often exaggerated, preternatural and escapist, though later trends would adhere to more realistic martial arts. Generally speaking, in the twenties and thirties, it was the story, rather than the martial arts or the performer, that was central to the genre. Martial arts at the time might be seen more as the product of the cultural (and cinematic) imagination than a form of film performance. It is noticeable, however, that the early wuxia films required their actors to have some capability in displaying martial arts on screen, so

morality."[10] Kwan Tak-hing, the well-known actor who depicted the character of Wong Fei-hung in most of those films, cannot be regarded as a real martial artist km ( )3u tr Ab.(

conclude that wuxia stars before the 1970s mainly built their screen images upon their acting rather than on displays of martial arts. -7.99n j 0.003 T4(t)-29

traditional wuxia stars like Di Long and David Chiang acquired some martial arts skills from the training school at Shaw Brothers, as martial arts choreographers continued to train stars to do their own moves. On the other hand, some performers who were previously trained in the opera school and had some real skills, such as Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao, grew up to be a new generation of wuxia stars.

Jackie Chan, another martial arts superstar, also came out of this tradition. Following Lee, Chan further accentuates the significance and irreplaceability of authentic martial arts by doing all the stunts himself in his films. He once expressed his discontent with new wuxia films pioneered by Tsui Hark in the late eighties and early nineties:

> I don't like the wuxia pian (film), the flying, the exaggerated kung fu skills. It's not real. You can make anyone fly like Superman or Batman, but only we special people can do my style of fighting.[20]

In Chan's view, a star with physical skills guarantees the "uniqueness" and "authenticity" of the wuxia film. Chan created a humorous variant of the martial arts that was distinct from Lee's earnest style of kung fu, encompassing comical acrobatics that derived from his training in the opera school and developing his trademark kung fu comedy. The transnational popularity of Jackie Chan films further foregrounds a spectacular manifestation of martial arts as the main appeal of the genre, and at the same time emphasizes "authenticity" as an important standard by which to judge a wuxia film. "Authenticity," according to Hunt, is a term "that sometimes refers to the martial arts themselves, to the 'invisibility' of cinematic representation (wide framing, unobtrusive editing) or to the body itself as guarantee of the real (athletic virtuosity, physical risk)."[21] However, we should notice that an overemphasis on physical capabilities can easily result in the neglect of actor-ed, except for

the stars mentioned above, most wuxia performers in the 1970s and 1980s turned into fighting machines and could not keep their names in the pantheon of wuxia stars.

When Jet Li came to play Wong Fei-hung in OUATIC in 1991, he faced two traditions of wuxia stars, one emphasising acting and performance, the other focusing on martial arts and the body. Li unquestionably falls into the category of "special people" that Chan refers to. He learned martial arts from seven years old; he was five times national martial arts champion; he made his name due to his excellent martial virtuosity showcased in his early films (Shaolin Temple, China/Hong Kong, 1982; Kids from Shaolin, China/Hong Kong, 1984). Audiences have good reason to believe that Li could display real martial arts as well as any other wuxia star. However, surprisingly, Li is strongly criticised for subordinating his real skills to cinematic technology in his films. The common complaint is that too many special effects and wirework stunts have been applied in the fight scenes. Based on his observation of a gradual disappearance of muscular bodies in Hong Kong popular culture from the realistic films inaugurated by Bruce Lee to Tsui Hark's new wuxia films starring Jet Li, Lo Kwai-cheung claims that "no body" exists in OUATIC, and that Jet Li is simply a support prop for the intensive effects work.[22] Similarly, Ackbar Abbas argues that it is special effects instead of Li that are the real heroes in the film. He writes, "Tsui Hark's star Jet Li knows his kung fu, but there are no more authentic stars/heroes of the order of Bruce Lee, as the real is more and more being 'coproduced' through special effects."[23] The anecdote that Li used stunt doubles during some fighting sequences after breaking his ankle has aggravated the charge of "inauthenticity." For example, Leon Hunt confesses that he would like to see Li be

more authentic by performing each move by himself, and concludes that “martial arts films simply do not need their stars to be trained martial artists anymore.”[24]

Despite the above criticism (noticeably seen in English-language writing), OUATIC was a big hit at the local box office. It not only held a place in the Box Office Top 10 in Hong Kong in 1991, but was lauded by Hong Kong film critics as one of ten best Chinese-language movies of the year. As a groundbreaking wuxia film, OUATIC revived the declining wuxia genre and initiated a new cycle in the early 1990s. At the same time, it resurrected Li’s fading fame since his Shaolin Temple days and made him a new kung fu superstar to follow in the footsteps of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. Why was the film such a huge success while Li is often criticised for not exhibiting martial arts authentically? If the “authenticity” of martial arts is mostly a western concern, how do local critics respond to Li’s kung fu body mediated by cinematic technology? How does Li negotiate his dual identities as a martial artist and an actor? What kind of masculine image does Li construct in this film?

In the following discussion, I will explore these questions by looking at some articles in City Entertainment, which is a highly reputed and key film magazine in Hong Kong. Two of the most important Hong Kong film awards are closely related to the magazine: it set up the annual Hong Kong Film Awards in 1982, while the Golden Bauhina Awards (held by the Hong Kong Film Critics Association) derived from the previous City Entertainment Awards. After the release of OUATIC, sevsclal reev10(()3(hO aisit)-

hero. In addition, some purists complained that Jet Li's northern martial arts style hardly prepared him to portray a real Cantonese kung fu hero.[30] Li also admitted that he was under big pressure to play a master because audiences had got used to his "kung fu kid" image.[31] However, the success of the film banished those doubts to a large extent.

After the release of OUATIC in Hong Kong in 1991, several film critics in City Entertainment used the same words to describe their feeling about the film: that is, that it came as a "pleasant surprise." Kang Xue-ying wrote, "it is a bit strange to cast Li with boyish features as a revered master, but unexpectedly he makes it."[32] She said that before watching this film, she thought that Li would transform Wong's image from a serious master to a mischievous teenager, but in fact Li's performance was no less dignified than Kwan Tak-hing's. Kang also saw Li's brilliant martial arts skills as a guarantee of the film's success. Zhang Zhen also noted that "Li's previous image of a vigorous kid has been absolutely got rid of." Zhang mentioned[33]

"it is exhilarating when Tsui's visual style meets Li's solid martial skills."[36] Zhang Zhi-cheng further pointed out that "this film again attests to the fact that fight scenes with only fists are limited, but with the help of film techniques, a fight scene full of imagination can be created."[37] Clearly, the City Entertainment reviewers tended to ignore the "unreal" part of Li's physical performance. For them, the important thing was not how much wirework Li applied in his fighting or whether or not he used stunt doubles, but whether or not he successfully delivered Wong's dignity and adeptness as a prestigious master by exhibiting his martial skills. In other words, it was the performativity of martial arts instead of its authenticity that was accentuated by Hong Kong critics as a key appeal of Li's remaking of Wong Fei-hung.

These comments on the one hand evince a holistic attitude toward martial arts performance amongst Hong Kong critics rather than a rigid distinction between "fighting" and "acting" as often seen in Western critical discourses, and on the other hand indicate a performative tendency within wuxia stars in the early 1990s. By that time, due to the introduction of Western cinematic technology and a gradually maturing system of martial arts choreography, stars with little or no prior martial arts experience like Brigitte Lin and Leslie Cheung could look like expert martial artists on screen. It was obviously difficult to become a new generation wuxia star by solely relying on martial arts ability. How could Li convincingly impersonate a revered kung fu master in OUATIC, in spite of his boyish face and previous "kung fu kid" image? It might be worth observing how Li articulates his own opinions on martial arts in the film before taking a closer look at how he actually practises it.

characteristic of Hong Kong martial arts/action films, and is used to arouse and channel emotion in fighting scenes. Instead of an impassive, aesthetic realism, Bordwell points out, Hong Kong filmmakers present a fight or chase which is "given a distinct, vivid emotional profile—ferocity, panic, evasiveness, meticulousness—or some combination of such qualities."[45] Indeed, in OUATIC, the alternation of fight and stasis harmonises Li's/Wong's intensity and calm, fury and poise, violence and peace, thereby perfectly conveying a dignified, revered master.

While Li's glamorous poses betray his mainland wushu background (which attaches importance to the expressivity of martial arts), they also show the influence of another Chinese opera tradition—"liangxiang," a term, as Hunt writes, suggesting "an opening of the body to let light shine in," "key presencing moment" in Peking opera.[46] Whenever Li/Wong poses, a close-up is used to emphasise his soul-piercing eyes and magnify his luminous presence. In OUATIC, "pose" has been expertly fused into Li/Wong's fighting style and has become an important way to portray the character. This can be clearly observed each time that Wong fights with Master Yim. While Yim desperately initiates one attack after another while emitting furious noises, Wong is always waiting for him in a still pose with a half-smile on his face. Wong's calm and Yim's hysteria form such a strong contrast that audiences probably do not need to wait until the last minute to know who will be the winner. The different fighting styles convey the different personalities of two martial arts masters. The deployment of these poses helps Li to create a graceful and serene fighting style, thus vibrantly demonstrating what makes Wong a respected kung fu master, that is, his commitment to peace—using his fighting skills as the last recourse, instead of attacking or showing off.

"Pause" and "pose" not only give fight sequences a vigorous rhythm and tension, but also add aesthetic beauty and elegance to Li's martial arts performance. More importantly, by incorporating theatrical elements into the displays of his martial arts, Li fully expresses Wong's dominance in the combat, and his self-possession and self-confidence as a superior kung fu master. This is probably what Hunt has in mind when he argues that "there is more to kung fu stardom than authentic ability," and that "Chinese performance traditions have made their own special contribution to film stardom."[47]

As mentioned before, Li is often criticized for substituting wirework and special effects for his physical skills. While Hunt suggests that Wong Fei-hung films embody a collision of technology and the kung fu star's body,[48] Ackbar Abbas claims that the aura of kung fu stars has been erased by technology.[49] However, City Entertainment reviews represent another (probably no less popular) perspective, namely that cinematic technology enhances Li's martial arts performance rather than damages his physical "authenticity." As far as I am aware, the criticism of technology impairing kung fu stars' performance mainly comes from English-language critical discourses, but Chinese critics seem to have less investment in this kind of authenticity. The prese Td [((ur)3s)-1(ki)-2(nd o4(ce)-6om)-11(t)-n(i)-2(t)-2(i)-(g)10(t)-n(i)-2(r)-7(a21(bl)-2(g

plays with the “burning branch,” “rotating wooden beam” or “flying ladders.” What is highlighted here is not how Li/Wong beats his adversaries, but how he performs his martial arts. These fight sequences, mediated by technology, are more atmospheric, fantastic, less violent, hence subtly delivering the message of nonviolence, which is certainly a key feature of the character.

In summary, technology is used in OUATIC as a supplement to the kung fu star’s body and helps Li perform martial arts gracefully and serenely. Instead of substituting cinematic artifice for his real skills, Li combines both. Rather than losing his aura, Li gains a more charismatic presence with the help of cinematic technology. By embracing such technology, Li further places emphasis on the performativity of martial arts. As discussed above, through introducing theatricality and technology into his martial arts performance, Li foregrounds martial arts as a forceful means to portray the character, and once again proves that martial arts and acting can complement one another perfectly within a wuxia star’s performance. In doing so, Li completes transformations both on

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colonial domination and a chaotic "fatherland" (during the Cultural Revolution) pressed for a tough and uncompromising hero image like Bruce Lee's because national self-confidence and identify with an imaginary, powerful China. By the early 1990s, with a highly developed economy and impending handover to the Mainland, the Hong Kong people began to reflect on the impact of Western culture in a less biased way, and examine their identity on a more complex level. A gentle and flexible wuxia hero like Li was therefore more relevant to the sentiment of the day.

The change of wuxia hero from Bruce Lee to Jet Li also indicates different trends within martial arts performance. Barry King[58] and Paul McDonald[59] draw the distinction between what they call "impersonation" and "personification" in acting. According to their definitions, "impersonation" is produced by the actor who transforms his/her body and voice in ways that signify the differences between the characters s/he plays. "Personification", on the other hand, foregrounds the continuity of the star's image over and above different characters. While an actor who impersonates plausibly integrates her/himself into the narrative circumstances, an actor who personifies always plays herself/himself. McDonald and King's distinction in terms of acting can be borrowed to address two different approaches to martial arts performance, i.e. personification and impersonation in fighting. A wuxia actor who maintains his particular fighting style in playing each character can be regarded as practising "personification in fighting". By contrast, "impersonation in fighting" means that a wuxia actor transforms his fighting style to adjust to different characters. If Lee and Chan are good examples of the former, Li's performance in OUATIC perfectly illustrates the latter.

As mentioned before, Lee tended to deny the performativity of his onscreen martial arts and highlight his authenticity and superiority as a martial arts master. Lee

invented his own style of martial arts, which he called Jeet Kune Do, and performed it in each of his films. Similarly, Chan rejects the exaggerated expression of martial arts and insists on the body itself as a guarantee of the real. Chan's comedic martial arts, as Yuen Wo

[5] Sek Kei, "The Development of 'Martial Arts' in Hong Kong Cinema," in Lau Shing-hon, ed., A Study of the Hong Kong Martial Arts Film (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival, 1980), 27.
[6] Jia Leilei, Chinese Wuxia Film History (Beijing: Culture and Art Publishing House, 2005), 53.
[7] Hector Rodriguez, "Hong Kong Popular Culture as An Interpretive Arena: the Huang Feihong Film Series" (Screen 38.1, 1997), 8.
[8] Leon Hunt, Kung Fu Cult Masters (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003), 29.
[9] Sek Kei, 28.
[10] Quoted by Mélanie Morrissette, "Choreography: The Unknown and Ignored" (Offscreen, August 31, 2002, http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/new_offscreen/choreography.html).
[11] Quoted from The Making of Martial Arts Films — As Told by Filmmakers and Stars (Hong Kong: Hong Kong film Archive, 1999), 19.
[12] Ibid., 38.
[13] Leon Hunt, 9.
[14] Quoted by David Bordwell, Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 286.

[42] , “ ”, , 362 , Deng Tu-zi, “Jet Li and Fong Sai-yuk” (City Entertainment, Issue 362, February 1993), 40.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Quoted from Ange Hwang, “The Irresistible: Hong Kong Movie Once Upon A Time in China: An Extensive Interview with Director/Producer Tsui Hark” (Asian Cinema, Fall 1993), 18.
[45] David Bordwell, 232.
[46] Leon Hunt, 44.
[47] Ibid, 43.
[48] Ibid., 17.
[49] Ackbar Abbas, 31.
[50] Quoted from Zhang Kee-long, Ang Lee (Beijing: Xian Dai Press, 2005), 226.
[51] Craig D. Reid, “Fighting Without Fighting” (Film Quarterly 47.2, 1993-1994), 31. Reid is said to be the only Chinese-trained American fight choreographer working in the US.
[52] In a City Entertainment interview (1991, Issue 323), 24, referred to the filmmaking process of this film: “The director (Tsui Hark) needs not only two persons fighting each other, but strong ‘atmosphere’. He always wants to shot something nonexistent. So we often try to go beyond our limit to do some impossible, original kung fu until the atmosphere or effect is created.”
[53] David Bordwell, 234.
[54] Quoted from Ange Hwang, 18.
[55] David Bordwell, 123.
[56] , “ ”, , 324 Luo Wei-ming, “Tsui Hark’s Wong Fei-hung” (City Entertainment, Issue 324, 1993), 38.
[57] Paul McDonald, “Star Bodies and Performance” in Richard Dyer, Stars (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 181.
[58] Barry King, “Articulating Stardom” in Jeremy G. Butler, ed., Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 42.
[59] Paul McDonald, 45.
[60] Quoted from The Making of Martial Arts Films, 64.
[61] Wade Major, 174.
[62] Bey Logan, Hong Kong Action Cinema (London: Titan, 1995), 178.
[63] Only one wuxia star has ever won a Best Actor Award, David Chiang, for Vengeance (Zhang Che, Hong Kong, 1970) at the Asian Film Festival. Jackie Chan was nominated twice for Best Actor in the Hong Kong Film Awards, but did not win, leading another wuxia star Di Long to claim that a bias existed against action/kung fu stars. Interestingly enough, in this year’s Bai Hua (Hundred Flowers) Film Awards, the largest in Mainland China, Jet Li, Jackie Chan and Stephen Chow were nominated for Best Actor for their roles respectively in Fearless, New Police Story and Kung Fu Hustle (predictably) failed.
[64] For example, in the Hong Kong Film Awards, there is only Best Action Choreography, not Best Fight