial arts movie always dominated by male.

A lot of American reviews mention two main female characters in the film, one is Yu Shu Lien and the other one is Jen Yu. In the review *Crouching Tiger gives tired genre*

a jump start (Margaret(2001)), the author says that

It is very interesting to see the most of the plot revolves around women, particularly Jen, a young bride-to-be who is befriended by Yu Shu Lien. And their sisterly relationship spins through a dizzying series of strange twists, including physical battle. (Margaret(2001))

Besides, Childress also highly praises that *“it is very amazing to see the women getting to kick a lot of ass. Not a single fight in Crouching Tiger fails to include a female warrior”* (Childress(2000)). Jaffe describes Shu Lien as *“the palpable epitome of postfeminist tragedy: fit, successful, independent, and admired by all, she nonetheless hasn’t been able to make a go of it with the right guy.”* (Jaffe(2001))

In the American eyes, the character Jen Yu is a major highlight of the film. Her volatile temperament and uncertain good or evil tendency leads the film to another level. Corliss describes Jen in this way: *“When first seen, Jen seems lovely but unformed, a dreamy adventuress, a spoiled rich girl with a skill to match her will. Gradually, though, Jen reveals a more toxic, intoxicating beauty”*(Corliss(2000)).

Childress portrays Jen as with a rich history that defines her more than just a "yes" woman in Chinese society (Childress(2000)). In another review *“Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”* (Schrager(2001)), the author says exaggerated that *“As young Jen wanders the countryside in the middle of the film, if you haven't already fallen in love with her, you will when she brazenly kicks the crap out of an entire restaurant.”* (Schrager(2001)).

6.3 Review of the director and actors

The second part is about the comparison of the review of the director and actors from both sides. If the director is the soul of the film, then the actors should be the foundation of the film. Bad director is not able to direct a good film; and poor actors are not able to make a great movie as well. From this perspective, the director and actors of the film are good enough to the vision of the American reviewers because of the highly praise from them. In fact, in the American reviews, they do satisfy with the director and actors. However, things are different in China once again, with the similar situation as the previous film itself part has, the Chinese responses on the director and actors are also mixed. We look into some entire reviews and describe the differences in the following chapter. We begin with the Chinese review on actors.

6.3.1 Chinese review on actors

In the Chinese review, the reviewers evaluate the performance by four main characters' actors. (Jen-Ziyi Zhang, Yu Shu Lien-Michelle Yeoh, Li Mu Bai-Chow Yun Fat, Lo-Chang Chen). Unfortunately, our poor Chang Chen suffers the maximum criticism once again just as his character Lo. There are no good words on his performance. Hong considers that Chang Chen is the worst actor in the film, his performance has no tension and wild nature, his character is a barbarian who goes through fire and water in the desert, but when he talks, reviewers feel like their bones are crisped which means his way of talking can not match his barbarian figure (Hong(2001)). In another review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*(Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author has the same point. He also considers that Chang Chen's performance is the worst part in the film. He does not like Chang's voice. He says that Chang Chen's voice is not like a barbarian in the Qing Dynasty, but like a down boy who lives in a rural area. It is a failed selection of the character. He believes that Takeshi Kaneshiro⁴ may be a better selection to replace Chang on character Lo. In Chinese eyes, Chang Chen's performance in this film is totally failed.

The other two main actors in the film are Chow Yun Fat and Michelle Yeoh. Before starring in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, they already have been famous and experienced actor. Unlike the international action star background of Michelle Yeoh, this is the first time Chow Yun Fat act in a marital arts film. Thus in the Chinese reviews, not much controversy on Yeoh's performance but some reviewers are not satisfy with Chow's. In the review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*(Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author speak highly on their outstanding acting skill. He says that

Chow and Yeoh deserve to be called "international film star". Both of them have excellent acting skill, and they makes a signification contribution to the film, particular Chow's acting skill is perfect, he has ability to show a warrior who is imperial without anger and neither sharpness nor slowly.(Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000))

Olympia also gives them a high evaluation; he thinks that chow performs Li Mu Bai's elegance quite in place. And Yeoh plays an Giang Hu woman warrior role that handcuffed by the feudal etiquette, is very accepted by reviewers (Olympia(2009)).

However, some people do not buy Chow's performance. In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: The Ang Lee's most failed film*(Dai(2000)), the author thinks that

⁴ The most welcomed film actor in Asian, Chinese and Japanese mixed-blood.

Chow's way to the Hollywood is failing. He is not in the state either in Third-rate shooting movie or big films such as Anna and the King. In Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, his performance is ridiculous; it seems that he can't get rid of his midlife crisis(Dai(2000)).

Compared to Chang's one-sided criticism and Chow and Yeoh's majority praise, the response on Ziyi Zhang's performance is quite mixed in the Chinese review. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is only the second film in her actor career. She plays such an important role in such a big film naturally difficult to convince the whole public. However, her performance still wins a lot of praise. In the review *three magic weapons of Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*(Zaobao newspaper website(2001)), the author considers that Jen Yu she played is light and elegant; she exudes a lovely temperament to the reviewers. In the review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*(Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author argues that Zhang is the soul and leading character across the film, her performance is pretty shiny and impressive. He pretty sure that she will be a famous film star due to this film. (Actually, His predict is come true, Zhang has now becomes a famous international film superstar). Beside, Olympia give a higher praise to Zhang, he considers that

Zhang offers a vivid performance for a rebellious teenage girl. And her aggressive characteristics conquered the western world. After starring in this film, she is praised as eastern Kate winslet.⁵ That is a huge title and honor for a young actress (Olympia(2009)).

For a fledgling actor, criticism is unavoidable for sure. Hong points out that Zhang's performance is pretty ordinary. "It is difficult for her to manage a couple of fight scene, particular when she brandishes a sword. Because she is quite emaciated, her body is too thin and it far exceeded her ability when she brandishes a sword." (Hong(2001))

In the review *Why Americans like Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon so much* (Yin(2001)), the author argues that Zhang's performance lacks of trump card, she is not only inferior to Gong Lee's glamorous⁶, but also inferior to Michelle Yeoh's kung fu skill. Furthermore, Dai proposes a more sharply criticism on her acting skill in his review. He says that

Zhang is an unsuccessful film star. The reason why Zhang become a famous film star is because she relies on director Yimou Zhang's influence.⁷ She has less talent for acting and lacks of histrionic plasticity. The role she plays in the film Jen has multiple personality. But Zhang actually have no

⁵ Kate Winslet is a famous British actress, well known by the leading character Rose in the film of "Titanic"

⁶ Gong Li is a famous Chinese actress, she has the highest achievement, position and influence among Chinese actress in international film field

⁷ Zhang performed in her first career film called *My Father And Mother* directed by Zhang Yi Mou

ability to show Jen's multiple personality for reviewers. She has no layering on the performance, particular when she acts Jen like an insidious, crazy and angry girl; her performance on it is terrible. Zhang has no ability to show a state which includes both evil and good sides; she just makes a pretty and lovely impression for reviewers, nothing more(Dai (2000)).

6.3.2 American reviews on actors

Compared to the Chinese reviews of actors with critical eyes, the American reviews are much more satisfy with the performance by four main actors. A number of American reviews consider that Lee's all-Asian cast is pretty good. Even Chang Chen's performance who suffered a lot criticism in China, they mostly give positive response. Greydanus thinks that Chang Chen's performance matches Ziyi Zhang (Jen)'s well, and he also plays a flamboyant young bandit well (Greydanus(2000)). Schrager feels that Chang possess the energy and intensity needed for his demanding parts(Schrager(2001)).

Since Chang's scene is not heavy in the film, thus not much American reviews mention him a lot. In contrast, they focus on Chow, Yeoh and Zhang's performance much more. Chow and Yeoh show up in previous Hollywood film before *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* released in United State. Therefore both of them have high cognition by American reviewers, and American reviews are recognized for their performance this time. Margaret thinks that Chow proves that he is the perfect choice to play Li Mu Bai (Margaret(2001)). Greydanus thinks that the invincible Li Mu Bai that Chow played is masterful and authoritative. He is well demonstrated the temperament of his character. And Yeoh gives a strong performance as Li Mu Bai's longtime friend and fellow adventurer Yu Shu Lien. And their rival show performed quite in place in the film (Greydanus(2000)). In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000): movie review* (Widge(2001)), the author thinks that Chow works very well on his earnest dual nature, both as warrior and guy just ready to settle down, and Yeoh is also excellent both in her amazing moves and in her scenes with Chow. Meanwhile, Park gives a more specific analysis and higher praise on their performance. He considers that

Chow and Yeoh incorporate the spirit of swordplay in their performances and alternate between slow, taut exchanges and lightning flashes of intense emotion. They likewise maintain character through their fighting sequences, in which Yeoh's Shu Lien moves with confident virtuosity, and Chow's Li Mu Bai needs to use only the sparest, most efficient techniques. They fearlessly play up their maturity, imbuing their performances with an exquisite sense of loss (Park (2001)).

The most impressive actor for American reviewers is Ziyi Zhang. They are excited

and speak highly on this young actress in her second film performance. There are two reviews give her performance a great title: film-stealer. Corliss says that "*Zhang is guilty of one crime: she steals the film. And he quotes Lee's words on Zhang's performance, 'She allows the audience to pour themselves into her imagination,' Lee said. 'It's not really her in the movie, it's you. That's beyond acting.'*" (Corliss(2000)) Widge also says that Zhang is the show-stealer of the film. "*Impetuous and angry at her seeming lot in life, she takes it out on those around her. Reviewers will just have to see the film to understand completely.*" (Widge(2001))

Greydanus considers that Zhang is fiercely charismatic as Jen, a beautiful young woman who leads a double life (Greydanus(2000)). And Park also argues that Zhang is ravishingly pretty as the confused and tormented Jen, and her background in dance helps her execute dazzling fight scenes and wire work. Zhang's performance, failing at times to arouse sympathy, makes her seem more cold and spoiled than anything else (Park(2001)). Generally speaking, compared to the mixed response from Chinese reviews on her performance, the majority American reviews are recognized for this young and inexperienced actress.

6.3.3 Chinese review on director Ang Lee

There is no doubt that director is the core of the film. The director capability largely determines whether the film is good or bad. Compared with the previous film directed by Ang Lee, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a new change and trial for him. For such a change and trial compared to his previous genre, someone can accept, while someone can not. It causes another mixed response on the Chinese reviews of director Ang Lee. In the review *three magic weapons of Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Zaobao newspaper website(2001)), the author thinks that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* accomplishes a film dream for Ang Lee. He mixes the traditional Chinese culture into a circuitous moving tragic story and combines the beautiful scene with elegant marital arts to create a new genre marital arts film. This film helps him to get out of the limitation of the emotional ethics film and open up a new sky. The author believes that the reason why Ang Lee has accepted by western is because of his creation idea, his film feature and his operation mode. He packages an easternized story with western's taste and habit and made his dream come true in the Hollywood's strict production control. Mr. Olympia has an alike view. He thinks that Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has led the Chinese martial arts film to a new height. The crazy martial arts scene has points the way of the development of the Chinese martial arts film. Ang Lee transmits eastern cultural to western through the film; that is the biggest reason for this film to be successful (Olympia(2009)). Chen considers that Ang Lee is very smart to use the way of shooting an eastern story with western

skill, describing the new generation with ancient warrior vision, and making an ambiguous ending to reduce contradiction and something unreasonable which happened in the film (Chen(2001)).

However, someone does not accept the new change made by Ang Lee. Hong analyzes Ang Lee's previous film feature in the first place. He says that Ang Lee's film always focuses on the topic of family in the past. Every complex relationship between people and people, the cultural conflict between eastern and western, and the impact of social movement on human being, they all take place in such a sweet and traditional "home" place. In this place, people contact with each other the most, those contradictions which can never cover up exposed more intense, and these things are more suitable to express with proper eastern way. It is fit for Chinese people and Chinese filmmakers' taste and aesthetical standard as well as Ang Lee's specialty. Nevertheless, in the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, this kind of taste of "home" was getting fewer and fewer; so was the feeling of the Chinese film. Mr. Hong thinks this film is more tend to be a western film. He evaluates Ang Lee in this way:

We can understand that this film was a boldly change by Ang Lee. If so, Ang Lee overrates his ability. He is not Akira Kurosawa⁸. We can also understand that Ang Lee makes this film in order to please foreign and win an Oscar. But for our Chinese audience, Ang Lee is really "He thought he was beautiful (Hong(2000))

Dai holds a similar view as Mr. Hong did. He argues that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a challenging work by Ang Lee, because it is his first touch of the martial arts film. However, the actual result showed us that it is his worst film in his director career. Then he analyzes why he has such an idea. He considers that this film requested both art and commercialization; both romance and martial arts and the film are not only to make the Chinese audiences satisfied, but also to fit for the international taste. Thus, Ang Lee directed his worst film in such a situation with his own hesitation and lack of control of the martial arts film (Dai (2000)).

Apart from these two contrary views, there is another kind of neutral stand. In the review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author thinks that this film is a good adventure for Ang Lee, but still not good enough. He says that Ang Lee takes the first step in his way of adventure when he made the war film *Ride with the Devil*. And *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is the second step in his way of adventure. Ang Lee challenges the Chinese traditional gorgeous and explosive martial arts film as a literary film director.

⁸ A famous Japanese director in 20th century

The fact proves that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is actually creating a new face for martial arts film, a more meticulous and temperamental situation for martial arts film. However, Ang Lee's "adventure" is still not enough, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is still use those old routines and themes such as ethics and morals, crises and conflict as well as dead and redemption.

6.3.4 American reviews on director Ang Lee

Compared to the mixed response which given by Chinese reviewers. The American reviews give more positive response on Ang Lee's director capability with this film. Schrager thinks that Ang Lee has not only found the perfect venue for such combat but has injected his action with poetry and meaning (Schrager(2000)).Margaret considers that Ang Lee has come up with a film that both revives and re-invents the classic Chinese martial-arts adventure, a genre gone shabby from misuse and neglect. And he believes that with this film,he has secured his place among the best filmmakers of his generation and given the world a haunting, tragic fairy tale for the ages (Margaret(2001)). Greydanus thinks that

Ang Lee has crafted a masterful synthesis of various forms of Chinese mythology and Taoist philosophy that brings a broader perspective to its subject matter than many Asian films and, in the end, embraces a gently romantic humanism that is more life-affirming than the esoteric way of detachment and denial characteristic of Eastern thought (Greydanus(2000))

Park comes up with a neutral stand. At first he admits that

Ang Lee has successfully spliced and grafted genres to create cinematic gold: a film that appeals on some level to just about everyone. He chooses to participate in a male-dominated action tradition but lets inspirational and three-dimensional female characters dominate his contribution. He also conjures two-plus hours of sheer fun that offers insight into the Tao (Park(2001))

After that, he also points out the film shortcoming, in other words, Ang Lee's shortage. He thinks that the film's greatest shortcoming is the inconsistency of its tone. Lee, in his ambition to reconcile the opposing forces of art house and Kung Fu Theater produces less a marriage of the two genres than a duel. The result is a film that sometimes jerks unevenly between emotional exposition and physical battles, and careens between melodrama and psychological subtlety, grave showdowns and campy brawls. But overall, in his opinion, Ang Lee's performance is worthy to be recognized.

6.4 Review of the filming technique

The discussion and evaluation about the filming technique finally reach a unified view from both sides. No matter the Chinese reviewers or the American reviewers, they all speak highly on the filming technique been used this time. Although there is no gorgeous special effects used like Hollywood film in this film. The brilliant martial arts design, the magnificent scenery pictures and elegant background music still surprised reviewers. Even for someone who has an aesthetic fatigue on Chinese martial arts film give a high praise on this film's technique been used. Meanwhile, for part of the American reviewers, they do not care the film script; they do not care the director and actors. The martial arts scene becomes the most interesting part for them in this film.

6.4.1 Chinese review on the film technique

In the Chinese reviewers' eyes, the biggest highlight in this film should be the film technique. Among the whole film techniques, the most praised part of the film is martial arts design. In the review *the review about the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author thinks that the best part of the film is fight scene. He says that the film was full of real sword and hand to hand martial arts style of play and battle instead of those unusual and strange martial arts trick which always appeared in the generally martial arts film. And this kind of fight scene seems plain but attractive. Moreover, the film uses a lot of traditional wire work as well as modern computer technology to remove the wires. The author considers that it creates a graceful, elegant and stunning martial arts effect. And this kind of effect is better than the film *The Matrix*. Even if Dai do not accept the entire film, he still gives a high praise for the marital arts design. He considers that the design of martial arts in this film is quite unique. There are many scenes of flying fight in this film, and it is rare in the past martial arts film which means it is a great innovation for the martial arts film (Dai(2000)).

In addition to the graceful martial arts design, the other film techniques which presented in the film are worthy to be praised as well. In the review *three magic weapons of Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*(Chinese Xinhua news agency(2000)), the author thinks that aside from the martial arts design, the crafted traditional Chinese flavors, the attractive landscapes of southern part of China and the magnificent desert made the film's overall atmosphere is plain but distant, dreamy, but not exaggerated. In the review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: creating a new myth of the Chinese martial arts film*(Chinese 163 web portals(2009)), the author thinks that the other sector staff's performance is also perfect. He says that aside from

the dance-like martial arts movement designed by Yuen Woo-ping, Peter Pau's camera movement is graceful and free-flowing, Timmy Yip's clothing design and landscape scene are elegant and exquisite based on the Chinese history, and Tan Dun's background music is mesmerized. Furthermore, Olympia also has a high evaluation on these behind-the-scenes heroes. He says that the camera used by Peter Pau could be described as superb; many scenes of the camera movement could be called classical. And Tan Dun's soundtrack was also good to convey the sorrow from eastern (Olympia(2009)).

However, very unfortunately, the Chinese reviewers' evaluation on a film is always very demanding. Even if the film is nearly perfect from the point of view of the film technique, there is still some fault-finder. Hong is just that fault-finder. He did not accept the design of martial arts. He considers that the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* do not show the charm of Chinese martial arts. He says that

The word 'fly' is the largest topic in this film's martial art design; everyone can fly, but the scene of "fly" in the film has led people to feel uncomfortable. Because it looks like that there are some steel wires pulling the actors had to fly rather than the actors want to fly to everywhere." In other words, the flying scene in the film seems like too intentional (Hong (2001)).

6.4.2 American reviews on the film technique

For those American reviewers who have used to seeing the gunfight and vehicle racing special effects in Hollywood film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* presents a new special effect experience for them. And these kind of curious and fresh senses are another reason why the American reviews speak highly on this film. For the evaluation of the filming technique of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the American reviews have sort of similar views as Chinese reviews did. They also give a high evaluation on several other important staffs especially the choreographer Yuen Woo-Ping in relation to the film. Margaret thinks that the Combat in the film represents more than kinetic interludes, the slashing pace and elaborate choreography of the fights are dazzling owe to action choreographer Yuen Woo-Ping (Margaret(2001)). Greydanus points out that the bravura stuntwork and martial-arts scenes combine the dazzling appeal of gymnastics and ice skating and ballet all rolled together. And he is very impressive on the simple wire work without computer trickery except to remove the wires. He considers that this kind of effects maybe less polished than the flawlessly constructed illusions of *The Matrix*, but they are somehow more "real" (Greydanus(2000)). Park also speaks highly on the using of wire work. He thinks that *Crouching Tiger* relies heavily on wire work and attains new heights of artistry in its use. He believes that the sheer scope of the wire work

and the skill with which it is executed by both actors and technicians should earn the admiration of even the least wire-friendly reviewers. Though some scenes verge on silly, many are rendered magical by the peculiar quality that wires lend to the actors' movements. Besides, he also gives a high praise for Yuen Woo-Ping; he says that the unrivaled clarity and dance-like beauty of his choreography should more than satisfy even the most demanding martial arts buff. Those in the know will find plenty of poetry in motion to admire (Park(2001)).

Apart from Yuen Woo-Ping, Cinematographer Peter Pau, Art Director Tim Yip and Composer Tan Dun, they all earn applause from the American reviews as well. Margaret says that

Peter Pau extracts equal beauty from the breathtaking Chinese countryside and the richly colored antique interiors. And Tan Dun, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and cellist Yo-Yo Ma contribute a score that is by turns electrifying, elegant and poignant (Margaret(2001))

Schrager thinks that Peter Pau adds his own dreamlike quality to the sequences by bathing the night in a blue moonlit glow, and Tim Yip's design makes reviewer feel as if they could step right into an ancient village or desert cave hideaway (Schrager(2001)). Park believes that the film's most radical departure from the martial arts genre lies in the beautiful and polished frame provided by Peter Pau and composer Tan Dun. He says that

They cultivate an imaginary China that is at once lush and ethereal. Peter Pau provides reviewers with stunning backdrops that capture the forbidding beauty of wild frontiers, the meditative tranquility of traditional Chinese landscape paintings, and the cosmopolitan majesty of Beijing during the prosperous days of the Qing dynasty. Tan Dun's soundtrack featuring cellist Yo-Yo Ma is a stirring blend of classical and world music, and its judicious use enhances both Pau's otherworldly vistas and the actors' performances. In the end he considers that it is wisely saved for the end credits, where its mood-shattering properties can be used to clear the audience out of the theater (Park(2001))

6.5 Review of the film interpretation

In the previous chapter, we present the surface review about the film from both sides. In this chapter, we look into the reviews to see how they understand the film in a deeper level, and what is the different or the similar point of their understandings?

6.5.1 Chinese review of the film interpretation

We have picked three Chinese reviews to see how they understand the film in a deeper thought. In the review *three magic weapons of Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chinese Xinhua news agency(2001)), the author thinks that the film is consisting of deeply philosophy and warrior spirit. It has more thought about the life rather than simple good or bad battle which presented in the generally martial arts films. Olympia considers that the film reflects the Taoist idea to increase the thickness of the film. He thinks that the film implies the repressed emotion of Chinese feudal society. It also lashes and criticizes the cultural dress in China in all ages. The character like Jen who dares to challenge the common custom is doomed to be destroyed (Olympia(2009)).

In another review *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: creating a new myth of the Chinese martial arts film* (Chinese 163 web portals(2009)), the author analyzes the feature of characters to present his deeper thought in relation to the film. He says that the warriors like Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien, they both have sensitive emotions, but they still keep restraining their surging desire in their hearts, it reflects the hermit thought of Taoist along with the Confucianism philosophy which to bring the social responsibility and moral rules together. Besides, for those female characters which appeared in the film, the author also has his own understanding. He argues that the female characters in the film, they all have been given the desire and sexual. Jen and Shu Lien are posited on Yin and Yang. They are dualistic of emotional and rational. Meanwhile, there is desire in the Shu Lien's heart deeply reflected on the Jen like a mirror. On the other hand, the evil Jade Fox is actually a female tragedy caused by the gender and class. They use variety ways to challenge the male-dominated underworld. In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's* world, the underworld is charming, but it is just a wonderful myth. Moreover, the author thinks that the dualistic structure has been used into a high level. For the spatial, the dual is underworld and Beijing, but for the humanity and heart, it is all about the young generation like Jen and Lo, their original desire which consisted of freedom and unrestrained love compared to the former generation like Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien, their repressed desire which consisted of norms, responsibilities, commitment and restrained love.

Therefore, in Chinese eyes, the film is all about the warrior spirit, the thought of the life, the criticism on the past Chinese bad culture, the Taoist thought and Confucianism philosophy, the Yin and Yang, the female tragedy, the romance, the humanity, and the released or the repressed desire.

6.5.2 American reviews of the film interpretation

Now we take a look on the American reviews about the film interpretation. See how differently or similarly they understand the film in deeper level. Corliss looks into the relationship between Jen and Li Mu Bai, and then he presents his conclusion about the film. He thinks that the theme of the film should be teaching, and the knowledge is power. He says that

In this war of the generations, the adults are as eager to instruct the young as the kids are to rebel against authority. In life as in martial arts, only the most powerful, like Chow's Mu Bai, can share the valuable knowledge. He hopes to share it with Jen. Teaching this bright, willful girl is as close as he will come to fatherhood--even if the job carries fatal risks (Corliss(2000))

Greydanus thinks that *Crouching Tiger* is a blend of Eastern action and Western psychological drama, with as much attention being given to human emotions and foibles as to traditional themes of honor and loyalty, and it is a meditation on passion and prudence, emotion and reason, freedom and duty. Besides, the film also offers a poignant critique of Eastern world-denying philosophy, ultimately embracing a gently romantic humanism that puts love before detachment or enlightenment. Moreover, Greydanus comes up with his understanding about the film title. He says that

Chow Yun Fat and Michelle Yeoh are the "crouching tigers" whose restraint and discipline represent the sober "sense" of responsibility and obligation; Zhang Ziyi and Chen Chang are the "hidden dragons" whose reckless spirits bespeak the quivering "sensibility" of intemperate youth. The disciplined "tigers" must confront the dragonlike passion in their own hearts, while the wild "dragons" must learn the need of tigerlike restraint and discipline (Greydanus(2000))

Speaking of the discussion of film title, Park also provides his thought. He considers the title names the animal pair most commonly representative of the contradictory and complementary principles of yin and yang in Taoist and Buddhist symbolism, the movie concentrates on the interaction of opposing forces. The consequences of impetuously pursuing one's desires contrast with the loss and regret that are the reverse of restraint and duty. The naive certainty of youth is weighed against the ambiguities of maturity. Jen's coming of age is juxtaposed against the mid-life conflict within Li Mu Bai. All of the main characters much decide when to fight to control their lives and when to acquiesce before forces that cannot be altered (Park(2001)).

All in all, the Chinese and American deeper understandings about the film are similar but in some ways are different. They all mentioned the basic elements like desire, duty, responsibility, loyal, honor, romance and humanity which presented simply

through the film. And they all read the Chinese traditional Taoist, Buddhist culture and Confucian philosophy and Chinese special symbol Yin and Yang out of the film. The different thing is that Chinese reviews get their deeper thought mainly rely on the film script and characters while the American reviews understand the film depend largely on the analyzing of the film title better. Besides, Chinese reviewers can easily read the warrior spirit and critique of the traditional Chinese bad culture through the film. However, due to the American reviewers lack of the knowledge about the traditional Chinese culture and warrior spirit, they were not able to see these things through the film.

6.6 What caused the different response?

Speaking of the culture, except for the satisfied with the film script, director and actors, and exciting about the film fight scene, in Chinese eyes, the big reason why the film success in the United State is because of the cultural difference between eastern (Chinese) and American. In other words, American reviewers accepted the film owe to their curiosity, interest and lack of the understanding about the eastern (Chinese) culture. Beside, the reviewer's aesthetical taste is another important factor to influence the response from both sides. For the Chinese reviewers, this type of martial arts film is very common in Chinese film market, so it is difficult to lift their appetite, while in American eyes, it is a novel film for them, since they rarely watch this kind of film in the past.

The Chinese culture is actually attractive and mysterious for the western people. However, if the film presents the marrow and heart of the Chinese culture for western people at one blow, they are not able to swallow and understand it immediately. Because western people have the different way to accept the eastern culture compared to Chinese (Hong(2000)). As a director who has profound American background, Ang Lee knows American reviewers' aesthetical taste. He knows the differences of cultural taste between eastern and western people. So he uses the traditional Chinese culture as his creation source and packages an oriental story with the accustomed and pleased way to match American reviewers' taste (Zaobao newspaper website(2001)). This is the most smart and successful points by Ang Lee. As the film composer Tun Dan said: *"Ang Lee is a successful director, he is the guy who knows how to impress the western reviewers especially knows the American reviewers' psychology. With the eastern culture spreading to the western; it is difficult for western people to accept without an easy accepted form. The use of the picture and the character relationship construction in the film, are very much fit for the American reviewers' aesthetical taste"*(Zaobao newspaper website(2001)).

In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, there are many traditional Chinese culture and elements presents here. For instance, the desert sand, the traditional Hui Zhou residential house, the typical Beijing quadrangle, the brisk bamboo as well as the amazing swordsmanship, horsemanship and some traditional Chinese martial arts like wresting and floating Kung Fu (Chen(2001)). These traditional Chinese factors are not something new for the Chinese reviewers; they are accustomed to see these things in the previous marital arts film. So these things are difficult to arousing their interest. But in western eyes, these are the absolute and real Chinese culture for them.

Besides, in the Hollywood film, people are unlikely to choice their death and life frequently in their life except for the disaster film and science fiction film. But in this film, we can see the following scene: One hit can abolish lover's Kung Fu; one piece of antidote can save the rival in love, disguise self can impersonate others to explore one's human nature, the edge of life and death can be reached when people is eating (Chen(2001)) . Compared to the Hollywood tradition of murder and speed scenes, these unreal and exciting scenes are new experiences for western people; they may be surprised that not only the Hollywood film, the Chinese marital arts film also can present so much exciting factors as well.

In Chinese eyes, lacking of understanding of Chinese culture is another big reason to lead to the positive response in United State. The Shakespeare-style dialogue matches the homespun long gown Giang Hu world people; Chang Chen's Taiwanese-style mandarin matches his rough figure as a Xinjiang bandit, moreover, there is a scene which Jen gets angry and fights for many people in the tavern, her last horse stance pose is a typical action move with literary film's shooting skill. These things are completely nondescript in Chinese reviewers' eyes, but the American reviewers do not know the difference between them. They do not know the way ancient Chinese talk to each other; they can not find Chang Chen's accent is strange and uncomfortable, they even consider that Jen's horse stance pose is the most classical Chinese Kung Fu style (Chen(2001)).

As "*HOUSTON CHRONICLE*" says: "*Even nonfans of martial-arts movies will want to cheer the fight scenes, which are sheer visual poetry*" (Harrison(2000)).

For most American reviewers, the most fascinated part of the film is martial arts design; this is also the biggest reason to explain why the film attains such a huge success in the United States, American reviewers love the fight scene in this film. But in some Chinese reviewers' eyes, the reason why American reviewers appreciate the film and its marital arts design is also due to their superficial understanding of

Chinese culture. They lack of knowledge about the centre spirit of Chinese marital arts culture---chivalry. They just enjoy the amazing fight scene and two moved love stories, in other words, the two major selling points of the action film: fist and pillows (Yin(2001)).

United State has always been a multicultural country due to a large number of immigrants; they usually have a strong acceptable and inclusiveness to the foreign culture. So it is not so hard to understand why they can easily accept a film as a foreign culture disseminator. One thing confused us is that the negative response from Chinese reviewers. At this point, we must mention another huge factor to affect the film response from both sides which is aesthetic factor. As we analyzed before, the film script, dialogue, character, director and actors, they all can become the reason why Chinese reviewers do not like the film. But, speaking from the whole viewpoint, in our opinion, aesthetic factor is one of the main reasons for such a phenomenon.

The martial arts film is always the major theme in the Chinese film market. Even Ang Lee injects some fresh elements into the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, it is still an old-fashion film for some Chinese reviewers. So some Chinese reviewers may have an aesthetic fatigue on this theme of film. The film script and the Chinese culture presented in the film are not something new for some Chinese reviewers; these things can not afford their appetite any more (Chen(2001)). But for the American reviewers, it is a novel theme film for them, but not too novel since they have known some Chinese Kung Fu film from the action star like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li. The Chinese culture and wonderful martial arts design presented in this film are absolute something new experience for American reviewers compared to the previous Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan's Kung Fu film. Image that, you have lived in your hometown for 30 or 40 years, one day, you get a chance to go abroad, some very beautiful country, when you land on the ground, how is that feeling? For American reviewers, this kind of aesthetic freshness is also the huge reason why they like this film very much. Compared to aesthetic fatigue of the part of Chinese reviewers on this theme film, it is not so difficult to understand why the film gets the different response from both sides.

Furthermore, as one of the most diverse director in the early of the 21st century (Schrager(2001)), Ang Lee's past successful director experience (*Sense and Sensibility, The Ice Storm, Eat Drink Man Woman*) become a major reason to concern the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* for Chinese reviewers. besides, the strong cast and big-budget production along with the Chinese martial arts film tradition, these factors make the Chinese reviewers are full of expectation before the film was

released. However, there is so-called more expectations lead to more disappointment, the imperfection of the film script, characters, dialogue and actors make the Chinese reviewers who have a huge expectation for director Ang Lee and martial arts film disappointed. Just as Yi says, “*I have been concerned about this film before it was released, but after watching the film, I can not tell how big the contrast is compared to my imagination, nothing surprise me*” (Yi(2000)). But for American reviewers, since they do not know much about the Chinese film in the first place (in their eyes, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li are almost the entire Chinese film), they surely have low expectation about the film. The *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* gives them a lot surprise.

Apart from these two reasons, in the process of searching and reading these Chinese film reviews, we find an interesting phenomenon; those negative reviews were usually published shortly after the film was released (from 2000 to 2001), while some positive reviews were published after 2007. Simply speaking, this may implies people have the different views about the same thing in the different era. So what caused this situation? In our opinion, this is because, with the progress of the times, people’s mind are also making progress, their recognition about one thing will change as time goes by. For Chinese reviewers, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* seems a little bit avant-grade at that time; the three sexual scenes and the jump off mountain ending are a bit difficult to accept for some Chinese reviewers who believe in the Confucian which suggests the golden mean and conservative way. However, with the progress of the era, some people are no longer constrained by the traditional culture of Confucianism, people’s mind are more open. When the people watch this film again or the new reviewers watch the film in first time in a different era, these things is no longer something difficult to accept for them. Meanwhile, it leads a higher assessment about the film. But for the American reviewers, they have been flaunted individualism, they love adventure, they are open-minded all the time, therefore, no matter what era they belong to, these will never be a problem for them.

7 Conclusion

On the whole, the analysis chapter shows that there are systematic difference receptions in US and China reviews about *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The American reviewers speak pretty highly on the film; they see the magnificent fight scene and action design which they have never seen before. In their eyes, this film can be seen as the feast of martial arts. The gorgeous fight scene can offset every shortage of the film. Beside, they admire for the actors’ superb acting and director’s profound skill. They use the western way to understand and interpret the film’s meaning.

American reviewers explore love, desire and struggle through the film and find some Chinese traditional philosophical thinking which largely rely on the analyzing of the film title.

However, the Chinese reviewers have more mixed attitudes about the film. On the one hand, they give praise for the beautiful fight scene presented in the film as well. On the other hand, they have a more critical eye on the film script, characters, actors and director comparing to the American reviewers. Someone consider that the script is too simple, characters are somewhat dull, actors do not perform well and director Ang Lee has a failed innovation. Those evaluations are something we rarely see from the American reviewers. Besides, the Chinese reviewers have a more oriental way to understand the film. They see a lot of warrior spirit, Taoist and Confucianism from the film while the American reviewers see more love, desire and struggle in the film.

The reason why the film gets different response from both sides may largely depend on the culture and aesthetic factor. There is no doubt that the excellent fight scene is the key factor in its success in the United State. However, in Chinese eyes, a mass of Chinese culture and elements presented in the film is another reason to attract the American reviewers. They feel novel and curious for those Chinese culture and elements. But at the same time, they lack of the understanding about the Chinese culture, so they can not experience the film whether it is good or bad on the cultural expression. Compared to the previous Hollywood speed and gunfight type film, this film gives them a new experience about the action film. However, for those Chinese reviewers, since the martial arts film has always been the major theme in Chinese film market, they have watched a lot of marital arts film in the past; so it is not strange that they have an aesthetical fatigue about this type of film. Besides, in some other Chinese reviewers' eyes, this film does not reach their expectation enough, this is another reason why the film gets the mixed response in China.

Moreover, speaking of the success reasons, we cannot ignore another two factors. From the objective point, although this film is a Chinese film, it is produced by four regions, and the investment of the film comes from abroad which means the film would be released in foreign counties (Hong(2001)), besides, the director Ang Lee also has a huge international influence. These factors are the fundamental requirement for the film to achieve an international success as well. From the subjective point, we also can not forget the efforts which made by film production staff. As director Ang Lee says: *"I didn't take one break in eight months, not even for half a day. I was miserable--I just didn't have the extra energy to be happy. Near the end, I could hardly breathe. I thought I was about to have a stroke"* (Corliss(2000)).His hard work

also reflects on his demanding on the actors' performance, even for superstar Chow Yun Fat and Michelle Yeoh. Chow recalls when they deal with the language problem: *"The first day I had to do 28 takes just because of the language. That's never happened before in my life"*. And Yeoh whose family's language is English, nearly to tears with Lee's insistence on precise speech (Corliss(2000)). Now, the film attains a huge international success, every effort are worthy.

The reconnection to previous literature of our findings is that we have filled the gap in which there was lack of research focuses on the comparison of one specific transnational film reviews from two different countries. After reviewing the film reviews from both sides, we find that the film embodies a little Hollywood individualism ideology like character Jen but rarely Chinese socialist ideology, and also the film have the contemporary Hollywood film characteristics along with some Chinese traditional film characteristics. Since the ending of film is openness, and some characters in the film such as Jen and Li Mu Bai, they have no clear identity and nature whether they are good or bad as well as some cultural expression appeared in the film which matches to the traditional Chinese film characteristics. Besides, one of the reason that why the film gets positively responses in US is because it is a marital arts film, in American reviewers eyes, it is basically even to the action film which is the most welcomed film genre in Hollywood.

The reception theory is suitable for our thesis, it help us to create four film themes as our theoretical tool to compare the different reviews in a more systematic way. However, since reception theory requires to chase down a single reviewer's identity or circumstances of exhibition, and it is very hard for us to do this. Therefore, some model of reception theory does not work in this thesis. Another problem is that we need larger sample size to make sure the reviews and evaluations of the film are more valid and efficient. So in the further research, we can do some questionnaire or interviews about the film to get larger sample size, combining with the social structure, historical and political factors to analysis an international film in a deeper thought. Besides, we also can explore some other major factor to affect an international film whether it is successful or not on a global scale. The implication of our findings to society and politics is that people whose race, social and cultural backgrounds are different may have different responses and viewpoints about one same work or same thing.

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