

Female, Feminine, Feminist Identification in *Sense and Sensibility* And *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*

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Abstrak

Esai ini menganalisis dua film yaitu *Sense and Sensibility* dan *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. Keduanya merupakan film yang merupakan adaptasi dari karya sastra yang dapat dikategorikan sebagai roman. Saya mempergunakan perspektif feminis dalam analisis film roman ini dan berasumsi bahwa kedua film tersebut dapat digolongkan sebagai film berperspektif feminis yang mengidentifikasi audiensnya sebagai *female* dan feminin dalam konteks sosial kultural serta historis tertentu. Kedua film tersebut merepresentasi perempuan yang merupakan korban dari struktur sosial tetapi kemudian berhasil mengatasi keterbatasan itu dan memperoleh kekuatan tertentu untuk kemudian mampu menjalani kehidupan sesuai dengan yang diinginkannya.

Introduction

This essay is to respond to Teresa de Lauretis' argument that feminist cinema 'addresses its spectators, as a woman, regardless of the gender of the viewers... that the film defines all points of identification (with character, image, camera) as female, feminine, or feminist' (1987, p.133). Lauretis' approach of identification is indeed challenging, and I would like to explore how it works in the two films I have chosen.

My argument on the identification of woman spectatorship of the two films will be influenced by my own identification as a woman who can easily define herself as female and feminist, though not always feminine. At the same time as the process of identification is multiple, it is problematic for me to put myself in the position of the three categories without assuming my own cultural and social identification. The multiple identification suggested by Modleski (1994, p.210) is supported by Kuhn as she argues that "theories of representation may have to come to terms with discursive formations of the social, cultural and textual" (1999, p.154). The identification of a woman spectator expands not only as feminine, female, feminist but, adding Kuhn's argument, as "female social audience' as well".

I should like to introduce here my argument why I would link *Sense and Sensibility* and *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* in the identification of female, feminine, feminist spectatorship. What makes the late 1700 or early 1800 story in England relate to the story taking place in what Director Ang Lee calls "a China that probably never existed"? What

would make the two films appeal to women? What makes *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, whose martial art genre is 'masculine', appeal to women?

Obviously, the fact that Ang Lee is the director of both films provides one link. Also, the probability of the two stories taking place at around the same time setting can make an interesting pairing of the two films. However, what links the two films more closely is perhaps how the films are conceived into being. James Schamus, the producer of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, who happens to be the co-producer of *Sense and Sensibility*, remarks that *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* has always been "seen as *Sense and Sensibility* with martial art". Both films are adapted from a novel, so there is a strong link of literature-to-film condition in the narrative agency produced in the films.

However, most importantly for this essay, both fall into the general category of 'romance'. *Sense and Sensibility*, which Jane Austen actually started writing in 1790s under the title *Elinor and Marianne*, was published in 1811 labeled as an "Interesting Novel". At that time it meant love story (Jane Austen's Writing). *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, written before the Second World War by Wang Du Lu, is one of five serial novels narrating the story of wuxia. However, in spite of its martial art genre, or arguably 'masculine' genre, romance and love stories are crucial part of the novels. The two elements are so important to the novels to the extent that the novels can actually be categorized more as "romance with martial arts" than martial art with romance. But what is romance? Pearce and Wisker define romantic love as "re/production of infantile human desire and romance as the 'cultural representation of that desire" (Pearce & Wisker, 1998: 5). Romance is not an individual expression of feelings, emotions and desire but rather a cultural social construction of how those three are organized within a specific space and time. Pearce and Stacey (1995) further discuss the possibility of using *chronotope* (literally means time-space) for analyzing romance within feminist discourse. I would like to attempt to make use of the approach to analyze *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* later in this essay.

Romance, which now I think have sat my two choices of films somehow comfortably with each other, seems to have posed a problematic issue for feminists. Radway, cited in Shiach (1999, p.397), points out the differing perception of romance in its effect on women; on one side is Kendrick who argues that romance is "escapist, masturbatory, and exploitative" and Ann Douglas who remarks romance as being "a backlash against the women's movement"; and on the other is Radway herself that suggests the possibility of resistance within the genre of romance. Similarly, Jackson argues that "love has been the site, for the last two centuries, a locus both of feminine complicity in and resistance to male domination" (Jackson, 1995: 52). Though somewhat skeptical at first about the possibility of resistance within romance, I have been allured to see that such possibility does exist.

Woman's films, or to be more specific within my discussion, romance films, can somehow provide a space for women outside the academia that "don't read feminist academic text book" to be female, feminine, and feminist within the scope of their own experience. Resistance in romance cinema is made possible through the fact that cinema, more or less like language, is a dialectic whose purpose "lies in the expression and signification of ideas, emotions and feelings..." (Mityr, 2000, p.16). Therefore, a woman's film categorized as romance can still function as feminist cinema. And as feminist cinema, romance films need to address their spectators as a woman, not only because feminism owes its own existence to women, but also because feminist cinema has and can create political power for societal changes and transformation.

To be able to respond to Lauretis's argument that "feminist cinema addresses its spectators as woman, ..." , I have to start from the basic argument that the two films I choose are feminist. In the analysis of the films, I am interested in three romance patterns suggested by Pearce and Stacey (1998:16-18), namely :

1. the trajectory in which the heroines find the loss of social identity, which becomes the barrier of their relationships;
2. the tragic situations that heighten the 'value of love in the light of its loss'. I would also argue at this point that the tragic situation suffered by the heroines might actually function as a kind of reflection in which the heroine learns from 'the old love' and evaluate her emotions.
3. Transformative pattern in which 'romance offers its subjects possibilities of new becoming'.

However, I would limit my attempt in the way that I would use the first and second pattern to justify my discussion of *Sense and Sensibility*, and the third for my discussion of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. While using the patterns, I would try to explore how romance and the narrative structure work in both films and how images and imaging work in the films. By doing so, I expect to be able to draw a discussion how romance as a genre can offer a room of/for feminist views. As a conclusion I hope to be able to argue that the two films do address their spectators a woman in the term that Lauretis argues as female, feminine and feminist.

Justifying feminism in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*

Since this essay is intended to answer the question if feminist cinema addresses its spectators as a woman as female, feminine and feminist, my assumption is that the two films

I have chosen have to belong to the category of feminist cinema. Neither of the films is actually labeled feminist. Nevertheless, it does not mean they are not. One big question is what is feminist cinema in the first place? Arguments have varied from feminist film critics, such as Sharon Smith (1999, p.18), who suggest that women characters in films should be given roles different from the stereotyped ones in the real world. In this sense, a feminist cinema is expected to be an instrument of the rethinking and reevaluation of the traditional sex-role stereotypes.

Smith also suggests the presentation of woman images that are disruptive to patriarchal culture, for example in the persona of Mae West being a sexual woman. The disruptive power of feminist cinema in patriarchal values in terms of sexuality for example have ranged from films such as *A Question of Silence*, *Antonia's Line* to the very disturbing *Boys Don't Cry*. Each of the film presents women either being lesbian, transsexual/transgender, or by being a sexual woman who have control over her own sexuality and perhaps even ridicule men's sexuality. *Question* actually presents two naked male bodies, the male bodies as object of spectacle. Another Gorris's film, *Antonia's Line*, is full of women who refuse to be institutionally attached to heterosexuality and motherhood.

Of course, there is always a danger in taking freedom in sexuality as woman's freedom. Countering Smith, Johnston (1999, p.34) argues that the persona of Mae West "is in no way subverts existing myths but reinforces them". There is some truth in it, and it makes the definition of feminist cinema become more problematic as we take Woman's films into the frame. This is the genre that presents women in their very own "private" sphere, as wife, mother, daughter and lover. The image presented within the space is then crucial as the disruption of patriarchal values is developed within the patriarchal ideology itself. The question is, can woman's films – romance films – be feminist films?

One of the answers to that question seems to have been found in 'Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics. Judith Mayne (1999, p.115) argues that women are indeed objects of spectacles, but women are spectators as well, and the dialectic is never simple. Women are not just passive viewers, "women come to the film text already positioned as 'resistant' viewers, women will read it differently" (Thornham, 1999: 112). The process of resisting and questioning as well as identification, I believe, is very liberating and promising in terms of transformation and changes. Being feminist does not always mean working outside the structure. Being feminist may also refer to works done within the structure.

On the part of filmmakers, feminist ideas do not necessarily render them to create films that present "extraordinarily independent women" who do not need anybody else, let alone men. In the same way, feminist films do not actually mean a film about a very free sexual woman who would just go to bed with any man or any woman she fancies. Rather, I

would say, is what is suggested by Molly Haskell that “better women’s films aspire... [T]he fiction of the ‘ordinary woman who becomes extraordinary’, the woman who begins as a victim of discriminatory circumstances and rises, through pain, obsession or defiance, to become mistress of her fate” (Haskell, 1999, p.23).

Moreover, I would argue that romance films, though working within the space of traditional values of heterosexuality, have potential to become feminist. This genre gives a space for a woman to relate her own experience in the real world to the constructed world in the film. Through the process of identification, a woman can find the articulation of her own repressed articulation in the world they experience through the world presented to her in the cinema.

Now, of course, I have to justify my own question. Are *Sense and Sensibility* and *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* feminist films? Taking Haskell’s definition of how a better women’s film should be, I would argue that both films are feminist in the sense that they both present images of women who are victims in their own societal structure but then raise to become extraordinary in term of having gained a certain power and control over their own fates. The romance films provide the characters as well as the spectators a space for resistance and transformation in a way that “enable us to feel that we can overcome all adversities” (Pearce and Stacey, 1995: 17). My justification will go on simultaneously with my analysis of each film.

Sense and Sensibility portrays two women as the central characters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Thrown out from their own house due to the death of their father. Elinor “the sense” and Marianne “the sensibility” are victims of the discriminative law of inheritance in late 1800s England. The term ‘sense’ and ‘sensibility’ might be understood as the same thing in modern English, but according to Gooringe¹, though ‘sense’ retains its meaning as it means today, the term ‘sensibility’ was then ‘associated with strong emotions and the gift of psychological discernment’. The two sisters’ love stories are entangled with their new class status. *Sense and Sensibility*’s ending provides the spectators not only a satisfaction of ‘sweet revenge’ but also the possibility of challenging boundaries and barriers and even overcoming them. The transgression of class hierarchy is crucial in the film to show how women survive within the dominant culture.

Jane Austen did not write about super women, she wrote about ordinary women in the situation faced by ordinary women at her time and showed that these women have somehow been victimized by the system, yet they survive and win the battle. The film, though

¹ Gooringe, Carrie, *Sense and Sensibility*, <http://www.nitrateonline.com/rsense.html> (29 December 2001)

leaves out some of the characters and is deprived of Austen's omnipresent narrative, has managed to present the amusing love stories as well as conveys Austen's "soft feminist message", thanks to the brilliant script of Emma Thompson. Camera shot has helped bring the "gossiping quality of Austen's novels". For example when Lucy is about to tell Fanny her "secret engagement", the camera starts from long shot, and as Lucy begins to tell more and more, the camera gets closer and closer and comes to a close up and pause when Lucy finally whispers the words. The camera acts as if Austen herself is gossiping about the secret engagement. In the same way, the spectators participate in the story as they get identified with the camera which is moving to a short shot as curiosity arises.

In *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, there are two strong women being the central of the narrative. First is Yu Shu Lien, a wuxia woman who is pictured getting tired of her 'unfeminine' occupation as a security courier. Her love is never fully manifested for ethical reasons being a warrior. The second is Jen, a daughter of a prominent politician, who fights for her love for Lo, a very unlikely suitor in his family's eyes, and for the warrior world she is fascinated by.

However, both women are not living in one singular world. They are somehow able to travel through spaces; one where their bodies are on cultural and social grounds, and the other space is where their bodies are transgressing the spatial limit and defying gravity. Gravity itself is an interesting spatial element. Literally speaking, it is the gravity that pulls things/bodies down to earth, but metaphorically the gravity is the power that positions them as women within the society.

The weird sisterhood of the two women finds its height in the death scene, as Shu Lien strongly stands and sends Jen to meet her lover, while she has just lost hers for the sake of the girl that decided to be her enemy. As for Jen, when she returns to Lo in Wudan mountain, she lets herself go from all the tension of her passion and love by throwing herself from the height of the mountain. It not only reflects the Tao teachings overshadowing the philosophy of the film, but also signifies Jen's full control of herself and freedom from other people's order and influence.

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon is not the exact replication of the novel, but obviously it has provided a very intricate material for romance, tragedy, comedy and martial art put together. Ended in a classical tragic romance, the film's narrative finds its closure establishing the women as their own mistresses.

***Sense and Sensibility* : Romance and Identification**

As I mentioned above, in the introduction to *Romance Revisited*, Pearce and Stacey suggest that one of the ingredients for romance is "the heroine's loss of social identity" (1995:

16). This is actually the trajectory of *Sense and Sensibility*. Denied their rights as, “Houses go from father to son, dearest - not from father to daughters. It’s the law“, the three Misses Dashwoods and their mother are thrown out from their mansion in Norland to finally settle in a cottage in Barton, a courtesy of their mother’s cousin. As romance blooms between Elinor-Edward and Marianne-Willoughby, their new class becomes the barrier. It becomes one necessary element of the narrative to heighten the emotion and to provide a kind of enigma of the progress of romance from which the spectators derive their pleasure.

The spectators are watching the romance not in a mere passive way of consuming the couplings or the feasibility of the couplings that the film presents, but also actively questions and resists the presentation of romance. Spectators might easily identify with Mrs. Dashwood when she finds out that Willoughby is not a “good gentleman“. She tells Elinor, “there is something about his eyes that I didn’t like“. The spectators, whom I think fall in love with Willoughby when he courts Marianne so passionately might actually say something similar too. In the process of identifying with the romance subjects, the spectators are both identifying themselves with the characters but at the same time remain in a distance. The “love conquers all“ dream is expected, but knowing from experience, that love is not always honest and happy-ending, spectators are ready for the possibility of the plight of this passionate man.

Another important element of romance is the tragic situation. The death of the father ensures the trajectory of social identity loss. Walks are important tragic elements in Marianne’s romance narrative. There are two similar walks taken by Marianne. Each is taken when it is on the verge of raining, foreshadowing a future tragedy and love. However, having much ‘sensitivity’, she is unstoppable even when her two sisters warn her. Marianne always says “It’s not going to rain“. Perceptively, both Margaret, in the first walk, and Elinor, in the second, warn her of the rain in the same way, “You always say that, it always does“. The film shows that Marianne’s ‘sensitivity’ is not sensible enough to foresee danger coming with the pleasure of love, but at the same time the spectators are not invited to blame Marianne for her passion. The first walk introduces her to Willoughby and leads her to severe broken heart. The second walk causes her fatal illness and marks the end of her old romance. The illness actually gives her space and time for reflection and to ‘see’ things more with ‘sense’.

However, more importantly, the second walk provides a tragedy not only to give spectators evidence of Colonel Brandon’s impeccable love for Marianne, but also for her to learn of his love. Marianne’s tragic illness brings the ‘sense’ Elinor to let herself be emotional and frail and even passionate enough to confess her love for her sister. It is a very strong scene when Elinor kisses Marianne’s hand begging her not to die with the camera following her face in a close up. This scene does not exist in the novel, but it is one feminist point

Thompson has been able to bring to surface and it helps illuminate Austen's own tone of sisterly love in the novel. "If Jane Austen was unable to give a realistic portrayal of love between a man and a woman – perhaps she did not believe in it – she certainly believed in family love and love between sisters".² The film shows passionate sisterhood that makes transformation possible.

Romance itself is questioned and satirized in the film. The image of Willoughby coming down in a white horse literally embodies the prince charming in fairy tales. His daring attempt to save Marianne and his later betrayal act satirize romanticism. Spectators are watching this closely. When the attachment between the rescuer and the patient grows stronger, the spectators, as well as Elinor, Margaret and their mother, believe that the two have an "understanding" only to learn from Marianne much later that Willoughby never really proposes to her. The attachment is according to Marianne 'everyday implied but never declared'. At this point the spectators identify more with Elinor who feels betrayed and at the same time upset with how Marianne reacts. Elinor articulates it to Colonel Brandon, 'What pains me most is how hard she tries to justify Willoughby'. Elinor is resisting Marianne's 'idealisation' of her lover. Thus, the spectator is likewise invited to ponder on the feminist question of the 'overvaluation of the love objects' (Pearce & Stacey, 1995: 29).

The fatal illness has shifted not only Marianne's love to Colonel Brandon but also transforms her into a person with more 'sense'. As she gets well she manages to say thank you to Colonel Brandon. The shift of affection is rewarded well by Colonel Brandon buying her a piano. Her power is his love for her, his power is his class and money. Nevertheless, the spectators are seduced to believe that Marianne falls for him because of his enduring love for her, which signifies her power, and not his money, which is his power.

Elinor, though she is supposedly the central character in the film, does not undergo a very turbulent romance narrative, though hers is not less significant. Her twisted situation with Lucy Steele is satirical. The motive in her plot is mostly that of the inheritance law. Edward's deprivation of his inheritance resembles Elinor's situation and it is important in the narrative to provide Elinor a role in Edward's life. The film has pictured man in the character of Robert Ferrars as a target of fortune hunter and at the same time man can be bought for money, as in the case of Willoughby. Women are therefore not the only victims of the discriminative law, in the case of Lucy Steele and Fanny Ferrars, women can be complicit in the scheme as well.

² Stone, Alan A., *Sense and Sensibility*, <http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR2.1.1/stone.html> (29 December 2001)

The juxtaposition of the two sisters and their relationships serves well to contradict the Kantian 'Reason and Passion'.³ The film shows that too much of one without another can be disastrous. The blend of it as finally represented in the Marianne's decision to marry (to love?) Colonel Brandon and the emotional expression of Elinor when she learns that Edward is not married symbolize the reconciliation of the two characters. Wittingly, Pearce writes "Falling in love requires a careful use of map and compass" (1998:110). Feminine virtue should then be somewhere in the middle between 'sense' and 'sensitivity'.

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon:

Chronotopic look at the Romantic Martial Art Genre

Reading *Romance Revisited*, I feel intrigued to explore analysis of romance in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* in terms of what Pearce and Stacey explain as the "transformative promise [that] holds out possibilities of change, progress and escape... [F]igured through both a literal and a metaphorical journey (to a new self)" (1999: 18). *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* is a film that according to Ang Lee is "a kind of dream China, a China that probably never existed". The spectators might relate to the film as something far from their own reality, not only because the setting is the past that never occurred, but also because it covers a large area of land emphasizing more what Pearce argues as "exotic location of romantic fiction" signifying "not as mere conventions, but as symbols of (another) life redolent with freedom, excitement and the possibility of change" (Pearce, 1998: 101).

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, being in an isolated time and space, is open to possibilities of transformation through the image of romance as well as through the characterization of the lovers. The transformative potential embodied in the imagined/imaginary world interests me in the sense that it makes romance a journey more significant than just searching for a lover, but more importantly finding ourselves.

However, more importantly for the spectators to feel a sense of being in a remote time/space is that the characters in the two films I am discussing here undergo continuous re/dis/location the way in which every single journey is significant for the heroines "to be able to reflect (critically) upon the narrowness of her former life/circumstances, and to prepare for a deconstruction/reconstruction of the Self..." (Pearce, 1998:105). The characters/lovers in the films can truly represent transformation the spectators want to see but may not be able to do.

³ Stone, Alan A., *Sense and Sensibility*, <http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR2.1.1/stone.html> (29 December 2001)

As I have imparted above, in this part I have to limit myself to discuss *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* as I find the analysis of the film can be more interesting by using the chronotopic approach. *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, as Ang Lee asserts using spatial term, is a story of two layers, “The title describes the structure of the film. The first part... is about society – it takes place in the world of law, duty and ceremony. The second part takes us beneath the surface, into the world of individuals and their relationships“ (A Conversation). Just like *Sense and Sensibility*, the romance narrative of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* juxtaposes two love stories, namely: the honorable, ethical, platonic romance of Yu Shu Lien - Li Mu Bai and the free, passionate, wild romance of Jen the dragon - Lo the tiger. Thus the romance, according to Lee, represents the tension of love, desire, honor and duty and it is elucidated by the narrative movement, which cannot easily be specified in gendered binary opposition of mobile/immobile as Lauretis argues, cited in Pidduck (1997:180). Indeed, the main characters are all defying fixed space, even gravity.

The binary mobile/immobile is contradicted in the image of the seemingly ‘feminine’ heroines. Shu Lien, who is reticent and expresses herself to her love more in facial expression and gesture than physical closeness, is actually a warrior herself and a businesswoman who travels extensively. Drawing from Young (1990), I find it interesting that her reticent and limited physical movement as a ‘woman’ is contrasted to her outreaching physical movement as a warrior and fighter.

The same interesting contrast can be found as well in Jen. The dragon who seems to be domesticated in a home of aristocratic family is a secret disciple of Wudan’s book. Thus she too lives in two different worlds requiring different bodies. As an aristocratic woman, Jen’s spatial movement is limited not only because of her delicate and elaborate clothes, but also because of the assigned cultural space her body as a woman is permitted. Take for instance, in the scene where she is writing, she only moves her hand just enough for her to draw, while her other parts of the body is motionless. Her ‘invalidity’ is then contrasted as she is shown to sneak, fly, run and fight and jump from one roof to another or fight at tree tops. The first encounter of the two women warriors shows not only the mobility of the women, but the other world they occupy outside their containment of being ‘women’.

Thus, the Other world that the women of the film travel back and forth enables the construction of “a territory in which alternative sexuality/gender relations can be explored“ (Pearce & Stacey, 1995: 34). The binary private/public blurs in the film as the image of home is never complete. The women neither really occupy nor make homes. Places are more pictured as transit point where journey continues as the two women are always in the process of being in love and becoming. The most comfortable home presented in the film is that made by Lo, and even that only home where love is nurtured and physically manifested has

to be left. Jen's departure from the 'temporary' home is required so that she can evaluate if she really wants to live with Lo and if such is the life she wants. Her return to the world prior to her 'ravissement' is the return to old world where she is about to continue living in the private sphere being married to an aristocratic man. Lo, whom she meets in one of her journeys and make her transit in his home, but then request her to continue her journey to the containment of 'womanhood', pleads her to go back to the point of ravissement. He seems to take that time does not exist between the point when Jen leaves him and the point when he comes to see her again. Jen refuses him because she is not the same woman now. She has traveled to another world, the world of warrior. She has been seduced by it and actually falls in love with the new world, symbolized by the Green Destiny. Love does not blind her. In the end, echoing the Tao teaching Li Mu Bai tells Shu Lien, "There is no eternity to the things we can touch. There is nothing we can hold onto in this world. Only by letting go can we finally possess what is real", Jen lets go everything. She lets her body fall, her hands open wide and her face high. In the end, she is not consumed by her new passion for the world of the warrior and certainly not in the containment of marriage, not even in a relationship with the man she loves.

The world of Shu Lien is the world where honor comes first and physical liberty is only gained when she is a warrior. As her relationship with Li is never manifested in any physical passion, I would argue that her interest in and sympathy for Jen and Lo's relationship is partly her embodiment of physical desire in her own relationship. Thus, she gives path to the young couple, as they are their own "dragon and tiger"⁴. Her journey from her 'office' to Beijing to the house in the wood and to the final terminal, the kiln where Li Mu Bai dies, brings the progress of her own romance. Shu Lien has to wait for Li Mu Bai to say the words, and as Michelle Yeoh comments on her role, spectators are expected to understand the depth of their love not through verbal expression, but through every facial expression, every gesture. "if what you see in the film, you don't feel, you will not understand, because nothing's explained in that way"⁵. And as Shu Lien herself who keeps waiting for the confirmation, so do the spectators. Tragically, only at the tip of death does Li Mu Bai admits his feelings completely, and only at the tip of death that the two are able to experience physical closeness.

The repression lies not only in whom to love, as in the case of Jen, but also in the case of how to love. Within 'Asian' culture, a woman is not supposed to express her feelings. Thus she can only assume that he loves her and she has to watch out for his signals and wait for

⁴ according to Lee, it's a Chinese expression to remind us of 'the mysteries that lie below the surface of society and our everyday life'

⁵ interview with Michelle Yeoh in the Special Featurette

the final declaration. Being an Asian myself I understand the situation. At the same time, being not in the time/space given, I resist the notion precisely by putting the romance in 'other' space and time. *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* shows that time again betrays love, but lovers deny that. Li admits that he has been holding his feelings for her too long. Ironically, what he can offer her is to love her in a different space, "I'll drift next to you everyday as a ghost just to be with you. Even if I was banished to the darkest place, my love will keep me from being a lonely spirit". The spectators cannot help thinking, if not regretting, 'if only he had admitted his feelings earlier, ...', and possibilities spring up. Shu Lien stands up and begins to clear the mess.

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to explore the argument suggested by de Lauretis that 'feminist cinema addresses its spectators as woman'. Using the approach of romance narrative, I have discussed that both *Sense and Sensibility* and *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* can be categorized as feminist cinema as they picture women characters not as submissive recipient of the condition imposed on them, but as characters actively moulds their existence.

In addition, the two films provide ample space for women's identification as female, feminine, or feminist as well as female social audience. The spectators not only see the romance presented in the film as a mere progress romance, but also as a cultural and social construction where romance is not an existence by itself.

I would like to note that the 'power' of romance has not been in my interest before, and writing this essay is a special journey for myself too. As I was watching all those movies and writing this, I was experiencing my own process of becoming. It took me to travel back and forth the places I have visited before, the places I have never visited but have always wanted to. I have learnt that love is not so natural after all.

Filmography

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A Question of Silence, Dir. Marleen Gorris, 1983, 96 minutes

Boys Don't Cry, Kimberley Peirce, 1999, 116 minutes

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, Dir. Ang Lee, 2000, 119 minutes

Sense and Sensibility, Dir. Ang Lee, 1995, 135 minutes

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