



The Female Protagonist as Historical Mediator and Urban Memory of HongKong in *Rouge*

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Abstract: After 1997, Hong Kong received attention from around the world as a reborn city. The influence and the appeal of Hong Kong films increased, due to the city's multiple cultures. Ghost film is an important genre in Hong Kong's film history. *Rouge* (1987), one of the most representative ghost films of the 1980s, achieved both commercial and critical success. Hong Kong, as an area of China with a special political situation, has no strict suppression of idealistic culture. As a result, the Hong Kong people have a long history of respect for ghosts and of engaging in several related cultural heritage activities, which has meant that ghost culture has been relatively well preserved in this city. This essay uses the female ghost in *Rouge*, Fleur, to explore the role of female ghost as a narrative subject, as well as how Hong Kong's culture is reflected by her character. The essay is divided into three parts. The first introduces the history of Hong Kong's ghost films, with the genre reaching its peak in the 1980s, after decades of development. Then, the essay discusses how the image of female ghost influences the narration in the selected film, as it blurs the boundaries between the past and the future, using special visual elements. The Hong Kong consciousness caused by the transformation of the city is also discussed, including historical and current experiences, as well as the anxiety of the citizens. The essay concludes that, through the image of Fleur and the depiction of her fate, *Rouge* embodies the implicit male-centred traditional gender concept, as well as the anxiety and confusion of Hong Kong's people in the 1980s when faced with questions of self-identity and the future development of Hong Kong.

Keywords: spectral temporality, urban memory, Hong Kong Cinema, postcolonial identity, gender politics

1. The history of ghost films in Hong Kong

To understand the image of ghosts in films, it is important to revisit the history of adaptation and the process of gradually developing independent content in Hong Kong. Movies were first introduced to Hong Kong in 1897; the first film produced in Hong Kong, by Shaopo Liang, was *Stealing the Roast Duck*, in 1909. Since then, the Hong Kong cinematic film industry has grown, mostly synchronized with that of mainland China. As a significant film genre, ghost films played an important role in Hong Kong's film history. Most of the images of ghosts in films that we see nowadays come from traditional Chinese texts, including folk tales collected by scholars. For instance, *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1680), which has been adapted into many theatrical versions, is a classic story from Pu Songling's novel *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (1680).

There have been more than three hundred ghost films produced in Hong Kong since the last century, which make up four percent of Hong Kong's feature films (Lee, 2011) [1]. Lee (2011) has also argued that the development of this genre of films over time can be divided into three stages. The period before 1941 was the early stages of Hong Kong's ghost films; there were only 17 ghost films made between 1913 and 1941. *Midnight Vampire* (1936) was the first film with a real ghost, but was not very distinctive. However, its director, Gongliang Yang, became the originator of Hong Kong ghost films. Lee (2011) points out that the popular ghost films at this time were mainly adapted from Cantonese folklore and operas, with content focused on destroying evil spirits or revenge, to promote the value of 'what goes around comes around'.

After the second world war, from 1949 to the 1960s, Hong Kong ghost films entered the middle stages of development. The works in the 1950s were more like educational films that were not very artistic but didactic, such as *A Beautiful Corpse Comes to Life* (1956) and *The Love Between a Human and a Ghost* (1958). Hong Kong's Mandarin ghost films were more popular and more artistic in the 1960s, especially those adapted from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (1680), such as *The Enchanting Shadow* (1960) and *Fairy Ghost Vixen* (1965).

The third period began in the 1970s and continued until the 1980s. At this stage, the production level of Hong Kong ghost films gradually improved and artistic features became more obvious. Due to the special political situation in Hong Kong, these films included kung fu, comedy and elements of Chinese characteristics that reflected a diverse creative style, promoting traditional Chinese culture. This period was the heyday of Hong Kong ghost films, with the largest productions and the best performances in films such as *The Spooky Bunch* (1980), *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) and *Rouge*. During this period, Hong Kong ghost culture had the most profound impact on subsequent films and other genres of film, causing this

culture to become more deeply rooted in the minds of viewers.

Unfortunately, after the 1990s, Hong Kong films hit a low point, as a large number of crude ghost films eroded the reputation of this film genre. After the 21st century, only a handful of good ghost films were made in Hong Kong. Therefore, the 1980s was the golden period for Hong Kong ghost films. At this time, the box office earnings increased each year. Hong Kong ghost films were an essential genre, which rapidly developed, not only in quantity, but also in quality. Martin(2012) mentions that, in the 1980s, Hong Kong produced a total of 30 female ghost films, which accounted for 29 percent of the Hong Kong ghost films in the same period[2]. However, portrayals of female ghosts were extremely different from those of male ghosts at this time.

A Chinese Ghost Story and *Rouge* created two of the most famous female ghosts in Hong Kong film history. They set the trend for a series of films featuring female ghosts that told a love story between a human and a ghost. The combination of human nature and ghost nature was the most prominent feature of female ghosts in the 1980s(Martin,2012), which was different from the previous one-dimensional portrayal of female ghosts.

2. The narrative functions of Fleur as a female ghost in *Rouge*

Rouge is a film adapted from a novel written by Lilian Lee Pik-Wah that tells the poignant love story of a courtesan. Fleur (Anita Mui) was one of the most popular courtesans in 1930s Hong Kong, who fell in love with a playboy, Chan Chen-Pang (Leslie Cheung), the son of a wealthy family. Due to the differences in their situations, the couple could never be married, so they decided to commit suicide by opium overdose to be together in death. However, Fleur died and Chan survived and was betrothed to his sister, in accordance with his parents' wishes. Fleur waited for her lover for 53 years in the underworld, but could not find him, so she went to the living world of 1980s Hong Kong to find him. With the help of a news editor, Yuen (Alex Man), and his girlfriend, Ah-Chor (Emily Chu), Fleur discovered the truth, but forgave Chan after seeing that he had become an impoverished Chinese opera stand-in. Fleur went back to the underworld, leaving behind the *rouge* case that Chan had given to her. *Rouge* is not only a love story about betrayal, it is also a memory of the urban culture of Hong Kong in the last century.

Fleur is the subject of narration in *Rouge*. She is the main protagonist of the film and experiences, witnesses and even shifts history. Amelie (1999) argues that the transformation of history, including the changes in space and time, are always the central part of narratives, and directors use sets, lighting, costumes, or other visual factors on female ghosts to mark the transformations to convey the gist of the film. Aside from the cultural gender perspective (to be discussed later), ghosts are the opposite of human beings and belong to a fringe group, while females are at the edge of a fringe group because of their perceived gender weakness[3]. Therefore, using a female as the narrative subject demonstrates can reflect the development of the narrative by taking advantage of their more obvious appearance factors compared with men and helps the audience understand the concept of gender in Hong Kong society at that time.

According to Lim (2001), ghosts call our calendars into question. It means that because of the interlacing of time and space embodied in ghosts, the original time sequence of linear development will be disrupted[4]. Lim(2001) explains that the main reason for this is the temporality of haunting, which means events and people return from the limits of time and death that is very different from the linear, progressive, universal concept of modern time. The ghost in the film not only appears in the past, but also in the stable present, which directly affects the boundaries of the past, present and future. Therefore, *Rouge*, as a film that uses ghosts as a provocation to the consciousness of the Hong Kong society, has a special tension (Lim, 2001). The role of the female ghost, Fleur, has made a good sense of social reality by her experience in the two periods. Therefore, Fleur embodies a mixture of modernity and history, as well as the conflict of different world values.

Rouge has two narrative structures operating at the same time. Both 1930s and 1980s Hong Kong are described in terms of the memories or experiences of Fleur. Her subjectivity is a cyclical or monumental modality of time, unlike the linear history represented by men (Chan, 2001)[5]. Chan(2001) also mentions that the intermittent cyclical movement of her 1930s memory, which appears in the film as a reflection of Hong Kong in the past, constitutes the fluidity of her female subjectivity. She is not only a ghost who can travel between two time spaces, but also a guide who brings the audience to the previous time. When viewers watch the film, they engage in a sort of time travel that awakens their memories of 1930s Hong Kong. However, Fleur' s memories were not the real Hong Kong, but were based on her own subjective impressions. History is always selected and reorganized by citizens to depict an ideal picture of the city(Clark,2010)[6]. So, in this sense, *Rouge* actually used the female voice to show a nostalgic Hong Kong (Chan, 2001).

Fleur is not only a female, but also a ghost, so the features and functions of ghosts in the film narration are also reflected in her. Ghost culture in Hong Kong's film and television industry is a legacy of the Chinese Opera, which attributed the accidents to ghosts(Lim,2001). Nowadays, it is still popular in entertainment industry, as Martin(2012)points out that many

business in Hong Kong are afraid of lingering ghosts so they feature altars to provide offers to gods and ghosts for appeasement. Martin (2012) also gives an example about the traditional Hong Kong ceremony of baai sahn before filming dangerous scenes, which involved the production team gathering around a table of food, raising burning incense above their heads and worshipping gods respectfully in several different directions. Ghost culture was well preserved, as citizens respected ghosts and accepted the world of the ‘un-living’ in Hong Kong. Producers or directors would also give actors who played dying or dead characters a nominal fee in red pockets(red means praying for fortune in Chinese culture) for their dangerous performance that might offend the gods(Martin,2012).

It can also be seen in the film that fortune-telling, as one of the most typical ghost culture activities, was still a popular culture in Hong Kong. In the 1930s, Fleur went to the Wen Wu temple seeking a sign, while in the Hong Kong of the 1980s, she turned to fortune-tellers. At the end of the movie, the audience knew that what the fortune-teller said was true: Fleur finds Chan in the living world. This result shows that, in Hong Kong at that time, just like in the past, there were many people like director Kwan, who believed in the ghost culture. Compared to the materialism propagated on the mainland at that time, ghost culture was largely preserved in Hong Kong.

The identity of Fleur as a prostitute also has an important implicit meaning for narration. Chan (2001) argues that Hong Kong has been described as a courtesan since it was colonized, for it not only took orders from its colonists, but also from the commercialism brought by British. There are other scholars who consider Hong Kong as being a virgin raped by the Western coloniser. They see the city as a poor woman that was restricted by the feudal system and family ethics. In *Rouge*, Fleur was the embodiment of colonised Hong Kong, and the counter-narrative to the traditional linear development of history, which directly challenged the male discourse on Hong Kong’s city culture at the time.

Lim (2001) argues that the appearance and personality of the female ghost effectively conveys the hidden gender concept. Compared with ugly male ghosts, like zombies or monsters, most female ghosts were of superior beauty. In *Rouge*, Fleur is the most popular woman in the brothel, with a beautiful face and sexy posture. In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, Nie Xiaoqian appears as a white fairy with beautiful black hair. The female ghost in *Spiritual Love* (1987), Wei Hsiao-tieh, constantly receives men’s attention because of her outstanding beauty. Amelie(1999) points out that the brilliant appearance of women in any culture, Western or non-Western, traditional or modern, secret or public, is associated with secret or overt pornographic views. Although the director, Kwan, has tried his best to create an independent female image, based on the shape of Fleur’s body and her costume, this female-oriented narrative still cannot escape the traditional gender hegemony that makes women into observers.

The female narration seems to show the director’s efforts to respect women objectively, but all films have subjective input from the director, so it is common for male directors to reflect their unconscious gender biases in their narratives (Lee, 2011). Whether female ghosts in films are evil or pure, they have something in common: they dare to love or hate, and avenge themselves if they are betrayed by others, especially by men. For instance, *Spiritual Love* (1987) tells a love story between the female ghost Wei Hsiao-tieh(Cherie Chung), a common man Pu Yung-tsai(Chow Yun-fat) and his ex-girlfriend May(Pauline Wong). Hsiao-tieh chooses to go back to hell and get married to the monster to rescue Yung-tsai, while May turns into an evil ghost to avenge the hero and heroine for love. Hsiao-tieh sacrifice fulfills the image of the spoony woman, given to her by the male director, satisfying the traditional male expectations of women, and her redemption makes the audience ignore the shortcomings of the male character in the complex relationship. Similarly, we see in *Rouge* that Fleur is also a woman who acts extremely for love. She did not hesitate to poison Chan to make sure that they would die together as his promise, but also comes back to the living world to bring him back to hell. This is very different from the fierce nature of male ghosts, most of the driving force of females’ behavior is given by the outside world, especially by love.

Even director Stanley Kwan, who is known for his exquisite female-themed films, struggled to escape the problem that women’s behavior is still dominated by male-centered behavior. In *Rouge*, although Fleur is the main character, her fortune is reliant on the men in the film. She seems to be independent and decisive, but her actions, including her resistance to the aristocratic family, her death and her return to the living world, are all driven by men. Lee (2011) argues that, in spite of the expression of sympathy for females, this narration is not completely free of gender bias.

Although *Rouge* is a story about a ghost, it also a romantic story full of imagination and is a realistic reflection of history and the current social climate. Fleur is the connection between reality and illusion; the fusion of the present and past is reflected in her appearance. Director Kwan skillfully used audio-visual language to express Fleur’s turbulent life and the cultural history behind this reflection.

In the first scene, Fleur is shown in a close-up shot, using a vintage eyebrow pencil to draw on traditional Chinese willow eyebrows. This is followed by an extreme close-up of her red lips, and the third scene is a medium distance shot of her in the corner of the screen. These three shots are separated by a black screen, with this blackness giving the audience a sense of

ellipses, causing time to seem lost. This generates a time-hopping atmosphere from the beginning of the film (Amelie, 1999).

Mostly, the images used in films aim to create considerations about the inner meaning behind the images, as well as to evoke moods and emotions in the audience (Maszerowska, 2015)[7]. As such, the viewers' expectations and reactions are changed by these feelings. The sense of uncertainty in Fleur and Chan's relationships, and the fragility of their love, are reflected through the visual element of a mirror, which is used throughout the film. Chan and Fleur are always shot together in the mirror, especially when they talk about their future. The mirror becomes an imagined world that can break at a touch, implying their fragile love is just an illusion.

A further visual effect is the use of light. According to Alton(1995), 'where there is no light, one cannot see; and when one cannot see, his imagination starts to run wild. He begins to suspect that something is about to happen. In the dark there is mystery.[8] So, the use of light also tells the audience more about Fleur's inner world. When the couple appear under a light at the same time, Fleur's face is always bright, but Chan's face is dark, suggesting that in the future, she would live honestly, while he hides from unspeakable lies and betrayal. In addition, when Fleur discovers the truth about Chan, the shadow of a window divides her face into pieces, just like her broken heart.

Fleur's appearance is used to reflect the changes in popular culture over the decades, and the cheongsam(a traditional female costume with Chinese characteristics) plays an irreplaceable role in this process(Amelie,1999). According to Amelie (1999), Fleur's visual appearance in the 1980s helps the film establish its 'double temporal framework'. In the 1930s, women wore mainly cheongsams, but the first time Fleur is seen, she is disguised as a man, so she is seen as different to other woman from the beginning and easily attracts Chan's attention. Fleur continues to change her clothes throughout the film, almost always remaining in fashion. When she comes to Hong Kong in the 1980s, fashion has changed completely. But she is just like a living person, and has very few of the features that we generally associate with ghosts. She is more like an actress with a costume, although many people find her clothing strange, as it is too traditional. This is the most obvious difference between her and other female ghosts. Our general perception of ghosts is similar to Ah-Chor's: they can take their heads off, move through walls, have long tongues or suck blood from humans. But Fleur can do none of these things; she even has a shadow like living people. The features of her appearance set the tone for the film, which is poignant, but not terrifying. Fleur is like a brightly-coloured ornament in a cold, modern society. She is incompatible with the contemporary world. Her lipstick fades with the passage of time and the loss of spiritual power, so Ah-Chor uses a new type of lipstick and tells her that modern cosmetics will not fade. In return, Fleur teaches Ah-Chor to use *rouge* to color her lips. Thus, the past and present are shown on these two female characters' faces. The use of cosmetics symbolizes people creating an illusion that Hong Kong has not changed (Amelie, 1999), but actually, it is no longer the original Hong Kong.

Fleur and Ah-Chor also differ in their concepts of love. In the past, the definition of a lucky woman was one that could live with the man she loves all her life, while unlucky women become prostitutes. However, women of the new era, like Ah-Chor, believe that it is boring to stay with the same person for their whole lives. When Ah-Chor asks Yuen if he would commit suicide for her, he answers 'we are not that romantic' and that neither of them agree with this view of love. Not only are the city and culture transformed with the passing of time, the Hong Kong people's attitude to life has also changed, due to the commercialization of society and the fast speed of life. Nevertheless, modern people are nostalgic for the pure view of love from the past. Ah-Chor says that she is jealous of Fleur's courage, because she is afraid just thinking about the things Fleur did. The living female becomes enamoured with the antiquated woman's ideals, as Ah-Chor agrees with Fleur's view of love(Chan,2001). This shows modern people's nostalgia for the past's simple view of love, but also implies that Hong Kong people in the 1980s have not completely forgotten, even a little miss the past life, although time never go back and they have to adapt themselves to the new life.

3. The identity consciousness of Hong Kong citizens

Rouge is a film in which the nostalgic image of Hong Kong from the 1930s is reproduced by the memories of a female ghost (Chan, 2001). According to Clark(2010), in the last century, Hong Kong experienced three stages of immigration and invasion. After the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, Hong Kong Island was ceded to the British because of the failure of the Opium War. Following this was the 1860 convention of Peking, which yielded the Kowloon Peninsula. In 1898, Britain and China signed a treaty that announced Britain could secure the New Territories on the north side of the Kowloon Peninsula for 99 years. During these decades, Hong Kong became a bridge and gathering place for economic and cultural exchange between China and the West.

On the 19th December 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Future of Hong Kong was signed by the British Prime Minister and the Chinese Minister Ziyang Zhao, which announced that the sovereignty of Hong Kong would return to China (Chan,2001). Between 1984 and 1997, Hong Kong still belonged to Britain, to maintain social stability. However,

Hong Kong had become an international city after 140 years of British rule, so when the news of the 'Return of 1997' appeared, the Hong Kong people experienced confusion about their identity and a fear of the unknown (Chan,1996)[9]. Many citizens moved out of Hong Kong to other countries for escaping the upcoming changes. This immigration phenomenon led the Hong Kong city towards decadence.

In the face of the Return of 1997, a word inevitably emerged from the long-lost collective unconsciousness of the people of Hong Kong – 'colonial'(Chan,1996). The Hong Kong people questioned who they were, as they had no memory of the motherland and they would soon bid farewell to their British identity. The only option was to identify as being from Hong Kong. As a result, their perception of themselves as Hong Kong people rather than British or Chinese was very confusing.

It was difficult for Hong Kong's people to imagine life after Hong Kong's return to China, or living under the rule of the Communist Party for 50 years as the agreement signed by China and Britain said. The coming transformation gave them a strong sense of uneasiness, so many people moved to overseas countries (Chan, 2001).

The film is full of conflicts arising from unclear self-cognition of the role. One of the most obvious conflicts is in the final sequence of the filming studio when Fleur goes there to find Chan. A director tells an actress who plays an ancient Chinese ghost that it is necessary to portray both the horror of the ghost and the cool attitude of the female hero. This made the actress confused, as she becomes neither the ghost nor the hero because it is hard for her to form a comprehensive self-awareness. Similarly, the consciousness of Hong Kong citizen was also in this embarrassed situation, between the historical traditions and the current situation is a broken historical experience that oscillates between multipolar cultures(Chan,1996).

Accompanied by the female ghost, the memory of 1930s is an imaginary Hong Kong, an illusory past – gorgeousness, decadence, opium, love – everything that was not in the 1980s. By contrast, modern Hong Kong is boring. Chan(1996) points out that the classical love story aimed to inject a little vitality into the mediocrity of the modern Hong Kong people, but in the end, the ghost is disappointed with reality and leaves the real world to retain her memories of Hong Kong. The world in Fleur's memory and the pale and desolate Hong Kong city of the 1980s are not the real Hong Kong in the Hong Kong people's minds. The identity of Hong Kong, like the unfinished and confused identity of Fleur, has not been recognized.

Lim(2001) argued that the ghost story in *Rouge* has the function of an allegorical frame; the history that has almost been forgotten becomes meaningful in the new world with the ghost's return. In a sequence at the beginning of the film, we see that the windows in the brothel are colourful; light colours are used more often, and the walls are decorated with raffish flowers and festive writing to reflect the vulgarity of the place. Although these elements might be tacky, they are symbols of the traditional Chinese features that Fleur brings back to the city. The conflict of being both a British colony and part of China is also reflected, as there are contradictory elements of both East and West present[10]. The bed that Chan gave to Fleur was in a Western style. The two-story brothel was full of the charm of the Republic of China era, but the style of the stairs, the modern lights and the mirror had Western architectural features. The traditional custom of adding 'ten' to the nicknames of males to indicate the prosperity of a rich family was still popularly used, even though they did business with Westerners. In Chan's family, the colours of furniture and people's clothes were elegant and like the types foreign people preferred, which were completely different from the gaudy colours of the brothel. There were also Western items of furniture, like clocks, in Chan's home. From the phrase 'Piaopiao Yun advertised again', it can be seen that there were already advertisements in the 1930s, and this speculation is confirmed in later episode that when Fleur leaves Chan's house, there was an billboard with English advertisement on the street.

Similarly, although Hong Kong was modernized in the 1980s, it still retained traces of traditional Chinese culture, and the north-south line(Nan Bei Hang in Chinese)where Chan's father worked is a good example. The ups and downs of the north-south line is an important clue to Hong Kong's early economy and trade. This refers to the shops in the middle and upper ring of Wenxian Street and Gaosheng Street. These shops are mainly engaged in the domestic and international freight trade, and made important contributions to the development of Hong Kong's trade in the early 20th century. In 1980s, the businessmen on the north-south line still know much about the local history, like the antique shop owner who explains 'Guzi' to them (it was a newspaper that specialised in publishing gossip about prostitutes that has become valuable over time). The north-south line has not disappeared in these decades, but the business is not as good as it used to be, it has witnessed the development of Hong Kong in those years. Besides, Chinese traditional culture has also been promoted on the basis of inheritance, which co-existed with the modern culture. When the scene turns to Hong Kong in the 1980s, the audience's first impression is of the bright modern high-rise buildings, which are extremely different from the previous scene, but there are still traditional Chinese medicine shops and vintage collection shops on the street. The colors of the people's clothes and the buildings are relatively mild, in shades of white, brown and gray that are more popular in foreign countries. There are also still traditional remnants, like Chinese wooden door in Yuen's workplace, a blue and white porcelain cup he uses, people who practicing kung fu on TV and the habit of reading right to left. When Fleur and Yuen stand together on the dilapidated

street dressed in clothes from different eras, neither of them seem to have a sense of the conflict with this street view, because the streets also blend the characteristics of the Chinese and western. When they stand on a bus, there is a thick pillar between them, to show their differences. In this sequence of the film, what she says made Yuen realize that she does not belong to this era: her memory obviously belong to the past. What she discusses, like Chan Po-chu and the Cantonese opera, are obviously symbols of history. But Yuen knows nothing about this actress, because popular culture has transformed as time passed. Yuen asks if Fleur comes from 'up land' (the name Hong Kong people used for the mainland at that time) or a foreign country; it is obvious that the traditional Chinese clothes she is wearing are strange or, at least not normal for the people of Hong Kong at that time. These differences illustrate their different identities, and this is also a reflection of the city's development. Some citizens refused to change with the city's development, just as Fleur refuses to drink cola, an image of the new concepts and culture from the West, and instead accepts the apple juice she is familiar with. However, it is made evident that such behavior is undesirable, as her soul almost dies. This suggests that if the people of Hong Kong do not accept change, then the outcome that awaits them is incredibly tragic. Hong Kong culture has experienced a dynamic process of change, influenced by both British culture and Chinese nationalism, before developing into a special culture with its own characteristics (Chan, 2001).

4. Conclusion

ghost films in Hong Kong experienced changes in characteristics during the 20th century. From the perspectives of the narrative subject, *Rouge* reflects the natural potential male-centered thinking of the director, Stanley Kwan, as a man himself. Although famous for caring for females in his films and having tried to reflect the subjectivity of women, most of Fleur's actions are decided by the actions of Chan. Kwan makes full use of Fleur's female identity in the movie, using audio-visual language to intuitively convey the intrinsic relationship between the characters and the historical changes. In addition, as a citizen who witnessed the political changes in Hong Kong, Kwan illustrates the anxiety and hope around an unpredictable future throughout the film.

Ultimately, *Rouge* transcends its narrative form to become a cinematic archive of cultural memory, where the female ghost emerges not merely as a character but as a medium through which Hong Kong's contested history and precarious identity are visually preserved and interrogated. This film, therefore, stands as a testament to how popular cinema can perform the critical cultural work of navigating collective trauma and envisioning possible futures.

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