

# **Orientalism in the Chinese Horror Films of Asia Extreme**

*Jiàn Guǐ* and its American remake *The Eye* in  
relation to the discourse of Orientalism

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## Introduction

“The success of Asia Extreme can be explained by the fact that it offers something

lacking in the current dominant national cinema” (Tony Rayns)

Different countries have their own traditions when it comes to the horror genre and within these traditions there is again a variety of subgenres. According to the distribution company Tartan Films<sup>1</sup> Asia does this by embracing the ‘extreme’ which is celebrated by the selection of films belonging to the Tartans Films brand ‘Asia extreme’. Founder and owner of Tartan Films Hamish McAlpine describes the label as ‘bringing the best of Asia to the world’ in the marketing of the films, but critics and theorist had their reservations about this. Various East Asian film scholars such as Daniel Martin, Chi-Yun Shin and Gary Needham put forward that the ‘Asia Extreme’ brand operates within the discourse of orientalism since the promotion techniques of the films focus on difference and excess making them rather expressions of the Western perception of Asian horror films instead of celebrating cultural specificity. The theoretical texts that discuss

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<sup>1</sup> Tartan Films was an UK-based film distributor founded in 1984 which also owned the US-based Tartan USA and Tartan Video. In June 2008 the film distributor went into administration.

this point of view mainly focus on the promotion of the films by Tartans Films and discuss the narrative of the films with minimal or no attention for aspects such as cinematography or mise-en-scène. This made me question how the films branded by the 'Asia Extreme' label are related to the discourse of orientalism on a cinematic level. Since Tartan Films distributed films that had been released earlier under their 'Asia Extreme' label, the distribution can be seen as a new contextualization in which Tartan Films attempts to construct the way of interpretation of the spectator. However, you might question on what aspects the films are selected to become part of the 'Asia Extreme' label? Do some films lend themselves easily to supplement the marketing strategy created by Tartan Films, or is the discourse of orientalism already unconsciously involved in the selection of the films with the result that specific films appeal to Tartan Films? This is precisely why it is relevant examine the films on a cinematic level. This aspect has not been sufficiently discussed and therefore the aim of this thesis is to research the relationship between the films and orientalism on a cinematic level as this will bring new insights into the scientific debate on this subject matter. Since the 'Asia Extreme' label contains films from a diverse number of Asian countries, the thesis will focus on a niche within the 'Asia Extreme' label, namely the Hong Kong productions. In this way the research is more focused, and the validity of the research can be guaranteed. From this, two case studies have been chosen: *Jiàn Guǐ* directed by Danny Pang and Oxide Chun Pang in 2002 and *The Eye* directed by David Moreau and Xavier Palud in 2008. *Jiàn Guǐ* belongs to the Hong Kong productions whereas *The Eye* is an American remake of *Jiàn*

*Guǐ*. By means of film analysis as method supported by primary and secondary literature, the thesis attempts to answer the following research question: “How do the films *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye*, belonging to the ‘Asia Extreme’ brand of Tartan Films, relate cinematically to the discourse of Orientalism?”

The thesis first constructs a basis with the important concepts in regard with the subject matter and then elaborates on the chosen case studies. Chapter 1 will form the theoretical framework and discuss the relevant literature regarding the subject matter. First, chapter 1.1 introduces the discourse of orientalism and explains this based on the text *Orientalism* from the American-Palestinian literary theorist Edward Wadie Said. Secondly, chapter 1.2 focuses on the texts of Daniel Martin, Chi-Yun Shin and Gary Needham to overview the findings concerning the relationship between the discourse of orientalism and the marketing strategies of the Tartan Films label ‘Asia Extreme’. In addition, this chapter explains what the ‘Asia Extreme label’, created by Tartan Films, entails. The third and final part of the theoretical framework consists of chapter 1.3, which formulates whether there is such a thing as an Asian aesthetic in film with regard to the genre of horror. This will be supported by various texts from the publication *The Asian Cinema Experience: Styles, Spaces, Theory* and “Ghost, Cadavers, Demons and Other Hybrids” by Stephen Teo. In addition, the texts “Generic Ghost: Remaking the New ‘Asian Horror Film’” by Bliss Cua Lim and “‘Cinema-Spiritualism’ in ‘Southeast Asia and Beyond: Encounters with Ghosts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’” by Peter J. Bräunlein are discussed in this chapter. Because *Jiàn Guǐ* is part of the Hong Kong

horror cinema the chapter will focus on the conventions of this specific cinema. The discussed texts from the theoretical framework will be applied to the case studies in chapter 2. Chapter 2 discusses the films *The Eye*, the American remake of *Jiàn Guǐ*, and *Jiàn Guǐ* in a comparative manner. The chapter will use secondary texts that especially relate to aspects from the films. In conclusion, chapter 3 provides insights into the results and thus the thesis attempts to answer research question.

## **Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework**

The diverse range of Asian films that Tartan Films distributed under the Asia Extreme label is often subject to a marketing strategy, which emphasized difference and the construct of 'The Exotic'. This leads Tartan Films to be criticized for using the discourse of Orientalism. However, Orientalism can manifest itself in different areas. Is the way in which Tartan Films uses this discourse mere a geographic or also a social construct? Or does the use of Orientalism stem from the constant that, in the case of Tartan Films, the Western process of film making in regard to the horror genre is seen as a norm and compared to a so-called Asian manner of film making?

### **1.1 Orientalism**

In 1978 *Orientalism* was published by Said. Although it has been criticized by theoreticians/scholars such as Dennis Porter for producing “a monolithic, essentialist and ahistorical characterization of orientalist discourse” (Ha, 17) many theoretician embrace the work of Said and emphasize how influential *Orientalism* is. As the title suggests, Said attempts to explain the term Orientalism. It can be said that Orientalism encompasses the stereotyping of the East by the West, frequently referring to mostly wrong clichés concerning the East, resulting in constructing the East or the ‘orient’ through these ideas instead of a specific culture located in the geographic East being actually investigated or represented. However, Said makes a distinction between three definitions in regard to the term Orientalism. Important to note here is that he considers these different definitions as interdependent. First, he considers Orientalism as an academic approach in which “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism” (Said, 2). Secondly, Said discusses a general definition in which difference is a premise in regard to writing about the Orient. Thirdly, he discusses Orientalism as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 3). Readers familiar with poststructuralism will recognize the theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault in the last definition that Said assigns to the term Orientalism. Foucault’s theories address mainly the relationship between power and knowledge; his notion of ‘discourse’ is, a concept that is essential for the work of Said.<sup>2</sup>How does Said’s work build

<sup>2</sup> The notion of ‘discourse’ is discussed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*.

on that of Foucault? What Foucault describes as a discourse serves as a precondition for a good understanding of Orientalism. In his book *Foucault*,<sup>3</sup> Machiel Karskens explains that Foucault defines the term discourse as follows: “a discourse is a historically given collection of documents containing proverbs and statements” (Karskens 29). A specific group, which manifests itself on a specific level, makes statements with which they construct reality and thereby implicitly constructs what must be regarded as truth. Although this ‘reality’ is subjective in nature, it is nevertheless seen as an objective truth and this is precisely where the problem lies. Foucault discusses that one should not simply accept this and should be aware of the fact that history is the manifestation of the dominant group. But how can we deconstruct this habituation? For Foucault the historian plays an important role within this process. Foucault sees history as a process that constantly shapes itself and ‘decodes its own conditions’ (Karskens, 44). A historian must establish himself as an observer and simply consider history, describe and re-read and reinterpret all of this. The discourses should be consistently deconstructed in order to expose the underlying power structure to find out who does what and, maybe even more important, why (Karskens, 27). Returning to Said, we can therefore state that Orientalism is a discourse where no deconstruction, as Foucault extensively encourages with regard to power structures, has taken place yet. The discourse of Orientalism is always driven by a hidden power construction which can be defined by emphasis on difference and dominance from the West with

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<sup>3</sup> Karskens, Machiel. *Foucault*. Uitgeverij Boom, 2012.



regard to the East. At the same time, the discourse of Orientalism creates the opportunity for the West to identify itself in a privileged and positive manner by placing the East in opposition of themselves. In summary, this discourse not only results in constructing knowledge with regard to the East but also constructs self-knowledge for the dominant group within this power structure of Orientalism. However, before a certain way of thinking, in this case the discourse of Orientalism, is taken over by a large group, it must be the case that there is consent. This is where Said refers in his text *Orientalism* to the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Within his ideas Gramsci put emphasis on culture and hegemony. He discusses that before an cultural hegemony<sup>4</sup> can exist consent and force need to be included. Force is first and foremost necessary to introduce a certain idea and perception in enough areas of society to create the opportunity to influence people. However, these ideas are only implemented and adopted when people outside the dominant classes agree with it and therefore consent is created. If there is only force, a cultural hegemony can't arise and the presence of force will result in a riot.

Even though in Said's work the emphasis is on Orientalism and the Middle East, this same process of imagining the other has been projected on Asia. In "Reading of the Asian Other", Marie-Paule Ha discusses the importance of Said's theory in order to overcome and rethink dominant cultural representations. In accordance with Said, she believes that "any Western narrative of the East is always already informed by the vast

<sup>4</sup> Gramsci describes a cultural hegemony as a cultural leadership that is executed by the dominant classes within a society. This dominant group can construct the perception of reality of the other groups within society by forcing control on different areas in society such as education, media etc.

reservoir of aesthetic, economic, sociological, historical, philological, and literary texts that are constitutive and constituted by what Barthes<sup>5</sup> refers to as ‘*codes culturels*’” (Ha, 11). She describes that the theory of Said tries to make clear that “due to the investment of the West in the Orientalism discourse no neutral contact can be made between the West and the Orient” (Ha, 112). You always approach the other first from your own cultural-specific environment and only then from a position as an individual. Your environment always colours your interpretation: “All readings are always already structured by a series of codes that both codify the texts and derive from them” (Ha, 112). The reading of the other is structured by codes and does not come naturally.

## 1.2 Asia Extreme

“How we describe and judge cultural exchange is tied up with our notions of culture, identity, and exchange itself” (O’Regan)

The ‘Asia Extreme’ brand of Tartan Films was founded in 2001 by the owner and creator Hamish McAlpine of the English distribution company Tartan Films. Special about the brand was that it was the first distribution label to especially deal with East-Asian film, playing an important role in

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<sup>5</sup> Roland Barthes was interested in semiotics and the structures that construct our understanding of the world. With cultural codes Barthes means the codes that refer not to the text’s narrative but to outside the text. the outside should not be regarded as reality but a common place of cultural expressions originating from knowledges deriving from different disciplines (Lacey, 74). For more information see the publication *Narrative and Genre: Key Concepts in Media Studies* written by Nick Lacey.

the promoting of these films in the West. Stephen Teo discusses the popularity of the Asian Horror film in the West in *The Asian Cinema Experience: Styles, Spaces, Theory* and explains that this genre attracts Western audiences because of the genre's - specific connotation of an 'extreme' experience. This experience is distributed by Asia Extreme and gives the viewer "films that are particularly daring and bold in their demonstrations of psychic fear and delusion, combined with a culpable sense of physical terror involving bodily abuse, mutilation or dismemberment" (Teo, 93). The Japanese film *Audition* directed by Miike Takashi in 1999 was the first film released by Tartan Films that became part of the 'Asia Extreme' brand, followed by many films from different Asian countries, including a variety of different genres.

### **1.2.1 The New Kind of Orientalist: Asia Extreme?**

Despite the diversity in origin and genres of the films included under the label of 'Asia Extreme', almost all films are largely compatible with the genre of horror. Several film scholars such as Noel Carroll<sup>6</sup> described that fear in a variety of ways across different cultures changes as society shifts. He states that many dominant ideas regarding horror films are intertwined with psychoanalysis in which 'the monster' serves as a representation of the thing that is suppressed in society (Carroll, 52). Likewise, Robin Wood emphasizes that the horror genre has a metaphorical function due to the fact that the things that our society suppresses can incarnate in 'the monster' and by this the spectator can use the film to expose themselves

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<sup>6</sup> *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, 1990.

to their very real fears indirectly instead of a real confrontation (Wood, 119).<sup>7</sup>This is one of the reasons why horror films can tell a lot about a culture or society. However, Chi-Yun Shin discusses in “The Art of Branding: Tartan “Asia Extreme” Films” that the success of the ‘Asia Extreme’ reveals more about “Western perceptions and obsessions about East Asian countries than what people or societies are like in these countries” (Shin, 97). Due to the success of the ‘Asia Extreme’ label the brand played an important role in the construction of an East-Asian film canon that resulted in the misinterpretation by the spectator that the films of ‘Asia Extreme’ would represent Asian cinema as a whole (Shin, 97). Taking ‘Asia’ as a seemingly unproblematically single entity, the brand simplifies the notion of culture whereby the different countries and their cultures are all put together in the term Asia. In addition, this generalization manifests itself also on the level of film theory since the different genres and subgenres are merged under a newly created genre called ‘Asia Extreme’. As noted earlier, Teo points out that the Asian horror film is often directly associated with an ‘extreme’ experience, however, promoting the films in such way, however is misleading because it not only creates, as Shin noted earlier, a canon of Asian cinema but more specifically it creates an overall image of the Asian horror film “as an intense test of endurance in the cinema” (Teo, 93). This is problematic in that the ‘extreme’ Asian horror films are seen as a representation of the genre while there are a lot of other Asian horror films that do not fit within this category. However, in “Transnational Cult Para texts: Exploring Audience Readings of Tartan’s Asia Extreme Brand”,

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<sup>7</sup> *Horror Film: A Critical Introduction*, 2018.

Emma Pett notes that the brand is mostly positively embraced by its audiences who see the brand as an appreciation of Asia, making foreign films accessible for the Western audiences. The audiences appreciate the different mode of cinema that these Asian films have to offer (Pett, 39). In contradiction, Shin criticizes the fact that this so-called different mode of cinema is promoted by Tartan Films with an emphasis on the hyper-violent nature and the shockingly unexpected aspects of the films (Shin, 88). Although this aspect of difference is appreciated by the audiences, several East-Asian film scholars have initiated a discussion to express their concerns about the reception of the films in a Western context. Shin discusses that it is notable that the discourse of difference and excess used in the promotion of 'Asia Extreme' "fits comfortably into the widespread notion about the East" (Shin, 97). In addition, Gary Needham also argues that Asia Extreme marketing propose a 'promise of unexpected danger which feeds into many of the fantasies regarding the Orient characterized by terms such as exoticism' (Shin, 97). In "Japanese Cinema and Orientalism" Needham explains this danger of the appearance of the discourse of Orientalism in the 'Asia Extreme' brand. Building on Said's text *Orientalism*, Needham describes Orientalism as a construct. It manages to shape the meaning of the Orient by exercising power which is called knowledge by the West to legitimize Western statements (Needham, 8). Because the West expresses their opinions as knowledge, the image that is constructed, in this case of Asia, is normalized. This ensures that people adopt this image without thinking critically about it. Stereotypes become knowledge in this way that 'helps' us defining the other. Needham

emphasizes that this is a paradox because “such imaginations, representations and stereotypes serve not to define the other, but rather to enable the self to be more clearly defined by what it is not” (Needham, 8). The promises of danger, as noted earlier, is linked with the marketing of the films and the emphasis here is on their otherness from Hollywood. In the marketing of ‘Asia Extreme’, the films’ otherness is defined in stereotypes such as exoticism, mystery and danger. It is important to realise that both the representation and selection of the Asian films by the West, Tartan Films in this case, is not a neutral venture. The packaging that ‘Asia Extreme’ creates for their films continue “a relationship in which otherness becomes a necessary element in their appreciation and contextualisation” (Needham, 9).

Daniel Martin has extensively studied Tartan Films brand ‘Asia Extreme’ and concludes his research in his eponymous publication *Extreme Asia: The Rise of Cult Cinema from the Far East* that the discourse of Orientalism has an effect on both the reception of viewers and the marketing of the films (Martin, 163). Hereby Martin nuances that the presence of language and images fitting in the discourse of Orientalism does not necessarily mean that spectators are directly influenced by this. However, the combination of on the one hand the word and image choice in the marketing and on the other hand the aggressive and targeted marketing purposes ensure that the spectator can hardly interpret the films outside of the discourse of Orientalism (Martin, 163). As noted earlier by Needham, the result of the marketing is that otherness becomes a necessary element within the reception of the films by audiences

(Needham, 9). By using a variety of films like *Audition* by director Miike Takashi as case studies Martin showcases that the creation of otherness is achieved by responding to the spectator's the desire for difference<sup>8</sup>. Just like Shin, Martin proposes that the way this desire is being fulfilled by 'Asia Extreme' reveals more about British culture than it does about any Asian cultures (Martin, 166). The result of expanding the market for Asian cinema by the means of beginning and promoting the brand 'Asia extreme', according to Martin, is that new canons of Asian cinema are being established. Both Shin and Martin describe this development of the generalization of Asian cinema in which the films of 'Asia Extreme' as a reflection of the whole of an Asian cinema<sup>9</sup> (Martin, 166; Shin, 97). Similarly, Jinhee Choi and Wada-Marciano note this paradox surrounding the term of difference in *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. On the one hand, the reception by the public is seen as a celebration of difference and on the other hand, Asian film scholars such as Needham, Martin and Shin see the reception of the public as a misinterpretation of an apparent appreciation, which is supported by difference, of Asian cinema. Choi and Wada-Marciano argue that 'Asia Extreme' not merely functions as a marketing label but also "carries a set of assumptions and implication that guides - and sometimes misguides -

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion of how *Audition* corporates itself in the discourse of orientalism see chapter 2 "Cinema of Cruelty: The Birth of Asia Extreme and Miike Takashi's *Audition*" in *Extreme Asia: The Rise of Cult Cinema from the Far East*.

<sup>9</sup> The film *Old Boy* by director Chan-wook Park is discussed frequently as example of a film which spectators see as a reflection of the whole of Korean cinema.

the viewer in assessing the political and ideological significance of the films” (Choi, Wada-Marciano, 6).

In contrast to the East-Asian film scholars discussed earlier, Pett argues that applying the discourse of orientalism, formulated by Said, is out of place regarding ‘Asia Extreme’ and that the marketing of the films needs a more contextual approach (Pett, 37). In summary, Needham, Martin, Shin, Choi and Wada-Marciano all use Said’s *Orientalism* to support their critique concerning ‘Asia Extreme’. Pett, on the other hand, has substantiated her findings on ‘Asia Extreme’ by interviews and answers to a questionnaire with the aim of defining the relationship between the brand and its audiences. Although it emerged that the audiences also expressed their appreciation of the films with the term “different”, this was not related to a desire to see the cultural other in the power binary that is discussed and deconstructed by orientalism but is more about how the films differ from the mainstream Hollywood cinema and how they are cultural specific by giving the spectator an insight view in another society (Pett, 43). The emphasis in the reception of the films by the audiences is on cultural difference that is received in terms of a potential to being challenged as spectator resulting in an ability to generate new ideas and knowledge by the audiences (Pett, 45). Pett argue that the results show that “the ‘exoticism’ of Tartan’s branding actually features very minimally within this reading strategy” (Pett, 45). She concludes that the analysis of the marketing by ‘Asia Extreme’ by other scholars, discussed earlier in this chapter of the theoretical framework, overlook the importance of how Tartan Films draws on a tradition of film marketing that is historically



related to art house films (Pett, 45). In this tradition the focus lays on a desire to break taboos by the means of a creating shock effect. She proposes that instead of seeing 'Asia Extreme' as inherently problematic due to its suggested relation with the discourse of orientalism it would be more effective to consider in terms of the tradition of art house films (Pett, 45).

### **1.3 Asian Cinema versus Western Cinema: The Construction of the Horrific**

"While Hollywood only talks about eating someone's liver with some fava beans, the Asian version will actually serve it up" (Patrick Galloway, 11)

Whereas the Hollywood horror film seems to be 'creatively dead' Bliss Cua Lim notes in "Generic Ghosts: Remaking the New 'Asian Horror Film'" that Hollywood should be "turning to Asia to restock their cupboard" in order to revive their own horror cinema (Lim, 110). Asia has a long tradition of the horror genre but in 2001 was an extensively popularity of this genre celebrated under the name 'the new Asian horror film'. This categorisation was object to the transnational exchange with Hollywood using this so called 'Extreme Cinema' <sup>10</sup>as a source for their successful productions of remaking the Asian horror films. With the rise of distribution companies like Tartan Films embracing Asian horror, the genre gained popularity in

<sup>10</sup> Vivian Lee discusses in the chapter "Universal Hybrids: The Trans/Local Production of Pan-Asian Horror" that this term 'Extreme Cinema' is extensively used to describe the Asian horror genre and includes all kinds of 'extremes' or excesses from the non-West (Lee, 43).

not only Asia but also in the West. Especially Japanese horror films such as *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002), *Ringu* (1998) and *Kairo* (2001) have been used extensively for American remakes. But also the Hong Kong cinema has delivered several horror films that were remade in America such as *Jiàn Guǐ*. Especially with regard to the Hong Kong cinema there has been a remarkable shift. Called an imitative cinema due to the imitation of Hollywood “the Hong Kong film industry is notorious for seizing upon a working formula and then working it to death” (Lim, 109), but that had now changed. But why would it be clever to look at another culture’s or nation’s horror cinema when the Western cinema has its own traditions with regard to the genre of horror? Carrol notes that the horror genre is extremely suitable for the process of remakes due to several characteristics that the horror genre possesses:

“the horrifying thrills and excitement generated in the narratives and situations can be immediately experienced by people everywhere without any knowledge of cultural signs or motifs. Even if such signs and motifs were present, they would not constitute an impediment to the experience of horror.” (Carrol, 15)

Although this transnational exchange can be seen as a triumph for the Asian horror genre Lim emphasizes that it is also a power shift. Hollywood retools the Asian horror films by adding conventions of the Hollywood system resulting in making even more profit than the original films had made (Lim, 113). Both Carrol, Teo and Lim discuss the characteristic of the

horror genre with regard to the possibility to construct an experience of fear that can relate in the same way to different people. However, the remakes appear to differ extensively from their originals in terms of how these films construct horror. As an example, one can refer back to the Asia Extreme label which emphasizes how the Asian films that they distribute extensively differ from Western horror films and therefore are 'intense and serve as a test of endurance in the cinema' (Teo, 94). Teo also emphasizes that despite the globalist approach to horror there has also been a critical discussion about the East-West difference in horror, in which it is noted that horror in the West is more a body genre due to the fact that it tends to concentrate on gore and physical violence whereas the East concentrates on the psychological aspects and suspense (Teo, 92). The appeal of the Asian horror film, according to Lim, can be explained by the fact that "because the 'Asian mythologies' behind the monsters are new to us they make the terror feel more rooted, less arbitrary" (Lim, 117).

But if we assume that there is indeed such a thing as an Asian aesthetic within the horror genre from these assumptions, how does this style manifest itself? Are there certain conventions that make the Asian horror film different from the Western horror film? And to be more specific, does the Chinese horror film differ from the American horror film?

### **1.3.1 The American Uncanny**

Based on the definition by Wood of the horror film being a genre that showcases the repressed in an indirect way so that the spectator can have a metaphorical confrontation with their inner fears, we could clarify that

horror is geographically different and fluid over time. Nevertheless we can see the same films passing by in different countries in the form of remakes. However, where certain conceptions of fear in the main strands of the narrative can appeal to several people, you can see with only a short observation that films such as *The Eye* and *Jiàn Guǐ* construct a different viewing experience. In order to make a comparison with the film *Jiàn Guǐ*, this chapter will attempt to define how the American horror film is shaped.

Kendall R. Phillips discusses in *A Place of Darkness: The Rhetoric of Horror in Early American Cinema* that the term 'weird' played an important role in even the early stages of the horror genre. This term had certain cinematic characteristics associated with it such as the appearance of ghosts, monsters etc. However, this term developed quite fast and was not only associated with the supernatural but also with the foreign. With the theory of Said in mind, the discourse of Orientalism was already apparent in the field of cinema. The horrific elements were framed in relation to Orientalist notions of the exotic East which was formed by dichotomies (Phillips, 74).<sup>11</sup> The foreign was identified in terms of notions of contrasts with regard to how Americans thought of themselves. By associating the 'weird' with the foreign, distance was created between the American spectator and the narrative on screen. Phillips shows that in this case the linkage of the 'weird' and the foreign came from the inability to fully know the other. This created a mysterious void to which the horror genre could give substance. Due to this inability it was easier to define the other in

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<sup>11</sup> *The Moon Stone* (1915) is an example of this orientalist representation of 'weird'.

dichotomies. In early horror films like *The Hindoo Dagger* (1909) this was reflected in the association of the horrific with aspects such as non-rational subjects such as magic and an emphasis on a society as being less developed. Precisely this aspect can also be linked to the theory of Wood who described horror as a genre that shows what society suppresses due to a fear of it. In "Modern Horror and the 1970's" Wood categorizes the repression which he links to the American horror genre as surplus repression being "specific to a particular culture and that this is the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture" (Wood, 28). He argues that due to the presence of this repression we have unconsciously constructed a society which is oppressive in the way that it depicts rules of normality (Wood, 28). The horror genre embodies these repressions and fascinates its audience because it has the possibility to activate the desire of society to free itself from the restrictions. However, because it thus represents repression, it also brings fear to the spectator who fears the monsters in the horror film that attacks normality. With this in mind, he formulates a basic formula of the horror genre: "Normality is threatened by the Monster" (Wood, 31). In this case the monster can therefore take different forms depending on the surplus repression.

Going back to the usage of the term 'weird' with regard to the horror genre, this term got a more defining form when it became associated with the concept of the Uncanny. In *The Horror Film*, Peter Hutchings points out how this concept has been abundantly discussed to interpret horror films. He emphasizes that Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis that

introduces the concept of the Uncanny, “identifies the Uncanny, or unheimlich, as a sensation or feelings that relates to beliefs, ideas or experiences that have been repressed or surmounted but which still linger inside us” (Hutchings, 69). Freud emphasizes that the Uncanny may look alien to us because our mind become alienated from it by the process of repression but it is actually something that is already familiar and well established in our minds (Hutchings, 69). However, we could question now how in particular the American Uncanny, which plays an important role in the American horror film, is constructed but also deconstructed.

Although different subgenres have been popular in different periods, thus showcasing the different fears within society in each period, we can conclude that there are some aspects in regard to the American horror film that stay dominant and recurring. In summary, a recurring characteristic within the American has been the emphasis on logic with regard to the narrative structure. This idea, which stems from the dominant role of the Hollywood system, results in the a story development in which closure needs to be established. Resulting in a trope in which the manifestation of the horrific must ultimately be ended by the protagonists, the American horror film simply has the following structure: the protagonists are exposed to the horrific, then a battle of destruction follows and it ends with protagonists who have removed the horrific from normal life. Secondly, within this narrative structure the opposition between rational and irrational is the impellent of the story line. The horrific is fused together with the irrational and the normal conditions of society are fused with the rational. Simply put, the American horror film is a showcase of the

disruption of the rational. Because the irrational has no place within Western society, it must therefore be destroyed. However, in the next chapter it will become clear that in Asian horror films the ratio between rational and irrational is different and not monotonous.

### **1.3.2 Conventions of the Asian Horror Genre**

Simply described as 'Extreme' by the label Asia Extreme, Teo argues in contrary that the Asian cinema is anything but unilateral. In the chapter "Asian Horror and the Ghost-Story Style" Teo states that "Asian cinema, like Asia itself, is a site or space which encounters many ideas" (Teo, 223). Looking at a national level, the Hong Kong cinema alone has showcased their hybridity by the multifaceted variations of the horror in which the genre of horror is combined with other genres like Kungfu, comedy, melodrama or the crime thriller (Teo, 94). In "'Cinema-Spiritualism' in Southeast Asia and Beyond: Encounters with Ghost in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Peter Bräunlein discusses that Southeast Asian ghost movies fit perfectly into the genre of post-mortem cinema. He describes this genre as followed: "While the body is (un)dead, the brain goes on living and leads an afterlife of sorts or finds different – ghostly, but also banal, mundane – forms of embodiment" (Bräunlein, 11). Because Southeast Asian ghost movies experiment with various forms of post-mortem existence and reflect upon trauma of the living as well as the dead, the movies fit into this genre in a literal sense (Bräunlein, 12). However, according to Teo, the ghost-story subgenre within the genre of horror is what distinguishes the Asian horror genre from other horror cinemas (Teo, 94). He explains that

both the sociality of spirits and the gender element of the female ghost are the conventions within this subgenre (Teo, 94). Referring to Carroll, Teo also discusses the paradox of horror, however, he suggests that Asian horror films give this paradox a different formulation. Carroll describes the paradox as a 'curious mixture of attraction and repulsion. In Asian horror films this paradox interests the sociality of spirits in which 'spirits seek to be social but we are repulsed by them' (Teo, 94). This suggests that spirits are not a threatening construction but that they have a deeper meaning which needs to be discovered. In films this is translated in the need for the protagonist to discover the reason of the presence of the spirit and by this participate in the sociality of the spirits instead of being overwhelmed by the repulsion caused by the appearance of the spirit. Not only the sociality of spirits but also the other characteristics that Teo assigns to the ghost-story are at the same time also the aspects that construct the cultural specific to Asian horror. For example, the ghost-story proposes that nature and the supernatural are intertwined with each other resulting in that the supernatural is embedded in society by this belief (Teo, 94). It is not that the ghost-story has created this belief of nature and the supernatural being connected. The basis of the ghost-story subgenre is formed by a long tradition of folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling in Asian society (Teo, 95). It is therefore a belief system that is normalized within society. The stories that result from this longstanding tradition are often a source of inspiration for Asian horror films<sup>12</sup>. Even though the presence of ghosts is widely accepted in various parts in Asia, Bräunlein

<sup>12</sup> A few examples of Asian horror films that are based on folklore are the Japanese films *Onibaba* (1964) and *Kuroneko* (1968).



emphasizes that the idea of ghosts existing is still a subject matter that evokes debates amongst Western academics (Bräunlein, 4). In summary, the debates are simplified into dichotomies such as religion versus science and reason versus unreason. Where Asian academics approach ghosts as a serious subject for academic research, Western academics still hesitate to acknowledge the existence of ghosts. Bräunlein points out that this reveals a lot about the West-East positioning, in which modernity plays a dominant role:

There are, of course, anthropologists, folklorists, film and cultural studies scholars striving for recognition of the subject matter.

However, such scholars are concerned, it is commonly assumed, with the 'primitive mind', with pre-industrial societies or the lower depths of society. In this way the mainstream consensus is reaffirmed. (Bräunlein, 2)

The idea that modernity is considered rational is a dominant discourse that results in a divide between East and West.

Accompanied by the sociality of spirits comes the early revelation of the ghost to both the spectator as the protagonist. Unlike Hollywood productions such as *Paranormal Activity* (2007) or *Poltergeist* (1982) in which the ghost will only reveal itself to the protagonist and the spectator when the end of the film approaches, in the ghost-story subgenre the ghost almost immediately forms a prominent part of the narrative in a visual manner. Although the revelation takes place early in the narrative, this simultaneously constructs a state of hesitation for both the protagonist and the spectator (Teo,96). The first disclosure in the

ghost-story subgenre is often a vision in which the ghost appears real but the image is not yet clear enough to confirm its existence. This results in the positioning of the spectator to decide to believe or not believe that the existence of a ghost could be a possibility (Teo, 96). However, the moment of hesitation transforms itself quite expeditiously into the acceptance of what the protagonist sees: "It is no longer a question of whether or not ghosts exist; we accept that ghosts are real and that they can do marvellous things, such as reincarnate, or fly, that can't be done by ordinary mortals" (Teo, 96).

In addition, Teo mentions the gender aspect as another aspect within the Asian horror genre that makes this genre so characteristic. The ghosts in Asian horror films are generally always women which is societally grounded (Teo, 100). Its origin can be traced back to the legend of the *Pontianak*. Although J-horror makes extensively use of the legend of the *Pontianak* to shape the vengeful female ghost that threatens the people around her, Chinese horror has its own construction of the ghost. In Chinese horror Taoism has a major influence on the shape of the ghost. Taoism believes that nothing is absolute. Therefore a person or in the case of horror a spirit is therefore not entirely good or completely bad either. Besides Taoism, Chinese Buddhism also influences the construction of ghosts in Chinese horror. Within Chinese Buddhism, the concept of death is part of the natural process of life in which birth, aging, sickness and death circulate. In this case, death should not be seen as a singular moment but rather as a continuation of life. The importance of these components of life are expressed in certain formalities that must be followed when a person

dies. In Confucianism, ancestor worship is very important. Proper burial ground is important and will affect the fortune of future generations. If this is not done properly, it results in wandering spirits of the deceased who cannot accomplish reincarnation. Souls of deceased that are content simply move on to the next life. Due to the importance of Chinese Buddhism recurring tragedy became a trope within Chinese horror. Endless suffering is part of Buddhism and the ultimate goal is to transcend reincarnation, however, the life cycle must be repeated to accomplish this. This trope goes hand in hand with the sociality of ghosts as the protagonist must find out what the reason for tragedy is for the ghost. However, the protagonist is initially repulsed by the ghost and the confrontation between the two becomes a recurring pattern until the protagonist is able to embrace this sociality of ghosts.

## **Chapter 2 *The Eye* and *Jiàn Guǐ*: The Same Story with Different Outcomes**

Both *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye* revolve around a female protagonist who, after undergoing an eye transplant, is plagued by mysterious images and possibly possesses the ability to not only see ghosts but also when death comes for people. Blinded since a young age the protagonist does not have the knowledge to fully understand the visible world. To understand this new world once she can see, the protagonist goes on a trip to find out who her eye donor is. From this journey it becomes clear that the eye donor had a curse on her. She was able to see when people would die and see the spirits of the deceased. Because her environment distrusted her

abilities, she was constantly harassed, which eventually ended in committing suicide. However, this is not the end, since the curse is passed on to the protagonist. Although *Jiàn Guǐ* seems inspired by the genre of J-horror in terms of aesthetics, the Hong Kong/Singaporean production by directors Danny and Oxide Pang remains a Chinese horror film with a fundamentally Chinese story that reflects upon Chinese traditional superstitions, morality and philosophy. Although largely similar to *Jiàn Guǐ*, the American remake *The Eye* seems to take a different approach and uses the idea of a vengeful ghosts haunting humans, a concept reflected in J-horror films such as *Ringu*. However, as already mentioned Chinese ghosts aren't completely good or bad and the ghosts in *Jiàn Guǐ* aren't the typical vengeful ghosts that appear in J-horror. This chapter will explore how both films establish the horrific by the narrative structure and the mise-en-scene.

## 2.1 The Narrative Structure: How to Establish Closure?

“The format of the ghost story and its conventions ‘allow for an allegorical tale of betrayal and fate, transporting characters on a journey through a psychic realm where the past determines the future’ (Teo, 223)

A vision in which an inexplicable figure appears threateningly in the shot forms the beginning of *The Eye*. Before the spectator has any leads, the horror is already shown abruptly. However, this structure doesn't continue and is followed by a serene introduction of the protagonist. *Jiàn Guǐ*, on the other hand, seems to start with a linear time frame but here also the temporality is interrupted by the past and the future when the story further develops. In *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, Lim points out that "the ghost film possesses the generic potential to unsettle the linear time of conventional narrative" (Lim, 161). This aspect is especially evident in the circular time dimension of the ghosts. Recurring tragedy is a trope in Chinese horror and in both films ghosts are reliving traumas. As an example, the scene with the little boy losing his school rapport can be discussed (C5, A5). The boy appears in the corridor of the protagonist's apartment and asks her if she has seen his school rapport. When she tries to help him, the boy is not able to say more than that his parents are going to be mad and ask again the same question. Finally, after the umpteenth time of repeating his question, the boy commits suicide. This happens in the same way as to how the boy died in the first place. It occurs that the boy is trapped in reliving his death and in this way past time becomes entangled with the present time. In addition to the circular time dimension, there is also an overflow of the present, past and future. Every time the protagonist wakes up from her nightmares, the interior of her bedroom changes into a different interior. This change of interior occurs several times in succession in scenes like this (C4, C6, A4, A6). As the story develops further, the spectator can

make the connection that the other interior is the bedroom of the protagonist's eye donor. In this way, past, present, and future are intertwined. The protagonist is in the present but the eye donor's bedroom is connected to the suicide she has committed in the past. Besides, the bedroom is also the place where the protagonist will eventually go to find out what the story behind the eye donor is and by this, the place also has a connection with the future. Knee notes that "this co-existence of past and present, old and new, functions on a more abstract level as well, as a series of oppositions between traditional culture and modern, older regimes of knowledge and systems of belief and newer ones" (74).

To put it simply, the structure of both films is built up by showcasing wandering ghosts or the figure of death picking up dying people in order to activate the protagonist to look for the origin of her eye donor to understand the meaning of her new gift. And not only the appearance of ghosts causes the trip to happen but also the disbelief regarding the visions of the protagonist. This ensures that she must travel to a place where people will be open to her new gift. The place where the protagonist first finds herself is a place where scientific thinking is dominant. In "The Pan-Asian Outlook of The Eye", Adam Knee mentions that the Western-educated Hong Kong doctors only believe Mun when she provides solid factual evidence to prove it (Knee, 74). Because of the disbelief Mun encounters, she and the doctor decide to go to Thailand with the idea that this a more openminded, spiritual country (Knee, 74). The belief in the existence of ghosts is marked directly when Mun visits a Sino-Thai physician in Thailand that believes her vision without any doubts. It also

clearly shows that the belief in the existence of ghosts is often linked to traditional thinking. Likewise, Bräunlein points out that in Western thought it is still difficult to approach the existence of ghosts as an academic subject matter (Bräunlein, 2). When the subject is taken seriously, this is accompanied by prejudices. Believing in ghosts is considered irrational because the master narrative on modernity is still dominant (Bräunlein, 2). This opposition is therefore literally reflected in the characters. However, this opposition can also be applied to the development of the narrative. As discussed, Carrol stated that “many dominant ideas regarding horror films are intertwined with psychoanalysis in which ‘the monster’ serves as a representation of the thing that is suppressed in society” (Carrol, 52). Likewise, Wood points out that “the horror genre has a metaphorical function due to the fact that the things that our society suppresses can incarnate in ‘the monster’” (Wood, 119). In *The Eye*, we could say that ‘the monster’ is the curse that haunts the protagonist. The confirmation that her gift is real and that the supernatural is intertwined with the natural, as is the case in *Jiàn Guǐ*, could be equated with the loss of irrationality. By this, the Uncanny would be the loss of irrationality. Wood notes that the spectator can use the horror film “to expose themselves to their very real fears indirectly instead of a real confrontation” (Wood, 119). Therefore a point of reversal must be established at which the monster is destroyed. *The Eye* does this by turning around the gift of the protagonist. After the protagonist has helped the ghost of her eye donor move on, she ends up in a traffic jam and has a vision of a big accident that is going to happen (A12). She manages to warn people in time so that no people die. In this

way, she knows to use her gift in a good way. However, the accident makes her blind again. But this is positive since in this way 'the monster' is destroyed. As discussed, in this way the story also develops in accordance with logical coherence of the Hollywood system and closure in the narrative is achieved. In contradiction, in *Jiàn Guǐ* Mun does not manage to save the people in the accident (C12). Stuck in the traffic jam she again witnesses the figure of death picking up people. In an effort to prevent this Mun runs along the cars to warn people. However, just like her eye donor tried to warn people, Mun also does not manage to save people. Knee discusses that this scene is a parallel with the eye donor witnessing the big fire in which a lot of people died (Knee, 80). By using this scene as a plot *Jiàn Guǐ* embraces its cultural specificity. Knee notes that this "evokes a Taoist cyclical or Buddhist karmic inevitability: In keeping with Eastern modes of thought, past deeds cannot be erased, but rather always make their return" (Knee, 80)

## 2.2 Horrific Elements in the Mise-en-scene

In both *The Eye* and *Jiàn Guǐ* the narrative is supported by not only what is shown, but especially how it is shown. In "Universal Hybrids: The Trans/Local Production of Pan-Asian Horror", Vivian Lee notes that visual perception not only provides access to the supernatural but is also the tool to unravel the secrets of both the dead and the living (Lee, 49). The focalization lays largely by the protagonist and the spectator is placed in the position of sharing the supernatural vision of the protagonist. However, this way of observing limits the spectator's judgment. Do we look at a



subjective or an objective perception? This doubt is initially created by the voice-over that introduces the story:

<i>Jiàn Guǐ</i>	The Eye
<p>“Some people say that the world is ugly but at the same time very beautiful. I don’t know if that is true. But I’m going to discover the world in a little while. ”</p>	<p>“People say to see is believing but for me that is not entirely true. I lost my side when I was five years old. These memories of what I have seen faded so much that I don’t recognize myself anymore. Now I see with other senses. I can smell the rain before it drops but I can’t watch it fall. I can feel the sun on my face but I can’t see it rise or set. I want to see the world like everyone else. The sun, the rain.. and music...oh I bet music looks beautiful.”</p>

As already discussed, Teo emphasizes that characteristic to the ghost-story subgenre is the early revelation of the supernatural in a visual manner (Teo, 96). However, this revelation does not directly go hand in hand with the acceptance of the display of the supernatural. Teo explains that this because often “a vision in which the ghost appears real, but the image is not yet clear enough to confirm its existence” (Teo, 96). By this, the first revelation results in a state of hesitation. In both *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye*, this first encounter of the protagonist with the supernatural is directly after her eye transplant (C2, A2). When the doctor removes her band-aid the spectator shares her blurry vision of the room. Even though the view is blurred the spectator can determine that the shadows are the people in the room. Simply because the spectator has seen an overview shot of the space before this point of view shot of the protagonist and therefore possesses specific prior knowledge. But the image is soon disturbed by an

unknown shadow. The spectator knows that this shadow was not previously part of the space. However, the spectator also knows that the protagonist's vision is not reliable yet. Besides this, the spectator also knows that the protagonist was blind before the surgery and thus her visual knowledge is limited. By this, the moment of hesitation comes in place. However, it must be emphasized that in the case of *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye*

this moment of hesitation is taken to the next level since the protagonist has had an eye transplant and therefore has to get used to her vision. As a result, there is a double hesitation because both the protagonist and the spectator can have their doubts about whether it is possible to judge with the vision they have at all whether what appears in front of them is real or not real. However, interesting in these two case studies is the moment in which the hesitation is transformed into a moment of acceptance. Initially, both films evoke the Western idea of science and rationality being intertwined with each other. However, in *Jiàn Guǐ* the existence of the supernatural is quickly accepted and experienced as a serious possibility concerning the protagonist's visions (C10). In this scene, she tells the doctor about her visions and he doesn't question if this could be real or not. He wants to support her in unraveling the meaning behind these visions and doesn't question her mental state. However, this is initially complicated by the fact that other doctors do not believe in Mun's visions. In contrast, the hesitation about the existence of the supernatural in *The Eye* is held longer or even labeled as impossible due to the idea that the supernatural would not fit within the modern condition. In the scene (A10)

where Sidney tells the doctor about her visions, he gets slightly frustrated. He thinks that it would be impossible for Sidney to see dead people and tells her that she is mentally unstable.

The fact that in *The Eye* the moment of hesitation is held longer and that the disbelief in the gift of the protagonist persists longer, also influences how the ghosts are constructed. This results visually in the appearance of the ghosts being ominous in *The Eye*. In *Jiàn Guǐ*, on the other hand, the idea of the sociality of ghosts is quickly embraced and therefore the appearance of the ghosts seems less threatening. As an example, the difference in the personification of death in both films can be discussed. In both films, a car accident occurs (C8, A8) in which the victim is taken away by the figure of death. In *The Eye* (A8) the figure appears to be humanlike but is partly deformed resulting in a monstrous appearance. When the protagonist tries to take a better look, the figure turns around and makes a threatening screaming sound. And not only in this scene does the figure of death make a threatening impression, but also in the opening scene in which we see the suicide of the protagonist's eye donor (A1), in which the showing of the figure of death is accompanied by shock effect for the spectator. However, in *Jiàn Guǐ* the figure of death looks human. Thus the difference is not only emphasized visually but also supported by sound. The appearance of the figure of death in *The Eye* is accompanied by haunting screaming voices. In *Jiàn Guǐ* this is not always the case.

Even though the curse seems to gather in the place of death of the eye donor, the curse is not limited to this place. The curse has a wide temporal and spatial reach. Present, future, and past are intertwined with

regard to both the time dimension and space. Both films make use of an opposition between the rural and urban environments. Knee notes that this is reflected in the mise-en-scene by the colour in *Jiàn Guǐ*: “Witness, for example, the counter-positioning of the aseptic corridors of the modern Hong Kong hospital and the wood construction of the rural Siam Rach hospital, shot in sepia tones, as well as the film’s initial elision of any narrative events in Bangkok” (Knee, 74). You can see this even more explicitly in the scene in which the protagonist wakes up from her nightmares (A4, A6, C4, C6). When she opens her eyes she sees the interior in her bedroom changing. But not only the change in the furniture itself is striking here, but also the colours. Her interior has blue tones while the interior of her eye donor appears alternately in sepia tones.

### Chapter 3 Conclusion

This research arose from the concerns that several East Asian scholars<sup>13</sup> had about the Asia Extreme brand and their promotion of Asian films. Previously published studies focused mainly on the marketing strategies of Asia Extreme and how this would influence the reception of the films by the public. This publications addresses the observation that Asia Extreme uses the discourse of Orientalism to promote their films. However, the limitation is that little is known about the link between this debate and the cinematic aspect of the films. For this reason, the research in the thesis has attempted to make a start on this. On the question of how the film *Jiàn*

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<sup>13</sup> Chi-Yun Shin, Daniel Martin, Emma Pett, Gary Needham, Jinhee Choi, Stephen Teo, and Wada-Marciano.

*Guǐ* and its American remake *The Eye* relate cinematically to the discourse of Orientalism, this study found that the results confirm the association between the films and the discourse of Orientalism in the case of a comparative approach. However, the most interesting finding probably is that the results also indicate that it is possible that *Jiàn Guǐ* may be also related to this discourse.

Looking at specific *Jiàn Guǐ* it is clear that a division is made between rural and urban which emerges in both the narrative and the mise-en-scene. Rural symbolizing the traditional culture and urban symbolizing modernity. Here you could suggest that the discourse of Orientalism is implied. However, in *Jiàn Guǐ* this opposition is not used to demonize the cultural other because the presence of the supernatural with which the rural is associated is accepted. In *Jiàn Guǐ* the unknown can live beside the known. This is not the case with *The Eye*. In this film, the contradiction seems to be used to demonize the cultural other and the supernatural must be deconstructed. The results of this research show that the remake deculturized *Jiàn Guǐ*. Characteristics belonging to Chinese horror such as the sociality of ghosts, the moment of hesitation with regard to the first introduction of the ghost and the supernatural being intertwined with the natural, are removed or adjusted in the remake *The Eye*. It could be suggested that the results confirm the association of *Jiàn Guǐ* and the discourse of Orientalism. But this is only the case when the film is considered in the context of Asia Extreme. *Jiàn Guǐ* possesses several characteristics of Chinese horror and differs from the cinematic Hollywood system. However, I think that with this case study the idea of

the extreme violently cinema is not compatible with *Jiàn Guǐ*. *The Eye* does intervene with the discourse of Orientalism. It clearly demonizes the cultural other with cinematic tools.

The Difference in dealing with ghosts in *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye*, and in particular the acceptance of ghosts, shows an opposition between East and West. In *Jiàn Guǐ*, the acceptance of the unknown besides the known is expressed in both the narrative structure and the visual structure. Even though *Jiàn Guǐ* seems to discomfort its spectator by letting the supernatural stay part of life, it does comfort in the way that it shows that it is possible to let the supernatural intertwine with the natural. Secondly, the mise-en-scene of *Jiàn Guǐ* embraces the sociality of spirits and by this, the supernatural is not threatening anymore. In *Jiàn Guǐ* the horror comes from the depression of seeing dead and in *The Eye* the horror is constructed from death itself. In contradiction, *The Eye* shows that dominant values articulate how horror is constructed. Likewise, Bräunlein pointed out that “Modernity is considered rational and secular, and this basic assumption carries with it a fundamental divide between the ‘us’ of reason and progress and the ‘them’ of irrational beliefs” (Bräunlein, 2). The narrative structure has been adjusted to deliver *Jiàn Guǐ* as already familiar for a Western public by deracinating. Values are reinterpreted for the remake because they were unfamiliar with Western culture. In the context of Asia Extreme, whereas the public expects something different than their own culture, *Jiàn Guǐ* works but when it has put in a different context a cultural translation is needed. *The Eye* intertwines the supernatural with evil and irrationality. To enhance the narrative logic and

rational coherence the supernatural has to be deconstructed in the plot. The protagonist is rescued from the supernatural. And also the mise-en-scene embraces this idea of rational coherence. *The Eye* contrasts the urban in opposition to the rural. Maintaining this contrast seems to be intended to demonize the cultural other. Looking at the scenes in which the protagonist is confronted with ghosts, this idea would be supported. *The Eye* constructs the ghosts as threatening, evil appearances which are further emphasized by the interplay with sound.

## Discussion

A potential problem that the scope of my thesis may be too limited. This study is unable to encompass the entire collection of Chinese horror films that is distributed under the Asia Extreme label. A suggestion for further research would be to incorporate films without a Western remake such as *Dumplings*. Initially the idea was to include *Dumplings* in the research but the size of the thesis for this assignment would become too broad. Due to this the decision was made to focus only on *Jiàn Guǐ* and *The Eye*.

## Appendix

Scene description	Time code	<i>Jiàn Guǐ</i>	Time code	<i>The Eye</i>
Opening scene	0:00:00 - 01:05:09 (C1)	The film starts with shots of the protagonist Wong Kar Mun who walks through the city. Looking at the mise-en-scene it becomes clear by the attributes that the protagonist is visually impaired. The general atmosphere, combination of the sound with the images, in the scene is	0:00:00 - 0:01:32 0:01:44 - 0:03:00	<i>The Eye</i> also shows the same kind of scene as in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> , however, this American remake starts with shots from a scene which is further on in the film when the protagonist Sydney Wells is looking for the origin of her eye donor. The sound and the images in this first scene create an aggressive

		peaceful. We are introduced on the sound track into the story of the protagonist with the help of a voice-over.	(A1)	atmosphere. Already one jump scare appears in this scene. This first scene is followed by the scene that also appears in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> which constructs an abrupt transition due to the peaceful atmosphere of this successively scene. On the sound track the spectator can hear a voice-over telling the story of the protagonist.
The first disclosure after the surgery of the protagonist's sight	0:05:19 - 0:07:22 (C2)	The protagonist can see shadows and as spectator we get to see what she sees by a point of shot. The spectator can largely derive from this that the shadows she see are the people that are standing in the room. However, one shot follows in which an inexplicable shadow appears to be seen and we go back from a point of view shot to an overview shot and we see that the protagonist reacts painfully to the seeing of the last shadow. This shot is accompanied by a sharp sound which offers a good transition to the reaction of the protagonist. From this scene the spectator could conclude that a hint is given that something is wrong or that something bad maybe is going to happen.	0:08:38 - 0:10:40 (A2)	The protagonist can see shadows and as spectator we get to see what she sees by a point of shot. Largely corresponds with the structure of the scene in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> . Here too, an inexplicable shadow appears. An ominous sound accompanies the visual track on which we see the shadow. This gives the spectator a hint that there is something that cannot be trusted. Concluding, in both versions the spectator gets to see the in inexplicable shadow and the soundtrack gives a hint that something dire can happen.
First night in the hospital	0:13:01 -	The protagonist sees inexplicable shadows but this time she sees two	0:12:48 -	The protagonist sees a strange shadow next to the hospital bed of



	0:16:24 (C3)	shadows instead of one shadow. The protagonist goes on the corridor to investigate. We hear a strange calling sound on the sound track, but it is difficult to explain what the sound is and where it comes from. The sound suddenly sounds nearby and louder and we see an old woman walking forward from behind the protagonist. We see short shots of images of both heads alternately, however it seems that the old woman is not trying to threaten the protagonist. In <i>The Eye</i> the spectator does get the impression that the old woman threatens the protagonist.	0:15:33 (A3)	another patient and therefore goes to investigate. She goes into the hallway and ominous music appears on the sound track. We see a shot in which the head of the protagonist and an old woman quickly alternate on screen. This shots make it difficult for the spectator to exactly explain what is happening. The quick shot transitions are marked by non-diegetic, synchronically matched sounds. However, both the sound and the reaction of the protagonist with regard to the situation give an impression that a threat is lurking.
First vision through her eye donor in her dreams	0:27:30 - 0:28:29 (C4)	The protagonist gets a vision in her dream in which she sees a hospital. In comparison with <i>The Eye</i> the images are less threatening. In this scene it is suggested that she has an inexplicable dream and not a nightmare such as is suggested in <i>The Eye</i> . In both versions the mise-en-scene plays an important role because the interior of the room changes into the interior of the room of the eye donor.	0:22:40 - 0:23:15 (A4)	The protagonist gets a vision in her dream of the past of her eye donor. She wakes up from her dream and the interior of her room slowly changes into a completely different room. Later on in the film the spectator can conclude that this the room of her eye donor.
Dead boy appears to the protagonist and asks if his	0:22:25 - 0:24:40	A little boy is standing at the door of the protagonist's apartment. She is not afraid of his presence when he asks her if she knows where	0:26:21 - 0:28:22	The protagonist enters the corridor and is startled by a little boy, wearing a raincoat, sitting on the floor. The fright of the protagonist

school report has been found	(C5)	his school report is. The little boy moves around and the protagonist walks into the corridor. Tension building music can be heard on the sound track. Then the boy stands on the floor in front of her again and eats from the food under the lanterns for sacrifice which are hanging at another door in the apartment complex. With this the mise-en-scene gives a hint that it could be possible that the little boy is not a living human anymore but could be a ghost. When the person of the apartment opens, you see the doubt on the face of the protagonist as to what has just happened.	(A5)	is emphasized by the sound track. The scene is less extensive in comparison with the scene in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> . The little boy only asks where his school report is and there are no further hints in the scene's mise-en-scene such as in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> that could possibly explain the boy's provenance.
Second vision through her eye donor in her dreams	0:31:14 - 0:33:07 (C6)	The protagonist is shown the same images as in her previous vision. And again the interior of her room changes when she wakes up and looks into her bedroom. The difference is with the first vision that the protagonist now walks into the room to look closer to the changing of the interior	0:31:00 - 0:33:28 (A6)	In comparison with <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> the scene in <i>The Eye</i> differs because the images are different than the images in the first vision. The images are again threatening, which is also supported by the sound track. The mise-en-scene is also of great importance as another important location with regard to the history of the eye donor is shown. Visual hints are thus given in this way. The change of space is abruptly stopped when the protagonist has got out of bed, tries to touch the wall and it seems like she is being pushed down on the floor.

Third vision through her eye donor in her dreams in which she appears in a fire			0:36:10 - 0:38:10 (A7)	The vision starts in her own room. This is where smoke is generated and she hears someone at the door and looks through the hatch. There she sees a man approach the door. Again you hear a ominous sound and a moment of fear is created. After this there is a transition to another location and the protagonist ends up in a fire. A person grabs her arm and leaves her with a wound. When she wakes up, the space around is normal again, but the wound is still on her arm. However, it slowly disappears. This does create a possibility that the vision of the protagonist is real. However, the spectator is left with doubt due to the knowledge that the protagonist must still recover from the operation.
Appearance of the figure of dead in which both the protagonist as the spectator see the figure of dead as a whole	0:38:35 - 0:39:50 (C8)	The protagonist witnesses a car accident and sees that the victim is being taken away by a figure. The figure appears to be humanlike but stays shadowy. Only the sound track gives a hint for the spectator that the figure could possibly be malignant. However, this possibility is does not get confirmed in this scene. The figure does not threaten the protagonist or interacts with the protagonist and by thus retains a	0:39:08 - 0:40:05 (A8)	The protagonist witnesses a car accident and sees that the victim is being taken away by a figure. This figure appears to be partly human but is also largely deformed. When the figure turns to the protagonist, it makes a screaming sound towards her. A shock moment for the spectator is created by this.

		mysterious appearance. Yet we do see a shock reaction on the face of the protagonist because she recognizes the figure from her first night in the hospital.		
Vision in a Chinese restaurant	0:35:55 - 0:38:20 (C9)	The protagonist sees the ghost of a woman with a child and a waitress comes up to her. The appearance of the woman and the child are shadowy. She confirms that what the protagonist thinks she sees is true and explains that the spirits of this two persons appear often in the restaurant but that the owner of the restaurant, which was the husband, can't see them.	0:40:06 - 0:44:00 (A9)	The protagonist see various objects catching fire shortly. The restaurant catches fire and there is a blast. After this the doctor comes running into the restaurant to see if the protagonist is still alive.
The protagonist tells the doctor that something is wrong	0:39:57 - 0:43:03 (C10)	The protagonist is being supported by the doctor almost directly. He doesn't have any doubts about if what she sees is real or imagined and he wants to help her find out what is going on. The doctor also doesn't question her mental state.	0:45:00 - 0: (A10)	The doctor doesn't take her seriously and tells her that the things she sees are imagined. He thinks the possibility that she would be dead is ridiculous. He tells her that the problem is not her eyes but that the problem is that she would be mentally unstable.
Appearance of a ghost in the lift	0:44:26 - 0:47:00 (C11)	The mise-en-scene plays an important role in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> as well as in <i>The Eye</i> . The protagonist looks into the lift and see a man standing in the corner with his head also facing the corner. When she looks at the security camera next to the lifts she can't see the man on the screen. By this the vision of the protagonist is brought into question	0:55:00 - 0:59:22 (A11)	As already noticed, the mise-en-scene plays an important role in this scene. The scene in <i>The Eye</i> is constructed in the same way as in <i>Jiàn Guǐ</i> . The protagonist looks into the lift and sees a man in the corner, when she looks on the security camera the man isn't on the screen. The sight of the protagonist is being questioned again.

		again whether if we can fully trust the eyes of the protagonist.		
The big accident in which the protagonist tries to save the day (12)	1:22:49 - 1:31:02 (C12)		<b>1:10:22</b> - 1:22:30 (A12)	The protagonist is able to warn the people in time that are in danger to die in the accident that is going to happen. She sees images of the accident in her visions through her eye donor and realizes that this is the event that her eye donor was showing her and wanted her to prevent this accident. By this scene closure is constructed within the narrative. The protagonist manages to save the people, however, it makes her blind again, but this time she is completely happy with the fact that she is blind.

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