

Asian representation in American films

Author: Cécile Voort **Student ID:** s1365843

Master thesis Asian Studies (60 EC)

Supervisor: Dr. S.S. Kharchenkova

Academic year: 2019-2020

Date of submission: 15-07-2020

Word count: 12179

Abstract

Asian Representation in American film productions has long been a topic of discussion. For many years, Asian people were portrayed as the Yellow Peril, the model minority, the perpetual foreigner and several other stereotypes related to gender. In the recent years, Asian Americans have become more vocal on this topic and they have been asking for more representation in Hollywood, with *The Joy Luck Club* having been the only film with a fully Asian cast for 25 years. In the last two years, two new American films came out with fully Asian casts, namely *Crazy Rich Asians* and *The Farewell*. Not much academic research on Chinese people's opinions on these films has been done, therefore, in this thesis I went into depth and analyzed the reviews on the Chinese website Douban, to see what the Douban audiences thought of these three films. In this thesis I answered the question: How do Douban users perceive the portrayal of (overseas) Chinese people in American films? Through a discourse analysis on the reviews taken from Douban, I found that the majority of Douban users is content with the representation of Chinese people in these films, however, there are critical notes about stereotyping and the Western perspective on China that they feel is present in these films.

Inhoud

1.0 Introduction.....	4
2.0 Justification.....	5
3.0 common stereotypes and representation	7
3.1 What are stereotypes?	7
3.2 The model minority.....	8
3.3 The eternal foreigner stereotype.....	9
3.4 Stereotypes assigned to gender	10
3.5 Whitewashing and yellowface	10
4.0 Douban (豆瓣)	11
5.0 Methodology.....	13
6. The research.....	15
6.1 Analysis introduction	15
6.2 Asian Representation.....	16
6.3 Stereotypes	19
6.4 Cultural accuracy.....	25
7. Conclusion.....	28
8. Limitations and suggestions for further research.....	29
Bibliography	31
Appendix	34

1. Introduction

The proper representation of Asian Americans in American cinema remains a sensitive and often discussed topic. Over the years, the presence of Asian Americans mainstream film productions has been relatively low compared to the growing percentage of Asian Americans in the population (Nishime,2017). However, the importance of representation of ethnic minorities in the mainstream media cannot be overlooked. This is because the media may play an important part in how people perceive ethnic minorities. This is called the Cultivation Theory: when people are often exposed to stereotypes about a certain ethnic minority through the media, they eventually will start to accept these stereotypes as the truth. There is a dangerous side to this, because exposure to negative stereotypes could lead to angry and hostile emotions towards certain groups of people (Zhang, 2010). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this is what happened to the Chinese immigrants who went to the United States to work. These immigrants often worked as rail workers. During this period, the American economy was unstable and people had a lot of anger and frustration about this situation (Kawai, 2005). At the same time, Americans were terrified of the Chinese immigrants because they looked different from them and had a culture that they perceived to be too different from their own culture. This fear resulted in white Americans directing their anger towards the Chinese immigrants (Kawai, 2005). American magazines and newspapers publicized cartoons that depicted Chinese people as insects, grasshoppers for instance, with warnings about the immigrants being a threat to the poor American small farmers. Chinese immigrants were mainly working for large enterprises and this was not well perceived among white Americans living in poor circumstances (Shim, 1998). The fear of East Asian people was called the Yellow Peril. In the late nineteenth century several laws were passed that made life for Chinese people in the United States extremely difficult. Due to the discrimination and worsening circumstances they faced, Chinese people felt that they had the choice to either stay in the United States, but live in Chinatowns, or leave the United States to go back to China (Shim, 1998).

The Chinatowns posed new problems. For many white Americans, Chinatowns seemed like dark and scary places. It was hard for them to understand what was going on in these neighbourhoods and this increased the feelings of Chinese people being “too different”. Chinese people became the “unassimilable other”. The representation of Chinese people in American film productions in the early to mid-twentieth century mainly consisted of them being portrayed as the villains. Fu Manchu, a villain character living in a Chinatown, is a famous example (Shim, 1998). In the decades that followed, the Yellow Peril stereotype persisted because of Japan’s role in the Second World War, and the Chinese Civil War that resulted into China becoming a communist country. Only in the 1960s this negative stereotype started to fade (Shim, 1998).

In the recent years, Asian Americans have become more vocal about Asian representation in films and other types of media in the United States, with the help of Asian American celebrities. In 2016 for instance, the Twitter hashtag #whitewashedOUT was used to raise awareness for the fact Hollywood productions still use white American actors for characters who were originally of East Asian descent. Several famous Asian Americans, such as comedian Margaret Cho, also joined in this campaign (Dockterman, 2016, *Time Magazine*). Sandra Oh publicly called out fellow actress Emma Stone over playing a woman of Chinese descent in the film *Aloha* (Dockterman, 2016, *Time Magazine*).

There are voices coming from the Asian American community that are asking for more Asian representation in Hollywood, however, it seems that there is not much information available on the views of Chinese people on this issue. It would be interesting to take a more in depth look at what Chinese people have to say about the representation of people of Chinese descent and Chinese culture. The Chinese online forum Douban (豆瓣) is a large network that is mainly for discussing films, books and music, and is often used as a tool by the Western media to check the Chinese audience's opinions (Soh, 2017) In this thesis I will answer the question: How do Douban users perceive the portrayal of (overseas) Chinese people in American films? To answer this question, I will do a discourse analysis on Douban reviews on three American films that have created discussions regarding Asian representation. These films are *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) directed by Wayne Wang, *The Farewell* (2019), directed by Lulu Wang, and *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), directed by Jon M. Chu. These three films revolve around the clashes between different generations in overseas Chinese families, and also the clashes between American culture and Chinese culture. All three films are set in both the United States and Asia (China and Singapore). These similarities make these films interesting to compare, and it would be compelling to see how Douban users react to the portrayals of Chinese people and the culture clashes in these films. In the methodology I will provide more information on these choices. In this thesis I will first provide a justification on the research topic, then I will give more information in the literature review about common Asian stereotypes found in American films, and give an explanation on the Chinese internet forum Douban. After that I will present the results of my research, and finally I will conclude this thesis with an answer to the research question, limitations of the study and notes for further research.

2. Justification

After the release of *Crazy Rich Asians* in 2018, Asian representation in Hollywood became a topic of interest in the media (Chow, 2019, *Times Magazine*). However, there has been a lot of scholarship on the topic of Asian representation and stereotyping in the American mainstream

media. Yuko Kawai's article "Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Dialectic of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril, Doobo Shim's article "From Yellow Peril Through Model Minority to Renewed Yellow Peril" and Qin Zhang's "Asian Americans Beyond the Model Minority Stereotype: The Nerdy and the Left Out" are all researches on this topic that have been quoted many times. While looking for research on Asian stereotypes in the United States, these articles will come up first. They have been written a while ago and discuss stereotypes that are commonly seen in older American films from the 20th century, and also stereotypes that appear in films from the early 2000's (Kawai, 2005; Shim, 1998; Zhang, 2010). However, in the past year there have been many changes regarding Asian representation in Hollywood, with films like *The Farewell*, *Always Be My Maybe* and *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* coming out (Chow, 2019, *Times Magazine*). As these films are relatively new, there is barely any academic research available on them. The research on Asian representation and stereotypes should include the new developments in the film industry, along with the phenomena seen in older films.

In the past few years, Asian Americans, including Asian American celebrities, have been speaking out for more representation (Dockterman, 2016, *Time Magazine*). However, there is not much research available on how Chinese people feel about this, and what their take is on the representation of (overseas) Chinese and Chinese culture in American films. Therefore I want to use the reviews on Douban to get a better idea on their opinions of these three films.

Douban is the most popular Chinese website for user-generated film reviews, and the Douban audience is known to be critical about the cultural products they review, because overall they tend to have a good knowledge on globalization and what is going on in the world (Soh, 2017). Internet forums are often used for discourse analysis. Usually, the people in an online thread on such a forum all share a similar interest that provokes a discussion between the members. There tends to be more candidness in these threads because the members often do not know each other in real life, and they have a certain anonymity compared to a face to face discussion (Holtz, 2012). This allows people to feel free to be more frank about their opinions. Furthermore, it is convenient to find comments related to your research due to the clear structure of internet forums. For these reasons, the content of internet forums is ideal for discourse analyses (Holtz et al., 2012). This research is relevant because it covers a topic that has been widely spoken about in the media, while including the perspective of Douban users who can fill the gap of the opinions of the Chinese audience in the current research. Furthermore, using internet forums is a common and convenient way of collecting data that represents the voices of larger groups of people.

3. common stereotypes and representation

In this chapter I will first define the important concepts, then I will discuss the most commonly found stereotypes about Asian Americans in film productions and why these stereotypes are controversial. Lastly, I will discuss other phenomena that often occur in American film productions that have characters of East Asian descent.

3.1 What are stereotypes?

A stereotype is the expectation of one group about how members of another group behave. This expected behaviour consists of overgeneralized and exaggerated characteristics that are seen as natural to this group, without taking into consideration that all members of this group have their own, individual personalities and behaviour (Paek & Shah, 2003; Zhang, 2010). The media plays an important part in endorsing stereotypes about different groups of people, and if the stereotypes about a certain group are negative, it could put this group at a disadvantage. When people live in an area without much diversity, their exposure to different ethnic groups could mainly come from the media. If the media that they consume portray an ethnic minority in a stereotypical way, they might take this as the truth. This is where the Cultivation Theory becomes relevant (Zhang, 2010). The Cultivation Theory was first introduced by George Gerbner in 1969. Gerbner's research was focussed on the role that television plays on our worldview. When communities consume the same centralized content on television every day, this might eventually lead to a more homogenous world view. This effect is called the cultivation effect (Gerbner et al., 1986).

As I mentioned earlier, the Cultivation Theory suggests that over time, media exposure could influence the way people perceive different ethnic groups (Zhang, 2010). One study by Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz and David Ta found that the use of ethnic stereotypes in videogames had a cultivation effect on frequent videogame players. This effect was not limited to specific genres of videogames, but for videogames in general as they tend to follow a similar trend. Common representations of different ethnicities can be found in a large variety of videogames (Behm-Morawitz & Ta, 2014). In many videogames, the videogame characters are also placed in roles that adhere to the stereotypes for their ethnicity. Asian videogame characters are often skilled in martial arts, while black videogame characters tend to fulfil the roles of athletes and criminals (Behm-Morawitz & Ta, 2014). This study found that their white participants tended to have less favourable views on black people compared to white people. According to this study, the participants' perceptions on different ethnic groups were more influenced by the videogames than by real-life interactions (Behm-Morawitz & Ta, 2014). When it comes to Asian Americans, there are a few

stereotypes that have been persistently portrayed in the mainstream media that may have influenced the way that they are perceived by people, which I will now discuss.

3.2 The model minority

The model minority stereotype originates from the United States and emphasizes the achievements of the Asian American communities. According to this stereotype, Asian Americans are academically skilled and economically stable, their success should serve as an example for other ethnic minorities in the United States (Kawai, 2005). The term ‘model minority’ was first mentioned in 1966 in the *New York Times Magazine*. At the beginning of that year, *New York Times Magazine* published an article called “Success Story, Japanese-American Style.” (Kawai, 2005) Yuko Kawai describes this as the first article that caused this stereotype to gain mainstream attention. The second article responsible for this was published later that year, by the *U.S. News and World Report*. This article, called “Success Story of One Minority in U.S.” was not about Japanese Americans but focused on Chinese Americans instead (Kawai, 2005). From this moment onwards, Asian Americans were also displayed as a model minority in films, on television and other mainstream media outlets. In the beginning, only Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans were referred to as a model minority, but later on this changed and nowadays, this stereotype is used to describe all Asian American communities (Li, 2005).

The model minority stereotype might sound positive at first, however, it carries negative connotations. According to Guofang Li, this stereotype is harmful for both Asian Americans and for other ethnic minorities in the United States. This is because this stereotype heavily emphasizes the ability of Asian Americans to achieve success on their own (Li, 2005). According to this narrative, if Asian Americans can realize the American Dream, other ethnic minorities in the United States can achieve this too. However, if they cannot reach this goal, it would mean that it is their own fault. The model minority stereotype implies that racism is not an issue anymore, all Americans, regardless of their ethnic and cultural background, should be able to achieve economic and academic success on their own. This is what Li refers to as “colour blind talk” (Li, 2005). Another harmful aspect of the model minority stereotype is that Asian Americans are regarded as “honorary whites”, because allegedly, the family structures and work ethic of Asian American groups is similar to white Americans, the difference is their ethnicity. As a result, Asian Americans are at risk of having their problems regarding racism and integration ignored. At the same time, this stereotype implies that other ethnic minority groups in the United States have a bad work ethic and should follow the example of Asian Americans (Li, 2005).

3.3 The eternal foreigner stereotype

The portrayal of East Asian people as foreigners who have a hard time assimilating into American culture is another common and persistent stereotype in American films and television. They are portrayed as having a heavy accent and strongly holding on to their culture while rejecting American culture (Shim, 1998). Qin Zhang argues that, compared to other ethnic minorities in the United States, the media portrays them as the most different and the least American, which is very contradictory to the implication of the model minority stereotype that Asian Americans are “honorary whites.” According to Zhang, Asian Americans are often shown as “FOB’s” (fresh off the boat) in American films and on television (Zhang, 2010). A study by Sapna Cheryan and Benoît Monin conducted a study where they showed the participants photos of American individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. The participants rated the individuals of East Asian descent to be less American than those of African American and Hispanic American descent. White Americans were rated as the most American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). The eternal foreigner stereotype originates from the time when East Asians were seen as the Yellow Peril, when Americans found the Chinese immigrants hard to understand and thus regarded them as scary and mysterious (Dooley, 2018). This stereotype excludes people of East Asian descent from the rest of the American society and could possibly lead to feelings of rejection and ostracization. Furthermore, as a result of Asian Americans traditionally being regarded as inscrutable, this stereotype could lead to them being portrayed as evil and unreliable, which in turn could stir up negative emotions towards the Asian American community (Zhang, 2010).

In 2015, the American television network ABC came out with a new sitcom that followed the events in the life of a Taiwanese-American family, *Fresh Off the Boat*. This television series was met with generally positive reviews, and received praise from the Asian American community as well for debunking myths and stereotypes about, in this case, Taiwanese-Americans (Dooley, 2018). *Fresh Off the Boat* did receive criticism for exaggerating certain aspects of this family, the grandmother for instance, mainly wears traditional Chinese clothes despite having lived in the United States for a long time, or the mother who is often depicted as a “tiger mom” (Dooley, 2018). However, the show took a comedic approach in highlighting the issue of “othering” that many Asian Americans experience. The Huang family that this sitcom focusses on, lives in a predominantly white neighbourhood. Curious neighbours are shown trying to interpret the family’s actions as traditional. For instance, in one scene the mother is spraying her sons down with a water hose so that they do not have to spend money on the waterpark. The neighbours interpret this as them “cleaning off evil spirits” (Dooley, 2018).

3.4 Stereotypes assigned to gender

There are several stereotypes about East Asian people in American media that are gender specific. For women, the most well-known and persistent stereotypes are the “dragon lady” and the “China doll” (Wang, 2013). The “dragon lady” stereotype is a Chinese woman who is beautiful yet evil, and fulfils a villainous role in films. In older American film productions that had Chinese characters, the “dragon lady” was very common, often portrayed by Anna May Wong. In more recent film productions this stereotype has been portrayed several times by Lucy Liu (Dooley, 2018). The “China doll” stereotype is the opposite of the “dragon lady” stereotype. This stereotype has its roots in the colonial history between Western countries and East Asian countries. Another name for “China doll” is the “lotus blossom” stereotype. When Asian women are portrayed in this stereotype, they are pretty and submissive, and their romantic interest is often a white man. This stereotype is still visible in modern media as well, but in more subtle forms. Television series like ER have female characters of Asian descent who behave in a subordinate way and are bad at taking decisions for themselves, despite being professionals in their job (Dooley, 2018; Wang, 2013).

Contrary to East Asian women who are often being portrayed as beautiful and desirable, East Asian men have often been portrayed as undesirable and unattractive, or even as more feminine and asexual compared to white male characters (Shim, 1998). Fu Manchu is an example of how East Asian men are portrayed as feminine and asexual. Fu Manchu never displays romantic or affectionate emotions, and his movements and behaviour comes across as feminine (Dooley, 2018). East Asian are also often represented in film productions as nerdy and antisocial people who are mostly focused on science and technology. They are visible in professional and business settings, without focus on their social lives, which gives the impression that they do not care for the things outside work (Zhang, 2010).

3.5 Whitewashing and yellowface

“Whitewashing” is the act of using white actors to play the role of non-white characters. For the first half of the twentieth century, it was very common in Hollywood to cast white actors and actresses for non-white characters. This was a result of the strict segregation laws at that time. There are many films that feature Fu Manchu as a villain, and not once was he played by an actor of East Asian descent (Dooley, 2018). When an actor or actress plays the role of an East Asian character and uses makeup and costumes to look East Asian, it is called “yellowface”. In the early twentieth century, people in the United States were very interested in stories with East Asian settings. At the same time, there was a widespread fear of Chinese immigrants and actors of East Asian descent were not welcome on stage because of discriminatory laws. Thus, white actors were cast instead

(Nishime, 2017). Over time, the Yellow Peril stereotype became less prominent, and the practise of yellowface and whitewashing on this level also started to decrease (Nishime, 2017). However, there are still recent cases of whitewashing and yellowface in Hollywood productions. In 2016, two new releases sparked a major discussion in the United States on whitewashing, these films were *Doctor Strange* and *Ghost in the Shell*. In *Doctor Strange*, a character who is originally a Tibetan monk, was changed into a white monk in Nepal and played by Tilda Swinton (Park, 2017). *Ghost in the Shell* is a film that is based on a Japanese animation from 1995. In the original Japanese animation the main character's name is Motoko Kusanagi. In the American film remake, this name is changed into Mira Killian and she is played by Scarlett Johansson. In this version, the main character is also originally Japanese until she becomes a cyborg (Mizukoshi, 2018).

4. Douban (豆瓣)

Douban (豆瓣), URL: douban.com, is one of the largest internet forums in China, with approximately 160 million registered users as of 2019 (Li, 2019. *Quartz*). It was established in the year 2005 and, together with other Chinese social media websites, it dramatically changed the way that Chinese citizens obtained news and information. Traditionally, state-owned media, like television and newspapers, were the main source of information for Chinese citizens for a long time. Since 2005, Douban has provided a way for them to obtain information through user-generated content (Ho, 2007). User-generated content is content that regular internet users create, usually by posting reviews online of restaurants, films or books. Other variations are videos on websites such as Youtube and pages written by users on Wikipedia. For many people, user-generated content, such as reviews, give useful insight into what the general public thinks about something (Krumm et al., 2008).

Douban is a forum that allows the users to discuss films, books and music. The users create an account where they can “collect” all the cultural products that they are interested in, and for each type of cultural product they can specify whether they have already obtained it, or still want to obtain it (Ho, 2007). Each cultural product can be rated and reviewed, either by longer reviews or in a forum-like setting with shorter reviews (Parfect, 2014). There are also groups and sub-forums on Douban, based on the users' common interests or locations. For instance, people can connect in a community on Douban over liking the same artists (Ho, 2007). Most Douban users are located in the People's Republic of China, but there are also users who are located in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Cultural products from all these three regions are often discussed on Douban, and as a result there

seems to be an exchange of cultures that is not political in nature, but instead based on cultural familiarities between the people of these regions (Ho, 2007). Douban users fall into a young demographic. As of 2014, 92.5% of Douban users were between 18 and 35 years old. The majority of Douban users are either university students or white-collar workers, so they are highly educated. Most of them live in large cities and have familiarity with globalization and current affairs. Due to these factors, they are known to be more critical than the general Chinese audiences. (Parfect, 2014; Soh, 2017).

Despite the fact that Douban consists of user-generated content, one must keep in mind that this content is still being reviewed and censored according to the rules and restrictions imposed by the Chinese government. To prevent a shut-down by the government, Douban self-censors the content that is being posted by its users (Parfect, 2014). Because of its reputation as the largest Chinese website for the reviews of cultural products, it is not uncommon for Western newspapers and magazines to use the reviews and ratings on Douban to find out what the Chinese audiences say about films for instance (Soh, 2017). However, with this you always need to keep in mind that Douban users represent one specific demographic and not China as a whole (Soh, 2017).

In late 2019, Douban experienced major changes. Usually, users were able to post things which their followers could see on their newsfeed. However, all of a sudden this feature had disappeared. Whatever the users would post would automatically turn into a private post. Many users expressed their discontent, stating that it made them feel like they were not able to share their thoughts anymore (Li, 2019, *Quartz*). Users felt skeptical about the reasons behind this sudden change, fearing that it had something to do with increased censorship. *Quartz* reports that the Douban community is known in China to be more free-spirited and open in their ideas than many people in China. For example, many Douban users support LGBTQ+ rights and do not like to be part of the bigger crowd. Therefore the new update comes as a shock to them and stirs up fears that this might be the end of Douban as they know it (Li, 2019, *Quartz*). As mentioned earlier, the discussions on Douban are mainly non-political, but *Quartz* reports that since a few years, more patriotic users have been signing up to the website, and they have created groups where political issues are widely being discussed, including topics that are seen as sensitive and controversial in China. These groups were already being made invisible by Douban moderators, but the suspension of the users' newsfeed could have something to do with these new phenomena on Douban (Li, 2019, *Quartz*). Many users who have been around on Douban for a long time feel that these events are indications that the forum might have seen its best days, and they are trying to find new places online to get together and share their thoughts. This has resulted in the usage of the hashtag #豆瓣难民 (*douban nanmin*), which means "Douban refugees" (Li, 2019, *Quartz*).

5. Methodology

For this research, I have chosen to do a discourse analysis on the Douban reviews written about *The Joy Luck Club*, *Crazy Rich Asians* and *The Farewell*. I chose these three films for the following reasons. All three films are centred around the relationships and generational differences in Chinese families. Furthermore, these films all have a heavy emphasis on the differences between East and West, and take place in both the United States and Asia (China and Singapore).

The Joy Luck Club tells the story of two generations of overseas Chinese living in the United States, that is to say four pairs of mothers and daughters. The storytelling perspective switches between the mothers and daughters, where the mothers tell their stories about their lives in China, while the daughters tell their stories about growing up as Chinese Americans (Yin, 2005). This film has been considered the main representative film for Asian Americans for a long time, and has received praise for being a breakthrough in Asian representation in Hollywood. However, it has also received criticism for painting China in a bad light (Yin, 2005).

Crazy Rich Asians is the first film in 25 years that has a fully Asian cast, with *The Joy Luck Club* being its predecessor. The film is about a Chinese American woman who follows her boyfriend to Singapore, where she meets his rich Chinese Singaporean family, and clashes with them. This film became a major box-office success in the United States, and is regarded as the film that is paving the way for more Asian representation in Hollywood (Ho, 2018, *Time Magazine*). According to *Time Magazine*, one year after the release of *Crazy Rich Asians*, there seems to be visibly more Asian representation with various television series and films coming out that have mainly Asian casts, like *Always Be My Maybe*. Actress Awkwafina shares that after *Crazy Rich Asians* came out, she has been auditioning almost daily (Chow, 2019, *Time Magazine*).

The Farewell tells the story of Chinese American Billi, who is close to her grandmother in Changcun in northern China. When her grandmother is diagnosed with terminal cancer, the family decides to not tell her and force Billi's cousin to get married so they have a reason to be together with her for one last time in China. Billi is against keeping the diagnosis a secret for her grandmother and is struggling with the Chinese cultural aspect of telling a white lie to a dying family member. The premise is based on the director's own personal experiences (Yamato, 2019, *The Los Angeles Times*).

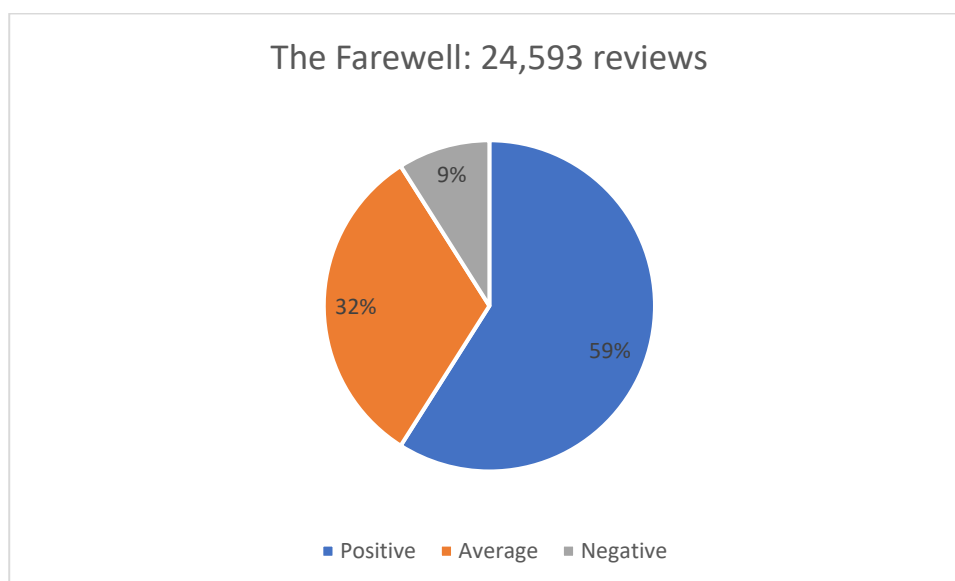
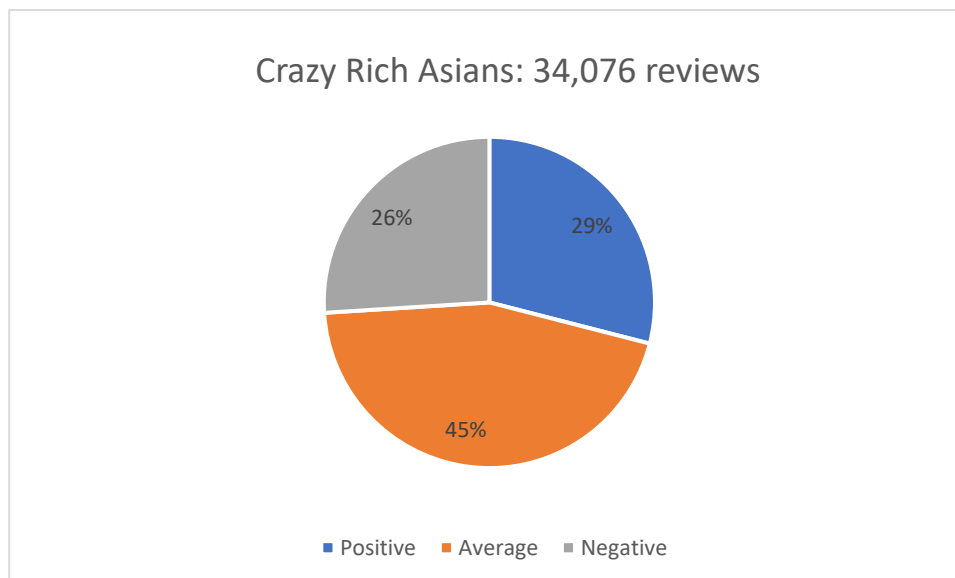
I will analyse the short reviews on these three films on Douban. The reason why I have chosen for short reviews is because it allows me to analyse more reviews and get a broader perspective on the opinions of the audience on Douban. For each film, Douban gives you the option to sort the short reviews by "most recent" and "most popular". Then, there are four options: all reviews, positive

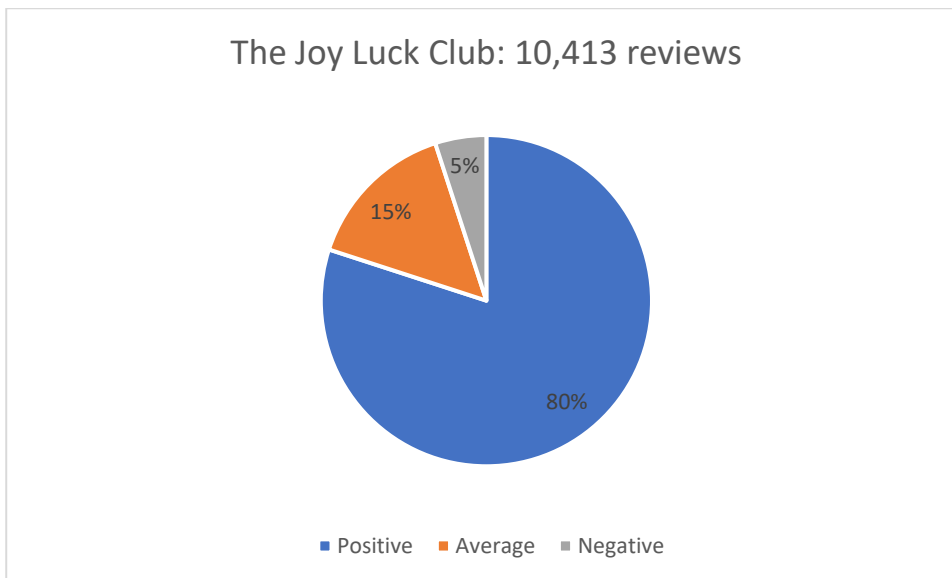
reviews, average reviews and negative reviews. I will select the 20 most popular reviews of the positive, average, and negative sections for each film. This will provide me with 60 reviews per film, 180 reviews in total. The way that Douban has organized these three sections is by the amount of stars the users have rated the film with. A user can give a maximum of 5 stars and a minimum of 1 star. A review counts as positive if it has received 4 to 5 stars, average if it has received 3 stars and negative if it has received 1 to 2 stars. After selecting the sample of reviews, I will perform a discourse analysis on the reviews, and provide direct quotes from my data. These reviews are originally in Chinese, all the translations will be done by me. My hypothesis is that, based on the information about the Douban demographics, the reviewers will be critical. However, since many of them might be living in China, Taiwan or Hongkong, they might not be familiar with the issues that Asian Americans have with their representation in American film productions, which could cause the reviewers to be less critical on these aspects.

6. The research

6.1 Analysis introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the outcome of my research on the sample of 180 film reviews on Douban, on the films *Crazy Rich Asians*, *The Farewell* and *The Joy Luck Club*. *Crazy Rich Asians* has a Douban score of 6.1/10, *The Farewell* has a Douban score of 7.3/10 and *The Joy Luck Club* has a Douban score of 8.4/10 (Source: Douban). If you take a look at the charts below, you can see that overall, the three films have received mainly positive to average reviews, with the negative reviews being in a minority for all three films.





These graphs give us a good overview of the general response, however, to get a better idea of the ratings given we have to get a closer look on the reviews themselves.

There are three themes that I will be discussing in this Douban analysis: the importance of Asian representation in American film productions for the reviewers, stereotypes and cultural accuracy. These are the themes that have come forward from analyzing this sample of reviews, so they are different from the themes that have been discussed in the literature review.

6.2 Asian Representation

First I'll start with the theme of Asian representation in American films. Out of all three films, the Douban reviewers for *Crazy Rich Asians* are the most vocal about Asian representation in this sample. Twelve reviewers explicitly mention the fact that the film has an entirely Asian cast, eight of them mention it as an asset of the film, while four of them mention it as a negative aspect, which I will explain further in the analysis. In the samples of the reviews for *The Farewell* and *The Joy Luck Club* there was no mention of the fact that the films had fully Asian casts. However, in the sample of reviews for *Crazy Rich Asians*, four reviewers made a reference to *The Joy Luck Club*, stating that *Crazy Rich Asians* is the first film in 25 years to have an entirely Asian cast, with *The Joy Luck Club* being the previous one.

Now I'll go further into detail about what the reviewers have to say about Asian representation. One positive reviewer (Ecthelion), who is located in Los Angeles, states this about *Crazy Rich Asians*:

“This is the first Hollywood film in 25 years with an entirely Asian cast and with an Asian director. It was not only amusing, but also a very good film. There were funny parts from

the beginning till the end, and it had a very precise grasp on Asian culture. The importance of this film for those of Asian descent is the same as the importance of *Black Panther* to those of African descent, we must support it unconditionally.” (CR08)

User Ecthelion seems to put a lot of emphasis on the fact that this film has an entirely Asian cast. This user feels represented by the film and puts less emphasis on the contents, and implies that other Douban users have to support the film unconditionally. *Black Panther* became a widely popular film amongst black communities worldwide, especially in the United States, because it is the first film in a long time that entirely focusses on black main characters, without portraying them as a minority that suffers from social issues such as poverty and discrimination. Instead, they are the rulers of a kingdom and have superpowers (Wallace, 2018, *The New York Times*). This user most likely feels that *Crazy Rich Asians* has a similar effect and significance to the Asian community, because it displays Asian people as rich and powerful. 76 people found this review to be useful, which could mean that they feel the same way as this user.

Six other reviewers also made the comparison with *Black Panther* and other American films with a significantly African-American cast when talking about the cast of *Crazy Rich Asians*. Like user TheGZMovieGuy, who is located in Seattle:

“Each event is part of a bigger process. A lot of people think that *Moonlight* was able to win the Oscar because of political pressure, but in reality, if we disregard that, this film is perfect in itself. To be able to achieve *Moonlight*, the African American film industry had to develop for a long time and strive hard. For example, Tyler Perry has been making bad films for years but he managed to make his films reach a big audience, at least this gave black people the chance to express themselves. So finally, step by step they reached *Moonlight*. This (the Oscar) was absolutely not random, there is absolutely no other reason, it is only because it’s a very good film. *Moonlight* is a work of art that will be recorded in the history of film. So even though *Crazy Rich Asians* does not really have many highlights (actually, if you pay attention you can still find many), it allows us to see Asian faces being represented on the big screen. You can even see some Asian elements being expressed very delicately. This film deserves to be cheered for. – 8/10” (CR15)

In this sample are four reviews that are skeptical about the fully Asian cast of *Crazy Rich Asians* receiving so much praise. One user, whose location is unknown due to a private profile, complains that this film was able to ride along on the “train of political correctness” (CR23) about diversity and representation in Hollywood, and did not feel the need to support the film just because it has a fully Asian cast. Another user, who is located in Los Angeles, expresses that the Asian cast does not

matter if the film in itself is not entertaining and original. Some users stated something similar, saying that they felt that the cast was its only selling point. One of these users is Taotao Linlin (桃林林), whose location is unknown:

“The core of the film is still a typical love story: real love breaks all barriers, happy reunions. This type of story could be used in any kind of setting, and has already been used in too many scenarios. Only because this time there is a fully Asian cast, it has become a hot topic. Thankfully, the film is still entertaining. The flaunting of wealth in the film is appropriate, and the supporting characters are interesting, and there are some scenes that highlight the cultural clashes, but it’s limited to that. It is a conventional Hollywood comedy film, and there are some parts that are actually a bit stereotypical.” (CR26)

Furthermore, there are fifteen reviewers who state that they find it a shame that *Crazy Rich Asians* is the newest Hollywood production that is supposed to represent people of Asian descent, because the film does not have an innovative premise. The review by TheGZMovieGuy that I have quoted earlier in this analysis, counters this criticism by giving examples of how many, seemingly bad or insignificant films starring African-American actors, have led to their film industry gaining recognition to the point where the film *Moonlight* was able to win an Oscar. According to this reviewer, *Crazy Rich Asians* is just part of a larger process where there will be more Asian representation on the big screen in the United States.

Why is there a significant focus on Asian representation in the sample of the reviews for *Crazy Rich Asians* compared to the review samples for the other two films? According to *Time Magazine*, there were high expectations of *Crazy Rich Asians* before it premiered in August 2018. This film was being advertised as a film that would change Hollywood, a stepping stone for more diversity and representation by actors of East Asian descent. Furthermore, it is a large Hollywood production, produced by Warner Bros. (Ho, 2018, *Time Magazine*). *The Farewell* is an independent film, that premiered at the Sundance Festival in 2019, but did not receive the same type of hype as *Crazy Rich Asians* before its premiere (Yamato, 2019, *Los Angeles Times*). *The Joy Luck Club* was released in 1993, so it has been around for a long time before Douban was even founded, and for thirteen years after the founding of Douban it was the only American film with a fully Asian cast. These factors might have caused the differences in focus on Asian representation in the samples of the reviews of *Crazy Rich Asians* compared to the other two films. This would also explain why *Crazy Rich Asians* is being seen as the Asian version of *Black Panther* by several reviewers, and *The Farewell* is not.

Nonetheless, there is also a possibility that there are reviews that discuss this, but that did not make it into this sample.

When it comes to Asian representation in these three films, the sampled reviews show that for *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Farewell*, Asian representation was mentioned by these reviewers. However, for the reviewers of *Crazy Rich Asians*, Asian representation was mentioned in three ways, judging by the sample. First, there are reviewers who state that no matter what, they and other Asian people have to show support for the film because of the Asian cast, even if the film is not good or original. Second, there are reviewers who did not feel represented because the film was set in Singapore instead of China. Third, there are reviewers who felt that the fully Asian cast was the main attraction of the film, and hoped that the film that was going to be representative of Asian people had a more original storyline.

6.3 Stereotypes

Out of the 180 sampled reviews, 18 Douban users explicitly mentioned the word “stereotyping” (刻板印象 *keban yinxiang*) in their reviews. However, 53 reviewers in total mentioned issues they had with the films such as that they gave a negative image of China, that the films seemed to be made to fit with the expectations the Western audiences have about China or Asia, and exoticism. These reviewers do not explicitly mention the term ‘stereotype’, but according to the definition of this term in the literature review of this thesis, I argue that this is a way of mentioning stereotyping. The definition earlier mentioned in this thesis states that a stereotype is the expectation of one group about how members of another group behave. This behaviour is exaggerated and overgeneralized, without taking the individual members of this group into consideration (Paek & Shah, 2003; Zhang, 2010). When this group of reviewers from the sample states that they feel as if the films were made with the expectations of the Western audiences on Chinese people and China in mind, they feel that these films contain negative stereotypes or have some stereotypical aspects to it according to the definition.

I will break it down per film, starting with *The Farewell*. In total, cultural exaggeration and putting China in a bad light is being mentioned eleven times in this sample. The film being made from a Western point of view is mentioned eleven times as well.

Most Douban users from the sample that gave this film a positive review did not mention stereotyping to be a problem for them while watching this film. Some of them state that they did

feel that the film was produced from a Western perspective, showing American culture in a more favourable manner, but mention that they realized that this was the result of the director of *The Farewell* being Chinese American and using her own experiences and point of view as someone who grew up in the United States. This is what five reviewers have stated is the case. One of them is Xiao You Fei (小油飞), based in the United States, who says:

“Actually, what has been filmed are the director’s (she a 1.5 generation who immigrated as a child) own experiences, so the scores that my American friends gave this film is higher than the scores given by my Chinese friends. Second generation Chinese who were born in the United States reckon that for them it’s not easy to understand either. Some parts might be interpreted by Chinese viewers as making fun of their culture, however, this is truly the 1.5 generation’s point of view (international students might also have the same feelings). The actors are all very good.” (TF17)

Four other reviewers had the same point of view and three of them live abroad, just like Xiao You Fei, while one of them is located in Hong Kong. One of these reviewers stated that seeing this film made him or her want to catch a flight home to China, implying that this has been written by a Chinese person living overseas away from family.

Now looking at the negative reviews for *The Farewell*, the users are less understanding about the director’s point of view as an American of Chinese descent. One reviewer called Da Hai Li De Zhen (大海里的针), located in Beijing, does not agree with the premise of the film that Chinese people live as a collective, and if that is true, he or she “must be a fake Chinese person.” This user states that this aspect of Chinese culture is being exaggerated and mentions several Chinese television series and films, such as *Huanle song* (欢乐颂), *Dou tinghao* (都挺好) and *Xiao huanxi* (小欢喜) as examples of how an average Chinese person lives (TF58).

The biggest criticism for *The Farewell* in the sample of negative reviews is that according to them, it shows China in a bad light. The users who wrote this mention as examples that the cultural clash was not handled well, showing American culture as the advanced culture and Chinese culture as the backwards culture. Cultural aspects like wedding scenes and family conversations were, in their opinion, exaggerated to make the Western audiences laugh. User Shijian Zhi Zang (时间之葬), Beijing, explains why that could be the case:

“There is absolutely no comparison between Chinese and Western culture, but it’s looking at China from a Western point of view. You could actually say that it criticizes the conservative and ignorant aspects of Chinese culture. However, the director is obviously trying to take an ambiguous and neutral stance, that is shown in the end credits. This not only causes the overwhelming majority of the film to come across as having a dubious attitude, it also causes to make those who do have positive feelings towards Chinese culture to feel unsatisfied. In other words, this ambiguous and neutral attitude completely comes across as fake. The problem does not lie in neutrality, it lies in whether or not you’re only pretending to be neutral.” (TF29)

Some users, whose locations are unknown, also mentioned in their reviews that they felt that the director tried to make money by exploiting Chinese culture, turning it into a film that was meant to make the Western audiences laugh. User Sa Ku La (萨库拉), located in Hong Kong, states that all the Chinese cultural elements in the film were not displayed with the same carefulness and tact that Taiwanese director Ang Lee shows in his films, instead this user feels that Chinese culture is being exoticized for the Western viewers (TF49). The cultural clash between Chinese and American culture that is shown in *The Farewell* feels forced to the people who gave this film a negative review, with too many typical situations that a Chinese person might encounter over the course of multiple years, but not in a short period of time like the film makes it seem.

In the sample of reviews for *Crazy Rich Asians*, 14 reviewers write that they find the film too Westernized, 4 reviewers state that Chinese culture is being exoticized for Western viewers, and 5 reviewers explicitly call the film stereotypical. However, not every user who states that the film is stereotypical has left a negative review. The users in the positive review section who mention stereotyping, write that despite that, they still want to endorse and support this film because it marks such an important mile stones for Asian representation in the American film industry. User J, located in Iceland, writes:

“Western films only need to tell a good story and it’s alright, so why are we demanding that this film represents all aspects of the complex Asian culture? The male and female leads really are the kind of people you would see passing by on the street. Also, this film exoticizes and caricatures Asian culture to cater to the American audience, but this is the first major studio film with an entirely Asian cast in 25 years since *The Joy Luck Club* came out. It has a lot of inside jokes and situations that only Asian people would understand (I even had to explain the metaphor of the mahjong scene to my colleague). We can see our own people on the big screen, in addition to a great variety of performances. The strong

female leads really moved the audience. It is very important that we put our pet peeves aside for the time being, first let's celebrate and support the box office. Only then we will have the chance to see even more Asian stories.” (CR02)

Another user who wrote a positive review says he or she feels that using Singapore to show Chinese culture seems a bit misplaced, but is overall content about the cultural aspects of the film. One positive review by user Hua Xi Ren (花袭人) mentions that Chinese culture seems a bit exaggerated but does not go into detail as to why that is :

“The way in which the Singaporean scenic spots were shown seemed accurate. The background music was incredible. The female lead looked cuter and cuter throughout the film. If you let go of the hype around the Asian cast, it's just quite a fine rom com, moreover, it is led by the women. The portrayal of Asian culture was exaggerated. From the viewpoint of a common person, I have to say that I had absolutely no idea about how the rich people in Singapore live XDD I do want to ask: When going to the airport to stop a person from leaving, how do you run past the border security in the departure hall? (stealthy laugh)” (CR13)

These three positive reviews are the only ones that mention this, overall, the positive reviewers mention that they are quite content with the portrayal of Asia and Chinese culture in *Crazy Rich Asians*.

The negative reviewers who commented on the stereotyping and exoticism feel very differently than the previously mentioned reviewers. User Winnie, located in Shanghai, writes that the film is stereotypical to the point where he or she feels uncomfortable (CR54). The user does not further explain why the film is stereotypical, but mentions that in his or her opinion, this is a film that white Americans have chosen as a mascot for diversity in Hollywood. User Xiedu Dianying(袭读电影) from Beijing writes that *Crazy Rich Asians* was fulfilling the ideas that the West seems to have about Chinese people. According to this user, the way the characters in the film behaved had nothing to do with Chinese culture, instead, their behaviour is solely based on deeply ingrained ideas about Chinese culture that exist in the West:

“Even though the characters in the film call themselves Chinese, the Chinese elements seen in the film are nothing but exoticism. This so-called China is merely the China that Western people imagine it to be. All the actors have a similar appearance with East Asian faces, but this has nothing to do with Asia anymore. This is based on the deeply ingrained ideas of Western people. They see the actors' Chinese accents as essential parts of Chinese culture.

The crazy rich Asian families are nothing but a comedic trope. Lastly, the woman wants to be independent. Bravely chasing true love like she is doing is very Western. This film is completely based on the ideas of Western people, it is a Cinderella story that has been modified with an Asian background. What does this have to do with Chinese people?” (CR48)

Despite having the highest score on Douban out of all three films, the sample of the reviews of *The Joy Luck Club* contains the most criticism on this theme compared to the other two films. 18 users find that this film was directed from a perspective that pleases the Western viewers, 6 users state that this film shows a negative image of China, 4 reviewers mention that the film is stereotypical.

User Probe, located in Beijing, writes that *The Joy Luck Club* shows China in the same way as American films did in the sixties and seventies of the previous century. The scenes that were shot in China all show the female leads being in dangerous situations. Reviewer Wen Jin (问津), located in Shanghai, writes something similar and states that he or she feels bothered by the portrayal of Chinese men in the film:

“This is Chinese culture as imagined by ABC’s and white Americans. In the film there is no good Chinese man. Only the ABC daughters’ white husbands give a positive impression. On IMDB it has a score of 7.2/10. It caters to the Western imagination of Chinese men. The score on Douban is 8.3/10, Chinese women really like being seen as the victims. I think that this film uses an imaginary problem to cover up the real problem. Overseas Chinese knowing half of the Chinese culture is scarier than Western people not knowing anything at all about Chinese culture.” (JLC42)

These reviews seem to point towards the early stereotype about Chinese people as the “Yellow Peril”, that I have mentioned earlier in this thesis. According to this stereotype, Chinese people were portrayed as the villains, and both China and Chinatowns as dark, mysterious places (Shim, 1998). Other criticism that is seen often in this sample is similar to the criticism for *The Farewell*, with reviewers mentioning that the director’s understanding of Chinese culture is not deep enough, and comparisons to Ang Lee’s films that portray Chinese culture better in their opinion. User Su Ye (溯液), Liaoning Province, agrees:

“I think that as I was watching, I felt distant. Maybe Americans and Chinese Americans are better at understanding this film. Before, the person who recommended this film to me told me that it was on par with Ang Lee’s *Pushing Hands* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, how could that be? The differences are too big, Ang Lee is unparalleled.” (JLC25)

Especially the negative reviews seem to be focused on stereotyping and exoticism. However, the common stereotypes that have been described in the literature review of this thesis, like the “model minority” stereotype and the “eternal foreigner” stereotype, are not mentioned in the reviews, except for the “Yellow Peril” stereotype in relation to *The Joy Luck Club*. The main point of criticism seem to be that the cultural clashes have been exaggerated, with too much emphasis on the ideas that Western people are individualists while Chinese people care about the collective, or the family. Other points of criticism are that certain aspects of Chinese culture are being exaggerated to create humoristic content for Western viewers at the expense of Chinese people, which puts China in a bad light. The reviewers who mentioned exoticism used the Chinese characters 猎奇 (*lie qi*), which literally means “hunting for novelty”. This is used in the context of exoticizing Chinese culture, however, they did not specify what aspects of Chinese culture were being exoticized. Looking at the overall numbers, the amount of reviews that mention the themes of stereotyping and exoticizing are small compared to the total amount of sampled reviews. Despite the criticism, the majority of reviewers were content about how the films handled these themes, or did not mention them. What has to be taken into consideration is that there is a chance that a part of the reviewers in this sample are not familiar with the views that Western people may have on China and Chinese people. They may not have experienced this firsthand, for instance, some might have only lived in China, so they could have based these opinions on constructs about Western people. Furthermore, these films portray different generations of overseas Chinese, in both Singapore and the United States. Therefore, the overseas Chinese culture that is being portrayed in these films might be seen by the reviewers as a misrepresentation or a stereotypical view on Chinese culture.

6.4 Cultural accuracy

Contrary to the previous section, there are reviewers in the sample who explicitly mention that they find the films culturally accurate. Out of the 180 sampled reviews, 24 Douban users explicitly state that they find the films to be culturally accurate, with 15 reviewers stating that *The Farewell* is culturally accurate, and 9 reviewers saying that *Crazy Rich Asians* is culturally accurate. However, there were no explicit mentions of *The Joy Luck Club* being culturally accurate in this sample of reviews. Despite that, both *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Farewell* are being praised in the reviews for the portrayal of the family dynamics between different generations of (overseas) Chinese people, which the reviewers stated, made them able to relate to the films. User N, located in Shanghai, writes about *The Farewell*:

“This film was the Centerpiece of the San Francisco Film Festival, the Castro Theatre with over 1000 seats was almost fully packed. The script was very good, it was packed with very typical Chinese dialogues (like the round-table dinners) that were written outstandingly. The cast, especially the female lead, all acted very well. Even when she wasn’t talking, she was able to convey her thoughts and emotions. The clashes between the Chinese and American cultures were handled in a comedic way throughout the whole story. It contains a lot of situations that are strange to Americans, such as the loud and chaotic wedding. The American audience all laughed to their hearts’ content. The weird thing is, even though I didn’t feel the urge to laugh, I didn’t feel awkward amidst other people’s laughing noises. Rather, I felt that the director’s expression was genuine. Nothing was being belittled, and nothing was being put on a pedestal. In Billi’s words: “One thing is not better than the other, it’s simply different.” Thus, when faced with the scenes about the wedding ceremony and Tomb Sweeping Day, even though I myself don’t like these customs, they did not come across as belittled (in the film). The cultural clashes in the film contained many layers and it made the audience respond with sympathy. The last time I cried while watching a film was with *Cold War*, but that time was because of the sad goodbye, this time I cried tears of relatability.” (TF07)

Another user stated to have similar feelings of being able to relate with the film. The user is located in Boston and writes that he or she was reminded of their own family by this film, and expressed the fear of missing out important happenings in their family while being abroad.

Several reviewers of *The Joy Luck Club* compliment the film of being able to portray the bond and the generational conflicts between mothers and daughters. User Xiong Ayi (熊阿姨), who is located in Beijing, writes that every mother and daughter pair can relate to this film (JLC02).

Nonetheless, it is unclear if they state this in relation to Chinese culture. User Dichu Feixing (低处飞行), Zhejiang province, writes that this film shows how much mothers are willing to sacrifice for their daughters, and expresses feelings of relatability as well (JLC03). These users are located in China, so it is uncertain if they are commenting on the experience of Chinese American families or the relationship between mothers and daughters in general.

When it comes to *Crazy Rich Asians*, the relatability factor is not present in the reviews in relation to cultural accuracy. Instead, the reviewers who found the film to be culturally accurate commented more on the way Singapore was represented and Chinese cultural references, including Chinese popular culture. A user whose location is unknown, writes that the depiction of the Singaporean society was accurate, especially because the film sheds light on the differences between people with old money that originates from China and the Singaporean nouveaux riches (CR16). Other people commented on how they appreciated the songs that have been used for the soundtrack, saying that these are songs that are actually popular in China. A few reviewers write that they find that the film has a good grasp on Chinese culture, but they do not go into detail about what aspects, other than the portrayal of the mahjong scene between the female lead and her future mother in law.

For *The Farewell*, 16 reviewers state that they find that the film gives the audience an accurate view of life and family ties in Northern China. User Jia Si Po Gege (加斯珀哥哥), who is located in Liaoning province in northern China, writes that this film really portrays what it is like to have a northern Chinese family, and that the events in the film really do happen in families in that part of China (TF04). Given that this user is located in Liaoning province, they might be speaking from their own experiences. However, the user does not go into detail of what exactly is accurate in the film. User HOW, located in Los Angeles, writes that the director has really represented the aspects of daily life in China and the different layers of the cultural clashes very well. According to HOW, *The Farewell* is up to par with Ang Lee's films when it comes to an culturally accurate representation.

“#2019#Christmas holidays#4.5 This film is full of real human interest. The director's point of view is very amicable and genuine. She has a very good grasp on the details of one's daily life, and the closer look on the cultural differences are not lesser than Ang Lee did back in the day. There are some parts in the film that may have been exaggerated for comedic effect, but the film as a whole feels genuine and it is wonderfully shot, it's very moving. It portrays the way of life in Chinese small towns in a way that is not belittling or ignorant, that makes people look at it fondly. The soundtrack consists of popular music but

it's not overwhelming. Awkwafina is not being held back by her acting skills in Chinese. At the moment this film is the nicest Christmas present.” (TF05)

Unfortunately, the users did not give details on what cultural aspects were accurately represented.

In conclusion, a very small group of reviewers found the films to be culturally accurate, with no explicit mention of *The Joy Luck Club*. For *The Joy Luck Club*, mentions of cultural accuracy were limited to the depictions of the relations between the mothers and daughters. For *The Farewell*, cultural accuracy was mentioned in both the contexts of the depiction of family relations and the depiction of China and Chinese culture. *Crazy Rich Asians* was called culturally accurate by some reviewers for its depiction of Singapore, but not explicitly for its depiction of Chinese culture or Chinese family dynamics, except for the portrayal of mahjong. The rest of the reviewers found that the films were culturally inaccurate or they did not mention it in their reviews. Given the numbers of reviewers who found the films to be inaccurate or stereotypical, a large majority in this sample did not mention either cultural accuracy nor cultural inaccuracy. Just like in the previous section, it is important to note that some of these reviewers might not have the knowledge on the various Chinese cultures shown in these films, that is to say Chinese American culture, Chinese Singaporean culture and Northern Chinese culture. Their opinions could therefore be based on their own ideas and perceptions.

7. Conclusion

This thesis addressed the question: How do Douban users perceive the portrayal of China and (overseas) Chinese people in American film productions? Looking at the overall scores the films have received, the majority of the Douban users have a moderately positive to positive impression of these three films, with the negative reviews being a minority in the total amount of reviews for all three films. *Crazy Rich Asians* was met with high expectations, such as changing Hollywood and being the start of more Asian representation in Hollywood and only this film received actual comments on the fully Asian cast and Asian representation in this sample. It might be possible that the importance the Douban audience attaches to Asian representation, depends on how the film was advertised to begin with, however, there could be reviews for *The Farewell* and *The Joy Luck Club* outside of the sample that mention Asian representation. When it comes to stereotyping and exoticizing China and Chinese culture, almost one third of the sampled reviews point out that there are stereotypical and exoticizing aspects in these three films, with the most common criticism being that the reviewers stated that the three films were made for a Western audience, not a Chinese audience, according to them, these films exaggerated aspects of Chinese culture for a comedic effect, and portrayed Chinese culture less favourably than American culture. This is still a minority, which means that the majority either did not find the films to be stereotypical and exoticizing, or they did not want to comment on it. Many negative comments did not just focus on this aspect. A large amount of reviewers actually commented mostly on the quality of the film, the acting and the storylines. Aside for *The Joy Luck Club* showing signs of using the “Yellow Peril” stereotype in the eyes of some reviewers, the stereotypes that were mentioned in the literature review did not come forward in this analysis. A very small group of reviewers in this sample complimented the films on their cultural accuracy, with *The Joy Luck Club* receiving no explicit praise for its cultural accuracy from them. This does not necessarily mean that the majority of the users did not find the films culturally inaccurate, a large amount of reviewers in this sample did not mention this aspect in their reviews.

Unfortunately, the majority of the users who did comment on the aspects of stereotypes, exoticism and cultural accuracy did not go into detail, so it is hard to tell what exactly they found to be problematic. The users are all located in different locations worldwide, however, it is not possible to conclude that their locations have any influence on their opinions. It could be the case that a user who is located in Los Angeles for instance, has first-hand experience with Chinese American culture, but there is no way to verify that this is the user’s real location. Too many users either have hidden their locations, or have put their accounts on private. Some users have had their accounts deleted, while their comments are still there. Because of these factors, I cannot say whether Douban

users who live abroad look more favorably towards these films than those who live in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong.

To answer the question, looking at the overall scores and the percentages of negative comments for these three films, the answer is that Douban users look favourably upon them. In this study I sampled an equal amount of positive, average and negative reviews, but for all three films the negative reviews form a minority on Douban. Furthermore, even if the positive and average reviewers pointed out some stereotyping or other cultural inaccuracies, they still enjoyed the films and found other aspects to be culturally accurate. In all three review categories in the sample, the Douban users seem to be critical about the directors' perspectives in shooting the films, which is in their opinion a Western perspective. Nonetheless, when you take a look at the total ratings on Douban you can see that this does not affect the ratings greatly.

This research contributes to the literature because not much academic research has been done on *Crazy Rich Asians* and *The Farewell*, these films came out very recently. Regarding *The Joy Luck Club*, the usage of Douban reviews to measure the opinions of Chinese people on the film has not been explored yet to my knowledge. Also, the literature on Asian stereotypes and Asian representation in American media such as films and television mainly emphasizes the stereotypes that could be found in older film productions from the early to mid-twentieth century. If more films like *Crazy Rich Asians* and *The Farewell* come out, it might be important to let the research on Asian representation in the media evolve along with such films. The stereotypes mentioned in the literature review were not mentioned by the Douban users for these two films, as opposed to *The Joy Luck Club* which is much older and contained some traits of the Yellow Peril stereotype according to the reviews.

8. Limitations and suggestions for further research

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the reviews that have been analyzed are part of a sample, not all reviews could be analyzed given the resources. Therefore, it could be the case for instance, that outside of the sample you could find many reviews on *The Farewell* and *The Joy Luck Club* that discuss Asian representation in the same way it was discussed in the reviews on *Crazy Rich Asians*. Secondly, the reviews that have been used in this study are short reviews. Therefore, the users do not always go into depth. Some reviews contain argumentations on why they liked or disliked the films, while other reviews consisted of one or two sentences that stated that they did not like the films or that the films were stereotypical. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to figure out why they felt a certain way about a film. Lastly, by using Douban to obtain a sample, you already select a specific demographic. Douban users tend to be university educated people in their twenties and thirties. They live in major cities and are often more familiar with cultural globalization than

other demographics in China. Subsequently, Douban users are not representative for the main Chinese audiences of these films (Soh, 2017).

For future research I suggest that in addition to the short reviews on Douban, also the longer, in-depth reviews could be analyzed. Hence, in addition to the comments by the general Douban public, there will be more insight and argumentation provided by these longer reviews. Despite having chosen Douban because the users are known to be more critical than other Chinese audiences, it would still be interesting to compare the opinions stated on Douban with the opinions on other Chinese sites such as Weibo. In this way you can obtain a better view on what the general Chinese public thinks.

Bibliography

Behm-Morawitz, Elizabeth, and David Ta. "Cultivating virtual stereotypes?: The impact of video game play on racial/ethnic stereotypes." *Howard Journal of Communications* 25.1 (2014): 1-15.

Cheryan, Sapna, and Benoît Monin. "Where are you really from?: Asian Americans and identity denial." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 89.5 (2005): 717.

Chow, Andrew R. "Crazy Rich Asians Kicked Down the Door. Now Asian Americans Are Fighting to Stay in the Room." *Time Magazine*, July 10, 2019.

<https://time.com/5622913/asian-american-representation-hollywood/>

Dockterman, Eliana. "Margaret Cho and Fans Speak Out About Whitewashing Asian Characters." *Time Magazine*, May 3, 2016,

<https://time.com/4316844/margaret-cho-whitewashedout-asian-characters/>

Dooley, Morgan William. "Fresh Off the Boat: Dispeller of Chinese American Stereotypes?." *Journal of Applied English Volume 13, December 2018* 13 (2018): 29-68.

Gerbner, George, et al. "Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process." *Perspectives on media effects* 1986 (1986): 17-40.

Ho, Karen K. "How Crazy Rich Asians Is Going to Change Hollywood." *Time Magazine*, August 15, 2018.

<https://time.com/longform/crazy-rich-asians/>

Ho, Kiu-Chor. "A case study of Douban: Social network communities and Web2.0 in China." *Masaryk UJL & Tech.* 1 (2007): 43.

Holtz, Peter, Nicole Kronberger, and Wolfgang Wagner. "Analyzing internet forums." *Journal of Media Psychology* (2012).

Kawai, Yuko. "Stereotyping Asian Americans: The dialectic of the model minority and the yellow peril." *The Howard Journal of Communications* 16.2 (2005): 109-130

Krumm, John, Nigel Davies, and Chandra Narayanaswami. "User-generated content." *IEEE Pervasive Computing* 7.4 (2008): 10-11.

Li, Guofang. "Other people's success: Impact of the " model minority" myth on underachieving Asian students in North America." *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy* 2.1 (2005).

Li, Jane. "We feel like cyber-refugees: The decline of the last online sanctuary for China's liberals." October 14, *Quartz*.

<https://qz.com/1726194/the-decline-of-douban-an-online-sanctuary-for-chinas-liberals/>

Magnan-Park, Aaron Han Joon. "Leukocentric Hollywood: Whitewashing, Alohagate and the dawn of Hollywood with Chinese characteristics." *Asian Cinema* 29.1 (2018): 133-162.

Mizukoshi, Kosuke. "Perils of Hollywood Whitewashing?: A review of Ghost in the Shell'movie." *Markets, Globalization & Development Review* 3.1 (2018).

Nishime, Leilani. "Mixed Race Matters: What Emma Stone and Bruno Mars Can Tell Us about the Future of Asian American Media." *Cinema Journal* 56.3 (2017): 148-152

Nishime, LeiLani. "Whitewashing yellow futures in ex machina, cloud atlas, and advantageous: Gender, labor, and technology in sci-fi film." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20.1 (2017): 29-49.

Parfect, Ralph. "Zhang Yimou's Sexual Storytelling and the iGeneration: Contending Shanzhashu Zhi Lian (Under the Hawthorn Tree) on Douban." *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for the Twenty-first Century* (2014): 301-20.

Shim, Doobo. "From yellow peril through model minority to renewed yellow peril." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22.4 (1998): 385-409.

Soh, Kai. "Examining the Chinese-Australian post-production relationship through Chinese audiences' cinema experience." *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 11.3 (2017): 122-136.

Yamato, Jen. "‘The Farewell’ director Lulu Wang to receive Sundance Vanguard Award." *The Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-lulu-wang-the-farewell-sundance-vanguard-award-20190521-story.html>

Yin, Jing. "Constructing the other: A critical reading of *The Joy Luck Club*." *The Howard Journal of Communications* 16.3 (2005): 149-175.

Wang, Hanying. "Portrayals of Chinese women's images in Hollywood mainstream films--an analysis of four representative films of different periods." *China Media Research* 9.1 (2013): 75-80.

Zhang, Qin. "Asian Americans beyond the model minority stereotype: The nerdy and the left out." *Journal of international and intercultural communication* 3.1 (2010): 20-37.

Appendix

CR02

. Ju. 看过 2018-08-16

1512 有用

白人电影只需要讲好一个故事就可以了 所以我们为何要苛求这部片去 represent 亚洲文化的所有复杂性？男女主确实是路人般的感情线 以及为了迎合美国观众而去 exoticize&caricature 亚洲文化 但是 《喜福会》后 25 年来第一部全亚洲卡司的 major studio 电影 很多 insider 梗只有亚洲人才理解（我还向同事解释了麻将那一幕的隐喻）能看到自己人出现在大银幕上 以及制作方对多元尽情的表现 和 strong female leads 真的很激动人心 真的很重要 pet peeve 可以暂时停一停 先来 celebrate 支持票房吧 才有机会看到更多亚洲故事

“Western films only need to tell a good story and it’s alright, so why are we demanding that this film represents all aspects of the complex Asian culture? The male and female leads really are the kind of people you would see passing by on the street. Also, this film exoticizes and caricatures Asian culture to cater to the American audience, but this is the first major studio film with an entirely Asian cast in 25 years since *The Joy Luck Club* came out. It has a lot of inside jokes and situations that only Asian people would understand (I even had to explain the metaphor of the mahjong scene to my colleague). We can see our own people on the big screen, in addition to a great variety of performances. The strong female leads really moved the audience. It is very important that we put our pet peeves aside for the time being, first let’s celebrate and support the box office. Only then we will have the chance to see even more Asian stories.”

CR08

8. Ecthelion 看过 2018-08-09

76 有用

好莱坞 25 年以来第一部全亚裔卡司、主创的电影——而且不仅仅是噱头，真的很好看！全程笑点，对亚洲文化的把握也很精到。这部电影对亚裔的意义就如同黑豹于非裔，必须无条件支持。

“This is the first Hollywood film in 25 years with an entirely Asian cast and with an Asian director. It was not only amusing, but also a very good film. There were funny parts from the beginning till the end, and it had a very precise grasp on Asian culture. The importance of this film for those of Asian descent is the same as the importance of *Black Panther* to those of African descent, we must support it unconditionally.”

CR13

13. [花袭人](#) 看过 2018-08-22

24 有用

新加坡景点的打开方式相当正确。配乐棒透透。女主越看越可爱。去掉所有的亚裔关注和 hype，就是一个做得相当精致的 rom com，并且是女性为主导。对亚裔文化的刻划有夸大。作为平头百姓，表示并不知道新加坡的有钱人是怎么生活的 XDD 我只想问：去机场接人，怎么跑到离境大厅了呢？

（偷笑）

“The way in which the Singaporean scenic spots were shown seemed accurate. The background music was incredible. The female lead looked cuter and cuter throughout the film. If you let go of the hype around the Asian cast, it's just quite a fine rom com, moreover, it is led by the women. The portrayal of Asian culture was exaggerated. From the viewpoint of a common person, I have to say that I had absolutely no idea about how the rich people in Singapore live XDD I do want to ask: When going to the airport to stop a person from leaving, how do you run past the border security in the departure hall? (stealthy laugh)”

CR15

15. [TheGZMovieGuy](#) 看过 2018-08-20

17 有用

所有的事情都是有一个过程的 很多人以为《月光男孩》能够在奥斯卡上斩获小金人只是各路的政治压力所致 但实际上就算撇开那部电影本身有多完美 能够到达《月光男孩》 黑人电影圈是花了很长的时间和很大的努力的 比如 Tyler Perry 这么多年来拍着烂得很难看下去的爆米花烂片 却还是能找方法把电影大范围放到院线上 这样至少黑人创作人们可以有发挥的机会 所以最后能循序渐进到《月光男孩》 并不是什么偶然 并不是什么其他原因 仅仅是因为它确实是很好的、可以在电影历史上留名的艺术电影罢了 所以这部电影 虽然没有特别多的亮点（其实用心的话还是可以发现不少的） 但看到亚洲面孔可以在大屏幕上有所被代表 甚至可以看到某些亚洲的元素能被用心地表达 其实就值得被叫好了 - 8/10

“Each event is part of a bigger process. A lot of people think that *Moonlight* was able to win the Oscar because of political pressure, but in reality, if we disregard that, this film is perfect in itself. To be able to achieve *Moonlight*, the African American film industry had to develop for a long time and strive hard. For example, Tyler Perry has been making bad films for years but he managed to make his films reach a big audience, at least this gave black people the chance to express themselves. So finally, step by step they reached *Moonlight*. This (the Oscar) was absolutely not random, there is absolutely no other reason, it is only because it's a very good film. *Moonlight* is a

work of art that will be recorded in the history of film. So even though *Crazy Rich Asians* does not really have many highlights (actually, if you pay attention you can still find many), it allows us to see Asian faces being represented on the big screen. You can even see some Asian elements being expressed very delicately. This film deserves to be cheered for. – 8/10”

CR16

咱说 看过 2018-12-01

12 有用

这是一部基于新加坡人以自己为原型的小说改编的电影，力求忠实反映新加坡华人 old money 与 new money 的生活状态。把这样一部除了女主角的妈妈是中国大陆移民这一设定之外，从情节到角色都跟中国八竿子打不着的电影，默认定位为反映中国人及中国文化的故事，进而觉得它出现了偏离和位移，这其中出现错位的恐怕并非电影，而是作为观众的我们。背后的心态也值得玩味，到底是我们太自大了还是太自卑了呢？

“This is a film based on a novel in which Singaporeans take themselves as the norm, and the film strives to faithfully reflect the living conditions of the people from old money and new money. Besides the fact that the heroine’s mother is an immigrant from mainland China, from the plot to the characters nothing else is slightly related to China in this movie. It was supposed to reflect the story of the Chinese and Chinese culture, and then it felt like it drifted off course and shifted. This reversal that occurs is not in the film, I’m afraid, but us who are the audience. The mentality behind it is also worth thinking about. Are we too arrogant or feeling too inferior?”

CR23

饮歌 看过 2018-08-16

438 有用

“流星花园”的故事穿上了好莱坞的衣裳，再搭配上文化差异的看点，就让这部电影瞬间蹭上了时下政治热火的列车，并一路高歌向前，看得老外和国外长大的华裔都乐到不行。中国人很可能不待见吧？其实索性当作爱情喜剧来看，那些该有的笑点泪点都有，别太认真，真的。

“This is the story of "Meteor Garden" that put on Hollywood clothes, and added cultural differences as highlights. This made the movie instantly get on the hype train of current politics. In addition the plot keeps happily moving forward as if foreigners and Chinese who grew up abroad are extremely happy. Chinese people are likely to not be fond of it, right? You might just as well look at it as a romantic comedy, it has a few of those laughing and crying moments, don’t take it seriously, really.”

CR26

桃桃林林 看过 2018-08-28

63 有用

核心还是一个套路的爱情故事，真爱打破一切壁垒，幸福大团圆，类似的剧情可以套用在各种场景，且已经套用在太多场景。只不过这次的全亚班，才让影片更有话题性。影片好在娱乐性应用合理，适当的炫富，有趣的配角，和一些文化差异梗。但也仅限于此吧，常规好莱坞娱乐片。而且有些设定其实还是挺刻板的。

“The core of the film is still a typical love story: real love breaks all barriers, happy reunions. This type of story could be used in any kind of setting, and has already been used in too many scenarios. Only because this time there is a fully Asian cast, it has become a hot topic. Thankfully, the film is still entertaining. The flaunting of wealth in the film is appropriate, and the supporting characters are interesting, and there are some scenes that highlight the cultural clashes, but it's limited to that. It is a conventional Hollywood comedy film, and there are some parts that are actually a bit stereotypical.”

CR48

裘渎电影 看过 2018-11-07

213 有用

虽说片中的角色说自己是中国人，但里面的中国元素都是猎奇式的存在，老外眼里的所谓中国，就像演员们的长相一样，看着是东方面孔，但跟东方已经没有关系了，骨子里是彻彻底底的白人思维，中国元素就像他们说的汉语口音一样尬。疯狂的亚洲富豪家族不过就是一个戏剧噱头，最后讲的还是女性要独立，勇敢追求真爱的西方主流价值观，完完全全的白人思维，不过是换了一个亚洲的故事背景板，讲的还是灰姑娘的故事，这跟中国人有半毛钱关系吗？

“Even though the characters in the film call themselves Chinese, the Chinese elements seen in the film are nothing but exoticism. This so-called China is merely the China that Western people imagine it to be. All the actors have a similar appearance with East Asian faces, but this has nothing to do with Asia anymore. This is based on the deeply ingrained ideas of Western people. They see the actors' Chinese accents as essential parts of Chinese culture. The crazy rich Asian families are nothing but a comedic trope. Lastly, the woman wants to be independent. Bravely chasing true love like she is doing is very Western. This film is completely based on the ideas of Western people, it is

a Cinderella story that has been modified with an Asian background. What does this have to do with Chinese people?”

CR54

Winnie 看过 2018-08-26

130 有用

stereotype 到尴尬不适，被好莱坞白人当作 diversity 的吉祥物罢了。以及都 8102 年了还在说美国精神追求个人意志自由而亚洲人墨守传统家族第一.....

“The stereotypes made me extremely uncomfortable, this film was taken by white Hollywood people to be used as a mascot for diversity. Moreover, there is the age old story of Americans being individualists and and Asians always putting family and tradition first.”

TF04

加斯珀哥哥 看过 2019-01-31

598 有用

Lulu Wang 实在会把握人类情感和东方的细腻，片中很多场景都是会真实发生在中国北方家庭里的，crazy rich asians 才不是亚裔家庭的样子，这才是。中国人边看边哭，美国人看的时候在笑文化差异，看完电影下楼梯开始哭。视听语言太出色了，比如在婚礼餐桌那一段有个 360 度快速旋转的两周镜头，还有出来配 classic drama scoring 的高速镜头。异国同鸟的意向，在墓地里做的声音设计，声音转场是否成熟自然，甚至隐藏了笑点。很多镜头都非常 USA，比中国一些拍家庭的导演要流畅的多。演员的演技都很自然，但浩浩在婚礼痛苦的那段没有流出眼泪？最后，我从小到大第一次看电影从头哭到尾，不说了我给爷爷奶奶打电话去了！（Lulu wang 本人很真诚 而且还是真实故事好打动我！

“Lulu Wang can really grasp the human emotions and the delicateness of the East. Many scenes in the film will actually happen in families in northern China. *Crazy rich Asians* does not represent Asian families, but this one does. The Chinese audience cried while watching, the American audience laughed at the cultural differences and cried downstairs after the movie ended. The audiovisual language is excellent, for example, there is a 360-degree fast-rotating lens at the wedding table, and a high-speed lens with classic drama scoring. The purposefully placed exotic birds, the audio added to the cemetery scene, whether the sound transition is mature and natural, and even concealing jokes. Many shots are very American, much smoother than some Chinese filmmakers

film. The acting of the actors is very natural, but how does one not shed tears during the painful wedding ceremony? In my whole life this was the only movie for which I cried from beginning to end. It goes without saying I called my grandparents! (Lulu Wang is very sincere, and it's still a story that truly impresses me!)”

TF05

HOW 看过 2019-01-27

318 有用

#2019 圣丹斯# 4.5 非常充满人情味。导演的视角非常亲切和真诚，对于生活细节把控和文化差异的审视不亚于李安当年。一些过于喜剧化的处理稍微有些失真但整体镜头真实感和影像感非常棒，很戳人。非常不露怯又不刻意诋毁的展示中国小城市风貌让人非常喜欢。配乐使用洋气但又不生硬。Awkwafina 的中文演技也没有拖后腿。目前今年圣丹斯最大惊喜。

“#2019#Christmas holidays#4.5 This film is full of real human interest. The director's point of view is very amicable and genuine. She has a very good grasp on the details of one's daily life, and the closer look on the cultural differences are not lesser than Ang Lee did back in the day. There are some parts in the film that may have been exaggerated for comedic effect, but the film as a whole feels genuine and it is wonderfully shot, it's very moving. It portrays the way of life in Chinese small towns in a way that is not belittling or ignorant, that makes people look at it fondly. The soundtrack consists of popular music but it's not overwhelming. Awkwafina is not being held back by her acting skills in Chinese. At the moment this film is the nicest Christmas present.”

TF07

N 看过 2019-04-19

283 有用

SFFilm 的 centerpiece，上千座的 Castro Theatre 几乎是座无虚席。剧本很好，很多充满了中国味儿的对话（比如席上拼娃）写的都很出色。演员尤其是女主角演得非常到位，哪怕不说话也能传达出很多情感和思想。整个故事在中美文化强烈的震荡之下是作为喜剧处理的。有不少对于美国人来说无比陌生的场景，比如闹哄哄的婚礼，美国观众都是笑得很开怀的。奇怪的是，我虽然没有想笑的欲望，也没有在别人的笑声中感到尴尬，而是觉得导演的表达很诚恳，并没有在贬低什么、抬高什么。借用 Billi 的话：“（没有什么哪个更好，只是）不一样。”因而，在面对比如婚礼和扫墓的片段，虽然是我自己也非常不喜欢的习俗，但也并没感到卑微。片中的文化冲突富有层次，引人共鸣。上一次看电影哭成这样是《冷战》，只不过那一次是伤别人的怀，这一次是 relatability 的泪。

“This film was the Centerpiece of the San Francisco Film Festival, the Castro Theatre with over 1000 seats was almost fully packed. The script was very good, it was packed with very typical Chinese dialogues (like the round-table dinners) that were written outstandingly. The cast, especially the female lead, all acted very well. Even when she wasn’t talking, she was able to convey her thoughts and emotions. The clashes between the Chinese and American cultures were handled in a comedic way throughout the whole story. It contains a lot of situations that are strange to Americans, such as the loud and chaotic wedding. The American audience all laughed to their hearts’ content. The weird thing is, even though I didn’t feel the urge to laugh, I didn’t feel awkward amidst other people’s laughing noises. Rather, I felt that the director’s expression was genuine. Nothing was being belittled, and nothing was being put on a pedestal. In Billi’s words: “One thing is not better than the other, it’s simply different.” Thus, when faced with the scenes about the wedding ceremony and Tomb Sweeping Day, even though I myself don’t like these customs, they did not come across as belittled (in the film). The cultural clashes in the film contained many layers and it made the audience respond with sympathy. The last time I cried while watching a film was with *Cold War*, but that time was because of the sad goodbye, this time I cried tears of relatability.”

TF17

小油飞 看过 2019-08-04

其实拍的是导演（幼年移民的 1.5 代）的感受，所以在美国的朋友给出的分数明显高于在国内的朋友，美国出生的华裔二代估计也不大容易看懂吧……在中国人看来也许有点假的表现，其实都是非常真实的 1.5 代视角（留学生应该也有同感）。演员都太好了。

“Actually, what has been filmed are the director’s (she a 1.5 generation who immigrated as a child) own experiences, so the scores that my American friends gave this film is higher than the scores given by my Chinese friends. Second generation Chinese who were born in the United States reckon that for them it’s not easy to understand either. Some parts might be interpreted by Chinese viewers as making fun of their culture, however, this is truly the 1.5 generation’s point of view (international students might also have the same feelings). The actors are all very good.”

TF29

时间之葬 看过 2019-11-20

并没有中西文化的对比，而是以西方的视角在观察和审视中国文化，在大部分时间里，其实可以说是在批判中国传统文化里的保守和愚昧。但是导演显然又想要一种更加中立暧昧的态度，于是加上了片尾那一段字幕说明，但这不但让整部电影绝大部分时间呈现的态度变得可疑，而且也难以让那些对中方文化抱有好感的人满意。也就是说，这种暧昧和中立，完全是假装出来的。问题不在于你是否中立，而在于你是否假装。

“There is absolutely no comparison between Chinese and Western culture, but it’s looking at China from a Western point of view. You could actually say that it criticizes the conservative and ignorant aspects of Chinese culture. However, the director is obviously trying to take an ambiguous and neutral stance, that is shown in the end credits. This not only causes the overwhelming majority of the film to come across as having a dubious attitude, it also causes to make those who do have positive feelings towards Chinese culture to feel unsatisfied. In other words, this ambiguous and neutral attitude completely comes across as fake. The problem does not lie in neutrality, it lies in whether or not you’re only pretending to be neutral.”

TF49

萨库拉 看过 2019-10-30

文化层面，热水壶、按摩、拔罐、哭丧、扫墓，就算达不到李安中西融会贯通的视角，也不至于如此猎奇。技术层面，主角没有行动线，剧情没有推动力，喜剧没有节奏感，直白的台词全是说给西方观众听的，尬得我坐立难安。

“Regarding the cultural aspects: the hot water kettle, massage, cupping, mourning, and grave sweeping; even if the portrayal doesn’t reach Ang Lee’s standards, it does not come close to exoticism.

Regarding the acting skills: the protagonist does not take much action, the plot has no driving force, and the comedy has no sense of rhythm. The straightforward lines all cater to Western audiences, it’s so embarrassing I feel uneasy watching it.”

TF58

大海里的针 看过 2020-01-07

“东方人把生命看做是集体的”，我可能是个假东方人吧，整部影片都太TM尬了，观感还不如《摘金奇缘》。其实每年有那么多国产影视剧，像《欢乐颂》《都挺好》《小欢喜》一类的，这些香蕉人随便看看都能知道中国普通人是怎样一种生活状态，他们愣是能按照自己的臆想拍出一部平行宇宙的中国社会，我也是服了。当然，一个真实的中国故事并不符合老外的审美，还是这种猎奇刻板的“文化差异”更符合西方评委的口味吧。

“Asians find it important to live for the collective”, then I am a fake Asian I guess. The whole movie is too embarrassing. I like it less than *Crazy Rich Asians*. In fact, there are so many domestically produced movies and TV shows every year, like ‘Ode to joy’, ‘All is Well’, and ‘A Little Reunion’. These banana-people (ABCs) will know the living conditions of common Chinese people with just a short look, and decisively shoot a Chinese parallel universe movie based on their erroneous assumptions. I’m sick of it. Of course, a real Chinese story does not conform to the taste of foreigners, and yet these stereotyped ‘cultural differences’ are more in line with the taste of Western reviewers.”

JLC02

熊阿姨 看过 2010-05-20

这绝对是我看过的最好的女人电影、最好的小说改编片。每一对母女身上都能看出自己家族女人们的影子，苦难也好理解也好，从头至尾充满了共鸣，忍着不去沉浸，但最后的结尾还是抑制不住地哭了。

“This is definitely the best film about women and the best novel adaptation I have ever seen. Every mother and daughter can relate this story to their own family. The suffering is easy to understand, and I’m full with a sympathetic feelings from the beginning till the end. I couldn’t resist it, but at the end, I cried uncontrollably.”

JLC03

低处飞行 看过 2009-01-30

妈妈从不会指望女儿人生有多么辉煌带来多少的报答，妈妈只是希望，希望女儿幸福，希望女儿一生能过得跟自己不一样，她总是急切的想把自己所有受过的伤总结成经验让女儿牢牢记住，而女儿

在当时却显得不配合或者反感这一种“操控”.. 呵，因为女儿总是像妈妈的，哪怕是在不同的时代背景文化氛围中成长

“Moms never hope for their daughters’ life to be filled with outstanding achievements or rewards. Moms just hope, hope that their daughters are happy, and hope that their daughters can live a life that is different from theirs. They are always anxious to sum up all the injuries they have suffered to turn these into experiences for her daughter to remember, but the daughters don’t want to cooperate, and resent this kind of "control".. Oh, daughters will always be like their mothers, even if they grew up in different times, cultures, and atmospheres.”

JLC25

24 有用溯夜 看过 2012-09-18

我觉得看着有隔膜，也许美国人或美籍华人能真正理解这片吧。之前推荐我看的人说这部片可以跟李安的《推手》、《饮食男女》相提并论，怎可能，差太远了。李安无敌。

“I think that as I was watching, I felt distant. Maybe Americans and Chinese Americans are better at understanding this film. Before, the person who recommended this film to me told me that it was on par with Ang Lee’s *Pushing Hands* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, how could that be? The differences are too big, Ang Lee is unparalleled.”

JLC42

44 有用问津 看过 2013-02-13

2013-02-13 ABC 和美国白人想象中的中国文化，电影中没一个好中国男人，只有个 ABC 女儿的白人老公是很正面形象在 IMDB 得分 7.2/10，迎合鬼佬对中国男人的想象，在豆瓣得分 8.3/10，中国女性特别高兴被看作受害者。我觉得电影用一种想象的问题，掩盖了真正的问题。华裔的一知半解比鬼佬的完全不了解更可怕！

“This is Chinese culture as imagined by ABC’s and white Americans. In the film there is no good Chinese man. Only the ABC daughters’ white husbands give a positive impression. On IMDB it has a score of 7.2/10. It caters to the Western imagination of Chinese men. The score on Douban is 8.3/10, Chinese women really like being seen as the victims. I think that this film uses an imaginary problem to cover up the real problem. Overseas Chinese knowing half of the Chinese culture is scarier than Western people not knowing anything at all about Chinese culture.”