RIGHTING WRONGS

A Study of Certain Socio-Legal Phenomena in *Wuxia* Films

Hugo J.T. Kolstee

MA East Asian Studies Thesis

Hugo Jacob Theodoor Kolstee, S1119885

E-mail: h.j.t.kolstee@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Thesis Supervisor: Ms. A.S. Keijser MA

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Chapter one: introduction

Introduction

The films of King Hu (1932-1997) and Chang Cheh (1923-2002), particularly those made between 1965 and 1971 in Hong Kong and Taiwan, have been described as both "inform[ing] sense and (mis)undestanding about Chinese culture, values and notions of 'Chineseness'",[1] whilst also appealing to Western audiences due to their romanticized, quasi-historical storylines and often heroic violence.[2] These films, all in the Mandarin language and belonging to the *wuxia* (武俠) 'knight-errant'[3] genre of swordplay films, displaced Cantonese language cinema in Hong Kong after 1965 and were exceedingly popular throughout all of South-East Asia throughout the seventies.[4] The settings, plots and characters of these films share several features: they are set in a (fictionalized) past, usually though not always in the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644), mostly in a non-urban setting, and star a recognizable troupe of actors performing dazzling sword fights, sometimes possessed of 'mythical' skills such a being able to jump over walls and glide over vast distances. After reaching their popular zenith sometime during the early 1970's, *wuxia* films were gradually supplanted by Cantonese language *gongfu* (功夫) 'kung fu' movies. These movies, with stars like Bruce Lee and later Jackie Chan, were likewise action films, but mostly take place in a recognizable present and focus on manual combat, rather than the sword-centric fighting of *wuxia* films.

Because these two film genres were popular sequentially, they have often been lumped together in a broad category called "martial arts films"[5] or, somewhat more prosaically, 'chop sockies'. Setting aside the normative implications of this mischaracterization, categorizing these films together risks conflating their form and their content: both genres offer far more than entertainments aimed at "a displaced peasant working class [...] possessed by both nostalgia and insecurity",[6] as their relatively recent scholarly treatment has begun to bear out.[7] This essay is however not concerned with the differences or similarities between these two film genres, nor

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[1] Chan (2004), p. 3.
[2] Crozier (1972), p. 229-232.
[3] This term is far more complex, and discussed further in chapter two.
[4] Fu (2000), p. 76-77.
[5] Steintrager (2014), p. 100.
[6] Crozier (1972), p. 231 quoting Jarvie (1970).
[7] See e.g. Bordwell (2000), Teo (2007) and Teo (2009).

will it detail their disparate origins and eventual (re)incarnations in Chinese and internationally co-operative cinemas.[8] This essay is about *wuxia* films, and in particular, about certain socio-legal phenomena as narrative drivers in *wuxia* films.

Thematically, *wuxia* films are usually described in simplistic terms: in 2014, research into the narratives of all *wuxia* films made between 1965 and 2014 bore out that the most common narrative driver was *baochou* (報仇) 'revenge'.[9] Unfortunately, a reductive approach is quite common in the literature dealing with *wuxia* films: the trope of the "lone swordsman" seeking "revenge"[10] is deemed sufficient to describe the narrative drive of *wuxia* films. As I hope to show in this essay, 'revenge' is but one way of discussing the concept of righting wrongs; as I will go on to detail, there are in fact three distinct typologies in which this process can be catalogued. I believe *wuxia* films are far more complicated, nuanced and multilayered than the discussion of this particular element of their narrative drives would suggest; by viewing the films through the lense of my typologies, I believe a far more complex and nuanced picture of their narratives emerges.

The contents and structure of this essay

This essay has five chapters. The second chapter (p.8) is theoretical in nature, and sets out my approach to cinema, focusing on its mediality and the ways in which its contents are conveyed. Further, chapter two contains a discussion of the *wuxia* genre, and contextualizes my approach. In this chapter, I also introduce and discuss the three typologies I use to characterize instances of righting wrongs in *wuxia* films. Chapter three (p. 18) contains the exegetic portion of this essay. In it, I discuss six canonic *wuxia* films made between 1965 and 1971, and catalog and discuss the instances of my three typologies. I rely mostly on the primary material (i.e. – the films themselves), incorporating relevant portions of other authors' discussions of the films if and when relevant. Chapter four (p. 40) is critical, reflective and theoretical once more. In it, I discuss two issues to do with my typologies: whether they are pre- or descriptive, and whether the perspective taken in performing the analysis is relevant for my discussion (or comprehension of the films). Finally, chapter five (p. 44) is a general conclusion, in which I

[8] About which Chan (2004) has written.
[9] Li (2014), p. 17.
[10] See e.g. Crozier (1972), p. 235, Glaessner (1974) whose book on *wuxia* and *gongfu* films even uses the subtitle 'cinema of vengeance', Teo (2009), p. 7, Lu (2011), p. 107 etc.

briefly summarize my ideas about the (usefulness of) the typologies and suggest further research.

A brief note on language and transcription

This essay uses source materials from various languages, of which only Chinese does not use the Roman alphabet. I have used the *hanyu pinyin* (漢語拼音) 'Chinese pinyin' transcription system without tonemarks exclusively throughout, except in the case of proper nouns. Chinese characters and terms are all in *fantizi* (繁體字) 'traditional Chinese characters', and presented in the following way, square brackets omitted: [*pinyin*] [(Chinese characters)] ['English translation']. People (both fictional and not) who have Chinese names are referred to using the transcription used in/by the source in which they occur, because this makes them easier to find in the references. All translations from Chinese to English are my own unless stated otherwise, both from written and spoken Chinese. If and when a translation is a point of particular attention or discussion, I mention the basis for the translation in a footnote.

Chapter two: theoretical underpinnings

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with definitions and theory. First, I discuss the nature of the medium of film, and the act and capacity of *viewing*, using works of film theory and film philosophy. Next, I discuss briefly my *approach* to *wuxia* films as expanding upon sociocultural and philosophical analyses of *bao*, *baoying* and *baochou*, by extending their reach to film. I also discuss briefly the category *wuxia* and its themes and characteristics. Finally, I set out the typologies of 'righting wrongs' which I will use to analyze the films in chapter three.

Film as medium; viewing

This essay is concerned with film, and in particular with the process of righting wrongs *in* films. I will therefore clarify what I mean by the terms *film* and *viewership* for the purposes of this essay.[11] The medium of film is photographic, which, as Bazin discusses, is "essentially objective" because it is produced by automatic means, which removes the human - subjective - element from its production.[12] Cavell, expanding upon Bazin's discussion, posits that film, being a series of (non-subjective) photographs "*of* reality or nature"[13] is thus a *presentation* of reality to a viewer who is present to the presentation (the *screening*), but *not* to the reality that is being presented/screened.[14] In this sense, cinema exists differently from a play or a *tableau vivant*, wherein the presenters and presented are present to each other without the medium (of film) between them.[15]

Film – cinema – thus constructs *a* reality through projection,[16] a reality which consists of – and is constructed by – the photographic choices made by the film's director. These choices – in terms of what to photograph, how to photograph, in what order to project etc. – add up to

[11] I have discussed the nature of film in a previous essay, namely Kolstee (2016), p. 9. This definition is an expansion of my earlier discussion. The works I use to describe the medium of film are mostly from the previous century, and concerned with films that were recorded and edited with analogue techniques, rather than with digital technology; all of the films I analyze in chapters three fall under this category.
[12] Bazin (2004), p. 13-14.
[13] Cavell (1979), p. 16.
[14] Cavell (1979), p. 16-18.
[15] Cavell (1979), p. 16.
[16] Bazin (2004) calls this process "objectivity in time".

what Chatman calls the "story-space" of the film.[17] Together with the discursive elements of a film, the director's choices with regards to the physical positioning of objects and their scale, color, quantity and clarity within the photographic frames that make up the film convey or communicate the *story* of that film.[18] The projection of frame after frame, in which the objects and camera (appear to) move create the dynamic that *is* the film.

In and of itself, a film is meaningless;[19] it is through the act of *viewing* that the film has or is imbued with meaning(s). Bordwell has attempted to analyze the process of viewing – "comprehension and interpretation"[20] – as a construction of meanings, both overt and implicit;[21] *viewing*, both as a capacity and as an act, is what allows films to communicate their message, or theme, or idea, above and beyond a film's images and sounds. The act of viewing is therefore essentially the reception of the constructed reality by the viewer. The psychological processes that allow the film to be understood fall outside of the domains of this essay, but it is the interaction between sights, sounds, overt and implicit meanings that produces a meaningful product for analysis.

The films that I have chosen were made between 1965 and 1971 in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and thus fall under the domains of what Lu has called "transnational Chinese cinemas", using the plural to incorporate the vastly different geographical, social and political contexts in which 'Chinese' films have been made.[22] The techniques used to make the films are however clearly identifiable and borrow from the same arsenal as non-Chinese films, even if the aesthetic effects these techniques achieve borrow heavily from Chinese classical art.[23] Thus, the approach I have taken to the *medium* (as opposed to its contents, which approach I discuss below) is to treat it as 'film', and not 'non-Western film' or 'Chinese film'.

Approaching film

My analysis of the process of 'righting wrongs' in *wuxia* films takes inspiration from a series of essays and books pertaining to Chinese society, philosophy and literature. The works are mostly philological: textual analyses of *wuxia* literary fiction and Chinese philosophy as recorded

[17] Chatman (1978), p. 96.
[18] Chatman (1978), p. 97.
[19] Bordwell (1991), p. 3-4.
[20] Bordwell (1991), p. 4.
[21] Bordwell (1991), p. 8-9.
[22] Lu (1997), p. 3.
[23] See e.g. Lin & Yu (1985), p. 198.

in written forms; and sociological – analyses of societal phenomena and their causes and effects; one of the texts deals with the matter of legal theory in the context of film. My approach is to synthesize the authors' discussions of philosophical, literary or societal instantiations of 'righting wrongs' in the Chinese context, and expand them to "cinematic manifestations" such as image and sound.[24] The texts describe and discuss phenomena which, through the medium of film, are presented to me, the viewer.

I will be taking primarily a thematic approach in my discussion of the films in chapter three. This allows me to analyze and discuss the films in terms of the typologies of 'righting wrongs' as set out below. I will take the films as a whole, rather than as a collection of single frames subject to formal analysis. If and when relevant, I will discuss particular shots or sequences in greater detail in order to support my argument; this syncretistic approach is necessary because there is insufficient space in this essay to discuss *all* the scenes and sequences in detail. My aim is to house the instances of 'righting wrongs' under one or more of my typologies, with the ultimate aim of producing a more complete understanding of the important theme in *wuxia* films of righting wrongs.

Wuxia films

The films that are central to this essay all fall under the designation *wuxia* film, but what *is* '*wuxia* film'? Stephen Teo posits that there is no adequate English translation of the term *wuxia* (武侠), which has its origins in late nineteenth century Japanese fiction.[25] Roughly, the term *wuxia*, consisting of characters meaning 'martial' or 'combative' (*wu*)[26] and 'knight' or 'chivalrous [person]'(*xia*)[27] *could* translate to 'combative knights-errant', but this is unhelpful and incomplete. Certainly, important film-characters in *wuxia* films are 'combative knights-errant', but *wuxia* films do not revolve solely around them, nor are *wuxia* films the only films to feature 'combative knights-errant'. Teo defines *wuxia* as a cinematic genre,[28] discussing features shared by films which allow them to be categorized as *wuxia* films: a focus on swords and swordplay; chivalry

[24] Chatman (1978), p. 26.
[25] Teo (2009), p. 2.
[26] *Kangxi* dictionary, p. 575, position 9; *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 1439, character 5.
[27] *Kangxi* dictionary, p.102, position 29; *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 147, character 1.
[28] Teo (2009), p. 4.

and righteousness; an element of "outer physical skills [such as] the mastery of hands, legs and other [body] parts"; the "element of flight" and historical rather than contemporary settings.[29]

Wuxia as a genre is thus defined aesthetically (historical settings, swords and swordplay, a focus on physicality and violence) as well as thematically (chivalry and righteousness). An important aspect of *wuxia* film is its setting, the *jianghu* (江湖) 'rivers and lakes'. This literal translation does not do the term justice: the *jianghu* is, as Wu (2015) argues, "an unsettling concept/ expression/ sensation/ text",[30] reflecting the dense layers of meaning behind the term. It is a *place* as well as a *mindset*, comparable to the American wild west:[31] non-urban, anarchic, violent, inhospitable, "a site of resistance".[32] The exegetic portion of this essay will leave the term untranslated, pointing out when and if it is relevant to a film's narrative.

Vicki Ooi has pointed out the contrast between historicized violence (superficial "entertainments and escapism") and the loftier ambitions of the historical allegory and social and religious commentary in *wuxia* films.[33] In this she is confirmed by Teo, who argues that part of *wuxia* films' cinematic appeal lies in the "physical qualities of action sequences".[34] Nevertheless, as Teo goes on to argue, *wuxia* films deal with "identity [...],historicism, nationalism, transnationalism, and orientalism";[35] Vicki Ooi's essay is further concerned with an analysis of the themes of power and corruption in the films of King Hu. Thus, *wuxia* films clearly offer more than entertainment for poor or illiterate moviegoers seeking escape;[36] the story-space in *wuxia* films holds sufficiently rich thematic material to merit analysis.

Righteousness is considered an important theme in *wuxia* films, having as a corollary "revenge".[37] I believe however that 'revenge' is an inadequate simplification for the entire process of righting wrongs as it occurs in *wuxia* films: revenge, as I will go on to discuss below, is a personal undertaking, yet not all knights-errant in *wuxia* films have been personally aggrieved. Furthermore, the lumping together of the various typologies of 'righting wrongs' that I have separated out below confuses character motivation, plot and importantly *viewer expectation*: *wuxia* films' exploration of the theme of 'righting wrongs' is far richer and more

[29] Teo (2009), p. 4-6.
[30] Wu (2015), p. 60.
[31] Berry (2009), p. 125.
[32] Wu (2015), p. 65.
[33] Ooi (1980), p. 104.
[34] Teo (2009), p. 11.
[35] Teo (2009) p. 8.
[36] Ooi (1980), p. 104, citing Glaessner (1974), p. 129.
[37] Teo (2009) p. 9; Ooi (1980) p. 105 a.o.

complicated than merely the tension between righteousness and vengeance, and it is precisely on this aspect of *wuxia* films' thematic material that this essay will focus.

Revenge, retribution and return: a theory of righting wrongs for the analysis of wuxia films

Underlying my analysis of the films discussed in chapter three are three typologies of what I have called 'righting wrongs'. Righting wrongs is a process, or a *doing*: it is dynamic, in that it consists of actions that follow each each other in time and space, and which are causally related. It is reactive: each *doing* requires a non value-neutral catalyst, the *wrong*, which forms the originary action of the *righting*. For the discussion in this essay, the catalyst is always a *wrong*, a physical or moral injury which encompasses both the *malum in se*, which is prohibited because it is wrong (for example: murder), and the *malum prohibitum* which is wrong because it is prohibited (for example: insulting a dignitary).[38] The *wrong* is offensive, morally and/or legally, and *explicitly so*, meaning that both within the filmic context and within the viewer's frame of reference, the *wrong is known to be wrong*. I will discuss the domains of moral ambiguity in my discussion of the films themselves.

The *righting* forms the response to the *wrong*. I have identified three typologies of this doing, based on several essays dealing with the concept of *bao* in Chinese philosophy, literature and criminology, as well as essays on the role of law and justice in film. The three typologies are response on a universal level, *bao* (報), 'return'; response on a societal level, which I shall call *baoying* (報應), 'retribution' and response on the personal level, which I shall call *baochou* (報仇), 'revenge'. Below, I will explain and discuss these terms, and set out how and why they are distinct without necessarily being mutually exclusive.

<u>*Bao*, 'return', resulting in parity</u>

The overarching idea of *bao* 'return' has been written about extensively,[39] and forms the first typology of the process of righting wrongs I will discuss. The essence of the word *bao* is 'reciprocate' or 'respond',[40] which is to say that *bao* can only exist in relation to an occurrence

[38] Van den Haag (1975), p. 9.
[39] See Yang (1957) and Kao (1989).
[40] *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 466, character 3, entry 1; *Kangxi* dictionary p. 422, position 12.

that *precedes it in time*: *bao may* instigate a following event, but is not the root cause in a chain. In his essay on the concept of *bao* Yang (1957) states that "[t]he Chinese believe that reciprocity of actions (favor and hatred, reward and punishment) between man and man [...] should be as certain as a cause and effect relationship".[41] Whether this amounts to "recompens[ing] injury with injury" or "recompens[ing] injury with justice" is an unsettled matter, seeing as there are Confucian precepts allowing for both.[42] At any rate, *bao* as reciprocity and response operates in two ways. Firstly as as a pattern of expectations, and secondly, derived from this, as a norm undergirding Chinese social and societal relations.[43,44] I will discuss the first operation of *bao* as a pattern of expectations in greater detail in this paragraph; the second operation will be discussed in the paragraph concerning *baoying*.

I have placed *bao* in the 'universal' domain, which, for want of a better word, I use to describe on a metalevel the ontological plane of *all existence* – *tianxia* (天下). This domain transcends *and incorporates* the societal and personal domains discussed below both in terms of time and space, and refers to all of the *existent*, and thus not only to the manifest or perceivable;[45] this plane is made up of both the physical - people, objects, animals - but also the notional - relationships, thoughts and forces. *Bao* as a pattern of expectations thus exists as a *force* in this domain.

Operationally, *bao* is a *re*action following an action, although this reaction does not need to be instantaneous, and similarly does not need to be a reaction *in kind*. The originary action is not value-neutral: it results in either a positive or negative value for the patient of the action. This means that it results in a 'disparity', for a positive or negative[46] value has been incurred (due to the action) where it would not have been in absence of the action.[47] Quoting the thinker Liu Xiang,[48] Yang states that "return or response [is] *a universal law of nature* (italics added)",[49] which describes an inevitable, inescapable and thus inherent counterpart of every action. *Bao*

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[41] Yang (1957), p. 291.
[42] Yang (1957), p. 293-294.
[43] Yang (1957), p. 296.
[44] I will discuss the term 'society' in somewhat greater extent below.
[45] Nozick (1981), p. 150-152 describes the issue in general, Mou (2009) p. 179-182 describes the issue in terms of the opposition between 有(*you*) 'to have' and 無(*wu*) 'to be absent'.
[46] I am aware that the utilitarian usage of 'positive' and 'negative' to describe the value-result of actions is a simplification, but my discussion here is in the most general terms.
[47] Wang (2009), p. 14.
[48] From *Shuoyuan* (說苑) 'The Garden of Sayings'.
[49] Yang (1957), p. 297.

does not require a tangible actor, but can nevertheless act through one: the actions *baoying*, 'retribution' and *baochou*, 'revenge' discussed below are examples of *bao* operating through tangible actors. *Bao*, when discussed in terms of "divine" or "heavenly" return[50] implies a personified *tian* (天) 'Heaven' as actor. I equate the situations in which (a personified) 'Heaven' acts as the *bao*-actor with those situations in which an actor is absent: 'Heaven' is such an undefinable entity that theoretically anything/everything could be called its personification, which creates a category too broad to be useful. Furthermore, I find that the idea of heavenly retribution fits into the description of *bao* as a natural law, seeing as the inevitability of the reaction/return can be explained as a function of the omniscience/omnipresence of 'Heaven'. This does *not* mean that instantiations of *bao* are necessarily (super)natural: human agents and patients are, as mentioned previously, incorporated into this domain and can thus function as the channels through which the force of *bao* operates.

The operation of *bao* can also be explained through its - imported - Buddhist usage: *bao* is recompense or retribution *for past deeds* (*guobao* (果報)/*baoguo* (報果)).[51] As one of the ten *rushi* (如是) 'thusnesses' from the Lotus Sutra,[52] *rushi bao* (如是報) or 'thusness of rewards and retributions' connotes return for actions undertaken. The return corresponds to the action in the sense that harmful actions result in harmful recompense - retribution - and beneficial actions result in beneficial recompense - reward. The Buddhist conception of birth and rebirth also make possible new explanations for intergenerational 'return': harmful actions undertaken in a current life can be recompensed with harm in a later incarnation,[53] and vice versa. I mention this specifically because, as will become clear in my discussion of the films in chapter three, Buddhist conceptions of *rushi bao* are both implicitly and explicitly present.

If *bao* on a metalevel is the frame that describes a natural law of reciprocation, its *effect* is what I call 'parity'. The set of occurrences following each other within a *bao*-frame produce the following schema: an originary act results in a positive or negative value, which is to say a *dis*parity; through the machinations of *bao*, the disparity is corrected to a state of parity by the

[50] Yang (1957), p. 298.
[51] http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%A0%B1%E6%9E%9C; see also Kubo & Yuyama's (2007) translation of *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 23.
[52] http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id(%27b5341-5982-662f%27); see also Kubo & Yuyama's (2007) translation of *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 32.
[53] This corresponds in essence to the Christian conception of Heaven as a reward for a just life, as exemplified by Matthew 5:20 a.o.

infliction of positive or negative upon the actor or, not uncommonly, their descendants. The parity is thus not necessarily a *re*-turn to a state of 'zero', whereby each negative is corrected by a positive (or vice versa) and thereby *undone*, but rather a new *universal* parity, that is, a parity in *tianxia*.

Baoying, 'retribution' resulting in justice

The second typology with which I study the process or righting wrongs in *wuxia* films is *baoying*, 'retribution'. This process *can* occur on the level of the single individual, but I posit that its locus is the societal level, that is, at the level of a collection of individuals not necessarily connected to each other by blood, kin or affective relationships.[54] The binomial *baoying* is made up of the character 報(*bao*), discussed above, and the character *ying* (應), defined most commonly as a verb meaning correspondence: 'according' or 'proper'.[55] The sense of *baoying* is broader than its translation as 'retribution': the word connotes a *propriety* of return, which is to say that both the universal parity of *bao* and the "wild justice"[56] of *baochou* miss the mark. *Baoying* results in *justice*, which exists in relation to a code of conduct or set of principles that have been ignored or trespassed against and must therefore be upheld or enforced.

Baoying exists in relation to an infraction, and is thus punitive. However, whereas *bao* describes a pattern of expectations or a *law of nature*, *baoying* exists in relation to *law*, be it a moral code/natural law or a legal code. This presupposes a certain consensus pertaining to both the law (or code) being upheld, and about the nature of justice, of morally correct and morally incorrrect. The philosopher Wang Haiming (2009) describes *gongzheng* (公正) 'justness' in terms of equality or correspondence of exchange between *hai* (害) 'harm' and *li* (利) 'benefit'.[57] Wang (2009) uses the Chinese term for 'justness', a notion that comes *before* justice, and to which justice – as an institutionalized concept – is servile.[58] Justice is not separate from justness, but a refined version: *justice* as I use it in this essay is a *societal justness*, the outcome of a balance between individual rights and collective obligations.[59] *Baoying* functions as the

[54] Definition adapted from the one given in the entry 'society' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*.
[55] *Kangxi* dictionary, p. 344, position 5.
[56] Bacon (undated), p. 5.
[57] Wang (2009), p.14.
[58] Sen (2009), p.xv.
[59] As discussed by Wang (2009), p. 16-17.

process originating in the infraction and ending in justice, thereby making a sharp distinction between 'good' (norm-conforming) and 'bad' (norm-defying) actions.[60]

Baoying has three actors: the victims of the infraction; the perpetrators of the infraction and the *baoying*-agents. The victims of the infraction are twofold: the direct victims and the society to which they belong, because the infraction against the victims is also an infraction against the *shared* moral code (or law). After the infraction, the *baoying*-agents become the actors, whereby the infractors become the patients of *baoying*. *Baoying*-agents are imbued with *authority*, either explicitly or implicitly as part of the shared moral code/law; absent this authority, there would be no distinction between *baoying*-agents and the personal revenge-takers discussed below. The *baoying*-agents mete out justice by causing what *ought* (*ying*) to occur upon the infractors; theirs is a dispassionate role as upholders of the shared moral code/law. The ultimate beneficiaries of justice need not be the original victims, but is necessarily the society upon which the moral code/law prevails, which separates justice from satisfaction as discussed below. It is important to emphasize that, in contrast to the (super-)natural parity of *bao*, *baoying* is not by necessity inevitable or inescapable; a *baoying* doing is not conditional based on its (successful) completion.

Baochou, 'revenge' resulting in personal satisfaction

The last typology with which I will study the process of righting wrongs in *wuxia* films occurs on the personal level, that is, on the level of a single individual. I call this tier of righting wrongs *baochou*, 'revenge'.[61] The binomial *baochou*, is made up of the Chinese characters *bao* (報) and *chou* (仇) 'enmity'.[62] The emotional tenor of the phrase ('reciprocating enmity') is clear.[63]

Chou, meaning 'enmity' belongs to the same semantic domain as *wu* (惡) 'enmity' or *hen* (恨) 'hatred',[64] in either case words that refer to emotions and feelings. The compound *baochou* can thus be translated inelegantly as 'reciprocating enmity'; necessarily ('reciprocation') as a result of earlier enmity.

[60] Van den Haag (1975), p. 49-50.
[61] This and subsequent translations from the Chinese are mine. I will put the source of the translation in a footnote. *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 466, character 3, entry 5.
[62] *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 109, character 3, definition 2, entry 1.
[63] Yang (1957), p. 291-292.
[64] *Hanyu da cidian* p. 109, character 3, definition 2, entry 1.

Revenge as a "societal custom" and "touching a root problem at the heart of Chinese legal thinking" has been around for a very long time.[65] The Chinese legal scholar Wang Wenhua points out the compatibility of blood or familial revenge with Confucian precepts,[66] and goes on to say that an important difference between revenge in pre-modern Chinese culture and pre-modern European culture is the lack of a legal basis for revenge: "[traditional] Chinese revenge culture missed the concept of "law", revenge appeared to have nothing to do with the law [...]".[67] I believe this to be a crucial point: personal 'revenge' may have had an important position in the *moral* domain (as a form of *bao*), but it is explicitly *extrajudicial*, anathema to the idea of the judicial apparatus as a source of societal retribution which I will discuss below.

What then *is baochou* 'revenge' exactly? I posit the following model, consisting essentially of a requirement and a reaction that together constitute the *doing*, the physical and intellectual *action* with subject(s) and an object(s) that is revenge.[68] First and foremost, revenge as I use the term requires a physical or emotional injury done unto a person or persons. I use the term 'emotional injury' in the broadest possible sense, meaning the incurrence of negative emotional feelings. Kao (1989) calls this physical or emotional injury "the originating point that *makes necessary* the subsequent acts [italics added]",[69] which ties in the idea of reciprocity discussed above. Revenge is at least partially an emotional doing, that is, a doing having its roots in emotions.[70] The injured person(s) go(es) from object (of the injury) to subject (of the *act* of revenge). If the injured person is unable to act (for example, because they are dead), they cannot be a *baochou*-actor; their death may however very well have been an emotional injury upon another person. The overarching principle of *bao* compels (and licenses) the revenge-subject(s)/injury-object(s) to reciprocate unto the injury-subject(s)/revenge-object(s) the injury. This *doing* results in what I call 'satisfaction' - the product of revenge, the 'enmity returned', the emotional resettlement that closes the circle opened by the originary act of injury. Like *baoying* however, a *baochou*-doing is not contingent on its (successful) completion in order to be recognized as such; a failed *baochou*-doing by the original injured does not preclude *baoying*-justice or *bao*-parity being achieved.

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[65] Wang (2011), p. 53.
[66] Wang (2011), p. 53.
[67] Wang (2011), p. 54.
[68] This model is inspired by, but different in many aspects to that of Kao (1989), p. 121-122.
[69] Kao (1989), p. 121.
[70] Van den Haag (1975), p. 10-11.

Chapter three: righting wrongs in *wuxia* films - an analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I will use the typologies of the doing that is righting wrongs discussed in chapter two in order to analyze six films in the *wuxia* genre. First, I will provide a brief overview of the films' production background, release and reception, and plot; this contextualizes the films and situates them in a time, place and canon. Then, I will organize the instances of righting wrongs by bringing each instance under my system. As I go on to show in this chapter, *all* instances of the doing fall under my categorization; I will critique these findings in chapter four. Time signatures for scenes and dialogue are from the versions listed in the bibliography.

Analysis of six wuxia films

Come Drink With Me/大醉俠 (1965) dir. King Hu

Background, release and plot

The story for King Hu's 1965 film *Come Drink With Me* – the English translation deviates strongly from the Chinese title, which translates literally to 'drunken knight' – was based on an opera Hu remembered from his youth.[71] The film's operatic roots are present throughout particularly the action scenes, where the interaction between dynamism and quiet, expansion and contraction and the usage of percussive music is prevalent.[72] The film was commercially successful, and launched Cheng Pei Pei as a stellar "lady of the law"[73] but faced some criticism for its reliance on *shenguai* (神怪) 'magical' or 'mystical' elements, particularly throughout the film's latter half.[74] Notwithstanding, Stephen Teo considers the film to be "the first major film of the new school movement".[75]

The film stars Cheng Pei Pei as Golden Swallow, sent to recover the son of a local magistrate kidnapped by Jade-Face Tiger (played by a heavily powdered Chan Hung-Lit) and

[71] Teo (2009), p. 120 citing Ye (1982), p.3.
[72] Yao (1990), p. 39.
[73] Glaessner (1974), p. 51-52.
[74] See for example Tang (1968), p. 72.
[75] Teo (2009), p. 117.

his gang, acting under the protection of the abbot Liao Kong (Yeung Chi-Hing). Golden Swallow is aided by Drunken Cat (played by a young Yueh Hua), ostensibly a vagrant who sings for his meals but in reality the (Chinese) title's drunken knight, adept at such mythical skills as shooting force-fields from the palms of his hands and cleaving large rocks with his fingers. The setting is the *jianghu*, where both officials and brigands are dispatched in orgies of sword-induced maimings, dismemberments and stabbing in one of King Hu's bloodiest films.

Baochou, baoying, and bao in Come Drink With Me

Superficially, the film can be viewed as a tale of justice rectifying banditry: a tale of *baoying* in the outlands – a classic in the *jianghu* setting. *Come Drink With Me*'s opening scene is a kidnapping: a group of bandits[76] unleash a violent attack upon a convoy led by the local governor's son whom they take hostage in exchange for their leader. This action provides the originary impetus for most of the film's events: a trade-off is proposed whereby the bandits would return the son in exchange for their arrested leader. A first layer of complexity is added by the fact the societal avenger – the *baoying*-agent Golden Swallow, sent by the governor – is the sister of the kidnapped man. Thus, the *baoying*-agent Golden swallow is simultaneously a *baochou*-actor. I posit that her personal vengeance *intertwines with* judicial punishment, but does not *overlap with* it for several reasons: principally in the motivation, where a distinction exists between her personal injury at (potentially) losing her brother to a band of criminals and her desire to see the governor's envoy released; but also because the potential resolution of the *baoying* and *baochou* quests differ: justice is restored if both the governor's son and the criminal leader are returned to the authorities, but *baochou* may require inflicting some harm on the kidnappers to satisfy personal Golden Swallow's moral injuries.

Originally unbeknownst to her, Golden Swallow receives the aid of Drunken Cat in escaping from some of the bandits; this help becomes overt when he rescues and nurses her back to health after she is poisoned by Jade-Face Tiger.[77] Through this action, Drunken Cat shares in Golden Swallow's role as *baoying*-agent: the vagrant knight-errant is a vigilante, operating outside of, but alongside with, the institutionalized *baoying*-mechanism that Golden

[76] [00:06:50].
[77] Nursing back to health as *bao*-trope occurs more frequently, see my discussion regarding *One Armed Swordsman*.

Swallow represents; the vigilante acts towards a generalized *justness* rather than an officialized *justice*.

The film introduces a second plot in the relationship between the characters of Drunken Cat and the abbot Liao Kong. Both were students of the same master, who was killed by Liao Kong with the aim of taking his bamboo staff and replacing him as head of the martial arts school. Drunken Cat, having already absconded with the staff before Liao Kong could steal it, faces a dilemma in confronting the abbot: at some point in their past, Liao Kong has saved Drunken Cat's life. *Baochou*, *baoying*, and *bao* collide: in choosing Drunken Cat over Liao Kong, the master instills a desire for *baochou* in retaliation to this personal injury; in killing their master, the abbot has obliged the other disciple Drunken Cat to punish his murderer (*baoying*);[78] in saving Drunken Cat's life, Liao Kong has created a *bao*-debt to spare his own.

The intertwining *bao*, *baochou* and *baoying* thus runs as a vein throughout *Come Drink With Me*. Nevertheless, the ways in which the storylines are wound up accord with the principles undergirding the *bao*, *baoying* and *baochou* doings described in chapter two. Golden Swallow succeeds in her *baoying* mission in regaining her brother *and* holding onto the leader of the criminal gang; she exacts her *baochou*-revenge on her brother's torturer whom she injures badly but who is left alive. In order for the seemingly irreconcilable resolutions for Drunken Cat's *bao*-obligation to leave Liao Kong alive in repayment for his own and his *baoying* and *baochou*-quests to avenge his master, the film must provide *two* 'final' confrontations between the rivals, which it does. At the end of the first confrontation, a disarmed Liao Kong, his eyes closed, is cornered in a medium close up facing the end of Drunken Cat's sword.[79] The image conveys his defeat, confirmed by the dialogue in which Drunken Cat agrees to spare his life as long as he disappears into the hills; Drunken Cat upholds his *bao*-obligation and in neutralizing Liao Kong closes the film's *baoying*-punishment of the bandits, with perhaps the suggestion that his *baochou*-quest is therein subsumed.

Come Drink With Me's true ending however provides a bloody revenge for the murdered teacher, enacted through the *baochou*-operative Drunken Cat; in his and Liao Kong's fight to the death, the drunken knight stabs the abbot in the heart with their teacher's bamboo rod. The camera zooms into the wound which sprays blood; a quick cut shows the blood squirting into Drunken Cat's face. Liao Kong's visceral death scene serves as a comeuppance and as a warning: even though his life was spared earlier he chose to attack once again, and thus his

[78] [01:17:04].
[79] [01:28:45].

final punishment is double, the object of justified *baochou* and the recipient of inevitable, inescapable *bao*.

One-Armed Swordsman/獨臂刀 (1967) dir. Chang Cheh

Background, release and plot

1967's *One-Armed Swordsman* by director Chang Cheh is one of the films associated with the pivot from Peking-operatic, female centered *wuxia*-films toward the *yanggang* (陽剛) 'masculine'-style of overtly violent cinema.[80] Furthermore, *One-Armed Swordsman* was the first Hong Kong film to earn over US$ 1 million (not adjusted for inflation), which contributed to it being touted by its producers - Shaw Brothers studio - as heralding 'a new *wuxia* century'.[81]

One-Armed Swordsman has a very dense, multi-layered plot. The titular one-armed swordsman Fang Kang is played by Jimmy Wang Yu, who, after his servant father dies defending his master Qi Rufeng (played by Tien Feng), is allowed to train with Qi at the Golden Sword School. In a pique of romantic jealousy, Qi's daughter Pei'er (Angela Pan) cuts off Fang Kang's right arm during a fight, leaving him to stumble off. He ends up under the care of Xiao Man (Chiao Chiao), a peasant woman who nurses him back to health and eventually sets him on the path toward becoming proficient in left-handed sword technique. Meanwhile, Qi Rufeng's old rival Long-Armed Devil (Yeung Chi-hing), having devised a sword-clamp is intent on killing all of Qi's students and eventually Qi himself. In a final confrontation between the one-armed swordsman and Long-Armed Devil, Fang Kang prevails and saves the Qi's, but ultimately opts for the life of a farmer rather than following in Qi's steps at the head of the Golden Sword School.

Baochou, baoying, and bao in One-Armed Swordsman

The film opens with an attack scene: Qi Rufeng is ambushed by 'brigand chiefs' Ma and Xu; in the ensuing battle Fang Cheng fights off the attackers but is fatally stabbed. In his final speech he recalls being raised and trained by Qi,[82] and dies after Qi assures him that he will take care of and train Fang Kang – Fang Cheng's son. A single event culminates one reciprocal occurrence: the *bao* of Fang Cheng dying in gratitude to Qi Rufeng,[83] and triggers another: Qi

[80] Teo (2009), p. 100-102.
[81] Teo (2010), p. 145.
[82] [00:03:35 onwards]
[83] Note that he is stabbed in battle and *not* in sacrifice or in lieu of Qi Rufeng.

agreeing to take in and train Fang Kang; only at the very end is this reciprocal relationship completed. I will conclude with discussing why Fang Kang's defeat of Long-Armed Devil does *not* qualify as a *baoying* or societal rectification.

Some years later, as Qi approaches his fifty-fifth birthday, he is set on choosing a successor as head of the Golden Sword School. His daughter Pei'er is spoiled and insufficiently skilled, and so he chooses Fang Kang, whom he also wishes to become his son in law.[84] Fang Kang, fearing that his staying on as head of the School would create problems due to his lowly origins as a servant's son, flees the School. During his flight, a distraught and jealous Pei'er confronts him and challenges him to a duel. After much prodding, Fang Kang acquiesces to an unarmed duel; after being flung to the ground Pei'er exclaims that Fang Kang belittled her[85] and in accidental act of rage chops off his right arm with her sword. Pei'er is left speechless and stares in shock as Fang Kang walks off; she says nothing to one of her companion's compliments about the speed with which she unsheathed her sword, and says nothing at all until her father approaches, to whom she tearfully confesses. Thus, in a pique of jealousy, rage and humiliation, Pei'er's doing not only causes Fang Kang "[...] the pain involved in the loss of the limb, but also that torture attendant on building his remaining limb into a doubly strong instrument [...]".[86] As I will go on to show, the process of righting wrongs as it unfolds in *One-Armed Bandit* is twofold: the loss of the arm is the catalyst of Fang Kang's *baochou*-quest, whilst simultaneously playing a pivotal role in the *bao* involved in repaying Qi Rufeng.

Fang Kang recovers under Xiaoman's care. She develops an emotional attachment to him, and pushes him to renounce the martial arts. Fang Kang *seemingly* faces a dilemma – trade a martial life for one of respectable peasantry,[87] living in a bucolic idyll in deference to Xiaoman for nursing him after his injury (that is, performing his role as *bao* actor in his relationship with Xiaoman), or learning how to handle a sword with his left arm. In *One-Armed Swordsman*, the choice has already been made for him: humiliated in defeat after being ambushed by two students from another school, he sulks until Xiaoman hands him a book on sword technique. In one of the film's many double-bottoms, the book is damaged and contains

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[84] [00:15:00 onwards].

[85] [00:21:30, Pei'er exclaims "你欺負我！", which can mean "you bullied me!" but which in this context I take to mean "you belittled me!", referring to her jealousy of Fang Kang as well as his beating her at combat.

[86] Glaessner (1974), p. 98.

[87] As a 農 (*nong*) 'farmer', the second highest rank in the Confucian social order, see Fairbank (2006), p. 108.

only the instructions for left-armed techniques, because Xiaoman's mother attempted to burn it after her father – a swordsman himself – died in battle. Xiaoman's mother burned the book in order to protect her daughter from the possibility of further vengeance: "reprisal will only beget reprisal", in her mother's words,[88] words which Xiaoman has taken to heart as evidenced by her eschewing of violence.

Through the machinations of *bao*, the mother's statement is proven true, though not in the way she would have imagined. Even though Xiaoman has led a life of harmless quietude, the burned book will be used by a one-armed swordsman uniquely suited to (the remnants) of its instructions in order to carry out his *baochou*-quest against the fighters who humiliated him. Ultimately though, the swordsman uses the techniques to repay (*bao*) the man who employed his father and trained him, indirectly effecting a double absolvement:[89] his debt to Qi Rufeng is repaid in saving his life;[90] his decision *not* to follow in Qi's footsteps but renounce violence and adopt the peasant's life is his repayment to Xiaoman,[91] *only* possible because he has guaranteed their safety through his mastery of the left-handed martial techniques. The finale of *One-Armed Swordsman* thus pulls together the plot's byzantine cause-and-effect structures: Fang Kang completes his *bao*-relationship with Qi Rufeng by saving his life and that of his family as well as his students;[92] he exacts his *baochou*-revenge on Pei'er through his rejection of her emotional advances;[93] his life is spared and his victory over Long-Armed Devil's henchmen and their sword clamps is possible *because of* rather than *in spite of* his deformity (being Fang Kang's personal *bao*, his recompense); and he is able to return to and for Xiaoman after all, whom he ostensibly left behind weeping at his decision to fight.

As mentioned, I do not view Fang Kang's victory over Long-Armed Devil as an instantiation of *baoying*, that is, as a victory of justice (societal retribution) over evil. The film does not provide evidence that Long-Armed Devil has transgressed against society, or for that matter against Qi Rufeng. The only information the viewer is given about their relationship is that they had a two-day fight[94] thirteen years before the events that conclude the film,[95] and that

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[88] [00:42:17]. Chinese: "冤仇相報, 何時能了."

[89] At least as far as this film is concerned. Sequels to this film were not taken into account in this analysis.

[90] [01:53:04], Fang Kang departs saying "今天報了事了..." ("Now, I have repaid you…").

[91] From the same speech.

[92] [01:27:47 onwards], Fang Kang exclaims that his revenge "is no longer just a matter of reputation [...] I must save my brothers [...]".

[93] He ignores her as she approaches him, and leaves her whimpering his name.

[94] [00:44:32].

[95] [01:37:56].

Long-Armed Devil is using his sword clamp in his fight with Qi Rufeng's school. Thus, Long-Armed Devil's defeat is not his comeuppance at the hand of a 'law-enforcer' by proxy in the form of Fang Kang, but rather the denouement of the Fang Kang/Qi Rufeng *bao*-relation. In summation, the typologies of *bao* and *baochou* are manifest throughout *One-Armed Swordsman*, whereas *baoying* is absent.

Dragon Gate Inn/ 龍門客棧 (1967) dir. King Hu

Background, release and plot

Dragon Gate Inn (sometimes called *Dragon Inn*, I will use *Dragon Gate Inn*) was King Hu's first film in Taiwan after his break with the Shaw Company.[96] Much attention has been paid to its success in establishing Taiwan's fledgling Union Production Company, and the film was indeed a box office record breaker.[97] Several of the devices used by King Hu are familiar from the earlier *Come Drink with Me* and the later *A Touch of Zen*, most notably the usage and layout of the inn, the prominence of a female knight-errant (played by a very young Shangguan Lingfeng) and a recognizable troop of actors, most prominently Shih Chun and Bai Ying.

The story is set in 1457, during the final third of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The secret police (*dongchang* (東廠) 'Eastern Depot') led by the eunuch Cao Shaoqin have usurped power and execute the Yu Qian, minister for war. Fearing reprisal, Cao banishes Yu's descendants to the Dragon Gate, a faraway mountainous region, but plots to have them murdered on their way. The execution is foiled by the Chu siblings, played by Shangguan Lingfeng and Han Hshieh, and all later meet up at the Dragon Gate Inn. There, the mysterious itinerant Xiao Shaozi (Chun Shih) arrives and harangues the Eastern Depot men who have been sent to finish off the Yu's; this band is later joined by two Tatar brothers who will play a pivotal role before the film's ending. The story moves towards a battle between the eunuch Cao and the Yu's protectors, and ends rather abruptly after the latter emerge triumphant, having both beheaded and impaled Cao on a sword. Tang Wenbiao has pointed out that the world of *Dragon Gate Inn* – the film's 'art space' – is recognizable as "our world", but as a superficialized reduction,[98] which, coupled with the film's lack of conventional narrative direction, give the film an *unreal*, Godardian quality.[99] This *unreality*, especially in the film's narrative development and its ethereal, isolated setting, provide the backdrop for the unusual resolution of the film's *bao* and *baochou*-plots, as I will go on to discuss.

[96] Rayns (1998/2015), p. 15.
[97] Teo (2009), p. 125.
[98] Tang (1968), p. 76.
[99] Tang (1968), p. 75.

Bao, baoying and baochou in Dragon Gate Inn

In my analysis I will argue that the film's events are (in)formed by *bao* and *baochou*, rather than *baoying*, confusing the expectations created by the opening voice-over's normative framing. The voice-over informs us that the Eastern Depot's men are "feared by all" for their cruelty,[100] and that their leader rules through "viciousness".[101] The voice-over positions the Eastern Depot and its leader squarely on the wrong end of the moral spectrum, confirmed by Cao's order to have Yu beheaded and his descendants exiled because "his [Yu's] spirit will not rest";[102] Cao is aware of the potential for *baochou* enacted by Yu's descendants, and seeks to remove this threat. Only by the end of the film, after the seemingly marginal figures of the Tatar brothers have been introduced and provided with a backstory is Cao's foresight borne out. Indeed, it is *not* the presumptive *baoying* agents (the Chu's and Xiao Shaozi) who succeed in killing the eunuch, but rather Dou La, one of the Tatars, who beheads Cao, completing his *baochou*-quest in taking Cao's head as penance for Cao's taking of his reproductive organs.

Thus, only *one* of *Dragon Gate Inn*'s *baochou* quests comes to fruition, aided by the villain's inevitable *bao* comeuppance, and that is the revenge of the Tatars Dou La and his younger brother. The two brothers who play such a pivotal role are introduced late in the film,[103] in keeping with *Dragon Gate Inn*'s unconventionally unfolding narrative. They reveal that they are fed up committing cruel acts on the Eastern Depot's behalf, and wish to join the resistance embodied by the crew protecting the Yu-family; they also reveal that they have both been castrated on the orders of Cao. Thus, the viewer is informed of two things: first, they too have innocent blood on their hands, having acted for the Eastern Depot; second that they have been injured both physically and morally by Cao Shaoqin, engendering in them the desire for *baochou* against their aggressor. As the final battle between the motley crew defending the Yu's in one corner, and the eunuch Cao in the other corner unfolds and concludes, it is the Duo brothers who, aided by the *bao* of Cao's weak health, which slows him down and confuses him, emerge victorious.

The final showdown between Cao and the (representatives of) the Yu-faction, now five in number and consisting of the Chu siblings, the Tatar brothers and Xiao Shaozi, is the

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[100] [00:01:13].

[101] The Chinese compares them to *shexie* (蛇蝎) literally 'snakes and scorpions'.

[102] [00:05:13}, Chinese: "[...]于謙的靈魂不喪".

[103] [01:16:55], in the film's final third.

culminating event of both the film and the *bao* and *baochou* quests whose origins have been discussed above. The actual physical combat unfolds over multiple acts. The opening act, accompanied by the musical *leitmotif* that accompanies Cao, shows him exiting his hut and marching solitarily towards the group (which at this point consists of four: Chu Hui, the younger sister is absent). Xiao taunts Cao for his being a eunuch[104] – taunts which Rayns describes as "psychosexual",[105] without remarking on the impact they may have on the Tatar companions – and before blows are exchanged Cao attempts to bribe Xiao into joining the Eastern Depot. The second act of the battle is initiated by Cao, who jumps and attacks Xiao, scratching his forehead;[106] the action is swiftly over and again taunts are exchanged. The third act begins in silent tension: Cao orders his men away, and only two remain. A medium shot over the groups shows the outnumbered Eastern Depot facing the four rebels, a quick cut to a medium close up on Shao, then Chu and finally Duo La shows the men's tense concentration, the soundtrack remains silent. A cut to Cao and his men is followed almost immediately by a break of the silence, Cao attacks and cuts of part of Shao's robes.[107] The action stop-starts throughout this act, revealing constantly Cao's superior skills as Shao is repeatedly injured. It is only in the fourth act that Cao's peripeteia is introduced:[108] some sort of health impediment, revealed through a dissonantly modulating electronic soundtrack and medium close-ups op Cao's flustered, vertigoed expression, weakens him. It is only this weakness that provokes the other members of the party to join Shao in his attack: it is Cao's *bao*-comeuppance, a return for his cruel leadership of the Eastern Depot and his usurpation that this condition should weaken him when confronted by serious opposition in battle. It is also *only* this – Cao is clearly the superior sword-fighter – that gives the Yu-group a chance to defeat him; the fourth act of the final battle reveals that without this condition Cao is able to defeat them in the skirmishes. The fifth and final act unfolds after Cao jumps down to where Chu Hui is waiting.[109] Outnumbered five to one, and increasingly weakened by his health condition, he runs but is chased, and in the final skirmish manages to kill first the younger Tatar before being impaled by the elder Chu. Cao's final act is stabbing the Duo La with the sword sticking out of his back, before being decapitated by him.

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[104] [01:40:38].
[105] Rayns (1977), p. 22.
[106] [01:41:28].
[107] [01:43:16].
[108] [01:44:07].
[109] [01:48:53].

The ending of *Dragon Gate Inn* provides the castrated Tatars with their *baochou* vengeance, for it is Duo La who decapitates the eunuch; the emotional and physical violence done unto them brings about Cao's demise. In their turn, they too are killed in penance for their acts as Eastern Depot agents. It is Cao's *bao*-punishment in the form of his health issue that makes their vengeance possible, and which is instrumental in Cao's downfall. *Dragon Gate Inn* is therefore *not* a story about justice being served upon the wicked by the righteous (that is, a *baoying* plot), even though the opening monologue creates this expectation by its Good (Yu) versus Evil (Cao) framework. Bloody personal vengeance, Bacon's "wild justice" resolves *Dragon Gate Inn*. I believe that this confounding of expectations fits into the film's unusual tone, pace and narrative structure; the "art-space" of *Dragon Gate Inn* (to borrow Tang Wenbiao's term) provides a setting for a superficially clear morality play to be resolved through morally ambiguous means and actors: *bao* and *baochou* predominate, the desired *baoying* is left out.

Golden Swallow/ 金燕子(1968) dir. Chang Cheh

Background, release and plot

Chang Cheh's 1968 film *Golden Swallow* is superficially a follow-up to King Hu's 1966 film *Come Drink with Me*,[110] starring Cheng Pei Pei in the titular role of the female knight-errant Xie Ru-yan a.k.a. Golden Swallow. Although the film bears this character's name as its title, it actually centers on the story of Xiao Pang a.k.a. Silver Roc, played by Jimmy Wang Yu.

Ostensibly, the plot revolves around Silver Roc's attempts to catch former classmate Golden Swallow's attention by committing several mass-murders (though always of criminals, bandits and other 'deserving' victims), leaving behind Golden Swallow's trademark darts as a way to lure her out of hiding. When finally the two meet, Silver Roc's tragic backstory is revealed (his family was murdered by bandits), a love triangle between Silver Roc, Golden Swallow and her travelling companion Han Tao a.k.a. Golden Whip is played out, and a final confrontation with the leader of a local mob – Wang Xiong a.k.a. Poison Dragon – ensues. The film ends with a declaration that Silver Roc is "the greatest swordsman of the times", and a final farewell between Golden Swallow and Golden Whip.

As I will go on to discuss, the film's plot deals with all three instances of righting wrongs: the originary act for Silver Roc's *baochou*-quest is the murder of his family by (unspecified) bandits; whereas his goals in punishing bandits, criminals and other infractors can be explained as a *baoying* doing, his excessive ruthlessness is righted (*bao*) by his own death at the hands of both Golden Whip and a final wave of bandit attackers.

Baochou, baoying and bao in Golden Swallow

The plot of *Golden Swallow* can be understood as simply the coupling of the (actual) main character's (Silver Roc's) revenge quest with his attempts at reconnection with Golden Swallow. The viewer is overtly told – through several instances of dialogue[111] – that Silver Roc's family was murdered by bandits, which event is explicitly linked with his *baochou*-quest:[112] his answer to the question of why he is so ruthless in his violence is simply to counter that his family was

[110] Teo (2009), p. 102.
[111] For example during the first confrontation between Golden Whip and Silver Roc, during which Silver Roc talks about the attack on his family [00:59:03 - 00:59:29].
[112] [00:58:56].

shown no mercy by the bandits who attacked them either, thereby linking the violence committed against his family and himself with his own violence. He thus acts as revenger (*baochou*-actor) both for himself – showing off the scar on his face – and for his family, which *baochou*-action has at its root the same originary event. Importantly though, the object(s) of his *baochou*-doing are *not* (stated to be) the originary actors in the attack against his family – he commits acts of violence against a *generalized* perpetrator, thus transmuting his attack from the realms of the personal to the realms of the societal.

Silver Roc's attackers are never identified clearly, which doesn't stop him from committing large-scale acts of violence against bandits, criminals and greedy landowners. Thus, his *baochou*-action can be seen as a chimera, or, more crudely, as a front for meting out punishments and thus operating as a force of discipline in the *jianghu*, those literal and figurative outlands of pre-modern Chinese society. Because the acts of Silver Roc's victims are presented as outrageously transgressive – the Cao brothers' forcing a 14-year-old to commit suicide after falsely accusing him of stealing a goose, for example –, these acts' position on a normative binary scale are clear; morally repugnant deeds beget punishment. Silver Roc's corrective action is swift and deadly: each offence, both presented in and implied by the film, is a capital offence, and in the lawless realms of the *jianghu*, Silver Roc acts as judge and executioner. Silver Roc's "wild justice" thus serves two purposes: he seeks revenge for the moral and physical injuries sustained by himself – even though he does not avenge himself against those who caused the injuries – and therethrough punishes groups and individuals who have caused injury against others. As I shall go on to argue however, his excesses and ruthlessness lead, through the working of *bao*, to his own demise.

Even before the film presents the viewer with Silver Roc's action sequences, Golden Swallow and Golden Whip are presented discussing his ruthlessness. Furthermore, his motives – leaving behind copies of Golden Swallow's darts in order to lure her out – are not selfless. The film goes on to present in sequence his mass-murders of the various other factions. In each instance presented, it is made plainly obvious that Silver Roc seeks to destroy entirely those forces whom he deems deserving: even a defenseless servant, presented as begging for his life with an appeal to filial piety – he allegedly takes care of his mother –, is slashed right across the face by Silver Roc for being complicit in his masters' infractions. Golden Whip, remarking on the needlessness of Silver Roc's brutality, is challenged to a duel, setting in motion *Golden Swallow*'s denouement and setting the stage for the correction of the imbalances caused by Silver Roc's transgressive vengeance.

Golden Swallow's conclusion plays out in two scenes. The stage is set for the duel between Silver Roc and Golden Whip, which plays out as frequent intercutting shows both Poison Dragon and Golden Swallow (with Silver Roc's favorite prostitute) approaching the mountaintop where the duel is taking place. A moment's distraction allows Golden Whip to stab Silver Roc as he launches at Poison Dragon, dealing a partial death-blow. The killing of Silver Roc is completed by wave after wave of attackers, all members of the various gangs punished by Silver Roc. Only after a drawn out battle, covered entirely in blood, and standing amidst a sea of dead bodies, does Silver Roc finally perish, and is Chang Cheh's "paean to [his] masculinity" complete.[113] Significantly, the cause of death can be attributed to two factors, Golden Whip and the attacking bandits; it is impossible to know whether each would have been sufficient in its own right. I understand this peripeteia as presentation of the operation of *bao*, restoring a semblance of balance to the society in which *Golden Swallow* occurs: Silver Roc's murderous rampage, justified both as personal vengeance and as punishment against infractors, has resulted in his own destruction. The repeated references to his excesses foreshadow the narrative's drive towards this end: for the characters inhabiting *Golden Swallow* as well as for viewers viewing the film, Silver Roc's less than perfectly selfless actions – the 'wrong' he commits – bring about *bao*: not through a specific character's machinations, but by the very nature of the *bao*-typology is Silver Roc's transgression reciprocated unto him, and is his wrong righted through his death.

[113] Teo (2009), p. 103.

The Heroic Ones / 十三太保 (1970) dir. Chang Cheh

Background, release and plot

The Heroic Ones, Chang Cheh's historical epic, is set in the late Tang dynasty (618-907). An epic in many senses of the word, the film's 120+ minutes, large battle scenes and especially the seemingly interminable hordes of extras hacked, sliced, impaled and maimed by the (Chinese) title's thirteen *taibao* (太保), a term denoting an official from the coterie of a regent, proved a hit: *The Heroic Ones* was Hong Kong's fourth-highest grossing film of 1970.[114] The film's plot leans on historical fact: near the end of the ninth century, the Tang court had lost control of the capital city of Chang'an to the rebel leader Huang Chao, who declared himself the Qi Emperor. The exiled Tang court then turned to the Shatuo warlord Li Keyong in order to displace Huang Chao and regain control of the capital.[115] The film's events detail the adventures, trials and tribulations of Li Keyong's thirteen generals – his adoptive sons – as they invade the capital, fight off Huang Chao's hordes, collude with scheming governors and succumb to internecine struggles, culminating in a fight to the death amongst the 'brothers'.

The film stars Shaw veteran Ku Feng as the Shatuo leader Li Keyong, Ti Lung and David Chiang as the eleventh and thirteenth *taibao*, both given great prominence and by far the most interesting action scenes, and Wang Chung and Nam Seok-hun as the film's tragic foils Kang Junli and Li Cunxin, corrupted by jealousy and manipulated by the governor from Bianliang, Zhu Wen, played with villainous glee by Chan Sing.

Bao, baoying and baochou in The Heroic Ones

In this discussion I set aside explicitly any historical inaccuracies and concentrate instead on the film's overarching *baoying* and *baochou* plots. The *baoying* relationship in *The Heroic Ones* is obvious at surface level: the expulsion of the usurper Huang Chao from the city of Chang'an. The far more interesting *baochou* is present twice, first in the relationship between the scheming governor Zhu Wen and the demi-brigand Li Cunxiao, the aforementioned eleventh *taibao*, and secondly amongst the 'brothers' themselves.

[114] Desser (2005), p. 33.
[115] For the historical account see Ter Haar (2009), p. 156 onwards.

The originary event that requires *baoying* doing by the agents of justice is made explicit in the intertitles which come immediately after the opening credits:[116] Huang Chao is called a *zeikou* (賊寇) 'bandit', establishing his character and that of the congeries of his fellow rebels on the negative end of the moral spectrum. Conversely, Li Keyong, having been bestowed a title (*cixing* (賜姓)) by the emperor, has pledged allegiance to the Tang court. He has been instructed by the emperor (*zhao* (詔)) to expel the invaders, which places on his and his associates' actions the seal of imperial authority; the Shatuo forces represent the (restoration of) order and thus moral rectitude. Li Keyong sends nine of his thirteen generals – the *taibao* who are also his adoptive sons – to assassinate Huang Chao under the cover of darkness; even though they fail on the first attempts, the intended victim is anxious enough to flee the city, thereby opening up an opportunity to break up his armies. Several skirmishes and battles between the armies of Li Keyong and those of Huang Chao are shown, but inexorably the moment of reckoning arrives: Li Keyong's armies retake Chang'an, and in a brief scene[117] filled with martial music a caravan led by Li enters through the city walls, where the flag of the Li clan now flies.

The paroxysms of violence, displayed in scene after scene of the *taibaos*' mowing down interminable waves of Huang Chao's men are cleansed of negative effects for them, for their violence is doubly condoned. First, they operate under the orders of the highest authority: imperial authority; second, their violence is instrumental towards a positive outcome. Thus, Li Keyong and those who act on his behalf are *baoying*-agents *pur sang*: even though the story is not set in the *jianghu*, there is nonetheless the clear binary of good and bad; acting under authority to remove 'bad' and (re)install 'good', Li Keyong's 'sons' achieve the film's inevitable *baoying* outcome.

Far more interesting and less straightforward are the two *baochou* relationships that inform the events in *The Heroic Ones*' second half. The film's Chinese title can be interpreted in two ways: it can refer to thirteen *taibao*, but also to *the thirteenth taibao* – Li Cunxiao – who is the nexus of the film's two *baochou* arcs: as psychological, physical and emotional aggressor in the relationship with Zhu Wen, and as the object of jealousy and resentment for his brothers

[116] [00:02:30].
[117] [01:03:10] onwards.

Cunxin and Junli. It is therefore the thirteenth *taibao*, rather than the thirteen *taibao*, provides the film's emotional thrust.

Zhu Wen rouses the drunken Cunxiao with the disparaging term *hu'er* (胡兒) 'savage'; a quick cut to a zoom ending in a close-up of Cunxiao's face shows surprise followed by anger;[118] the camera zooms out and pans along with Cunxiao's movements, which culminate in him slapping Zhu Wen in the face. This is the first encounter between the two men, and from the intense concentration of the camera on this exchange, the relationship is framed as antagonistic; the men have planted the seeds for *baochou* in each other, which seeds must come to fruition. Their antagonism is exacerbated by Cunxiao taking Zhu Wen's belt by force after winning a bet, adding literal insult to injury and further deepening Zhu Wen's moral wounds. As I shall discuss further below, Cunxiao's hideous destruction is as much a product of this antagonism as it is a murder committed by his 'brothers'.

The emotional harm Cunxiao causes Cunxin and Junli is less overt; it is referred to during the *taibao*'s abortive first raid on Chang'an, when Junli exclaims that Cunxiao's assassination of Huang Chao will make him the hero; it is further implied in Cunxiao's stern rebuking of the two brothers after their attempted rape of a lady in Chang'an who puts the *taibao* up after their failed assassination attempt; it is discussed during the banquet which Zhu Wen holds for Cunxin and Junli, amongst others. It appears to be rooted in the unfair favor Cunxiao enjoys in Li Keyong's view, unfair because Cunxiao is the most recent addition to the constructed family, given the surname Li while Junli retains the surname Kang. It is thus the subtle psychological injury of unearned favor and overzealousness on the part of Cunxiao which engender in Cunxin and Junli the desire to *baochou*, a desire greedily exploited by the insulted Zhu Wen.

Zhu Wen's attempt to capture and kill Cunxiao fails when he does not show up or a trap that has been set for him and Li Keyong; instead, his city of Bianliang is burned, his troops and bodyguards massacred, and his plot to eliminate the Li-clan and install himself as emperor is foiled. However, his *baochou*, being coincident with (though not causally related) that of Cunxin and Junli, is visited upon Cunxiao in the film's most gruesome scene: Cunxiao's quartering. Cunxin and Junli, having taken the drunken Li Keyong's sword, tie Cunxiao up under false pretenses, all while flattering his bravery as if to emphasize his over-inflated ego and thus the justness of their desire to see him destroyed. The bound Cunxiao is ripped apart by five

[118] [00:13:29-00:13:30].

horses[119] to which the ropes on his extremities have been tied. Chang Cheh relishes in the scene's violence, first through a slow motion medium shot, with on the soundtrack agonized screaming, which centers on the tent in which is body lies; next, in a dramatic medium long shot showing five bloody trails in the sand where his body parts have been dragged along. The astounding violence visited upon Cunxiao's body is the product of the concentrated rage of not one but two *baochou*-actors: Zhu Wen and the 'brothers' moral wounds are assuaged by the destruction of their aggressor through an act of excessive violence. The length of the scene and the grotesque drama of Cunxiao's death convey Chang Cheh's unsubtle message about *baochou*'s hideous potential.

The errant *taibao* are killed by their 'brothers' in a sword fight in an almost archetypal instantiation of *baoying*: repeated warnings to surrender are ignored, and Cunxin and Junli are only killed in self-defense rather than deliberately; just punishment is visited upon them in the end. I believe *The Heroic Ones*, for all its historical fantasy, is thus principally a morality play with two currents: the punishment of evil by justice (*baoying*) and the horrors of emotional vengeance run amok (*baochou*). I will discuss the role of audience expectation for these outcomes in the fourth chapter of this essay.

[119] This is a discontinuity in the film, as Cunxun and Junli are only shown tying up Cunxiao's arms and legs.

A Touch of Zen / 俠女 (1971) dir. King Hu

Background, release and plot

King Hu's *A Touch of Zen*,[120] a prize winner at Cannes in 1975 and perennial critics' favorite,[121] has been described by Teo (2007) as "one of the essential films of Chinese language cinema".[122] The film's great length (three hours in its full version), complexity and difficulties in production, release and distribution would have stood in the way of its later success were it not for a foreign critic who urged Hu to submit the film for competition in Cannes four years after its release in Hong Kong and Taiwan.[123] *A Touch of Zen* is, with all of its complexities, impossible to characterize: the first hour of the film is a haunted-house plot in the Chinese tradition of *chuanqi* (傳奇) 'strange stories',[124] after which the machinery of a *wuxia* plot is introduced (renegade knights-errant, sword fighting) as is the Zen Buddhist element. The film's finale, which Teo (2007) calls its "fantastic-marvelous" phase,[125] shifts the balance definitively away from the *wuxia* genre's skilled combat style and towards a superhuman, supernatural Zen-induced hallucinatory style.

The film stars Chun Shih as Gu Shengzhai, a scholar and town scribe, who lives with his mother (played by Zhang Bingyu) next to a decaying, supposedly abandoned *tunbao* (屯堡), a type of barracks. Frequent disturbances in the *tunbao* together with the arrival of the mysterious Ouyang Nian (Tian Peng) compel Gu Shengzhai to investigate. The barracks turn out to be occupied by the secretive Yang Huizhen (played with force and conviction by a then unknown Xu Feng) and her mother. Nothing is as it seems: the blind fortune teller is the general Lu (played by Xue Han), the city's new herbalist is the general Shi (Ying Bai) and Yang is in fact the exiled daughter of an official, on the run from the Eastern Depot (discussed in the section on *Dragon Gate Inn*), of whom Ouyang is an agent. Gu, Lu, Shi and Yang hatch a scheme to rid themselves of the agents pursuing Yang; the *tunbao* is booby trapped and filled with 'ghosts',

[120] The literal translation of the Chinese title would be 'female knight errant'; I personally find this translation more suitable to the seriousness of the film. However, since it has been released in English as *A Touch of Zen*, I shall use this name.
[121] Hong Kong Film Awards Association, 'The best 100 Chinese motion pictures', available from http://www.hkfaa.com/news/100films.html, last viewed on 30 May 2018.
[122] Teo (2007), p. 1.
[123] All discussed at great length in Teo (2007), p. 8-14.
[124] Idema & Haft (2005), p. 127 onwards.
[125] Teo (2007), p.91.

and when the Eastern Depot men attack, they set off the booby traps killing them all. Yang, Lu and Gu end up under the protection of the abbot Hui Yuan (Roy Chiao, of *Indiana Jones* fame), a supernatural force who finally defeats the Eastern Depot commander Xu (Han Yingjie, Hu's martial arts director). *A Touch of Zen* is a dense and complicated film; below, I analyze the film's central conflict – between the Eastern Depot and the Yang/Lu faction – as an abortive *baochou* and likewise unsuccessful *baoying* narrative, being resolved only through the supernatural intervention personified by the abbot Hui Yuan.

Bao, baoying and baochou in A Touch of Zen

The originary events of the *baoying* and *baochou* attempts that form the narrative drive of *A Touch of Zen* are shown about halfway through the film, in a flashback.[126] Yang's father is killed by the Eastern Depot's chief eunuch Wei after attempting to report on his misdeeds; in order to protect Yang Huizhen from the Eastern Depot, the generals Lu and Shi – loyal to Yang's father and the anti-eunuch cause – hide her, first in the mountainous region where they meet the Buddhist monks led by abbot Hui Yuan, and then in the *tunbao* of the narrative present. Yang, having suffered the death of her father at the hands of the eunuch Wei is the obvious *baochou*-agent; the generals Lu and Shi are the presumptive *baoying*-actors: they are framed as the representatives of the just resistance against the Eastern Depot's tyranny. Thus, the outlines of the film's *baochou* and *baoying* motivations are presented only after the haunted-house plot is wound up. The film's overarching *bao*-arc is implied. Not only does Wei torture and kill the upright Yang, he also forces Yang's daughter and two generals into hiding. The message is clear: the eunuch Wei is cruel and deceitful, and thus the audience's expectations for his downfall are created through his moral shortcomings.[127] In principle, the means and the motive for *bao, baoying* and *baochou* are thus present: the emotionally injured daughter exacting her personal vengeance against his killer; morally upright authority bringing corruption to justice, and a (super-)natural return for evil deeds committed.

A Touch of Zen's resolution of these threads is foreshadowed in Yang's flashback, wherein she details how the abbot Hui Yuan saved her from Ouyang Nian and the agents of the Eastern Depot. Hui Yuan and his monks are outnumbered and unarmed, yet handily and easily

[126] [01:16:00 onwards].
[127] The psychological implications of his physical impairments for his moral failings do not form a part of my analysis.

rid themselves of their attackers. I posit that this is because Hui Yuan is *bao* personified: the embodiment of the karmic retribution that awaits those that act on behalf of evil. Hui Yuan's otherworldliness is shown through more than simply his superior martial skills: in a medium close up shot, filmed from a very low angle looking up at the abbot, the sunlight blindingly golden shining down from behind him, the soundtrack dissonant, piercing and ethereal; the cumulative effect is pure awe at his being, acted out by the audience's stand-in Ouyang Nian. King Hu shows the abbot to be capable of more than a man skilled at martial arts; the abbot has the aura of the supernatural about him,[128] a warning the Eastern Depot fails to heed. This scene foreshadows the movie's hallucinatory conclusion: the abbot is *bao* made flesh, acting over and above the realms wherein *baoying* and *baochou* – both human undertakings – occur, the ultimate judgement of right and wrong.

The film's resolution occurs in three main acts. The first act starts when Gu is found by agents of the Imperial Guard (under the eunuchs' control), acting on a warrant for his arrest. Lu and Yang are nearby, and are shown in a very brief medium close-up shot from a low angle, echoing the shot of Hui Yuan described above. They are Gu's protectors in the same way Hui Yuan was theirs, and in this instance they are *bao*-actors, repaying their debt to Gu who helped them defeat Ouyang Nian and his agents. They defeat the soldiers, allowing Gu to escape, but are confronted by an unbeatable opponent in the form of commander Xu Xuanqun. Here is where their *baochou* (Yang) and *baoying* (Lu) quests end in failure: neither is able to cause any serious harm to the intractable Xu, set up as the Eastern Depot's embodiment, and therefore as the film's antagonist. Both try several times, but their attacks are easily rebuffed; Teo (2007) has analyzed this as meaning that "good may be strong, but evil is stronger",[129] but I disagree: King Hu, who wrote the film as well as directed it, is merely emphasizing the fact that there is nothing inherent in either the justified retribution of *baoying* or the passion of *baochou* that compels those forces towards a satisfactory conclusion: *baochou* and *baoying* are recognizable processes that can very well end in failure without negating their component actions.

The finale's second act, the entrance of the abbot Hui Yuan with his monks, is the first definitive shift away from the characters' earthly plane, wherein their personal (*baochou*) or societal (*baoying*) retributions play any meaningful role. Hui Yuan, gliding downwards over grass and reeds in a short scene intercut with very brief shots of sunlight on rippling water,

[128] Similarly to the 'evil' abbot Liao Kong in *Come Drink With Me*; however, as I will go on to discuss, the abbot Hui Yuan emerges victorious, whereas Liao Kong is slain.
[129] Teo (2007), p. 97.

waving shrubs and quivering reeds accompanied by a soundtrack of a male chorus, symbolizes the arrival of *bao* in human form, descended from the realms of *tianxia* to serve upon evil its just desserts. Xu attempts to fight Hui Yuan – that is, he attempts to fight his inevitable fate – but is unsuccessful; this act of the battle concludes with Hui Yuan preaching to a bound Xu, who *seemingly*[130] relents and gives up his pursuit.

The finale's concluding act however shows his deceitfulness, and provides the denouement of the film's *bao*-arc, enacted through the *bao*-agent Hui Yuan. Hui Yuan leads Lu and Yang to the monastery when they are confronted by Xu and his sons. Xu continues his pretension of having recanted, then suddenly stabs Hui Yuan as his sons attack the others. Hui Yuan, fatally stabbed, stumbles off but is still able to hit Xu on the head, knocking him dizzy. The abbot climbs upwards and is once again presented to be one with the sun, being taken up by its bright radiance and shown to be bleeding gold. Xu is engulfed by madness after realizing what Hui Yuan is – the personification of fate; *bao* in human form. As the colors of the shots shift to the negative, Xu first kills his sons and then jumps off the cliff. *Bao*'s physical role has been played out, and thus a human medium is no longer needed to exact upon Xu – evil by proxy – his final comeuppance, his own extinguishment and that of his kin. What Yang and Lu, acting as *baochou* and *baoying*-agents respectively in their human dramas were unable to accomplish, is the inescapability of evil's fate; King Hu's *A Touch of Zen* is a forceful narrative reminder that the processes of *baochou* and *baoying*, being as they are human endeavors, are fallible, but that *bao* is ultimately an inescapable, inevitable force; a foundation of existence.

[130] I point out here that Vicki Ooi has written incisively and in my opinion conclusively about the interplay between appearance and reality in *A Touch of Zen* in her essay quoted above; I rest this issue.

Chapter four: critique

Introduction

In this chapter, I will the discuss my analysis of *wuxia* film according to my typologies. I will problematize my typologies by examining whether they are descriptive or prescriptive; secondly I will critique my analysis by examining the problematics of perspective, discussing the (in)commensurable paradigms and episteme of the viewer and the auteur.[131]

Descriptive or prescriptive typologies?

Above, I have analyzed films in order to bring their narrative drives under one of my typologies; my attempt has been to nuance the doings that make up the narratives against the backdrop of oversimplified descriptors such as 'revenge'. As discussed in chapter two, *bao*, *baoying* and *baochou* are names for a sequence of doings which exist in a causal relationship: the retribution or revenge may be unsuccessful (that is, inconclusive), but cannot exist in absence of an antecedent (its originary event). My aim was to demonstrate that certain causally linked, ordered events fall under one or more of the typologies, and that there exist express differences between the motivations, actions and outcomes that distinguish the typologies from one another. This raises the question of whether these differences exist a priori, that is, as a factor determining the course of the 're-action' (making the typologies prescriptive), or whether the typologies merely serve as category markers, as ex post descriptors. I will attempt to answer this question, but stress that it is closely interlinked with the issue discussed below, namely the problematics of perspective.

The films show a wide range of ways in which the typologies appear: *bao* manifests itself in human form (as in *A Touch of Zen*), 'acting out' the resolution of the film's antagonism in tangible form; it also acts through those who mete out justice in punishing the wicked (as in *Come Drink With Me*) or works in concert with parties seeking bloody revenge for being personally aggrieved (the Tatars in *Dragon Gate Inn*). *Bao* operates on multiple timelines: intergenerationally (the book used by Fang Kang in *One Armed Swordsman*) and within single

[131] I use the term auteur to refer to the person under whose creative imprimatur a work of art has come to be. In the cases of the films I have discussed, the auteur is the director.

lifetimes. *Baoying* and *baochou* are easily confused: Silver Roc is not the archetypal do-gooder associated with *baoying*-agents as forces for societal order, the downfall of the eunuch Cao in *Dragon Gate Inn* is not brought about by the *xia*, and neither is the death of commander Xu in *A Touch of Zen*; vengeance, hate-instigated *baochou* is what provides those films with their climactic outcomes, but this is only clear when the sequence of events is unpacked and analyzed closely.

The unsatisfying answer to the question that is the title of this section is that the typologies can be both prescriptive and descriptive. If the causal linkages between "injury, anticipation and reaction"[132] (what I have called simply the 'action-reaction' dynamic) are indeed the forces that propel the narrative forwards, then there must be a prescriptive element to the typologies; if an injury leads to nothing, or if licentiousness was left unchecked, or if in the end the bad guy didn't get their just desserts, would the films make sense? Answering that question is impossible, because there are no alternatives to the narratives provided. Still, I propose that the films would be less likely to fit into the *wuxia* genre, which is, as I have argued, the case for the most ambivalent examples (*Dragon Gate Inn* and *A Touch of Zen*). In those films, the set up points towards a particular typology (*baoying*, in both cases), but the resolution manifests itself in another. The typologies therefore have a prescriptive and a descriptive aspect: the doings that make up the film's actions will all fall within one or more of the typologies, which are themselves meant to describe with greater distinctiveness the doings that are so much more complex in origin and resolution than merely the term 'revenge' connotes.

The problematics of perspective

Closely connected to the question of whether or not the typologies are pre- or descriptive is the issue of whose perspective is taken in the analysis. This is relevant because the perceived causality of the relationships between originary events and their *bao*, *baoying* and *baochou* unfolding is derived partly – as I have argued in chapter two – from expectations. Whether the typologies (and the events they purport to describe) make sense, and thus whether the expectations about them are met, could depend on the perspective of the expector. If a certain doing fulfils the criteria of a certain typology, the expectations I had about/for it have been met; bearing in mind the question of whether or not the typologies are descriptive or prescriptive,

[132] Kerrigan (1996), p.5.

room for discussion exists as to whether this is also the case from a different perspective than my own (e.g. - from the auteur's perspective, or from that of a Chinese viewer). This discussion is relevant for two reasons: firstly, because any pattern of expectations is bound up with a paradigm and/or an episteme, and secondly because the issue of perspectives is, in the case of my analysis above, an intercultural issue, given that I as analyst and the films (and their auteurs) as analyzed are from dissimilar cultural backgrounds. For my usage of the terms 'episteme' and 'paradigm', I will lean on Ming Xie's usage of these terms in his explorations of comparative intercultural inquiry.[133]

Xie states that "we may speak of *cognitive* epistemes and *social* paradigms [original italics]"[134], which is a useful way of expressing the difference between the grasp of the elements of "*connaissances*",[135] a term incorporating 'the knowable' (the episteme, being a cognitive function/entity of a higher order), and the ways it is expressed or interrogated (i.e. – the paradigm), for example by auteurs and analysts of a certain medium.[136] The relevance of this abstruse discussion lies in the fact that epistemes and paradigms by necessity underlie the films' narratives (which are products of their auteurs' imaginations) but also underlie a viewer's understanding of and expectations for the (causal) relationships between the doings that make up a film's narrative. If the typologies *bao*, *baoying*, and *baochou* exist as causal relationships and patterns of expectation – which I have presupposed they do, for my definitions of them in chapter two – and if they make sense in an intercultural context – which I have argued they do – then the perspective does not matter: both the auteur and the viewer understand the causal relationships and thus the progression of the films' narratives. This could be explained by the fact that the causal relationship between an action (a *bao*, *baochou* or *baoying* doing's originary event) and the reaction (the *bao*, *baochou* or *baoying* doing) exists within an intercultural episteme;[137] the paradigm informs the way the films' narratives are interrogated: in my case the paradigms that inform the typologies can be traced to (intercultural) moral and societal concepts ('good', 'injury', 'justice' etc.).

For the sake of the argument, if perspective *does* matter, and the episteme or paradigm underlying the auteur's intent clashes with those underlying the viewer/analyst's (my)

[133] Xie (2011), p. 79 onwards.
[134] Xie (2011), p. 80.
[135] Xie (2011), p. 74, using Foucault's terminology.
[136] Xie (2011), p. 79.
[137] An idea which could be gleaned from Kerrigan's 1996 history of the revenge tragedies.

expectation – Xie uses the idea of 'incommensurability',[138] which I will also use – the typologies would be nonsensical to another viewer, or to the auteurs themselves. This then falsifies my thesis (that the typologies can exist) and raises (a potentially unlimited number of) antitheses or alternative theses. I will conclude this chapter by arguing that I believe that this is not the case, whilst remaining cognizant of the fact that I have no way of *proving* that the typologies fit within an intercultural episteme/paradigm, independently of perspective.[139]

In delineating the typologies, I have relied on Chinese and non-Chinese material, relating to certain sociocultural phenomena.[140] In my discussion of the material, I did not encounter (paradigmatic) explanations of the (workings of the) phenomena which were incommensurable with one another. Furthermore, in my description of the typologies, I attempted to use terms from the Chinese language that could be understood in English (through translation or explanation), or otherwise culturally neutral terms ('doing', 'originary event' etc.), which terms likewise did not lead to internal paradigmatic incommensurability. For the analytical section, I used evidence from the films themselves in categorizing the various doings as *bao*, *baochou* or *baoying*, taking visual, audio and technical cues in order to construct my argument. My findings accorded with the idea of the typologies as being a way of systematizing and limning the differences in motivation and outcome between for example *baochou* and *baoying*, a distinction I found lacking in earlier literature on these films. I believe[141] that my analysis makes sense (i.e. - is not paradigmatically (interculturally) incommensurable) because indeed the causal relationships described by *bao*, *baoying*, and *baochou* are epistemically intercultural: that they exist both for myself as viewer/analyst and for the auteurs. This would also accord with the answer to the question in the previous section: the typologies are both descriptive and prescriptive because a) differences between the motivations, actions and outcomes of the typologies exist and b) can be analyzed which allows them to c) be brought under one (or more) of the typologies. Insofar as it is possible to take different perspectives into account, I do not believe an incommensurability exists between the viewer/analyst's and the auteur's.

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[138] Xie (2011), p. 80.

[139] Partly because King Hu and Chang Cheh are dead and thus unable to comment on my typologies, partly because there are so many antitheses (relating to expectations and causality per typology) that investigating each and every one of them is impracticable.

[140] See also my references to the works of Van Den Haag, Sen, Nozick etc.

[141] And wish to avoid a meta-discussion about the unquestionability of the epistemes that govern my thinking about my own thinking etc.

Chapter five: conclusion

Overview

In the previous chapters, I have set out a tripartite typology in order to more accurately understand certain cause-and-effect actions in *wuxia* films. The terms I used (*bao*, *baoying*, and *baochou*) describe certain distinctly different 'doings', with different causations, different actors, and different conclusions. These three typologies are meant to challenge and refine more general terms such as 'revenge' and 'justice' which are applied indiscriminately as being 'themes' of *wuxia* films. I then set about analyzing the narratives (and, when necessary, the narratives' constructions) of six *wuxia* films deemed canonic. I found that, when viewed in greater detail, the actions that made up the films' primary substance were categorizable according to my typologies. This finding is not surprising (the existence of certain cause-and-effect relationships in these films has been written about extensively), but is useful in introducing certain distinctions which have been absent in academic discourse regarding *wuxia* films.

Thus, I argued that *Come Drink With Me* presents a *baochou* plot and a *baoying* plot intertwining in the actions of the female knight errant Golden Swallow. In Chang Cheh's *Golden Swallow*, I posited that Silver Roc's destructive quest is the originary event for his own demise, pointing out that his death is an instance of *bao*, a return to parity. *The Heroic Ones* presents complex, dense plotlines: the thirteen *taibao* are injurious amongst themselves even as they act as conduits for the designs of scheming officials; catastrophic violence is the finale of *The Heroic Ones*' *baochou* and *baoying* plotlines in a stark reminder of the epic ways in which emotional injury can be converted to physical pain and destruction. *One Armed Swordsman* pretends to offer a simpler dynamic of savior, betrayal and recompense; as I have argued however, Fang Kang's actions are born out of pseudo-fealty to Qi Rufeng and a desire to punish Pei'er, rather than lofty ambitions of (re)establishing justice. King Hu's films *Dragon Gate Inn* and *A Touch of Zen* treat the conventions of the *wuxia* film lightly: the balance between *baochou* and *baoying* tilts towards the former in *Dragon Gate Inn*'s finale, even though at first glance the latter might *seem* to be at play. *A Touch of Zen* presents the most compelling instance if *bao* personified in the form of the monk Hui Yuan: the film sets up an incorrigible, treacherous evil whose correction lies outside the grasp of the earthly *baoying*-agents Lu and Yang. Lumping together these various narrative lines under the unsatisfyingly austere (and sometimes factually

incorrect) designation ‘revenge’ does not do justice to their complexities and outright dissimilarities.

Finally, I attempted to critique my approach and the underlying assumptions by questioning the explanatory power of the typologies, as well as the possibility *per se* of attempting to analyze fictional causal relationships. The conclusion I reached was that the typologies have predictive potential, because they aim to explain how and why certain actors react when confronted with certain actions themselves; at the same time, the typologies are a way of categorizing certain sequences of actions with greater precision than I had encountered in scholarly literature on *wuxia* films. On the more theoretical side, I argued that the absence of an incommensurability between the theoretical underpinnings (taken from intercultural materials) that underlie my typologies helps explain why I believe they make sense to me in the same way they make sense to the creators of the narratives they aim to categorize.

Reflection

Film, as a multisensory medium incorporating visual, aural and narrative aesthetics, approximates (the idea of) the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Different approaches to film yield different insights into the how/why/what questions central to the humanities; Chinese film is no exception. This essay was motivated by two things: firstly the desire to address what I perceived to be a shortcoming in the discussion of certain cause-and-effect relationships in Chinese language films; secondly, the idea that *wuxia* films in particular are profoundly interesting and rich with possibilities for analysis. The typologies I have introduced and used to categorize narrative drives in these films are, I believe, applicable to other films and film genres, although more research into other films would be necessary. Future research may also bear out that more than three distinctions exist, further complicating the seemingly simple process of ‘righting wrongs’.

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