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Masculinities in Transcultural Spaces – Negotiations of Masculinities in Ang Lee's Films

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 3
ABSTRACT 4
INTRODUCTION 5
1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 18
1. 1 Previous Studies on Ang Lee and His Films 18
1.1.1 Bicultural Identity and Cultural Translation 19
1.1.2 Orientalism? 21
1.1.3 A Gender Perspective: Homosexuality and Femininity 22
1.2 Theoretical Framework 27
1.2.1 "Hegemonic Masculinity": Extending the Use of the Concept 29
1.2.2 Understanding "Hegemonic masculinity" in American Culture 31
1.2.3 Confucianism: A Cornerstone in Conceptualizing Masculinity in Pre-modern China 34
1.2.3.1 Homosociality and the Same-sex Relationship 35
1.2.3.2 Defining Masculinity in Interpersonal Relations 38
Father-son Relationship 39
Man-woman Relationship and Femininity/Masculinity 42
Male Friendship 45
1.2.4 *Wen-wu*: Asserting a Chinese Masculinity Paradigm in and out of Confucianism 48
1.2.5 Transdifference 50
2. WEN-WU MASCULINE IDEAL AND CONFUCIAN FATHERHOOD IN *PUSHING HANDS* 55
2.1 Beyond the West: Understanding Chinese Manhood in a Culturally Specific Way 58
2.1.1 *Wen-wu* Dyad: Asserting a Chinese Masculinity Paradigm 59
2.1.2 Filial Piety: Defining Chinese Manhood in Fatherhood 62
2.2 Representing Mr. Chu in the Traditional Chinese Manhood 64
2.2.1 A Paragon of *Wen-wu* Model 64
2.2.2 An Incarnation of Confucian Fatherhood 66
2.3 Traditional Chinese Manhood in Transcultural Spaces 70
2.3.1 Father-son Relationship 70
2.3.2 Man-woman Relationship 77
Mr. Chu vs. Martha 77
Mr. Chu vs. Mrs. Chang 81
2.4 Transdifference 88
2.5 Conclusion 91
3. ANOTHER STORY OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND MASCULINITY IN *THE WEDDING BANQUET* 93
3.1 Parody of "Racial Castration" 97
3.2 Sexuality beyond Hetero: Understanding Homosexuality and Masculinity in Pre-modern China 102
3.3 Repressive Chinese Familiality vs. Free American Gayness? 105
3.4 Homosexual or Heterosexual? 107

3.5 Chinese Manhood in Transcultural Spaces....112
3.5.1 Man-woman Relationship: Wai-tung vs. Wei-wei....112
3.5.2 Father-son relationship: Mr. Gao vs. Wai-tung....115
3.6 Transdifference....120
3.7 Conclusion....123

4. FROM AMERICAN COWBOY TO CHINESE SUPERIOR MAN [JUNZI] IN *BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN*....125
4.1 Representing Gay Men in the American Cowboy Masculine Model....128
4.2 Debunking Homophobia in Gay Cowboys....136
4.3 Portraying the Same-sex Relationship Beyond Sexual Orientation....138
4.4 Defining Manhood in Interpersonal Relations and *Junzi* Masculinity in Confucianism....146
4.5 Representing Masculinity in Interpersonal Relations....150
4.5.1 Male-male Relations: Ennis vs. Jack....150
4.5.2 Male-female Relations: Ennis vs. Alma....152
4.6 A "Coward" or an "Ideal" Man?....157
4.7 Transdifference....163
4.8 Conclusion....165

5. FROME AMERICAN SUPERHER TO CHINESE XIA IN *HULK*....166
5.1 Subverting Superhero Masculinity in *Hulk*....169
5.1.1 Transforming the Body....170
5.1.2 Rescuing the Woman....173
5.1.3 Defeating the Villain....175
5.2 Beyond Bruce Lee's Body: Chinese *Xia* Heroism....181
5.3 Interpreting the American Superhero in Transcultural Spaces:....186
5.3.1 Interpreting Hulk in the Context of Chinese *Xia* Masculinity....186
5.3.2 Hulk as An Image of Chinese American Masculinity?....191
5.4 Transdifference....193
5.5 Conclusion....194

6. CONCLUSION....196
6.1 Central Notions and Terms in Lee's Conceptualization of Masculinities....196
6.1.1 *Wen-wu* dyad....196
6.1.2 Filial Piety....197
6.1.3 Femininity....198
6.1.4 Homophobia....199
6.1.5 Body....200
6.1.6 Social Responsibility....201
6.2 Implications of the Study....202
6.3 Future Research....206

BIBLIOGRAPHY....208

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of readings of four selected films by Ang Lee — *Pushing Hands*, *The Wedding Banquet*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *Hulk*, ranging over a decade from 1992 to 2005. The readings are predominated with gender issues in films, particularly with the representation and negotiations of Chinese (American) and American masculinities. The dissertation is both conceptual and analytical. On the conceptual level, with double epistemology of both Western and Chinese masculine theories, which are deeply entrenched in Confucian thought, the dissertation provides multiple readings of masculinities in a palimpsest of cultural encounters from a transcultural perspective. On the analytical level, the dissertation provides a textual analysis by examining film techniques, such as shots, camera movement, lighting, dialogue and music. In this way, the dissertation is informed by both interpreting the negotiations of different masculinities that are enacted in the visual texts and the negotiations of different theoretical lenses in reading these visual texts.

INTRODUCTION

My interest in representations of men and masculinities comes from my reading and thinking about the depiction of Chinese men in Chinese American literature. Chinese American writers first aroused American public attention in 1950 with the autobiographical novel *Fifth Daughter* by Jade Snow Wong, who was honored by the U.S. government and sent on a four-month speaking tour of Asia in 1953 to tell the success story of a Chinese immigrant woman. In the 1970s, Chinese American literature saw further progress and there were prolific and successful works by Frank Chin, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, David Henry Hwang and so on. Around the 1990s, there arose internal conflicts and a public debate among these Chinese American writers. This centered on the representation of Asian masculinity. Frank Chin and others criticized some popular Chinese American women authors, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, for describing Chinese culture as cruel and misogynistic in their works. They argued that these women writers were employing common racist stereotypes of Chinese culture as misogynist and participating in the "racial castration" of Chinese and Asian men. Frank Chin contended that Kingston's best-selling book *The Woman Warrior* (1976) appeased the white desire to emasculate Chinese men and affirmed that the victimized Chinese women could only be saved from Chinese men by white American men. He and his co-editors committed to rejuvenating the "real" Chinese heroic traditions and intended to restore the lost manhood of Chinese men.[1] However, as King-Kok Cheung has pointed out, Frank Chin's efforts to celebrate Chinese men as warriors, falls into the trap of merely

[1] See Chin F., J.P. Chan, L.F. Inada and S.H. Wong. Eds. *Aiiieeeee! An anthology of Asian American Writers*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974.

affirming the prevalent western, patriarchal, binary perspective.[2] According to this argument, embracing heroic Chinese masculinity only works in the interest of perpetuating patriarchal and Eurocentric monolithic norms of masculinity. Chin's solution to racial oppression is oversimplified, and he overlooks men's oppression of Chinese women and affords no space to discuss inner contradictions of different masculinities in Chinese culture. As a result, his perception and representation of Chinese masculinity falls into the trap of social homogenization, and this monolithic notion of Chinese masculinity is highly imaginary and fictional, which is inadequate and untenable to be able to grapple with heterogeneous Chinese masculinities in the new era of the 21st century. Accordingly, multiple and heterogeneous conceptions of Chinese masculinities need to be valued. The "authentic" way of restoring Chinese masculinities should not be embedded in monolithic or normative categories, but requires a new authenticity, that is, perceiving Chinese masculinities through a non-homogeneous cultural lens, and discussing them from a transcultural perspective. Therefore, Chinese masculinities should be discussed in and out of Chinese culture, taking into consideration its negotiations with Western manhood.

In contrast to Chin's monolithic, stable and normative notions of Chinese masculinity, I find that Ang Lee's films provide a deeper and more complicated perspective to investigate different forms of masculinity in and between cultures. My study provides a close reading of Ang Lee's films to explore his representation of diverse Chinese and American masculinities, discussing negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces. I attempt to investigate how the representation of plural and diverse male figures in Ang Lee's films dismantles a secure sense of white hegemonic masculinity dominant in the global world. Stephan M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett

[2] See Cheung, K. "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Herosim? " *Conflicts in Feminism*. Eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller. New York: Routledge, 1990. 234-51.

suggest that, "the [power] relations among men produce subordinate and marginal masculinities, such as those which surround homosexuals and non-white men" (8). These marginalized masculinities inform my research to challenge white hegemonic masculinity in the American context. In particular, my study argues that by representing Chinese (American) men in a culturally specific understanding of manhood, Ang Lee provides the Western audience with an alternative perspective to perceive Chinese masculinity and Chinese culture [3], resisting the Western hegemonic consumerist notion of exotic "otherness" and the stereotypes of emasculated Chinese (American) men. Meanwhile, by introducing the outlook of men and masculinities in pre-modern China and Confucian thought, Lee's films destabilize gender norms and masculine ideals in the Western context, in particular, American culture, thus providing transcultural spaces for the negotiations of masculinities.

Though a rich body of research has been done on Ang Lee and his films, my study differs fundamentally from previous research in three significant ways. Firstly, my analysis of Lee's portrayal of male figures marks a systematic study of the representation of men and masculinities in Lee's films, which has never been carried out before. As Stuart Hall (1997) contends, representation can have many meanings, encompassing depiction, standing for, symbolizing, or substituting for someone or something (16). My study demonstrates that representation does not only include visual depiction, but also has cultural, political and gender dimensions. Lee's filmic depiction has never been taken as a gendered act or perceived as a masculine project, and Ang Lee's male identity is neglected in the analysis of his films. I chose four films to explore Lee's depiction of male figures, namely, *Pushing Hands* (1992), *The*

[3] In "Breaking the Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee", Wei Ming Dariotis and Eileen Fung pointed out that in *Pushing Hands*, Ang Lee sees the "East" from a "native" perspective, and provides the audience with a cultural history to challenge the hegemonic view of the "West".

Wedding Banquet (1993), *Hulk* (2003) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). Unlike most of Lee's other films centered on female figures, such as *Eat Drink Man and Woman* (1994), *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (1999), and *Lust, Caution* (2007), protagonists in these films are predominantly male, and male-male relations, in particular, the father-son and homosexual relationships, are remarkable. Focusing on Lee's representation of male characters in these four films, it is insightful to investigate his concept of masculinity and his own position in representing gender-power relations.

Secondly, I grounded my study of the male figures in Ang Lee's films in "critical studies on men (CSM)" or "studies of men and masculinities".[4] Masculinities studies in Western countries have captured much attention in the academic arena since the 1970s. The last two decades have seen a large number of works on men and masculinities emerge in a wide range of disciplines. Such studies of men's experiences and masculinities have made "men *as men*, rather than as generic human beings whose gender [goes] unnoticed and untheorized or at least undertheorized" (Brod and Kaufman 4). In this way, men's studies attempt to critique and subvert "patriarchal ideology's masquerade as knowledge" like women's studies (Brod 1987, 40). However, different from women's studies, critical men's studies foreground men's experiences to theorize masculinities in a subtle way. As Michael Kimmel (1994) notes:

> Institutionally, women lived in a world in which men held virtually all the positions of power. Interpersonally, individual women felt powerless to effect the kinds of changes in their lives they wanted. Feminism thus proposed a syllogism: Women were not in power and did not feel powerful; men were in

[4] In *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China*, Song Geng quotes Ford and Lyons, pointing out that "nowadays more and more scholars have rejected the term 'men's studies' in favor of 'critical studies on men' (CSM), 'critical men's studies', or "studies of men and masculinities'" (3).

> power and therefore must feel powerful. But this symmetry between women's powerlessness at the aggregate, social level and at the individual, interpersonal level, however, was not matched by an equally symmetrical relationship for men to the idea of power (vii).

Here Kimmel points out the difference between men's social power as a group and men's individual experience of powerlessness. Therefore, it is important to recognize the diversity and plurality of men's experiences, in particular, the power asymmetry among different men in race, sexuality, history, and class. Chinese men have occupied such a paradoxical position in "the world gender order" (Connell 2005, 73). They are privileged by gender power over Chinese women as a group, but meanwhile are subordinated in race by white men and women.[5] They have been portrayed in ways that Edward Said (1978) explained in terms of the concept "Orientalism" and are "Othered" as emasculated and asexual. These portrayals, according to Morrell and Swart, "are misrepresentations and reflect global disparities" (91) from postcolonial perspectives on men and masculinities. Contextualizing my study of Lee's portrayal of male figures in critical men's studies, I go beyond both gendered essentialism and the hegemony of the Western gender paradigm to articulate alternative paradigms in understanding masculinities, examining how different masculinities are constructed and negotiated in transcultural spaces. My study follows the line with R.W. Connell's idea that "different forms of masculinity exist together and that hegemony is constantly subject to challenge" (1998, 17) and his call for international teams to work together on men and masculinities (18-19). Ang Lee's films have never been dealt with in such a disciplinary field.

[5] Analyzing masculinities from a multidimensional perspective, Mutua points out "black men were privileged by gender and subordinated by race" (xvi). Athena, D. Muta, "The Multidimensional Turn: Revisiting Progressive Black Masculinities." IEEE Ctc IEEE (2012): 38-47.

Most significantly, I employ a comparative perspective of theorizing men and masculinities in Chinese and American cultures with an innovative methodology. Though some scholars have discussed Lee's depiction of male images, in particular, the father image and homosexual males, they contextualize their discussion in either traditional Chinese culture or Western theories, in particular, feminist and queer theories. Positioning myself as a Chinese woman who studies American culture in Germany, my study transgresses cultural boundaries and gender delimitations, focusing on the negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces. I approach Lee's portrayal of men and masculinities with a feminist consciousness, paying special attention to Lee's dealing with female characters in constructing and reconstructing masculinities. My study marks men and masculinities salient in the gender-power relations with reference to women and femininities.

My exploration of Lee's representation of men and masculinities is equipped with double epistemological perspectives, namely, both Chinese and Western. My project is both conceptual and analytical. On the conceptual level, I intend to demonstrate how constructions of masculinities can be more productively explained by employing not only the Western conceptual arguments of transcultural space (transdifference) but also by reading this space from different epistemological perspectives, namely the Western and Chinese. As a buzzword now in gender studies, masculinity is as familiar as difficult to define for scholars. "Many perspectives approaching the problem of masculinity have been advanced, but there is still no comprehensive theorizing of a universal set of defining characteristics of masculinity" (Louie 2002, 2). The meanings of gender and masculinity vary considerably from culture to culture, within any culture over historical time, over the life course, and within any given society at any one time (Kimmel and Aronson 503-04). Therefore, "a failure to theoretically

reconstruct and deconstruct models of masculinity, whether they be 'Eastern' or 'Western', would only perpetuate the myth of a supra-sexual 'mankind', placing all other kinds in the margins" (Louie 3). My analysis deploys both Chinese and Western perspectives to provide a fruitful interpretation of men and masculinities in Lee's films, so as to explore Lee's conceptualization of masculinities and their negotiations in transcultural contexts.

Manhood in Chinese culture has gone through different historical periods and has been much transformed. In my project, I employ the concepts and ideas of gender and masculinity in pre-modern China to interpret Lee's representation of male figures. The reasons for my focus on the conceptualization of gender and manhood in the pre-modern period lie in two important facts. Firstly, Ang Lee is not influenced by the changes of the gender paradigm and masculinities through important historical events in Mainland China, and his imagination and depiction of Chinese culture are based on the traditional Chinese culture, in particular Confucianism, which dominates in the pre-modern period. Although the year is contestable among historians, the pre-modern period refers to the period before Westernization or modernization in China.[6] Ang Lee's parents moved from the Mainland to Taiwan following the Chinese Nationalists' defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and he was born in 1954. Masculinities and manhood went through many important changes in Mainland China, in particular, in the period of the selfless and asexual Maoist revolutionary heroes. However, living in Taiwan, where the Confucian tradition is not denounced as in Mainland China, and Chinese traditions are well preserved, Ang Lee's perception and understanding of Chinese culture is very traditional (There are of course

[6] The beginning of modernization in China is contestable among historians. Some argue that it should be the year 1912, the foundation of the Republic of China. Others contend that modernization starts in the year 1919, marked by the May Fourth Movement.

complicated divisions among Taiwanese). After he moves to the USA, his emotions and nostalgia for Chinese traditions deepens for his Chinese diaspora identity. In his films, Lee's imagination and depiction of China focus on Chinese traditions, and transcultural interactions between China and US are dealt with according to his own understanding of Chinese culture.[7]

Secondly, the conceptualization of gender in pre-modern China is remarkably different from the Western gender discourse and it plays a significant role in constructing gender and manhood in contemporary China. In studies of men and masculinities in China, scholars share a keen interest in reconstructing the picture of masculinity in Chinese culture in the pre-modern period before the East met the West. "The differences between the Chinese constructs and the prevailing Western constructs in gender are of great significance" (Song and Hird 6). Although the Chinese gender paradigms have been reconfigured under Western impact since China's modernization, the pre-modern cultural influence does not disappear. On the contrary, it is gaining increasing importance in understanding and constructing contemporary manhood in China and negotiations of masculinities in the world. With China's increasing power in the world, on the one hand Chinese men are attempting to validate their manhood in the global arena through flaunting the traditional cultural characteristics after the crisis of masculinity since Western colonization and modernization. Manhood based on the traditional cultural roots is being revived among Chinese men. Popular TV series in Mainland China, such as *Red Sorghum* (*Hong Gaoliang*) and *Ordinary World* (*Ping Fan De Shijie*), promote the

[7] Tu Wei-ming argues that the overseas Chinese who may seem peripheral to the meaning of being Chinese and Chinese culture, can assume "an effective role in creatively constructing a new vision of Chineseness that is more in tune with Chinese history and in sympathetic resonance with Chinese culture" (28). "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center 'Cultural China'." *Daedalus* 120.2 (Spring1991): 1-32.

revitalization of the spirit of "Search for Roots"[8] and where a Chinese audience can see virile Chinese men once again. On the other hand, "there has been a converted effort by both political leaders and image-makers to seek inspiration from traditional virtues and try to convince the world that Chinese 'characteristics' matter and are worth eulogizing" (Louie 2015, 131). The springing up of many Confucius Institutes is the best illustration for the promotion of the "soft power" of China in the world.

However, my employment of the pre-modern conceptualization of gender and manhood is not a part of the nationalist assertion of Chinese uniqueness. Rather it provides a different epistemological perspective to look at men and masculinities, thereby challenging both the gender norms and the domination of the Western gender paradigm in the world gender order. Using the Chinese conceptual notion of masculinities to analyze Lee's portrayal of men, probes deeply into Chinese men and masculinities in a culturally specific context on the one hand, dismantling the stereotypes of Chinese (American) men as emasculated and inferior. On the other hand, perceiving Lee's portrayal of American male figures through a Chinese perspective provides a new and different interpretation of masculinity beyond the Western paradigm and thus destabilizes Western norms of gender and masculinity. Therefore, my project is part of the critical theories challenging both gender and racial hegemony, which are always connected.

Admittedly, emphasizing Chinese conceptualization of gender and masculinity ideals might fall into the essentialist notion of masculinity and reproduce masculine hegemony in gender. My dialogical reading of Lee's depiction of Chinese (American)

[8] The "Root-seeking school" was a group of fiction writers who explored Chinese native cultural traits to come to a new understanding of present culture during the 1980s in China. The Roots of literature (Wenxue de gen) gave the school its name. Writers in this school called for a redefinition of self-consciousness, in particular, men's self-consciousness rooted in Chinese tradition. The search for masculinity was an essential part of the search for cultural roots. The macho male figures in "Search for Roots" were always primitive, robust in rural areas, standing for the strength and potency of the Chinese nation. Representative writers were Mo Yan, Han Shaogong, Jia Pingwa and Zhang Chengzhi.

men with the application of contemporary Western critical theory prevents me from falling into this trap. Through having double epistemological perspectives, I can step out of the simple East-West dichotomy to explore the negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces. I use "transcultural spaces" in the analysis of Ang Lee's films on two levels. It can be interpreted in the concrete sense: referring to the metropolitan city, for instance, New York City in *Pushing Hands* and *The Wedding Banquet*. Transcultural spaces can also be used in an abstract way: referring to the filmic space created by Lee, in which he deploys double cultural perspectives to display and illustrate his male figures and how these male figures demonstrate the interactions between manhood from two cultures. I introduce the transdifference theory to provide a theoretical foundation for my analysis of transcultural spaces. Transdifference has been recognized in a wide range of contexts, and provides insight into the analysis of issues related to identity constructions with a focus on the conceptualization of North American indigenous identities.[9] However, it has never been applied in a non-Western context. My application of the concept is the first attempt to "play" it in a transcultural context between Western and non-Western. Transdifference is salient in my investigation on the negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces, and the male characters in Lee's films are confronted with the "phenomena of transdifference" as they come to be incorporated in complicated, potentially conflicting "social-cultural affiliations, personality components" (Breinig and Lösch 105). In a word, together with my double epistemology, transdifference evokes a multiple reading of masculinities in "a pamlipsestic process" (110) of cultural encounters to reintroduce complexity in constructing and negotiating masculinities in Ang Lee's films.

[9] See Breinig 2003, 2007; Däwes 2007 and Hein 2012.

On the analytical level, I employ audio and visual textual analysis in my examination of Lee's portrayal of male figures. Film techniques, such as shots, camera movement, lighting, editing, setting, dialogue and music, are examined to provide a close reading of Ang Lee's films. In this way, the analysis is informed by both interpreting the negotiations of different masculinities that are enacted in the visual texts and the negotiations of different theoretical lenses in reading these visual texts.

My dissertation starts with an introduction of my innovative approach to study negotiations of masculinities in Ang Lee's films from both conceptual and analytical levels and double epistemological perspectives. Then a theoretical chapter follows to briefly introduce some concepts and features of gender and masculinities in both Western and pre-modern Chinese cultural contexts. These notions of gender and masculinities will be further explained in following chapters, intertwined with the specific film analysis.

Chapter One reads Lee's portrayal of male images in his first film *Pushing Hands* (1992). This chapter examines the ways in which the Chinese father is represented in respect to the traditional understanding of normative Chinese masculinity and fatherhood, and then explores how these notions are destabilized in the father-son relationship. Using Kam Louie's *wen-wu* dyad as an analytical model and the Confucian notion of filial piety, I argue that Lee's depiction of the traditional Chinese father provides an alternative perspective to comprehend Chinese manhood and fatherhood, which cannot be separated when discussing a non-western and culturally specific paradigm.

Chapter Two focuses on Ang Lee's representation of homosexuality in *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) as a device for dealing with racial, cultural and generational

conflicts. I argue that Lee's portrayal of the homosexual relationship between Wai-tung and Simon subverts the power asymmetry between Chinese manhood and American manhood in a racial hierarchy. His Confucian outlook of homosexuality and a bisexual perspective in pre-modern China in the portrayal of Wai-tung destabilizes his sexuality, which is previously caught in a heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy and thus challenges the compulsory heterosexism of the Western gender paradigm.

Chapter Three takes a transcultural perspective to interpret homosexual relationship in *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). Analyzing Jack and Ennis as two ideal masculine models from two cultures, namely, the cowboy masculine model and the Confucian *junzi* masculine ideal, I argue that Lee's depiction on the one hand dismantles the stereotypical representation of gay men in American mainstream media and meanwhile questions the cowboy masculine model as American macho iconography. On the other hand, he introduces a Confucian outlook to interpret homosexuality with respect to moderate desires and social responsibility in *junzi* masculinity. In this sense, the film becomes a transcultural space in which masculinities in different cultural contexts are negotiated.

Chapter Four deals with another American masculine icon – the superhero in *Hulk* (2003). This chapter illustrates how Bruce/Hulk can be read to address the American superhero masculinity, which Lee subverts and inserts with the notion of Chinese heroism *xia* for an interaction of heroic masculinities in a transcultural way. Moreover, this chapter also discusses how Lee uses Bruce/Hulk as an allusion to Chinese American masculinity in the cultural interstitial space, turning marginalization into empowerment through transdifference.

In my conclusion, I sum up my findings of negotiating masculinities in the four films and formulate Lee's concept of masculinities in transcultural spaces. I state the implication of my research for the scholarship on studies of masculinities in the transcultural context and filmic representation of gender. And finally, I propose directions for future research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. 1 Previous Studies on Ang Lee and His Films

Ang Lee was born to a *Waishengren*[10] family in Taiwan. His parents moved to Taiwan from Mainland China following the Chinese Nationalist's defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Lee's father was the principal of a high school in Taiwan and he imbued his children with studying traditional Chinese culture. He had expected Ang Lee to become a professor and was disappointed when his son failed the national university entrance exams and subsequently entered the National Arts School. Ang Lee went to the US in 1979, received his MFA in film production and started his career as a filmmaker. With numerous international awards, Ang Lee has been internationally recognized as a transcultural filmmaker. From his first screenplay *Pushing Hands* (1992), which won a prize from the Taiwan government, to *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), which won him the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and started his international career, and then his return to Taiwan for *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), which won five awards in Taiwan and internationally, Ang Lee demonstrates his fascination with the interaction between East and West. *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) not only made him a second-time winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, but also opened the door to Hollywood, where he directed three films: *The Ice Storm* (1997), *Ride with the Devil* (1999) and *Hulk* (2003). *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (1999) made his name internationally recognizable with surprising success worldwide, and finally he won a large number of Best Director awards for *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and achieved world renown. After *Brokeback Mountain*, Lee directed *Lust Caution* (2007), which captured the

[10] Waishengren(外省人) refers to those people who moved to Taiwan from mainland China after 1945 until the late 1940s and early 50s.

Golden Lion at the 2007 Biennale Venice Film Festival. *Life of Pi* (2012) was a remarkable box office success and earned eleven Academy Award nominations after *Taking Woodstock* (2009). Ang Lee's films range over a wide array of genres and he has crossed and blurred the boundary of Chinese and American culture, moving skillfully between the two. His films embody the rapidly deepening relationship between American and Asian cinema in specific ways, promoting a transnational communication in the global era:

> By the time I made *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, everything seems to have come together… On the receiving side, I think the whole world is more ready with the Internet, with film festivals and DVDs. It used to be a one-way street from West to East: we were receiving and the West was producing. I think we are getting closer and closer. The gap between the cultures is getting erased every day… the world is getting smaller".[11]

1.1.1 Bicultural Identity and Cultural Translation

There is a rich body of research on Ang Lee's films due to his great success in cinema. Most research attributes this success to his bicultural identity, which enables him to navigate both Chinese and American cultures (Chen, Cao, and Zhuang 154-156; Hu 180; Xiao 131-134; Zhang 151-154; Zhou 45-50). Lee's first three films, known as the "Father Knows Best" Trilogy, depict a fascinating picture of traditional Chinese cultural elements: Tai Chi and Chinese calligraphy in *Pushing Hands*, traditional Chinese wedding rituals in *The Wedding Banquet*, mouth-watering Chinese food and culinary arts in *Eat Drink Man Woman*. The significant Chinese landscapes in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* provide his audience with a rich sensory

[11] Ang Lee, quoted in David M. Halbfinger, "The Delicate Job of Transforming a Geisha", *New York Times*. 6 Nov. 2005. For more details, please see https://mobile.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/movies/moviesspecial/the-delicate-job-of-transforming-a-geisha.html.

experience in "Cultural China"[12]. His representation of Chinese culture has been greatly appreciated by some scholars from the standpoint of Chinese nationalism (Fu 8-9; Hou 15-16; Qin 105-106). Ang Lee is skillful at combining Western techniques with Eastern verve and his representation of Chinese culture is viewed as a success of cultural translation in promoting the wider reception of Chinese culture in a global context. Lee Ken-fang's paper argues that *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* subverts the definition of Chinese *Wuxia* cinema and redefines Chineseness in the global era.[13] Ti Wei points out Ang Lee's films demonstrate a close relation to the increasing globalization of the film industry. He argues that cultural transplantation is an effective tool in *Eat Drink Man Woman* to enable success in the international film market with a mass audience.[14]

On the other hand, Lee goes the other way and introduces Western culture to a Chinese audience. Ang Lee goes beyond his Chinese cultural roots to direct films situated in Western cultural contexts. He explores the love life and romantic relationships among the Dashwood sisters in 18th century England in *Sense and Sensibility*. He depicts the destruction and fragmentation of the 1970s American family in *The Ice Storm*. He examines complicated North-South relations and racial issues in the American Civil War in *Ride with the Devil* and he tells a homosexual love story between two cowboys in 1980s USA in *Brokeback Mountain*. In spite of limited research, some scholars have noticed Lee's efforts in translating Chinese culture in Western films. Shao Yang argues that Lee demonstrates traditional Chinese culture in both his Chinese-language and English-language films, in which Lee

[12] See Tu, Wei-ming. "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center 'Cultural China'". *Daedalus*120.2 (Spring1991): 1-32.
[13] Lee, Ken-fang. "Far away, so close: cultural translation in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*". *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.2 (2003): 281-95.
[14] Wei, Ti. "Generational/Cultural contradiction and Global incorporation: Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman*". *Island on the Edge: Taiwan Cinema and After*. Eds. Chris Berry and Feii Lu. Hong Kong University Press, 2005. 101-12.

establishes an implicit Chinese cultural image. It indicates the possibility of local cultural practices in the globalized era and thus helps articulate the voice of Chinese culture in the world.[15] Chris Berry points out that *Brokeback Mountain* is "distinguished from most other Westerns by mixing in melodrama" (2007, 32). He analyzes the "Chinese form of melodrama" and Chinese "family ethics" in the film. Moreover, Felicia Chan observes the Western culture in Lee's Chinese-language and argues that *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* is a successful cultural translation, transplanting the Western chivalry and feminism in Chinese language films.[16]

1.1.2 Orientalism?

While some critics appreciate Ang Lee's translation of Chinese culture for wide reception, others criticize it from the postcolonial perspective as an Orientalist stereotypical representation. Cai und Zhou point out that Ang Lee's representation of Chinese culture is West-centered and analyze Orientalism in Lee's films.[17] Ding Hui analyzes orientalist spectatorship and considers cultural exoticism an important characteristic of Lee's films.[18] Ma Sheng-mei analyzes the impact of globalization on Ang Lee's films and points out that there is an obvious description of exoticism in the "Father Trilogy". He argues that the "Father Trilogy" is produced and consumed under the capitalist framework, so as to cater to the bourgeoisie's taste. Ang Lee's representation of Chinese culture fulfills the desire of the Western audience so that he

[15] Shao, Yang. 邵杨.论李安外语片中中国文化形象的隐性存在[On the Chinese Cultural Images in Ang Lee's Foreign-Language Films]. 当代文坛 4 (2011): 148-51.
[16]Chan, Felicia. "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: Cultural Migrancy and Translatability." *Chinese Films in Focus II*. Ed. Chris Berry. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 73-81.
[17] Cai, Shengqin and Zhou Xin 蔡圣勤、周新. 论李安电影中的东方主义[Orientalism of Director Lee Ang in His Film]. 华中科技大学学报社会科学版 15.4 (Nov., 2001): 86-9.
[18] Ding, Hui. 丁卉. 李安电影中的文化奇观[Cultural Spectacles in Ang Lee's Films]. 电影通讯 5 (2000): 50-2.

could attract a world audience in the global market.[19] Eleanor Ty argues that Lee's films show similarities with Wang Wayne's films, which adapt Oriental exoticism, and demonstrate the surrender of power to Western subjectivity and the viewing position through the recoding process.[20]

Other scholars seem to be more positive, focusing on Lee's efforts on transcultural interactions in spite of his employment of Orientalism. Cheng Shao-chun points out that Lee has employed the Orientalist strategy effectively to promote the visibility of Chinese culture in the international film market.[21] He considers Orientalism an effective approach rather than a betrayal. Fran Martin holds that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* appeals to both the Chinese audience and Western audience as Lee employs a cross-cultural perspective for "allo-identification" (identification with a character different from oneself).[22] It is worth noting that Darius Wei Ming and Eileen Fung contend that Ang Lee provides an indigenous representation of the Orient, China in particular, challenging Western hegemonic consumerism.[23]

1.1.3 A Gender Perspective: Homosexuality and Femininity

Some scholars explore the gender issue, focusing on Lee's portrayal of homosexual and female characters. Homosexuality is an important topic in Lee's films: *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *Taking Woodstock* (2009), among which *Broke* has won numerous awards and achieved

[19] Ma, Sheng-mei. "Ang Lee's Domestic Tragicomedy: Immigrant Nostalgia, Exotic/Ethnic Tour, Gobal Market". *Journal of Popular Culture* 30.1(1993): 191-201.
[20] Ty, Eleanor. "Exoticism Repositioned: Old and New World Pleasures in Wang's *The Joy Luck Club* and Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman.*" *Changing Representations of Minorities East and West*. Eds. Larry E. Smith and John Rieder. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996. 59-74.
[21] Cheng Shao-chun. "Chinese Diaspora and Orientalism in Globalized Cultural Production: Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." *Global Media Journal* 3.4 (2004).
[22] Martin, Fran. "The China Simularcrum: Genre, Feminism, and Pan-Chinese Cultural politics in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*. Eds. Chris Berry and Feii Lu. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005, 149-59.
[23] Dariotis, Wei Ming and Eileen Fung. " Breaking the Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee." *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender.* Ed. Sheldon Hisao-peng Lu. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. 187-220.

world acclaim for Ang Lee. Researchers have explored homosexuality in Lee's films from different perspectives. Chinese critics prefer to analyze the topic from a cultural perspective. For instance, Cai and Yang explore homosexuality in traditional Chinese family values and discuss the reactions of Chinese parents, family conflicts and how it challenges Chinese ethical norms.[24] *Brokeback Mountain* is analyzed as a universal love experience, expressing the purity and innocence of love. Du points out that the film obscures gender and it focuses on the struggle for universal love experience.[25] Chris Berry points out that the narration of homosexuality is treated more as a family problem than as a gender issue.[26] Compared to the other two, *Brokeback Mountain* has generated more discussion among Western critics from the perspective of queer theories. Many a critic substantially argues that "the gay element of the narrative has been played down in the interests of mainstream marketability" and the gay figures "are not gay enough" (Keller and Jones 23). W.C. Harris analyzes how *Brokeback Mountain* marginalizes gayness by placing it in the closet, avoiding conflicts between homosexuality and heterosexuality.[27] Janet A. Mcdonald considers that although *Brokeback Mountain* subverts the Western cowboys' hard masculinity, the representation of Jack and Ennis still maintains the characteristics of heterosexuality, and he considers that it is deceptive to invite heterosexual heroes to play homosexual roles in films.[28] Jr Richard N. Pitt observes different attitudes toward black and white bisexuality in American media from intersections of race and gender. They point out

[24] Cai, Hongsheng and Yang, Dejian. 蔡洪声、杨德建. 李安的新都市电影 [Ang Lee's New Urban Films]. 当代电影 2 (1996): 109-14.
[25] Du, Yan. 杜燕.寻找心中的<断臂山> [The "Brokeback Mountain" in Heart]. 电影评介 9 (2006): 20-1.
[26] Berry, Chris. "*The Wedding Banquet*: A Family (Melodrama) Affair." *Chinese Films in Focus II*. Ed. Chris Berry. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 183-90.
[27] Harris, W.C. "Broke(n)back Faggots: Hollywood Gives Queers a Hobson's Choice." *Reading Brokeback Mountain: Essays on the Story and the Film*. Ed. Jim Stacy. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. 2007. 118-34.
[28] Mcdonald, Janet A., "Queering the Representation of the Masculine 'West' in Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain.*" *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review* 3.2(2007): 1-7.

that in films like *Brokeback Mountain*, white bisexuals are represented as healthy and sympathetic while black bisexuals' behavior is indecently described as morbidity and AIDs related, indicating that American media has been more open to white bisexuality but provides no space for African Americans.[29]

Besides generating many comments in terms of homosexuality, Ang Lee's films also evoke feminist criticism, particularly on female images in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. William Leung considers that *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* is a feminist film, for it gives a much deeper representation of female characters than any other *Wuxia* films.[30] However, many critics contend that this film does not attack Chinese patriarchy from a feminist perspective. Chan believes that the film actually represents and reaffirms patriarchy through its distorted representation of female figures.[31] L.S. Kim considers that the female warriors in the film come from the *Wuxia* pattern instead of the feminist movement.[32] And Catherine Gomes argues that the film reproduces patriarchal culture.[33] Some authors criticize that Ang Lee's film adaption of *Sense and Sensibility* has weakened the feminist element in Jane Austen's novel. Kristin Flieger Samuelian points out that the film emphasizes romance, which appears to endorse feminist discourse, but actually relates to post-feminist intervention and effectively kills the feminist tendency in the novel.[34] Rebecca Dickson sees the "strong and self-sufficient Elinor" of Jane Austen's novel reduced to

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[29] Jr., Richard N. Pitt. "Down Mountain? De/Stigmatizing Bisexuality through Pitying and Pejorative Discourses in Media." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 14.2 (Spring 2006): 254-58.
[30] Leung, William. "Crouching Sensibility, Hidden Sense." *Film Criticism,* 26.1 (Fall 2001): 42-5.
[31] Chan, Felicia. "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: Cultural Migrancy and Translatability." *Chinese Films in Focus II*. Ed. Chris Berry. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 73-81.
[32] Kimm, L.S. "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Making Women Warriors—A Transnational Reading of Asian Women Action Heroes." *Jump Cut* 48 (2006). <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc48.2006/womenWarriors/>.
[33] Gomes, Catherine. "Crouching Women, Hidden Genre: An Investigation into Western Film Criticism's Reading of Feminism in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon.*" *Limina*11(2005): 47-56.
[34] Samuelian, Kristin Flieger. "Postfeminist Intervention in Sense and Sensibility." *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Eds. Linda Troost and Sayre N. Greenfield. University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 148-58.

"a girl woman with unexpressed emotions who must learn to demonstrate them" in Lee's film. The representation of a distracted Elinor kills the success of her as a woman (55-56). Since *Lust Caution* (2007), scholarship has being burgeoning among Chinese critics on feminist thoughts in Lee's films (Gao 155-158; Zhan 2011; Xiang 2014). Dai Jinhua's article extends her discussion from the female body and sexuality to national politics and ideology, contextualizing her discussion in the changing political power relations since the 20th century. She points out that the film demonstrates the rupture between individual self-identification and national identity, indicating the personal response and national reactions to the power asymmetry in the process of globalization and capitalization.[35]

All these essays have constituted a huge part of the scholarship on studies of Ang Lee and his films. In 2007, Ang Lee's autobiography *Shinian yijiao dianying meng*[36] (A Ten-Year Dream of Cinema) tells stories of Ang Lee's life and his career as a filmmaker, which provide helpful resources when studying Ang Lee. *The Cinema of Ang Lee: The Other Side of the Screen* written by Whitney Crothers Dilley is the first complete English academic study of Lee's films. The author analyzes nine films (1992-2005) from cultural, gender, filmic, feminist, psychoanalytic and postmodern perspectives, providing a detailed interpretation of each film. She focuses on cultural identity and argues that Ang Lee's films "reveal a startling array of genres and approaches to the topic of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world" (45). Her research emphasizes the importance of narrative analysis of Lee's films, discussing Lee's filmic adaptions. However, it does not form a systematic thematic analysis of Ang Lee's films with a theme, and her analysis of the global impact on

[35] Dai, Jinhua. 戴锦华. 时尚·焦点·身份——<色戒>的文本内外[In and out of *Lust Caution*]. 艺术评论 12 (2007): 5-12.
[36] Zhang, Liangbei. 张靓蓓. 十年一觉电影梦[A Ten-Year Dream of Cinema]. 人民文学出版社, 2007.

Ang Lee's films goes unilaterally from West to East. Xiang Yu's doctoral dissertation *The Art of cross-border – The Research of Ang Lee's films* explores Ang Lee's films from the perspective of film history and filmic techniques. He investigates Lee's successful combination of Chinese artistic ideas with Western filmic languages, exploring his double coding methods to represent images of China, women and homosexuals. His research focuses on film studies rather than cultural studies.[37]

Previous studies show that male figures in Lee's films have not attracted sufficient attention and no intensive study has been made from the gender perspective on men and masculinities. Scholars have discussed certain male images in Lee's films, focusing on the father image and the homosexual males. Chinese critics demonstrate great interest in Lee's portrayal of the Chinese father, who takes an authoritative position in the symbolic order. Fu Rong analyzes Electra complex and father issues in Lee's "Father Trilogy", illustrating Lee's nostalgia for traditional Chinese culture and Chinese roots.[38] Sun Weichuan argues that the "Father Trilogy" demonstrates sympathy and concern for the father, and meanwhile deconstructs Chinese patriarchy, subverting the feudal ethics in traditional Chinese culture.[39] Yu Qunfang points out that Ang Lee has been through the process from nostalgia for patriarchy to oscillation between glorification and accusation, and finally to shaking off patriarchal restraints.[40] Chen Xihe analyzes the different father images in Ang Lee's films and Zhang Yimou's films, discussing the interactive relations between the two societies and cultural contexts, which produce such differences. He points out that the father

[37] Xiang, Yu. 向宇. 跨界的艺术：论李安电影[*The Art of cross-border – The Research of Ang Lee's films*]. 中国社会科学出版社, 2014.
[38] Fu, Rong. 付蓉. 从"恋父情结"解析李安电影中的文化内涵 [An analysis of the cultural connotation from the "Electra Complex" in Ang Lee's Films]. 电影评介 20 (2006): 8-9.
[39] Sun, Weichuan. 孙慰川. 试论李安<家庭三部曲>的叙事主体及美学特征[The Narrative Subject and Aesthetic Features in Ang Lee's Trilogy]. 南京师范大学学报 1(2007):150-5.
[40] Yu, Qun fang. 喻群芳. 李安电影中的 "恋父情结" [The "Electra Complex" in Ang Lee's Films]. 当代电影 5(2004):115-7.

image in Lee's films demonstrates Lee's thinking on the deconstruction of Chinese patriarchy in the Western context.[41] Besides the queer perspective in the studies of homosexuality, there is limited research by some scholars exploring identity politics through some male figures in Lee's films. Gina Marchetti is an important scholar. She discusses the identity hybridity of Wei-tung in *The Wedding Banquet*, analyzing his construction of identity through race, gender and cultural negotiations.[42] In another article, Marchetti argues that Lee represents Hulk as a metaphor for people of color in the US, demonstrating their anger as well as his final acceptance of his marginalized position.[43] Such scholarship is helpful for my study of Ang Lee's films from both Chinese and Western epistemological perspectives, focusing on negotiations of masculinities in a transcultural context. Therefore, a conceptual framework based on gender and masculinities theories from both Western and Chinese contexts are important to consolidate my analysis of Lee's representation of male figures in transcultural spaces.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

As a buzzword in gender studies, "masculinity", in the words of Tim Edwards, is at once "everywhere and yet nowhere, known and yet unknowable, had and yet un-*have*-able" (1). However, the last two decades have witnessed increasing scholarship about men and men's experiences, among which there is a burgeoning interest in the critical study of the Western notion of masculinity and the knowledge of gender and masculinity in non-Western countries. In "Globalization, Imperialism, and

[41] Chen, Xihe. 陈犀禾. 李安和张艺谋电影中的父亲形象比较[A comparative analysis of the father images in Ang Lee and Zhang Yimou's Films]. 2006 李安电影研讨会.
[42] Gina Marchetti. "The Wedding Banquet: Global Chinese Cinema and the Asian American Experience". *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism.* Eds. Hamamoto, Darreli Y. and Sandra Liu. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000. 275-97.
[43] Gina Marchetti. " Hollywood and Taiwan: Connections, Countercurrents, and Ang Lee's Hulk." *Chinese Connections: Critical Perspectives on Film, Identity, and Diaspora.* Eds. See-kam Tan, Peter X. Feng, and Gina Marchetti. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009. 95-108.

Masculinities" (2005), R.W. Connell develops "a concept of the globalization of gender" and points out that a "world gender order" has connected "the gender regimes of institutions, and the gender orders of local societies, on a world scale" (71). Concerning the construction of masculinity, we "must now think about the construction and enactment of masculinities" between the local and global forces (74). In the era of globalization, the communication of different masculinities is not a simple flow from the West to the East but an active interaction between local and global forces. Masculinity Studies therefore have to take into consideration the complicated relationships among different cultures and ethnic groups, so as to reveal the characteristics of masculinities in different cultures, in particular non-Western cultures, which are overshadowed by the Western gender paradigm. Therefore, the study of either Chinese manhood or American manhood cannot be carried out independently, regardless of the complicated conflicts and negotiations between them, particularly with China's rising power and its cultural impact on the global world.

Two aspects are important while examining the interaction between Chinese and American manhood in the context of globalization. On the one hand, manhood based on the essentialist notion in a given culture is challenged and on the other, the power asymmetry among manhood in different cultures should also be kept in mind. Such a perception reemphasizes the significance of the turn from "masculinity" to "masculinities" as the discourse of masculinity has become increasingly plural in and between cultures.[44]

[44] See Kimmel and Messner, M.A. *Men's Lives*. 6th Boston: Pearson Education, 2004.

1.2.1 "Hegemonic Masculinity": Extending the Use of the Concept

In either a given culture or transcultural spaces, acknowledging differences within the category of men is the first step to analyze power relations among masculinities. As R.W. Connell (2005) points out:

> To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity (37).

The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" provides "a way of theorizing gendered power relations among men and understanding the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order" (xviii). This concept first appeared in the article "Towards a new sociology of masculinity" (1985), in which Carrigan, Connell, and Lee extensively critiqued the "male sex role" literature and proposed a model of multiple masculinities to explore power relations. In the article, hegemonic masculinity refers to "a particular variety of masculinity to which others – among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men - are subordinated" (587). According to the authors, the concept concerns "a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance" (592). In the later article "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" (2005), Connell and Messerschmidt further advocate the use of the concept to explore the hierarchy and power relations in specific circumstances and historical periods (832). In this sense, "hegemonic masculinity" is constructed in specific context, varying according to different historical, social and cultural contexts. Connell's recent writings focus

attention on the emergence of "transnational business masculinity" as the latest manifestation of a mode of "hegemonic masculinity" in the global world or "global gender order".[45] In this way, Connell "globalizes" the concept and explains how certain forms of masculinity enter the global arena and occupy the dominant position.[46] The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" thus goes beyond the local to global, and therefore can be used to explain power relations between men in transcultural spaces.

The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" offers a lens to explore the power relations between masculinities in my project on two levels. On the global level, the Western gender paradigm dominates the world and undermines that in other cultures, in particular, the non-Western cultures. Analyzing Ang Lee's portrayal of men, this concept is insightful when exploring the internalization of the Western notion of masculinity in Chinese men and hierarchical relations between white-American and Chinese (American) men. On a local level, it is important to recognize that in either Chinese or American culture, the male population has never been a homogenous one. By privileging certain groups of men in different historical periods, some men are subordinated and marginalized. Examining the negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces acknowledges that the two discourses not only run parallel, they also intertwine. Analyzing the global gender order in "Globalization, Imperialism, and Masculinities" (2005), Connell points to the importance of equal power relations and criticizes the political hegemony of the United States. "Western cultural forms and ideologies circulate, local cultures change in response, and the dominant culture itself

[45] R.W. Connell. "Globalization and Business Masculinities." *Men and Masculinities* 7.4 (April 2005): 347-64.

[46] Juanita Elias and Christine Beasley's article assesses the scholarship between globalization and "hegemonic masculinity". They argue that "transnational business masculinity" renders the notion monolithic and top-town, and suggest a "demassification" of it. Juanita Elias and Christine Beasley. "Hegemonic Masculinity and Globalization: 'Transnational Business Masculinities' and Beyond." *Globalizations* 6.2 (2009): 281-96.

changes in an immense dialectic" (73). He points out "the links that constitute a global gender order seem to be of two basic types": The first is "interaction between existing gender orders" and the second is "the creation of new 'space' and arenas beyond individual countries and regions" (73). Ang Lee's films mirror such a transcultural space, in which the interaction of gender order in different cultures not only "multiplies the forms of masculinities present in the global gender order" (74), but also most importantly destabilizes the hegemony of the Western paradigm, which dominates the world gender order. In order to explain how Lee dismantles such hegemony in his portrayal of men in American culture, I firstly try to characterize major attributes of "hegemonic masculinity" in American society.

1.2.2 Understanding "Hegemonic masculinity" in American Culture

In *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996), Michael Kimmel points out that though "manhood means different things at different times to different people" (5), there is "a singular vision of masculinity, a particular definition that is held up as the model" against which American men all measure themselves (5). He quotes the summary by the sociologist Erving Goffman as follows:

> In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports… Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior (5).

Kimmel traces how such a singular "hegemonic masculinity" is prescribed as the norm of masculinity in American culture and how it renders American men besieged. He argues that the history of American manhood is "a history of fears, frustration, and

failure" (8). Haunted by fears of being not masculine enough, American men frequently fall into a pattern of trying to "control themselves", projecting their fears onto "others", and then attempting to "escape" (8).

Gay men are the most important group of men who Kimmel identifies as the "other" to the "complete" American men to project their fears upon. Kimmel foregrounds the male-male relationship and points out that homophobia is fundamental to the conceptualization of masculinity in American culture. In "Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity" (1994), he illustrates homophobia in American culture as follows:

> Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that awe might be perceived as gay…. Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear (142).

Homophobic fear dominates American cultural definitions of manhood and heterosexuality thus becomes a central element of American manhood. In order to demonstrate manliness in front of other men, American men enact all manner of exaggerated masculinity to prove that they are not effeminate, cowardly or lack aggression. Most significantly, Kimmel explains how homophobia "is intimately interwoven with both sexism and racism", and how minorities and women thus become the "other" against which American white heterosexual men "project their identities, against who they stack the decks so as to compete in a situation in which they will always win, so that by suppressing them, men can stake a claim for their own manhood" (145).

Women, according to Kimmel, are not "incidental" to men's constructs of masculinity, though "they are not always its central feature" (1996, 7). He distinguishes between women and femininity, pointing out "it is not women as corporeal beings but the 'idea' of effeminacy by other men animated men's actions". It is "femininity" rather than "actual women" that "becomes a negative pole against which men define themselves" (7). Together with women, non-white men are also used as a screen against which white men project their own fears of emasculation. Since the mid-20th century, Asian men "have served as unmanly templates against which American men have hurled their gendered rage" and are seen as "small, soft, and effeminate – hardly men at all" (1994, 145). David Eng (2001) explores how Asian American men are symbolically castrated in American society and emphasizes that colonized societies are posited as homosexual while heterosexuality is implicitly linked with whiteness. He mentions the "antimiscegnation and exclusion laws" that prohibited the immigration of Asian women, which resulted in the Chinatown as "bachelor communities" (17). Such historical and political prejudice has rendered a much greater part of the Asian American population "queer", marginalized and excluded from American manhood (18). Eng's book clearly demonstrates how homophobia plays together with racism and how white-American men project their fear of masculine inadequacy to non-white Asian men. In this sense, homophobia can be considered as a fundamental attribute in constructing "hegemonic masculinity" in American culture.

Kimmel's conceptualization of homophobia relating to sexism, heterosexism and racism in constructs of American manhood is insightful for my project. The approach is helpful in looking at how Ang Lee's films perpetuate or dismantle certain hegemonic models of masculinity in American manhood. My project investigates how

white American men employ hegemonic models, such as the cowboy masculinity model and the superhero model, to assert their masculinities against feminism and homosexuality. And most significantly, how Ang Lee challenges and subverts such models so as to dismantle the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity based on homophobia against sexism and racism in American dominant culture. Therefore, women and femininity in Lee's films, instead of being used in constructs of masculinity, whether as the "other" to be measured against, or as sexual objects to demonstrate heterosexuality, take on looks different from the mainstream culture. Meanwhile, rather than portraying homosexual men as emasculated and effeminate, Lee portrays new images of them. Such new articulation shows great debt to Ang Lee's background in traditional Chinese culture, from which he employs many insights of the conceptualization of gender from pre-modern China to challenge the domination of the Western notion of masculinity as the universal norm. In this way, the knowledge of gender and masculinity in pre-modern China can be taken as an effective tool to challenge the Western hegemony though it does not necessarily assert a so-called Chinese model or paradigm. It not only engenders a better understanding of Chinese culture, but also provides a sophisticated perception of masculinity from a transcultural perspective.

1.2.3 Confucianism: A Cornerstone in Conceptualizing Masculinity in Pre-modern China

The word "masculinity" is absent in Chinese and in Chinese literature and vernacular language, some terms such as *nanzi* 男子, *nanren* 男人, *dazhangfu* 大丈夫, *yingxiong* 英雄, *haohan* 好汉, or *shi* 士 are used in different contexts referring to the idea of what a man should be. The absence of the term "masculinity" and the ample discussions of the notion, according to Wu Yulian, "reveals that there is no singular

definition of masculinity" in Chinese culture and "masculinity is a complicated notion that contains many components and perspectives" (61). Exploring the term in pre-modern China, Confucianism is the most important source. Confucianism has been the dominant ethic in China for more than 2,000 years. Though the authority of Confucian values was challenged at the turn of the 20th century, it has had an immense impact on the definition of manhood in traditional Chinese culture, and influences the notion of gender and manhood in contemporary China. My project formulates a framework through important notions of gender, sexuality and moral values in Confucian classics and studies on men and masculinities in pre-modern China.

1.2.3.1 Homosociality[47] and the Same-sex Relationship

In examining the idea of masculinity in pre-modern China, we must be aware that most men spend most of their time in same-sex company. Confucian society stresses separation between men and women, who are strictly confined to the household. With limited contacts with women, men develop mostly their social skills, emotional bonds and their talents in the company of other men. Susan Mann (2000) maintains "late imperial China was a society where the dominant channels of social mobility ensured that men would spend the better part of their social life interacting exclusively with other men. This was a culture where we could expect homosocial bonding to reach the state of a very high art" (1606). For this reason, "gender" in traditional Chinese culture is conceptualized in a highly homosocial context and lacks dichotomies in the modern sense. According to Tani E. Barlow (1988):

[47] "Homosocial" is a term developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, referring to "social bonds between the same sex" (1). *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

> [G]endering – the social and textual strategies by which experience, objects and subjects are apportioned a male or female identity – probably assumed a very different place in Chinese modernity than it had in the preceding imperial epoch. I am not suggesting that people in the Chinese past were more confused about their gender than people in China's present. It's just that in pre-Modern epochs (in Europa as in Asia) before capitalist culture and before colonialism, people's anatomical endowment did not immediately determine their gender – their social sex, so to speak (7).

Barlow holds that the contemporary male/female, masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual binary categories are appropriations from the West and that sex and gender have been reinvented in the modernization and Westernization of Chinese culture since the beginning of the twentieth century. In other words, China had a long history of cultural tolerance of same-sex relationships before confronted with the Western representations of sexuality in law and science that labeled them harmful to health and social order, placing them "in a marginalized position where they were pathologized, criminalized, or tainted with notions of sin" (Mann 2011, 148).

Studies on Chinese gender and same-sex relations demonstrate that male homosexual bonds are widely accepted in pre-modern China. In his book *The Libertine's Friend* (2011), Giovanni Vitiello explores homoeroticism in the fiction of the late Ming and Qing dynasties and argues that male homosexuality, expressed as both sexual acts and romantic bonds, has always held a central position in Chinese practices and imaginations of desire. He shows persuasively that male homoeroticism was an important aspect of the late imperial sexual imagery and that male same-sex bonds were an acceptable and normative variant of sexuality to Chinese men. Bred

Hinsch's book *Passions of the Cut Sleeves* focuses on the reconstruction of the Chinese "male homosexual tradition". Identifying different paradigms of homosexuality in Chinese history[48], he points out that "homosexuality was widely accepted and even respected, had its own formal history, and had a role in shaping Chinese political institutions, modifying social conventions, and spurring artistic creation" (4). The repressive attitude towards homosexuality is a relatively recent phenomenon. Though official anxiety about homosexual intercourse increased during the early eighteenth century in the Qing dynasty, Matthew Sommer (1997) argues that the government's concern is not male sexual relationships, but the defense of patriarchal marriage to uphold "familial order and social hierarchy as means to political order" (140). Such findings demonstrate a fluid and indeterminate conceptualization of gender and sex, and male homosexuality is thus rarely subject to moral indictment or medical pathologization in pre-modern China.

However, it is worth noting that the notion of same-sex relationships has limited social and cultural meanings. Male-male sexual relationships in pre-modern China were hierarchical and "understood in terms of status rather than expressions of mutual love" (Mann 2011, 139). Examining the history of same-sex eroticism in pre-modern China, Susan Mann states (2011):

> Because phallic penetration was such a powerful status symbol in same-sex relationships, assumptions about hierarchy and power were implicit in most historical accounts of male-male sex. Fictional references to young male lovers were often patronizing or dismissive, sometimes noting that a young man who

[48] Hinsch points out "we must take care when discussing male homosexuality in the Chinese context, because classical Chinese lacked a medical or scientific term comparable to 'homosexuality' or 'homosexual'. Instead, Chinese terminology "did not emphasize an innate sexual essence, but concentrated rather on actions, tendencies, and preferences" for associations with homosexuality (7). *Passions of the Cut Sleeves: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1990.

> took a passive (inferior) role in male-male sex would eventually move on to heterosexual relationships in which he would be penetrator, sometimes treating male lovers as a convenient substitute for inaccessible cloistered females (140).

Susan Mann's statement places same-sex intercourse in a regime of power-based male-male relationships, distant from emotional intimacy and male friendship, which I will explain later. Moreover, the tolerance of the same-sex relationship and male intimacy does not mean that pre-modern Chinese society embraces homosexuality, rather Confucius establishes a set of rules to uphold the suppression of personal desires for political and social responsibility so as to maintain "proper" relations among people.

1.2.3.2 Defining Masculinity in Interpersonal Relations

As I have mentioned above, the gender concept is fluid, and sexual orientation in pre-modern China is not as important as a definer of masculinity and personal identity as it is in Western culture. Rather Confucian virtues, such as filial piety to parents, obligations to family, and contributions to the sovereign and state, constitute what defines a man and the "ideal masculinity". Therefore, instead of defining masculinity as a generic category and as an individual subjectivity in the Western gender paradigm, Confucianism prescribes manhood in a web of interpersonal relationships and virtues embodied in them. Confucianism sets up a set of moral doctrines to regulate human relationships, namely, the Five Cardinal Relationships: those between emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger, and friends. Of these five, the father-son relationship occupies the key position in the social fabric.

Father-son Relationship

Manhood in traditional Chinese culture cannot be discussed without reference to fatherhood. In Confucian culture, a man's identity and purpose of existence are not complete until he continues the family lineage with an heir, preferably a son. And it is a great imperative for the father to bring up a filial son so that he will not feel humiliated in front of his ancestors. The father-son relationship is remarkably important and governing it are the perceptions of filial piety, which exerts a great impact on the concept of man and manhood in pre-modern China. The Confucian classic explains filial piety in the "Hisâo King" as follows:

> Our bodies-- to every hair and bit of skin--are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them:--this is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages, and thereby glorify our parents:-- this is the end of filial piety. (*The Classics of Filial Piety*: The Scope and Meaning of the Treaties. C. i.)
>
> 身体发肤，受之父母，不敢毁伤，孝之始也。立身行道，扬名于后世，以显父母，孝之终也。(孝经：开宗明义章第一)

This clearly demonstrates the ultimate obligation that filial piety imposes on men, which is that he should live a life with honor and credit so as to bring fame to his family, in particular to his father, who will not be ashamed of him. In this sense, to be a superior man is related to the ethical conduct of filial piety. This is reiterated in a more detailed statement in the "Li Ki":

> The body is that which has been transmitted to us by our parents; dare any one allow himself to be irreverent in the employment of their legacy? If a man in his own house and privacy be not grave, he is not filial; if in serving his ruler he be not loyal, he is not filial; if in discharging the duties of office he be not reverent,

he is not filial; if with friends he be not sincere, he is not filial; if on the field of battle he be not brave, he is not filial. If he fails in these five things, the evil (of the disgrace) will reach his parents:-- dare he but reverently attend to them? (Bk. xxi., sect. ii., 11)

身也者，父母之遗体也。行父母之遗体，敢不敬乎？居处不庄，非孝也；事君不忠，非孝也；朋友不信，非孝也；战陈无勇，非孝也。五者不遂，灾及于亲。敢不敬乎？(礼记·祭义)

The reverential service to his father extends to the ruler and the friend, and the filial responsibilities range from those in the household to the public arena. In this sense, filial piety becomes a system of rules governing men's conducts and a benchmark of measuring manhood in Confucian society. As a matter of fact, filial piety is both a duty and an opportunity for a man to assert his manhood (Hinsch 8). In Chinese history, many men won fame and social advancement for their filial piety. For instance, "Show Filial to Parents" (Wo Bing Qiu Li) tells a story of a man in Jin Dynasty named Wang Xiang, who lay down on the ice to fish for carp for his sick stepmother. His filial devotion was not only moved Nature to reward him with fish, but also win him celebration among people to gain an official position.

Governed by filial piety, the father-son relationship in Confucian society firstly engages duties on both parts, but mainly on the part of the son. The duty to support the parents and his sacrifice of personal comforts for them is enjoined in the book of filial piety: "They are careful in their conduct and economical in their expenditures, in order to nourish their parents. This is the filial piety of the common people" 谨身节用，以养父母 (C.vi.). And according to "Li Ki", "While his parents are alive, a son should not dare to consider his wealth his own nor hold it for his own use only." 父母

在，不敢有其身，不敢私其财 (Bk. xxvii., 30.) Such statements demonstrate the central and dominant position of the father in the family over the son, who is expected to prioritize the needs of father, proving him with material wellbeing in his old age. However, Confucius is not satisfied with such duties of the ordinary people. The Master said:

> The filial piety of nowadays means the support of one's parents. But dogs and horses likewise are able to do something in the way of support; without reverence, what is there to distinguish the one support from the other?"
>
> 今之孝者，是谓能养。至于犬马，皆能有养；不敬，何以别乎？(LY, 2.7)

Reverence, love and obedience to the father are thus more importantly considered as a sentiment of pious regard from the son. Confucianism highlights the father's superiority and authority over the son and the son is expected to be obedient and respectful towards his father. As a filial son, a man does not only have to support his father when he is alive, performing ceremonial duties of ancestral worship after his death, the act of filial piety but also highlights sincere respect and instant obedience. Being obedient to fathers and the subsuming of their desires for autonomy, according to Bret Hinsch, prove the maturity of Chinese men to demonstrate their "manly strength of will" (8).

The responsibilities of the father are more serious and grave. The father avoids comradeship with his son for it might tend to impart the son's veneration for him: "I have also heard that the superior man maintains a distant reserve towards his son." 又闻君子之远其子也 (LY, 16.13). The father tries to "keep himself a veritable hero in his son's eyes, in order that he may command, and may be worthy to command, his admiration and reverence" (Dawson, 154). Fathers in this sense are governors of Confucian moral and social criteria, "ever-watchful and loving guardian, happy in his

son's well-doing and grieved, rather than wroth, at his misdoings" (154). The father-son relationship thus emphasizes status hierarchy, social propriety and formality instead of expressions of emotional feelings. However, such a picture of the father-son relationship does not mean that a lack of love and intimacy, or psychological distance rather than closeness, characterizes the very relationship. While demanding obedience and respect from the son toward the father, filial piety also encourages overall benevolence and love from the father to the son. The articulation of the soft and sentimental emotions between them is confined by the "strict father" persona, which "set restrictions for men to express their parental love, for the greater good of the child, for the maintenance of appropriate social order, and for the upholding of a proper male posture" (Li and Jankowiak 5). Such a Confucian understanding of the father-son relationship in terms of filial piety, the patriarchal fatherhood, and the suppression of emotional expressions with confined sentiments is helpful to explore Ang Lee's portrayal of the father-son relationship in respect of generational and cultural conflicts in transcultural spaces.

Man-woman Relationship and Femininity/Masculinity

In Confucian society, women play a subordinate role in their relationship to men. Their life is described by three kinds of obedience: to the father during childhood, to the husband during marriage and the son during widowhood. Women are kept to their homes as much as possible and suppressed in domestic life. According to Tani Barlow (1991), women in pre-modern China are defined through their domestic roles as daughters, wives and mothers (133). In the process of raising her, the parents of the Chinese girl set matrimony as her goal. She is trained and taught with an eye to subjection to her husband in the regulation of the family and to obedience to her husbands' parents, in particular the mother at home. As part of the ceremony of

marriage, the bridegroom goes in person to bring his bride home to his father's house, where she becomes a member of her husband's family and a daughter to his mother. This is stated in the "Li Ki":

> The Father gave himself the special cup to his son, and ordered him to go and meet the bride; it being proper that the male should take the first step (in all the arrangements). (The meaning of the marriage ceremony. 6)
>
> 父亲醮子而命之迎，男先于女也。(利记·昏义)
>
> The ceremony establishing the young wife in her position; (followed by) that showing her obedient service (of her husband's parents); and both succeeded by that showing how she now occupied continuing the family line:--all served to impress her with a sense of the deferential duty proper to her. (The meaning of the marriage ceremony. 8)
>
> 成妇礼，明妇顺，又申之以著代，所以重责妇顺焉。(利记·昏义)

Such quotes clearly demonstrate the inferior and weak position of women in the home of her husband's family. As an "intruder" and an outsider, she is always considered as a potential threat to the harmony of her husband's family. Men are supposed to guard against undue influence by women, in particular their wives, so as to fulfill their moral commitment to family and social obligations (Furth 1990, 196-197). A husband can divorce his wife when she is considered disobedient to his parents or causes trouble to his family.[49] Therefore, confined to the domestic field, women in Confucian society are dependent upon men and have very slim chances of speaking out.

Since women are absent from the public arena, the concept of manhood in pre-modern China, as noted above, lacks a femininity/masculinity dichotomy. Femininity,

[49] In the Elder Tai's Record of Rites [大戴礼记], the causes for divorcing a wife are stated: "Disobedience to parents-in-law, failure to bear a son, adultery, jealous of her husband, leprosy, garrulity, theft".

the most important "other" in constructs of masculinity in the Western gender paradigm, demonstrates an alternative relation to masculinity in pre-modern China. In Martin Huang's book *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* (2006), he explores "the questions of *how* different models of masculinity were proposed and negotiated in relation to the feminine" (9) through critical readings of male images in elite discourse, vernacular fiction and advice literature in the late imperial period. Taking gender as a relational concept, Huang discusses the role of femininity or "female others" in constructs of masculinity. He summarizes two strategies for negotiations of masculinity in relation to women, namely, "the strategy of differentiation" and "the strategy of analogy" (2).[50] According to Martin Huang, while some men define their masculine valor "against the feminine", the other seek to "validate" their masculinity "through the feminine" (32). Feminine features, such as rosy lips, pale faces and weak bodies in pre-modern China do not necessarily mean a lack of manliness. On the contrary, they can represent ideas of masculine beauty and handsomeness. For example, Jia Baoyu, the hero of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is such a beautiful and "ideal" man:

> His face was like the full moon at mid-autumn; his complexion, like morning flowers in spring; the hair along his temples, as if chiseled with a knife; his eyebrows, as if penciled with ink; his nose like a suspended gallbladder; his eyes like vernal waves; his angry look even resembles a smile; his glance, even when stern, was full of sentiment.[51]

[50] According to Martin Huang, the differentiation strategy is "straightforward", in which the "masculinity is defined in sharp contrast to femininity". In this strategy, women are considered as "a threat to men's manhood" and "masculinity is gauged by a man's distance from women". Such a strategy to construct masculinity is closely related to misogyny and the subordination of women, which are also implied in the strategy of analogy. Therefore, in pre-modern China, these two strategies are not "inherently exclusive of each other because hierarchy and sex inequality are the basic principles underpinning both"(5).

[51] See Cao, Xueqin and Gao, E. *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. 3 vols. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1978.

面若中秋之月，色如春晓之花。鬓若刀裁，眉如墨画，面如桃瓣，目若秋波。虽怒时而若笑，即嗔视而有情。

Such a portrayal of Jia Baoyu embodies many feminine features in terms of "moon", "flowers", "vernal waves" and "sentiment" to assert his "ideal" masculinity. According to Wu Cuncun (2003), in the Qing dynasty, men of either social hierarchy endeavor to resemble the features of a beautiful woman; "pale lustrous skin like jade, a slim body that barely supported the clothes, fingers like sprouts of spring bamboos, vermillion lips, a gentle gaze, and a tender air (22-23). Such "feminized" ideals of masculinity and male beauty embody the easy slippage between masculine and feminine styles and performances, and transgress Western gender norms.

Male Friendship

Confucian classical writings highlight emotional and intellectual intimacy among men, and male friendship is an important attribute in constructing the notion of idealized masculinity. Friendship in traditional China, according to Martin Huang (2007), "was more or less a masculine relationship" and "it was largely perceived to be a male privilege" (5). "To have many male friends was often considered an important badge of masculinity since it bespoke a man's ability to travel and meet other men outside his family and beyond his hometown" and is thus a "manly accomplishment" (6).

Most importantly, Confucianism has elevated male friendship as absolute indispensable in achieving moral self-cultivation in ideal masculinity. "One could not achieve ultimate Confucian sagehood in isolation and without the help of like-minded friends"(Huang, 31). As stated in *Confucian Analects* (Lunyu): "The superior man on

grounds of culture meets with his friends, and by friendship helps his virtue.[52] 曾子曰：“君子以文会友，以友辅仁。” (12.24). Confucius reiterates the importance of friendship in self-development as a superior man, who should be selective of his friends in terms of moral virtues.

> There are three friendships which are advantageous, and three which are injurious. Friendship with the upright; friendship with the sincere’ and friendship with the man of much observation: these are advantageous. Friendship with the man of specious airs; friendship with the insinuatingly soft; and friendship with the glib-tongued: these are injurious.
>
> 子曰: “益者三友, 损者三友。友直, 友谅, 友多闻, 益矣。友便辟, 友善柔, 友便佞, 损矣。” (LY, 16.4)

Here Confucius summarizes the criteria for choosing a friend, demonstrating that in order to be an idealized friend, one has to be an upright, sincere man with much insight and knowledge. In many specific contexts, Confucius states the virtues a man should possess in friendships:

> I daily examine myself on three points: -whether, in transacting business for others, I may have been not faithful;-whether, in intercourse with friends, I may have been not sincere;-whether I may have not mastered and practiced the instructions of my teacher.
>
> 吾日三省吾身 —— 为人谋而不忠乎？与朋友交而不信乎？传不习乎？(LY, 1.4)
>
> If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty, and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous; if, in serving his parents, he can exert his utmost

[52] The English translation of Confucian Analects (Lunyu 论语) quotes from James Legge. Legge, James. Trans. *The Fourbooks: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, And the Works of Mencius.* Shanghai: The Chinese Book Company, 1930.

strength; if, in serving his prince, he can devote his life; if his intercourse with his friends, his words are sincere: -although men say that has not learned, I will certainly say that he has.

贤贤易色；事父母能竭其力；事君，能致其身；与朋友交，言而有信。虽曰未学，吾必谓之学矣。(LY, 1.7)

Such statements demonstrate that Confucius attaches remarkable importance to the virtues of sincerity and trustworthiness in male friendship. And most importantly, it suggests that friendship in Confucianism, similar to relations to the minster or parents, is "conceived of in terms of a man's social obligations in his relationships with other men" (Huang 2007, 11). Accordingly, Confucius also emphasizes the propriety in rituals in conducting friendship as in other interpersonal relations:

When a friend sent him a present, though it might be a carriage and horses, he did not bow. The only present for which he bowed was that of the flesh of sacrifice.

朋友之馈，虽车马，非祭肉，不拜。(LY, 10.23)

In serving a prince, frequent remonstrances lead to disgrace. Between friends, frequent reproofs make the friendship distant.

事君数，斯辱矣；朋友数，斯疏矣。(4.26)

Faithfully admonish your friend, and skillfully lead him on. If you find him impracticable, stop. Do not disgrace yourself.

忠告而善道之，不可则止，毋自辱焉。(12.23)

Therefore, friendship is important in self-development to be a superior man in Confucianism and it becomes an important means for demonstrating masculinity. Many Chinese novels, such as *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel* (San Guo Yan Yi), *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shui Hu Zhuan), and poetry, all celebrate male intimacy

and brotherhoods in portraying idealized male figures.[53] Such male friendships are so vividly described that some scholars have inferred that male friendship might include sexual relations in pre-modern China (Hinsch 1990, 131-132), whereas others insist that male friendship did not involve such sexual relations (McDermott 1992, 70). Limited studies in men and masculinities in the pre-modern era make it difficult to have a clear answer.[54] However, no matter if male friendship involves sexual relations or not, it acknowledges that male intimacy and affection in pre-modern China are widely accepted as performances of masculinity and have not been overshadowed by charges of homophobia as in Western culture.

1.2.4 *Wen-wu*: Asserting a Chinese Masculinity Paradigm in and out of Confucianism

Although Confucianism is the orthodox ideology in pre-modern China, there are also some men who rebel against this and reject conforming to the Confucian notion of masculinity. They defy the containment of Confucian rules, aspiring to be free spirits. Meanwhile, their heroic conducts invoke admiration and respect among ordinary men, providing an alternative masculine imagination. For instance, we can find *Xia* 侠 in vernacular fictions. They are martial men with brilliant kung-fu skills or massive physical strength, with which they fight for the weak against the strong. Unlike Confucian men, they have no interest in achieving high social status. Rather they demonstrate self-loyalty and individualized free will. For a long time, they have been neglected in the discussion of manhood in pre-modern China.

[53] See Shi, Nai'an and Luo, Guanzhong. *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Trans. Sidney Shapiro. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980. And Luo, Guanzhong. *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*. Trans. Moss Roberts. Beijing/Berkeley: Foreign Languages Press/University of California Press, 1994.
[54] According to Martin Huang, "in traditional China friendship between two men in male-male sexual relationship was possible but in most cases substantially or qualitatively different from that between two males who were not sexually involved with each other" (2007, 25).

As a pioneering researcher in the field, Kam Louie (2002) establishes this group of men as a significant element in his Chinese masculinity paradigm. He develops a *wen-wu* dyad to capture the Chinese masculine ideal over time in a wide spectrum, extending to contemporary China beyond Confucianism. According to Louie, "*Wen* is generally understood to refer to those genteel, refined qualities that were associated with the literary and artistic pursuits of the classical scholars" (14). *Wu*, however, is a concept which embodies "attributes of physical strength and military prowess", as well as "the wisdom to know when and when not to deploy it" in the *wu* philosophy (14). Both *wen* and *wu* are cultivated by the male masses, though a man may only achieve one or the other, and only those men with both *wen* and *wu* prowess are considered as a masculine ideal (14-17). Using Confucius and Guan Yu as *wen* and *wu* masculine models respectively in Chinese cultural tradition, he extends his discussion to include modern Chinese literature and film, exploring the transformations of *wen-wu* in a global context. For instance, the *wen* ideals "can be seen as encompassing commercial expertise" and Confucius is considered as a capitalist entrepreneur that "embraces an economic component" (43). Advancing the dyad *wen-wu* as an analytical tool and theoretical approach to conceptualize the Chinese masculinity, Louie's book also includes a discussion of women's voices to articulate their attitudes towards masculinity. "Gender and sexuality are only comprehensible if the various genders and sexualities are correlated with each other and not in isolation" (99). Most significantly, he has illustrated how the *wen-wu* ideal, as a cultural construct, reflects the multifarious social conditions in which it is produced, as well as transformed. His study demonstrates that Chinese masculinity "moves to being multi-gendered as well as being more international" (164).

His book is illuminating in three ways: firstly, the *wen-wu* paradigm for the first time provides a general theoretical approach and analytical model to conceptualize Chinese manhood, challenging the universalism of the Western norms of gender and masculinity. Secondly, his study retrieves women's "muffled" voices on men and masculinity, examining how women construct manhood. Most significantly, Kam Louie extends his discussion of the paradigm to a broader range of international context, examining the transformation of both *wen* and *wu* attributes from traditional China to the contemporary period. In this way, his study takes a transcultural attribute and is thus insightful for my investigation of Ang Lee's films in a transcultural way. Inspired by his insightful study, my dissertation not only recuperates Confucianism as a significant perspective to investigate Ang Lee's conceptualization of masculinity, but also explores how the Confucian notion of masculinity is challenged in and between cultures. In other words, my project challenges the idea that China will somehow become just like the West in terms of gender and masculinity, or the idea that China will cast a distinctive path and offer some utopia to "solve" the problems of men and masculinities in the West. Instead, my project probes deeply into the processes of conflicting and negotiating different masculinities in transcultural spaces.

1.2.5 Transdifference

My study of negotiating masculinities in Ang Lee's films is interested in moments when the clear demarcations of difference are oscillated, but not entirely dismantled. The concept of transdifference is highly useful to debunk "plural affiliations, conflicting solidarities, even contradictory identifications" (Hein 61) in the construction of male identities. Helmbrecht Breinig and Klaus Lösch define the concept as follows:

> The term *transdifference* refers to phenomena of a co-presence of different or even oppositional properties, affiliations or elements of semantic and epistemological meaning construction, where this co-presence is regarded or experienced as cognitively or affectively dissonant, full of tension, and undissolvable. … The concept of transdifference is related to such models of non-linearity because it interrogates either/or attributions like identity and alterity; … The focus of transdifference is on what is left out or suppressed in differential meaning production not on the diachronic but on the synchronic level. … At the same time, its focus is not on the multiplicity of differences in significational networks but on the complexity that is engendered but suppressed even in differentiating processes based on the assumption of binary opposites or at least of only a very small number of factors to be distinguished – again a pervasive tendency in human operation of establishing meaning (105; 108).

Compared to related terms in transcultural theory, such as hybridity, transculturation and borderland, transdifference "fills an important gap by not pointing in the direction of an overcoming of difference, the blending and merging of properties, and the mediation of semantic fields" (106). The concept means "neither synthesis, nor syncretist combination, nor deconstruction" but "refers to moments in which difference becomes temporarily unstable, to put it metaphorically, loses its totalising grip but still reaches out for awareness" (115). In this sense, transdifference holds difference as a point of reference, but meanwhile points out its insufficiency of reducing world complexity.

Analyzing negotiations of cultural identities, transdifference aims at "recovering the intricate interrelatedness and interdependence of self and other that is usually

being obfuscated or even obliterated in the discourse that engage in identity politics" (112). In the construction of personal identity, the concept may be "hindering the constructions of an integrated, consistent and relatively stable personal identity" (116) or "calling for the construction of a self-concept that outgrows the limiting dichotomous model the self vs. other by acknowledging the ruptures and the affective and cognitive dissonances engendered by 'cross-cutting identities' "(116). Most importantly, transdifference devotes particular attention to the questions of power asymmetry in multiple affiliations in the process of identity construction. "The chances to *articulate* transdifference positionalities are distributed in a highly asymmetrical way" (117, emphasis in original) and "one must caution that the autonomy of the subject is always crossed and at least partly cancelled out by heteronomous aspects of subjectification" (117).

I profit from the concept of transdifference in applying it to the analysis of negotiating masculinities in Ang Lee's films, and it comes into my study in the following ways. First, I follow Breinig and Lösch's assertion that "there can be no such thing as 'pure' self-representation, no autonomous (counter-) discourse, since all narrations of identity are somehow intertwined with the narrations of other groups – in the case of a counter-discourse this will be the hegemonic discourse" (112). Lee's depiction of men and masculinities in transcultural spaces demonstrates the voicing of both Chinese and American notions of manhood. His portrayal of Chinese male figures echoes the voice of American manhood and vice versa, each bearing some marks of the other. Second, the dichotomies of self and other, heterosexual/homosexual, male/female are oscillated but not entirely deconstructed. Breinig and Lösch point out that "the concept of transdifference interrogates the validity of binary constructions of difference without deconstructing them" (109). In

the light of transdifference, my analysis explores oscillation and the suspension of binary delimitations in constructs of masculinities, debunking the complexity engendered and suppressed for a clear belonging of cultural and gender identity. In addition, transdifference is insightful to illustrate the complicated power relations beyond the individual's control in constructs and negotiations of masculinities. "The specific social power relations an individual is exposed to largely determinate his or her chances to claim a transdifference positionality" (118). Transdifference provides a perspective to investigate masculine identity construction and emancipation in transcultural spaces where power affiliations interact and self-autonomy is always beyond the reach of many men.

Most significantly, reading Ang Lee's representation of masculinities in light of transdifference goes beyond a unilateral reading of masculinities either from a Western or a Confucian perspective. Rather, it evokes a multiple reading of masculinities from double epistemology and most significantly, in a palimpsest of cultural encounters. As Breinig and Lösch note:

> While from a first order (ingroup) perspective the symbolic order of a given society may appear as natural, consistent and historically continuous, from a second order perspective it is a historically contingent construction that owes its seemingly undisputable validity to the continuous repression of alternatives and 'difference within difference'. … From a diachronic perspective, systems of meaning can therefore be aptly described as palimpsests: what has been excluded can never be erased, but only overwritten by what has been selected. And the traces of the repressed are therefore present and the repressed alternatives can be reconstructed (110).

My double epistemology provides two order perspectives to promote a multiple reading of Chinese and American masculinities in Ang Lee's films, investigating how such readings interact with each other and reintroduce complexity in masculinity constructions and negotiations. In this way, transdifference can also be taken as "a starting point" to interrogate "the consistency and the truth claims of the symbolic order [s]" (110), serving as a tool to resist both Confucian and Western masculine norms to articulate new conceptions of masculinities.

2. WEN-WU MASCULINE IDEAL AND CONFUCIAN FATHERHOOD IN *PUSHING HANDS*[55]

The camera shows an extreme-close-up of hands pushing in the air, and then introduces a facial close-up of an old Chinese man, Mr. Chu, who is practicing Tai Chi. Fluid and dramatic camera movements portray his movements with a diversity of shots: depicting Tai Chi visually as an emancipating, leisurely activity. Then the camera turns to a shot of a computer screen, with an extreme-close-up of hands typing above the keyboard before introducing a facial close-up of a young blond woman, Martha, the daughter-in-law of Mr. Chu. Within a frame-shot, we see Mr. Chu practicing Tai Chi in the living room in the front and Martha working on the computer in the kitchen at the back. They are within the same shot, but separated by a doorway. The camera occasionally shows shots of Chinese calligraphy on the wall, marking a contrast to the strawberry cake in the refrigerator, where a Chinese soy-sauce bottle juxtaposes with an American milk carton. The intercutting between Mr. Chu and Martha exhibits conflicting differences in the two cultures. Tai Chi, Chinese calligraphy, videos of the Beijing opera and Chinese cuisine show a striking contrast to computer typing, jogging, American cartoons, Western cakes and salads all through the film.

Pushing Hands is Lee's first screenplay. It was first released in Taiwan in 1992 and later received a U.S. release after the success of *The Wedding Banquet*. *Pushing Hands* tells the story of a traditional Chinese father who is trapped by great changes in American society. A retired Chinese Tai Chi master, Mr. Chu (Sihung Lung), emigrates from Beijing to live with his son Alex (Bo Z. Wang), American daughter-in-law Martha (Deb Snyder) and grandson Jeremy (Haan Lee) in New York. The

[55] Part of this chapter will be published as one chapter "Masculinity and Fatherhood in Ang Lee's *Pushing Hands*" of the forthcoming book *Fatherhood in Contemporary Discourse: Focus on Fathers*. ISBN (10): 1-4438-7323-3 and ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7323-9. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

cultural differences cause misunderstandings and emotional conflicts among all the family members. His son Alex arranges a matchmaking picnic between Mr. Chu and Mrs. Chang (Wang Lai) so as to be absolved from his filial obligations. Mr. Chu feels humiliated and leaves home. Mr. Chu gets a job washing dishes in a restaurant. Offended by his ruthless Chinese boss, he finally uses his Tai Chi skills to defend himself: he stands his ground and is able to defeat the gangsters by turning their strength against them. Following his arrest, Mr. Chu's reputation as a Tai Chi master spreads and he later teaches Tai Chi to both Chinese and American residents in Chinatown. The film ends with Mr. Chu's accidental encounter with Mrs. Chang and hints at a possible union between them.

The opening scene introduces the conflicting cultural differences between the U.S. and China. Analyzing "East" and "West" relations, Edward Said asserts that "the essentialist relationship, on political, cultural and even religious grounds, was seen-in the West, which is what concerns us here to be one between a strong and a weak partner" (40). "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). Lee remarkably subverts this dominant and subordinate relation at the beginning of the film. Firstly, Lee reverses the power relations in the colonial discourse of West/masculine and non-West/feminine binary. Said argues that "orientalism" characterizes Western writings, and the Orient represents the "West" self-referentially and positively, as everything that the "East" was not. Describing the "West" as hyper-masculine, China and Chinese men have been strategically constructed as the feminized "Other" in Western imagination. However, Lee challenges this power relation by depicting the US as an incarnation of a young blond woman whereas China is symbolized as an old man. Moreover, intercutting Mr. Chu and Martha in

different activities with an equal proportion of shots, Lee seems to represent the two cultures without preference, subverting hegemony in orientalist depiction. Most importantly, Lee highlights the silence between Mr. Chu and Martha, indicating their non-recognition and misunderstanding between each other.

Portrayed as the "Yellow peril" and bachelor "Chinamen", Chinese men were considered as "vile, womanly, cowardly and cunning" in American popular discourse (Pon 142). Such stereotypes are products of colonial and orientalist discourse, resulting from American/Eurocentric writings. Analyzing Ang Lee, Dariotis and Fung asserts, different from Marco Polo who represents China as an ethnographic observer from the imperial and colonial perspective, Lee "sees the 'East' from the perspective of the 'native'." In this way, "he presents his audiences alternative cultural histories that attempt to challenge the hegemonic views of the 'West'" (192). Following their line, I contend that Lee's representation of Chinese men and manhood is also culturally specific, providing an alternative understanding of manhood in traditional Chinese culture. Analyzing Lee's portrayal of Mr. Chu with respect to traditional Chinese cultural heritage, it is significant to rediscover the indigenous knowledge to challenge the Western gender paradigm in the postcolonial context. Furthermore, it engenders a complex and sophisticated perception of manhood, exploring the transformation and negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces.

By analyzing the film textually and performing a close reading of its filmic techniques, I intend to discuss the ways in which Mr. Chu is represented with respect to the traditional Chinese masculinity in the *wen-wu* masculine ideal and Confucian fatherhood. Then I explore how his masculinity is threatened in American society through his relation to Martha and in the father-son relationship, and the restoration of manliness in transcultural spaces. I argue that Lee's portrayal of Mr. Chu provides an

alternative perspective for a Western audience to comprehend Chinese manhood and fatherhood, which cannot be separated when discussing a non-western and culturally specific paradigm. It thus challenges the stereotypes of a Chinese man as asexual and emasculated, and the patriarchal image of the Chinese father, dismantling the power asymmetry between American manhood and Chinese manhood in the global arena.

2.1 Beyond the West: Understanding Chinese Manhood in a Culturally Specific Way

To comprehend manhood in traditional Chinese culture, it is important to define the concept. Generally speaking, manhood refers to the standards or norms, which men in certain cultures are expected to follow. Michael Kimmel (1994) notes:

> Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed. Manhood does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture. Manhood means different things at different times to different people. We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of "others" – racial minorities, sexual minorities, and above all, women (134).

Kimmel clearly points out that manhood is "socially constructed and historically shifting" (134) and thus differs from culture to culture.[56] According to him, American manhood is constructed against "others", and anti-femininity is at the heart. In this sense, American manhood "is defined more by what one is not, rather than what one is" (Song 2004, 4). Different from American manhood, which is fundamentally constructed in male/female binary differences, women in pre-modern China have

[56] I distinguish "manhood" from "masculinities" in my study. Manhood is used collectively in one culture, whereas multiple masculinities coexist in any given culture. Masculinity can be a singular form of masculinities, referring to the manliness of individual males; it is occasionally used interchangeably with manhood.

been completely removed from the signifying system. Manhood in traditional Chinese society is thus "absent of the male/female, masculinity/femininity and heterosexual/homosexual dichotomies" (11). As David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames explain:

> In China the realized person has been broadly defined as an achieved harmony of the full range of human traits and dispositions. Male dominance is a consequence of sexual differentiation into male and female that has tended to exclude the female from the achievement of becoming human. Thus the male has been free to pursue the task of realizing his personhood through the creation of an androgynous personality (81).

Therefore, a fruitful way to understand manhood in traditional Chinese society is to look at heterosexual relations, but most significantly male-male relations, focusing on manhood ideals to capture the concept. Reading Lee's portrayal of masculinities in *Pushing Hands*, I find Kam Louie's work and the Confucian notion of filial piety are insightful for my analysis.

2.1.1 *Wen-wu* Dyad: Asserting a Chinese Masculinity Paradigm

In *Theorising Chinese Masculinity* (2002), Kam Louie develops a *wen-wu* dyad as a paradigm of conceptualizing Chinese masculinity. He observes that a balance of *wen* and *wu* was regarded as the masculine ideal in pre-modern China. He asserts that the Western standard of manhood is misleading in an analysis of other cultures and that a Chinese masculine paradigm should be generated within the Chinese context rather than to simply conclude Chinese men are feminized or emasculated (9). According to Louie, *wen* refers to those literary and cultural attainments associated with classical scholars while *wu* centers on physical strength and military prowess.

The masculine model presented by the *wen-wu* model was one aspired by men of all social classes, and is closely lined with power relations.

> Male leaders of every persuasion and historical period therefore try to demonstrate both *wen* and *wu* prowess. That is, all ambitious males strive for both *wen* and *wu*, and those who achieve both are the great ones. Lesser men may achieve only one or the other, but even this partial success will bestow them the aura of masculinity and the right to rule over a certain domain, however small (17).

The *wen-wu* framework is thus of great importance in order to understand Chinese manhood. Louie further points out that although the ideal masculine image is a combination of *wen* and *wu*, the relationship between *wen* and *wu* is not equal (17). In *Analects*, Confucius shows clearly his preference for *wen* over *wu*:

> Of the shao music, the Master said, it was perfectly beautiful and perfectly good. Of the *wu* music, he said, it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good. 子谓《韶》, “尽美矣，又尽善也”。谓《武》, “尽美矣，未尽善也”。 (LY, 3.25)

Annping Chin further explains that *wu* is associated with King Wu, the founder of the Zhou, who had conquered the Shang with violence. Compared to Emperor Shun, who ascended to power by the force of his character, the *wu* music of King Wu was inferior (41). Confucius' comparison between Emperor Shun and King Wu demonstrates that the superiority of *wen* over *wu* has existed for a long time in the history of China.

> In tracing the dynamics of the balance between *wen* and *wu* from classical times, Huang (Kuanzhong) found that in the early period both *wen* and *wu* had equal

value, with *wu* losing favor in the Warring States and Eastern Jin and reviving it in the Tang dynasty, only to lose it again in the Song" (Louie and Edwards 145). Furthermore, from the Sui dynasty (AD 606) to Late Qing dynasty (1905), the civil service examination system was the ultimate aspiration and the most effective tool for Chinese men to gain social status. As the Chinese phrase remarks: "to be a scholar is to be at top of the society" (万般皆下品惟有读书高). The association of *wen* masculinity with the right to rule is deeply rooted in the history of China, which, by extension, legitimized the primacy of *wen* to *wu*.

The divide and the hierarchy of *wen-wu* continue today (Louie and Edwards 147). Despite the appeal of Chinese men portrayed by Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan in kung fu films, Chinese men favor the power of the softer and refined intellectual masculine form in expression of *wen*. Louie points out that the concept of *wen* masculinity has been adapted to symbolize business wisdom and economic success under the Western influences since the 1980s. Analyzing the *wen-wu* dyad as the paradigm for Chinese manhood, Kam Louie highlights that *wen-wu* has significant gender, racial, ethnical and class implications. Women and men of non-Chinese race are excluded from the paradigm. *Wen-wu* can be applied to a broad range of social classes as a paradigm for conceptualizing masculinity among Han people, but not including non-Han ethnical minorities. In addition, although women are excluded from the paradigm, the class differences imply the perception that all men are powerful and all women are powerless is simplistic, as men have less power relative to elite women. Thus, the *wen-wu* dyad is not only an analytical paradigm of Chinese manhood, but also signifies the dynamic of social power in analyzing masculinity.

2.1.2 Filial Piety: Defining Chinese Manhood in Fatherhood

Kam Louie's *wen-wu* dyad theorizes ideal Chinese masculinity and asserts a Chinese masculinity paradigm beyond Western culture. However, the *wen-wu* dyad is inadequate to fully capture Chinese manhood because it ignores the most important determinant – filial pity – in defining a man in Chinese culture. According to Bret Hinsch (2013), the elevation of filial piety to a preeminent masculine ideal marks a radical distinction between manhood in China and the West (7). Filial piety is remarkable and significant in the Confucian Classics.[57]

> The disciple Zeng said, "Immense, indeed, is the greatness of filial piety!"
>
> The Master replied, "Yes, filial piety is the constant (method) of Heaven, the righteousness of Earth, and the practical duty of Man."
>
> 曾子曰: "甚哉，孝之大也。" 子曰: "夫孝，天之经也，地之义也，民之行也。" (*The Classics of Filial Piety*, Vii.)
>
> The disciple Zeng said, "I venture to ask whether in the virtue of sages there was not something greater than filial piety."
>
> The Master replied, "Of all (creatures with their different) natures produced by Heaven and Earth, man is the noblest. Of all man's actions there is none greater than filial piety. In filial piety there is nothing greater than the reverential awe of one's father. In the reverential awe shown to one's father there is nothing greater than making him the correlate of Heaven. The duke of Zhou was the man who (first) did this. "

[57] See Legge, James. Trans. *The Classics of Filial Piety* (The Hisâo King). *The sacred books of the East*, Vol.3. Ed. Max Müller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923. Print.

曾子曰: “敢问圣人之德，无以加于孝乎？” 子曰: “天地之性，人为贵。人之行，莫大于孝。孝莫大于严父。严父莫大于配天，则周公其人也。” (*The Classics of Filial Piety*, ix.)

In Confucian patriarchy, to be a man is firstly to be a filial son, whose most important responsibility is to pass on the family lineage through a male heir.

Mencius said: “There are three things that are unfilial, and the greatest of them is to have no posterity.[58] Shun married without informing his parents out of concern that he might have no posterity. The noble person considers that it was as if he had informed them.”

孟子: “不孝有三，无后为大。舜不告娶，为无后也，君子以为犹告也。” (Mengzi, 4.26).

The discontinuing of a family lineage due to the lack of an heir is considered as the biggest offense against the ideal of filial piety. A man’s identity and purpose of existence are not complete until he begets a son. Thus manhood cannot be separated from fatherhood in Chinese culture and neither can be fully described or understood without reference to the other.

According to David Y.F. Ho, “The definition of fatherhood in traditional China was primarily a Confucian definition” and the father was unquestionably “the official head of the household” (227). In Confucian thoughts, the superiority of father over son was determined by a “natural law”, such that “the father guides the son” (父为子纲). In spite of the father’s authority over the son, they are both governed by filial piety. “A son was expected to be obedient and respectful towards parents, provide for

[58] In Irene Bloom’s translation of Mencius, he explains “according to Zhao Qi, the other two expressions of unfiliality were acquiescing in lack of rightness on the part of a parent and failing to provide for them in their old age” (86).

their material as well as mental wellbeing in their old age, and to perform ceremonial duties of ancestral worship after their death" (Ho 228). In turn, the father has to "bring up his children as filial sons and daughters" and "failure to do so would render himself an unfilial son in the eyes of his ancestor" (228). Their relations are reciprocal. In this kind of father-son relationship, individual autonomy is obviously very limited. Bret Hinsch points out, "In many cultures, a man proclaims his entry to adulthood by aggressively asserting independence from his parents. In contrast, to some extent the Chinese man always remains a child in relation to his parents. He proves his maturity by subsuming his desire for autonomy, thereby demonstrating a manly strength of will" (2013, 8). In a nutshell, filial piety has an immerse impact on defining Chinese manhood and fatherhood. Most importantly, it connects both roles. It is also worth considering that filial piety is "not just a duty but also an opportunity" for a man in China (Hinsch 8). A man can either assert or injure his manhood by fulfilling his filial obligations or neglecting it.

2.2 Representing Mr. Chu in the Traditional Chinese Manhood

2.2.1 A Paragon of *Wen-wu* Model

Mr. Chu, the Chinese father in *Pushing Hands*, incarnates the traditional masculine ideal in terms of both *wen-wu* attributes. The opening shot of the film shows hands pushing away in the air, emphasizing the act of practicing Tai Chi. Mr. Chu's physical prowess of Tai Chi makes a great display in the Chinese restaurant scene. After leaving his son's house, Mr. Chu rents a small apartment in Chinatown and works as a dishwasher in a Chinese restaurant. The venal boss treats Mr. Chu disrespectfully and intends to fire him by the second day. Mr. Chu pleads for his job, but the boss is impatient and forces him to leave the kitchen. Humiliated by his rudeness, Master Chu refuses to go. He stands rooted in place, summoning energy from Tai Chi and

resists the efforts of the Chinese gangsters to remove him. Whitney Crothers Dilley remarks that the father's "heroic action" requires "a distracting cultural shift" for the Western audience, who may be confused about Mr. Chu's "warding off the employer who has fired him and ordered him to leave the premises" (56). From the perspective of Chinese masculinity, this fighting scene is a marvelous display of Mr. Chu's *wu* virility, which demonstrates not only his physical strength, but also the *wu* virtue. In Chinese culture, *wu* centers on, but is not restricted to martial and military force. *Wu* also embodies seven virtues: "suppressed violence, gathered in arms, protected what was great, established merit, gave peace to the people, harmonized the masses and propagate wealth" (Louie and Edwards 142), which together means "the degree of military authority sufficient to make further engagement unnecessary" (142). In this sense, *wu* masculinity contains the Confucian notion of benevolence (仁) and self-restraints (忍) in deploying physical strength. The fighting scene evidently embodies this *wu* philosophy. Mr. Chu behaves quite humbly and remains calm towards his ruthless boss until he is infuriated by the insulting words "useless trash" and feels that his masculine honor is threatened. Bret Hinsch points out that "an acute sensitivity to honor conditioned the development of early Chinese masculinity" (2013, 31) and a man is respected when he retaliates to defend his honor, in which violence can be legitimated (32). Mr. Chu maintains a respectable and manly public image through a physical display of Tai Chi force in his resistance against the kitchen workers who attempt to forcibly remove him. Moreover, there is an emphasis on his manliness when the scene depicts his physical superiority over the gangsters who try to challenge him. Meanwhile, he displays a Confucian concept of masculine honor in terms of benevolence and tolerance. His self-discipline in his use of violence renders

his fighting heroic rather than violent. It is clear that Mr. Chu's martial skills and virtues help him acquire and display *wu*, asserting his masculinity as a *wu* hero.

As an exemplary of an ideal Chinese man, Master Chu strikes a balance of *wen*-*wu* attributes. While *wu* masculinity is more approachable to the ordinary man, the *wen* attribute is confined to high literati in antiquity as cultural capital (Louie and Edwards 146). The Qin dynasty witnessed a fierce competition of the constituents of hegemonic manhood between the rich merchants and the educated elite literati. This culminated in the Song dynasty when "cultural refinement became intimately connected with ideal manhood" (Hinsch 2013, 94). Calligraphy practice, poems, and tea drinking have been important elite cultural pursuits among scholars since then. Besides his prowess in Tai Chi, Mr. Chu also exhibits other refined cultural practices such as writing calligraphy, reading poems and playing chess. The camera casts several meaningful shots of the scroll on the wall and captures some very detailed moments of his practicing calligraphy with Wang Wei's poem: *To Zhang Shaofu*[59]. Through such a display of refined cultural taste, Mr. Chu crafts his male identity in *wen.*

2.2.2 An Incarnation of Confucian Fatherhood

As I have argued above, Chinese manhood cannot be separated from fatherhood in traditional Chinese culture. Mr. Chu's masculinity is also constructed in his identity as a father and grandfather. First, Mr. Chu fulfills his filial duties to his ancestors through childbearing and nurture, that is, extending the Chu family lineage and the

[59] *To Zhang Shaofu* is a poem by the famous Chinese poet Wang Wei from the Tang dynasty. This poem manifests a pursuit of spiritual liberation in depression, indicating the poet's disgust at the life of an official and expresses a willingness to maintain an aloof life in nature. This poem in the film also implicitly demonstrates the inner depression and pain Mr. Chu suffers in his cultural displacement, as well as indicating his rejection of assimilation into mainstream American culture.

family glory through his son Alex. Obviously, Mr. Chu's masculine pride depends much on the fact that he has overcome hardships to bring up Alex.

(Alex comes to move the old man out, only to find that Mr. Chu is sick in bed) (01:04:45)

Alex: "Da, Ma's been gone for so many years, and you've never wanted to look at her picture."

Mr. Chu: "I couldn't face her. Do you remember this scar!? When the red guards came to our house, they knew that they couldn't hurt me, so they took it out on you and your mother. I only had this one body! In protecting you, I couldn't protect your mother. When they finally stopped their beating, she was too gravely injured to survive. In this one life, I can never face your mother again, but I can face you!"

Alex: "Dad, it's been so many years. Why talk about it now?"

Mr. Chu: "I feel stifled. Let me tell you something. Compared to loneliness, persecution is easy. Look at how much hardship and injustice I've endured in the last 40 years, their tortures only inspired me to perfect my Kung Fu…."

Such a conversation emotionally depicts Mr. Chu's difficulties and sacrifices as a father. In the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, Mr. Chu prioritized saving his son over his wife. Perceived from a Confucian perspective, Mr. Chu's priority in protecting his son lies beyond his personal affections but in his filial responsibility as a man to his ancestors, so that the family lineage can continue. His wife's death evidently rendered him guilt and pain. He has remained single to commemorate his wife, taking care of Alex all on his own. His endurance of the difficulties of raising Alex constructs his ideal masculinity as a strong-willed and responsible father. Moreover, such a sensitive portrayal also underlines Mr. Chu's emotional comfort and

gratification in raising Alex to be a successful son to continue the family glory. As a computer engineer, Alex marries a white woman and establishes his family in U.S., exhibiting a successful life path of man. In "The Scope and Meaning of the Treatise" (开宗明义) of *The Classic of Filial Piety* (孝经), it states "When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents, this is the end of filial piety" (立身行道，扬名后世，以显父母，孝之终也). Alex's success glorifies his father and renders Mr. Chu proud. Most importantly, Alex also begets a son to continue the familial lineage. In one scene, when the grandson, Jeremy, naughtily runs away from his mother after a bath, wearing only a towel. Mr. Chu picks him up and tickles him, delightedly checking Jeremy's "family jewels": "The future of our Chu family, depending on your little treasure." Such behavior, which aggravates Martha, who is anxious about her son's sexuality, nevertheless exhibits the pride of Mr. Chu as a man for continuing familial lineage through generations. In this way, Mr. Chu establishes his masculinity to fulfill his filial duty, ensuring the continuation of the family line.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chu attempts to maintain his masculinity through patriarchal authority over the filial obedience on the part of his son Alex. Mr. Chu is not depicted as a traditional Chinese father who "was typically characterized as a stern disciplinarian" and "feared by the children" (Ho 230). But he obviously demands propriety and obedience in the child's education, which is evidently demonstrated in his involvement and interference in Jeremy's parenting.

(At the table, Jeremy leaves to watch cartoons without eating)

(00:18:20)

Mr. Chu: "American people teach children like they are doing business. Everything is a deal. If children cannot concentrate on eating, what else can they concentrate on."

Alex: "Yes, dad."

Mr. Chu obviously disagrees with Alex's acquiesce for Jeremy's watching cartoons instead of concentrating on eating. His comment sounds mild but stern. Though Alex implicitly refuses his suggestion, he does not stop Jeremy afterwards, he obediently responds to his father, not challenging him directly. In another scene when Alex tries to express his different way of parenting to his father, Mr. Chu abruptly interrupts and stops him.

(00:20:15)

Mr. Chu: "In America, you are so polite to kids."

Alex: "You think so? "

Mr. Chu: "You don't treat kids as kids. It's interesting."

Alex: "It is very interesting. It is called democracy. Democracy means no big and no little."

Mr. Chu: "Ok, you understand America better than I do."

Instead of fully complying with his father, Alex expresses his own idea in this conversation. Starting with an affirmative note, he explains the cultural difference in a cautious way. However, his explanation still annoys Mr. Chu, who stops him impatiently with a sarcastic tone. Obviously, Mr. Chu's patriarchal authority is threatened in Alex's epistemological privilege on American culture, which Mr. Chu has no knowledge of. His interruption is an important strategy to assert his authority, so that his manhood can be maintained.

In summary, an examination of Lee's representation of Mr. Chu through the lens of gender performances in the *wen-wu* masculine model and Confucian notion of filial piety provides alternative interpretations to understand Chinese manhood in a culturally specific way. A display of the *wen-wu* attributes and the authoritative status of Mr. Chu not only represent traditional Chinese culture, but also most significantly, provide a channel for the expression of his masculine identity. Through representing Mr. Chu in alternative models of ideal masculinities, Lee thus challenges the Orientalist stereotypes of Chinese men as asexual and emasculated. What is significant is that Lee does not only assert Mr. Chu's masculinity according to the Chinese tradition, but also he furthers the portrayal of Mr. Chu's masculine identity by showing how such masculine traits undergo changes and how Mr. Chu reconstructs his masculinity in transcultural spaces.

2.3 Traditional Chinese Manhood in Transcultural Spaces

The traditional *wen-wu* masculine ideal, the Confucian notion of filial piety and fatherhood have offered insights to understand Mr. Chu's manliness in a culturally specific context. Nevertheless, through displacing to New York City, Mr. Chu's masculine identity encounters challenges in transcultural spaces.

2.3.1 Father-son Relationship

Mr. Chu's masculinity is firstly dwarfed in his relationship with his son Alex, who embodies the transformed *wen* man under the impact of Western capitalism. In *Theorising Chinese Masculinity* (2002), Kam Louie goes beyond pre-modern China, exploring the transformation of the *wen-wu* paradigm in the late 20th century. He advocates that in the 1980s and 1990s, *wen* ideals were fundamentally transformed, encompassing commercial expertise:

> Confucius as capitalist entrepreneur turns the traditional understanding of *wen* on its head. From being a moral and political force, the *wen* icon now embraces an economic component as well. The "real man" in China need not have the *wen-wu* attributes as they are traditionally understood – he may in fact have neither. Successful *wen* masculinity can now be measured by the acquisition and flaunting of trappings such as the size and power of mobile phones and laptop computers. The Chinese male ideal is moving closer to the image of young executives found in in-flight magazines read by the international young executives found in in-flight magazines read by the international jet-set (43).

Kam Louie observes that the positive image of *wen* men in the new era is grounded in material success under Western influences. The capitalist ethos reduces the values of certain attributes in traditional *wen* masculinity. Cultural tastes in calligraphy or music are rendered as less important whereas material success becomes a significant benchmark in the measurement of masculinity. In *Pushing Hands*, the son, Alex is depicted as a *wen* man with no cultural refinements in the areas of calligraphy or poems, and yet surpasses his father in aspects of this transformed *wen* masculinity.

> (Dialogue with Mrs. Chang while Mr. Chu is giving her a massage)
>
> (01:12:15)
>
> **Mrs. Chang**: "Mr. Chu, your Kung Fu is so powerful. How do you manage to have such elegant calligraphy?"[60]
>
> **Mr. Chu**: "I am ashamed to talk about it. My grandfather was a scholar in the Qing Dynasty. My father was one of the Nation Founders, who is in charge of the Nationalist government. My son has a Ph.D. in computer science. In a

[60] The English subtitles here are not accurate. Mrs. Chang points out critically that Mr. Chu's calligraphy skill is not as powerful as his Kung Fung and Mr. Chu's answer implies his inadequacy in *wen* attributes.

family of scholars for generations, there is worthless me. I have practiced Tai Chi for life, but still cannot overcome the (pathetic) fate and circumstances."

Mr. Chu's personal experience shows that even as a man with both *wen-wu* traits, he still believes that he is inferior "in a family of scholars of generations". In Chinese tradition, participation and success in the imperial examination form a respected component of the masculine image and the stereotypical *wen* man is equated with the scholar character (Louie 59). The ideal man is an official who serves the state. Mr. Chu's grandfather and father were both such ideal men, holding high social status with power. They were not only capable of controlling their own fates but also of influencing the destiny of the nation. At the same time, Mr. Chu also considers that his *wen* attributes in cultural refinements are inferior to his son's *wen* masculinity, which is established through his middle-class profession and economic success. Wealth, according to Chinese tradition, did not count as an essential component of ideal masculinity. It was even disdained by Confucian ideology, which scorned the act of pursuing profits. This situation, however, is undergoing tremendous change under the impact of capitalism. According to Louie, the changing constructions of the *wen* man were a result of Westernization and its inclusion of business acumen reached its peak in the 1990s (76). The ability to accumulate wealth began to be admired and being wealthy became newly valued as a trait for the *wen* men. Mr. Chu's self-perception demonstrates such a change in *wen*, which destabilizes his traditional *wen-wu* masculinity.

Mr. Chu's son, Alex, represents this new *wen* man, who constructs his masculinity on material accumulation and middle-class social status. Analyzing how capitalism reshapes Chinese masculinity, Hinsch points out, "To be respectable in the new capitalist economy, a man needed a stable job with sufficient income to allow him a

high degree of autonomy. When possible, he eschewed menial labor, tried to acquire some modern education, and elevated himself by deploying the cultural capital of the new middle class" (2013, 137). Alex embodies such a respectable male image in capitalism, embracing a new *wen* masculine model for many Chinese American men: well educated in the American university, holding a well-paid and stable job, married to a white American woman, having a son and owning a big house and expensive car, living the middle-class American life style. If Alex is represented as an admirable transformed *wen* man, the Chinese boss in the restaurant serves as a counter-example to embody those who are overwhelmed by greed and selfishness under capitalism.

(In the kitchen, the boss fires Mr. Chu)

(01:27:23)

Boss: "Ten dollars. Take it or leave it."

Mr. Chu: "Boss, do you have to treat an old man this way? I will wash faster."

Boss: "Not just faster, but cleaner too! Come on, cut the crap, go! Time is money. Have you heard that before? Probably not, you came from Mainland China. I know everything's shared there, working more but gets you nothing. Four decades of such thinking has produced all you lazy bums, useless trash."

Mr. Chu: "Who you are calling a useless trash?"

Boss: "Eh? What's wrong? You do not accept that? Then go back to China and live off others. Go on! No one's stopping you. I am telling you, this is America. There is no communal property. You have to earn everything by yourself."

The Chinese boss obviously puts a financial value on everything. Men are reduced to (being) tools for making money, so he treats Mr. Chu disrespectfully, calling him "useless trash" when the old man cannot bring him economic profit. Though he comes from China, he obviously shows contempt for Chinese culture, which he

ironically sells in his restaurant. He repeatedly shouts at Mr. Chu, “this is America”. According to Dariotis and Fung, “While this acknowledgment of his new location would seem to signal a positive adjustment, his refusal to bring with him a sense of his own past or tradition leaves his masculinity fundamentally unstable” (196). Through the portrayal of the venal Chinese boss, Lee highlights the negative consequences of capitalism and thus casts doubts on the loss of traditional Chinese masculinity into the type of masculinity based on economic profit in capitalism. Lee intentionally arranges a meaningful fighting scene between the restaurant owner and Mr. Chu, alluding to the combating between two types of masculinity. Mr. Chu’s masculinity is visually signified by his rootedness in Tai Chi power and resurrected, whereas the Chinese boss’s behaviour results in ultimate humiliation and disgrace. Mr. Chu’s fighting and strength surprise the American police, and it was broadcast on television, rendering him a famous celebrity in Chinatown. Accordingly, if Mr. Chu signifies the residual dignity of the Chinese tradition in the rejuvenation of Chinese manhood in transcultural spaces, the restaurant boss’s rejection of Chinese tradition and his blind assimilation into the dominant culture seals his fate, which is the loss of masculine honor.

Although Lee demonstrates sympathy and sensitivity for Chinese cultural traditions in asserting manhood in transcultural spaces, Mr. Chu’s manliness is still destabilized in the breakdown of the Confucian father-son relationship when Alex arranges a match for him and Mrs. Chang so as to move his father out. The conflict demonstrates the cultural conflict between Chinese filial piety and American individualism in the assertion of manhood. Confucianism holds filial piety as the foundation for all other virtues and the duty to support parents is clearly illustrated. In the “Filial Piety in the Common People” (庶人), the sacrifice of personal comforts is

commanded as necessary for even the lowest order of filial piety: "They are careful in their conduct and economical in their expenditures, in order to nourish their parents. This is the filial piety of the common people" (谨身节用，以养父母). Mr. Chu has performed his duty as a father to raise Alex. The lines of obligations run between them, so that Alex has to fulfill his obligations to support his aging father. Failure to do so renders Alex unfilial and thus injures his status of manhood in Chinese culture. However, Alex constructs his male identity in the American culture of individualism, which values self-dependence and self-interest. Instead of following the obligations of prioritizing his father's physical and mental wellbeing over his personal desires, Alex prefers to live in a nuclear family with his wife and son.[61] Alex's rejection of support for his father is not only a failure of his filial duty, but also disgraces his father. Bringing up such an "unfilial" son means humiliation and failure in Confucian fatherhood for Mr. Chu, who would be ashamed in front of his ancestors. His masculine honor as a respectable father is therefore diminished. As a result, he leaves the house in great disappointment and frustration.

Mr. Chu's forced departure demonstrates a destabilization of both his manhood and fatherhood in the father-son relationship. However, the ending of the film seems to endorse the patriarchal order and the Confucian values of filial piety. Greatly regretting his actions, Alex finally locates his father, in prison.

(01:35:44)

Alex: " Dad, we have bought a new house. It is much bigger than the old one."

Mr. Chu: "What for?"

Alex: "I am here to take you home."

[61] In the article "Breaking and Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee", Wei Ming Dariotis and Eileen Fung point out that the conflict between the father and the son shows that there is "a contrast of values between China and America". Mr. Chu "puts his son before his wife" while Alex obviously puts his nuclear family (his wife and son) before his father. (196)

Mr. Chu: “Home? Whose home?”

Alex: “Mine is yours.”

Mr. Chu: “Forget it. I see clearly now. The only thing that matters is that you have a happy life. If you want to show some filial respect, rent me an apartment in Chinatown. Let me peacefully pass my days and discipline my spirit. In your free time, bring the boy to see me. By this way, when we get together, there will be some good feelings.”

Alex: “Dad, all these years, I have studied and worked so hard to build a family in order that one day I could bring you the States, so you could have some good days in your life.”

(Alex bursts out into crying in the arms of Mr. Chu)

Film techniques are meaningfully employed to evoke emotional resonance and sympathy towards the old Chinese father. The camera shows the father sitting in the prison from a high angle shot from the perspective of Alex, who stands in front of him, towering over him, thus marking the relationship dynamics of the vulnerable father and the powerful son. Then Alex bends down to Mr. Chu, and the camera moves closer to show Alex’s head bowing lower to his father – an endorsement of the patriarchal order. The frozen shots keep Mr. Chu’s profile in the dark, avoiding exposing his face, indicating his repression of emotions. Low and somber music played on the traditional Chinese instruments er-hu creates an audio sympathy between the audience and the father, and also portrays the inner pain and bitterness of the old father, whose face is not cast in light until Alex ends the conversation by bursting into tears in the arms of his father. The close-up of the father’s withered face highlights his aging and his deteriorating health. Finally, the camera takes a long shot of the father hugging the son in the prison, demonstrating the ultimate reconciliation

between Mr. Chu and Alex. The scene then shifts to the new big house, in which Alex intends to live together with his father, indicating his return to traditional Chinese practice of filial piety and the embrace of his father's manhood.[62]

This conversation also demonstrates Mr. Chu's adaption of Confucian fatherhood to accept American individualism. When Alex tells Mr. Chu to take him "home", the father asks whose "home" it is. Different from Confucian culture, in which the son is always attached to his parents and should not consider his wealth his own, American culture emphasizes personal boundaries and values self-reliance. Evidently, Mr. Chu has realized that in American culture, he cannot take his son's home as his own. Therefore, Mr. Chu finally accepts such American cultural values and chooses to live alone. What is worthy of attention here is that Mr. Chu's choice of living alone is more an active self-sacrifice for his son according to Chinese culture than a forced acceptance of American cultural values. Mr. Chu prioritizes the happiness of Alex over his personal desire to live together with his son. In this way, Lee actually highlights the kindness, love and full devotion of the Chinese father to his son. Lee therefore maintains the self-esteem of the father and restores his image as a respectable father according to Chinese tradition.

2.3.2 Man-woman Relationship

Mr. Chu vs. Martha

Besides the friction between father and son, Lee emphasizes the cultural conflicts between Mr. Chu and Martha, his Anglo-American daughter-in-law. The opening scene introduces their conflicting relationship through interior frames. Mr. Chu's practicing Tai Chi and calligraphy in the forefront marks a contrast with Martha's typing on the keyboard at the back of the frame. When Mr. Chu is smoking outside,

[62] Wendy Ashleigh Teo helped me to formulate this point of the discussion.

the camera has a frame-shot with Martha reading silently in the right of the frame. Mr. Chu and Martha are frequently portrayed in one shot, but separated either by doorways or windows. When Martha is jogging outdoors, Mr. Chu is shown looking at her indoors. In this way, Lee emphasizes that they "share the same space, but they live in separated worlds" (Dariotis and Fung 193). Furthermore, Lee emphasizes their mutual non-recognition by marking silence in a significant way. In the early moments of the film, Mr. Chu and Martha are conducting different activities in striking silence. The sparse communication results from the language barrier as well as Martha's command for silence from Mr. Chu. When he watches the Beijing opera in the sitting room, Martha tells him to use headphones. When he puts aluminum foil in the microwave, she angrily shouts at him: "no metals!" According to Dariotis and Fung, "unlike later in the film, when silence functions as a kind of communication, at the beginning, it is only the silence of two people who cannot understand each other" (195).

Most symbolically, Lee highlights their cultural friction through the motif of hands. When they are writing, their hands are deploying different tools. Mr. Chu is writing calligraphy with a Chinese brush while Martha is typing on the keyboard. When they are cooking in the kitchen, their hands are performing the same tasks, but always at odds. In one scene before Martha's hospitalization, when Mr. Chu is feeling her pulse to examine her, she feels so tense and anxious that she has a stomach perforation. After she returns from hospital and he tries to reach across the table when he sees her in pain, she flings back her hands, rejecting his touch. The incongruent motions of hands significantly demonstrate the clashing forces in culture, and in particular, Martha's mistrust of Mr. Chu as a cultural "Other". In this way, Lee implicitly

indicates Mr. Chu's frustration of male identity in encountering American culture. Lee further makes this point clear through the following conversation.

(00:18:56)

Martha: "What has he been moaning about?"

Alex: "The violence in cartoons."

Martha: "How can he complain? He's a martial arts expert himself. Isn't that violent enough?"

Equating Mr. Chu's Tai Chi skills to the violence in children's cartoons, Martha shows a great contempt for Mr. Chu's male identity and Chinese culture. In another scene when Mr. Chu wants to take a walk outside, she treats him like a child. After her fear that he will get lost is not successfully communicated, she impatiently waves him away, "Ok, go ahead. What do I care". Mr. Chu's getting lost in the city therefore can be metaphorically interpreted as a loss of his masculine honor in the transcultural family. The film includes many shots to portray Mr. Chu's lonely and bored life at home. He keeps changing different Chinese TV programs and VCDs, showing no interest in any. He has no one to communicate with. Even if Alex comes back, he appears to be exhausted and impatient when (having to) talk with his father.

Lee further unsettles the Confucian notion of manhood and fatherhood, in which Mr. Chu's masculinity is grounded. China has a long history of patriarchy. Mencius outlined the Three Sub-ordinations. A woman was to be subordinate to her father in youth, her husband in maturity, and her son in old age. Thinkers such as the influential Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC) in the Han dynasty blended the *yin/yang* theory together with Confucian discourses, and used metaphysics to legitimate men's domination over women (Hinsch 2013, 24). The female historian Ban Zhao wrote "Lessons for Women", outlining the Four Virtues women must abide by: proper

virtue, proper speech, proper countenance and proper merit. Women were confined to the "inner" space at home and required to follow the "Three Obedience and Four Virtues" throughout the imperial period. In Confucian thoughts, the wife was expected to merge herself in her husband's family after the marriage. In "Li Ki" it states:

> When she was thus deferential, she was obedient to her parents-in-law, and harmonious with all the occupants of women's apartments; she was the fitting partner of her husband, and could carry on all the work in silk and linen, making cloth and silken fabrics, and maintaining a watchful care over the various stores and depositories (of the household). (The meaning of the marriage ceremony. 8)
>
> 妇顺者. 顺于舅姑.和于室人.而后当于夫. 以成丝麻布帛之事. 以审守委积该藏.（礼记·昏义）

Such an ideal regulates the relationship between the strong and the weak.[63] As a part of the ceremony of marriage, the bridegroom went in person to bring his bride home to his father's house, where she became a member of his father's family and a daughter to his parents. Accordingly, she was trained to be obedient to her husband's parents in the home, and join in filial obligations to his family and ancestors. Lee challenges such patriarchal ideas through Martha's rejection of them.

> (Alex comes home in great frustration without finding his father)
>
> (00:55:42)
>
> **Martha**: "I should have been more careful. But I…with the book…In some ways, your father is more and more like a child cooped up with me. And I can't talk to him. I was trying to write. I had a feeling that he was gonna get himself lost just like a kid trying to get some attention."

[63] See *The Ethics of Confucius*. Ed. Dawson, Miles Menander. University Press of the Pacific, 2005.

Alex: "I grew up in believing, you should care for your parents the way they care for you. My father is a part of me. Why can't you accept that?"

Martha: "I know. I tried."

The conversation demonstrates Alex's psychological torture in conflicts between his father and his wife. According to Alex, who attempts to be a filial son, his wife Martha should support his father with admiration and reverence. However, Martha does not "really" understand such Confucian obligations as a wife and a daughter-in-law. She does not acknowledge Mr. Chu's Confucian fatherhood as the family head, so that she compares Mr. Chu to a kid, who gets lost in order to attract the attention of adults. She is self-focused and much concerned with her writing, which is interrupted by Mr. Chu's presence. Furthermore, Martha considers Mr. Chu as a burden and wants to get ride of him. She repeatedly urges Alex to move Mr. Chu out of the house. Such behavior, according to Confucian culture, is unfilial and the woman should be disciplined to assert men's authority in the family. "The acid test of manhood is whether a son is able to resist his wife's bad influence and whether he can effectively discipline her" (Huang 2006, 187). Here, Alex's frustration in "disciplining" his wife and maintaining a harmonious family relationship demonstrate his lack of masculinity. Moreover, his failure in resisting Martha's idea to move his father out also indicate that Mr. Chu has lost his authority as the family head to his daughter-in-law.

Mr. Chu vs. Mrs. Chang

Mr. Chu's frustration about the neglect of traditional Chinese masculinity demonstrated by Martha is compensated through his relationship with Mrs. Chang, the Chinese woman in the film. Lee depicts Mr. Chu's masculine appeal to Mrs. Chang, highlighting his desires towards her. Examining the *wen-wu* dyad, Kam Louie

contends the differences between *wen* and *wu* men in their relations to women. While romances of scholars and beauties are common themes in Chinese literature, approving *wen* masculinity with sexuality, the *wu* hero has to resist the lure of women to demonstrate his strength and masculinity. In contrast to the Western "real man" who wins the beautiful woman as a reward, the *wu* hero in Chinese tradition must withhold his sexual desires and "containment of sexual and romantic desire is an integral part of the *wu* virtue" (Louie 19). For instance, the *wu* hero Wu Song becomes a "real man" when he rejects the advances of the amorous Golden Lotus (Pan Jinlian). The *wu* hero therefore has to reject women to prove his masculinity.[64] However, Lee transgresses the masculine norm to underscore Mr. Chu's masculine sexuality in his relations with Mrs. Chang. His hands symbolically embody his desires. At the beginning of the film, the camera takes a wide cut, exaggerating the movements of Mr. Chu's pushing hands, indicating the importance of the body. Hands are significant instruments to express Mr. Chu's sexual desires and they are highlighted with filmic techniques in practicing Tai Chi, practicing calligraphy and massaging in Mr. Chu's pursuit of Mrs. Chang. In order to attract Mrs. Chang's attention, Mr. Chu accepts the challenge of a large student, Fatty, and intentionally pushes him into a table of steamed breads being prepared by Mrs. Chang's cooking class. Mr. Chu thus successfully impresses Mrs. Chang with his physical strength and gains the opportunity to strike up a conversation with her. The camera frames an extreme close-up (XCU) in slow motion on Mr. Chu's right hand to emphasize his strength. Later, Mr. Chu sends her a delicately mounted calligraphy he wrote himself with an apology to win her favor with his cultural attainment. The camera takes

[64] The story of Wu Song who resists the temptation of his sister-in-law Pan Jinlian, is described in the Chinese novel *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shui Hu Zhuan) by Shi Nai'an. *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Trans. Sidney Shaprio. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980.

frequent close-ups of the movement of Mr. Chu's hand and his face with its satisfying look.

Furthermore, Lee depicts Mrs. Chang's trust in Mr. Chu when she has a sore shoulder, marking a sharp contrast to Martha's rejection of him for her treatment. In the picnic scene, Mr. Chu and Mrs. Chang develop a mutual affection through his massage of her. While he is massaging her shoulder, the camera firstly frames an XCU on Mr. Chu's hand holding Mrs. Chang's, and then moves to a close-up of the facial expressions of others around, with a freeze shot on Jeremy's twisted face for showing distrust and fear. And then the camera changes back again to an XCU on the hands, expanding gradually to a medium close-up of Mrs. Chang's face, revealing her relief from the pain. In addition, the ending of the film is a sweet and understated scene, explicitly emphasizing Mr. Chu's masculine sexuality and anticipating their possible romance. They stand in a Chinatown street and she suggests: "You should come by sometime and visit". He boldly asks: "Anything to do this afternoon?" She hesitates and replies shyly: "Um, nothing." There is an atmosphere of sweet expectation as the two are looking and smiling at each other and the scene fades.

Lee's representation with the focus on Mr. Chu's male sexuality in relation to Mrs. Chang can be interpreted on the one hand as a counter-narrative to the stereotypes of asexual and emasculated Chinese men in American mainstream depiction. Lee employs the hetero-romance as a strategy to demonstrate Mr. Chu's heterosexuality and therefore validates his masculinity in the Western gender paradigm. On the other hand, underlining Mr. Chu's attractiveness to Mrs. Chang, Lee compensates for Mr. Chu's injured virility in his relationship with Martha, who represents an observer of manhood from the mainstream American perspective. Analyzing the differences of Mr. Chu's relations to Martha and Mrs. Chang in constructing his manhood,

intersectionality is a useful concept to explore the complexity of racial reproduction. The notion of intersectionality is insightful to analyze groups that "are enacting domination and simultaneously being subordinated" (Mellstrom 168). As Ulf Mellstrom points out, "in a certain sense, such forms of masculinity are hegemonic and subordinate in parallel" and "there are then gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men (and women) connected to race, class and nation" (168). Mr. Chu's masculinity embodies "a form of gender configuration that is at the junction of several structural elements that privilege as well as subdue" (168). As a paragon of the Chinese traditional masculine ideal, Mr. Chu's masculinity is obviously subdued in his relationship with Martha in terms of race but is redeemed in his relationship with Mrs. Chang, the Chinese woman in the film.

However, Ang Lee depicts Mrs. Chang as much more than a supportive figure to construct Mr. Chu's masculinity. She is visually portrayed as an active female agent in the interactions with Mr. Chu, who nevertheless always appears timid and unconfident. In their first encounter, Mrs. Chang takes the initiative to ask Mr. Chu whether her cooking class could share the classroom with his Tai Chi class. The camera takes medium shots, focusing on their body language to convey their feelings for each other. Following Mrs. Chang's walking away after the conversation, the camera then moves close to frame an XCU of her smiling face. After a system of long and medium shots to introduce the Tai Chi and the cooking class, the camera shows a close-up of Mr. Chu, and then observes the cooking class from his perspective. The medium shot ends with an XCU and a freeze shot on Mrs. Chang's hands, indicating Mr. Chu's desire for her. When she feels his gaze, Mrs. Chang boldly raises her head, looking at him responsively. Mr. Chu feels embarrassed and then quickly withdraws

his look. In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey explores how females are displayed as passive objects to be looked at by "active males":

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (837).

Lee obviously subverts the split "between active/male and passive/female" between Mr. Chu and Mrs. Chang. She is the object of Mr. Chu's gaze, advocating in some way the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of femininity, but at the same time, she is also a statement of power. Instead of eluding the male gaze, Mrs. Chang interrupts and dismantles the vision of the male gaze through enacting the female gaze, and thus demonstrates female empowerment. In one scene, Mrs. Chang comments on Mr. Chu's calligraphy, exhibiting her more refined cultural taste than Mr. Chu. It not only breaks the exclusion of *wen* power beyond the grasp of women in traditional China, but also demonstrates a reversal in power relations between them, marking Mrs. Chang more powerful and dominant in her relationship with Mr. Chu.

Mr. Chu behaves unconfidently with Mrs. Chang in his pursuit of her, and the changes of his clothes provide an illustration. Mr. Chu wears two types of clothes in the film, the Western shirt, sports blazer, suits and the Chinese cheongsam. The clothes vary to demonstrate his masculine identity. The Chinese cheongsam, which he wears when practicing Tai Chi and calligraphy, confirms his self-assured masculinity. Nevertheless, he is dressed in Western style when his virility is unstable and injured. For instance, he is cast in a blue shirt in three remarkable scenes in which his

masculinity is destabilized: washing dishes in the Chinese restaurant, getting lost in New York City, and being arrested by the American police. On his first visit to Mrs. Chang and her family, he intentionally wears formal business suits with a tie, indicating his diffidence as a Chinese man and his adjustment to American culture so as to attract Mrs. Chang. His uneasiness is further revealed when he is waiting for the phone call. He is so eager to receive the call from Mrs. Chang that he puts the telephone beside him during mediation exercises. The caller/Mrs. Chang and receiver/Mr. Chu relationship reverses the active/male and passive/female power relations. Consequently, depicting Mrs. Chang as a powerful female in the relationship with Mr. Chu, Lee attacks stereotypes of Chinese men as asexual and resurrects Mr. Chu's masculinity without falling prey to binary opposites and thus "charts new topographies for manliness and womanliness" (Cheung 1990, 246).

Lee further restores Mr. Chu's masculinity according to Chinese traditions through the acceptance and respect from Martha. At the end of the film, Martha fries spring rolls for her friend and intends to write a book on Chinese immigrants in transcontinental railway construction. She is even trying to learn 'pushing hands' from Alex.

(01:37:33)

Martha: "Why haven't you ever learned any Tai Chi from your father?"

Alex: "You know for dad, Tai Chi was a way to escape from reality. Even when he did pushing hands, for him it was a way to avoid other people."

Martha: "Pushing Hands?"

Alex: "Yeah. It's like a Tai Chi for two. A way of keeping you in balance while unbalancing your opponent."

The camera casts shots of pushing hands between Martha and Alex, and then shifts to Mr. Chu's Tai Chi class in Chinatown, indicating the acceptance and continuity of Chinese traditions. Most significantly, Lee demonstrates an understanding of Mr. Chu through Tai Chi or pushing hands to Martha. According to Alex, Tai Chi is a way for Mr. Chu to escape reality and avoid other people, indicating his clinging to cultural roots for masculine identity. However, it is impossible to avoid other people and other cultures in transcultural spaces, in which different masculinities coexist and are negotiated. Like practicing pushing hands, Mr. Chu attempts to maintain his traditional Chinese masculinity in negotiating with the American culture. In this sense, pushing hands can be metaphorically interpreted as a negotiating process between manhood in cultures: both parts attempt to keep balance in encountering and borrowing from each other.

In summary, placing Mr. Chu in the father-son relationship and his relationships with women, Lee on the one hand destabilizes Mr. Chu's traditional masculinity in transcultural spaces. On the other hand, Lee carefully maintains the Chinese tradition and validates the appeal of it in transcultural interactions of masculinities. Both the *wen-wu* dyad and the Confucian notion of fatherhood undergo transformations and adaptations through the incarnation of Mr. Chu, who ultimately embraces such changes to reconstruct his masculinity. Restoring Mr. Chu's manliness, Lee's depiction does not fall into the trap of sexism or misogyny, but the happy ending for the resolution of cultural conflicts might be too ideal and superficial. It obviously undermines the cultural displacement of Mr. Chu and the power dynamics of masculinities in transcultural spaces.

2.4 Transdifference

The film ends with an ostensibly harmonious relationship among all the family members, in particular, between Mr. Chu and Martha, celebrating a transcultural understanding and acceptance. Analyzing transculturality, Epstein positively asserts that the emerging transcultural space provides the freedom for the individual to escape the restrictions imposed by each single culture and access the right to be free from the conditioning and the dependencies of any given, native or primary cultures (328). However, casting a close look at Mr. Chu's masculine identity politics, I find Epstein's positive note on transculturality too optimistic to explain its complexity. Instead of feeling emancipated in transcultural space, Mr. Chu returns to the Chinese tradition for his masculinity reconstruction. In this sense, the theory of transdifference provides valuable insights into Mr. Chu's complicated situation.

Dealing with boundary/contact zones, transculture/transculturality focuses on liberating the individual from the root culture, emphasizing the integration of cultures and the freedom to belong to "no culture". The transdifference theory by Helmbrecht Breinig and Klaus Lösch nevertheless "refers to a wide range of phenomena arising from the multiple overlappings and mutual intersections of boundaries between cultures and collective identities, no matter whether these are conceptualized in essentialist or constructive terms" (112). They explain that:

> Investigating processes of identity formation in light of transdifference aims at recovering the intricate interrelatedness and interdependence of self and other that is usually being obfuscated or even obliterated in the discourses that engage in identity politics. … [I]n light of transdifference, narrations of cultural identity must be seen as interdependent texts, each bearing some marks of others, that is as intertexts. …Simply put, there can be no such thing as 'pure' self-

> representation, no autonomous (counter-)discourse, since all narrations of identity are somehow intertwined with the narrations of other groups – in the case of a counter-discourse this will be the hegemonic discourse (112-13).

Placing a traditional Chinese man in American society, Lee attempts to explore "an interplay of articulated self-perception and perception by the cultural other" (113). Evidently, Mr. Chu's ideal masculinity according to the *wen-wu* paradigm and Confucianism encounters frustration in his relationship with Martha, who takes this ideal as the cultural "Other". The constructions and reconstructions of Mr. Chu's masculinity in transcultural spaces involve both his self-perception as a man with *wen-wu* attributes and the Confucian ethics, but also the counter reaction against the stereotypes projected by mainstream American culture. Lee resurrects Mr. Chu's masculinity through the heterosexual romance with Mrs. Chang, validating his sexual attractiveness in the Western gender scheme. It demonstrates the transgression of the sexual containment in the Chinese *wu* hero, who asserts manliness through the rejection of the lure of women. In addition, Lee depicts the changes of *wen* masculinity, and Alex as a transformed *wen* man, demonstrating the mark of capitalism in constructing manhood in transcultural spaces. Although Mr. Chu's manliness is ultimately maintained through Lee's depiction of Martha's embrace of Chinese tradition, indicating the interaction and negotiations between two cultures, his final choice to live alone in Chinatown indicates his options for a clear cultural belonging.

Instead of living together with his son in the new big house, Mr. Chu eventually insists on renting an apartment in Chinatown, where he works as a popular Tai Chi master instructing both Chinese and American students. His invitation to Mrs. Chang at the end of the film is a sweet and understated scene, demonstrating his reassertion

of manhood.[65] In this sense, the cultural boundary seems to provide a shelter for Mr. Chu in restoring his Chinese masculinity. In their discussion of "Transdifference", Breinig and Lösch point out,

> [T]ransdifference, understood as a by-product of any process of identity formation, is usually suppressed in the articulation of identities, since the function of identity and alterity must be seen precisely in the reduction of complexity for the sake of an ontological safety of groups (and individuals) in a fundamentally contingent world (112).

Mr. Chu's withdrawal to Chinatown in defense of his manliness explicitly demonstrates the suppression of transdifference. In his articulation of a clear form of belonging to Chinese manhood, the complexity of identity politics is eradicated. Most importantly, the possibility for masculinity negotiations is shunned. However, Mr. Chu is not the person to be blamed. His option for "an ontological safety" indicates the power affiliations of identities, in particular, masculinities in transcultural negotiations. Breinig and Lösch point out it is "important to take the power asymmetries inherent in processes of intercultural negotiation into account" and they note:

> [T]he chances for one group to disturb and destabilise the other's self-perception (in the sense of strategically instrumentalising transdifference) or to cope with the interference of the other's construct of alterity within their own construct of identity, respectively (e.g. fending off the experience of transdifference) depend on a number of factors such as their 'visibility', their

[65] Dariotis and Fung take Mr. Chu's final decision to live in Chinatown and his initiation in his relationship to Mrs. Chang as a signifier of a "newfound vigor and hope", despite the fact that they are both "culturally isolated in Chinatown while the rest of the United States remains unintelligible to them" (198).

access to the public discourse and their self-confidence, which in turn correlate with their position within the specific social power relations (113).

As a paragon of the *wen-wu* masculine model in traditional Chinese culture, Mr. Chu's masculinity is nevertheless marginalized in American society because of the society's urgency "to reduce world complexity by reverting to a thinking of difference in which inbetweenness, multiple solidarities, and oscillations have no place" (Hein 261). Mr. Chu's arrest shown on TV ironically marks his *wu* masculinity visible to American society, but the voices of the Chinese notion of manhood and fatherhood are soon interrupted and silenced. His choice of withdrawing to Chinatown results from his powerlessness in validating Chinese manhood and fatherhood in American society and, finally, in the global arena where the concept of white American manhood dominates and that of Chinese manhood is subordinated.

2.5 Conclusion

What can be traced through Lee's representation of Mr. Chu in *Pushing Hands* is the denial to grant American manhood privilege that is constructed upon the projection of emasculation and repression onto Chinese (American) men. As a Tai Chi master, Mr. Chu displays the strength and virtues of the *wu* masculinity that he balances with the cultural refinements of *wen* in calligraphy, poems and music. Framing Mr. Chu's manhood within the *wen-wu* paradigm, Lee challenges the American hegemonic masculine discourse and provides an alternative perspective for the Western audience to understand Chinese manhood in a culturally specific paradigm. Meanwhile, filial piety, as a significant marker and connector of Chinese manhood and fatherhood, is conceived with ambiguity in *Pushing Hands*. On the one hand, Lee explores the suppression of filial piety by the father, in particular, the son, criticizing Chinese patriarchal style of fathering. On the other hand, he nevertheless

advocates traditional Chinese ethics and values in maintaining a harmonious father-son relationship. In addition, Lee questions and destabilizes Chinese patriarchy through the depiction of Mr. Chu in relation to Mrs. Chang and Martha, dismantling the power asymmetries based on gender and race. In a word, in the era of frequent interactions among cultures, it is impossible to attain ontological safety in clearly defined cultural boundaries, but special attention should be paid to two important points. What Lee seems to portray here is that cultural heritage should not be blindly deserted in constructions of masculinities in transcultural spaces; where there is a power asymmetry in the interactions of masculinities in the contemporary world and this will require a lot of effort to dismantle.

3. ANOTHER STORY OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND MASCULINITY IN *THE WEDDING BANQUET*

The voice of a Chinese woman comes into a black screen, and then there are shots and sounds of moving weight machines. With slow vertical camera movements, an Asian man's face is brought into view. He wears headphones while exercising on a steps machine in a gym, listening to a cassette from his mother from Taiwan. Then camera shots show him lifting different weights, intercutting with long, medium and close-ups on his pumping iron and his hands, chest, calf muscles and sweating face. Then a black screen reenters before a new scene. A white man is giving a patient physical therapy. He speaks a philosophical Chinese couplet: "Qingshan ben bulao, weixue baitou; Lüshui ben wuyou, yinfeng zhoumian" (The Blue Mountain's not at all old, It is white-haired because of Snow; The Green Pond's actually care-free, Its wrinkles are add'd by the Breeze). [66] Then he is called on the phone with the Chinese man, who has now changed into a suit, standing on a crowded street by the phone box. The two pairs are held together by pieces of communications technology: the cassette and the phone. This is the beginning of Ang Lee's film *The Wedding Banquet*, which earned him prestigious prizes at film festivals and started his career in the international market.

In this film, a Chinese son Wai-tung Gao (Winston Chao) and his lover Simon (Mitchell Lichtenstein), a gay couple, are living in Manhattan. In order to stop his parents from pushing him to marry, he takes Simon's suggestion of a sham marriage with Wei-wei (May Chin), who is an artist from Shanghai and faced with deportation from the U.S since she has outstayed her visa. The marriage was intended to be

[66] It is a couplet by Shen Jiefu from the Ming dynasty. It means that the nature of human beings is carefree and anguish always results from external temptations. Simon might recite it to release his patient's anxieties. However, his patient does not understand it. It is supposed to indicate Simon's knowledge of Chinese culture.

convenient for both Wai-tung and Wei-wei. Wei-wei moves into the basement and everything is supposed to be fine until Wai-tung's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gao (Sihung Lung and Ah-Leh Gua), decide to make the trip from Taiwan to attend the wedding and meet their daughter-in-law. Wai-tung's plan for a small and uncomplicated civil ceremony at City Hall is thwarted when Mr. Gao's former driver offers his restaurant for a big traditional Chinese wedding banquet. Forced to drink excessively during the banquet, Wai-tung is seduced by Wei-wei and impregnates her. Ultimately, Wai-tung reveals his homosexual secret to his mother but wishes to keep it from his father. However, Mr. Gao sees through it early and shares his secret with Simon, whom he accepts as a kind of "son-in-law". Wei-wei finally decides to keep the baby and asks Wai-tung and Simon to be its fathers. The film ends with Mr. and Mrs. Gao's departure for Taiwan, and the whole family is left in the moment of pain, relief, and ambivalent emotions. The camera has a final shot of Mr. Gao's holding up his hands for the security check.

As a significant mark of Ang Lee's films, the beginning is of great importance. Firstly, it marks a distinct contrast between forms of manhood in two cultures. Wai-tung's building up of his muscles and hard body establishes an important feature of American masculinity, while Mrs. Gao's urging him to marry and have a child alludes to the most significant feature of Chinese masculinity, that is, to have a child, preferably a son, to guarantee familial continuity. Simon's reciting of the Chinese couplet indicates his immersion in Chinese culture, predicting his relationship with Wai-tung. The film soon reveals their homosexual relationship at the dinner table. The beginning thus addresses a potential conflict in the film: Wai-tung's homosexual relationship with Simon runs counter to his filial obligations to continue the family line through a child. Secondly, the separation of spaces and sounds imply Wai-tung's

split identity in two cultures. Mrs. Gao's voice from Taipei is juxtaposed with the picture of Wai-tung's weight machines in New York, her voice transcending one space (Taiwan) and reaching the son in another (U.S.A.). It is the context of sounds separated in space that indicates Wai-tung's trapped identity in transcultural spaces. In addition, with an appropriation of the mainstream representation of masculinity, Wai-tung's masculine body is highlighted. Lee portrays Wai-tung as a healthy, masculine and muscular Asian man, establishing a contrast to the stereotypes of Asian men, gay men, or both. The character of Wai-tung blurs the established binary opposition of feminine Asian men and masculine white American men, as well as the boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual in American mainstream depiction.

Compared to *Pushing Hands,* which has aroused little discussion in English academia, *The Wedding Banquet* has stimulated extensive scholarship on the image of Wai-tung. In *Racial Castration*, David Eng argues that Wai-tung's homosexual identity dismantles both the monolithic notion of heroic Chinese masculine tradition advocated by Frank Chin and other editors in *Aiiieeeee!*, and the U.S. cultural imaginary of materially and psychically feminized Asian American males. He argues that the dominant Rice Queen dynamic present in the mainstream gay community is reconfigured in the film:

> This stereotype…relies upon the racist coupling of passive gay Asian (American) men…with objectionable Rice Queens…white men attracted to gay Asian (American) men through their Orientalized fantasies of submissive "bottoms". That *The Wedding Banquet* significantly revises this Rice Queen dynamic, depicting a successful, savvy, and handsome Asian male who is not in a relationship of economic dependence with a homely white man twice his age,

> marks a laudable departure from the pervasive stereotype of the white daddy and the Asian houseboy endemic to mainstream gay culture (220).

David Eng's analysis identifies Wai-tung as queer and examines the queer masculinity of Asian men, who are feminized in their relationship to White gay men and marginalized in the mainstream gay culture. In my mind, the film's construction of homosexuality focuses more around the issue than on the issue itself. At least one reviewer sees the film as "notable for the first Chinese movie to problematize the reactions to relationship rather than the relationship itself".[67] I perceive that homosexuality functions as a device in the film for dealing with racial, cultural and generational conflicts. Ang Lee deploys homosexuality as a means to parody racial castration and explore different cultural understandings of homosexuality in manhood. I argue that Lee's innovative portrayal of Wai-tung and Simon's relationship subverts the power asymmetry between white and non-white men in American mainstream depiction. Most significantly, Lee's discussion of homosexuality and masculinity in transcultural spaces is not based on a Western-style homophobia but on their conflicts and negotiations in Confucian ethics. In addition, I argue that his depiction of Wai-tung's sexuality destabilizes the category of heterosexuality and homosexuality, and thus dismantles the rigid definition of masculinity on compulsory heterosexism. In this sense, Lee develops a concept of masculinity from a bisexual perspective rooted in pre-modern China, which goes beyond the tendency of polarizing, dichotomizing and oversimplifying issues of sexuality and sexual orientation in the Western gender paradigm.

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[67] See Dariotis, Wei Ming, and Eileen Fung. "Breaking the Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee." *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Ed. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. 187-220.

3.1 Parody of "Racial Castration"

Portrayed as the "Yellow Peril", "heathens" and bachelor "Chinamen", Chinese men in U.S America have historically been represented as vile, womanly, effeminate, "devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage and creativity" (Chin et al. 237). As Brian Locke argues in *Racial Stigma on the Hollywood Screen*, the ruling white and black binary of U.S racial discourse governs Hollywood's representation of the Asian (9). Chinese men are either villains or feminized partners to the white figures in Hollywood depiction. In *The Wedding Banquet*, Ang Lee goes beyond the ruling white and non-white binary in interracial relationship representation by creating a gay couple with a Chinese American man (Wai-tung) and an Anglo-American man (Simon). Significantly, Lee ostensibly re-inscribes a heterosexual paradigm in the homosexual couple, in which Wai-tung plays the "masculine" role and Simon the "feminine", thus subverting the stereotype of interracial relations between masculine white American men and emasculated Asian men.

Wai-tung is displayed as a very virile and successful man. The opening shots of muscles emphasize his physical strength. Later the film reveals that he is a successful businessman in real estate. He gives the street singer a dollar to stop singing and playing for a minute so that he can make a call. After finishing the call, he pats the shoulder of the singer and then joyful music resonates with shots of him walking away against the background of skyscrapers. With such shots at the beginning of the film, Lee portrays Wai-tung as a physically strong man with great material success and aggressive behavior. So he threatens his employees that fines will be paid from their own pockets if they make any further mistakes. And most importantly, he also dominates in the relationship with Simon: the white man in the film. The first shot of

Simon centers on his work as a physical therapist; he is a trained carer. His feminine position is further signaled in the first face-to-face conversation with Wai-tung at the dinner table.

(00:04:19)

Simon: "You're eating too fast."

Wai-tung: "I'm nervous. If they let me convert the Hudson building, I'll make millions. If not, we couldn't even afford a vacation in the Poconos."

Simon: "What's the point of being able to afford a vacation if you won't even take time off to have one? Speaking of which, Steve and Andrew just got back from Belize. They hated the hotel."

Wai-tung: "Was that the one we were going to stay in?"

Simon: "Ah ha, so I guess it's great we didn't go."

Wai-tung: "Simon, I'm really sorry. But I've made up my mind. I'm taking you to Paris in September, right after the zoning hearing. It will be a birthday present."

(Simon smiles shyly and throws the napkin to Wai-tung)

Simon: "You're such a jerk."

This dialogue resembles that of a heterosexual couple in a family scene. The overworked masculine man attempts to appease the agitated feminine counterpart who wants a vacation. Wai-tung is calculating the economic profits and concerned about their financial situation. His superior economic status suggests that he is the decision maker in the partnership. So he promises to "take" Simon to Paris to make up for a missed vacation. In this conversation, Simon behaves like an emotional woman whose expectations are not fulfilled. He expresses his dissatisfaction indirectly and replies sarcastically to his partner's explanation. He is not relieved until

Wai-tung apologizes and makes new travel plans as a birthday present. His womanly look and facial expression are emphasized through camera shots of close-ups, marking his longer curly hair, beautiful feminine features, his earring, his mild mannerisms, and his sensitivity in facial expression.

This reversed gender paradigm is further delineated in Simon's familiarity and "wifely" mastery of Wai-tung's life. The film spends several minutes on Simon's introduction of Wai-tung's daily life and habits to Wei-wei, who is following him, busy making notes, adding a humorous effect to the scene.

(00:20:10)

Simon: "Wai-tung's clothes, shirts, underwear. He wears jockeys, but he sleeps in boxers. And here, all the stuff he gets from his parents. Mega polyester, but he saves the shit religiously. The couch is his own world. Here, piles of unread magazines. World Trade, Advocate, UW, and Fortune. He's such a disgusting yuppie. And, of course, the phone, which hogs like a total pig. Extra pillows, 'cause he likes to drop off to sleep here. Sometimes I have to carry him up to bed. He showers in the morning, unless he goes to the gym, which is if he's in a bad mood or we've had a fight. He doesn't smoke or drink, unless we fought or he's in a bad mood. No junk food either."

This long description of Wai-tung's life style portrays Wai-tung on the one hand as a middle-class gay man with tastes and moderation, recuperating the wounded manhood of Asian American men through economic success and physical robustness. On the other hand, it reiterates Simon's feminine domestication in his relationship with Wai-tung, rendering him in a parallel position to Wei-wei. Throughout the film, Simon and Wei-wei are depicted as comparable "women" to Wai-tung. This is revealed explicitly through Wei-wei's comment: "I am jealous of Simon, he has such a handsome and

rich boyfriend." Simon is a better carer than Wei-wei. He not only takes care of Wai-tung, but also later his father. Actually, General Gao thanks Simon twice for "taking care" of Wai-tung (Mr. Gao tells Wei-wei at the end that "The Gao family will be grateful to you" and Simon "thank you for taking care of Wai-tung"). His excellent cooking is contrasted with Wei-wei's terrible domestic skills. The kitchen scenes in which Simon teaches Wei-wei to cook and takes turns cooking, according to Dariotis and Fung, show two "daughters-in-law", where one fulfills the expectations of the traditional Chinese parents and the other satisfies the sexual desires of the gay husband (205).

Simon and Wei-wei are not only comparable "women" in domestic duties, but also they are the only two figures whose bodies are largely exposed. The camera invites the audience into their most private moments, aiming for the voyeuristic pleasure of the viewer. Simon is shown urinating twice in the film. He is seen, heard, first urinating while Wai-tung is on the phone with his parents, and later at the banquet in the bathroom of the Chinese restaurant. The camera nevertheless focuses on his behind instead and avoids the sight of his penis or his stern facial expression. These redundant shots place him under surveillance of the audience, rendering him vulnerable. Wei-wei, conversely, is shown more openly for desire. She is firstly introduced to the audience through camera shots of her feminine body, and the camera moves in on her washing, in close-ups of legs, neck and arms. Later when she is showering at Wai-tung's apartment, the camera peeps in to reveal her half-naked body. The objectification of Simon and Wei-we's bodies not only feminizes Simon, but also reverses the gaze of power between East and West, going beyond the interpretation of Said's *Orientalism*, which often reduced the [East-West] exchange to a matter of spectacularity between the gazer and object of the gaze.

The feminization of Simon to be Wai-tung's woman makes a parody of the masculine white American man and effeminate Chinese (American) men in U.S. mainstream depiction. David Eng argues that "racial difference repeatedly operates as a proxy for normative and aberrant sexualities and sexual practices" (6) and "heterosexuality gains its discursive power through its tacit coupling with a hegemonic, unmarked whiteness"(13). In *The Wedding Banquet*, the relationship between Wai-tung and Simon reverses the rigid racial classification of men, questioning the limits of essentialist identity categories premised on race and sexual orientation. The reversal thus shatters the indispensible connection among whiteness, heterosexuality and masculinity in Western gender paradigm. In addition, Simon, the white gay man in the film takes up a feminine position to be accepted as another "daughter-in-law" with Wei-wei, a Chinese woman supposed to be "saved" by the white men. Gayatri Spivak, in her influential essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" maintains that the abolition of the Hindu rite of sati in India by the British has been generally understood as a case of "White men saving brown women from brown men" (92). This myth has long been observed in literature and films in Asian American studies. Asian women choose white men over Asian men, and white men "save" Asian (American) women from the patriarchal, cruel and emasculated Asian (American) men. Lee distorts the story in the triangular relationship between Wai-tung, Simon and Wei-wei. The white American man Simon suggests to the Chinese American man Wai-tung "saving" the Chinese woman Wei-wei from deportation through a sham marriage, which renders him paralleled with Wei-wei and explicitly feminized in the Gao family. Lee intentionally deploys this saving myth to dismantle the power asymmetry between Chinese (American) men and white American men.

Lee's feminization of Simon follows the understanding of homosexuality in the Western context, in which it is understood erroneously as the feminization of the male. However, his depiction of Wai-tung denounces homosexuality with feminization. I argue that Lee develops a pre-modern Chinese perspective to explore homosexuality and masculinity in Wai-tung. His concept of masculinity does not have a Western-style homophobia; rather he approaches masculinity and homosexuality in a Chinese cultural context. In the following part, I provide a short review on studies of homosexuality and masculinity in pre-modern China, and then examine Lee's concept of masculinity through Wai-tung's identity politics.

3.2 Sexuality beyond Hetero: Understanding Homosexuality and Masculinity in Pre-modern China

In analyzing American manhood, Michael Kimmel points out that the great secret of American manhood is that "we are afraid of other men" and homophobia is a central organizing principle of the cultural definition of American manhood. Rather than the fear of the homosexual experience or even with fears of homosexuals, homophobia is perceived to be the fear that other men will "unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men" (142). In order to escape from the fears and deep shame that they are unmanly, middle-class, straight, white men reground their sense of themselves by constructing a rigid and narrow limiting definition of masculinity, excluding women, gay men, and men of color. American manhood is of racism, of sexism and of homophobia (145). Similarly, in analyzing the *wen-wu* dyad as the paradigm for Chinese manhood, Kam Louie highlights that this paradigm has significant gender, racial, ethnical and class implications. Women and non-Chinese men, even non-Hans are excluded from the paradigm. However, homosexuality does not count as a means for exclusion. By

contrast, Louie explores the homosocial desire in masculinity construction of the *wu* icon Guan Yu in Chinese literature. He points out that the stereotypes of Chinese men as asexual results from the rigid perception of sexuality as being fundamentally hetero-erotic in the Western context. He proposes a perspective of bisexuality, even privileged homoeroticism to analyze *wu* heroes (2002, 24). Endorsing Louie's argument, Song Geng further explores the *wen* men (scholars) in the Late Ming period and maintains that the concept of "masculinity" in pre-modern China was conceived in the network of hierarchical social and political power in a homosocial context rather than in opposition to "women". Song Geng finds that "gender discourse was more power-based than sex-based in pre-modern China", and Chinese masculinity was androgynous in nature (2004, 13).

In *Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (2011), Giovanni Vitiello goes further than Louie and Song; he discusses homosexuality in relation to ideologies of masculinity and romantic love represented in fictional works in the Ming and Qing periods in China. Givovanni Vitielle has long argued that male homosexuality, expressed as both sexual acts and romantic bonds, has always held a central position in Chinese practices and imaginations of desire. He shows persuasively that male homoeroticism was an important aspect of the late imperial sexual imaginary and that male same-sex bonds were an accepted and normative variant of sexuality to Chinese men.

Heterosexual and homosexual desires are thus not thought to contradict one another, but to potentially arise in the same individual. It is conceivable that a man's sexual desire would be directed "exclusively" (*zhuan*) toward either boys or women, but more often it is a matter of degree – a man may be "extremely" (*ji*) fond of one or the other, or "overwhelmingly" or "addictively" (*ku*) so (18).

Vitiello's assessment maintains that there was relatively little anxiety about the inclusion of male same-sex eroticism in Chinese mainstream fiction and cultural definition of masculinity. He charts the intertwined histories of depictions of masculinity and homoerotic love in Chinese history and states that "homoeroticism in late imperial China was generally accepted as an integral part of male sexuality, as it fell within and not without its normal boundaries" (12).

The chief limit of homosexual desires in the Chinese context, Vitiello points out, was the filial requirement to marry and procreate, which men were required to owe their parents and ancestors. However, there was rarely any categorical moral indictment or medical pathologization, or any strong legal or religious persecution, of homosexual behavior, which offers a sharp contrast with the anti-sodomy fanaticism that characterized Christian European cultures. Homosexuality was not "in principle incompatible with proper male sexuality" in pre-modern China (Furth 1988, 7).

In *The Wedding Banquet*, Lee focuses on the reactions to homosexuality rather than homosexuality itself. Wai-tung is struggling between the individual freedom of his homosexual relations to Simon and his filial responsibilities in getting married and having a child, rather than between maintaining homoerotic desires and constructing masculinity on compulsory heterosexism and homophobia. Furthermore, Wai-tung has sexual acts with both Simon and Wei-wei, and Lee's depiction of his gender ambiguity obscures the boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual in Western gender paradigm. Therefore, situating homosexuality in the context of Chinese Confucian ethics, Lee tells a different story of homosexuality and masculinity in the film.

3.3 Repressive Chinese Familiality vs. Free American Gayness?

The Wedding Banquet sets out to problematize the relationship between homosexuality and the Chinese family, in particular, filial obligations. Wai-tung and Simon live "happily" in their homosexual relationship, and the only problem for them is, as Wai-tung complains to his mother while confessing his gayness: "If it weren't for Pa's need of a grandchild and your constant matchmaking, I'd be very happy the way it was." Chinese filial obligations appear to be the only obstacle for Wai-tung's homosexuality. In Confucian patriarchy, the discontinuing of a family name due to the lack of an heir is considered the biggest offense against the ideal of filial piety: one of the most valued Confucian virtues/teachings. A man's identity and purpose of existence are not complete until he begets a son. Based on this Confucian teaching or possible nightmare and threat to all Chinese men, Lee validates Wai-tung's potency by his accidental impregnation of Wei-wei, a poor artist from mainland China. As long as Wai-tung fulfills his obligations to have a son to pass on the Gao family name, his manliness in Chinese tradition is sustained. Though the sex of Wei-wei's baby remains unknown in the film, it functions as a male (Mrs. Gao speculates that it must be a boy) in that it has assured Mr. Gao of the continuance of his family line. The baby mirrors Mr. Gao's own experience of returning to the family fold in order to continue the line with his own son, Wai-tung.

Observing the repressiveness of Chinese filial obligations on Wai-tung's individuality, Fran Martin asserts that the film "stages a kind of postcolonial cultural clash between two regimes of sexuality: broadly, a 'Chinese-familial' regime, and a regime of 'American gay identity'" (2003, 143). This reading seems to be confirmed by Ang Lee's cameo appearance in the film. Leaning over the back of his chair, he explains in English to the white guests on the wedding banquet that, "you are

witnessing the result of five thousand years of sexual repression." Lee's remark at the banquet, Fran Martin states, reproduces the division between the U.S. as the location of sexual truth compared with China/Taiwan as the place in which sexual truth is covered over with complex webs of ritualized speech productive of the open secret (155). In this sense, Martin concludes, if China is produced in this way as inherently homophobic, then the U.S. is produced as the location of the free, out gay subject (156). I agree with Martin on his observation of the Confucian suppression of sexual desires in Lee's utterance and the film, but his conclusion on "homophobic China" and "free U.S." is too rash and superficial. I assert that the U.S. society is depicted far from a location of "free, out gay subject" in the film, and the Chinese family with the Confucian tradition is not represented as homophobic, but rather tolerant and receptive to homosexuality.

Looking at the U.S. society delineated in the film, one finds implicit homophobic tendencies. Sexual prejudice is openly expressed in the following scene. Simon throws the trash into the garbage cans at the front of the apartment, when his gay friend Steven rides a bike up to him and greets him jokingly with a kiss: "Hey, you homo! What are you doing in this neighborhood?" Simon stops him: "Don't joke about it. You know the Witchells down the street? Check them out." Then the camera casts a medium shot of the white heterosexual couple looking at them and talking, indicating their bias against homosexuality. When Steven leaves on his bike, he ironically greets the couple, whose angry and contemptuous faces are shown in close-up. In his stage directions, Lee defines the couple as "a prototypical American middle-aged Jon Birch-type couple standing and tinkering on their steps. An American flag hangs from their house" (123). It clearly demonstrates that U.S.

Society is far from a utopia of freedom for gay people, for even white, U.S.-born people like Simon are sexually prejudiced.

The white couple's homophobic reactions mark a contrast to the tolerant views of the Gao family towards Simon, illustrating that homosexuality rests in ethical thoughts in Confucianism rather than a Western-style homophobia. Evidently, Mr. and Mrs. Gao's primary concern about Wai-tung's homosexuality rests on their expectation to have an heir, rather on the issue itself. As long as the familial line is sustained, "'Chinese family' and 'gay identity' seem like parallel or nested, rather than antagonistic systems" (Martin 156). Hence Mr. Gao not only accepts the homosexual relationship between Wai-tung and Simon, but also he gives Simon a red envelope full of money *hongbao* and takes him as another son by the end of the film. Mrs. Gao, though she first suspects Simon of leading Wai-tung "astray", admits Simon into the family and is very concerned about him. Consequently, despite the fact that Lee debunks the suppression of individual freedom, in particular, sexual desires in Confucian thoughts, he illustrates the tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality in the concept of masculinity. Lee deplores "masculinity as homophobia" in American manhood and develops a fluid concept of sexuality in Wai-tung's male subjectivity, dismantling the binary categorization between homosexuality and heterosexuality and exhibiting a sense of bisexual gender perspective prevalent in pre-modern China.

3.4 Homosexual or Heterosexual?

Is Wai-tung homosexual or heterosexual? Lee obscures this division and explores the complex nature of sexualities. As Harry Brod states, "in our (US) culture heterosexuality and homosexuality exist not as two ends of a horizontal sexual continuum but as top and bottom (non pun intended) of a vertical sexual hierarchy" (2006, 252) and "if you are no longer strictly straight, then you must be gay" (253).

Lee's depiction of Wai-tung goes beyond the dichotomous characterization into gay vs. straight, and implies a bisexual perspective to understand sexuality and manhood.

Although the beginning of the film reveals Wai-tung's homosexual relationship with Simon, his gay identity is obscured through the film. His male identity is more hybrid than queer. Firstly, Wai-tung is not completely "coming out of the closet": identifying himself within the gay community. In one scene, Simon and other young men and women are staffing an information stand on the street from which hangs the familiar black poster with pink triangle and white lettering proclaiming SILENCE=DEATH, indicating the queer perspective on "standing out of the closet". Soon, the camera zooms out and the picture changes: Wai-tung pulls up next to the stall in his Mercedes; Simon enters the car and Wai-tung drives away. It indicates his distance from the gay community, in which Simon is engaged. Actually, Wai-tung has never been filmed in such a gay community or even positioned himself to others as gay except for his confession to his mother. This self-closure, keeping gayness entirely to himself, is not necessarily "an affirmation of internalized homophobia, implying that this aspect of oneself is too shameful to disclose to anyone", but definitely makes gayness as "an individual rather than a societal or systemic one" (Sophie 60).

In the following scene, Simon and Wai-tung enter their apartment. As the pair begin kissing, the camera takes a reserved stance in showing their behavior. When they take off their trousers and go up the stairs, the camera shows them from a fixed position, instead of following them up. Alternatively, several shots of decorations in the house are intercut with them, thus avoiding the direct exposure of homosexual behavior. As a matter of fact, the sex acts between Wai-tung and Simon are represented with great reserve and caution in the film. In another scene when they are

in bed, although the camera shows a close-up, it takes a point of sight parallel with the low-key lighting, blurring the picture of their kissing. Lee limits the exposure of homosexual acts between Wai-tung and Simon. It can be interpreted as to circumvent the gaze into the privacy of homosexual people, but I contend that it significantly maintains Wai-tung's maleness by avoiding the objectification of his body. As I have argued above, Simon and Wei-wei's bodies have been objectified in the film, nevertheless, Wai-tung's body only appears once at the beginning and is displayed as strong, masculine and powerful. Mulvey argues that the male body cannot "bear the burden" of objectification reserved for the female body: "According to the principles of the ruling ideology, and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (838). Evidently, Wai-tung's body is taken as male and hence cannot be exhibited as much as those of women, or at least not in the same way.[68] Consequently, through film techniques, Lee weakens Wai-tung's queerness.

Furthermore, different from Simon's marked gayness in looks and mannerism, Wai-tung represents a certain intolerant and inflexible notion of straightness. The audience is reminded of his *wu* masculinity by the photo of him in military uniform, his pumping iron at the gym, his dark and muscular physique; his *wen* masculinity in his material success. His manliness even renders Wei-wei suspicious of his gayness. When Wai-tung is "dating" Miss Wu (*Mao mei*) in the restaurant where Wei-wei works as a waitress, she becomes very jealous and emotionally shouts at Wai-tung: "You told me you're gay and I believed you". Though Wei-wei later apologizes for her misunderstanding of Wai-tung's dating Miss Wu, her suspicion does not diminish.

[68] Some scholars, such as Peter Lehman, Steve Neale, D.N. Rodowick, Paul Willemen, and Cynthia Fuchs, have challenged Mulvey's assertion and maintained that white male bodies are displayed "more perfect, more complete, more powerful" on screen for the visual pleasure of spectators. In spite of being a non-white man, Wai-tung's body is represented in the same way.

A striking aspect of this film is the controversial line "I'm going to liberate you" (*Wo yao jiefang ni*) uttered by Wei-wei. After the wedding banquet, the newly-married Wai-tung and Wei-wei enjoy their first moments of solitude in their wedding suite. In their half-asleep, pre-dawn drunken state, Wei-wei and Wai-tung lie on the bed with their eyes closed. Suddenly, Wai-tung's eyes fly open, and he asks Wei-wei what she is doing with her hand. Wei-wei responds seductively: "Liar. You told me women don't excite you." He asks her to stop, but then she pronounces the fateful line, "I'm going to liberate you." Whitney Dilley interprets the line as Wei-wei's desire to "normalize" her gay husband so that her dream can be realized (66). However, with the perspective of bisexuality, it can also be interpreted in the way that Wei-wei is liberating Wai-tung from the heterosexist notion of the either straight or gay paradigm. His fall for Wei-wei and impregnation of her make his sexuality ambiguous and complicated. He upholds a Chinese tradition of filial piety and duty, and meanwhile manages to keep his homosexual lover. Dariotis and Fung ask, "Is he gay? Is he heterosexual?" (205). Their question indicates that the dichotomy of either gay or straight does not apply to Wai-tung, who has crossed the boundary between homosexuality and heterosexuality in heterosexist culture. Wai-tung is both.

Gender identity for Wai-tung is more a performance than an essentialist notion. He behaves as a homosexual lover when staying with Simon, and performs the role of a heterosexual son fulfilling filial obligations to his Chinese parents. The audience has noted the details during the frenetic scene in which the two men frantically attempt to "redecorate" their home as a heterosexual environment, in preparation for the arrival of Wai-tung's parents. The homosexual signifiers, such as the scantily clad "Ken" doll, are removed and replaced with Chinese calligraphy scrolls. The intimate couple photo is replaced by Wai-tung's picture in a military uniform. The wedding banquet

itself is also a performativity of Wai-tung's heterosexuality and his male identity in Chinese tradition. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler does not accept stable and coherent gender identity. Gender is "a stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity… the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (271). The redecoration of the apartment from homosexual to heterosexual evidently exhibits the mechanism of gender performativity and transformation. And it is "the possibility of different sorts of repeating" that destabilizes and subverts gender identity. Wai-tung's double gender performativity constructs his double identity as both a homosexual lover and a "heterosexual" filial son in transcultural spaces.

In conclusion, portraying the conflict between homosexuality and Chinese manhood on Confucian ethics, Lee dismantles the dichotomy of repressive Chinese familiality and free American gayness. By contrast, the US Society exhibits more sexual prejudice than freedom and respect, while the Chinese family shows greater tolerance and aptness rather than patriarchal suppression. Besides, with a sexual fluidity and ambiguity in Wai-tung, Lee destabilizes the boundaries between homosexual and heterosexual, subverting the equation between masculinity and heterosexuality in the Western paradigm. In particular, he goes beyond the heterosexist dualism and develops a bisexual perspective to approach Wai-tung's male identity, which transcends sexuality, race and culture, illustrating the complexity of masculinity in transcultural spaces.

3.5 Chinese Manhood in Transcultural Spaces

3.5.1 Man-woman Relationship: Wai-tung vs. Wei-wei

As I have argued above, Wai-tung's sexuality is obscured in the transcultural spaces. His manliness in Chinese tradition is maintained through Wei-wei's pregnancy and a potential baby to pass on the family name. Wai-tung's bisexual identity freedom is based upon the price paid by Wei-wei, the Chinese woman in the transcultural space. However, Wei-wei is not depicted as a passive and sacrificing Chinese woman in Confucian teachings in the patriarchal world. In her relationship to Wai-tung, she by no means displays the Orientalist images of submissive Chinese women to dominant Chinese (American) men.

Wei-wei is depicted as a liberated woman as well as an educated and ambitious artist from mainland China. Her learned knowledge of Chinese calligraphy and her passion for impressionist art connotes female independence and intelligence. Significantly, Lee's portrayal downplays her femininity and purposely makes her a much more neutral figure. Firstly, her name "Wei" means "authority" and "power" in Chinese, transmitting manliness. Furthermore, she is portrayed as aggressive, tough, and straightforward, beyond domestic and docile. The first encounter between Wai-tung and her emphasizes her seductive hugs and intentional murmuring in his ear, when she is not shy to express her affections. Her seduction of Wai-tung on the wedding night borders on sexual violence: Wai-tung says "no" and the positionality of Wei-wei could qualify this as a "rape" scene (Dariotis and Fung 205). Having her coming from mainland China, Lee might project the concept of gender in Mao's period, where women are defined as the upholder of half of the sky. Lee portrays her manly demeanor in the airport scene. Wai-tung and Wei-wei are waiting to meet Mr. and Mrs. Gao. She stands with two hands on her waist, and suddenly she nudges Wai-

tung with her elbow, telling him that she is extremely anxious. However, receiving a look from the Gao parents, she quickly changes her posture and lowers her hair. Such an amusing change demonstrates Wei-wei's aptness in playing the "feminine" role in the Chinese tradition, but she by no means internalizes it. Actually, Lee highlights Wei-wei's female subjectivity even in the culmination of her "domestication".[69]

On the way to the hospital for an abortion, her stubborn request to eat a hamburger seems to demonstrate her female-consciousness, and then she decides to keep the baby and raise it herself. When Wai-tung tells her that it would be a burden for her, she replies: "there must be a solution". Wei-wei is then represented as a strong-willed female in her statement that if he can't handle her having the baby, she will raise the child on her own. Therefore, Wei-wei establishes a different story of Chinese women in transcultural spaces. She does not dream of being "saved" or "taken care of" by men, rather she picks up her drawing pen and strives to be an independent warrior. It is also through her reflective words that Wai-tung realizes his responsibility for the family and for Simon, as well as for the baby.

However, is Wei-wei really emancipated in transcultural spaces? Wei-wei's sham marriage and her keeping Wai-tung's baby are both represented by Ang Lee as anything but forced. Lee's display of her masculinity and toughness seem to justify her freewill decision to keep the baby as that of a liberated and independent woman in transcultural spaces. Lee nevertheless ignores the fact that Wei-wei's choice results from the subordinate position of women in transcultural spaces, in which gender oppression interplays with the capitalist exploitation of women, rendering her no other alternatives. Wei-wei's experience and her relationship with Wai-tung articulate

[69] Dariotis and Fung argue that Wei-wei is "domesticated, tamed and desexualized" in the Gao family and her domestication culminates in her pregnancy to fulfill Wai-tung's filial obligations (205).

the intersection of multiple oppression and general invisibility as a woman from the Third World.

Feminist scholars Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey define intersectionality as "an integrative perspective that emphasizes the intersection of several attributes, for example, gender, race, class and nation" (3). Intersectionality allows us to see the complex picture of how Wei-wei is oppressed in multiple identity categories, such as race, class, gender and nationality. As a poor artist from Shanghai, Wei-wei is one of the illegal immigrants who risks being deported from the U.S. She lives in "an unfit for human habitation" apartment, having "depressing meals" without any financial support from parents or friends. Her only means of making a living is to work as a waitress in a restaurant. By contrast, Wai-tung comes from an affluent family in Taiwan, is well educated in the US, establishes his own company and becomes a successful businessman. He is the perfect choice for Wei-wei to solve both her economic and visa problems. Hence, Wei-wei seduces Wai-tung and expects to be the object of his sexual desire. Her self-objectification is a non-choice under the exploitation of capitalism. The consolidation of a transnational patriarchy of capital is fundamentally dependent upon the subordination of women and labor, and women and labor are conflated, so that the woman becomes the very sign of labor (Chiang 383). It is through Wai-tung's impregnation of Wei-wei and the control of her maternal labor that the conflict between his homosexuality and filial obligations is resolved, and in addition, Wai-tung's virility is maintained. Meanwhile, Wei-wei is domesticated and oppressed. Lee also seems to hurriedly replace her in the Gao family as a traditional wife and daughter-in-law. Wei-wei is frequently depicted in a parallel relationship with Mrs. Gao, the traditional wife and mother in the film. Mrs. Gao's cheong-sam fits Wei-wei well, indicating that Wei-wei should follow the same

route. Furthermore, when Simon takes a picture of the Gao family in the city hall, the camera intentionally imitates the traditional focus mode, positioning Mrs. Gao's head onto Wei-wei's body. More explicitly, Mrs. Gao attempts to persuade Wei-wei that " a woman is still a woman. Husbands and children are still most important to us". Shi Shu-mei points out, "when (postcolonial historiography) analyzed as a gendered discourse, nationalism has most often been seen in its complicity with patriarchy and masculinity, which either represses internal feminist causes or competes with colonial masculinities" (46). Obviously, although Lee aptly reconstructs the power relations between "East and West", his maintenance of a transcultural father image and reconfiguration of Chinese (American) masculinity are dependent on the subordination and sacrifice of women in transcultural spaces.

In sum, Lee's portrayal of Wei-wei dismantles the stereotypes of feminine, docile and submissive Chinese (American) women in the Orientalist depiction. Nevertheless, as a male filmmaker, he unintentionally sacrifices her subjectivities for the manhood assertion in postcolonial discourse. Wei-wei's domestication and participation in Wai-tung's fulfillment of filial obligations indicate that the emancipation of individual male subjectivity in transcultural spaces might be based on the sacrifice of women.

3.5.2 Father-son relationship: Mr. Gao vs. Wai-tung

Mr. Gao is introduced to the audience at the beginning of the film through the voice of Mrs. Gao in the first tape she sends to Wai-tung. "He was a general commanding tens of thousands of soldiers, and now, he has only me and Mr. Zhang to command at home." Later, when he arrives in the apartment, the camera shots show his Chinese calligraphy scrolls, emphasizing his cultural attainments. As both a military general with *wu* power and a calligrapher with *wen* virtue, Mr. Gao conforms to the ideal Chinese manhood, which is further consolidated in his role as a father.

Mr. Gao is depicted as the family head, full of wisdom, a competent father in tackling the family dynamics. He makes a speech for the significance of the union at the wedding.

(00:51:56)

Mr. Gao: Wai-tung, Wei-wei, you two grew up differently. But fate unites the two of you here so far from home. It's something you should treasure. If differences arise… opinions… habits… you must work to resolve them. Always be thoughtful of (sic) each other. That's the key to a successful marriage.

In its comic context of the sham marriage, this speech comes cross as an inappropriate platitude and Wei-wei breaks into tears before he finishes it. But it also sounds an insightful suggestion for establishing a harmonious and mutually beneficial partnership. Most importantly, Mr. Gao follows his words to be considerate about the other members while resolving family conflicts. He "hears, understands, and learns," accepting Simon as his son: "Wai-tung is my son, and you are my son also". Shortly before his departure, the father, a typical Chinese male who makes little physical contact, holds Simon's hand tightly rather than Wei-wei's to bid farewell and thanks him, fully acknowledging Simon as a member of the Gao family. In addition, he even becomes enlightened enough to "feminize" himself to wash the dishes to show his comradeship with Simon: "Simon cooked, I'll wash." Moreover, though he expects a child of Wai-tung, he leaves Wei-wei a free choice whether to have the baby and expresses his great gratitude towards her: "The whole family Gao are grateful to you." Lee's portrayal of Mr. Gao challenges certain stereotypes of the Chinese father with stubborn adherence to outworn rules and ideas, indicating his nostalgia for Chinese tradition. For Lee, though Chinese tradition demonstrates a certain suppression of

Wai-tung's male subjectivity, it significantly provides reconciliation to the father-son conflicts and maintains a harmony in family relations.

The harmonious bonds are cemented by mutual secrets kept between Mr. Gao and Wai-tung. Wai-tung keeps his secret of homosexuality to maintain Mr. Gao's authoritative power and knowledge. When Wai-tung is challenged by Simon for his obedience to his parents, "look at yourself - your parents send you a form in the mail and you practically pee in your pants. You know, you are an adult - as a matter of fact, you're practically middle-aged." Wai-tung responds: "you're right, it's kind of stupid, all these likes, but I'm used to it". Simon cannot understand Wai-tung's lack of autonomy as a middle-aged man. In many cultures, particularly in the Western culture, manhood originally means departure from boyhood to adulthood, the need for asserting independence from the parents. A true man is mature, not only physically and financially, but also emotionally and in relationships. Nevertheless, a Chinese man always remains a child in relation to his parents. In contrast to asserting aggressively individual independence, he proves his maturity by suppressing his own desire for demonstration of a manly strength of will (Hinsch 8). Therefore, Wai-tung's obedience to his father demonstrates his maturity and manliness in self-restraint and filial piety, as well as his respect to him.

Mr. Gao's authority does not exert demands on Wai-tung explicitly, but rather makes the mother the translator, conforming to the "Strict father, kind mother" (Wilson 73) model in Chinese parental roles. The father is typically characterized as a stern disciplinarian, more concerned with the demands of propriety and emotionally detached from his children; and the mother as affectionate, kind, protective, lenient and even indulgent (Ho 231). The film literally begins with the mother's voice on tape translating and literally speaking for the father and giving voice to his wish that Wai-

tung would marry and procreate. Even when they arrive in the United States, the mother continues to act as the bearer of Chinese customs, while the father remains mostly silent. Most importantly, the mother becomes caught between the lie of the son to his father. When Mrs. Gao is finally forced to recognize Wai-tung's homosexuality, she insists that his father should not be told. "It would kill him", she says, sobbing quietly. It is true that his father has had a series of strokes, but her concern for his health masks the systemic role of secrecy as a bond in a patriarchal structure of authority. For the father to know things that are inconvenient or inappropriate casts doubt on his disciplinary parental role and threatens his authority. The greater his power is, the greater the prohibition on any challenge to it. So the mother becomes the bearer of guilt and a secret that, on the one hand, has made her role more significant; yet on the other hand, her agency/identity is completely disintegrated by the overwhelming importance of the connection between father and son (Dariotis and Fung 203).

But Mr. Gao himself actually knows everything. Just before the Gaos depart, he gives Simon a birthday present, an envelope full of money, and reveals that he speaks English and has been aware of his son's homosexual relationship for a long time.

(01:35:45)

Mr. Gao: " Happy birthday, Simon."

Simon: "Mr. Gao? You speak English?"

Mr.Gao: "Please. Happy birthday."

Simon: "My birthday. Even I forgot. Then you know, you've know…"

Mr. Gao: " I watch, I hear, I learn. Wei-tong is my son. So you're my son, also."

Simon: " Why, you…thank you."

Mr. Gao: " Thank you."

Simon: "When Wei-tong…"

Mr. Gao: " No. Not Wei-tong, not Mother, not Wei-wei shall know. Our secret."

Simon: " Why?"

Mr. Gao: "For the family."

"If I didn't let them lie, I'd never have gotten my grandchild" (in Chinese).

Simon: " I don't understand."

Mr. Gao: "I don't understand."

Mr. Gao here reveals (though not to Simon) that the cunning is necessary to ensure a familial continuity. In concealing his knowledge, Mr. Gao successfully maintains his authority as a proper father and surmounts the "obstacle" of Wai-tung's homosexuality. Most significantly, as Fran Martin states, his (Mr. Gao's) power increases through the surprising but welcome revelation that such an initially distant "traditional, familial" and "Chinese" authority in fact contains within it what is effectively a familiar, liberal "tolerance" of homosexuality (2003, 159). Consequently, Mr. Gao's epistemological privilege over his son not only reconsolidates his authority, but also constructs a plausible image of reconciliation and harmony between father and son.

Lee's complicated emotions are displayed through the decaying physical health of the father. On the one hand, the deterioration indicates the symbolic image of the father, the shattering of Chinese patriarchy in transcultural spaces. On the other hand, the aging father image stimulates sympathy and concern from the son to maintain the authority. The beginning of the film reveals the poor physical health of the father through Mrs. Gao, rendering his long expectation for a grandchild understandable. Later, the father is found in a death-like doze in the room. The camera shows the father dozing on the sofa, using a high angle shot from the perspective of Wai-tung,

who stands in front in low angle shots, making the contrast between the vulnerable father and the powerful son. Suspecting that he may be dead, Wai-tung comes close and bends down to check his breath. The camera takes a close-up of the father's withered face and then moves to the son, demonstrating Wai-tung's dilemma between his filial obligations to his aging father and his individual freedom for his gayness. Actually, the father turns to be rather weak each time when the father-son relation is on the edge. Finally, it is also due to the physical weakness of the father (he has a stoke) that Wai-tung agrees to keep the secret from him, thus avoiding explicitly challenging the father's authoritative position.

In conclusion, Lee's sensitive portrayal of the father-son relationship exhibits a complicated picture of negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces. Lee debunks the suppression of Chinese patriarchy on the son's male subjectivity, but meanwhile advocates Chinese tradition in reconciliation of the father and the son. By displaying an aging and physically deteriorating father image, Lee indicates the shattering of the symbolic father in Chinese culture. Meanwhile, he also attempts to stimulate more understanding, sympathy and respect towards the Chinese father and the implicated Chinese ethics and traditions, which constitute positive cultural heritage in manhood reconstruction in transcultural spaces. I will illustrate this point in Lee's English-language film *Brokeback Mountain* in my next chapter.

3.6 Transdifference

The theory of transdifference is insightful when analyzing Wai-tung's ambiguous male identity in transcultural spaces. The impression that he inhabits a position of difference is contested if one focuses on the way that he negotiates his complex situation and engages with the various, contradictory cultural influences that inform

his actions. Lee's depiction of Wai-tung is innovative as it explores suppressed complexity in masculinity construction. As Breinig and Lösch write:

> The concept of transdifference is related to such models of non-linearity because it interrogates either/or attributions like identity and alterity; it also refers to the difference of difference. … The focus of transdifference is on what is left out or suppressed in differential meaning production not on the diachronic but on the synchronic level. Transdifference re-emphasises the moment and thus runs crosswise to the temporal unfolding of *difference*… At the same time, its focus is not on the multiplicity of differences in significational networks but on the complexity that is engendered but suppressed even in differentiating processes based on the assumption of binary opposites or at least of only a very small number of factors to be distinguished — again a pervasive tendency in human operations of establishing meaning (108).

The complexity of Wai-tung's masculinity lies in the fact that he will have an heir to fulfill filial obligations, and yet at the same time keeps a homosexual lover. Wai-tung is at the center of paradoxical relations, in which binary opposites consisting of heterosexuality and homosexuality, filial obligations and individual desires, masculinity and femininity, are oscillated. Simply categorizing his situation into a binary opposite between free American gay identity and repressive Chinese familiality ignores complexity in cultural differences and transcultural interactions upon individual subjectivities. Lee's depiction of Wai-tung debunks the nuanced and complex nature of sexualities and masculinities, calling "a chiastic quaternary constellations that destabilizes the respective binarisms" (Breinig and Lösch 113). Is Wai-tung homosexual or heterosexual? Is he masculine or feminine? Is he American or Chinese? Lee's portrayal of him complicates the answers. From a perspective of

transdifference, one perceives Lee's interrogations of simple abstractions and complicated negotiations of various identities in transcultural spaces, in which numerous articulations of cultural differences constitute a multiple dialogue.

In this sense, Wai-tung's male identity is reconstructed in the interstitial space, in which the affinity between heterosexuality and masculinity, and the division between homosexuality and heterosexuality are destabilized. According to Breinig and Lösch,

> The experience of transdifference may be either seen as hindering the construction of an integrated, consistent and relatively stable personal identity (cf. Erikson 1973: 18, 124, 137) or as calling for the construction of a self-concept that outgrows the limiting dichotomous model self vs. other by acknowledging the ruptures and the affective and cognitive dissonances engendered by "cross-cutting identities" (Bell 1980: 243) (116).

Wai-tung's male identity construction calls for a new concept of masculinity that outgrows the limiting dichotomous model in heterosexist culture. It implies a bisexual perspective on masculinity in pre-modern China, where homoeroticism is accepted as an integral part of male sexuality and masculinity is not necessarily homophobia. Reading this from a bisexual perspective, Wai-tung's masculinity is verified in contradictory cultural affiliations. He is an ideal *wen* man with homoerotic relationships, and a filial son with individual subjectivity. Nevertheless, Wai-tung is not living in pre-modern China and the liberation of his male identity is not naturally sustained, but rather established with the sacrifice of Wei-wei, the Chinese female character in the film.

Breinig and Lösch state that transdifference is "a mixed blessing" and "whether it can be used for individuation and emancipation will depend on ego strength and various other factors such as economic, social and political independence which are

beyond the reach of many people" (119). Wai-tung's final individuation and emancipation is brokered on his economic and social power, which purchases Wei-wei's maternal labor with a green card. The consolidation of his masculinity is fundamentally dependent upon the subordination of Wei-wei, although Lee renders it more her decision to keep the baby than her being forced. As Eng L. David argues, Wai-tung's position (a subject of capital) is made possible only through his subordination of the diasporic Third World woman (as an object of capital) and his emancipation demands Wei-wei's acquiescence to keep and not abort their (male) child (223). Consequently, the reconstruction of Wai-tung's male subjectivity must be understood in power affiliations in transcultural spaces, in which women are likely to pay the price of the emancipation of individual male subjectivity.

3.7 Conclusion

In *The Wedding Banquet*, Lee satires the masculine white and emasculated non-white binary in Hollywood representation. By reversing the binary in homosexual relations, Lee dismantles the power asymmetry between Chinese (American) men and Anglo-American men in transcultural spaces. Money plays a role in the reversal, and Wai-tung's economic power ensures that he is the masculine decision maker in his relationship with Simon and his purchase of Wei-wei's maternal labor in sustaining his masculinity in Confucian filial obligations. Wai-tung's sexual behavior with Wei-wei indicates the moment of sexuality obscuration, oscillating the dichotomous division between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Most importantly, Wai-tung's ambiguous sexual identity introduces a bisexual perspective to approach masculinity in transcultural spaces. Lee thus develops a concept of masculinity beyond binary opposites between heterosexuality and homosexuality, masculinity and femininity, in Western heterosexist culture. In this concept, men seem to have more traditional

responsibilities in terms of gender roles, but are more flexible and fluid in gender attributes, sexualities in particular. In *The Wedding Banquet*, Lee not only rejects the prevalent Western gender discourse but also significantly contextualizes the complex nature of sexualities and masculinities that actually exist in our world. It is a world beyond the West.

4. FROM AMERICAN COWBOY TO CHINESE SUPERIOR MAN [JUNZI] IN *BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN*

A panoramic shot of a mountain in twilight fills the screen, accompanied by the sound of wind. The shot is so still that it almost looks like a landscape portrait. Then a truck moves into the picture, driving along a desolate road at the foot of the mountain. The camera takes long shots of the truck traveling in the landscape, casting it in the frame dominated by the land; marking a sharp contrast between the magnificent Wyoming landscape and the insignificant truck. The accompanying guitar music resonates slowly and sporadically, interspersed by the wind. As the truck is moving close, the camera shows a medium shot of Ennis jumping off it and then walking towards a cabin. In the next scene, Ennis stands silently outside the cabin, where Jack's car soon arrives. The characters are shown separately in silence, with only the sound of wind, and occasional noises of vehicles. This is the beginning of Ang Lee's film *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). The significant Wyoming landscape, the thin and discontinuous instrumental music and the remarkable silence communicate the grandness and eternity of nature, generating a sublime feeling and a sense of loneliness and isolation. The long distant sound of the wind seems to travel from the remote past, approach the present and extend to the future, creating an imagination of infinite space and a connectedness in the universe.

Based on the 1997 story by Annie Proulx, Ang Lee's film *Brokeback Mountain* tells the story of a tragic romance between two Wyoming cowboys. Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) first meet in the summer of 1963 as ranch hands and are hired, working together as shepherds on Brokeback Mountain. They turn to each other for physical intimacy one night after they have been drinking whiskey. However, they both deny their homosexuality the next day and return to

their separate lives in two directions. Ennis marries his fiancée Alma (Michelle Williams) and has two daughters with her. Jack moves to Texas, where he meets and attracts Lureen (Anne Hathaway) and establishes his own family. However, Ennis and Jack share a passionate affection and neither of them can forget each other. They reunite four years later, and Jack asks Ennis to set up a ranch and live a life together with him, but Ennis rejects this idea. Over the years, the two men continue to see each other on rare camping and fishing trips to Brokeback Mountain, where the raw beauty of Wyoming and their emotions towards each other bring them comfort and warmth. Although the two men are deeply in love, they have to live lives isolated from each other because of social prohibition. When Jack dies, Ennis visits his parents to collect his ashes. Allowed to see Jack's childhood bedroom, Ennis finds his own shirt tucked inside Jack's in an endless embrace. The film ends with Ennis's standing in front of his closet, where his shirt embraces Jack's, murmuring tearfully, "Jack, I swear…"

Brokeback Mountain has aroused controversial debate both in academic and non-academic circles. While some welcomed and appraised it as a "gay western" (Dilley 162) that "changes our perceptions (of the western) so much that cinema history thereafter has to arrange itself around it"[70], others questioned whether the film truly challenged the mainstream depiction of homosexuality. Critic Michael L. Cobb even calls the film a "Christmas gift for conservative Christians".[71] Such criticism, either applauding Lee's representation of gayness or denouncing it, obviously focuses on the issue of homosexuality and interprets the male characters from a Western perspective. Ryan James Kim asserts: "By the end of the film, it's the expressive Jack we consider

[70] B. Ruby Rich, "Hello Cowboy," *Guardian*, 23 September 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/sep/23/3>.
[71] Michael L. Cobb. "God Hates Cowboys (Kind of)," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13.1 (2007): 102-05. More film reviews and analysis on *Brokeback Mountain* can be found in *Brokeback Mountain* written by Gary Needham and *Reading Brokeback Mountain: Essays on the Story and the Film* edited by Jim Stacy.

brave and the silent Ennis we find cowardly."[72] In his comment, "we" obviously refers to a Western audience. Michael Thompson's article "The Confucian Cowboy Aesthetic" turns the other way around and explores the Eastern notion of Confucianism in Lee's portrayal of Jack and Ennis.[73]

However, I contend that it is inadequate to analyze the film from either the Western gender perspective or the Confucian outlook, for it simplifies Lee's portrayal of Jack and Ennis which provides a complex and sophisticated perception of masculinities in a transcultural way. My study provides a multiple reading of the film with both the Western and Confucian theories, and most importantly investigate how these readings interact with each other to generate a new understanding of masculinities from a transcultural perspective. Portraying Jack and Ennis in the American cowboy masculinity model, the film on the one hand dismantles the stereotypical representation of gay men as effeminate in American mainstream cinema, and on the other, subverts heterosexism in the construction of masculinities and debunks homophobia in this American macho iconography. Focusing on the emotional connectedness and male intimacy between Jack and Ennis, Lee introduces the Confucian outlook to perceive masculinity in interpersonal relations, in particular, male bonds beyond the dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality in the Western context, as well as the hierarchical same-sex relationship in pre-modern China. Transplanting the Confucian masculine model *junzi* into his portrayal of Ennis, Lee probes into the construction of masculinity in a web of complexities, challenging the perception of Ennis as a failure in Western queer studies. Ennis is not a "coward", but embodies the virtues of self-control and social responsibility in the ideal *junzi* masculinity. Nevertheless, Lee also criticizes Ennis' Confucian self-repression in his

[72] Ryan James Kim. "Not a gay movie". *Advocate*. December 9, 2005. <http://www.advocate.com/news/2005/12/09/brokeback-mountain-not-gay-movie>.
[73] See "The Confucian Cowboy Aesthetic" in *The Philosophy of Ang Lee*, 65-76.

relationship with Jack and thus promotes a self-reflection and full devotion to Jack in the end of film. In this way, Lee jumps out of both the Western gender paradigm and Confucian thought to reconsider the "nature" of men and masculinity in a transcultural way, and *Brokeback Mountain* becomes a transcultural space in which masculinities are negotiated in different cultural contexts.

4.1 Representing Gay Men in the American Cowboy Masculine Model

In US history, many male images: the buffalo hunter, the mountain man, the gold washer, the Western immigrant, and the "bullwhacker", have all attracted a degree of interest among many people and the imagination of men. However, only the cowboy has captivated them and is held as the American folk hero and a leading actor embodying American manhood. The American cowboy myth has exerted a tremendous influence on American culture and is widely taken as an icon of American masculinity. "Throughout its history, the cowboy icon has reflected concerns over the social and economic status of Anglo-American men and the emasculating effects of urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratization" (Carroll 115). In *The American Cowboy*, Joe B. Frantz and Julian Ernst Choate identified, not very persuasively, the significance of the cowboy image in making American literature.

> At this juncture, the heroic age in America is indisputably the age of the frontier, and there is no denying that the cowboy's segment of the frontier contains as much colorful and significant material about man versus man, man versus Nature, man versus environment, man versus emotion, man versus temptation, man lonely, man in harness, man in motion, man developing – the stuff of which literature is made (9-10).

No matter how the cowboy image is pictured: a heroic loner, a visionary frontiersman or even a glamorous outlaw, it has frequently represented racial and gender superiority, from which women and non-white men are excluded. From Theodore Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, cowboys have been deployed to rejuvenate so-called male virility from "the feminizing influences of civilization", to confirm "Anglo-Saxon cultural and physical dominance", to celebrate "outdoor physical adventure" and legitimize "the moral authority of violent action in the name of the American nation" (Carroll 115).

For those who have been entrenched in such a powerful folk myth and masculine ideal, there is an aversion to relate cowboys to homosexuals. Although homosexuality is defined as same-sex desire and/or sexual activity, referring to both men and women when the term was coined in the nineteenth century, "male homosexuality has been a more prominent concern in American society" (Carroll 217). For a long period in American history, homosexuality has been categorized as a sin, a crime or an illness. Homosexuals were punished as committing felonies worthy of life sentences to imprisonment. According to Michael Kimmel, homophobia is "a central organizing principle" of the cultural definition of American manhood (1994, 142). As psychohistorian Geoffrey Gorer observes, "the lives of most American men are bounded, and their interests daily curtailed by the constant necessity to prove to their fellows, and to themselves, that they are not sissies, not homosexuals" (129). Although gay and lesbian movements in the U.S. have changed remarkably people's attitudes to homosexuality in the past decades, homophobia remains at the center of American gender discourses and cultural representations. In *The Celluloid Closet*, Vito Russo convincingly analyzes how gayness is viewed as an aberration and gay men are stereotyped either as buffoons or villains in American mainstream films. He

points out that "Hollywood films, content with easy laughs and cheap social comment, have perpetuated a lazy, stereotyped idea of homosexuals in the place of realist characters who happen to be gay" (248). He further advocates that "honesty and a respect" should be devoted to "dealing with the gay characters" in popular films. However, the past decade has not seen significantly successful changes in depicting the same-sex relations until Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* was released. In *Brokeback Mountain*, instead of portraying homosexual men through popular stereotypes, linking them to "the idea of men acting like women" (Russo 133), Ang Lee depicts Jack and Ennis with sophistication and resourcefulness, providing a liberating and a refreshing depiction of them as part of rugged cowboy masculinity in American culture.

Ang Lee highlights Jack and Ennis's attempts to maintain the cowboy masculinity. The music festival scene is the best illustration of Ennis's visual cowboy image. Two hippies are foul-mouthing some women. Annoyed by their blasphemous language, Ennis asks them to lower their voices, warning them that his wife and daughters are close. But the hippies obviously do not take him or his words seriously, responding provocatively and talking even more loudly. Ennis passes his little daughter to Alma, walks to them and knocks them down violently. The camera takes an elevated angle to show shots of Ennis's effortless punching and kicking them down. The frozen shots cast him standing tall in the frame, with fireworks rising and blooming in the background, and the hippies' begging back heads in close shot. This image recuperates and revives the heroic image of a strong, violent and virile cowboy in American culture.

In American mainstream culture, cowboys are depicted as emotionally distant and isolated individuals who live an outdoor life free from domestic constraints (Carroll

115). In *Brokeback*, Ennis embodies these cowboy attributes. First, he attempts to assert his cowboy manliness through domestic resistance. Although Ennis participates in taking care of his two daughters, he obviously leaves other domestic work to his wife, who is frequently portrayed washing clothes or cooking. In a scene where Alma hurries to take an extra shift for her work, Ennis angrily tells her: "No one's eatin'it unless you're serving' it, Alma". And we also see Ennis taking the two daughters to Alma during her work. Moreover, the film techniques further emphasize the contrast between the domestic constraints and nature integrity in cowboy culture to underscore Ennis's outdoor manliness. We see Ennis's increasing awkwardness in the indoor scenes together with Alma: the shabby and cluttered apartment, the screaming and crying babies, and the obligatory sex. At the same time, he is shown as accomplished with a gun, riding on horseback, and setting up tents in the wild, natural space. The extreme long shots portray the vastness and colorfulness of nature, suggesting an escape and liberation from the narrow and suffocating domestic space. Ennis's cowboy manliness is thus maintained in his pursuit of a "strenuous life" in natural spaces.

Furthermore, Ennis is depicted as a reticent and tough man, emotionally conservative and individually isolated. His response to Jack's self-introduction in their first encounter is extremely short ("Ennis" "Del Mar"), portraying him as a sober, serious and inward man. As they become close, Ennis still attempts to maintain his aloofness, constraining his feelings. The following conversation happens before they leave Brokeback Mountain.

(00:37:43)

Ennis (riding up as Jack stows a tent): "What are you doin'?"

Jack: Aguirre came by again. Said my uncle didn't die after all. Says bring'em down."

Ennis: "Bring them down? Why, it's the middle of August."

Jack: "Says there's a storm coming, moving in from the Pacific. Worse than this one."

Ennis: "That snow barely stuck an hour, huh? Besides, the sonofabitch, he is cutting us out of a whole month's pay. It ain't right!"

Jack: "Well, I can spare you a loan, bud, if you're short on cash. Give it to you when you get to Signal."

Ennis: "I don't need your money, huh? You know, I ain't in the poorhouse. Shit!"

At this moment, Ennis has developed deep emotions towards Jack, which are demonstrated implicitly through the camera shots. After hearing that their ranch work will end early, he behaves in a way that suggests his uneasiness: shaking his head and shoulders, and putting his hands into his pockets. However, he attempts to repress his emotions and hide his dismay about the forthcoming separation. When Jack takes his false reasons for his disappointment seriously and says that he can lend him money, Ennis angrily kicks the snow and walks away in: agonized and infuriated. This behavior, on the one hand, further highlights Ennis' suppression of his emotions as a cowboy, who tends to employ anger and violence for emotional release. On the other hand, it importantly indicates that Jack's offer of financial support humiliates him and injures his honor of cowboy masculinity with respect to economic individualism. As a matter of fact, Ennis' financial difficulties run through the whole story. Alma suggests that the family move to the town so that he can apply for a better-paid job in a power plant. Ennis nevertheless rejects her idea. His rejection, in some sense, can possibly

be interpreted as a refusal to "settle down", maintaining the title of "authentic cowboy", marking a lifestyle "characteristically rugged and independent" (Perez 77). He attempts to prevent the eroding influences of the corporative society on his independence as a cowboy, who aspires to a life free from urban-industrial concerns and constraints. However, as Perez points out, the instability of his seasonable ranch work and the difficult financial situation obviously limit his mobility and autonomy (77) and thus render the fantasy of the independent cowboy masculinity invalid. Consequently, portraying Ennis's attempts to maintain the cowboy manliness, Lee questions the legitimacy of this ideal masculine icon.

Jack is represented as a man striving to be a rodeo cowboy throughout the film. He engages in a very dangerous sport as a rodeo bull rider so as to match his father's cowboy masculinity. His manliness as a rodeo cowboy is emphasized in the Christmas dinner scene. Jack's father-in-law, who is the successful owner of a farming machine company, has long treated him disrespectfully and scorned his rodeo cowboy identity. At the Christmas table, L.D. takes the place of Jack to cut the turkey, demonstrating his authority over Jack in the family. The drama starts when Lureen asks Bobby (their son) not to watch TV during dinner, and then Jack turns off the TV to carry out the rule. However, Lureen's father turns it back on.

(01:24:31)

L.D. Hell: "We don't eat with our eyes. You want your son to grow up to be a man, don't you, daughter? Boys should watch football."

Jack: "Not until he finishes eating the meal that his mama took three hours to fix." (Gets up and turns TV off.)

(L.D. stands up to turn on the TV again.)

Jack: "Now you sit down, you old son of bitch! This is my house, this is my child, and you are my guest! Now you sit down, before I knock your ignorant ass into next week."

(L.D. sits as Lureen wipes a smile off her face. Jack starts carving the turkey.)

When L.D is talking, the camera shifts from a medium shot of him to a close-up of Jack, indicating a conflict between two men. "To grow up to be a man" and "a boy should watch football" implicitly demonstrate the father-in-law's teaching his grandson under the perception of hegemonic masculinity in modern commercial society.[74] His gestures display an arrogant contempt for Jack's male identity both as a cowboy and a father. The shots of Lureen's uneasiness explicitly predict the war between the two men. When Jack's disaffection is being shown, the camera has shots of the whole family, depicting the tense relationship at the table. After he finishes, the camera shows a medium shot of Lureen's smiling face and then changes to Jack's face for a close-up and finally shows L.D.'s turning and sitting back in his seat. The camera techniques demonstrate the whole process of the competition of manhood and Jack's ultimate victory in his assertion of masculinity. Obviously, the table is turned into an arena for a competition between two American models of masculinity: the father's modern commercial masculinity and Jack's rodeo cowboy masculinity. Jack's victory at the table figures as an embodiment of Teddy Roosevelt's rough-riding ethos of cowboy masculinity, which reinvigorates aggression and primitive strength, thwarting the civilized commercial masculinity.

Jack's cowboy masculinity defeats his father-in-law's modern commercial masculinity at the Christmas table, but obviously not in everyday life. Compared to Ennis who lacks mobility for economic reasons, Jack lives a more flexible and mobile

[74] For more discussion on hegemonic masculinity in American football, see Rader, B. G. *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised sports*. 6th Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008.

cowboy life. However, his autonomy ironically depends on his marriage to Lureen, who has a commercially successful father. It explains why he does not divorce Lureen even though their marriage runs out of heat. Lee highlights their dying marriage in camera shots. Lureen is increasingly shown doing calculations and office work, semi-conscious of her husband's activities. She does not notice, or more precisely does not care that her husband is gay, losing her passion for him, which is indicated in her increasingly heavy make-up and brittle hairstyles (Keller and Jones 29). Throughout the film, Jack attempts to pursue a gay cowboy lifestyle, an autonomous way of life free from social constraints. He suggests more than once to Ennis that they rent a ranch together. But ironically, as he tells Ennis, he expects an amount of money from his father-in-law to be able to afford such a ranch. Therefore, depicting Jack as a man who asserts his cowboy manliness, Lee indicates the emptiness and vanity of the masculine model.

Perceiving Lee's portrayal of masculinity in Jack and Ennis, Keller and Jones argue that *Brokeback Mountain* reasserts traditional American masculine stereotypes.[75] On the contrary, my analysis illustrates that Lee dismantles traditional American masculine conceptions in heterosexism. Must men choose between homosexuality and masculinity? Can gay men be manly and virile? Lee's portrayal of Jack and Ennis provides a positive answer. Portraying Jack and Ennis as rugged cowboy masculinities, Lee dismantles the sexist bullying that casts homosexual men as emasculated or feminized in mainstream representation, thus subverting the heterosexual normalcy in constructing masculinities. Therefore, instead of flaunting traditional American manhood, Lee rather questions the heterosexism of this

[75] James R. Keller and Anne Goodwyn Jones's article "Brokeback Mountain: Masculinity and Manhood" illustrates contemporary American manliness and masculinity in the film. They argue that instead of challenging the prescription of American manhood, Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* rather recuperates traditional American masculinity. See "Brokeback Mountain: Masculinity and Manhood." *Studies in Popular Culture* 30.2 (Spring 2008): 21-36.

conception. Moreover, casting Jack and Ennis in the cowboy masculinity model does not mean that Ang Lee advocates this masculine ideal. My analysis has illustrated that Lee implicitly questions this masculine iconography with respect to emotional repression, the fantasy of autonomy and mobility, and radical individualism. Most significantly, Ang Lee explicitly challenges it by debunking homophobia, and further denounces the heterosexual hegemony in American manhood for generating fears and panic in male-male relations, limiting the expression of intimacy between men.

4.2 Debunking Homophobia in Gay Cowboys

Lee illustrates the internalization of the prejudice against homosexuality and homosexuals in Jack and Ennis's constructs of cowboy masculinity. Both deny homosexuality after their first sexual relationship, naming their powerful love a "thing" that grabs hold of them.

(00:32:06)

Ennis: "This is a one-shot thing we got goin'on here."

Jack: "It's nobody's business but ours."

Ennis: "You know I ain't queer."

Jack: "Me neither."

When they are talking, both of them avoid looking at each other. Jack keeps his eyes down in the talk until he says, "me neither", raising up his eyes to Ennis and ending the conversation. Camera shots clearly reveal Ennis's internalized homophobia. The camera keeps cutting to close shots of the reverse side of his head. The intentional avoidance of his facial expression indicates his repression of emotions and the rejection of homosexuality. He does not want to face up to this issue. Lee further depicts Ennis' self-hatred in his quarrel with Alma when she talks about his secret at Christmas evening.

(01:28:01)

Alma: "Don't try to fool me no more, Ennis, I know what it means. Jack Twist."

Ennis: "Alma."

Alma: "Jack Nasty. You didn't go up there to fish. You and him…"

Ennis (grabs her wrist and twists it): "Now you listen to me, you don't know nothin' about it."

Alma: "I'm goin' to yell for Monroe."

Ennis: "You do it and I'll make you eat the fuckin' floor."

Alma (screaming): "Get out! Get out!"

In the quarrel, Alma exhibits an explicit prejudice against homosexuality, naming Jack "nasty". Gayness is obviously defined as "a dirty secret", which Ennis is terribly frightened to expose. Being angry and humiliated, Ennis tries to stop Alma several times, and eventually he waves a clenched fist to threaten her to shut up. It demonstrates his self-disgust as a gay man and his fear of homoerotic desires.

Compared to Ennis, Jack is depicted as actively "gay". In his first encounter with Ennis, he poses provocatively to attract Ennis's attention. He observes Ennis through the rearview mirror while shaving. He goes to Mexico to have sex with hustlers. He tells Ennis of his desire to live together with him. However, this does not mean that Jack is less vulnerable to homophobia, or that he has less internalized guilt and self-hatred. After the rodeo clown dismisses Jack's offer, the bartender discovers his gayness and asks him if he has ever tried calf roping. Jack gets offended: "do I look like I can afford a fuckin' ropin' horse?" and leaves the bar in humiliation. This situation is somewhat pathetic, but it indicates an overriding consciousness of the heterosexual norm in Jack, who compulsively denies homosexuality. Both Jack and Ennis are afraid of their gayness, and are unable to accept it.

Furthermore, the lynching story of gay men circulates in the film to underline homophobia. When Ennis was a child, he was taken by his father to witness the dead and mutilated Earl who had been beaten with a tire iron. The horrific scene lingers in Ennis's memory, and he has internalized the most enduring prejudice and threats against homosexuality, which the film represents vividly. When he hears the story of Jack's death from Lureen on the phone, the camera casts shots of Ennis's imagined scenario of his horrendous childhood memory, indicating that Jack might also have been lynched. Lureen is firstly depicted with a cool face, describing Jack's death and his wishes to have his ashes buried in Brokeback Mountain, which she takes to be a pretend place. But when Ennis tells her that Brokeback Mountain is the place where they were herding sheep in the summer of 1963, the camera casts an extreme close-up of her eyes with tears and her trembling lips, indicating that she might know about Jack's gayness and that she cannot hold her repressed emotions any longer. The audience might assume that she does not tell Ennis the truth about Jack's death and that what Ennis reflects about might be true. The film nevertheless offers no representation of the certainty that Jack is eventually killed by the tire iron, leaving a space for the audience's imagination. Consequently, by creating a threatening imagination to project Ennis's dreadful memory onto Jack's death, Lee attacks the cruelty of homophobia in U.S. society and attempts to generate sorrow and sympathy among the audience. In this way, Lee has "paradoxically appropriated a certain homophobia in order to challenge homophobia" (Keller and Jones 25) and converted homophobia into the horror of homophobia itself.

4.3 Portraying the Same-sex Relationship Beyond Sexual Orientation

Lee challenges the homophobic fear in same-sex relations, whether or not they involve sexual desires and activities. I argue that Lee further subverts sexual

orientation as the most important definer of masculinity in the Western notion of gender paradigm.[76] His representation of Jack and Ennis highlights their spiritual and emotional interdependence beyond sexuality. In this way, *Brokeback Mountain* can be interpreted as a film about how men get along with each other, portraying the emotional attachment between Jack and Ennis, a commitment in their relationship. It predicts a time when Russo maintains, "people are regarded as people, no matter what their sexual preference" (310).

Ennis and Jack's emotional relationship develops gradually in the film. The first talk takes place after they have taken the job as shepherds. They are sitting shoulder to shoulder at the bar table, drinking and talking about their family.

(00:07:10)

Jack: "My second year up here. Last year one storm the lightnin' killed 42 sheep. Thought I'd asphyxiate from the smell. Aguirre got all over my ass like I was suppose to control the weather. But beats workin' for my old man. Can't please my old man, no way. That's why I took to rodeoin'. Do you ever rodeo?"

Ennis: "You know…I mean, once in a while, when I got the entry fee in my pocket."

Jack: "Yeah. Are you from ranch people?"

Ennis: "Yeah I was."

Jack: "Your folks run you off?"

Ennis: "No, they run themselves off. There was one curve in the road in 43 miles, and they missed it. The bank took the ranch, and my brother and sister raised me, mostly."

[76] Eve Sedgwick argues against the limiting sexuality to homosexuality or heterosexuality, and most importantly, she critiques the historical moment in which sexual orientation became a definer of personal identity. See Sedwig, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Jack: “Shit. That’s hard.”

Ennis (reaches for lighter): “Can I? Thank you.”

This is a significant initiation of the affectionate relationship between Ennis and Jack, who share their autographical stories of inadequacy as cowboys. Jack frankly tells Ennis that his rodeo cowboy pursuit results from his ambivalent and frustrating relations to his father, expressing his failure to fulfill his father’s expectations. Although Lureen is attracted by Jack’s rodeo riding, the film never acknowledges that she has an idea of the reason for Jack’s choice as a rodeo rider, representing a contrast to his spiritual connectedness to Ennis. Jack’s sincere talk touches Ennis, who shares his sad story that his parents died early in an accident, rendering him dependent on his brother and sister for a living. Both Ennis and Jack have painful reasons for their aspirations to be cowboys. This conversation emphasizes that the relationship between Jack and Ennis starts from mutual trust in each other, which characterizes all intimate human relationships. In this way, Lee undermines the sexual orientation in the relationship between Jack and Ennis, highlighting the same emotions in all relationships. It indicates that Lee attempts to achieve a wider reception of same-sex relationships among his audience. Lee further portrays that the intimacy and fondness between Jack and Ennis gradually develop in their cooperative ranch work on Brokeback Mountain.

(Jack pours some whiskey in Ennis’s cup)

(00:20:40)

Jack: “Well, my ol’man was a bull rider, pretty well known in his day, though he kept his secrets to himself. Never taught me a thing, never once come to see me ride. Your brother and sister do right by you?”

Ennis: "They did the best they could after my folks was gone, considerin' they didn't leave us nothin' but 24 dollars in a coffee can. I got me a year of high school before the transmission went on the pickup. My sis left. She married a roughneck, moved to Casper. Me and my brother (sic), we got ourselves some work on a ranch up near Worland until I was 19, and then he got married. No more room for me. That's how come me end up here. (Notices Jack smiling.) What?"

Jack: "Friend, that's more words than you've spoken in the past two weeks."

Ennis: " Hell, that's the most I've spoke in a year. My dad, he was a fine roper. Didn't rodeo much, though. He thought rodeo cowboys was all fuck-ups."

Jack: "The hell they are! (Gets into Ennis's face and whoops.) Yee-haw!"

Ennis: "There you go."

(Jack continues to whoop and carry on.) I'm spurrin' his guts out, wavin' to the girls in the stands! He's kickin' to high heaven, but he don't (sic) dashboard me, no way! (Stumbles and collapses in laughter.)"

Ennis (also laughing): " I think my dad was right."

Their talk on the same topic implicitly confirms their closer relationship, in which they share similar life experiences and feelings, in particular, with their fathers. Neither of them has had an opportunity to develop a friendly father-son relationship. Jack tries to match the manhood of his father through bull riding, and aspires to his father's approval and praise, which unfortunately he never earns. Ennis loses his father early in life but his authority exerts an obvious impact on the son. Due to his father's negative view of rodeo, he does not rodeo much. The lynching spectacle his father takes him to witness haunts Ennis all his years. Their aloof, indifferent and authoritative fathers represents the stern fathering style and the lack of intimacy

among American men who, according to John Ibson, "are not inclined and allowed to express their affection for each other – whether that affection involves romance, sexual longing, or just profound fondness" (189). Accordingly, Lee debunks the loneliness and alienation among American men, and highlights the emotional attachment between Jack and Ennis.

It is more loneliness than homosexual desires that brings Ennis and Jack together. Two scenes involving a shirt are particularly significant in portraying their affection. The first scene is their separation after the shepherd job on Brokeback Mountain. Ennis remarks that he has left his shirt on the mountain. The camera goes to a close-up of Jack, displaying his uneasiness. Then they both talk about their future plans. Ennis will marry Alma and Jack is going back to help his father. The camera intercuts close-ups of both, portraying respectively their repressions of emotions and reluctance to part. Finally Ennis and Jack are cast in one frame shot and then Ennis walks away. The camera follows Jack getting into his car and driving away. It cuts to a close-up of Jack and his looking in the rearview mirror, in which Ennis is shown in a freeze-frame long shot. A facial close-up focuses on Jack, displaying his agony. Then the camera switches to the freeze-frame long shot of Ennis, who walks slowly into a frame shot of a wall in shadow. He is kept in the dark and the long shot represents his vomiting and sobbing against the background of white clouds and green mountains. Such a series of camera shots captures the strong sentiments between them, intensifying their emotional connectedness, which culminates at the end of the film. After Jack's death, Ennis visits his parents and is allowed to look at his childhood room. Behind the closet, Ennis finds his lost shirt embracing Jack's. The camera keeps freeze-frame shots of Ennis's holding of and kissing the shirts, indicating that time has stopped and love becomes eternal. In this way, Lee attempts to stimulate

tremendous empathy and sympathy among the audience. The affectionate relationship between Jack and Ennis is thus recognized and accepted by anyone who is longing for interpersonal closeness, intimacy and love. And most importantly, it transcends homosexuality to gain a "universal" appeal.

In "An Affair to Remember", Daniel Mendelsohn points out that seeing the film as a "universal love story" is "shoving the characters back in the suffocating closet". Mendelsohn dichotomizes a "gay story" and a "universal love story" in the film and thus repudiates its "universal appeal". [77] However, I contend that the "universal appeal" does not necessarily diminish Lee's efforts and vision to increase visibility and acceptance of homosexuality in American cinema. It rather marks *Brokeback* as a distinctive story, through which Lee promotes the acknowledgement of emotional attachment in male-male relations and therefore dismantles heterosexism and homophobia in defining manliness. Instead of focusing on homoerotic desires to advocate wider acceptance of homosexuality, Lee rather dwarfs homosexuality and its distinctiveness in portraying the same-sex relationship between Jack and Ennis. Lee's depiction of Jack and Ennis intentionally employs strategies of heterosexual relations. In heterosexual romance, nature has been frequently deployed as alluding to the feelings between lovers. Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst point out, "when the bride and groom are gathered together down under in a natural locale, heterosexuality is enfolded into nature, and vice versa" (135). In *Brokeback*, Lee employs the beautiful landscape as a metaphor for the gentle and affectionate attachment between Jack and Ennis. The sweeping panoramic shots display a peaceful and tranquil view of the natural beauty of Brokeback Mountain. Jack and Ennis are herding sheep up

[77] He criticizes the producers' (in particular, James Schumas) commercial advertising of *Brokeback Mountain* as "not, in fact, a gay story, but a sweeping romantic epic with 'universal' appeal". See the debate between Deniel Mendelsohn and James Schumas on the film on the website of the New York Review of Books: http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2006/04/06/brokeback-mountain-an-exchange/.

and down, galloping on horseback, passing through dense forest, walking along rocky crags, and traveling across rushing rivers. The landscape changes tranquilly along with their happy days on the mountain: from the green summer to the white winter, rich in colors and vivid in images. Jack and Ennis are portrayed in shots of chasing each other, playing and laughing, jumping from a cliff into the lake amid the beauty of nature. Moreover, the image of nature varies to portray the inner sentiments of the lovers. After their first sexual encounter, Ennis gets up to check the sheep. The camera shows a series of long shots of his galloping on horseback in the magnificent Brokeback Mountain landscape, and then an extreme long shot of him in the frame together with the flock of sheep, particularly a dead one. There is a close-up of the dead sheep which has been savaged by a wolf, and then the camera turns to emphasize Ennis' face, demonstrating his guilt, shame and self-blame. His back to the camera, Jack squats naked by a river, washing his clothes. A close-up focuses on his shoulder and profile, and then the camera quickly switches to long shots of a mountain landscape in a high angle, undermining his body. Camera shots focus on the sparkling flowing river, wooden bridge, flocks of sheep, implying Jack's peace and warmth of mind. However, the continuous slow and deep music accompanies all of the images, and the camera finally moves to shots of Brokeback Mountain in the dusk, indicating that both of them are immersed in the shadow of heterosexual normalcy.

Sexual acts in *Brokeback Mountain* do not form the framework in which Jack and Ennis are portrayed. Ang Lee intentionally avoids exposure of their bodies and reduces shots of sexual acts. As a matter of fact, the scenes of homosexual acts in the film are very rare, whereas years of separation and longing between them render their relation more poignant. When Ennis and Jack meet each other after four years since their separation on Brokeback Mountain, the camera casts a long shot of their kissing

from the angle of depression, intercutting with close-ups of Alma's shocked face, undermining the homoerotic desires. Lee depicts their homosexual acts only once in the film, focusing more on tender emotions rather than sexual behavior. Within the frame of a long camera shot, Jack is taking off his clothes in the tent, and Ennis is sitting by the fire, a symbol of desires. Then Ennis stands up, and the camera turns to naked Jack, with a medium shot above his waist. As Ennis enters the tent, the camera has close-ups of Jack slowly approaching Ennis for a kiss. This sight of two men kissing each other is enough to make the homophobic audience sit upright in seats, but not provocative enough to alienate most of the audience due to its control in filmic techniques and the emphasis on emotional intimacy. Ennis stops kissing Jack and says: " I am sorry." Jack holds his face, comforting him: "It's OK. It's OK. Lie down." Then Ennis leans on Jack's chest and a close-up focuses on his relieved face. The camera keeps a consistent objective eye level, and the soothing guitar music resonates throughout the act, generating a feeling of warmth and sweetness.

In this way, Ang Lee paints a refreshing and vigorous picture of men in love, showing ways in which homophobic fears limit the feelings and intimacy between men. His distinctive depiction wins a large space for the articulation of the same-sex relationship, portraying a diversified picture of "gay" life, which has been represented as sex-obsessed relations. *Brokeback Mountain* thus asserts the fact that relationships are just relationships, no matter whether they are homosexual or heterosexual. In this sense, Lee significantly validates a concept of manliness beyond sexual orientation and marks the interpersonal relationship as the central issue in understanding masculinity. Such a conceptualization of masculinity is based on a Confucian notion of masculinity in interpersonal relations.

4.4 Defining Manhood in Interpersonal Relations and *Junzi* Masculinity in Confucianism

Coined by 16th Century Jesuit missionaries, the term "Confucianism" refers to the Chinese cultural-philosophical tradition shaped by Confucius and his followers from Warring States (481-221 BC) and leading up to the Song dynasty (AD 960-1279). Confucianism has provided a set of doctrines to regulate "human relationships, social structures, virtuous behaviors and work ethics which forms the foundation of Chinese cultural tradition" (Klaus 1). Confucianism considers "proper" human relationships as the basis of society and a Confucian society is one wherein individuals find themselves in constant social interactions，embedded in a web of interpersonal relationships. Confucianism sets forth five basic cardinal relationships: emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger, and friends. Confucian thoughts emphasize the self to be the center of all social relationships in terms of one's responsibility, not one's rights. Five virtues are fundamental for one to fulfill one's responsibility in relationships, cultivate oneself and ultimately transform society: *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety), *zhi* (wisdom in thought and action) and *xin* (faithfulness). Though Confucianism undergoes different interpretations in different historical periods[78], these basic thoughts of five relations and five constants are maintained. This fundamental web of interpersonal relationships and virtues has a tremendous impact on the Confucian notion of Chinese manhood. The notion of the ideal man in Confucian ethics, namely *junzi*, refers to those who possess these virtues in conducting interpersonal relationships.

[78] Scholars identify three types of Confucianism, which keeps developing in progressive historical periods: Classical Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism and New Confucianism.

The concept of masculinity in Confucianism is embedded in social relations rather than defined as a generic category. In *Chinese Femininities/Masculinities Reader*, Susan Brownell and Jeffrey Wasserstrom insightfully point out:

> The Western tendency to take male/female as fundamental, immutable opposition may lead scholars to assume that the female/male distinction is the central organizing principle in all symbolic systems, but this has not always been the case in China. …In Chinese gender symbolism, sex-linked symbols are often secondary to other, more fundamental principles of moral and social life. This is because the structure of sex-linked symbolism mirrors the social structure, in which gender is situated within a broader network of social relations that take precedence over the dyadic sexual relations (26).

In "Theorizing Woman: Funü, Guojia, Jiating [Chinese Women, Chinese State, Chinese Family]", Tani Barlow argues that the genetic category of woman was absent in traditional China, and women were defined through their domestic roles as daughters (nv 女), wives (fu, 妇) and mothers (mu, 母) (133). Barlow's argument not only debunks the Confucian oppression of women and female subjectivities in Confucian discourse, but it also most significantly demonstrates a different construction of "subjects" in Chinese culture, in which sex or gender is undermined. Similarly, in traditional China, men were also constructed as officials (shi, 士), husbands (fu, 夫), and fathers (fu,父), although they attained more power than women. According to Song Geng (2004), the gender perspective is "significantly absent in the signifying system" (96), and gender discourse was "more power than sex-based in pre-modern China" (13). Therefore, though men in Confucian discourse have been represented as morally superior to women, they are largely "ungendered or desexualized" (12). In this sense, a Confucian outlook on manhood marks a sharp

contrast to American culture, in which manhood is primarily defined in terms of gender attributes, particularly sexual behaviors, and homosexual men are always excluded.

In his book *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese culture*, Song Geng points out two important gender dimensional facts in *junzi*: firstly, women had been explicitly expelled from the term, and *junzi* in Confucian classics were exclusively men. Secondly, "as the prescriptions on exemplary masculinity by the Confucian ideology, the defining characteristic of this gender ideal is that it mainly focuses on the moral and political dimension, instead of the sexual dimension" (90). In other words, *junzi* in Confucian thoughts is "desexualized" and lacks the homosexual/heterosexual categorization. Male intimacy in Confucianism is therefore not shadowed in homophobic panic. The Confucian concept of masculinity is mostly constructed in male bonds[79], in particular, in male friendship. According to Martin Huang (2007):

> In traditional China, many men believed friendship was more or less a masculine relationship in that it was largely perceived to be a male privilege. To have male friends was often considered an important badge of masculinity since it bespoke a man's ability to travel and meet other men outside his family and beyond his hometown, thus a manly accomplishment, whereas a woman was required by Confucian norms to be confined within the boundary of the household (5-6).

In Confucian thoughts, male friendship is a great testimony of manhood, and true friendship can only be established between *junzi*. Relationships of loyalty, of either the *zhong* or *yi* kind are highlighted in male friendship, in which homoerotic emotions

[79] For more discussions on Male bonds in Chinese culture, read Susan Mann's "The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture". *The American Historical Review* 105.5 (Dec.2000): 1600-14.

might exist, but are never a threat to the establishment of manhood. As a matter of fact, as Huang points out, "In late imperial China, people with inclinations toward same-sex passion were never considered belonging to a 'third gender', and there was no gender category of 'homosexuals' in pre-twentieth-century China, as understood in its modern sense" (15). In *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, Kam Louie explores the intimate friendship between the *wu* icon Guan Yu and other men in *Three Kingdoms*. He points out that the naturalness and primacy of affection between men above all human emotions is generally accepted and makes it clear that love between men, whether it be erotic or otherwise, is the only noble emotion while heterosexuality is at best a distraction (35).

Though Confucianism does not demonstrate a tendency against homosexuality in male bonds, this does not mean that it celebrates homosexual desires. Confucius establishes a conception of moderate desire (including both material desire and sexual desire), which has a significant impact on *junzi* masculinity. The key element of virtues for a *junzi* is *ren* (仁). Confucius notes:

> If the gentleman (*junzi*) forsakes humaneness, how can he be worthy of the name of gentleman? The gentleman does not abandon humaneness, not even for the duration of a meal. He holds on to it whether he is in a hurry or in a crisis. 君子去仁，恶乎成？君子无终食只间违仁，造次必于是，颠沛比于是。(LY, 4.5).

Confucius further interprets *ren* in specific contexts. The Master said, "Restrain the self and return to the rites [keji fuli]. This is the way to be humane" (克己复礼为仁) (LY, 12.1). In other words, in order to be a *junzi*, men have to meet the requirements of ritual with restrained desire, whether material or sexual, homosexual or heterosexual. Confucius assumes that a fulfillment of extravagant desire will harm the

interest of others and eventually disturb the peace and harmony of the society. Therefore, self-control for social responsibility is the main attribute in defining a *junzi*, who should contain and manipulate personal desire and embody a sense of social responsibility in interpersonal relations.

In *Brokeback Mountain*, Lee highlights the emotional and spiritual attachment between Jack and Ennis, focusing more on male bonds than homosexual relations. Ennis is struggling with his personal desire to be together with Jack and his social responsibility as a husband and father. Lee emphasizes the Confucian ethics in Ennis, highlights his social roles as a friend, husband and father, portraying him as a *junzi*.

4.5 Representing Masculinity in Interpersonal Relations

4.5.1 Male-male Relations: Ennis vs. Jack

As I have argued above, Lee's depiction of Jack and Ennis' relation focuses more on the emotional intimacy rather than on sexual desires in terms of Western homosexual relationships. Meanwhile, their relationship is also different from the male-male sexual relationships in traditional China. According to Martin Huang, so far almost all the available written sources tend to suggest that male-male sexual relationships in traditional China were strictly hierarchical. He states (2007):

> In most cases, sex between two males either leads to inequality or deepens the inequality that already exists, thus replicating the rigid gender inequality in a heterosexual relationship, because a man who has been penetrated will be reduced to being a "woman" (having lost his original status as man) (25).

This demonstrates that although sexual relationships might be possible in traditional Chinese male friendship, it is substantially hierarchical and thus different from male friendships. Lee's portrayal of the relationship between Jack and Ennis highlights an egalitarian male friendship rather than the hierarchical male-male sexual relationship

in traditional China. Therefore, instead of situating Jack and Ennis in homosexual relations in terms of sexual desires, I explore how Ang Lee represents their relationship as a testament of Jack, in particular, Ennis' *junzi* masculinity.

Confucius considers male friendship as a significant yardstick of manhood. *Junzi* cultivates a noble character and embodies virtues, among which Confucius places much emphasis on the importance of "integrity" and "trustworthy":

> If a gentleman (junzi) does not have integrity, he will inspire awe. And when he tires to learn, he will not persevere to the end. Such a man should stay close to those who do their best and are trustworthy. He should not befriend those who are not his equals. And when he makes a mistake, he should not be afraid to correct.
>
> 子曰: "君子不重，则不威； 学则不固。主忠信。无友不如己者。过，则勿惮改。" (LY, 1.8)

Ang Lee portrays Ennis as a loyal and faithful friend in his relationship with Jack, embodying attributes of *junzi* in male bonds. When Lee shows that Jack is the person who frequently travels a long way to meet Ennis, he implicitly says that Ennis endures poverty all his life in a village so as to meet Jack conveniently. Alma has suggested that they move to the town for a more comfortable life, but Ennis rejects this with an excuse. The main reason lies in the fact that he is afraid to lose touch with Jack, and village life is more convenient for their meeting. Moreover, when Jack is excused when his emotions towards Ennis are frustrated and so turns to gay prostitutes in a Mexico ghetto, Ennis attempts to fulfill his responsibility as a father, taking care of his two daughters. He remains loyal to Jack and rejects the pursuits of a pretty woman, Cassie. The contrast marks Ennis's integrity in a significant way, establishing him a respectable man.

In addition, Ennis treats Jack with dignity, following the rites (li) in a Confucian sense. Confucius maintains:

> When a friend died, if this person did not have a kinsman, who could his body in and give him a proper service, he would say, 'I will arrange to have his funeral in my house'" (朋友死，无所归，曰: "于我殡。") (LY, 10.22).

Knowing Jack's dying wishes to have his ashes buried in Brokeback Mountain, Ennis travels a thousand miles without any stop to visit Jack's parents to collect his ashes. This is similar to *junzi* behavior to "have his funeral in my house", taking great care of the body so as to comfort the spirits of the friend.

Ang Lee also emphasizes Jack as a devoted friend to Ennis. Married to Lureen, Jack lives a more affluent life than Ennis. However, class differences do not mean that Jack slights Ennis rather he intends to offer financial help to Ennis more than one time in their relationship. It is Jack who always travels a long way to meet Ennis; it is Jack who exhibits great passion and embodies full devotion to the relationship; it is Jack who aspires to live together with Ennis but ends in painful despair. Even though Jack eventually dies feeling great disappointment over his relationship to Ennis, his dying wish is to have his ashes buried on Brokeback Mountain so that he can be eternally together with Ennis.

4.5.2 Male-female Relations: Ennis vs. Alma[80]

Compared to the original short story by Annie Proulx, who intensively portrays the relation between Ennis and Jack, Ang Lee's film consists of many depictions of Ennis and Jack in their families as husbands and fathers. In this way, Lee situates and explores manhood in a web of complexities in interpersonal relationships, in

[80] Ennis's elder daughter Alma Del Mar Jr. has the same name as his wife Alma Beers Del Mar. I contend that it is more intentional than coincidental.

particular, familial relationships. As an exemplary man, *junzi* has to follow step by step, cultivating himself, arranging family relationships, tranquilizing the state and ultimately bringing peace to the world. *The Doctrine of the Mean* [Zhong Yong 中庸] states: "The way of the superior man [junzi] may be found, in its simple elements, in the intercourse of common men and women" (君子之道，造端乎夫妇). It demonstrates that in order to be a *junzi*, a man has to properly deal with the relationship with his wife. Confucius does not explain specifically how a husband should treat his wife, who is required to obey her husband. However, he emphasizes *shu* the word that can serve as the guide to conduct behavior throughout one's life, and further explains it: "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not want other [others to impose on you]" (己所不欲勿施于人)(LY, 15.24). This rule is also applicable to the relationship between husband and wife, demanding that couples should treat each other with kindness and respect. Confucianism highlights that the husband and wife should follow rituals [li] to maintain their marriage. Passionate emotions are not essential to the husband and wife, who should fulfill their public and private tasks respectively. As a *junzi*, a man has to respect his wife and support his family.

Depicting the relationship between Ennis and Alma, Lee portrays Ennis's efforts to be a considerate and responsible husband. Ennis and Alma got to know each other early in life, and they live a harmonious married life until Alma finds out Ennis's secret. The film includes many shots of their happiness: kissing at the wedding ceremony, skiing in winter, watching films in cars, cooperating in domestic tasks, going out for a music festival, sharing personal feelings and raising their daughters. Ennis fulfills his role as the breadwinner while Alma stays at home as the housewife. Furthermore, Ennis shows respect for and defends Alma. When Jack suggests a life

together, asking Ennis to leave Alma: "You and Alma, that's a life?" Ennis not only rejects Jack, but also harshly criticizes him: "Now you shut up about Alma. This ain't her fault." It evidently demonstrates Ennis' *shu* in Confucian thoughts, embodying his *junzi* attributes in humanness. In addition, Lee highlights Ennis's rejection of the pursuit of Cassie (Linda Cadellini). Ennis meets Cassie after his frustrating divorce from Alma. Cassie is greatly attracted to Ennis and actively chases him, expressing her willingness to take care of his daughters. Cassie meets Ennis again after his rejection of her. She walks into the bar where she met Ennis, and talks to him crying: "I don't get you, Ennis Del Mar." The camera zooms in on a frozen facial close-up of Ennis, indicating his ambiguous emotions. He is guilty but not regretful, as his rejection obviously embodies his integrity and righteousness in not involving another woman who sincerely loves him in a potentially miserable life. Is it because he has seen and understood Alma's suffering?

Compared to the portrayal of Lureen, Lee clearly places more emphasis on the suffering of Alma as a straight wife to a gay husband. Lureen is depicted most of the time as an aloof and mundane wife. Her full engagement in her business life rather than in her husband renders her more detached than sympathetic. Although Alma appears to be a whiny and stubborn wife, sharp and intolerant, Lee implicitly demonstrates his sympathy towards her through camera shots. After four years' separation, Ennis and Jack reunite. The camera takes a high angle shot from Alma's view of their kissing and then it turns to a frozen facial close-up of her, highlighting her shock and embarrassment. She quickly closes the window, withdraws to the room, and walks out of the door. The camera then has a frame shot, in which Alma stands in the right-hand third of the screen, turning her head away to the right, leaving an open door filling the two thirds on the left. The shot clearly embodies a significant loss of

visual balance, demonstrating Alma's emotional loss. Her turning away and standing against the door visually demonstrates her fears, and her refusal to face the facts. The highlighted open door seems to indicate her empty heart and misery. The camera has shots of Alma walking through the living room with very low lighting, vividly demonstrating her emotional suffering. Her marriage to Ennis is shadowed from this moment. This scene on the one hand represents Lee's sympathy with Alma, and on the other hand, introduces Ennis's later development through his reflection on Alma's suffering.

Lee highlights Ennis's self-cultivation in interpersonal relations, embodying it through his responsible behavior towards his daughters. The film includes many shots of Ennis taking care of the two babies, and he even cancels a meeting with Jack to accompany his daughters. He is evidently portrayed as a respectful and caring father. In the end, Alma Jr. invites her father to attend her wedding:

(02:04:31)

Alma Jr.: "Me and Kurt. We're getting' married."

Ennis: "Well, how long you know this guy for?"

Alma Jr.: "About a year. The wedding'll be June 5th at the Methodist Church. Jenny will be singing, and Monroe is gonna cater the reception."

Ennis: " Now this Kurt fella — he loves you?"

Alma Jr.: "Yeah, Daddy. He loves me. (Ennis looks away.) Was hoping you'd be there."

Ennis: "Yeah, I think I'm supposed to be on a roundup down near the Tetons."

(Alma J. is visibly disappointed, but says nothing. Ennis sighs, comes to a decision, stands and walks to the refrigerator.)

Ennis: “You know what? I reckon they can find themselves a new cowboy. (Ennis takes a half-full bottle of wine from the refrigerator as Alma Jr. laughs and smiles. He pours the wine into two small glasses.) My little girl, getting’ married, huh? (Goes back to his chair, handing Alma Jr. one glass.) To Alma and Kurt. (They toast the coming marriage.)

This dialogue portrays the delicate tenderness between father and daughter. The daughter seems to be a little uneasy, her hands rubbing the cup as she is telling his father that she is getting married. The camera has a close-up of the father, who attempts to hide his feelings, lowering his eyes until he asks slowly whether this man loves his daughter or not. Then the camera turns to a close-up of the daughter, whose eyes are full of tears: “Yes, Daddy, he loves me.” Ennis then looks away, and the camera focuses on his trembling lips, indicating his restraining of intensive emotions. On the one hand, the conversation with his daughter might have recalled Ennis’ grief for Jack, for whom he is regretting that love nevertheless does not constitute primacy in his life. His suppression of his love for Jack renders him a responsible father, nevertheless it ends in Jack’s despair and ruination. On the other hand, his question concerning love might also indicate his regrets for his wife Alma, who loves him but he does not really love her. Ennis realizes that Alma has also been a victim in the marriage. She sincerely loves him, but his homosexuality brings about her misery and pain in the relationship. Sharing the same name with her mother, Alma Jr. might also face the same fate as her mother. As a father, Ennis anxiously asks whether the man loves his daughter instead of the other way around. It indicates that Ennis ultimately understands the painful experience of his wife Alma and does not want his daughter Alma to have to repeat the same trauma. This dialogue thus indicates Ennis’ self-reflection and his growth in interpersonal relationships with his wife and daughter.

Subsequently, observing that Alma is so disappointed that he may not be able to attend her wedding, Ennis stands up and says that the ranch can find another cowboy to take his place. In this way, Ennis not only exhibits great concern and care towards his daughter, but has also healed the "wounds of isolation" in his previous assertion of cowboy identity (Thompson 75). He finally faces up to his homophobia and his feelings towards Jack. Meanwhile, he also reflects on his relationship to Alma, who married him unconscious of his homosexuality and suffers agony after knowing it. He understands that she has also been sacrificed and victimized in the oppressive marriage. Ennis ultimately accepts himself and fully embraces his relations to others.

4.6 A "Coward" or an "Ideal" Man?

Scholars criticize Ennis's homosexual repression, judging him as less brave than Jack for not fighting against homophobic culture.[81] However, such a conclusion is grounded in the queer theory of the Western-centered point of view, which is biased in terms of different cultural perspectives. I argue that depicting Ennis as an "ideal man" in Confucian thoughts, Lee casts doubts on the universalization of queerness in analyzing men with homosexual desires. Queer theory should not be another form of hegemonic imposition in defining masculinity. From a Confucian perspective, it is obviously unfair to judge Ennis as a "coward", for he actually embodies the virtues of *junzi* in moderate desire and self-control for social responsibility. After four years of

[81] Ryan James Kim asserts: "By the end of the film it's the expressive Jack we consider brave and the silent Ennis we find cowardly." Hiram Perez points out in his essay *Gay Cowboys Close to Home: Ennis Del Mar on the Q.T.* that such criticism made by Ryan James Kim to pronounce Ennis as coward "ignores the complicated queer identifications with Ennis, including the class-based identification" (87). See Kim, Ryan James. "Not a gay movie." Advocate. 9 Dec. 2015. <http://www. Advocate.com/news/2005/12/09/brokeback-mountain-not-gay-movie>.
Perez, Hiram. "Gay Cowboys Close to Home: Ennis Del Mar on the Q. T." *Reading Brokeback Mountain: Essays on the Story and the Film*. Ed. Jim Stacy. North Carolina: McFarland& Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007. 71-87.

separation, Ennis and Jack meet each other again and they return to Brokeback Mountain to get together.

(01:09:59)

Ennis: "Well, I was just sending up a prayer of thanks."

Jack: "For what?"

Ennis: "For you forgettin' to bring that harmonica. I am enjoyin' the peace and quiet."

Jack: "You know, it could be like this, just like this, always."

Ennis: "Yeah? How you figure that?"

Jack: "What if you and me had a little ranch somewhere, a little cow-and-calf operation, it'd be a sweet life. I mean, hell, Lureen's old man, you bet he'd give me a down payment if I'd get lost. I mean, he more or less already said it."

Ennis: "No, I told you, it ain't gonna be that way. You know your wife and baby in Texas, and you know, I got my life in Riverton."

Jack: "Is that so? You and Alma, that's a life?"

Ennis: "Now you shut up about Alma. This ain't her fault. The bottom line is, we're around each other and this thing grabs hold of us again, the wrong place, in the wrong time, we're dead."

Ennis's refusal of Jack's suggestion demonstrates Ennis's "moderate" desire in *junzi* masculinity. Confucius admits the existence of desire, whether in terms of matter or sex. But he also emphasizes the rational satisfaction of desire, and advocates self-control in manipulating desire to be "proper" and "moderate", so that its gratification will not harm others' interests in social relations. According to Confucius:

> Wealth and eminence are what people desire. If you cannot acquire them by proper means, you should not accept them. Poverty and lowly position are what

people despise. If you cannot avoid them by proper means, you should not reject them.

富与贵，是人之所欲也；不以其道得之，不处也。贫与贱，是人之所恶也；不以其道得之，不去也。(LY, 4.5).

Ennis and Jack love each other, and their sexual desires, whether heterosexual or homosexual, according to Confucius, can be gratified in a "proper" way with self-control. A rational satisfaction of their desires, in Ennis's view, is that they are "around each other and this thing grabs hold of us again" in the "right" place, at the "right" time. They should control their desires, that is, meet and love each other occasionally in Brokeback Mountain. Jack's suggestion nevertheless demonstrates irrational and extravagant desire, so Ennis rejects it and warns that, "the wrong place, in the wrong time, we're dead".

Meanwhile, Ennis keeps reminding Jack that they both have wives and children, demonstrating the primacy of his family responsibility over personal desire. For Ennis, the gratification of personal desire should not hurt his wife and daughters, and therefore he attempts to maintain a balance in his relationship with Jack and his social role in the family. However, Jack's suggestion of leaving their families to live together only concerns the satisfaction of personal desire and will inevitably neglect his social responsibility as a husband and father. In other words, Jack's suggestion imposes a conflicting choice between personal desire and social responsibility on Ennis. In this way, Lee situates Ennis in Confucian ethics to understand his choice and portrays him a respectable Confucian man. As an exemplary man, a *junzi* is concerned about primarily committing to righteousness and benevolence. He is a man who has learned self-discipline and self-restraint, following *li*, the ritual forms and rules of propriety, according to which he enacts his roles in society. A concern for

propriety informs everything a *junzi* does: “Look at nothing in defiance of ritual, listen to nothing in defiance of ritual, speak of nothing in defiance or ritual, never stir hand or foot in defiance of ritual” (非礼勿视，非礼勿听，非礼勿言，非礼勿动)(LY 12.1). *Junzi* should learn how to reconcile his own desire with the interests of his family and society. When these two are in conflict, he should regulate his selfish desire in the interest of others and society. Therefore, Ennis rejects Jack’s suggestion to live a life together and keeps a Confucian way in maintaining a balance between his personal desire and the needs of his family. According to the Confucian ethics, Ennis is a *junzi* worthy of respect and admiration.

Understanding Ennis within Confucian ethics, Lee provides an alternative reading of him beyond Queer theory. Such a different reading challenges the universal diffusion of “queer” from Western countries, particularly U.S. to the rest of the world, and declares a much-needed nuance in understanding male identities and sexuality in transcultural spaces. As Neville Hoad points out, “isn’t the use of “queer innocent of its own colonizing fantasies?” (135). The diffusion of either “queer” or “Confucianism” might impose new forms of hegemony in men. Lee implicitly declares this point in portraying Jack’s death as a punishment in a Confucian perspective.

Lee highlights Ennis’s self-control for social responsibility, highlighting a distinction from Jack. The following is a conversation during their last outing in Brokeback Mountain before Jack dies.

(01:43:11)

Ennis: (uncomfortable) “Somethin’ I been meanin’ to tell you, bud. It’s likely November before I can get away again, after we ship stock and before the winter feedin’ starts.”

Jack: (stunned) November? What in hell happened in August? Christ, Ennis, you had a fuckin' week to say some little word about this." (Ennis is silent) Why's it we're always in the figgin' cold weather? We ought a go south, where it's warm. We ought a go to Mexico."

Ennis: "Mexico? (tries to lighten the mood) Well…you know me. 'Bout all the travelling' I ever done is goin around the coffeepot, lookin' for the handle. Lighten up on me, Jack. We can hunt in November, kill a nice elk. Try if I can get Don Wroe's cabin again. We had a good time that year.

Jack: (bitter disappointment) Never enough time, never enough. (looks at Ennis) You know, friend, this is a goddamn bitch of an unsatisfactory situation. You used a come away easy. Now it's like seein' the Pope."

Ennis: "Jack, I got a work. Them earlier days I used a quit the job. You forget how it is bein' broke all the time. You ever hear a child support? Let me tell you, I cannot quit this one. And I can't get the time off…"

Putting his frustration aside, Ennis attempts to comfort Jack for the fact that they won't meet until November. The conversation evidently depicts Ennis as a man with self-restraint, prioritizing his work and family in spite of his desire to stay together with Jack. Admittedly, his straitened economic situation is an important element here to explain Ennis' suppression of desire because he has to look for jobs to support his family. But from a Confucian perspective, self-discipline marks a significant contrast between Ennis and Jack, who is depicted as having a lack of control and indulging in his sexual desires. Confucius holds thrifts in appetite for matter and anti-carnality for sex. He bemoans: "I have never met a person who loved virtue as much as he loved physical beauty" (吾未见好德如好色者也)(LY, 9.18). Confucius is disappointed with the ruler who covets beauty and worries that "morality and cultivation could not

hold down the expansion of lust for sex"[82]. He argues that the evils of humans result from uncontrolled desire and that a *junzi* is disciplined by ritual, manipulating his personal desires: especially sexual desires. Unlike Ennis, who regulates his homosexual emotions and desires to a restricted level, Jack is at the mercy of his desires: "Never enough time, never enough". His looking for gay prostitutes in Mexico further implies his uncontrolled sexual desire. This abandoned desire generates his ruination and finally results in his death. From a Confucian perspective, the death of Jack demonstrates a punishment for his extravagance in personal desire and his lack of self-control.

Such a Confucian reading of Jack takes an ironical turn from the interpretation of him from a queer perspective. It makes us ask, since Ennis and Jack can be so differently interpreted in different cultural contexts, what counts as backward or oppressive, and who gets to decide? Although portraying Ennis as an "ideal" man in Confucian ethics, Lee also questions the self-repression in Confucianism. Lee provides an emotional scene at the end of the film, in which Ennis embraces his love for Jack. Ennis carefully folds his daughter's sweater, kissing it softly and puts it into the closet, where two shirts hang together with a postcard of Brokeback Mountain. The beautiful music in his memory resonates. Ennis stands in front of the closet, looking at the postcard, his eyes full of tears. The postcard is pinned over the shoulder of hanging shirts, indicating their eternal love on the mountain as well as in his memory. The unfinished murmuring of Ennis: "Jack, I swear…" is put into concrete filmic images, implying a marriage vow and his full devotion to Jack.

[82] See Wang, Yan [王炎]. "Conception of Moderate Desire in Confucian Thought on Goodness and Its Realist Significance." 4 Dec. 2003.
<http://www.confucius2000.com/poetry/comdictogairs.htm#_ftn20>.

Accordingly, Lee repudiates any masculine norms imposed upon men and manliness, which can be interpreted verily in different contexts. Perceived with Queer theory, Ennis is the "coward" man, a "closet case", whereas he can be interpreted as a Confucian hero for his self-control in personal desires and a great sense of social responsibility. In this way, Lee not only provides a non-Western perspective beyond sexual orientation to discuss masculinities defined in interpersonal connectivity, social responsibility and self-control of desire in the Confucian ethics, but he also questions any universal understanding of manhood. Ang Lee therefore articulates a fluid concept of masculinity, dismantling the power asymmetry among different masculinities in one culture and between cultures.

4.7 Transdifference

Looking at the negotiations of masculinities in *Brokeback Mountain*, the image of Ennis is remarkable. He embodies an American cowboy hero image with ambiguities and complexities, rendering American manhood in the cowboy myth divested of its hegemonic status as a male identity model. As a consequence, it is moved to a position where it can be dealt with, where it can be questioned and challenged. To all effects, as a model of hegemonic American manhood, the cowboy image, though not dissolved, "integrated into the complex, contradictory, and transcending, overlapping nets of multi-dimensional structures" (Hein 167).

Transdifference further explains the complicity of his male identity. In "transdifference" (2006), Breining and Lösch write,

> From a diachronic perspective, systems of meaning can therefore be aptly described as palimpsests: what has been excluded can never be erased, but only overwritten by what has been selected. And the traces of the repressed are therefore present and the repressed alternatives can be reconstructed. Expanding

> the metaphor of palimpsest in dynamic terms, we propose to call the reproduction of systems of meaning a palimpsestic process: in the cycles of reproduction the excluded has to be re-inscribed and overwritten again and again in order to ban its destabilising threat. This iterative moment produces transdifference, since in reintroduces world complexity by necessarily referring to other possibilities to validate its selection (110).

Ennis tragically weaves those palimpsestic moments and aspects of transdifference into his male identity construction. Ennis's homosexual desires and longing for male intimacy are repressed, but can never be erased in his cowboy masculinity construction. Lee probes into the palimpsestic process of this identity formation, exploring the complexity between homoerotic desires and compulsive heterosexuality, male intimacy and homophobic anxiety, personal desire and social responsibility. Such complexities remove him from the stigma of "coward" in the Western queer theory and reconstruct his masculinity in a web of interpersonal relationships as a husband, father, lover and friend. In this sense, *Brokeback Mountain* is an innovative film that explores how men in same-sex relationships construct masculinities and how they interact with the dominant cultures. Jack and Ennis's experiences might be disconcerting to the other cowboys or American men because they rise to the fore of what is customarily excluded and suppressed in American manhood.

Lee's transcultural outlook helps him to perceive the repressed emotions in American manhood, comprehend Ennis's masculinity beyond sexual orientation, and negotiate masculinities between two cultures, demonstrating a palimpsest process of cultural encounters. The dissolution of simple categories and the transdifferent instabilities run through Lee's portrayal of Ennis as an American cowboy, a man with homoerotic desires and a Confucian *junzi*. Depending on many power relations and

social factors, people with transdifferent positions might end in failure and live tragic lives like Jack and Ennis in *Brokeback Mountain*. However, this story is inspiring to many people and has stimulated reflection on freedom and repression, on relationships between oneself and others, on personal desire and social responsibility.

4.8 Conclusion

As a most successful and well-discussed film, *Brokeback Mountain* is far more than a film about homosexuality. Lee's representation of the relationship between Ennis and Jack highlights their spiritual interdependence and emotional connectivity more than their sexual desires. By depicting Jack and Ennis within the American cowboy masculinity model, Lee subverts the heterosexual normalcy in the assertion of manliness, and questions homophobia at the same time. Most significantly, instead of interpreting Ennis as a "coward" in Western queer theory, Lee reconstructs his masculinity in the Confucian notion of ideal man *junzi* in a web of interpersonal relations. In this way, Lee challenges the universal diffusion of queer and the hegemony of any cultural forms in defining men and masculinities. Men cultivate themselves and grow in social relations, among which male intimacy should be established without homophobic fears. *Brokeback Mountain* demonstrates that heterosexuality is not necessarily compulsory in the assertion of masculinity; masculinity does not necessarily have to be constructed as exclusive and competitive, and it can be cooperative and interdependent, in particular, in spaces of frequent transcultural negotiations.

5. FROME AMERICAN SUPERHERO

TO CHINESE XIA IN *HULK*

Hulk has arrived just in time to rescue the beautiful woman, Betty. He uses his overwhelming strength to fight three monstrous dogs, bashing them against trees, throwing them onto the ground and knocking them into each other. His giant body embodies significant masculine heroism, which is expected to eliminate the dogs and rescue the beauty. However, the heroic image suddenly gives way to the extreme brutality of the fighting scene. Camera shots focus on his cruel and barbaric fights with the dogs: ripping them apart and shredding them into pieces. The battle renders the hero extremely exhausted. Defeating the dogs, he wanders to a nearby pond, peering at his image in the water. A single tear falls down, disturbing the close-up of his reflection. Then the camera takes the perspective of the woman, observing him from the window of a car. The giant body of the superhero shrinks to normal size. He gets back on his feet, walking and stumbling towards her. The long and high angle shots show his naked body as small and vulnerable. “He sent these dogs, didn’t he? But I killed them!” clinching and wielding his fists, he shouts. Suddenly, Hulk grabs Betty’s throat in a choking gesture. She screams and then looks at him with sorrow and sympathy. Startled by what is he doing, he releases her and finally collapses in her lap.

This is the first battle scene in Ang Lee’s film *Hulk*. Instead of exhibiting a self-assured superhero with measured use of violence, defeating the villain and celebrating the rescue of the woman in most American archetypal superhero narratives, Ang Lee portrays a different superhero image of Hulk. The extreme brutality of the fighting renders him more a barbarian than a courageous masculine hero. Moreover, the

emotional and melodramatic elements portray Hulk as more sentimental than invulnerable.

Adapted from Stan Lee's graphic book *The Incredible Hulk*, Lee's film *Hulk* (2003) tells the tale of an obsessed American military scientist, David Banner (Nick Nolte), who, in quest of cell regeneration, genetically modifies himself and subsequently passes these genes on to his son, Bruce Banner (Eric Bana). Bruce, knowing nothing of his birth parents, becomes a scientist and pursues similar research with his lab partner Betty Ross (Jennifer Connelly). After accidental exposure to gamma rays, Bruce discovers the secret of his body, which survives the radiation and turns into the green behemoth Hulk with his tremendous power. With the help of Betty, Bruce recalls and confronts his repressed childhood memories, in which his father David accidentally killed his mother. He then understands the origin of Hulk and realizes that this repressed anger triggers the transformation. Though Bruce wants to be a "normal" man living together with Betty, Betty's father, General Ross (Sam Elliot) considers him an unstoppable threat and sends a vast amount of military hardware to annihilate him. Betty's ex-boyfriend, Glenn Talbot (Josh Lucas) also tries to harness the power of Bruce/Hulk in order to make money. After a fierce battle, Hulk is caught and chained when he meets his father David, who intentionally exposes himself to gamma radiation and gains the ability to "absorb" the elemental properties of objects that he touches. David tries to persuade his son Bruce to control the world with their powers, but Bruce rejects this. A final battle takes place between father and son, and ends in the destruction of the father. The film ends on a positive note. Bruce is hiding out in a Latin American jungle, where he heroically distributes medicine to those suffering. When the bad guys show up to confiscate the supplies,

the threat of Hulk emerges: "Don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I am angry".

Commenting on Lee's *Hulk*, Stanley Kauffmann makes the harsh critique: "Well, he has done everything except make it entertaining" and he advises that "in future Lee can best serve his versatility by never doing anything like this (*Hulk*) again".[83] Similarly, Keith Phipps says, "Ang Lee's *Hulk* is generally considered a dead end in the history of superhero movies".[84] Lee himself also looks back at *Hulk* in an interview on his *Life of Pi*: "My problem is that I took the whole thing too seriously. I should have had more fun with it (*Hulk*), instead of all the psychodrama!"[85] Such comments and Lee's self-reflective words evidently demonstrate that *Hulk* runs far from the expectations of the American audience anticipating a superhero film. Concerning *Hulk*, Whitney Crothers Dilley writes: "his trademark themes – of family and deep, personal character study – were no doubt foremost in his mind as he envisioned *Hulk*'s screenplay" (147). Her insight demonstrates that *Hulk* is a different superhero film with Ang Lee's representation of transcultural characteristics.

My analysis intends to explore cultural distinctiveness of *Hulk* and illustrates how the film can be interpreted in a transcultural way. On the one hand, the melodramatic portrayal of the father-son relationship renders the film a typical Ang Lee film concerning the reconsideration of the Confucian ethics and Chinese fatherhood as in *Pushing Hands*. On the other hand, *Hulk* can also been seen to address the American superhero narrative into which it subverts the tradition, and inserts the notion of Chinese heroism *xia* to open it for a reconfiguration of heroic masculinities in transcultural spaces. In my analysis, I will firstly look at how Lee's portrayal of

[83] See Stanley Kauffmann. "The Unexpected Self." *The New Republic*. July 21, 2003. 24-5.
[84] Phipps, Keith. "The successful failure of Ang Lee's *Hulk*." April 28, 2015. <http://thedissolve.com/features/movie-of-the-week/1006-the-successful-failure-of-ang-lees-hulk/>.
[85] Vineyard, Jennifer. "Director Ang Lee on *Life of Pi*, Petting Tigers, and His *Hulk* Regret." Nov. 19, 2012. < http://www.vulture.com/2012/11/life-of-pi-ang-lee-interview.html>.

Bruce/Hulk challenges cultural notions of masculinity embodied in American superhero films and then introduce Chinese heroism and the concept of *xia*, exploring xiahood in Lee's depiction of Bruce/Hulk. Meanwhile, I will focus on the father-son relationship highlighted in the film to explore Lee's critique of the concept of Confucian fatherhood. Finally, I will illustrate that Lee's representation of Bruce/Hulk alludes to Chinese American masculinity in a culturally interstitial space, turning marginalization into empowerment through transdifference.

5.1 Subverting Superhero Masculinity in *Hulk*

There are few images of masculinity in American culture more iconographic than Superman. With the increasing popularity of the blockbuster superhero films since the first decade of the new millennium, hyper-masculinity has been continuously held as the preferred model of gendered behavior for boys and young men in the United States. According to Jeffrey A. Brown (2016):

> Superheroes have always represented the pinnacle of American cultural ideas about masculinity, and have served for generations as a key fantasy for male adolescents. The superhero is stronger than anyone, defeats every villain, is always in the right, and gets the girl. Superheroes can fly, lift trucks, shoot laser beams out of their eyes, blast energy from their fists, and so on – *Who wouldn't want to be one?!* (131)

Brown has summarized the standard motif in films that feature comic book superheroes such as Batman, Superman, and Spider-Man. *Hulk* anticipates such a conventional superhero narrative: A wimp male transforms into a confident hero with superpowers, overcomes evil and rescues the innocent (probably the woman), embodying and celebrating an extraordinary hyper-masculinity. However, Lee

subverts such a cultural notion of superhero masculinity through the representation of Bruce/Hulk in his movie.

5.1.1 Transforming the Body

Superheroes have amazing bodies. As a signifier of masculinity, the male body is always highlighted in comic films to symbolize valor and power. Graphic novel artists and comic filmmakers frequently deploy the human body as a re-masculinization device to illustrate the transformation of an ordinary man into a superhero. In *The Superhero Film Parody and Hegemonic Masculinity*, J.A. Brown points out the significance of this body transformation in superhero films:

> In most cases this transformation becomes the main story rather than just background or motivation. The spectacle of transformation serves as both the emotional and the narrative centerpiece of most of the films…. This obsessional focus on the moment that the regular man becomes the superhero is a ritualized presentation of masculinization. The shift from "less-than-ordinary" to "extraordinary" masculinity is literally and symbolically written onto the hero's body…. This physical transformation at the core of the films stresses the valorization of traditional masculine ideals such as physical strength, resiliency, power, and heterosexual desirability (133-34).

Body transformation in the American superhero genre functions conventionally as an important tool for re-masculinization and represents a significant spectacle for male empowerment. However, Lee's depiction of the body transformation from Bruce Banner to Hulk, I argue, does not empower Bruce or establishes him as hyper-masculine, but renders him a vulnerable and emotional green behemoth.

First, Lee's technical employment of digital effects in depicting the body of Hulk runs counter to the viewer's desire for the "perfect" body image of superheroes. The CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) Hulk does not impress superhero fans. As John Keneth Muir points out, the "CGI work was totally inadequate in dramatizing the green behemoth. One shot showed the Hulk tossing a tank across the desert, looking like a blown-up cartoon, with no detail, depth, or sense of reality" (289). Meanwhile, Lee's decision to make the body of Hulk malleable and subject to reconfigurations in size also arouses criticism among fans. They remark that such a depiction reduces Hulk to be an "ever-changing bloated version" of the superhero.[86] Moreover, Lee frequently shows a facial close-up of Hulk to highlight his emotional trauma and such shots render him a weak man rather than a hyper-masculine body. Consequently, Lee's expressive use of digital effects in *Hulk* disappoints the viewers' expectation of an ideal superhero body with which they identify.

Second, Lee's adaption to make the body transformation generated from his repressed childhood paralyzes Hulk as an idealized image of superhero masculinity. In the original story of Stan Lee's graphic book, Hulk's physical strength originates in the genetic mutation. However, Lee undermines this genetic cause and emphasizes that Bruce's psychological trauma is the most significant reason for the trigger of the transformation. This is illustrated in a conversation between Bruce and Betty.

(01:09:08)

Betty: "How are you feeling?"

Bruce: "OK, I guess."

Betty: "I think that somehow the anger you felt last night is triggering the nanomeds."

[86] See Matt Yockey. "Melodrama and the Digital in Ang Lee's Hulk." *Superhero Synergies: Comic Book Character Go Digital*. Eds. James N. Gilmore and Matthias Stork. Rowman& Littlefield, 2014. 27-39.

Bruce: "How could it? We designed them to respond to physical damage."

Betty: "Emotional damage can manifest physically."

Bruce: "Like what?"

Betty: "A serious trauma…a suppressed memory."

Bruce: "Your father grilled me about something I was supposed to remember from early childhood."

Betty: "He did?"

Bruce: "Yeah. It sounded bad. But I honestly don't remember."

Betty: "What worries me is that a physical wound is finite, but with emotions, what's to stop it from going on and on, and starting a chain reaction?"

Bruce's father attempted to kill him when he was a child, but it caused his mother's death as she wanted to protect him. This repressed trauma haunts Bruce and fuels his rage. As Betty tells him, his emotional damage manifests physically to activate his mutant cells and causes his transformation into Hulk. Therefore, Hulk's physical power and psychological vulnerability are bound together, and the physical empowerment also represents his psychological fragility. Lee illustrates this point in one scene of Bruce's transformation into Hulk. In order to obtain and reproduce the mutant genes of Brue/Hulk, Glen Talbot attempts to provoke Bruce into transforming into Hulk. Bruce struggles to control and resist his transformation. After many futile attempts at physical stimulation, Talbot orders Bruce's repressed childhood memories to be aroused through the stimulation of his brainwaves, and successfully makes Bruce unable to suppress his transformation into Hulk. This forced body transformation is a failure of self-autonomy rather than an assertion of autonomous masculinity. The transformation into the physically powerful Hulk therefore demonstrates a process of masculine disempowerment rather than empowerment.

Additionally, even though Bruce transforms into a superhero with physical prowess, Hulk is not depicted as a strong and invulnerable man. In the fighting scene against the American military, Lee portrays Hulk with more pathos rather than heroic valor. The special agents firstly attempt to tranquilize Hulk, followed by the tanks of the ground troops chasing him. The helicopter keeps following and firing, and Hulk's body is shown being hotly pursued and fiercely attacked. Wherever he runs, he cannot get away from the helicopter, which finally bombs him in the rock tower. Ironically, it is through shrinking back into the "normal" body Bruce that he is saved, for Betty persuades his father to stop the fight. In this way, Lee evidently repudiates re-masculinization through body transformation in archetypal superhero narratives and therefore dismantles the masculine fantasy of the superhero.

5.1.2 Rescuing the Woman

Analyzing the superhero genre, Jeffrey A. Brown (2015) points out that "what the superheroes repeatedly enact for readers is a symbolic policing of the borders between key cultural concepts: good and evil, right and wrong, us and them" (185). Intertwined with these abstract concepts, the boundaries between male and female are particularly salient. "Men are heroic, strong and brave; women are damsels in distress, love interests, and romantic prizes" (Brown 2016, 134). In a more specific way, Inness notes that in superhero films, "women were seldom presented as tough and independent. Instead, they were apt to require men to rescue them from all sorts of mishaps" (1999, 143). However, Lee challenges such a dichotomy of strength/rescuer/masculinity and vulnerability/rescued/femininity in the relationship between Bruce/Hulk and Betty. He ironically makes a parody of the rescuing myth in superhero formula, depicting Bruce/Hulk being saved by Betty.

The opening battle scene violates the expectation of a heroic superhero masculinity saving the woman. Instead of being calm, clever and self-assured, Hulk is depicted as a tragic hero who cannot control his destructive strength. Arnaudo points out that "it is not just the costume or the superpowers that make the hero, but also (if not primarily) temperament and moral clarity, strength of spirit, control over one's most visceral and destructive passions" (85). However, Hulk's fighting and annihilating of the dogs renders him a terrifying savage, losing control of his "destructive passions". Staring at the horrific and cruel fighting between Hulk and the evil dogs, Betty is cast in fear and shock rather than being saved. After the battle, Hulk seems to be so obsessed with his destructive power that he cannot stop and almost chokes Betty. Such a depiction of the "difficult-to-control body" undermines Hulk's heroism in the rescue and renders him an emotionally unstable and threatening figure in need of Betty's help.

Ang Lee further highlights the curing and rescuing role of Betty for Bruce/Hulk. When the film starts, Bruce and Betty have recently ended their relationship due to Bruce's emotional remoteness. As the story progresses, we learn that this remoteness is a symptom of Bruce's repressed memory of his mother's death at the hands of his father. It is Betty who helps Bruce to confront the trauma of his past and understands the origin of Hulk. The film includes many scenes in which Bruce/Hulk looks in despair and vulnerable because of the psychological trauma, whereas Betty tries to comfort and take care of him. The military fighting scene is a clear illustration of Betty's rescue of Bruce/Hulk. The military computer keeps tracking Hulk down and helicopters are firing at him. He is shown in most shots as escaping rather than being able to fight back before Betty persuades her father to halt the military effort to kill him. Hulk faces Betty while surrounded by popular images of male heroism in

America: police, firefighters, and members of the military. In a revisionist view, "This scene intentionally resembles a series that preceded it, but does so only to drastically rework the archetypal superhero narrative" (Wandtke 19). Hulk inverts the typical heroic narrative in which, after the violent defeat of evil, the hero embraces and kisses the female protagonist as her rescuer to the applause of the crowd (Zietsma 198). Hulk nevertheless approaches Betty vulnerably and shrinks back into Bruce. With moist eyes and sagging shoulders, he finally reaches her and sinks weakly to his knees. "You found me," Bruce says to her feebly. She responds, "You weren't hard to find." This dialogue explicitly reverses the superhero saving myth, and obviously, Bruce/Hulk is not the rescuing hero, but the one who needs to be found and rescued.

This reversal allows for a more nuanced power dynamic than the archetypal superhero narratives, which "featured a restrained heroine… often being rescued by a hero and the antagonist who captured the heroine" (Furlong 93). Lee complicates and rewrites this triangular power relation into double two-part power structures. Not only does he establish in the film a progressive story of empowering women and subverting male hegemony and hegemonic masculinity perpetuating in superhero narratives, he also significantly makes the antagonist David Banner Bruce's father, challenging the heroic fantasy based on simple dichotomies between good and evil, hero and villain, self and other.

5.1.3 Defeating the Villain

In the superhero paradigm, the superhero vs. supervillain is an important strategy to establish the "ideal" manhood of the superhero. As Reynolds summarizes in *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology*, a villain continues year after year, story after story, "sabotaging the social order in an endless treadmill of destruction", which the superhero "struggles to control and contain" (24). Supervillains are the "engines of

diachronic continuity" as the superhero requires the supervillain to justify his existence and construct his heroism (Reynolds 50). In *The Incredible Hulk* directed by Louis Leterrier in 2008, Emil Blonsky stands opposite Hulk as "aggressive and controlling, extremely so as Abomination" (Mills 173). He runs through most parts of the storyline, marking Hulk's fighting and defeating him in a typical superhero storyline. Lee nevertheless replaces the superhero/supervillain conflict with more complicated relationships, thus blurring the boundary between hero and villain in *Hulk*. Bruce/Hulk fights three characters in the film, namely General Ross, Talbot and David Banner.

Lee depicts Hulk fighting against the American military led by General Ross. General Ross firstly seems to have a personal vendetta against Bruce, who he considers might follow in the steps of his father to carry on the vicious biological experiments. So he warns Bruce to stay away from his daughter Betty. Later when he observes how destructive Hulk can be, he appears to harbor complicated emotions towards him. On the one hand, he shows pity for him, particularly after Betty has told him about the repressed childhood memory of Bruce. On the other hand, he perceives Bruce/Hulk as a danger to American society, and if he cannot be controlled, then he must be annihilated. In this sense, the American military directed by General Ross and its attack against Hulk is justified by the patriotic aim of the safety of American civilians, rather than being depicted as the villain. Meanwhile, Hulk follows a dynamic that his existence is threatened with annihilation and he fights for his individual survival. Therefore, General Ross is more ambiguous than evil, and Hulk's battle against him is inadequate to fulfill a superhero fantasy.

Different from General Ross, Talbot is evidently a sinister military figure. Talbot is a power and money obsessed man, who wants to take Bruce/Hulk's genes and make a

fortune by selling this to the government as a weapon. Though he is such a vicious man, his limited scenes in the film do not make him a comparable villain to the superhero. Hulk actually does not have much difficulty in throwing him off in fighting. Accordingly, the fighting between them is not significant enough to establish Hulk as a superhero. Rather the most powerful "villain" in the film is David Banner, the father of Bruce/Hulk.

Ang Lee divides Dr. David Bruce Banner from the live-action television series into David and Bruce, making David an important character in the storyline. He works as a genetic scientist on an army base under General Ross. When General Ross thwarts his endeavor to improve the human body through genetic research, he carries out experiments on himself and passes his genetically mutated cells onto his son. When he realizes that Bruce might grow up into a monster, he attempts to kill him as a toddler. In a struggle to save Bruce, his mother is accidentally killed. Bruce Banner represses the memory of the murder. This repressed trauma activates his modified genes and fuels his oversized rage and transformation after he is accidentally exposed to gamma radiation. Following Bruce, David intentionally exposes himself to the gamma rays and gains the ability to integrate with everything he touches. Observing Bruce's superpower in Hulk, David wants to harvest his mutation. In the final battle between Bruce/Hulk and David, he sucks up all of Hulk's energy and is destroyed by his power obsessions. David Banner, who is introduced both as Bruce's father and the supervillain, is a major deviation of Lee's *Hulk* from the original comic book. I argue that such an adaption demonstrates Lee's reconsideration of American heroism as the clear-cut boundary between good and evil in superhero narratives, as well as his Confucian reading of the father-son relationship.

David is depicted both as an evil man with a lust for power, and an aging father occasionally capable of paternal love, making the relationship between David and Bruce significantly complicated. In a conversation with Betty, David bluntly expresses his desire for power.

(01:28:44)

David: "And what did I do to [my son], Miss Ross? Nothing! I tried to overcome the limits in myself - myself, not him. Can you understand? To improve on nature, my nature. Knowledge of oneself, that is the only path to the truth that gives men the power to defy God's boundaries."

He is desperate for absolute power from Hulk, so he intends to kill Betty for she might disturb his plan by curing his son: turning Bruce into a "normal" man. In this sense, he is portrayed as a villain, a monster of evil. As a matter of fact, when he returns to contact Bruce, he turns from a young and decent biologist into a craven old man, with tangled hair and furtive manners, visually demonstrating that he has become a freak. But at certain moments, he actually seems to be a regretful father. When Bruce turns into Hulk in the lab, David observes him quietly behind the door. They stare at each other for seconds, and then David stumbles close to him, physically reaching out to him. Bruce/Hulk pauses when his father attempts to stroke his cheeks. His gentle and loving gestures seem to have evoked Bruce/Hulk's tender feelings towards his father. The camera shows a close-up of David's withered face with tearful eyes from a high angle, rendering him a small and vulnerable old man in front of his giant son.

Lee highlights the complicated father-son relationship in the final scene. The camera takes an extreme long shot of Bruce sitting on the chair (tied to the chair). Two spotlights are crisscrossing the stage, one on Bruce and the other on the opposite

chair, creating a theatrical view. The camera then shifts to the facial close-ups of David, and casts a panoramic shot of his entrance to the large, dark room and his slow walk towards Bruce. When David comes close and stands in front, Bruce lowers his head, avoiding the look from his father. This scene ironically resembles the situation that the son has done something wrong and feels embarrassed in front of his father, waiting to be scolded. The Confucian notion of patriarchy is evidently demonstrated in the conversation.

(02:00:10)

Bruce: "No. Please don't touch me. Maybe, once, you were my father. But you're not now – you never will be."

Father: "Is that so? Well, I have news for you. I didn't come here to see you. I came for my son."

(Bruce looks up at him, confused.)

Father: (Cont'd) "My real son – the one inside you. You are merely a superficial shell, a husk of flimsy consciousness, ready to be torn off at a moment's notice."

Bruce: "Think whatever you like. I don't care. Just go now."

(The father smiles, laughs.)

Father: "But Bruce – I have found a cure – for me. You see, my cells too can transform – absorb enormous amounts of energy, but unlike you, they're unstable. Bruce, I need your strength. I gave you life, now you must give it back to me – only a million times more radiant, more powerful."

Bruce: "Stop."

Father: "Think of it – all those men out there, in their uniforms, barking and swallowing orders, inflicting their petty rule over the globe, think of all the

harm they've done, to you, to me – and know we can make them and their flags and anthems and governments disappear in a flash. You – in me."

Bruce: "I'd rather die."

Father: "And indeed you shall. And be reborn a hero of the kind that walked the earth long before the pale religions of civilization infected humanity's soul."

Bruce is tied to the chair while David can move freely, indicating the son's submissive position to the father in the Confucian ethics. David expresses his disappointment with Bruce, whom he calls a "superficial shell". He asserts that he has come to see his "real" son, who is "capable of serving him and perpetuating his ambitions" (Marchetti 2009, 101). Here the father David acknowledges the Confucian notion of filial piety. Only those who fulfill the expectations of their fathers can be qualified to be filial sons, and "real" men. Lee seems to further expose the oppressiveness of Confucian patriarchy through the mouth of the father: "I gave you life, now you must give it back to me". The father-son relationship highlights filial duties on the part of the son, who is expected to sacrifice himself to comfort his father. Instead of treating his son as an equal individual, the father sees the son as belonging to him and thus demands his power to stabilize his own condition. However, Lee represents Bruce as a rebel against the Confucian filial obedience. He rejects, breaking down in tears, shouting at his father to go. The father is so disappointed that he retreats back to his chair. He tells the son to stop "bawling" with contempt, as if he is still a child. Introducing the Confucian father-son relationship into the portrayal of David and Bruce/Hulk, Lee complicates the identities of the characters and implicitly blurs the traditional line between the good superhero and the evil supervillain in American culture of heroism.

The loss of the traditional good-evil dichotomy within *Hulk* pushes forward Lee's ironic treatment of the superhero narrative, preventing Hulk from engaging in "a necessary component of the superhero fantasy: violent confrontation that results in the defeat of a great evil" (Wandtke 21). Consequently, showing the vulnerability, sadness and struggles within Hulk, Lee reverses the veneration and masculine fantasy that frequently accompanies superhero films. By introducing a Chinese cultural perspective to address the superhero in the father-son relationship, Lee represents the superhero and negotiations of heroic masculinities in a transcultural space. As a matter of fact, Lee's visual representation of Hulk has been identified as including "a tradition of lighter-than-air Chinese martial heroes" (Marchetti 2009, 103). Following Marchetti's line, I contend that Lee's portrayal of Bruce/Hulk demonstrates a larger understanding of heroism within Chinese *xia* culture.

5.2 Beyond Bruce Lee's Body: Chinese *Xia* Heroism

Chinese men have long been perceived as effeminate in Western cultures, in which the limited imaginations of masculine Chinese males come from the figures in martial arts films. Bruce Lee is the first Chinese American male to star as a Chinese hero in Hollywood films. He not only introduced and popularized the Chinese kung fu film genre among mainstream American audiences, but also represented the remasculinization of Chinese men in the U.S. through the tough image represented by his masculine body and superhuman ability.[87] During the 1970s when China was overwhelmed with Western culture and Chinese Americans were suffering institutional racism in the United States, Bruce Lee's kung fu films, according to Jachinson W. Chan, "reconstructed a heroic masculine Chinese identity that resisted the historical and political domination by foreign countries centered on re-visioning

[87] See Shu, Y. "Reading the Kung Fu Film in an American Context: From Bruce Lee to Jackie Chan." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 31.2 (2003): 50-9.

and mythologizing the past" and thus "met the needs of Chinese audiences who experienced 'an inferiority complex' by re-visioning or re-creating a mythic, heroic, and masculine Chinese hero who overcame this psychological predicament" (374).

However, Chan also insightfully points out, "although Bruce Lee categorically dismantles the wimpy, asexual nerd stereotype, his martial arts has been co-opted by the media industry into another stereotype of Asian men: the chop-socky, kung-fu fighting Asian male" (372). Competing with his white male counterparts, Bruce Lee's films set up a model of heroic masculinity that upholds the physical power and excessive violence as markers of manhood prevailing in the Western gender paradigm. Culturally specific features of heroic manhood in Chinese martial arts are removed, neglected or appropriated, and Chinese heroic masculinity in martial arts films is narrowly (if not mistakenly) defined in terms of muscular body and physical prowess. Chan additionally remarks that Bruce Lee's films represent the heroes more realistically than before, for earlier martial arts films "were based on myths or legends in which characters could fly in the air, travel underground, and slice someone in half with a sword that never touched the opponent" (387). This difference, however, illustrates an important shift of heroic Chinese masculinity from the abstract sense to a concrete corporeal representation. In Chinese martial arts literature before Bruce Lee, the muscular body was absent and physical power was not the most important determinant of heroism. In pre-modern China, those men that employ their marvelous martial skills to fight against the strong and protect the weak are named *xia*. Generally speaking, *xia* refers to a pre-modern Chinese martial heroism. It is difficult to find a corresponding English term for the translation of *xia*. In *The Chinese Xia versus the European Knight: Social, Cultural, and Political Perspectives*, Sinkwan Cheng defines *xia* as following:

> Unlike the knight, a xia could be either a man or woman…A xia had no armour and no squire. S/he did not even necessarily own a weapon; the most competent xias often fought barehanded. … The etymology of xia has nothing to do with wealth or social prestige, but with moral qualities. There is no English equivalent for xia. As a noun, xia is a figure who "protects the weak against the strong, and courageously combats injustice". As an adjective, xia means upright and courageous. The passion for justice and righteousness were no less important attributes for a xia than martial prowess. Gender and class origins, on the other hand, have nothing to do with the word xia and are totally irrelevant to xiahood. The primary importance of moral qualities for xiahood can be seen in the image of the xia in popular Chinese imagination (43).

Here Cheng acknowledges two important features of *xia*: moral qualities are essential in defining *xia*; and xiahood lacks gendered notions of heroism. First, *xia* is primarily defined in moral qualities rather than physical prowess. "Martial prowess alone can yield a fighter but not a *xia*" (Cheng 44). This important feature embodies a disparity for what constitutes heroism between two cultures. According to Richard Carrier, "Western heroism is connected at its very root with martial valor and prowess, as well as bodily perfection" and "heroism is for the young, the strong, the quick, those who are handy with chariot, spear, or fist" (7-8).[88] Carroll further illustrates the male body as an important display of heroism in Western culture:

> The male body has been an object of widespread interest, administration and social contemplation at least since the time of ancient Greeks. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, American culture increased its scrutiny of

[88] Carrier, Richard. "Heroic Values in Classical Literary Depictions of the Soul: Heroes and Ghosts in Virgil, Homer, and Tso Ch'iu-ming." 2004. <http://www.richardcarrier.info/HomerTsoVirgil.pdf>.

> the male body and viewed it both a symbol of an idealized masculinity and an aesthetic object in itself (56).

Following this logic, Chinese kung fu masters are accordingly portrayed in terms of their martial techniques in American films, highlighting the notion of ideal manhood based on physicality. However, such depictions show a narrow understanding of heroism in Chinese culture. *Xias*, in spite of a martial hero, prioritizes morality over physical prowess. According to C.H. Wang, "it is determined by Chinese ethics in general that almost repudiates martial spirit from heroism. The display of martial power (wu) is never as worthy as the exhibition of cultural eloquence (wen)" (27). *Xias* or true martial heroes never engage in an easy and superficial fight, "rather, they suffer and endure until they come to understand the purpose of their battles" (Hiramoto 393), or the employment of physical violence is really necessary. As a result, in spite of brilliant martial skills or kung fu, *xias* are in self-control to deploy their prowess, and there is a clear tendency of curbing physical violence in *xia* culture. Accordingly, the male body has never been a marker of idealized masculinity as significant as in American culture. Rather the body has always been repressed and neglected in Chinese culture dominated by Confucianism. Analyzing the "ideal" masculinity *junzi* in Confucian society, Song Geng (2004) points out that "the *junzi* in the Confucian discourse is a man, as it were, without body" (96). He illustrates that the physical "deficiency" of eunuchs as men did not deprive them of masculinity, but rather helped them to attain high political position and power with the favor of the emperor (50).

Second, Chinese heroism, in particular *xia*, is not seen through a gendered lens. "There was a long tradition of strong, heroic women in Chinese literature, especially notable when we consider the general reluctance to celebrate martial, heroic qualities

in men" (Hsieh 146). The female *xia* or knight-errant emerges as a key vibration of the heroic woman in the Tang dynasty. In *The Sword or The Needle*, Roland Altenburger traces the development of female knights-errant (*nü xia*) in different historical periods and highlights the female *xia* tradition in Chinese heroism. Instead of being absent or depicted as supporting figures to construct men's virility, women have occupied a significant position in *xia* literature, symbolizing "female power and independence" and "women's capability to overcome their inferior position in traditional society" (52).

Since Chinese women in pre-modern China have long been generalized as submissive to the patriarchy, "it is inherent to the basically gender reversing role of the female *xia* character type always to retain the potential to radically question the social positions and roles conventionally assigned to women" (Altenburger 53). In this sense, Sinkwan Cheng additionally points out that, *xia* captures "the pre-modern Chinese imagination with their free spirits and open heart" (47), demonstrating a move away from the Confucian orthodoxy. *Xia* embodies a kind of American individualism based on self-loyalty rather than a life for social responsibility in the family and for the state in Confucian ethics. James Liu points out:

> To a [xia], personal loyalty was more important than loyalty to one's sovereign or parents. Even when a [xia] died for a prince, it was not out of a sense of loyalty such a subject owed his sovereign, but such as one man owed another who 'appreciated him'….This is clearly illustrated by the lives of such men as Hou Ying and [Jing Ke]" (5).

Free from social conventions, *xias* are rebellious individuals who "objected to any rigid regimentation and had little respect for the law of the state or the conventions of behavior of the society in which they lived" (Liu 6). Concerning idealized masculinity,

though *xia* heroism cannot escape the influences of the dominating Confucian ideology, it nevertheless demonstrates a rejection of the Confucian notion of social hierarchy in defining manhood. In this way, xiahood posits a particular idea of heroism, which not only cuts a different understanding from American culture, but also represents a rebel against Confucian culture.

5.3 Interpreting the American Superhero in Transcultural Spaces:

5.3.1 Interpreting Hulk in the Context of Chinese *Xia* Masculinity

Originating from the American superhero genre, Lee's representation of Hulk transculturally demonstrates Chinese *xia* temperaments. His heroism is more embodied in his withdrawal from violence rather than his employment of physical prowess. As I have argued above, the body transformation does not masculinize Bruce/Hulk and the battle against the ferocious dogs demonstrates more his barbarism rather than his heroism. In the final battle against his father David, Hulk's physical strength and violence is nevertheless, to a large extent reserved and undermined in Lee's portrayal. Having absorbed the power of electricity, David turns out to be overwhelmingly powerful. Bruce also transforms into Hulk, and the ultimate battle unfolds. We see that they race into the sky with tremendous lighting flashes and power, embodying their fight against each other. In this way, Lee avoids a direct portrayal of their fighting scene. Then they land near a lake, where David quickly takes on the form of rocks. Hulk strangles him and smashes the rocks, but David soon integrates with the rocks and is able to revive. Hulk throws the rocks into the lake, but he finds his father then taking on the form of water. By transforming David into different materials in the battle rather than giving him a similar muscular body like Hulk, Lee indicates that David has attained omnipotent power in nature and meanwhile omits the brutal fighting between them. The fight in the lake becomes

murky and obscure. “That’s right, keep fighting,” his father talks to him, “the more you fight, the more of you I take.” Startled and feeble, Bruce recalls his childhood memories. “Struggle no more… and give me all of your power.” Hulk gives up, crying: “You think you can live with it? Take it, take it all!” Then David absorbs all of his power and the power is out of control, leading to his self-destruction. This battle scene has generated much criticism among scholars, who are confused by Lee’s obscure depiction of the battle and Hulk’s giving up fighting. However, perceiving it from a Chinese perspective, Lee’s portrayal of Hulk exhibits *xia* heroism.

First, Lee dwarfs the male body and physical violence, rather highlighting self-restraints in deploying strength. The slow motion battle scenes imitate the graphic novel’s static frames, destabilizing the image of the physical body. They call our attention to the digital postmodern aesthetics rather than to the male character’s honed bodies and fighting skills. The changing forms of David’s body further undermine the role of the body in asserting masculinity and strength, to a large extent marking the violent fighting scene in ellipsis. Hulk’s final surrender should not be interpreted as cowardice, but as a symbol of the assertion of his masculinity. It demonstrates that Hulk, who used to be controlled by his psychological trauma, is finally able to manage his angry emotions and destructive strength. He can deploy his prowess to fight as well as to withdraw it. The taming of his destructive power has broader implications, for it symbolizes not only the disciplined body of strength, but also the re-establishing of the primacy of the civil (*wen*) over the martial (*wu*) in Chinese *xia* heroism and manhood. Moreover, his giving up of fighting and recalling of sweet childhood memories with his father indicate a nonviolent solution to conflicting relations, undermining violence as the only tool for ridding violence.

Second, Hulk demonstrates *xia* moralities in his fighting. He has a strong sense of justice and self-loyalty that is characteristic of xiahood. According to Sinkwan Cheng, "A *xia*'s loyalty…was based on moral principles and human sentiment rather than politics or social hierarchy" (45). Instead of being a superhero with a mission to protect the American community, Hulk is considered by General Ross as a great threat to social safety because of his destructive power. However, the fighting against his father shows his principles of justice and human sentiment. Instead of following his father's will to avenge and dominate, Hulk chooses to fight against him for righteousness. Cheng points out, "True to the principle of righteousness, *xias* often volunteered for death just in order to protect a good person, even if that person was a mere stranger" (46). Such righteousness goes beyond social obligations for a certain country or a community, but embodies "a higher form of justice – something close to what the West calls natural law" (Cheng 47). Different from the American superhero narrative, in which the superhero bravely defeats the villain and wins the glory for protecting his community, in Lee's portrayal, Hulk fights and even gives up his life for a community to which he does not belong. In this sense, Hulk's fighting against his invulnerable father embodies courage and fearlessness, self-sacrifice and altruistic morality as postulated in *xia* culture.

Betty also exhibits *xia* attributes, and thus transgresses the gendered notion of heroism. Lee's depiction of the relationship between Bruce/Hulk and Betty demonstrates "spiritual companionship" rather than making Betty a supportive "other" to construct Bruce's heroic heterosexual masculinity. The film is about her as much as it is about Bruce/Hulk. Like Bruce, Betty also has a problematic relationship with her father who prioritizes his work over his family. She is estranged from him. In one scene, General Ross invites her to dinner, but it turns out that he only intends to ask

about Bruce. Betty leaves the table in great disappointment. Lee deploys many flashbacks of both Betty and Bruce to illustrate their similar and even entangled childhood memories. According to Mills, "Betty sees in Bruce not only a man in need, but also the pain of her own childhood" and "their love is indeed 'born from shared tragedy'" (172). Betty shares vulnerable and tender feelings with Bruce/Hulk, and it is Betty who sees his frailty most profoundly and realizes that violence can only make him more destructive. This portrayal of the male-female relationship obviously leaps away from the ordinary romantic love relationship in the superhero narrative and "adds a unique angle to their relationship, something altogether absent from the other films" (172). This unique angle embodies the level of "spiritual companionship" (zhiji or zhiyin) common in *xia* literature and marks Betty "the ideal woman" overlapping with the "intimate friend" or "soul-mate" and "this in turn entails her partial adoption of a male persona" (Vitiello 2000, 218). In this sense, Betty demonstrates a more or less literal degree of "gender reversal" in female xiahood, though she does not obviously perform martial techniques. Ramet (1996) defines "gender reversal" as follows:

> Gender reversal may be understood to be any change, whether 'total' or partial, in social behavior, work, clothing, mannerism, speech, self-designation, or ideology, which brings a person closer to the other (or, in polygender systems, *a*nother) gender (2).

Throughout the film, Betty is never portrayed in terms of a gendered body. Her frequent saving of Hulk and her psychological self-exploration can be regarded as a provocation to the governing gender ideology in archetypal superhero narratives, and hence as a counter-model to the gender norm. In this way, Lee not only makes Betty a significant female figure in the film, but most importantly, Lee transforms the

asymmetrical power relation between men and women, establishing them as equal parts in embodying heroism.

Finally, Hulk represents an open and rebellious spirit in the *xia* culture. On the one hand, Hulk rejects following the conventions of acting as an American superhero. Lee ironically depicts a flashback of Bruce's conversation with his teacher in primary school, her telling him that he is to be a heroic person. Bruce nevertheless rejects such an expectation or fate for him. Throughout the film, Bruce Banner does not act like Spider Man or Iron Man, who are masculinized through their body transformations and then undertake their mission to protect the American community and save the world. In contrast, in spite of transforming into Hulk, with all his overwhelming power, Bruce has never intended to be a hero. His power is thus taken as a potential threat to American society. Since he cannot be employed or tamed, he must be annihilated. Therefore, the fighting between Hulk and the American military can be interpreted as Hulk's escape from American social conventions to be a free spirit. On the other hand, Hulk also rejects following his father's will to revenge American society, in particular American militarism. My aforementioned analysis illustrates that Lee depicts the father-son relationship in a Confucian way, and Bruce represents an unfilial son: a rebel against Confucian patriarchy. Such a portrayal highlights Hulk as a misfit in both American and Chinese mainstream culture. His green skin, neither white nor yellow, may be an indication of a metaphor for racial "otherness". Lee makes Hulk's outcast status explicit at the end of the film. Betty is missing Bruce/Hulk, staring at the green trees out of the window. The camera zooms in on the green color and then introduces shots cast in a jungle, where Hulk distributes medicine to suffering children and is ready to fight bandits. The camera finally zooms out from his green hat to a bird's eye view of the Latin American jungle, indicating

Hulk's belonging there in the green environment. In this sense, Lee's portrayal of Hulk as an outcast *xia* may allude to his perception of Chinese American masculinity, which is engaging in negotiations with the notions of Chinese and American manhood, meanwhile aspiring to a sense of belonging.

5.3.2 Hulk as An Image of Chinese American Masculinity?

Trapped in two cultures, Chinese American men engage in a long process of struggling to assert their masculine identity. Lee explores this identity problem in his portrayal of Bruce/Hulk in two mirror scenes. The first comes early in the film before the adult Bruce Banner is introduced to the audience. A young man is shaving in front of a steamy mirror, through which we see his perplexed face, and then an extreme close-up is zooming in to the eye, through which we see Bruce riding his bike to work. Later, fighting the American military helicopters, Hulk is falling down through the air. An extreme close-up zooms in to his face and then after a milky picture, the camera has a close-up of Bruce shaving himself in front of a steamy mirror. The camera shots are so well connected to the previous shaving scene that it seems that everything is just a fantasy while Bruce is shaving in front of the mirror. Then Bruce reaches out to clean the mirror, as does Hulk with a finger. Suddenly, Hulk's hand smashes through the mirror and lunges for Bruce's throat. As he lunges, Hulk declares in a foreboding and guttural voice, "Puny human." Then the camera returns to shots of Hulk's falling from the sky into the sea. Such a portrayal is so confusing that it is difficult to identify whether it is a story of Bruce turning into Hulk or whether Hulk is looking at the story of Bruce. Whose subjectivity has produced whom? Has Bruce's subjectivity produced Hulk or Hulk's Bruce? In this way, Lee visually makes the self-identification a problem for Bruce/Hulk.

According to Lacan, a mirror separates us from ourselves. In order to recognize myself, I have to be separate from my self. With the boundary-formation of identity comes separation, and the image is perceived as the distinct other. Separation creates a sense of loss and a lifelong desire to regain the "jouissance" of the connected wholeness.[89] Hulk and Bruce are two separated entities in one person, perceiving each other as a distinct other: rendering a sense of loss and lack of belonging. Bruce looks through the mirror to see how Hulk views him and vice versa. Hulk and Bruce are in one body oscillating between two forces. While Betty wants to "turn him back" to be Bruce, curing his childhood psychological wounds, his father David Banner nevertheless intends to keep him as Hulk. The film is engaged in such a long process of the identity struggle that he still stands at the interstitial position in the end.

Standing in the interstitial position between two mainstream cultures, Chinese Americans are considered as "queer", marginalized and excluded from both American and Chinese manhood. Interstitial position therefore results in asunder and disempowerment in their masculine identity. However, Lee's film implies another alternative and this time interstitial position means more power than asunder. Lee's Hulk walks out of the American superhero background as well as the Chinese Confucian orthodoxy rather he represents free spirits and self-loyalty as a *xia* in a new political and circumstance. In this sense, Ang Lee's *Hulk* can therefore be interpreted as an allegory of Chinese American men finally accepting themselves as multiracial and free from cultural boundaries.

[89] See Lancan, J. " The mirror stage." *Identity: A reader*. Eds. Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman. London: Sage 2000. 44-5.

5.4 Transdifference

Hulk and Bruce are like two sides of a spinning coin, articulating either one means at the same time suppressing the other. Such a situation is discussed in the theory of transdifference. Breinig and Lösch write:

> The personal experience of transdifference *avant la lettre* – in the sense of belonging to different groups without feeling at home in any, or, of living in the interstices of belonging – which has long been seen as the tragic fate and the stigma of mixed bloods and marginalised individuals alike, is now being reinterpreted as an asset that bears the potential for individual liberation…. Articulating experiences of transdifference in the presentation of a multiple and fragmented identity may thus be seen as a striving for emancipation and individuation (117).

Evidently, the fragmented identity of Hulk and Bruce is eventually taken as an advantage for emancipation in the end of the film. Living happily in the jungle indicates the power of standing in initial spaces, which serves as "a starting point for the construction of alliances or even 'communit[ies]' on the basis of 'groundless solidarity' (Elam 1994:109)" (117). Bruce/Hulk eventually becomes a hero without boundaries, helping those in need, rather than striving for a clear identity as either Hulk or Bruce.

However, the ending is more or less utopian. In the film, Bruce/Hulk can withdraw to the jungle, but how about in real life? As Breinig and Lösch point out, "Given the various forms and degrees of dependence on social others one has not chosen freely, it seems reasonable to assume that the chances to articulate transdifference positionalities are distributed in a highly asymmetrical way" (117). For Chinese Americans, their interstitial position bears the potential for individual liberation from

essential notions in two cultures and allows for a reconstruction of their identities. However, such an asset is influenced by many cultural and political factors, and "the autonomy of the subject is always crossed and at least cancelled out by heteronymous aspects of subjectification" (117). American society cannot tolerate Bruce/Hulk's existence, which is explicitly demonstrated in the military's attempt to annihilate him. The chasing scene ranges from desert to sea, going far beyond U.S. territory. Even the jungle is not a utopia. The bandits' bulling seems to imply the power relations there and indicates that transdifference positionality is actually far beyond the individual's reach.

5.5 Conclusion

Rather than ignoring or eradicating the influential reality of existing norms of gender and race-informed patterns of behavior, Ang Lee provides alternatives within the dominant modes of discourse, parodying the fundamental conventions of the American archetypal superhero narrative, at the same time expanding the definitions of heroic masculinity and heroism in a transcultural way. The body with physical strength is no longer fantasized as an effective means of masculine empowerment, and "othering" loses its validity as a tool to construct heroic manhood. The woman is saving rather than being saved and the villain takes the position of a father. Such boundary blurring not only destabilizes the fantasy of masculinization, but also complicates the relationships and thus introduces a transcultural reading of *Hulk*. Portraying Hulk's heroism in a transcultural perspective, Lee dismantles stereotypes of effeminate Chinese men of small height or of being not as muscular as white men; for the muscular or martial body has never been a most significant marker of ideal manhood in Chinese culture. Meanwhile, asserting another martial hero *xia* in Chinese cultural tradition, Lee extends the narrow understanding of Chinese

masculinities in American martial arts films in terms of martial techniques and physical violence to a culturally specific understanding of both *wen* and *wu*, and prioritizing *wen* over *wu*. Moreover, through the portrayal of the relationship between Hulk and Betty, Lee not only dismantles the unequal gender power relations, but also introduces an independent image of women – the female *xia* and depicts it transculturally through gender reversal. Finally, Lee portrays the dilemma of Chinese American men in constructs of masculine identity through the oscillating identity of Hulk and Bruce. Though Lee imaginatively provides a utopian ending to empower the "two-ness" or double cultural identities, such a claim of transdifferent positionality is influenced by many social, economic and political factors beyond the individual's control.

6. CONCLUSION

With both Chinese and Western epistemology, my previous chapters have explored how Ang Lee employs double cultural perspectives to portray men and masculinities in culturally specific contexts, challenging the power asymmetry of gender paradigms in the "world gender order", and evokes a transcultural reading of masculinities in negotiations, opposing any masculine norms imposed upon individual masculinities. In this way, Lee not only has advocated flexibility and multiplicity in the understanding of masculinities in varying cultural perspectives, but also has evoked multiple readings of masculinities in a palimpsest of cultural encounters. My analysis has clearly demonstrated the complexity and multiplicity in negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces, which can be both emancipatory and repressive in re-constructing and re-negotiating one's masculinity. The interactions between Chinese and American male subjectivities in Lee's films have demonstrated that some masculine attributes are rendered invalid, some behavioral traits are questioned and others are reinforced in defining manliness. This chapter firstly assesses the conclusion that can be reached out of the masculinities engaged by this study. It employs the study's central terms and notions in order to provide a clearer picture of Lee's concept of masculinities in transcultural spaces.

6.1 Central Notions and Terms in Lee's Conceptualization of Masculinities

6.1.1 *Wen-wu* dyad

In his first film *Pushing Hands* (1992), Ang Lee has employed a culturally specific paradigm to assert traditional Chinese manhood out of the Western framework. Portraying Mr. Chu, the Chinese father as a paragon of *wen-wu* attributes, he dismantles the stereotype in American mainstream to depict Chinese men as emasculated and asexual, and provides an alternative perspective for the audience to

understand traditional Chinese culture and masculinity. However, rather than romanticizing the past and the *wen-wu* framework, Lee displaces Mr. Chu in a transcultural context, exploring the threats and challenges to such a *wen-wu* masculine ideal in his relations to the Chinese American son and the American daughter-in-law. *Wen* has lost its cultural pursuits to economic success, while *wu* has also been devoid of containment of sexual desire and misogyny. In such a way, Lee demonstrates the changing constructs of the *wen-wu* ideal, and most importantly he questions that a certain masculine ideal, whether Western or Chinese, dominates others. The *wen-wu* masculine ideal is an important alternative to articulate the voice of "indigenous knowledge"[90] of Chinese men, but meanwhile, Ang Lee avoids the knowledge itself to fall into the danger of essentializing and fixing.

6.1.2 Filial Piety

As a marker of Chinese manhood, filial piety is an important issue in Lee's concept of manhood. Filial piety is investigated in three films discussing the father-son relationship: *Pushing Hands* (1992), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), and *Hulk* (2003). Lee explores the conflict between Chinese filial piety and American individualism in *Pushing Hands*. In order to maintain his manliness in the Chinese tradition, the son Alex is expected to take filial obligations to support his father in old age, which runs contradictory to his American lifestyle to live in a nuclear family with his son and wife. Lee's sensitive portrayal of the father's frustration in his relationships with his son and daughter-in-law, and his final choice to live alone in Chinatown indicates his sympathy and understanding for the previous generation (the

[90] In "Men in the Third World: Postcolonial Perspectives on Masculinity", Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart cite Ifi Amadium (1987), who "attempts to retrieve indigenous knowledge" is an alternative approach to challenge the universalist claims of Western thoughts through analyzing the gender fluidity and harmony in pre-colonial Igbo society (98). See Morrell, Robert and Sandra Swart. "Men in the Third World: Postcolonial Perspectives on Masculinity." *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*. Eds. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn & Robert W. Connell. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage, 2005. 90-113.

generation of the father). The father has fulfilled his responsibilities in fatherhood and parenthood in the Chinese culture, but encounters a loss of filial values in the new generation in transcultural spaces. With an imaginative happy ending, Lee demonstrates his appreciation for traditional Chinese values in maintaining harmony among family members, retrieving its value in constructs of manliness. In *The Wedding Banquet*, filial piety is employed to discuss the homosexual issue in masculinity construction in Confucian ethics. Although the Confucian notion of manhood considers homosexual acts as neither aberrant nor perverse, homosexuality is contrary to the notion of filial piety, which requires the continuing of family lineage. The conflict finally dissolves through the sacrifice of the Chinese woman, who becomes pregnant through sexual acts with the son Wai-tung of the Gao family. In such a way, Lee debunks the subordination of women in reconstructing Chinese masculine identity and maintaining the Confucian filial obligations in transcultural spaces. Lee further explores the repressiveness of filial piety through the salient father-son relationship in *Hulk*. Establishing a breakup from the power-obsessed father, the son Bruce/Hulk establishes his heroism through his rebellious spirit and sacrifice of himself for a community to which he does not belong. These three films demonstrate Lee's changing attitudes towards filial piety in constructs of masculinities. From emotional attachment to oscillation and finally to cutoff, Lee has addressed different periods in dealing with fatherhood and filial piety in traditional Chinese culture, indicating his reevaluation of it in constructing and negotiating masculinities in transcultural spaces.

6.1.3 Femininity

Femininity is employed by Ang Lee to construct masculinities in two ways, reflecting the two strategies summarized by Martin Huang (2006) for negotiating

masculinity in relation to women: namely "the strategy of analogy" and "the strategy of differentiation" (2). On the one hand, Lee validates the manliness of his male characters through the feminine attributes. For example, Mr. Chu epitomizes a sensitive and caring father, fulfilling his parental role as both a mother and a father; Bruce/Hulk embodies feminine features like vulnerability and succorance. On the other hand, Lee constructs manliness "against" femininity. He establishes Ennis' hardness and violence under the fearful gaze of Alma; he underlines Wai-tung's masculine body and assertiveness in contrast to Simon's womanly look and feminine features. His employment of "the strategy of differentiation" results much from his parody of the binary in the Western gender paradigm, and his "strategy of analogy" demonstrates the concept of gender fluidity in pre-modern China. Therefore, repudiating the dichotomous construction of masculinity against femininity, Lee articulates a flexible and fluid gender concept of masculinities in transcultural spaces.

6.1.4 Homophobia

The condemnation of homophobia runs through Lee's portrayal of men and masculinities. Lee attempts to dismantle homophobia in constructs of masculinities in his two films from different perspectives. In *The Wedding Banquet*, he employs the pre-modern concept of bisexuality to deconstruct heterosexism. Portraying Wai-tung's sexuality as an oscillation and ambiguity between homosexuality and heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity, Lee develops a concept of masculinity, in which men have more traditional responsibilities in terms of gender roles, but are more flexible in gender attributes: sexualities in particular. In *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), Lee challenges homophobia through the expression of male intimacy in friendship, and meanwhile questions sexual orientation as a defining element in the assertion of manliness. He introduces a Confucian notion of moderate desire to

analyze homoeroticism. This insists that desires, whether heterosexual or homosexual, should be controlled to a certain level, so as to construct a notion of *junzi* manhood. In this way, Lee not only dismantles heterosexism but also generates rethinking about the ostensible emancipatory project of Western queer studies, which might run risks of imposing a new hegemony upon homosexuals and exacerbating gender inequality. Therefore, articulating multiple readings of homosexuality and homophobia in cultural encounters, Lee is cautious not to be over-generalized, but rather attentive to the specific cultural contexts in which different masculinities are situated.

6.1.5 Body

The body marks a contrast in Chinese and Western notion of ideal masculinity. In pre-modern China, in particular, Confucian notion of gender, the body was absent. But in Western culture, the body has been taken as an important symbol of gender, and a young, healthy and muscular body exhibits a masculine ideal. In Lee's portrayal of Chinese and American male figures, he highlights the existence and performance of the body in constructing masculinities. In *Pushing Hands*, Lee depicts Mr. Chu's manliness through the performance of his hands. Hand messaging demonstrates his desire towards Mrs. Chang, the Chinese woman; the rejection of touching hands indicates Martha's denial of Mr. Chu's virility and the frustration of traditional Chinese manhood in relation to the American daughter-in-law. In *The Wedding Banquet*, Lee deliberately highlights the masculine body of Wai-tung, marking a contrast to feminizing Simon's body in parallel to Wei-wei. It thus subverts the power asymmetry between masculine white men and emasculated Asian men in American mainstream depiction. Furthermore, Wai-tung's body also works as a strategy to display sexuality obscuration, dismantling the dichotomous division between homosexuality and heterosexuality. In *Brokeback Mountain*, Lee undermines

homosexual acts and corporeal intercourses in his portrayal of Jack and Ennis, but nevertheless emphasizes their cowboy virility through performances of hard bodies. Both Jack and Ennis exhibit masculine valor through horse riding, shooting, fighting and rodeo. If Lee has used the body as a strategy to assert virility and manliness in the first three films, he ironically dismantles such a fantasy of masculinization through body transformation in *Hulk*. Most men have fantasized about being masculinized through a transformation into a superhero body with tremendous power. However, his depiction of Bruce transforming to Hulk obviously does not empower or re-masculinize Bruce, but rather renders him a vulnerable and emotional green behemoth in need of help. Portraying Hulk as a Chinese *xia* hero beyond a masculine body, Lee redefines masculine heroism in terms of moral attributes rather than physical power and excessive violence, which prevails in the Western gender paradigm. In a word, discussing the body from double cultural perspectives, Lee evokes different understandings of masculinities between cultures and thus reduces the body itself as a defining attribute in constructing masculinities in transcultural spaces.

6.1.6 Social Responsibility

Lee demonstrates a great interest in portraying men in traps, in particular, struggling between personal desires and social responsibility. Alex is struggling between his individual desire to live in a nuclear family and his filial responsibility to take care of his aging father; Wai-tung is trapped in his obligations to continue the family line and his personal desire to live a homosexual life; Jack and Ennis are faced with asserting their cowboy masculinities and maintaining male intimacy between each other; and Bruce/Hulk is torn apart between his will to be an ordinary man together with Betty and his rescuing role as a man with superpowers. Influenced by the Confucian "zhongyong" 中庸 (medium or moderation), Lee is careful to maintain

a balance between these two conflicting forces. He obviously criticizes the suppression of individual desires in Confucian thoughts, but meanwhile emphasizes the importance of social responsibility in constructing manhood. In his portrayals, Alex eventually purchases a big house to invite his father to live together with his family, indicating his embrace of filial obligations; Wai-tung impregnates Wei-wei and fulfills his responsibility as a son in a Chinese family; Ennis suppresses his emotions towards Jack to fulfill his role as a father and husband; Bruce/Hulk eventually accepts his heroic identity and performs rescue work in the African jungle. Such resolutions clearly demonstrate Lee's endorsing of social responsibility in constructs of masculinities.

In a word, Ang Lee's conceptualization of masculinities is non-essentialist: not necessarily a rejection of femininity or homosexuality. He advocates a flexible understanding of manliness, which is more related to roles or behavior rather than gender or sexuality. Lee has drawn much insight from the notion of gender and manhood in pre-modern China, in particular, the Confucian thoughts, advocating self-control and social responsibility in interpersonal relations. Though he has introduced the Confucian notion of ideal masculinity in his films, Lee nevertheless has no interest in flaunting any masculine ideals, which he attempts to destabilize in transcultural spaces. Asserting notions of gender and masculinities beyond the Western paradigm to articulate multiple readings of masculinities from a transcultural perspective, Lee's work dismantles both the West-centrism and China-centrism in the assertion of dominating masculinity in the world.

6.2 Implications of the Study

This study has concentrated on four films ranging a decade from 1992 to 2005. During this relatively short period, China has been transformed socially, culturally

and economically, facing the ambiguities of entering the global arena. Since the early 1990s, along with Deng Xiaoping's further economical reformation, as Song points out, China's integration into capitalist globalization on the one hand, has brought forth cultural pluralism, questioning and eroding the notion of Chineseness, including Chinese manhood; on the other hand, the rise of China as an economic, political and military power has generated "an outburst of nationalism" among the people and "a desire for restoration of the country's past pride and prestige" (Song and Hird 11). Lee's films, despite taking a slightly different path from the modern gender identities developed through globalization in Mainland China, embody some complex and profound changes in the discourse of manhood during such a period. Whereas in the early 1990s, Ang Lee was concerned with the conflicting encounter between the U.S. and China, questioning Western gender standards as the universal norm, the 21st century saw Lee's deconstruction of American hegemonic masculine models and a "return" to Chinese traditions for re-masculinizing Chinese men. However, it has never been a simplistic and essentialist fashioning of Chinese tradition or traditional Chinese manhood. Instead, a complex, profound and diversified transformation in masculinities has taken place in the transcultural negotiations. For example, Mr. Chu's final withdraw to Chinatown is not a sheer restoration of the Chinese masculine ideal, but also an acceptance of American individualism and an adaption of his traditional masculine identity to American society. Lee's affirmation of Confucian *junzi* masculinity in Ennis is not a simplistic flaunt of Confucian traditions, but demonstrates a rethinking of the Western conceptualization of queerness for emancipation in the Chinese context.

I would like to finish my dissertation by reiterating how the research of negotiations of masculinities in Ang Lee's films enriches critical studies of men and

masculinities. The critique of Chinese men has long been underpinned by the dominant Western notion of masculinity as the universal norm, in which Chinese men have been judged against the myth of the Western masculine models and are thus labeled effeminate. However, the construction of masculinities is historical and ideological, and it functions as a site of power negotiations. The stereotype of Chinese men as emasculated and inferior to Western men in terms of manhood is a product of colonial discourse (Song 2004, 8). Today in the era of globalization, it is significant to dismantle the power asymmetry and to comprehend how transcultural interactions shape gender and masculinities in the new century. Lee's portrayal of Chinese (American) men and masculinities serves to offer an alternative framework and a more complex understanding of Chinese manhood. As with postcolonial theory, his films provide an "indigenous knowledge" to reclaim the voices of Chinese men and his representation reconfigures power relations among masculinities in transcultural spaces.

Lee's representation of both Chinese (American) men and American men have been recognized as going beyond the local, demonstrating a more sophisticated perception of a broader historical context for constructions of masculinities in transcultural spaces. In this sense, "global history and contemporary globalization" enters Lee's depiction of men and masculinities, which demonstrates the interactions between local masculinities in the transnational arena. In Lee's transcultural spaces for negotiations of masculinities, it is not the case that Western or American gender and masculinity norms circulate while Chinese manhood changes in response. Rather, they both change in an immense dialectic, and most significantly new forms and new spaces beyond an individual culture emerge. For instance, Ennis embodies a mixture

of American cowboy masculinity, homosexuality and *junzi* masculinity. Bruce/Hulk demonstrates American superhero masculinity with Chinese *xia* attributes.

In light of transdifference, my study analyzes the complexity and sophistication in negotiations of masculinities evoked in a palimpsest of cultural encounters. My analysis finds that male individuals are always more caught or trapped than emancipated in constructing masculinities in transcultural spaces, in which cultural differences are interrogated or suspended, but not completely overcome. Male subjectivities in Lee's films turn to three different ways to construct or reconstruct their manliness. First, men suppress trandifference and opt for a clear belonging to a certain culture, in particular, the culture of origin for masculinity restoration. Mr. Chu in *Pushing Hands* is a great illustration. Frustrated in transcultural spaces, he finally chooses to reassert his manliness in Chinese community. Second, men embrace transidifference to construct an ambiguous masculine identity in transcultural spaces. In *The Wedding Banquet*, Wai-tung ultimately sustains his masculinity in Confucian filial obligations in Chinese culture and meanwhile maintains his homosexual relationship with Simon. His male identity as homosexual or heterosexual, Chinese or American, is suspended. Third, men might transcend cultural boundaries to demonstrate transcultural manhood. My multiple readings of Ennis and Bruce/Hulk embody such an imaginative way to construct an emancipated masculinity in transcultural spaces. However, Ennis ends distressed by Jack's death while Bruce/Hulk ultimately lives in the African jungle, indicating a Utopian world. But who knows, there might be such a day in future, when people stop asking the question of Lady Macbeth to her husband: "Are you a man?"[91]

[91] See *Macbeth* by Shakespeare, Act 3, Scene 4, Line 70.

6.3 Future Research

This study offers a comparative study and an interpretation of masculinities in Lee's films from a transcultural perspective. However, it cannot answer every question concerning men and masculinities in Lee's films. For example, a further study might expand upon intersectionality or multidimensionality in studies of men and masculinities among race, class, sexuality, age that are touched upon in *Pushing Hands* and *The Wedding Banquet* in analyzing Chinese American men. My study does not divide Chinese men and Chinese American men when analyzing transcultural negotiations between Chinese and American masculinities for I am more interested in the way they are positioned. A more nuanced study is needed to examine Lee's representation of Chinese American men and Chinese men, exploring the power relationships besides those of father and son, heterosexual and homosexual men.

Another study might concentrate on the changes of Lee's portrayal of masculinities. From "Father Trilogy" to *Life of Pi* (2012) and *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (2015), Lee's perception of men and masculinities is transforming over time. How does Lee represent the changes of men and masculinities in his films? How does Lee express his changing views on men and masculinities? How do some masculine models transform to the new roles? Moreover, it might also be insightful to investigate and compare the reception of Lee's representation of male figures in the U.S. and in China. When appropriating Chinese cultural elements in constructs of masculinities: why is *Brokeback Mountain* a great success while *Hulk* is a failure? Focusing on the Chinese notion of masculinity, why is *Pushing Hands* not as well received as *The Wedding Banquet*? What are the power dynamics behind such differences in reception?

Despite lagging behind Western countries, studies of men and masculinities are gaining increasing academic attention in China and much research has been done on the cultural heritage of Chinese manhood. I believe more studies will emerge in the future to make men salient in gender studies in China; examining the power relations between men and women, the adapting practices of Chinese masculinities in changing circumstances and in frequent transcultural negotiations in the era of globalization.

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Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Interpretation vier ausgewählter Filme des Filmemachers Ang Lee – *Pushing Hands*, *The Wedding Banquet*, *Brokeback Mountain* und *Hulk,* die in den Jahren 1992 bis 2005 entstanden. Sie erforscht die unterschiedliche Inszenierung von Konzepten der Männlichkeit im chinesischen und US-amerikanischen Kontext, sowie den Männlichkeitsdiskurs in Räumen des kulturellen Üergangs.

Die Untersuchung Lees männlicher Figuren und Männlichkeitskonzepte macht sich sowohl die chinesische als auch die westliche erkenntnistheoretische Perspektive zu eigen, dabei ist Untersuchung sowohl konzeptionell als auch analytisch angelegt. Auf der konzeptionellen Ebene soll sie zeigen, wie sich die Konstruktion von Männlichkeitskonzepten unter der Einbeziehung nicht nur der westlichen konzeptionellen Argumentation von transkulturellen Räumen (Transdifferenz), sondern auch von andersartigen erkenntnistheoretischen Perspektiven, hier der chinesischen, besser erklären lässt. Auf der analytischen Ebene werden in der Untersuchung der Inszenierung männlicher Figuren audio-visuelle Textanalysen benutzt.

Die Analyse hat deutlich die Komplexität und Vielfältigkeit der Aushandlung von Männlichkeitskonzepten in transkulturellen Räumen gezeigt, wobei die Rekonstruktion und die Neuverhandlung von Männlichkeit sowohl emanzipatorisch als auch repressiv von statten gehen kann. Männliche Protagonisten bei Lee finden drei unterschiedliche Wege, ihre männliche Identität zu konstruieren. Als erste Lösung unterdrücken sie den transdifferenten Aspekt und wählen die klare Zugehörigkeit zu einer der Kulturen, die dann als Ursprung für die Restauration der Männlichkeit dient. Die zweite Lösung ist das Annehmen der Transdifferenz um eine

mehrdeutige maskuline Identität im transkulturellen Raum aufzubauen. Als letzte Lösung gelingt es einen männlichen Figuren, kulturelle Grenzen zu überschreiten und eine transkulturelle Männlichkeit zu manifestieren.

Stichwörter: Repräsentation, Männlichkeit, transkulturelle Räume, Transdifferenz

This dissertation consists of readings of four selected films by Ang Lee — *Pushing Hands*, *The Wedding Banquet*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *Hulk*, ranging over a decade from 1992 to 2005. It explores Lee's representation of diverse Chinese and American masculinities, discussing negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces.

My exploration of Lee's representation of men and masculinities is equipped with double epistemological perspectives, namely, both Chinese and Western. My project is both conceptual and analytical. On the conceptual level, I intend to demonstrate how constructions of masculinities can be more productively explained by employing not only the Western conceptual arguments of transcultural space (transdifference) but also by reading this space from different epistemological perspectives, namely the Western and Chinese. On the analytical level, I employ audio and visual textual analysis in my examination of Lee's portrayal of male figures.

My analysis has clearly demonstrated the complexity and multiplicity in negotiations of masculinities in transcultural spaces, which can be both emancipatory and repressive in re-constructing and re-negotiating one's masculinity. Male subjectivities in Lee's films turn to three different ways to construct or reconstruct their manliness. First, men suppress trandifference and opt for a clear belonging to a certain culture, in particular, the culture of origin for masculinity restoration. Second, men embrace transidifference to construct an ambiguous masculine identity in transcultural spaces. Third, men might transcend cultural boundaries to demonstrate transcultural manhood.

Keywords: representation, masculinities, transcultural spaces, transdifference