

**Religion in Cinema:
Buddhism and Taoism in Popular Films through a
Jungian Lens**

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University
in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this long journey of completing my thesis, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisors- Professor Hao Xiaoming and Associate Professor Stephen Teo, for believing in me, tirelessly guiding me, and showering me with all the kindness and patience despite the difficult and frustrating moments that I have caused them in the process.

From the moment I undertook my part-time study in Master of Mass Communication in 2005 and later my full-time Ph.D study at NTU, I was blessed to have had many professors who guided me and provided me with opportunities for learning along the way. Among them are Professor Eddie Kuo who has motivated me, guided me, and developed my interest in the field of research, and Dr. Alfred Choi who has shown me the sophistication and joy of working with diverse research methodologies through various research projects.

While my heart is overflowing with joy as I bring closure to this research, I would like to give all glory to Lord Jesus Christ for His strength and grace in the accomplishment of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, Buddhist and Taoist approaches to the development of “Self” and its relation to the human being’s conscious and unconscious minds, and the Jungian viewpoint of Self form an interdisciplinary framework to study the images and ideologies of these religions in popular films. Contents from both religions that are portrayed in popular films are discussed; symbols and philosophy from Buddhism and Taoism in relation to the Jungian perspective of archetypes and universal symbols within popular films are examined.

This research is drawn from the fields of psychology and religion, and as such, contributes to an interdisciplinary outreach of research in film studies. It examines Buddhism and Taoism in a selection of five popular films, two of which are produced by Hollywood, while the remaining three are Chinese-language productions. Textual analysis through a Jungian perspective is carried out on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) directed by Ang Lee, *The Karate Kid* (2010) directed by Harald Zwart, *The Promise* (2005) directed by Chen Kaige, *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, and *Hero* (2002) directed by Zhang Yimou. The thesis concludes that the cinema allows viewers to go through a journey of individuation similar to that undergone by the protagonists of the films. While traveling together with the characters in the space of the cinema, viewers are presented with ideologies and symbols from Buddhism and Taoism that have the potential to bring about transformations in their own minds. The cinema thus allows viewers to look at the characters on the screen with conscious identification or even judgment, and at the same time, allows the unconscious aspect to go through a journey of individuation together with the characters presented.

PREFACE

When I first started my Ph.D study, I embarked on the journey to investigate this topic: Buddhism and Taoism in Films. At the initial stage of the journey, I was a Buddhist. In the process of developing my thesis, I became a Christian, and that prompted me to discover more about the topic but from both Buddhist and Christian perspectives. In the midst of my research, I found linkages between the topic of Buddhism and Taoism in films from the perspective of Jungian psychology. While I am a Buddhist turned Christian, Carl Gustav Jung was a Christian who later made discoveries and developed extensive writings on the relationships between Christianity, Eastern religions and his work on analytical psychology. Intrigued by the analysis he provided on Eastern religions in his study of mind and images, I seek to present my discussions of films from a religious angle, seeing them through the lens professionally crafted by Jung, to argue and entrench the notions of religion and spirituality in the cinema.

Religion can be explained as a set of symbols that acts to “establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivation in men” by formulating conceptions of “order of existence” and clothing these conceptions with “an aura of factuality” so that “the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz, 1973, p.90). Through “myths, symbols, doctrines, sacred times and places and ethical components of religions”, adherents are presented with alternate worlds and prescriptions for a better life or with tools to re-view the world they are in (Plate, 2008, p.2). Campbell (2003) notes that there is a difference between the “spiritual” and the “ethical”, and thus he believes that while we do have practical ethics that guide us, we are lacking spiritual principles which are linked to a mystical realm (p.102). In my view, religion provides a transcendental spirituality that is beyond the guiding principles of morality or ethics. In addition, I see religious practice as a process to connect one to the unconscious mind, by which one is able to hear the inner voice that could link one to God, wisdom or liberation.

Here I would include my experiences, of being both a Buddhist in the past and a Christian at present, to illuminate my view on religion and the unconscious mind. I had been an ardent practitioner of Taoism and Buddhism of various traditions since

young until 2009¹. I was blessed to be able to fuse my pursuit of spiritual attainment and my arts practice as a theatre director and performer since 1995. I injected Buddhist and Taoist philosophy and symbols in my stage performances, and I used meditation, Tai Chi and chanting for my performers' training. One of my theatrical performances *Mandala* which is based on Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and Jung's notion of Mandala, travelled to Poland, France and South Korea after its premiere in Singapore. Throughout my career as an arts practitioner, I was able to attend numerous intensive Buddhist teachings and retreats that lasted from three days to a month in Singapore, Nepal and India. I had a Tibetan Buddhist master whom I met at least once a year in either Singapore or Nepal between 1999 and 2008 for spiritual guidance. The master influenced not just my well-being but my perspective toward life too.

I attribute my conversion to Christianity in 2009 as a work of the unconscious. The sudden conversion shocked many close friends and family members. A few weeks before this, I was attending a theatre camp with my performers. In the camp, I spoke of Christianity with the tone of a pastor in my sleep for two days in a row. As a committed Buddhist practitioner who had never thought about entering into other sects and religions, this was unbelievable. However, my friend, a fellow Buddhist who

¹ In terms of academic education for Buddhist Studies, I have a GCE "O" level credit in Buddhist Studies and have taken up a Pali language course and audited modules under the Degree in Buddhist Studies program (offered by the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka) at Mangala Vihara Temple in Singapore in 1997. In addition, I was the Publications Secretary of the National University of Singapore Buddhist Society (NUSBS) and the editor of the annual Buddhist magazine and the monthly Buddhist digest published by NUSBS from 1992 to 1994. I have also published a section of my academic research on Tibetan Buddhism and the Internet as a book chapter "Religious Ecology on the Internet: A Case Study of Tibetan Buddhism" in *Mediating Piety: Technology and Religion in Contemporary Asia* (2009) published by Brill Academic Publishers. In terms of actual practice of the religion, I have attended more than ten retreats (five to thirty days per retreat) in which most of them require strict observation of precepts and silence, as well as full-time meditation and Zen courses (seven to ten days) at various monasteries and centers in Singapore, Nepal and India from 1995 to 2008. These monasteries and centers include Kopan Monastery (Nepal), Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre (India), Amitabha Buddhist Centre (Singapore) and Kwan Yin Chan Lin (Singapore).

Though I have not received systemic education and training in Taoism, I was born in a Chinese family with strong beliefs in Taoism as a folk religion. I followed my family for Taoist prayers, rituals and pilgrimage in China when I was a teenager. In addition, I have participated in Taoist festive celebrations and Taoist rituals related to formal ceremonies and calendrical rites such as weddings, funerals, ancestral rituals, rituals for house moving, rituals of thanksgiving for the Jade Emperor. In terms of theoretical knowledge of Taoism, I have studied both the English and Chinese volumes of *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi, texts by Zhuangzi and the *I-Ching*, and learned the physical and philosophical aspect of *Tai Chi* since 1995. I have also applied the philosophy of Taoism into the making of theatrical performances from 1995 to 2009.

shared the same room with me told me that I spoke at length in favor of Christianity with an authoritative tone in my sleep for two nights. She elaborated that I made comparisons between Buddhism and Christianity, and made arguments in favor of Christianity. The mystic unconscious mind was at work, in my view. While in a logical frame of mind, I would never speak in favor of Christianity at length. However, it seemed that something beyond the conscious realm I was in “spoke” to me in the form of dreams. I was curious and attended one of the megachurches in Singapore a few weeks later. Of course, in a multiracial society like Singapore, that was not the first time I attended a church. I have been following my friends to churches since I was a teen as a form of social event. However, during the first church service I had after the dreams, I accepted Christ immediately, without a shadow of doubt. The following week, before I reached the church for service, uncontrollable tears flowed throughout the day from morning until the night though I was out with a friend. For a vain person who puts on make-up when I am out, it was not logical for me to shed tears and ruin the make-up that I had on! But I cried as I simply felt the presence of God. Non-Christians would think of me as crazy if I were to say that I had a conversation with God. However, among the Christians, this form of communication with God on the unconscious level is not uncommon.

Thus to me, religions enable one to attain inner realization, be it through the grace of God or through one’s systematic work on Self. Both cases involve one’s understanding of the unconscious. This unconscious, though emphasized in Buddhism and Taoism, can also be found in Christianity. For instance, speaking in tongues and listening to messages from God in the form of dreams and symbolic events are acts derived from the unconscious aspect of being. From Goodman’s anthropological investigation of speaking in tongues, we know that as people of different cultures speak in tongues, they speak in an accent and intonation pattern that are not related to their native tongue (Goodman, 1990, p.12). I view speaking in tongues as an example of the collective unconscious mentioned by Jung. To Jung (2008), qualities of the unconscious mind include the “dream manifestations, its ancestral world of thought-forms, and its timelessness” (p.130).

Various explanations on universal spiritual experience are suggested from the varied propositions by different scholars from the fields of Psychology, Religion, and Anthropology. What is common in these various propositions is the transcendental experience described by these scholars. It is an out-of-ordinary experience beyond the

day-to-day and mundane life. I would like to add that in the conscious realm of religion, there are also certain basic moral values that are shared by all religions. For instance, the value of attaining peace and the five precepts of Buddhism (refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicating drinks and drugs) are regarded as positive values that are upheld by most cultures and religions.

My first immense experience of a film that lifted me from a mundane realm to a religious transcendental experience in cinema was the viewing of *Baraka* (1992), a non-narrative documentary film that portrays images from urban and rural lives of different cultures. In the film, religious images such as the Wailing Wall, Sufi whirling, Zen monks in meditation and Balinese Kecak ritual are intertwined with images from daily life. Though there was no word or linear line of story delivered through the film, the symbols of world religions portrayed were able to move me in a way that I was drawn to a timeless world, and started to reflect about the existence of being. After this experience, many other films including popular films with religious symbols or messages continue to elevate me to a spiritual realm in cinema. I was inspired to discover more about how religious elements in cinema aid in providing a spiritual transcendental experience, which is beyond that of entertaining and informing audiences.

While most film scholars would approach film analysis from more traditional disciplines such as semiotics, sociology, philosophy and history, I have decided to approach film studies from the critical perspective of religion. I deem it useful to examine the spiritual and religious aspects of cinematic experience. This is far from the conventional method of appreciating films. In adopting such a perspective for this thesis, I hope therefore to make an original contribution to research methods and analysis of films. It is my hope that my contribution can be used as a model for research into religion and its association with film, particularly relating to Buddhism and Taoism. My approach relies on Jungian psychology and its awareness and evocations of Buddhist and Taoist religious viewpoints. Due to my own understanding of and my own previous associations with Buddhism and Taoism, I have therefore chosen to base my readings of the films selected for analysis on these two religions. This is a conscious choice from both practical and theoretical standpoints, as I will be using the framework of Jungian psychological concepts of archetypes, individuation and universal symbols to form a systematic method of analysis of the religious elements in the films that I will analyze in the following chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Popular movies are cultural standard-bearers; they carry with them the values, beliefs, dreams, desires, longings, and needs of a society and, thus, can function mythologically.
— Martin and Ostwalt (1995)

Examining Buddhism and Taoism in Films

Films resonate with the audience and according to Singh (2009), especially popular films give pleasure to audiences that view them (p.13). However, Singh (2009) points out that this pleasurable act of viewing does not fully depend on meanings generated by the films but is also affected by the affective element in the act and experience of viewing (p.99). Martin and Ostwalt (1995) describe popular films as “cultural standard-bearers” that carry with them the “values, beliefs, dreams, desires, longings, and needs of a society and, thus, can function mythologically” (p.66). Ideologies and images from Buddhism and Taoism can be seen in popular films. They do not just exist in Asian films, but in Western films too. Thus, what are the pleasurable elements that Buddhism and Taoism can provide to viewers? What are the attractions of these two religions and why are they being portrayed in popular films?

Religion can be explained as a set of symbols that acts to “establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivation in men” by formulating conceptions of “order of existence” and clothing these conceptions with “an aura of factuality” so that “the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz, 1973, p.90). Through “myths, symbols, doctrines, sacred times and places and ethical components of religions”, adherents are presented with alternate worlds with prescriptions for a better life or with tools to re-view the world they are in (Plate, 2008, p.2). According to Berger (1967), religion provides the “farthest reach of man’s self-externalisation, of his infusion of reality with his own meanings” (p.5).

Ritual, an essential element present in all religions, is used widely as a synonym for religion and the sacred (Grimes, 2002, p.228). Ritual is defined by Combs-Schilling (1989) as “a circumscribed, out of the ordinary, multiple media event — recognized by insiders and outsiders as distinctively beyond the mundane — in which prescribed words and actions are repeated and crucial dilemmas of humanity are evoked and brought to systematic resolution” (p.29).

In Buddhism, chanting, prayers and meditation techniques are some of the rituals for spiritual practice, with each sect of Buddhism emphasizing different practices (Lyll, 2001). In the practices of Tibetan Buddhism, there are unique characteristics of lineage transmission, advanced forms of tantric techniques that are usually done in secrecy, initiations, blessings, meditation, transmissions of teachings, as well as the transmission of “energy” through prayers. In Taoist practices, Taoist priests play an important role as a bridge between the communities and the whole cosmos, and the giving of offerings such as paper and rice in gratitude to the Ultimate Being is a major practice in Taoist rituals (Smart, 1993, p.203). Priests are also involved in performing rites such as healing rites, rites of passage and rites that help individuals to avoid entering into the realm of hell (Smart, 1993, p.203).

To Clifford Geertz, it is in ritual that the world that is imagined is fused with one’s actual experiences of the realities (Geertz, 1973). Bobby Alexander, an anthropologist of religion, defines ritual as “a performance, planned or improvised, that effects a transition from everyday life to an alternative context within which the everyday is transformed”, and he points out that traditional rituals “open up ordinary life to ultimate reality or some transcendent being or force in order to tap its transformative power” (Alexander, 1997, p.139). Rituals, thus, can serve as a tool to link the world of “reality” (how things are) with “ideality” (how things ought to be) (Lyden 2003, p.101). Rituals, according to Emile Durkheim, arouse a passionate intensity which he called the feeling of “effervescence” in which individuals experience something that is larger than themselves (Durkheim, 1976). For both Jung and Durkheim, ritual is experiential and it is the personal way to connect to “the wider collective through the luminous concept of the ‘numinous’” (Otto, 1958, p.5-11).

Despite the variations in theoretical definitions of ritual, “what is common across them is a stress on the physicality of performance, of bodies engaging in symbolic actions, using formalized speech, music and movement” (Plate, 2008, p.69). The common element shared by all religious rituals is experiencing divine or spiritual energies. Religious rituals usually consist of people performing actions of chanting, singing or speaking the same sentences simultaneously (Kinney, 1995). In Richard Schechner’s *The Future of Ritual*, he stated that:

Ethologists and psychologists have shown that the “oceanic feeling” of belonging, ecstasy, and total participation that many experience when ritualizing works by means of repetitive rhythms, sounds, and tones which effectively “tune” to each other the left and right hemispheres of the cerebral cortex (Schechner, 1995, p.20).

Ritual has the potential of creating a form of spiritual experience that could be known as “oceanic experience” termed by Freud, the “*unio mystica*” termed by Christians or “*satori*” termed by Zen practitioners (Turner, 1983):

The rhythmic activity of ritual, aided by sonic, visual, photic, and other kinds of “driving,” may lead in time to simultaneous maximal stimulation of both systems, causing ritual participants to experience what the authors [d’Aquili *et al.*] call “positive, ineffable affect.” They also use Freud’s term “oceanic experience,” as well as “yogic ecstasy,” also the Christian term *unio mystica*, an experience of the union of those cognitively discriminated opposites typically generated by binary, digital left-hemispherical ratiocination. I suppose we might also use the Zen term *satori* (the integrating flash), and one could add the Quakers’ “inner light,” Thomas Merton’s “transcendental consciousness,” and the yogic *Samadhi*. (p.230)

The experience of spiritual transcendental state in ritual may be created in cinema, where film viewing serves as a ritual for audiences to go through a supra-mundane experience and embark on a journey of reflections and transformation within the enclosed space.

In both Buddhism and Taoism, humans are said to be able to attain ultimate bliss through the systematic work on oneself. One needs to get in touch with one’s ultimate self, which consists of both the conscious and unconscious minds, in order to achieve enlightenment. The core view in this research that I am expounding is that the key universal quality Buddhism and Taoism emphasize on is the work on the Self, which affects one’s views towards living and dying. This is presented in the cinema as a journey of self-discovery for the audience. As the audiences become involved in the journey of understanding oneself and the world around, the experience can be engaging and satisfying. However, is the connection with one’s self, including the unconscious state of mind an alien concept in the West? It might not be so, if we were to take a look at psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Jung’s interpretation of Self. In the study of psychology, the concept of the work on Self to achieve happiness in human beings has the potential in reaching out to people of different cultures. My research will examine the symbols and philosophies in popular films through a Jungian lens to examine why Buddhism and Taoism can appeal to an international audience despite the differences in cultures.

Buddhist and Taoist philosophies and symbols depicting journeys of self-discovery can be identified in popular films. In both religions, humans are said to be able to attain the ultimate bliss or enlightenment through systematic work on oneself. Attaining enlightenment is explained as achieving the wholeness of Self in Jungian psychology. The Buddhist and Taoist concepts of formless Tao, emptiness, *yin-yang*, the middle path, meditation and stillness, poisons of the inner soul, attachment and non-attachment, that are linked to the work on Self to attain enlightenment, are identified in the films selected for analysis. The parallelism of these Buddhist/Taoist concepts and the Jungian theory of Self will be elaborated on in this thesis.

Jungian psychology is described by Hockley (2001, p.1) as “a psychology of images”. I find it relevant to use Jungian psychology for the study of films which essentially comprises a series of moving images. While “Jungian” as a term is often used to describe scholars and psychologists who are influenced by doctrines of Jung, it can also refer to a follower of Jung who used to study directly with him. Samuels mentioned in an interview with Kulkarni (2003) that it is impossible for scholars and analysts to do everything in Jung’s own terms, as they are likely to be inspired by other researchers even though they base their work on “Jungian tradition”. Samuels (1999) uses the term “post-Jungian” to indicate “both connectedness to Jung and distance from him” (p.19), in which Jung’s works are examined critically (p.19). In this context, Jungian scholars include Alder, F. Fordham, M. Fordham, Harding, Hannah, Jacobi, R. Jung, Neymann, von Franz, Wickes and Wilhelm (Samuels, 1999, p.2). Post-Jungian scholars include I. Alister, D. Fredericksen, L. Lennihan, C. Hauke, G. Singh and A. Samuels. Discussions in this thesis draw from writings by both Jungian and post-Jungian scholars. Though Jungian psychology was developed in the early 20th century, Jungian and post-Jungian film analyses were developed only in the recent decades. Hauke and Hockley (2011) observe that Jungian film theory is still at a nascent stage and it is meaningful and exciting for academics to continue with the exploration in this field (p.1). Singh (2009) expresses that he is interested in a post-Jungian approach in film analysis as the Jungian tradition is a better vehicle to understand the emotions and empathy in the experience of film (p.12). While pointing to theories derived by Jung and the psychological methods based on his doctrines, I use the term “Jungian” to refer to the totality of Jung’s thought and the scholarship that has emerged around him and his philosophy.

Jung (1970) considers that the cinema has the potential to allow viewers to experience different emotions and fantasies without the danger of exposing themselves to these experiences in real life:

The cinema, like the detective story, makes it possible to experience without danger all the excitement, passion and desirousness which must be repressed in a humanitarian ordering of life. (p.93)

Plate (2007) states that films and religions are alike, as they can convey to viewers a world that they want to live in or a world that they want to avoid by presenting “other realities that stimulate moods and motivations” for viewers to imagine a world outside their own social status (p.434). Bird (1982) views art and film as filling the void or making sense of it and they are powerful agents for transcendence because they do not only stimulate thoughts, but draw from the viewers the depth of a feeling response (p.21). Hauke and Alister (2002) similarly share Jung’s view and conclude that while the intense experiences that one encounters in daily life could be painful or unbearable, popular cinema can provide a space to let viewers encounter these experiences in a more accessible and bearable fashion (p.2). Plate (2008) emphasizes that films can “utilize props, costumes and camera angles to create the powerful themes, ideas, narratives and symbols of myths” (p.79).

Bird (2007) believes that films can “enable an exploration of the sacred” (p.393) and have the capability to become “a disclosure of the transcendent or sacred precisely through the material of reality” (p.391). Neil Hurley (1970) links film to the delivery of a transcendental state in cinema:

I think that motion pictures and theology work with transcendence... While seeking recreation, diversion, and understanding, movie watchers are often exercising transcendental faculties of insight, criticism, and wonder that come remarkably close to what religion has traditionally termed faith, prophecy, and reverence. (p.x)

Media can be used to create a spiritual transcendental world for the viewers. Religious studies have always been concerned with the transcendental experience that a film can bring to the audience (Plate, 1998). Schrader (1972) explains that transcendental style in filmmaking can be explained as a style which is used “to express the Holy” (p.3). Though the transcendental style of film does not necessarily have to be related to religions, I feel it useful to discuss about transcendental style in films as it portrays a form of “spiritual universality” which could be similar to Jung’s “universal unconscious”. Directors that have used this style to create their films include Yasujiro

Ozu of Japan, Robert Bresson of France, and Carl Dreyer of Denmark (Schrader, 1972, p.3). Schrader (1972) explains that the transcendental style can bring a viewer to experience a calm region within:

Transcendental style can take a viewer through the trials of experience to the expression of the Transcendent; it can return him to experience from a calm region untouched by the vagaries of emotion or personality. Transcendental style can bring us nearer to that silence, that invisible image, in which the parallel lines of religion and art meet and interpenetrate. (p.169)

To transcendental artists, rationalism or conventional interpretations of reality dilute the transcendental (Schrader, 1972, p.11). Similarly, in Buddhism and Jungian psychology, spirituality or the totality of existence cannot be experienced solely from the conscious or rational realm. Maritain (1965) describes two types of means that should be applied to the creation of transcendental art (p.219). The first is the abundant means which “demand a certain measure of tangible success” (Maritain, 1965, p.219). The second is the sparse means, “the proper means of the spirit” and “less visible”, which bring about the elevation of the spirit (Maritain, 1965, p.219). Schrader (1972) describes the abundant means as “sensual, emotional, humanistic, individualistic” and the sparse means as “cold, formalistic, hieratic” (p.155). While the abundant means are characterized by “soft lines, realistic portraiture, three-dimensionality, experimentation”, sparse means are characterized by “abstraction, stylized portraiture, two-dimensionality, rigidity” (Schrader, 1972, p.155). To Maritain (1965), both means “are necessary but not equal”, and that “the sparse means are higher than the abundant means” and “the sparse means are means approaching an end” (p.219). Schrader (1972) elaborates that a successful transcendental style will eventually be “so bare, so sparse that an abundant technique will have no context to relate to” towards the later point of the film (p.161).

Many popular films do largely engage the abundant means with their use of spectacular visuals, however, it would be too generalized to say that they are incapable of providing a transcendental world for the viewers. I see transcendental style as one of the ways that directors can use to create the spiritual realm in films, though there are certain similarities in the choices put into film production. For instance, the use of stylistic expressions, abstraction and the elimination of the “conventional interpretations of reality” (Schrader, 1972, p.11).

Plate (2008) argues that films can show “how myths operate beyond their existence as verbal stories” and that myths allow directors to retell the stories in ever-

new forms as they are always seen to be fascinating, with a world of gods, goddesses and heroes (p.20). Some of the prominent myths that tell us who we should be include the hero myths, and stories about individuals who go on extensive journeys and battle back to attain triumph after a defeat (Plate, 2008, p.22). He believes that myths have staying power and that watching mythological stories creates a primal response in the viewers who “throughout the history of the world have responded to such mythological structures by creating performative rituals that re-enact the old stories and make them new again in the present age” (Plate, 2008, p.16). Hockley (2007) explains that Jung seems to view cinema as having the ability to develop a visual and symbolic language that could revitalize ancient myths for contemporary times (p.23). To Jung (1972), mythological motifs or primordial images formed the collective unconscious shared among people of different cultures (p.152). Mythological figures in Buddhism include the Buddha and Bodhisattvas depicted in scriptures and mythological images in Taoism include the celestial beings like the Jade Emperor, Xi Wangmu and the Furnace Prince of Zaojun. Some of the Buddhist and Taoist myths can be found in folk tales and literary works such as *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng’en, *Jataka* tales which tell the stories of the previous lives of the Buddha, *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi and writings by Zhuangzi. Campbell (2001) observes that the metaphoric vigor of symbols from that of mythology and rituals deliver more than just an intellectual perspective, but “provide a sense of actual participation in a realization of transcendence” (p.6). Mythology, in his view, also has the ability to “awake and maintain in the person an experience of awe, humility, and respect in recognition of that ultimate mystery that transcends every name and form” (p.13), which very much resembles the main teaching of Tao and Buddhism in that the illuminating state of being can be attained through meditation and understanding of one’s mind. Romanyshyn (1989) observes that “film portrays the mythology of an age. It is a shared myth, a cultural daydream” (p.19). Mythologies can thus be presented in the forms of new myths such as that of *Star Wars* (directed by George Lucas) and *The Matrix* (directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski) (Plate, 2008, p.23). They mix “cosmogonies and hero myths in multiple ways as they emerge with brand new mythologies that continue into the twenty-first century” (Plate, 2008, p.23).

While traditional rituals open up ordinary life to a transcendental reality with transformative power (Alexander, 1997, p.139), re-created rituals on screen also provide the potential to transport audiences between worlds (Plate, 2008, p.41). Re-created rituals include a hero’s journey (examples are *Gladiator* and *Shrek*), rites of passage

(examples are *The Lion King* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*) and pilgrimages (examples are *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Blues Brothers*). According to Grimes (2000), renewed rituals are important to keep human beings inspired. Central to the re-ritualizing process is the media of transmission. Many people turn to films for the re-ritualizing process that helps them through different stages of life, as films “offer linguistic and symbolic registers and ways of understanding the world from vital, new perspectives, touching on sensual aspects that words alone are too limited to deal with” (Plate, 2008, p.85). Similarly, Jung (1970) feels that the cinema, with its projected contents which mirror what is hidden in the unconscious, can allow the viewers to experience various emotions and fantasies, and yet without the danger of exposing themselves to these experiences in real life (p.93).

The cinema space thus provides the potential for viewers to have shared experiences at the level of collective unconscious and yet personal. Like a religious experience, viewers gather in a dark setting and simultaneously react to the images projected on the screen. A sense of transcendence and spirituality in the cinema can be created with the use of religions, myths and rituals, together with Jung’s archetypes, universal symbols and individuation journeys.

In this research, Buddhist and Taoist approaches to the development of “Self” and its relation to our conscious and unconscious minds, the presence of Buddhist and Taoist contents in popular films and the Jungian viewpoint of Self will form an interdisciplinary framework to study the images and ideologies in popular films. Discussions will be made based on concepts from Buddhism and Taoism, as well as research carried out by Carl Jung. By doing so, this research does not just draw its discussion from the fields of film and religion, but analyzes the films through the lens of Jungian psychological theory.

Works by Jung were chosen for the study of these two religions in popular films because Jung, as a psychologist, focused a huge aspect of his research on linking his findings on analytical psychology to Buddhism and other Eastern religions in the later part of his life. Jung’s works on Buddhism appeared in 1936 and his visit to India took place between 1938 and 1939 (Bishop, 1992, p.166). Jung’s research on Eastern religion included the relation between the human psyche and the images of the *mandala* and the Buddha; the use of meditation and active imagination as psychological therapy; and the use of symbols in spiritual transformation and healing (Bishop, 1992, p.167). The practice of active imagination to attain inner transformation can also be found in Tantric

meditation practiced by Buddhists and Taoists. In Tantric meditation, the practitioner identifies himself with the symbols visualized which comprised the Buddha image or symbols related to the Buddha, and is transformed into a Buddha (Moacanin, 1992, p.89). It is a metaphysical transformation as one does not turn into the historic Buddha, but seeks to attain the Buddha nature and qualities of a Buddha through Tantric meditation. This phenomenon is explained in analytical psychology as “active imagination” (Jung, 2008, p.136). Jung (2008) encourages Westerners to be grounded in their own Western history and religions, but to seek the “Eastern values from within and not without, seeking them in ourselves, in the unconscious” which many Westerners reject (p.121). He elaborates that it is “an undeniable fact that the more one concentrates on one’s unconscious contents the more they become charged with energy; they become vitalized, as if illuminated from within” (p.136).

Both Buddhist/Taoist beliefs and Jung’s psychological system agree that each individual can attain liberation or wholeness through one’s unique inner work (Moacanin, 1992, p.87). The ultimate objective of Jung’s psychology and that of Buddhist and Taoist thought is spiritual transformation. Jung describes such spiritual transformation as wholeness while Buddhism and Taoism call it enlightenment. In Taoism, one needs to attain a balance of *yin* and *yang* to become whole, and in Buddhism, it is only through the Middle Way that one can achieve enlightenment without going through the extremes of asceticism and sensual indulgence. Jung (1992c, p.66) also emphasizes on the need to attain balance in life, which can be found in the Chinese cosmic principles of *yin* and *yang*. He thinks that “the union of opposites through the middle path” is the “most fundamental item of inward experience” (Jung, 1992a, p.205). For instance, Jung believes that the Buddha is an image to represent wholeness as he comprises both the elements of purity and defilement, and that he attained enlightenment through the work on Self to achieve oneness with the divinity — known as the Universal Being (Jung, 1949, p.18).

In the study of psychology, Jung (1921) points out that the Self is made up of the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. While the understanding of the conscious mind can be done through the analysis of conscious perceptions, thoughts and memories, the understanding of the unconscious mind requires one to understand oneself from within through mythology or through the analysis of the individual so that one can open up the vital energy within (Jung, 1972, p.310). The analysis of the individual to develop

the individual personality so that “individual beings are formed and differentiated” is known as individuation (Jung, 1921, p.448). Individuation is a transformation where the personal and collective unconscious is brought into consciousness to form the whole personality (Jung, 1962, p.430). Jung explains that the personal unconscious contains materials that a person has repressed or forgotten, either deliberately or involuntarily (Jung, 1990, p.42). He explains that the collective unconscious, on the other hand, is intrinsic and universal in nature, and is identical in all humans (Jung & Hisamatsu, 1992, p.105). Jung (1972) describes the collective unconscious as a psychic experience that is innate and shared among people of different cultures:

The collective unconscious — so far as we can say anything about it at all — appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious... We can therefore study the collective unconscious in two ways, either in mythology or in the analysis of the individual. (p.152)

Suzuki (1970) states that the Self is one that “knows itself from within and never from the outside” (p.28) and it is the Self that “has touched the unconscious” (p.16) and he calls this form of unconscious, the Cosmic Unconscious. I view this metaphysical Self that Suzuki proposes as something that is similar to the collective unconscious as coined by Jung.

At the same time, it does not mean that both Buddhism and Jung neglect the cognitive function of the mind. In Buddhism, “intellectual understanding increases the power of the rational mind and this increases the power of formal meditation” (Dhargyey, 1974, p.92). Jung (1977), though emphasizing on the need to get in touch with the unconscious, also mentions that the unconscious can only be observed through conscious expressions (p.186). Thus, the conscious understanding of images and symbols is important for the understanding of the unconscious. Hockley (2001) points out that for Jung, symbols, myths, dreams, meditation and religious experiences are connected to the objective psyche (also known as universal symbols) which gives rise to conscious expressions.

The projection of contents from the unconscious can be viewed from the perspective of a cinema. The projection of images in a cinema has the potential to connect people to their unconscious mind. Jung (1984) believes that films are able to produce symbols to engage the audiences of different cultures collectively at an unconscious level known as the “collective unconscious” (p.12). Jung (1990) claims that

the significant symbols of the individuation process known as archetypes include the shadow, the wise old man, the hero, the child, the anima in man and the animus in woman (p.183). He (Jung, 1992b) explains that these archetypes are innate images from the collective unconscious (p.37). From Jung's perspective, filmmakers can use archetypes to aid the audiences to the primordial and unconscious realm (Jung, 2003, p.82).

Singh (2009) suggests that one of the primary motivations for a viewer to watch a film arises from the feeling of empathy he has with a character in the film derived from the "subjective feeling of self that is superimposed upon the characters being watched" (p.143). Hauke and Alister (2002) point out that more scholars are interested not just in analyzing the cognitive aspect of films, but are more concerned with themes that are linked to the transformation of viewers' conscious and unconscious processes (p.1). This research analyzes the cognitive, spiritual and psychological significance of Buddhist and Taoist symbols and philosophies in popular films in relation to the development of Self.

In this thesis, while Jungian analytical psychology is used as a framework to analyze Buddhism and Taoism in popular films, I am not suggesting that Jungian analytical psychology is better than any other approaches to the study of film and psychology. However, the Jungian approach is chosen for this particular story because in addition to the analysis of the connection between images and unconscious psychology, Jung has also carried out research specifically on Buddhist and Taoist images and psychology, which could be used as relevant references for this research on Buddhist and Taoist images in popular film. In addition, Jung's psychological perspective is concerned with "projection, transference and image formation" (Hockley, 2007, p.9), which are qualities that can be aptly applied to the elements of a cinema. Jung's theories and observations of projection of images, Buddhist and Taoist symbols and their connections to the unconscious form a wealth of materials that are specifically suitable for this thesis.

Psychoanalysis in film studies has significant impact on the reading of films. However, while Freud had also suggested that there are meanings in images, he based his explanation on the "hypotheses about the sexual nature of dream imagery" (Hockley, 2007, p.8) and his theories revolved around the view that the unconscious is formed by the repression of Oedipal desires (Fowkes, 2010, p.44). Freud's perspective of the unconscious is narrow as compared to Jung's which focuses on the "all-inclusive Self" (Bortha, 2012, p.3). As Hagood (2006) describes:

The unconscious to Freud was the repressed memory and desire, both libidinous and aggressive. Jung included the collective archetypes, our mythological heritage, with the repressed in the unconscious, the most significant archetype being the Self, of which the ego is but a small player. (p,161)

To Jung, the unconscious mind comprises more than repressed contents, but memories, myths and future contents as well. The projection of the unconscious mind from the Jungian perspective, to a large extent, is like the projection of cinematic images that include contents from past, present and future. Jacques Lacan's theories on the look and the gaze are important for film studies (Plate, 2008, p.54). Lacanian analyzes that the spectators identify with the images on the screen to fill a lack in their heart of desire. (Jess-Cooke, 2009, p.133). Freudian and Lacanian theories tend to "establish a lack" while the Jungian approach attempts to bring what might seem opposite together (Hockley, 2007, p14). "Unconscious", in the context of Freud and Lacan, centers on experiencing a lack of the desired object which can never be totally fulfilled (Brown, 2009, p.62). Both theorists do not take into consideration the primordial archetypes of the unconscious.

While Slovenian philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek's works are able to provoke the thinking of readers and offer a new perspective about humans and the world, he tends to reduce everything "to the pseudo-profound 'fact' (or objectness) that there is an economy and that things can and will be bought and sold" (Bowman, 2010, p.62). To Žižek, just as Protestantism was the necessary ideology of the industrial stage of capitalism, the Western appropriation of Buddhism and Taoism equals the necessary ideology of postmodern "late capitalism" (Bowman, 2010, p.59):

"Western Buddhism" [or Taoism] thus perfectly fits the fetishist mode of ideology in our allegedly "post-ideological" era, as opposed to its traditional symptomal mode, in which the ideological lie which structures our perception of reality is threatened by symptoms qua "returns of the repressed," cracks in the fabric of the ideological lie. (Žižek, 2001, p.13)

To Žižek, Westernized Buddhism and Westernized Taoism are ideological coping mechanisms for "all who must learn to survive in a world of deregulated flows and unpredictable and unmanageable upheavals" (Bowman, 2013, p.31). While Žižek provides a different insight to how one views the presence of Buddhism and Taoism in the Western world, the economic approach is insufficient, as it descends into

“universalistic mantras about the delusions and simulacra of capital” (Bowman, 2010, p.63).

For this research, it is important for me to use a framework that takes into consideration the concept of the collective unconscious to more appropriately examine the metaphysical aspect of Buddhism and Taoism in popular films. Jung’s analytical psychology is suitable for the study as his core interests of research were on Eastern religion and the elements of spirituality.

Many writers have offered archetypal characters in literature and films. Jung developed the concept of archetypes mainly from the perspective of psychological patterns that reflect the human experience. In Vladimir Propp’s study of fairy tales, he identified seemingly similar archetypes. However, Propp (2003) understands archetypes from a functional instead of a psychological perspective (p.89). He explains in his study of a series of wondertales about a persecuted stepdaughter that identical functions can be found in various folktales though the characters and plots are different (Propp, 1984):

As a result of studying the material (and not through abstract reasoning), I devised a very simple method of analyzing wondertales in accordance with the characters’ actions — regardless of their concrete form. To designate these actions I adopted the term “functions”. My observations of the tale of the persecuted stepdaughter allowed me to get hold of the end of the thread and unravel the entire spool. It turned out that the other plots were also based on the recurrence of functions and that all wondertale plots consisted of identical functions and had identical structure. (p.69-70)

Propp’s archetypal characters are being seen as “functions” within different spheres of actions instead of as an aspect of the psyche (Fowkes, 2010, p.44). For instance, rather than seeing a child as a psychologically motivated person, a child is defined by the function he fulfills within the narrative.

Jung’s archetypes are the universal images in the collective unconscious, which I find useful for the study of spiritual journeys and the universal connotations of Asian religious elements in films. While archetypes can be found in films that do not portray any specific religion or religious experience, the benefit of using Jung’s archetypes attributes to his view of them as reflections of the psyche — having the potential to bring about spiritual transformation to a person through an individuation journey.

Instead of treating archetypes as concrete psychological forms, they should be conceived as “a way of understanding, in the form of an image, how an individual is engaging with both inner and outer worlds” (Hockley, 2007, p.10). Jung (1958) relates archetypes to religious contents that are ineffable in nature:

Whenever we speak of religious contents we move in a world of images that point to something ineffable. We do not know how clear or unclear these images, metaphors, and concepts are in respect to the transcendental object... [However], there is no doubt that there is something behind these images that transcends consciousness and operates in such a way that the statements do not vary limitlessly and chaotically, but clearly all relate to a few basic principles or archetypes. These, like the psyche itself, or like matter, are unknowable as such. (p.xiii)

However, Jung's archetypes are often misunderstood as a certain definite mythological image or motif (Hockley, 2007, p.10). Archetypes thus should not be taken literally, but should be treated as a type of metaphor, in the form of an image, for how an individual engages with his inner and outer worlds (Hockley, 2007, p.10). While the pattern of the archetype could be relatively fixed, the images represented could vary and respond to the influences of different cultures and experiences (Hockley, 2007, p.10). I see Jungian archetypes, which serve as metaphors to understand one's inner world, as suitable for analyzing the spiritual journey that the characters are going through in the films.

Despite using Jungian concepts as a framework in this thesis, I am not suggesting that the Jungian approach is a better approach than other psychoanalysis theories. Jungian approach to film studies also has its limitations. One limitation of adopting the Jungian framework of archetypes and universal symbols for film analysis is that archetypes and universal symbols form the core of the analyzed meanings, thus other aspects such as that of the narrative, structure and plot development of the films may be undermined. Audience analysis and the socio-political context in which the films are produced and consumed may be neglected in the Jungian approach to film studies (Greg, 2009, p.3). Thus, while the framework for study is taken from Jungian concepts, how I am applying those concepts is in a post-Jungian spirit of understanding the limitations of the Jungian approach. I will also introduce film theories to complement Jung's concepts.

From the perspectives of Buddhism and Taoism, as well as Jungian psychology, understanding the conscious and unconscious minds was important for the development of the being. Using this point as the common denominator between these two Eastern religions and Jungian psychology, I would like to further explore how this is manifested in popular films as a universal experience for a global audience. To give a holistic study on both the cognitive and psychological significance of Buddhist and Taoist meanings in popular films, I have applied Jungian theory of the Self to frame a textual analysis of

the films under study and offer a psychological discourse on Buddhist and Taoist philosophies therein.

The research of this thesis has dealt with the presence of Buddhist and Taoist religious elements and ideas in a group of popular films. My methodology of undertaking the analysis of spirituality in this group of films is based on Jungian psychological theory. Analyzing films using this Jungian framework which comprises the investigation of individuation, archetypes and universal symbols provides an understanding of the psyche and points us towards achieving some cognition of the association between film and religion.

Key Concepts and Framework for Study

While there are different doctrines in Buddhism and Taoism, the ultimate goal for practitioners of these religions is to gain enlightenment, which can be explained as the liberation of being. To attain enlightenment, one has to work on oneself with one's effort and not through the assistance of any supernatural beings or gods. The core of my research and review of the literature will touch on how the various concepts and practices of the Buddhist and Taoist religions are related to the notion of "Self". There are parallelisms between symbols, myths and philosophies of Buddhism/Taoism and the Jungian view of development of Self. In this research, Buddhist and Taoist approaches to the development of "Self" and its relation to a human being's conscious and unconscious minds, and the Jungian viewpoint of Self form an interdisciplinary framework to study the images and ideologies of these religions in popular films.

"Self" in Buddhism, Taoism and Jungian Psychology

Both Buddhist/Taoist beliefs and Jung's system agree that each individual can attain liberation or wholeness through one's unique inner work on Self (Moacanin, 1992, p.87). In Buddhism, one needs to get in touch with one's ultimate self, which consists of both the conscious and unconscious states, in order to achieve enlightenment (Suzuki, 1970, p.19-20). Attainment of enlightenment is explained as the achievement of the wholeness of Self in Jungian psychology.

In Zen Buddhism, the real Self is a metaphysical self which is different from the psychological or ethical self (Suzuki, 1970, p.32). Suzuki (1970) views Zen Buddhism and Taoism as sharing a similar concept in the way nature works in an unconscious

manner, in which the conscious man arises out of it (p.18). In his view, the concept of “unconscious” in Zen represents the mysterious or unknown, which people may perceive as unscientific (Suzuki, 1970, p.17). However, this unconscious state of man is not a total instinctive one alike those of the animals, but a trained unconscious which operates in the field of consciousness (Suzuki, 1970, p.19). Abe (2003) concludes that in Buddhism, human beings are seen to be capable of achieving enlightenment as compared to other beings such as animals (p.17). The unconscious aspect of being, in Suzuki’s view, is intimate to us, and to be conscious of the unconscious which is mysterious in its nature requires “a special training on the part of consciousness” (Suzuki, 1970, p.18). He gives the example of a skilled swordsman to illustrate what he means by having a trained unconsciousness. He states that the attainment of the unconscious mind in Zen is associated with the highest degree of swordsmanship. At that level, the swordsman is no longer aware that he is engaged in the battle of life and death; his mind is like a mirror which reflects each thought and movement of the opponent and he knows where and how to strike the opponent immediately (Suzuki, 1970, p.22).

Suzuki (1970) calls this unconscious state a form of the Cosmic Unconscious (p.16). As one transcends the realm of venal human feelings, one is able to attain a form of spiritual awakening when one can detect greatness in small things. To experience silence or to meditate are some of the ways that can aid one to attain an enlightened state of mind. Likewise, according to Jungian psychology, the Self is made up of the conscious mind and the unconscious mind (Jung, 1921). The psychic experience of getting in touch with one’s unconscious is explained by Jung (1972) as a form of collective unconscious that is innate and shared among people of different cultures (p.152). Jung (1990) explains that the collective unconscious is not developed within each individual, but is inherited and consists of pre-existent forms (p.43). At the level of the collective unconscious, we are linked to what Jung called the mysterious universal mind which can be found in Buddhist and Taoist teachings. From Buddhist and Taoist Tantric perspectives, “each being contains the whole universe” and there is “no separation of the individual and universal mind” (Moacanin, 1992, p.281). This also parallels Jung’s belief that the unknown collective unconscious in man is as wide as the world itself (Jung, 1976):

The unknown quantity in man which is as universal and wide as the world itself, which is in him by nature and cannot be acquired. Psychologically, this corresponds to the collective unconscious. (p.312)

Jung (1990) points out that the understanding of the unconscious is essential for total understanding of one's mind in order for one "to see the true face":

True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (p.43)

"True face" in this aspect echoes the Buddhist concept of "Buddha nature". In Buddhism, it is believed that there is a "Buddha nature" (the enlightened being) to be attained in every sentient being. Therefore, in Buddhism, every individual has the potential to become a Buddha to attain enlightenment. Jung presents a similar idea. He sees that in every being, there is always an urge for "light" or a higher consciousness (Jung, 1989):

I understood that within the soul from its primordial beginnings there has been a desire for light and an irrepressible urge to rise out of the primal darkness. (p.269)

In Tibetan Buddhism, one achieves happiness and liberation when one's conscious mind is clear and free from projections and this level of mind is the highest state of consciousness called "clear light" (Moacanin, 1992, p.76). The concept of different levels of consciousness in Tibetan Buddhism is similar to the structure of consciousness and the unconscious in the psyche as conceptualized by Jung (Moacanin, 1992, p.76). Simplicity in one's life in Buddhism and Taoism can help one to attain inner peace and clarity of mind. Suzuki (1970) observes that in the Eastern tradition of Zen or Tao, one can detect greatness in small things, which include a blade of wild grass, and that "when one's mind is poetically or mystically or religiously opened", one feels transcended beyond "all venal, base human feelings, which lifts one to a realm equal in its splendor to that of the Pure Land" (p.2-3). In Buddhism, one enters into the Pure Land when one gains enlightenment. Thus, the state of the Pure Land can be interpreted as a blissful and awakening state that one experiences. To be busy and "run about among your neighbors in a confused state of mind" does not aid one to "master the Way" (Suzuki, 1970, p.35).

Taoism stresses the fact that human beings are essentially “natural beings”, and that the human being’s thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) instead of acting against the natural flow of life (Adler, 2002, p.15). In both religions, meditation and observing silence are part of the core practices for practitioners. The practitioners aim to “empty the mind” to achieve peace within (Smart, 1993, p.110). In fact, Jung emphasizes the importance of simplicity too. He feels that when one’s mind is at peace, one can be aware of messages transmitted from one’s inner psyche (Jung, 1983):

We must be able to let things happen in the psyche. For us, this is an art of which most people know nothing. Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, and negating, never leaving the psychic processes to grow in peace. It would be simple enough if only simplicity were not the most difficult of things. (p.20)

Suzuki (1970) states that the “silence” is a form of “thunderous silence” and it resembles the eye of a hurricane in which “without it no motion is possible” (p.65). This form of paradoxical explanation is prominent in Buddhism and Taoism, as well as in Jung’s view of Self, which will be elaborated on in the succeeding paragraphs.

Both Buddhism and Taoism have a close link to nature, and nature is not seen as a separation from “self”. In fact, these two religions suggest that a person can reach a level of becoming one with nature if the inner and outer energies are balanced. The balance in energy (represented by the *yin-yang* in Taoism) can be interpreted as the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness. Jung also emphasizes the importance of achieving a balance of opposites echoing the concepts of *yin-yang* in Taoism and the teaching of the Middle Way in Buddhism. Jung (1989) compares the Buddha to the Christ figure by stating that the Christ figure is too perfect as he is the son of God and the savior, whereas the Buddha is a historical personality (p.279). To Jung, the Buddha represents the wholeness of Self as he comprises the opposites of purity and defilement (Jung, 1949, p.18) and attains enlightenment due to his “rational insight” (Jung, 1989, p.279). It seems that Jung (1938) is intrigued by the presence of opposites that form the wholeness of being:

The insane contradiction, on the other hand, between existence beyond *Maya* in the cosmic Self, and that amiable human weakness which fruitfully sinks many roots into the black earth, repeating for all eternity the weaving and rending of the veil as the ageless melody of India — this contradiction fascinates me; for how else can one perceive the light without the shadow, hear the silence without the noise; attain wisdom without foolishness. (p.578-579)

The cosmic Self is not a perfect self, but is filled with “illusion” (*Maya*). At the same time, there is potential for the cosmic Self to attain the ultimate enlightenment. The recognition of polarity is also a fundamental concept in Tantric Buddhism where the integration of opposites is the core of the Tantric practice: the union of male and female energies; active and passive principles; matter and spirit (Moacanin, 1992, p.81). In Tantric practice, practitioners are told not to reject worldly pleasures as long as one is not attached to them. Any experience of the senses and any worldly pleasures can become an opportunity for enlightenment in Tantric practice when wisdom is applied (Moacanin, 1992, p.84).

Jung (1999) explains that the qualities of opposites are needed in achieving the wholeness of self:

(...) the psychological name of the “self” — a term on the one hand definite enough to convey the essence of human wholeness and on the other hand indefinite enough to express the indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness. The paradoxical qualities of the term are a reflection of the fact that wholeness consists partly of the conscious man and partly of the unconscious man. (p. 194)

He elaborates that there is a “transcendental function” at the point of tension between opposites that gives birth to “a new level of being, a new situation” (Jung, 1972, p.90). The aspects of the unconscious therefore consist of dark and light, bestial and superhuman, evil and good, demonic and divine (Jung, 1976, p.192). Jung (1992c) says that the integration of opposites is also expressed in Laozi’s *Tao Te Ching*, as well as the Taoist principles of *yin* and *yang* (p.66). One of Jung’s writings that express such paradoxes in the unconscious resembles the concept of “Emptiness” in the *Heart Sutra* in Buddhism (Jung, 1989):

Nothingness is the same as fullness. In infinity full is no better than empty. Nothingness is both empty and full (...) A thing that is infinite and eternal hath no qualities, since it hath all qualities. (p.379)

In Buddhism, emptiness emphasizes the notion that all things are dependent upon causes and conditions. The essence of “emptiness” is explained in the *Heart Sutra* of Buddhism (taken from *The Wisdom of Buddhism*):

Form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, nor does form differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness that is form. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness. (Humphreys, 1987, p.114)

Thus, emptiness means seeing things beyond their duality, and focuses on direct realization of the true nature of all things which is dependent upon causes and conditions (Trungpa, 1987, p.220). This is presented with a similar explanation by Jung (1992a):

It is a fundamental mistake to imagine that when we see the non-value in a value or the untruth in the truth, the value or the truth ceases to exist. It has only become relative. Everything human is relative because everything rests on an inner polarity. (p. 75)

At the same time, the concept of non-duality is not unknown in Christianity too. In *The Gospels According to Thomas* (Guillaumont, 2001), the following passage is found:

Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female, when you make eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in the place of a hand, and a foot in the place of a foot, and an image in the place of an image, then shall you enter the Kingdom. (p.17)

Jung (2008) considers that the process of achieving the union is not based on rational demonstration of will, but a psychic process which “expresses itself in symbols” (p.21). One of the universal symbols that can aid one in discovering the Self can be expressed in circular movement and circular diagrams that resemble the *mandala* (circular diagrams in Tibetan Buddhism that aid meditation). Jung shares his experience of sketching a small circular drawing daily in *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* (1989):

I sketched every morning in the notebook a small circular drawing, a *mandala*, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time. With the help of these drawings, I could observe my psychic transformations from day to day. Only gradually did I discover what the *mandala* really is: Formation, Transformation, Eternal Recreation and that is the self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious, but which cannot tolerate self-deceptions. (p.195-196)

Jung finds that *mandalas* have an intuitive quality that can exert a “retroactive influence on the unconscious” though the influence may not be consciously felt (p.77). According to Jung, the circular symbol that resembles a *mandala* exists in all cultures. Jung emphasizes that the symbol of the *mandala* is not only seen in the East but the West as well. He points out that the Middle Ages are rich in Christian mandalas, in which most of them “show Christ in the center, with the four evangelists, or their symbols, at the cardinal points” (Jung, 2008, p.22). This symbol is thus universal for one to connect to the unconscious. *Mandalas* can also be found in cultures around the world, from the

whirling dance of Sufi monks in Dervish monasteries to the stained glasswork found in European cathedrals (Leder, 1990, p.173). In Zen Buddhism, the circle represents enlightenment and human perfection (Jaffe, 1964, p.279).

In Tibetan Buddhism, spiritual transformation requires the transformation of mind, which consists of changing our perception of reality and attaining of the universal consciousness (Moacanin, 1992, p.79). The universal consciousness is the “intuitive experience of the infinite and the all-embracing oneness of all that is”, which is also the state of psyche where non-duality prevails (Govinda, 1969, p.77). According to Buddhism, all conscious experience depends on the interactive process instead of an isolated entity (Olendzki, 2006, p.259). For instance, all forms of recognition that range from seeing a form, hearing a sound, tasting a flavor to smelling an odor depends upon the “inherent transitivity of consciousness” (Olendzki, 2006, p.259). In this way, we can examine our “self” and our worlds more deeply if we consider the “Self” as a result of interactions. Thus, even our conscious mind does not comprise solely of the consciousness that is based on our sensory cognition. It is not the mind as an object that determines the form of our sensory awareness but it is our sensory capacities that determine our daily consciousness. For instance, human eyes do not respond to infra-red light but infra-red light does exist (Waldron, 2006, p.178).

At the same time, to attain liberation through the work on Self, the paradoxical idea in Buddhism is that one has to attain “non-self” which involves non-attachment to one’s own possessions and worldly pleasures by abandoning the three inner poisons of greed, anger and ignorance. It is “the sense of ownership that is directly responsible for both individual and collective suffering” (Olendzki, 2006, p.254). The Dalai Lama calls one’s grasping at self-existence “egoistic grasping” (Gyatso, 2009, p.137). When our sense of self or ego is strong, we tend to relate to the world with that subjectivity (Varela, 1997, p.49). Indeed, Moacanin (1992) explains that, according to Jung, the ego is full of distortions and projections, and has to be dissolved before one can experience the unconscious (p.84).

The state that is beyond a daily consciousness is important for one to experience a glimpse of non-self. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, when one is relaxed without having the conscious mind that one is accustomed to, for instance, during occasions such as fainting, dying, sexual intercourse and sleep, the strong sense of self is slightly relaxed and one is capable of experiencing the clear light in which the mind is at its subtlest fundamental state (Varela, 1997, p.49).

Thus, both Buddhism and Jungian psychology view that human liberation can be attained through internal transformation of the mind; the psyche has the potential for liberation; and that one has to be free from all external authority eventually in order to attain the ultimate freedom (Moacanin, 1992, p.96). Though there are similarities between Jung's psychology and the Buddhist view of the notion of Self in relation to obtaining ultimate liberation, there are however some differences. While Buddhism views that there is a way to end suffering, Jung does not perceive any possibility of putting an end to suffering, as happiness and suffering are opposites which cannot exist without one another:

Man has to cope with the problem of suffering. The Oriental wants to get rid of suffering by casting it off. Western man tries to suppress suffering with drugs. But suffering has to be overcome, and the only way to overcome it is to endure it. We learn that only from him [the Crucified Christ]. (Jung, 1973, p.236)

Another key difference between Jung and the Buddhist view of the understanding of the unconscious mind is that to the Buddhists, it is possible to understand all the unknowable and become fully enlightened, but to Jung, the unconscious can never be fully understood (Moacanin, 1992, p.92).

Though there are some fundamental differences between Eastern and Western religious belief systems, Western science and Buddhism share a couple of similar conclusions on a number of issues related to "Self" (Waldron, 2006). In addition to the view that the "Self" comprises both conscious and unconscious minds as discussed, both also hold that the "Self" is a term for interactive processes and not the name of an autonomous entity, as cognitive awareness arises only as a result of interactions between subject and object. Such awareness, thus, does not occur either solely inside or wholly outside of the brain, but "at the interface of 'self' and world" (Waldron, 2006, p.175). Thus, the "world" is not objective in what it is autonomously. It is not the "world" that determines humans' perceptions of the world but it is the perceptual capacities of humans that determine their "world" (Waldron, 2006, p.182). Our "world" is not a reality that exists by itself but it is a phenomenon that has to be understood interactively (Waldron, 2006, p.177). One's perception of "world" can be applied to the cinema too. In a cinema, spiritual reality transmitted by a film can be perceived by the audience as a form of reality based on how they perceive the film consciously and subconsciously. The way we understand the world is a perceived world that we make. One's perceptions

can be influenced by interpretations made based on one's habits, culture and beliefs (Goodman, 1978).

In addition, from Goodman's perspective of world-making, there are multiple actual worlds (Goodman, 1978, p.2). Goodman (1978) elaborates that he is "not speaking in terms of multiple possible alternatives to a single world but of multiple actual worlds" (p.2). He explains that the differences in placement of emphasis may affect the worlds portrayed (Goodman, 1978, p.11). He gives an example of weighting in the different portrayed histories of the Renaissance: one is a Renaissance that stresses the arts but without excluding the battles; the other one is a Renaissance that stresses the battles without excluding the arts (Goodman, 1978, p.101-102).

Ways of world-making include ordering, composition and decomposition, weighting of emphasis, deletion and supplementation, as well as reshaping and deformation. These qualities are visible in the film editing process as well. Films create worlds by reshaping elements of the present world and offer glimpses into other worlds (Plate, 2008, p.1). In films, a view of reality can be manipulated to portray the alternate worlds or the "real world" in stunning detail (Mitchell & Plate, 2007, p. 46). Larger-than-life images can be created in films through cinematography, editing, lighting and sounds (Mitchell & Plate, 2007, p.46). Hockley (2007) asserts that the cinema has the capacity to bring viewers into fictional worlds that "become momentarily almost real" and that these worlds are collective and yet personal:

What we experience in the cinema is an awakening of personal and collective psychological material, which mirrors the way in which images behave in the psyche. (p.29)

Film, as a form of art, engages non-literal devices such as metaphors, pictures, sounds, images, gestures, expressions or other symbols in creating versions of worlds. The audience's decoding of meanings portrayed by the film and the audience's reactions while viewing the film are part of the interactions that take place between the audience and the film that form the "world" of the audience. It is the nature of consciousness to create experiences of objects using the cognitive and sensory organs (Olendzki, 2006, p.260). The "world" viewed by the audience is not a fixed or "objective" world, but created from the processes of ongoing interactions between the images on the screen and the cognitive and sensory organs of the audience. The objects or the images in films that are shown to the audience thus lack an inherent existence on their own. This is similar to the concept of emptiness in Buddhism which emphasizes the lack of

independent existence of all objects. In Buddhism, the true nature of all things is dependent upon causes and conditions, and should be understood beyond their duality (Trungpa, 1987, p.220). For instance, it is the mind of duality that gives importance to something that may not be important by its own nature. It is the mind that labels it as “important”. Wilkinson (2009) observes that from the perspective of Zen Buddhism, cognition is “an activity of the phenomenal self that articulates the world in relation to the needs of the self” and that such cognition “is not to be regarded as objective”, and that “awareness is obtained only when there is awareness without a self” (p.77).

Using the concepts of Taoism and Buddhism that are linked to the conscious and unconscious aspects of Self in seeking liberation from the cycle of life and death, this research approaches the analysis of films from both cognitive and psychological perspectives. This provides a good basis for and reference point to the analysis of religion in films as religious messages operate on both the conscious and unconscious levels. As we are examining the unconscious mind, and the inner work on Self in both Buddhism and Taoism, Jungian psychological theory serves as a framework for us to understand how the ideologies and symbols of the religions are manifested at both cognitive and psychological levels in popular films.

Religion in Cinema through a Jungian lens

The Unconscious

When Jung (1921) speaks about “image”, he does not only refer to the meanings of the actual image but image that is related “indirectly to the perception of an external object”, which “depends much more on unconscious fantasy activity” (p.441). He speaks about both the actual images (texts) and their psychological interpretations (Hockley, 2011):

It [the image] undoubtedly does express unconscious contents, but not the whole of them, only those that are momentarily constellated. This constellation is the result of the spontaneous activity of the unconscious on one hand and of momentary conscious situation on the other. The interpretation of its meaning, therefore, can start neither from the conscious alone nor from the unconscious alone, but only from their reciprocal relationship” (Jung, 1921, p.442).

Furthermore, the unconscious can only be observed through the conscious expressions (Jung, 1977):

Whatever we have to say about the unconscious is what the conscious mind says about it. Always the unconscious psyche, which is entirely of an unknown nature, is expressed by consciousness and in terms of consciousness, and that is the only thing we can do. (p.7-8)

Thus, the conscious understanding of images and symbols is important for the understanding of the unconscious.

Film can be a powerful tool for the viewer to reflect and understand the Self. For instance, characterization in film allows the audience to engage, empathize and identify with the characters on screen (Singh, 2009, p.130). Cinema provides the viewers a collective experience with others in a dark place where both the conscious and unconscious minds are stimulated and engaged (Hauke & Alister, 2002, p.171). Individuals will have a personal experience while watching a film, and yet at the same time, it is a collective one (Hockley, 2007, p.27). Hockley (2007) further points out that the immersive quality of the cinema affects the viewers on both bodily and psychological planes:

The immersive quality of the environment helps viewers to make the transition from the here and now, into the fictional world of the film. Cinema-going is a psychosomatic experience — something that affects viewers on both bodily and psychological planes. (p.27)

Jung (1984) considers that films are less restricted in providing the potential to unlock the unconscious as they are “able to produce amazing symbols to show the collective unconscious, since their methods of presentation are so unlimited” (p. 12).

In films, a temporal and alternate world can be created as a sacred space for viewers to re-view the world they are in or to transcend the mundane life with thought-stimulating or emotionally filled experience. Ostwalt (1995) says that there is a similarity between film viewing and religious ritual as going to the cinema allows viewers to “transcend mundane life for a prescribed period of time, we are part of a sacred space, a sacred time, and, transfixed by the experience, we are confirmed by an alternative reality, a ‘not me’, an Otherness. (p.155)”. Artaud tells us that the role of the film and filmmaker is similar to that of a shaman or holy person who has the ability to evoke the supernatural from the natural world (Artaud, 2007). Hauke and Alister (2002) propose that the film director can be regarded as the “God with a very big imagination” that allows viewers to witness their psyche and dreams on the big screen with “a view to transformation and growth” (p.1).

There are also film directors who agree that films have the potential to reach out to the subconscious of viewers. For instance, the Italian film director Federico Fellini, winner of five Academy Awards in a filmmaking career spanning over forty years, explained the images in his films in relation to the unconscious mind:

A film takes form outside your will as a constructor; all genuine details come through inspiration. And what do we mean by inspiration? The capacity for making direct contact between your unconscious and your rational mind. When an artist is happy and spontaneous, he is successful because he reaches the unconscious and translates it with a minimum of interference. (Quoted in Samuels, 1972, p.121).

Luis Buñuel, a Spanish-born Mexican filmmaker, describes a film as an imitation of a dream, and he believes that the cinema expresses the life of the subconscious (BFI Film Forever, 2012):

A film is like an involuntary imitation of a dream. (...) On the screen, as within the human being, the nocturnal voyage into the unconscious begins. (...) the cinema seems to have been invented to express the life of the subconscious, the roots of which penetrate poetry so deeply. Yet it is almost never used to do this. (Quoted in Kyrrou, 1963, p.109-111).

Symbols

Symbols play a very important role in affecting the psychological state of a person and symbols can even have a healing function according to Jung. Through the analysis of symbols in films, we can attempt to examine both the “unconscious and conscious parts of the psyche” (Hockley, 2001, p.94). Symbols and concepts related to Buddhism and Taoism are analyzed in this thesis and some of these symbols in films can be seen as archetypes that have “universal” connotations.

Jung (1990) claims that the significant symbols of the individuation process known as archetypes include the shadow, the wise old man, the hero, the child, the anima in man and the animus in woman (p.183). The shadow consists of the dark elements of the personality with emotional and primitive aspects that resist moral control; anima is the feminine aspect that a man experiences while animus is the masculine aspect that a woman experiences. The other archetypes will be further elaborated in later chapters in the analysis of films. Jung (1992b) explains that these archetypes are innate images from the collective unconscious (p.37). The archetypes act as guides to assist individuals to get in touch with their inner selves and realize the aspects of unconscious life that can affect their everyday relationships and engagement with the world (Hockley, 2007, p.25).

From Jung's perspective on the function of archetypes, filmmakers can use archetypes to aid the audiences to the primordial and unconscious realm (Jung, 2003):

The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. (p.82)

Jung (1970) explains that the more vivid these archetypes, the more they will be "colored by particularly strong feeling-tones", and they have the ability to impress and fascinate individuals who have access to them (p.449).

Other than archetypes in the form of personality or behavior, other archetypes include "universal symbols" in which meanings can be found in mythology and across different cultures. Universal symbols are symbols that originate from the "objective psyche" (Hockley, 2001):

What is of concern here are the more general, or "universal", symbols which originate from the objective psyche. "Water" is one such symbol. It contains a diversity of meanings, including: baptism, purification, castration, regeneration, the objective psyche, danger, death, etcetera. (p.92)

"Water" in this context could have different meanings. There is an underlying meaning of facing new challenges or entering into a new phase of life. Hockley (2001) points out that Jung's process of individuation is about realizing the latent unconscious aspect of human psyche through "the acceptance of contradictions, oppositions and of individual psychological complexes" (p.105). Stevens (2006) summarizes the archetypal types as described by Jung as: events or situational archetypes such as birth, death, marriage, initiation and separation from parents; figure archetypes such as mother, hero, trickster and wise man; symbolic archetypes such as sun, water and the snake; and motif archetypes such as the Deluge, the Creation and the Night Journey (p.84).

At the same time, it is also appropriate to consider an "archetype" as a "standard situation that manages to be particularly appealing to a given cultural area or a historical period" (Eco, 1998, p.201). Thus, there are cultural symbols that develop over a period of time and "gain cultural resonance and shared meaning within a cultural practice", and there are the "Natural Symbols" which "represent underlying and inexpressible archetypal structures in psychic life" (Singh, 2011, p.170). Natural symbols manifest themselves in dreams and visions, and they are not confined to any one cultural area or period of time (Fredericksen, 2002, p.25). The shared cultural meanings are often linked

to rituals and pictorial representations among masses that have evolved over many centuries (Singh, 2009, p.111).

According to Bell (1997), sacral symbols have the ability to point to greater realities. An object has this sort of “sacrality” not because of reference to a divine figure, but because it has a quality of specialness and possesses the ability to evoke “extra meaningfulness and the ability to evoke emotion-filled images and experiences” (Bell, 1997, p.105). Similar to Jung, Bell (1997) believes that there are symbols that have the ability to evoke deeper experiences for the viewers, and in Bell’s language, these are the “sacral symbols”. The sacral object thus points to something beyond itself, and expresses “values and attitudes associated with larger, more abstract and transcendental ideas” (p.157). Examples of such symbols are sacral places, religious symbols such as the Christian cross and the Star of David, natural landscapes such as the Niagara Falls, rites of passage, symbols of purification, and even secular symbols such as national flags or monuments (Bell, 1997, p.53-54, p.156-157).

Though symbols at both natural and cultural levels can be seen in films, Fredericksen (2002) observes that given the mass economic function of popular films, cultural symbols dominate the films as “they are psychologically safer and more easily understood” (p.25). Hockley (2007) concludes that archetypal images influence “psychological development and growth”; they are “patterns that interact with our culture, our personal experiences and family lives to bring shape and form to an individual psyche”; and they are the mechanism to guide “each individual on the quest for wholeness which Jung termed ‘individuation’ ” (p.21).

Myths

To Levi-Strauss, the structure of myth can always be broken down into its component parts, with the assumption that “all human behavior is based on certain unchanging patterns, whose structure is the same in all ages and in all societies” (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p.9). Myth, to him, is a means by which social life can find resolution between conflicting opposites:

Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions towards their resolution. (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p.224)

He breaks myths into constituent units within the structure and labels them as “mythemes” which function as “bundles of relations” (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p.211). While Jung’s and Levi-Strauss’s concept of myth may seem to be different at first glance,

both acknowledge that there is universal similarity in how human brains function, which leads to the “universal possibility of a uniform mental functioning” (Gras, 1981, p.472). Jung (1968b) states that “the brain has a history exactly like the body and in the basic structure of the mind you will naturally find traces of the archaic mind” (p.45). Similar to Levi-Strauss’s view of seeking resolution between conflicting opposites, Jung (1999) believes that the synthesis of opposites is needed for the attainment of wholeness (p.194).

Both Jung and Levi-Strauss received criticism for focusing on the universal quality of myths which neglect the cultural and historical context (Gras, 1981, p.483-484). Levi-Strauss’s view on myths suggests that there is a universal structure in all myths, which has received criticism from anthropologists and mythographers (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p.9). However, as his study on myths was based on primitive and preliterate cultures, his theories are still applicable for them (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p.9). It may also be worthwhile to study the constituent units of myth in the individuation journey of the characters in films, and seek similarities of myth structure across the films.

Barthes (1987), a French literary critic and cultural commentator, explains that the notion of myth is beyond the myths that are related to classical fables or the exploits of gods and heroes, but is the dominant ideology of the society. From the perspective of the cultural dimension of symbols, these two modes of myths should be understood as they complement each other instead of being opposed to each other. Singh (2009) also emphasizes the importance of Barthes’ notion of the ideological function of myth and points out that “Barthes’ notion of mythology exists not only in historical fantasy and fable, but also for us in the everyday”. He explains that:

It [Barthes’ notion of mythology] also has a strikingly ideological dimension — one that may be analysed itself to produce several tertiary meanings of various kinds (...) [It is] acknowledging the power of myth in the realm of culture, and thus, the collective psyche. (p.146)

Romanyshyn (1989) observes that “film portrays the mythology of an age. It is a shared myth, a cultural daydream” (p.19). Mythology is thus not just about epic journeys, but it is also about “the contemporary crux of personal, collective and fictive history” (Singh, 2009, p.168).

On the surface, Jung’s view of “myth” could be vastly different from that of Barthes as to Jung, natural symbols exist in ancient myths and the unconscious. Hockey (2007, p.14) explains that while Barthes believes contemporary myths evacuate history

and give priority to the connotations of things governed by unchanging values, myths in this case “provide a way for a culture to interpret its history” (Hockley, 2007, p.14). Thus, from Barthes’ perspective, culture is inherently ideological (Hockley, 2007, p.14). Understanding “myth” from both perspectives helps to integrate one’s intrinsic behavior with the world (Hockley, 2007, p.14). Understanding contemporary myths is important for reading of a film, even though films do have shared elements that have their sources in the unconscious which is termed “the collective unconscious” by Jung. Izod (2006) notes that:

In common with all cultural forms, films are vehicles for symbolic energy charged not only with collective consciousness but also with shared, irrational material that has its source in the unconscious. Jung used the term “the collective unconscious” to refer to phenomena that appeared to animate the psychological landscape of the human species; but some post-Jungians have adopted the concept of “the cultural unconscious” which... functions better as an indicator of the provenance of this partially formed energy. (p.18)

Izod (2006) thus emphasizes that it is important to understand films within their social and cultural contexts:

Looking at the ways in which post-Jungian readings imply that screen myths might work on audiences entails considering how those myths related to the cultural and ideological values to which the film’s audiences were exposed at the time of the product’s release. We shall find that questioning the psychological effect of films frequently brings the political context and the intervention of the medium itself into consideration. (p.7)

Izod imagines that Jung who had always been conscious of the cultural dimensions of symbols would not find the reading of the ideological function of myth as a conflict (Izod, 2006, p.5). Greg (2009) sees Izod’s support for understanding of myths in the realm of culture to complement the more classical Jungian studies as “a revelation for post-Jungian approaches to film” (p.146). Understanding of myths, whether from Jung’s or Barthes’ points, has to be considered within the cultural and ideological values of the audiences. While natural symbols can be used to explain ancient myths or myths that exist in the primitive areas of the mind, cultural symbols can be used to study the ideological function of myth as posited by Barthes. Thus, in addition to analyzing universal symbols and archetypes from Jung’s view of myth, I would also comment on how cultural differences, ideological power struggles and social context affect the interpretation of the films by the audience.

Some of the characteristic manifestations of the unconscious as researched by Jung (1992c) include “archaic thought-forms imbued with ‘ancestral’ or ‘historic’ feeling, and, beyond them, the sense of infiniteness, timelessness, oneness” (p.62). Buddhist and Taoist symbols and philosophy can be identified in the contents and aesthetics of films in creating a sense of “ancestral” and “historic” feeling, infiniteness, timelessness and oneness in cinema. In this thesis, symbols and philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism are used to explain Jungian archetypes and universal symbols identified in the popular films selected for study.

Significance of Study and Objectives

The history of religion–film study can be traced back to the 1920s when French filmmaker and theorist Jean Epstein suggested that the technological medium of film enhances and re-creates the world in new styles which add a mystical dimension to films (Mitchell & Plate, 2007, p.46). He explained that film contains an “animating quality”, and that “the cinema is polytheistic and theogonic” (Epstein, 1924, p.295). However, this occurred before the emergence of the phrase “religion and film” (Plate, 2008, p.ix).

Early studies on religion and film from the 1960s to the 1980s were grounded in Paul Tillich’s theology of culture, in which films were to help human beings understand more about humanity, destiny and purpose in life, and the works of Carl Theodor Dreyer, Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu were prominent in these studies (Plate, 2008, p.ix). According to Tillich (1953), the theology of culture is “to analyze the theology behind all cultural expressions, to discover the ultimate concern in the ground of a philosophy, a political system, an artistic style, a set of ethical or social principles” (p.45). Thus, there is no cultural expression that is without a religious substance, though the intention of cultural expression is not religious as such (Morgan, 1997, p.374).

By the late 1980s, scholars had moved away from examining religion and film in “serious”, art-house films, and began to pay attention to popular Hollywood films (Plate, 2008, p.ix). In the 21st century, scholars have looked at religions portrayed in popular films in the globalized era (Iwamura, 2001; Lefkowitz-Mattern, 2000; Smith, 2001). These scholars look at issues of the commodification of religions in a consumer society, where religious doctrines are marketed for a consumer culture.

For this research, the main emphasis of study is focused on popular films, as I believe that popular films can help us to understand the values, tastes and experiences of the masses in society and these films do demonstrate the collective unconscious needs of the audience. Films that are viewed widely by moviegoers are referred to as popular films in this thesis, and emphasis of research is placed on films that are mainstream commercial products distributed in the United States and worldwide. The popular films selected for study are mainstream productions from Hollywood and Asian film industries that copy Hollywood's formula of employing a celebrity cast, panoramic photography and a big budget, as opposed to small-budget independent productions which usually are not distributed in commercial theaters.

Hauke (2002) points out that there is a need for serious research on the so-called escapist or popular films as they resonate with unconscious needs in the collective psyche of the audiences who respond to the contents in popular cinema. Hauke (2002) is of the opinion that these escapist films do not only help us escape from "reality" but also to escape to a different reality that is non-ordinary:

They help us escape — but not simply escape from "reality" (whatever that is), but also escape to a different reality, one that tends to be ignored or devalued in our day-to-day lives. They offer us an experience that is non-ordinary, one that is uncommon in daily life; uncommon by virtue of the passions involved, the events witnessed, and, importantly, uncommon because of the individuality of the characters and the story. And yet, despite all this unusualness, the novelty of scenes, narrative and imagery that grips our attention, we still recognize enough to, unbelievably, identify with the characters and the story of the film. (p.151)

Kaminsky (1985) believes that popular films deserve attention for academic research since "if a film is popular, it is a result of the fact that the film, or series of films corresponds to an interest — perhaps even a need — of the viewing public" (p.153). Thus, the popularity of the films reflects the needs and wants that include fantasies and dreams of the people, which the films can provide. Hauke (2002) asserts that just because the vehicle that delivers what the people need also earns big profits at the same time, "there is no reason to ignore what the popular 'escapist' movie is supplying for the culture as a whole" (p.152).

Plate (2008) comments that though the study on religion and film is over a century old, the "critical academic enterprise of religion and film is just getting its legs" (p.ix). According to Jozajtis (2001), writings on religion and media in the mid- and late-20th century can be characterized by two main trends. The first is rooted in the Western

Christian concerns regarding effects of media and popular culture on religious institutions, religion and society (Atkinson, 1979; Bluck, 1978; Coleman & Tomka, 1993; Fore, 1987; Goethals, 1981, 1990; Muggeridge, 1977; Nelson, 1976). The second major research on religion and media also has its roots in the Christian criticism of media, but it has grown into an extensive literature on televangelism (Bruce, 1990; Frankl, 1987; Hadden & Swann, 1982; Hadden & Shupe, 1988; Hoover, 1988; Horsfield, 1984; Kuhns, 1969; Owens, 1980; Schultze, 1991).

While serious attention is given to study the relationship between television and religion, Jozajtis (2001) observes that little attention has been given to films in this field of study. Kraemer (2004) points out that even in the 21st century, religion and film is still an immature field, as many of the books on religion and film are designed for non-academic audiences, for instance church study groups. The established scholarly writings in the area of religion and film are mostly carried out by Western scholars such as Gordon Lynch, S. Brent Plate, John Lyden and Jolyon Mitchell, who focus on analyzing films with Christian themes by Western directors.

Compared to the scholarship on Christianity and film, there is a lower level of scholarship on Asian religion and film. Despite saying so, significant studies have been done on Chinese *kung fu* and films, which includes the Taoist and Buddhist philosophy of Chinese martial arts practice. Among many writings on Chinese martial arts and film are *Theorizing Bruce Lee: Film-Fantasy-Fighting-Philosophy* (2010) and *Beyond Bruce Lee: Chasing the Dragon through Film, Philosophy and Popular Culture* (2013) by Paul Bowman, *Bruce Lee: Fight Spirit* (2008) by Bruce Thomas, *Reading the Kung Fu Film in an American Context: From Bruce Lee to Jackie Chan* (2003) by Yuan Shu, *Bruce Lee and the Anti-Imperialism of Kung Fu: A Polycultural Adventure* (2003) by Vijay Prashad, *Aesthetics in Action: Kungfu, Gunplay, and Cinematic Expressivity* (2001) by David Bordwell, *A Touch of Zen* (2007) and *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema* (2009) by Stephen Teo, and *Bruce Lee: His Influence on the Evolution of the Kung Fu Genre* (1981) by Hsiung-Ping Chiao.

Two prominent scholarly writings on Orientalism and Asian religion in film are *The Oriental Monk in American Popular Culture: Race, Religion, and Representation in the Age of Virtual Orientalism* (2001) by Jane Iwamura and *Orientalist Commercializations: Tibetan Buddhism in American Popular Film* (1998) by Eve L. Mullen. In *The Oriental Monk in American Popular Culture*, Iwamura (2001) examines the stereotypical constructions of “the spiritual East” through the study of

representations of the icon of “Oriental Monk” in visual media (glossy weeklies, television, and film); in *Orientalist Commercializations*, Mullen (1998) demonstrates the misleading representations of Tibetan Buddhism in American popular films. However, both scholars view Asian religious images as being distorted in popular films and they deem Orientalism as a distortion of truth about Asia from the perspective of the West.

There is a body of writing on the transcendental style in films of Yasujiro Ozu from Japan. Examples of books on this topic are Donald Richie’s *Ozu* (1977); Paul Schrader’s *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (1972); and Yoshida Kiju’s *Ozu’s Anti-Cinema*. Several scholars have examined the history and development of mythological and devotional films in Indian cinema. For instance, Rachel Dwyer traces the history and development of the mythological and devotional films in *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*. Dwyer (2006) defines the mythological, the founding genre of Indian cinema, as “one which depicts tales of gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines mostly from the large repository of Hindu myths” which are largely found in the Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and she defines the devotional as one that focuses on “the life of a human devotee who is presented in historical time” (p.15). Other scholars who write on Indian cinema and religion are Heidi R.M. Pauwels, Nandini Bhattacharya and Vijay Mishra who authored *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics* (2007), *Hindi Cinema: Repeating the Subject* (2013) and *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desires* (2002) respectively.

Film viewing is a “totality” experience, which involves embodied viewing that engages an audience’s emotional, cognitive and affective levels (Singh, 2009, p.87). To analyze the emotional and psychological significance in film viewing, my approach to analyzing the films selected for this thesis may be called post-Jungian inasmuch as the research does not only carry out textual analysis of films from a cognitive level, but also from the psychological and emotive perspectives, which aim at revealing the hidden series of spiritual meanings underlying the film’s narrative. In the spirit of examining explicit and symbolic meanings of religion in popular films at both the conscious and unconscious levels, this research combines making “objective” observations and providing experiential knowledge based on my past in-depth and intense association with the schools of Buddhism and Taoism.

Campbell (2003) asserts that our current culture has “gone into an economic and political phase, where spiritual principles are completely disregarded” (p.xvii). We do not deny the fact that there is a strong economic driving force behind the making of popular films. However, at the same time, there are spiritual values in the films that the audience or scholars may overlook as they focus on the entertainment, economic or political aspects of these films. The Buddhist and Taoist concepts of formless Tao, emptiness, *yin-yang*, the middle path, meditation and stillness, poisons of the inner soul, attachment and non-attachment, that are linked to the work on Self to attain enlightenment will be identified in the films selected for analysis. The construction of Buddhist and Taoist religious images within popular films are analyzed to answer the questions of “What are the Buddhist and Taoist philosophies and images portrayed in popular films that depict the journey of self-discovery?” and “How have the Buddhist and Taoist concepts and symbols been portrayed in relation to Jungian concepts of archetypes and universal symbols in popular films?” To answer these questions, contents from both religions that are portrayed in popular films will be examined and discussed. Symbols and philosophy from Buddhism and Taoism in relation to the Jungian perspective of archetypes and universal symbols within popular films will also be examined.

The contribution that I make to existing research in this field is through this study that is new and unique in its analysis and synthesis of the three components of Jungian theory, Eastern religions and film. Studies that involve any two amalgamations of these three components are available. However, studies that are made based on all the three mentioned areas are not available.

For the study on Jungian psychology and films, most scholars such as Christopher Hauke, Luke Hockley, Greg Singh, Don Fredericksen and Michael Conforti carried out their research from a cultural, psychological, mythical, cinematic or gender perspective. Using a Jungian lens to study religions, especially Eastern religions in films is a gap I identified in research.

There are also scholars who study religions from a Jungian perspective, for instance, Radmila Moacanin who studied the relationship between Jung’s psychology and Tibetan Buddhism, Marie Byles who researched on Vipassana meditation and Jungian psychology, Meckel, Daniel and Robert Moore who edited *Self and Liberation: The Jung-Buddhism Dialogue*, Robert L. Moore who carried out study on Christianity and Jungian psychology, and Nathan Katz who did a critical comparative study of Jung

and Tibetan Buddhism. However, there is paucity in research carried out simultaneously in the disciplines of religion, Jungian psychology and film. In the area of Eastern religions and films, there are a couple of key scholarships on Eastern Religion and Film². However, again, scholarship that is carried out concurrently on religion, Jungian psychology and film is scarce.

This thesis, is thus taking a leap in Jungian-Eastern Religion-Film research. My research contributes to scholarship on Asian religion and film through a psychological perspective, especially in examining the universal resonances of spirituality in film. The research method and analysis of films which adopt a Jungian framework to examine the spiritual and religious aspects (especially Eastern religions) of cinematic experience therefore fills a gap in the current literature.

My thesis thus aims to achieve the objectives of providing an additional perspective to the current literature on religion and film which is dominated by Christianity studies, and of analyzing the construction of Buddhist and Taoist religious images and/or ideologies in popular films within an interdisciplinary framework. This research which is drawn from psychology and religion is worthy of being pursued as it contributes to the interdisciplinary research in film studies and contributes to the current literature of religion and film that is dominated by research focusing on Christianity. Religions that are generally referred to as being East Asian or Chinese (i.e. Buddhism and Taoism) are analyzed within the framework of concepts put forth by both Eastern and Western scholars from the disciplines of religion and psychology.

The next section provides a background on Buddhism and Taoism and their occurrence in today's society, as well as a background on religion and film.

² Elaborated on pages 37 and 38.

Background: Buddhism and Taoism in Today's Society

Buddhism and Taoism³ are prominent religions in East Asia and within the Chinese community worldwide. There are overlapping elements in these two religions that have also influenced one another. Globalization and the embracing of religions beyond those of Western traditions such as Christianity and Judaism in America are some key factors that have contributed to the emergence of Asian religions in popular films screened to a Western audience.

Both Taoist and Buddhist philosophies, which do not posit the concept of a creator God but emphasize seeking enlightenment through one's effort, appeal to those who want a spiritual path but not a specific religion. The key essence of "Tao" which is formless and cannot be defined in concrete terms can be studied without the need to obey any specific religious rules or doctrines. However for Buddhism, though there are

³ While Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are commonly practiced by the Chinese community, the key reason why I did not include Confucianism in this study has to do with the subject of unconscious mind that I am examining. There are moral principles and ethics in most religions, for instance there are precepts of no stealing, no cheating and no killing in both Buddhism and Taoism. However, the thesis emphasizes on the understanding of the unconscious through religions and not just the conscious realm which includes moral values and ethics. Both Buddhism and Taoism highlight the importance of getting in touch with the unconscious mind, in order to attain enlightenment.

In Confucianism, strong emphasis is placed on adhering to the moral ethics and doctrines developed by the Chinese philosopher Kongzi, which comprises a system of ethics and values for a way of life (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009, p. 17). It places importance on the responsibility that one has to fulfill in one's lifetime (Tang, 1991, p.165). While Buddhism and Taoism deal with metaphysical topics of unconscious mind, prophecy, dreams and limitlessness, Confucianism deals largely with concrete code of conduct on how one should behave in a society. Tang (1991) explains that "Confucianism is nothing more than a teaching regarding how to behave oneself, namely, one should set a demand upon oneself and hold oneself responsible to the world and the nation (p.53). Though Confucianism does acknowledge that one can attain spiritual transformation as one becomes "a sage within", the ultimate goals of such transformation are "creation of new dynamics of interacting and being with others, bringing out the best in them, benefitting them, learning from them, moving them along in the process of their own self-cultivation" (Littlejohn, 2011, p.xxi). Thus, Confucianism is also known as the "religion of ethics" by Mou Zongsan (1909-95) (Mou, 1999, p.5).

Though Confucianism is known as a system of ethics and values, it does not mean that Confucianism is totally devoid of the life of the spirit (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009, p.17). Confucius promoted the ancient Chinese religious rites and endorsed ancestral worship (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009, p.17). However, the worship is not so much from the perspective of a divine connection, but to emphasize the values of filial piety and not to forget one's origin. Thus, Confucianism believes that one should show respect to the spirits of ancestors or deceased parents by performing rites of sacrifices and prayers (Yao, 2000, p.202). This belief, though is associated with the spirit, is to be executed at a conscious level and awareness. The respect of the ancestors is emphasized as a conscious duty to be carried out. Thus, while Buddhism and Taoism deals with the unconscious realm of spirituality, Confucianism emphasizes a conscious effort in performing one's role and duty in the society.

Most religions will have a set of moral principles and ethics for the adherents to live by, as well as the spiritual aspect that links one to a mystical realm. While the external practices of religions such as the forms of rituals, the ideology or the codes of conduct can be experienced at a conscious level, spirituality is to be experienced at a level beyond the conscious mind. It could be known as a mystical experience or an experience that transports beyond the day-to-day mundanity of life. While the conscious realm of Buddhism and Taoism is examined, the unconscious realm of both religions are also explained in great length during the analysis of films.

precepts and regulations in specific religious doctrines, Buddhist teachings are often presented as a form of philosophy to be examined from a logical perspective. Such teachings of Taoist and Buddhist philosophies that do not place emphasis on a creator God have made inroads into Western society. Non-Taoists and non-Buddhists can use Taoist and Buddhist philosophies to make improvement in their lives without giving up their own religions or beliefs.

In modern times, the idea of Tao is increasingly known in the West, as it is in line with environmental concerns, and its fluid approach to natural events mirrors the contemporary notions in physics and cosmology (Smart, 1993, p.202). Taoism stresses the fact that human beings are essentially “natural beings”, and that a human’s thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) (Adler, 2002, p.15). Smart (1993) explains that though some religious aspects of Taoism are considered as superstitious and unscientific by many, it is its philosophical aspect that is its most powerful legacy (p.202). The formless Tao also gives one flexibility to embrace Tao as a form of daily philosophy. One does not have to adhere to any precepts that most religions emphasize. Thus, the idea of Tao is universal to mankind, and it is applicable to the lifestyle of everybody. The Taoist philosophy embedded in Chinese martial arts such as Tai Chi has also become popular among both Asians and Westerners who seek a form of bodily training that can aid them in focusing their minds. Since the 1970s, Tai Chi has become a popular training for actors to develop focus and concentration, to stay “in the moment” and to develop a holistic “bodymind” which emphasizes the importance of developing both mind and body simultaneously (Nicholls, 1993, p.20).

Some of the main reasons why Buddhism is popular among Westerners are that it can be practiced without giving up one’s own religion; one does not have to subscribe to any creed or become a vegetarian; and one can analyze the teachings thoroughly without accepting it at face value (Lampman, 2006). Those who study Buddhism are told not to accept its teachings based on blind faith. The Buddha told his disciples to examine his teachings thoroughly with analytical reasoning before accepting them so that they could “cut through any doubts and discover a profound certainty” (Martin, 2004, p.150). Thus, simply reciting the mantra will not bring about realization unless one reflects on the teachings of the Buddha. Lama Surya Das, a highly trained American lama said that Americans are looking for experiential practices, and not just a new set

of ethical rules which is rather similar in all religions, thus “it’s the transformative practices like meditation which people are really attracted to” (Lampman, 2006).

Buddhism started to gain popularity in the United States from the 1960s. While many Tibetan Buddhist teachers and high lamas took up residence in Nepal and India after their exile in 1959, a number of Tibetan Buddhist teachers traveled to the large cities of America and Europe (Dowman, 1997). The settlement of Tibetan Buddhist communities in the West has enhanced the possibilities for dialogue and interconnection between the West and Tibetan Buddhism, and can be seen as a natural opening for the popularization of Tibetan Buddhism. Following his exile, the Dalai Lama resided in India, and has received many international visitors. Jeffery Hopkins and Robert Thurman, two of the West’s chief scholars on Tibetan Buddhism visited the Dalai Lama in the 1960s and have written extensively on the topic. Robert Thurman is a professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies and the head of the Religion Department in Columbia University. Jeffrey Hopkins set up a program in Tibetan Buddhism at the University of Virginia after spending several years in India studying with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan scholars (Powers, 2000). They have published numerous books and articles in English that are readily available to Western audiences and have translated a number of Tibetan Buddhist classics into English. In addition, there are two prominent publishing houses in the United States — Snow Lion Publications and Wisdom Publications — that are devoted primarily to Tibetan religion and culture, and have published many titles on various topics pertaining to Tibetan Buddhism (Powers, 2000). In New York City and other parts of the United States, fans were seen flocking to the talks of Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh whose book *Living Buddha, Living Christ* sold 100,000 hardcover copies (Van Biema and McDowell, 1997). The Zen Buddhists in San Francisco run two of the better-respected AIDS hospices and the number of English language Buddhist teaching centers in the United States increased from 429 in 1988 to 1,062 in 1997 (Van Biema and McDowell, 1997).

Buddhism and Taoism, which focus on getting in touch with the Self within, emphasize the point that everyone is capable of achieving enlightenment through the search within. Often, in Buddhism and Taoism, one’s mind is said to be filled with defilements when various distractions cloud it. In both Buddhism and Taoism, simplicity in one’s life can lead to inner peace and clarity of mind. Silence, meditation and renunciation of worldly desires are some of the conscious ways that one can practice to attain the state of being that is free from worries and negative emotions.

Philosophy within a religion encompasses the doctrinal tenets, beliefs and teachings that guide the way of life of its adherents (Lytle, 2005). Religious ideologies can exist in the community's oral and written texts and traditions, and "each faith tradition and its constellation of communities is uniquely constructed by a particular collection of meta-narratives" (Lytle, 2005, p.4). The following gives a brief coverage on the philosophy of Buddhism and Taoism:

Basic Philosophy of Buddhism

Buddhism emerged in the 5th century in India from the teachings of Buddha, who was born there around 563 BC. He gained enlightenment under a Bodhi tree and realized the "Four Noble Truths" about life, which provided him with the answer to wiping out the root of unhappiness. These four noble truths are: life is full of suffering, the sources of suffering, the cessations to suffering and the path leading to the cessations of suffering (Gyatso, 1975). Buddhism posits that many problems in the world are mainly due to pride, jealousy and desire, and that these can be overcome with the cultivation of wisdom and compassion (Martin, 2004). In Buddhism, it is believed that human beings are reborn over and over again, and reincarnation can take different forms, including being reborn as animals, and it is only when one attains full enlightenment that one can be freed from the cycle of rebirth (Van Biema & McDowell, 1997). The Buddha did not preach the existence of a creator God and discouraged idol-worship, since such worship would result in seeking salvation from an external power instead of seeking enlightenment within one's own power (Lyall, 2001). Enlightenment requires work on the "self" that "integrates all the dimensions of the person: body, imagination, emotions, psyche and spirit" (Lenoir, 1999, p.106).

Basic Philosophy of Taoism

Though the roots of Taoism are complex and no single source can be traced, they can be traced back to the 6th to 4th centuries BC in the writings of three major thinkers — Laozi, Zhuangzi and Liezi (Fowler & Fowler, 2008). On top of writings by these three major thinkers, various Taoist texts can be found in *I-ching* and writings by Huainanzi (Robinet, 1993). The main Taoist tradition takes shape in the book *Tao Te Ching* (the Classic of the Way and its Virtue), which is ascribed to Laozi (Smart, 1993, p.195). There are two types of Taoism: Classical Taoism and religious Taoism. Classical Taoism focuses on the philosophical and mystical aspects of Taoism, while religious Taoism focuses on the overtly religious, ritualistic and institutional expressions (Fowler

& Fowler, 2008). Tao is defined by Fowler and Fowler (2008) as “the undifferentiated Void and potentiality that underpins all creation, immutable, unchanging, without form” (p.101). There is a principle of *wu wei* (acting through not acting) in Classical Taoism which emphasizes “not acting, naturalness, spontaneity, passivity” (Smart, 1993, p.197). Thus, to be vital, one should act without effort, which also means “act without acting” (Smart, 1993, p.15).

In Classical Taoism, there are many juxtaposed concepts, and some of these concepts are: outward strength is balanced with a soft and yielding nature; external force is balanced with inner power; the masculine is balanced with the feminine; verbosity is balanced with silence; and plurality is balanced with oneness (Fowler & Fowler, 2008, p.96). Jung (2008) observes that in Tao, there is “no position without its negation” and “where there is faith, there is doubt; where there is doubt, there is credulity; where there is morality, there is temptation” (p.135). In religious Taoism, there is a complex hierarchy of gods that exists and the myriad gods come from Taoist sources, Buddhist sources and even folklore (Smart, 1993, p.202). The significant gods and celestial beings in Taoism include Yu Huang Da Di (the Jade Emperor who is a divine equivalent of the Chinese Emperor), Xi Wangmu (the western Empress Mother who rules a paradise in the Kunlun mountains), the Furnace Prince of Zaojun and Laozi (Smart, 1993, p.202). In the physical practices of religious Taoism, some of the practices include “pursuit of good deeds, breathing exercises, care not to lose sperm, and taking a sufficient amount of the elixir of immortality” (Smart, 1993, p.199). The contemplative practices of Taoism as emphasized by the practices of meditation, breathing, dieting and alchemical experiments share some similarities to high *tantra* in Buddhism.

Films and the Treatment of Buddhism and Taoism

This thesis focuses on examining Buddhism and Taoism in a selection of five popular films, two of which are produced by Hollywood, while the remaining three are Chinese-language productions. It is noteworthy that the two Hollywood productions I will analyze here are in essence departures from the conventional focus on Christianity as far as the genre of religious film is concerned, as for example, the more traditional Hollywood Biblical epics such as *The Robe* (1953), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), as well as the contemporized interpretations of the life of Christ, including *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (1973), *Godspell*

(1973) and the more astringent accounts of Christ's story such as Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). Other significant films on Christianity that are produced in America include *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964), *The Flowers of St. Francis* (1950), *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (1972), and *Jesus of Nazareth* (1989).

The films under analysis in this thesis are not concerned with the Christian narrative at all, and, strictly speaking, are not even religious films. However, they do deal with Buddhism and Taoism in various ways, as I will show, and they can infer religious meanings as well as the sense of religious ritual, as I will explain in the next section. This section will briefly review the treatment of Buddhism and Taoism in film, and since the hub of this treatment is more or less connected with China or Chinese cinema in my thesis, my review below pertains to Buddhism and Taoism in Chinese cinema.

Buddhism and Taoism in Chinese Cinema

The first feature film about Buddha *Buddhadev* was produced in 1923 by the Hindu producer of mythologicals, "Dadasaheb" Phalke, "the father of Indian cinema" (Bakker, 2009, p.133). Phalke made the first entirely Indian film *Raja Harichandra* (1913), establishing the mythological genre, which created a connection between religion and Indian cinema that persists to this day (Dwyer, 2006, p.1). To Bakker (2009), though Buddha films have been produced in countries such as India, Japan, China and Korea, only a couple of feature films on Buddha have become successful: *Buddhadev* (1923) produced by Dadasaheb Phalke, *The Light of Asia* (1925) directed by Franz Osten and Himansu Rai during the silent film era, *Shaka* (1961) produced by Japanese filmmaker Kenji Misumi, and *The Little Buddha* (1993) directed by Bernardo Bertolucci (p.135).

In Chinese cinema, Buddhist and Taoist elements have been prominent in films from the very beginning of Chinese production in the 1920s. The presence of Buddhism and Taoism in Chinese films can be found in martial arts films; legends and myths from Buddhism and Taoism; and plots of Taoist priests or common people that deal with the supernatural world of ghosts and Chinese gods.

Images of Buddhist temples and monks in Chinese films were already present in the silent film era. They are especially abundant in Chinese *wuxia* and Shaolin films. Zhang Shichuan's *Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (1928), a silent *wuxia* film with a story that takes place mainly in a Buddhist temple, was released serially in 18

instalments over three years to its audiences who kept coming back for more (Costanzo, 2014, p.57). In *Red Heroine* (1929), the protagonist Cloud Maiden acquires her martial arts skills from a Taoist mentor. Due to the popularity of the *wuxia* film genre, an estimated 241 *wuxia* films were produced by around 50 studios, and many of these films were based on stories adapted from the popular 16th century novel *Journey to the West* which has strong Buddhist and Taoist elements (Costanzo, 2014, p.57).

Bruce Lee was a notable martial arts actor who introduced the genre of *kung fu*, together with its philosophy which comprises Buddhist and Taoist ideologies, to the United States. While Bruce Lee succeeded in gaining a supporting role on TV series *The Green Hornet* (1966-1967) and guest appearances on other TV shows, David Carradine, a non-martial artist, was given the role of the Shaolin monk Kwai-Chang Caine in the TV series *Kung Fu* (1972-1975) though Bruce Lee auditioned for the role. In 1973, a US and Hong Kong co-production *Enter the Dragon*, which starred Bruce Lee and was known as “the first American produced martial arts spectacular”, gained significant box office success. Hong Kong cinema broke into the American market in 1972 with its *kung fu* film *King Boxer* produced by the Shaw Brothers (Bowman, 2010, p.17). Between 1971 and 1973, around 300 Hong Kong *kung fu* films were made for the international market, and some of these have never been released in Hong Kong itself (Hunt, 2003, p.3). In the 1980s, in American theaters, martial arts stars were not made up of only Asian actors but Caucasians such as Chuck Norris, Jean Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal (Tierney, 2006, p.607). In addition to offering a glimpse of what martial arts is all about through *kung fu* films, Bruce Lee also gave talks on *kung fu* and its philosophy in universities and wrote about them (Little, 1997, p.12). In 1963, he wrote the book *Chinese Gung Fu: The Philosophical Art of Self Defense*. In 1964, Bruce Lee worked on a manuscript. However, it was not published till John Little was invited by Linda Lee Cadwell (Lee’s widow) and Adrian Marshall (Lee’s attorney) to edit writing, notes, photographs and research materials that Lee left behind into the book *The Tao of Chinese Gung Fu* (Little, 1997, p.12). Lee (1997) explains that the core of *kung fu* is Tao, which means “the spontaneity of the universe” (p.116).

Another master of *wuxia* film “who brought a new level of technical artistry and a touch of Buddhist philosophy to the genre” was King Hu (Costanzo, 2014, p.58), a Taiwan director who pioneered a poetic depiction of martial arts different from the usual Hong Kong-style *kung fu* in the 1971 film *A Touch of Zen* (Landler, 2001). King Hu staged his fight scenes like ballets and the ritualized actions of Peking Opera (Costanzo,

2014, p.58). Teo (2007) observes that *A Touch of Zen* still leaves traces on contemporary cinema in films such as Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). The concepts of Zen are seen in the artistry that delivers a level of "universal transcendence" (Teo, 2007, p.5). It "combined martial arts action with political allegory, a ghost story, a love story", "referencing Chinese poetry, painting, philosophy, music, and history" to achieve "a universal, transcultural quality" (Teo, 2007, p.5).

While most people would imagine that Chinese martial arts are associated with fights and violence, Taoist concepts of "harmony" and "world order" and Buddhist concepts of right action (doing no harm to other living beings), compassion and non-violence can be seen in Chinese martial arts films that transmit the message of "peace" through the warriors, fight scenes and martial arts. This thesis will analyze *Hero*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *The Karate Kid* further in this aspect. Bruce Lee sums up the connection of "peace" and martial arts practice in the following paragraph (Lee, 1997):

The best soldiers are not warlike; the best fighters do not lose their temper. The greatest conquerors are those who overcome their enemies without strife. The greatest directors of men are those who spread peace to the others. (p.143)

The Taoist philosophy of *kung fu* also has traces in Chinese gangster films (Nochimson, 2007, p.73). In addition, religious Taoism is also prominent in these films. For instance, the gangsters normally worship the Taoist god Kwan, "who represents loyalty, integrity, and business" (Nochimson, 2007, p.73). For instance, in John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), recognized as the first Hong Kong gangster film, Mark, the immigrant gangster protagonist is staunchly committed to the values of honor, loyalty and brotherhood and has never committed violence for instant gratification of impulse or materialist reward, but to defend the integrity of the Triad (Nochimson, 2007, p.74, 78). Nochimson (2007) explains that Hong Kong gangster films can be traced back to the martial arts genre through transitional films like *Chinatown Kid* (1977) directed by Chang Cheh (p.73). *Chinatown Kid* tells the story of a martial arts champion who is forced into the gangster life in the modern world, but carries with him his *kung fu* ideals all the time (Nochimson, 2007, p.73). In 1996, the *Young and Dangerous* series, a group of eight films directed by Andrew Lau, emerged. The centrality of a group of immigrant gangsters replaces the "glamorous lone gangster figure" in John Woo's films (Nochimson, 2007, p.75). The *Young and Dangerous* series featured elaborate Taoist

rituals, such as the Chinese funeral ceremonies and ceremonies of celebration as part of the gangster's group identity "created through assertion of communally available ways of performing the coherence of the immigrant community" (Nochimson, 2007, p.86-87).

The growth of Western interest in the Oriental however did not begin with martial arts films (Bowman, 2013, p.5). In fact, such an interest emerged after World War II, fueled by frustrations with Western institutions, combined with anti-Vietnam War sentiments (Bowman, 2013, p.5). Bruce Lee entered at the height of the popularity of the counterculture in the West and offered "a complete transformation in the image of the male hero" through *kung fu* films. Popularizing *kung fu* through the Hollywood cinema created a contemporary myth of the martial arts form (Bowman, 2013, p.5). Lee is said to have "bridged cultures" and "revolutionized the martial arts" through the genre of *kung fu* (Thomas, 2008, p.233). Chinese martial arts and its philosophy have thus become a transcultural icon, even though some may argue that the version of Chinese martial arts presented to the West is devoid of its nationalist or political discourse, for example, the political connotations that are attached to martial arts practices such as *qigong* and *falun gong* (Xu, 1999, p.963-964). From the perspective of Roland Barthes, Chinese martial arts, as a cultural symbol, is a contemporary myth that resonates with the cultural and ideological values of audiences. The myth of martial arts arrived in the West with its "massive and seductive quantity of Eastern mysticism surrounding and embellishing it with legends and traditions of the enormous physical prowess to be achieved" (Bowman, 2010, p. 151). After Bruce Lee led Chinese martial arts to popularity in the West since the 1970s, other Chinese martial arts actors who made their way to the West since the late 20th century are Jackie Chan, Jet Li and Michelle Yeoh.

Legends and myths from Buddhism and Taoism can also be seen in classic popular films such as the Taiwanese productions *The Eight Immortals* (1971), *Monkey King With 72 Magic* (1976) and the mainland Chinese animation film *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King* (1979). *The Eight Immortals* (1971), directed by Chen Hung-min, depicts the story of the eight immortals from Chinese mythology, who exist to fight against the evil forces for the good of mankind; *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King* (1979), directed by Wang Shuchen, Yan Dingxian and Xu Jingda, is an adaptation of a story from Chinese mythology in which the Taoist boy-deity Nezha breaks into the Dragon King's underwater palace and defeats him; and *Monkey King With 72 Magic* (1976), directed by Fu Ching-wa, is based on an episode in the story of the Monkey King before he meets the monk Xuanzang to go on a journey to the West (India)

to retrieve Buddhist scriptures. The story of the monkey king and his rebellion against the Jade Emperor of Heaven is also portrayed in *The Monkey King* (2013) directed by Cheang Pou-Soi of Hong Kong and starring Donnie Yen as the protagonist. Images of Buddhist temples and monks appeared in the Shaolin martial arts film series *The Shaolin Temple* in the 1980s, co-produced by Hong Kong and China that starred Jet Li as the key protagonist. The series originated with *The Shaolin Temple* in 1982, followed by *Kids from Shaolin* (1984) and *Martial Arts of Shaolin* (1986) and gained popularity among the Chinese communities of East Asia. Taoist and Buddhist images and ideas are also abundant in other forms of Chinese martial arts films such as *Tai Chi Master* (1993), *Kung Fu Cult Master* (1993), *The Temptation of a Monk* (1993), King Hu's *Come Drink With Me* (1966) and *A Touch of Zen* (1971), and the internationally acclaimed *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and *Hero* (2003). These last two films are chosen for analysis in my thesis.

The popularity of Taoist practices of alchemy and breath control, and the notion of immortality in the post-Han period of Chinese history had greatly influenced the genre of *wuxia* films which feature heroes performing such superhuman feats as walking through fire, flying through the air and walking on water (Fielding, 2011). There are also films that portray the use of physical exercises, sexual techniques and special diets by the characters to sustain well-being or extend their longevity (Fielding, 2011). For instance, in Tsui Hark's *Once Upon a Time in China II* (1992), Wong Fei Hung is able to walk through fire; in the "Going Home" episode of horror film *Three* (2002) directed by Peter Chan, a Chinese couple use traditional herbs to preserve a dead body for years and to enable the hair and nails of the corpse to continue growing; in the "Dumplings" sequence in *Three... Extremes II* (2004) directed by Fruit Chan, an aging lady discovers the key to youth and sexual vitality in a secret dumpling recipe; and in Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), the middle daughter explains that food has to be balanced based on its energy and nature according to ancient Chinese philosophy (Fielding, 2011).

Stories of spirits and ghosts from the Buddhist and Taoist traditions can also be found in Chinese films. The tradition of "hungry ghost" or "stiff corpse" can be found in the belief systems of Buddhism and Taoism (Costanzo, 2014, p.214). For both religions, spirits wander the earth after death and haunt the living because of unresolved issues such as an unpunished wrong or unrequited love (Costanzo, 2014, p.214). "Ghosts" and "stiff corpses" in film include *The White Haired Girl* (1950) co-directed by Chinese directors Wang Bin and Shui Hua, and are found in the highly popular Hong Kong

production *A Chinese Ghost Story*, released in 1987, and its most recent remake, also known as *A Chinese Fairy Tale* (2011). One of the collaborations between Western and Eastern producers on the theme of “ghost” is *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974) produced by Hong Kong’s Shaw Brothers Studio and British Hammer Studios, which has rich images of Buddhist temples, Buddha and martial artists surrounding the story of seven vampires. Many of the Chinese horror films have their source from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, a collection of nearly 500 supernatural tales written by Pu Songling (1640-1717) (Costanzo, 2014, p.237). His characters include the ghosts that are usually sensuous young women, naïve young scholars who are easy prey for any temptress, and powerful priests who battle the ghosts (Costanzo, 2014, p.237).

In the 21st century, two significant transnational Chinese films that have made their way to global box office success are *wuxia* films *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and *Hero* (2003). Ang Lee, director of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, has expressed in various interviews his conscious demonstration of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies through plot development and characterization (Lee, 2000a; Lee, 2000b). On the other hand, Zhang Yimou does not mention the use of Buddhist or Taoist philosophy in his film *Hero*. However, film critics have viewed *Hero* as a film that illustrates meanings and spirituality from Buddhism and Taoism (Finkel, 2006; Lee, 2007; Li, 2008; Von Busack, 2004). Von Busack (2004) describes the movie as “one of the finest cinematic expressions of Taoism ever”. Finkel (2006) sees *Hero* as “a virtual storehouse of ancient Chinese myths” that “reflects its roots in the ancient traditions of Confucian teachings, Buddhism and Taoism” (p.10).

Taoism, which is sourced from Chinese philosopher Laozi who lived around the 6th century BC, comprises the wealth of Chinese wisdom. Elements of Buddhism have also been blended with Taoism after Buddhism spread to China from India 2,000 years ago. Zhang Yimou could have been influenced by these philosophies as part of his demonstration of “Chineseness” in his films. Taoist ideals are also present in his *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), in which the characters Jin and Mei desire to be “free like the wind” and to “go live life like the wind” (Fielding, 2011, p.126). Though the characters do not become “free like the wind” eventually, they learn that the way to live in their socially restrictive situations is to “let go” (Fielding, 2011, p.127). Taoist ideals of living according to the rhythm and flow of nature, and *wu wei* (acting through not acting), as well as the Buddhist concept of non-attachment can be identified in the film. However, the use of folk and religious symbols to create “Chineseness” in films could be a tested

and formulaic way to bring local works to the global stage. Chow (1995) observes that “in the era of transnational capitalism”, the “ethnicity” of Chinese cinema has become a sign of “cross cultural commodity fetishism” (p.59). At the same time, such “Chineseness” is not totally authentic both from the point of view of the Chinese, and also from the perspective of Western audiences. For instance, there are critics who found Zhang guilty of “distorting history” and “emphasizing visual effects at the expense of character development” (Costanzo, 2014, p.61).

As illustrated above, Chinese filmmakers who work in diverse film genres ranging from historical drama to horror have adopted Buddhism and Taoism in their films. Outside Chinese cinema, other prominent films that include Buddhism are *Siddhartha* (1972) directed by Conrad Rooks which is based on a novel of the same name by Herman Hesse depicting the spiritual quest of a young man; Thai horror film *The Coffin* (2008) directed by Ekachai Uekrongtham which is based on the theme of death, and inspired by a Thai ritual that involves lying in a coffin to get rid of bad luck (Channel News Asia, 2008); *The Razor's Edge* (1984) directed by John Byrum which centers on an American who visits India and Nepal where he encounters Hinduism and where he finds spiritual guidance from a Tibetan monk, respectively; *The Golden Child* (1986) directed by Michael Ritchie which is about the kidnapping of a Buddhist mystic child by an evil sorcerer, with Eddie Murphy playing a detective who is given the task of finding and protecting the child; the Hollywood film *The Glimmer Man* (1996) which portrays a Buddhist police detective who adopts practices from Buddhism and uses *mala* (a string of beads used in Tibetan Buddhist prayers and prostrations) to calm his mind (Adherents.com, 2010); *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) directed by Korean director Kim Ki-duk which also centers on a monk with each stage of his life represented by a season, as the title of the film suggests.

Film Analysis and Chapter Mapping

Exploring the relation between Buddhism and Taoism, Jungian psychology and cinema, the research of my thesis presents discussions from the analysis of popular films directed by both Western and Chinese directors on how images and philosophies from Buddhism and Taoism aid the viewers in going through a journey of individuation in the cinema. Textual analysis through a Jungian lens is carried out to answer the research

questions. Hollywood films and popular films directed by both Western (particularly Europe and the United States) and Chinese directors from 1995 to 2010 that include messages and symbols of Buddhism and Taoism are chosen for analysis.

Films that are viewed widely by moviegoers are classified as popular films. The process of selection includes surfing the Internet and combing through the list of movies with Buddhist or Taoist themes recommended by various scholars and Adherents.com, a website established in 1998, which contains the largest online data on major religions in the world. After going through the synopsis of these films, I selected films that demonstrate certain distinctive tendencies in their use of Buddhism or Taoism in depicting journeys of self-discovery. The Chinese films selected have made their way to international audiences.

Films from the late 20th century onwards are chosen for four main reasons. Firstly, Hollywood films with Asian religious elements have become increasingly evident since the 1990s. Examples can be seen in the major popular films on Buddhism — *Kundun* (1997), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) and *Little Buddha* (1993) — that were produced in the 1990s. Secondly, other than Western religions such as Christianity and Judaism, other religions that originated from Asia such as Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and New Age spirituality have also increasingly become part of American pop culture since the 1990s. For instance, in 1990, there was an hour-long TV movie *Hollywood Spiritually* that featured celebrities' search for esoteric spiritual disciplines of yoga, Buddhism and other alternative forms of healing. Thirdly, Chinese directors such as Ching Siu-Tung, Ang Lee and Zhang Yimou began to gain international success with films such as *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and *Hero* (2003) (Benyahia, 2006). In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, the Taoist master played by Wu Ma lives away from mankind, contemplates the Tao, and tries to perfect himself in his quest for immortality (Nepstad, 2004). In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the protagonist Li Mubai enters a Taoist monastery and is an expert in the Wudang School of swordfighting. He has a 400-year-old sword, Green Destiny, which has special powers. Although his Taoist practice is at a high level, he believes that the last remaining blockages which he encounters in his Taoist practice are due to his attachment to the sword. Film critics view *Hero* as a film that illustrates lessons in the Tao (Li, 2008; Von Busack, 2004).

I viewed twenty popular films produced between 1995 and 2010 that comprised themes of Buddhism or Taoism before I selected five films for analysis. The films that

I viewed include *The Glimmer Man* (1996), *Kundun* (1997), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), *Himalaya* (1999), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *Shaolin Soccer* (2001), *Hero* (2002), *Bulletproof Monk* (2003), *The Promise* (2005), *Red Cliff* (2008), *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), *2012* (2009) and *The Karate Kid* (2010). I have selected *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) directed by Ang Lee, *Hero* (2002) directed by Zhang Yimou, *The Promise* (2005) directed by Chen Kaige and *The Karate Kid* (2010) directed by Harald Zwart for analysis.

At the initial stage of the research, I included popular films of diverse nature for the study. For instance, art house films that are popular, Hollywood films, popular Asian films and popular independent films. However, in the process, I found that there were too many sociocultural and production differences between these films that called for attention, thus diverting the focus away from analyzing Buddhism and Taoism on screen. I then took a deliberate effort to select films that were diverse enough to provide space for comparing and addressing different aspects of Buddhism and Taoism in films through a Jungian lens, and yet were similar in a certain context. Eventually, films that satisfied these three qualities were selected: 1. Large-scale productions; 2. Hollywood films or films with Hollywood characteristics; 3. Films with Chinese characteristics.

Large-scale popular films were chosen as these films are normally rich in images and colors, which provide wide opportunities for the analysis of universal symbols and imageries in films. Hollywood has established itself as the center of global film industry. Often, Chinese directors measure their success based on the level of recognition they gain in the Hollywood scene. Buddhist- and Taoist-themed films also started to appear in Hollywood in the 1990s. Hollywood films were therefore selected.

Though Buddhism originated from India, the Chinese form the largest Buddhist population, based on statistics gathered in 1997 (Ash, 1997, p.160-161). Furthermore, as a researcher, I am proficient in the Chinese language and able to compare the Chinese films in their original language with those that are translated into English. “Chinese cinema with Hollywood characteristics” and “Hollywood with Chinese characteristics”, which were termed by Berry (2013, p. 186), thus formed the criteria for the selection of films for study. The meeting of East and West can be found in these films. While the line between “Chinese cinema with Hollywood characteristics” and “Hollywood with Chinese characteristics” can be blurred, I would consider *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* and *The Promise* as Chinese cinema with Hollywood characteristics. I

see *The Karate Kid* and *Seven Years in Tibet* as Hollywood with Chinese characteristics though *Seven Years in Tibet* was banned in China due to its political sensitivity.

Seven Years in Tibet (in English) was selected for analysis as it is one of the key Hollywood films produced about Tibetan Buddhism after the exile of the Dalai Lama. The film comprises Buddhist themes and centers around the life of the boy Dalai Lama. Popular actor Brad Pitt plays the role of Heinrich Harrer who meets the Dalai Lama. The film was also released at a time when there was a “Tibet craze” due to the active “Free Tibet” movement extensively promoted by celebrities and through popular concerts and audio CDs (Bishop, 2000).

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Hero and *The Promise* are popular Chinese films from the genre of swordplay films in which philosophies from Buddhism and Taoism can be identified. These films have also gained significant success at an international level. They marked a breakthrough for Chinese filmmakers as both films found immense success in Hollywood, and at the same time gained recognition from Chinese movie viewers. The concepts of formless Tao, emptiness, *yin-yang*, the middle path, meditation and stillness, poisons of the inner soul, attachment and non-attachment, no killing and non-violence can be identified in these films.

The Karate Kid (in English) starred Jackie Chan as the protagonist and presents Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. *The Karate Kid* is about an American kid Dre Parker who follows his mother to China and is bullied by other kids in his new environment. He gets to know Mr Han, a *kung fu* master played by Jackie Chan and eventually learns that the essence of *kung fu* is to “make peace” and not to “fight”. Through the learning of *kung fu*, Dre learns the lessons of Taoism and Buddhism as well. The movie also shows the Taoist holy site located at Wudang Mountain of China. This film is shot across the lands of the East and the West, and uses the Chinese character Mr Han to bring out the Chinese religious philosophy of Taoism and Buddhism.

These are popular films of different genres, different eras and different settings. *Seven Years in Tibet* is an adventure film about Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer’s journey to India and Tibet between 1939 and 1957; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a Chinese swordplay film set in the Qing dynasty which is based on a novel by Wang Dulu; *Hero* is a Chinese swordplay film set in 227 BC during the Warring States Period in ancient China; *The Promise* is a Chinese swordplay fantasy film set in an ancient era where men and gods live together; and *The Karate Kid* is a contemporary fiction film set in modern China. The differences provide diversity to the discussion of the topic.

The element of fighting, however, is present in all the films. *The Karate Kid* (2010), which is selected for analysis, centers on the theme of *kung fu* and Taoist philosophy related to the learning of *kung fu*. While *The Karate Kid* belongs to the genre of *kung fu* films, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* and *The Promise* are *wuxia pian* (swordplay films). *Wuxia pian* is used to describe a genre of film in Chinese cinema that is different from *kung fu* films, although both types of films can be collectively categorized as Chinese martial arts films. Other terms such as “Chinese warrior films”, “martial chivalry films” and “Chinese sword-fighting films” have also been used widely to describe the genre of *wuxia pian*. There is, however, no absolute differentiation between *wuxia pian* and *kung fu* films. Lau (1980) views that *wuxia pian* generally refers to Chinese martial arts films that comprise armed combat, typically swordplay, while *kung fu* films generally refers to films that feature weaponless fighting from Chinese martial arts tradition. Teo (2009) explains in his book *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema* that a *kung fu* film emphasizes on the martial arts while a *wuxia* film emphasizes on “chivalry and the pursuit of righteousness” (p.4). This paper would take into consideration these explanations as the characteristics of *wuxia pian* and view *wuxia pian* as Chinese martial arts films that feature “a wandering swordsman who rights justices” (Klein, 2004, p.24). This description of a *wuxia* film echoes Teo’s explanation which emphasizes chivalry and righteousness, and shows fighting styles that involve the use of weapons such as swords or long poles.

While the films selected for study are obviously created for international audience, and there are parts that are predictable, the films generally do not fall into cliché treatment. Narrative archetypes are different from clichés. Clichés refer to things that are predictable or overdone. However, in the cinema, narrative archetypes allow the viewers to identify with characters on screen and the journeys that they go through. In literary criticism, an archetype refers to recurrent patterns of narrative, actions, themes, images and character-types, which can be identified in a wide variety of literary works, as well as in myths, dreams and social rituals (Abrams, 1999, p.12). Cliché, on the other hand, is an over-used idea or expression which is banal and loses its originality (Dupriez, p.98). In a cinema, clichés may refer to recurring idea, plot or character that has become commonplace with no surprises.

There is a saying, “if the scene is about what the scene is about, the scene isn’t working” (Slater, 2005, p.3), thus, when superficiality and cliché are identified in a film, the film falls flat (Slater, 2005, p.3). At the same time, the familiar elements which

include universal patterns have to be present, together with the unique, to generate strength in a film (Slater, 2005, p.3). Archetypal themes and characters, such as the tales of heroes, of fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, aging and premature death, are embedded motifs that satisfy a primal psychological and spiritual need in us (Conforti, 2005, p.56). This explains why cinema goes love to watch the same stories again and again, and laugh and cry over the various renditions (Conforti, 2005, p.56). However, it does not mean that the archetypal quality of the film has to do with having numerous recognized archetypes in the content (Slater, 2005, p.6). A good film has to be able to accurately and creatively deliver its cinematic and archetypal narrative coherently (Conforti, p.55), and needs to unveil layers beyond what is seen on the surface (Slater, 2005, p.6), be it through plot development, good acting, cinematic language, script or a combination of all the film elements mentioned. Thus, a film would not work if “the underlying grand themes and sweeping universal patterns are too transparent”, which turn the film into a cliché (Slater, 2005, p.3).

Van Gennep (1960) describes three stages in traditional rites of passage (p.11). In the first stage, the person who is undergoing the rite of passage is separated from the community; in the second stage, “the person is between the discarded former identity and the new one”; and in the third stage, the person re-enters the community with the new identity (Van Gennep, 1960, p.11). Campbell (2008) articulates the similar three stages in his description of the journey of everyman— “the separation or departure”, “the trials and victories of initiation”, and “the return and reintegration with society” (p.28-29). Such stages of rites of passage form the narrative archetype that allows the audience to embark on a similar journey while viewing the films. The stages could be seen in the films selected for analysis— In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Jen leaves home in order to escape from an arranged marriage, and eventually realizes the way of Tao after encountering a series of events on the journey away from home; in *The Karate Kid*, Dre experiences his rites of passage in a foreign country; in *The Promise*, Kunlun leaves a life of a slave to one which he finds a new identity when he identifies himself as a citizen of Land of Snow and one who is capable of shaping his own destiny; in *Seven Years in Tibet*, Heinrich leaves Austria and begins his rites of passage in the Eastern lands of India and Tibet. Though the element of separation from the community is not obviously shown in *Hero*, I see that Broken Sword does not belong to his community of chivalric warriors the moment he decides not to kill the King, and thereafter he discards the identity of the type of warrior he initially sets up to be.

There are areas that the films do not follow a conventional treatment though narrative archetype is used. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, like King Hu's *A Touch of Zen*, is unconventional in its treatment of a martial arts film which typically feeds the audience with fights and fast action. The first fight in the film does not occur until about fifteen minutes into the plot, which is different from the pacing of the traditional martial arts films (Dilley, 2007). Klein (2004) observes that by delaying the first fight scene in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Ang gives himself time to provide background on the Green Destiny sword and to introduce the emotional tensions between his main characters (p.32). By spacing the fight scenes apart, Ang allows the plot to emerge without rushing through the dialogue scenes (Klein, 2004, p.33). In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, it is the female who walks the path of Tao, which is contrary to the commonly portrayed accounts of male figures who attain enlightenment. In *The Karate Kid*, spiritual attainment of women is also strongly represented by the lady who practices with the cobra, from whom Dre eventually understands the true meaning of Tao in martial arts. Mr Han, though is a Self archetype, has his weakness and darkness to face too. He is not presented as a wise person in a simplistic and one-dimensional manner. Despite the predictability in the plot of the film, the cinematic treatment of the film and the details taken into sculpturing the characters draw the audience into their journeys. The archetypal relation of a father and son is portrayed through Mr Han and Dre, and they both play an important role in helping each other to attain the wholeness in themselves.

The relationship between Heinrich and the Dalai Lama is also hinted as that of a father and son in *Seven Years in Tibet*. Without having overly dramatic treatment of the interaction between the two characters, they are portrayed as being tightly knit and constantly nurturing each other with their day-to-day conversations. The Dalai Lama, who is a real life spiritual archetype, is not shown as a cliché spiritual character who knows everything, and the Tibetans are also not all stereotypically portrayed as virtuous. In *Seven Years in Tibet*, the Dalai Lama is not a perfect monk, and he is depicted as someone who cries in the middle of the night, and someone who is helpless when asked to make political decisions in front of the Chinese government. The Dalai Lama is also presented as someone who has worldly concerns. For instance, he loves watching movies and asks Heinrich to help him build a movie theatre; he loves to know about the Western world; and he is like any other human being who show different emotions including fear and sadness. The fragility and the worldly aspects of the Dalai Lama are

shown in the film. While most of the Tibetans are portrayed as compassionate beings, the Tibetans initially display extremely unfriendly attitude towards the Westerners (Heinrich and Peter); and the regent of Tibet betrays Tibet and aids the Chinese military troops in the invasion of Tibet.

Chen Ya-Chen, in her examination of gender issues in Chinese martial arts films, observes that in *The Promise*, the writer/director Chen Kaige enriches and rewrites the romantic archetypes of popular folktales such as Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty (Chen, 2012, p.97; Chow, 1995, p.39). Chen (2012) explains that by making a comparison between Snow White and Qingcheng:

In the story of Snow White, the man who wins Snow White is Prince Charming, an aristocrat, while the losers are seven laborers in the woods; however, in *The Promise* the winner in the competition for Qingcheng is Kunlun, a slave, while the losers are his master, General Guangming, and another aristocrat, Duke Wuhuan. (p.108)

In addition, Chen Kaige also frees Qingcheng from the male-centeredness of ancient China, by allowing the character “to explore possibilities to be with different men” and depriving “the male aristocrats of the privilege to limitlessly enjoy being surrounded by countless pretty women” (Chen, 2012, p.108)

In *Hero*, the hero archetype Nameless becomes a hero not by accomplishing his mission, but by giving up his mission. The twist in plot and character development is different from many stories that portray the hero archetype as one who attains one’s goal ultimately. Most hero archetypes have survived at the end of the story as a victor. However, instead of emerging as a winner at the end of the film, Nameless sacrifices his life. The shadow archetype, the King, is also not painted in a cliché fashion. While Emperor Qin is described as a ruthless and aggressive king by many, there are elements of romance and justice in his inner world. His narrative sequences take an unhurried pace and the images are presented in a slow and steady rhythm.

The criteria to differentiate between Buddhism and Taoism in films are categorized by major differences between the two religions in the various aspects of religious symbols, rituals, representatives/figures/saints of religion, myths and philosophy. Major philosophy and rituals of both religions are described in the previous sections. However, this research also takes into consideration that there are cases where hybridization of the two religions has taken place. Jungian psychology which includes the concepts of individuation, archetypes and universal symbols serves as the primary

analytical methodology of the analysis of Buddhist and Taoist elements in the films. While the process of individuation of archetypes can be found in both religious and non-religious films, looking at the journey of a hero from the perspectives of Chinese myths and religions as well as the martial arts genre highlights the spiritual aspect of the journey. This opens up discussions on Buddhist and Taoist symbols and philosophy within the journey that both the characters and the audience may perceive.

Films are analyzed in the following chapter sequence: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *The Karate Kid* (2010), *The Promise* (2005), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) and *Hero* (2002). The arrangement is made such that there is a gradual shift in the analysis of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies from a daily realm to the metaphysical realm that includes the limitless ability of the mind, visionary dreams and the power of imagination. Chapter 2 kicks off the actual analytical content of this thesis with my discussion of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (henceforth referred to as *Crouching Tiger*). The main theme relates to the understanding of the Self. The precious sword Green Destiny in the film is an important symbol for individuation and it also represents Buddhist concepts of attachment and poisons of the inner soul. The acquiring and losing of the sword by Jen and Li Mubai (the two lead protagonists) point to the struggle between attachment to and letting go of the Self. Chapter 3 discusses the individuation journey of an American kid who finds himself in a strange land, China. The film is *The Karate Kid*. Here, the Taoist concept of humility as well as the concept of non-self, which can be found in both Buddhism and Taoism tie in with the focus on Chinese martial arts. Buddhist and Taoist philosophies are demonstrated through the process of martial arts practice. It emphasizes the importance of being compassionate and humble, and yet having the strength of a warrior at the same time, which points back to the fundamental principle of balance in Taoism (*yin-yang*). Chapter 4 examines the limitlessness of the mind which can be found in the concept of the formless Tao and the Buddhist concept of emptiness. The film is *The Promise*, a Chinese epic *wuxia* film with elements of fantasy and supernaturalism. The film makes use of the concept of limitlessness in both Buddhism and Taoism to develop its plot revolving around themes of free choice, fate and destiny. The moment when the duality of time and space does not exist at the end of the film can be described as a leap into a realm of the unconscious. Chapter 5 explores the mystical themes of a Bodhisattva being and his prophetic dreams and visions in *Seven Years in Tibet*. In the film, Heinrich Harrer (played by Brad Pitt), who represents the hero archetype, is portrayed as an aggressive and arrogant person

possessing qualities that are seen as negative emotions in Buddhism. As a reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Self archetype, as represented by the Dalai Lama, is believed to have the wisdom and compassion of a Bodhisattva. From the Dalai Lama, Heinrich learns about great compassion and a way of life. Chapter 6 underscores the Buddhist concepts of non-violence and non-attachment, as well as the Taoist concept of *yin-yang* in the *wuxia* film, *Hero*. Like *The Karate Kid*, *Hero* teaches that a true warrior is one who gives up the act of violence. Similar to *Crouching Tiger*, it carries the message that any forms of attachment, including attachment to performing deeds of justice can bring suffering to one's life, thus ultimately it is important for one to seek balance in life. The difference between *Hero* and the other films analyzed is that it makes use of the active imagination in depicting different stories narrated by its characters. *Hero* is filled with poetic metaphors in describing the *yin-yang* notion of swordsmanship. Finally, Chapter 7 is the Conclusion, wherein I discuss the implications of my research, drawing on Jungian psychological theory in analyzing Buddhist and Taoist images in popular films, and some limitations of the study. While each movie has its own unique characteristics, the common factors of the films chosen are that they portray Buddhism and Taoism in terms of images and/or ideologies, and that they are popular films made for a global audience. Hopefully, this study will provide new directions for further research in the field of film and religion.

This research which is drawn from psychology and religion contributes to film studies in an interdisciplinary fashion. It seeks to expand the current literature on religion and film which is dominated by research focusing on Christianity. In addition, much of the current literature has focused on the economic, entertainment, and political implications of films. By providing a focus on the spirituality of films through the perspectives of Buddhism and Taoism, this research contributes to a less-studied area in the field of religion and film. It is my wish in writing this thesis to offer an original viewpoint by introducing a Buddhist and Taoist perspective into the field of film studies. I have adopted Jungian methodology and as such, have sought to present a more interdisciplinary framework in my study of images and ideologies of Buddhism and Taoism as contained in the popular films of my choice. Such a perspective, I believe, is worthy of further exploration and discussion. Buddhist and Taoist philosophies can enhance universal understanding. Their intrusion into cinema can likewise enhance the moving image as a truly universal language of enlightenment.

CHAPTER TWO

SEEKING THE SWORD IN *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*

Introduction

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, a Chinese film that contains religious elements from Buddhism and Taoism and has gained significant success at an international level, is the focus of this chapter. It begins my analysis of the selected films as texts that will demonstrate Buddhist and Taoist factors and motifs. While the film is not explicitly religious, the director Ang Lee has expressed his conscious demonstration of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies in *Crouching Tiger* through plot development and characterization (Lee, 2000a, p.7; Lee, 2000b, p.137). *Crouching Tiger*, according to Ang, is a fusion of popular mass product and the classical Chinese culture of martial arts and Tao:

We embrace the most mass of art forms and mixed it with the highest — the secret martial arts as passed down over time in the great Taoist schools of training and thought. (p.7)

James Schamus, the executive producer and screenwriter of *Crouching Tiger* comments that Ang Lee's approach to the film is to make "an eastern movie for western audiences and in some ways a more western movie for eastern audiences" in order to sell a movie to both the Western and Eastern audiences (The Guardian/NFT Interview, 2000). Ang Lee also admits that he is "Westernizing" the film to reach out to more people, including both the Western and Chinese audiences. He addresses the contention that *Crouching Tiger* is "too Hollywood" in an interview featured in "East Meets West", a special edition of *Newsweek* (2001):

That was the only way to make this movie. Hollywood financed it. Hollywood was responsible for the esthetics. I use a lot of language that's not spoken in the Ching dynasty. Is that good or bad? Is it Westernization or is it modernization? ... In some ways modernization is Westernization — that's the fact we hate to admit. Chinese people don't watch Chinese films anymore. They watch Western movies. In Taiwan, *Crouching Tiger* did so well because it was promoted as a big Hollywood movie. (Hajari, p.79)

With James Schamus as one of the screenwriters, the script was first written in English, and then translated into Chinese and then translated back to English. In each version, modifications were made to the structure and texture of language in order to present "a

more Western narrative form” and yet not losing the cultural context of the story (Schamus, 2000a).

This is the first film in this thesis for which I am applying the framework of Jungian psychological concepts of archetypes, individuation and universal symbols to form a systematic method of analysis of its religious elements. A similar framework will be used for the analysis of the other four films. From the approach of Jungian analysis, the main theme relates to the understanding of the Self through journeys of individuation undertaken by the key characters. The precious sword Green Destiny in the film is an important symbol for individuation and it also represents Buddhist concepts of attachment and poisons of the inner soul. Jungian archetypes of the shadow, the wise old man, the hero, the child, the trickster, the anima in man and the animus in woman will be identified in *Crouching Tiger* and the other four films. From Jung’s perspective on the function of archetypes, filmmakers can use archetypes to aid the audiences to the primordial and unconscious realm (Jung, 2003, p.82). In *Crouching Tiger*, the protagonist Li Mubai is the hero archetype who wishes to transform not just the environment and individuals around him, but also his inner self. Jen is the trickster archetype that strives to be a hero but appears to be immature and self-centered. Jade Fox, who is driven by greed, anger and jealousy, represents the shadow archetype. Yu Shu Lien is the Self archetype who is able to give sound advice to Jen and Li, and is quick to find the best ways to handle the various problems encountered. By reflecting on the thoughts and images that emerge from the conscious and unconscious minds, the viewers can gain a greater understanding of the inner being after going through a journey of individuation together with the characters presented. The parallelism of these Buddhist/Taoist concepts and the Jungian theory of Self will be elaborated on in this chapter.

The Sword and the Journey of Self-discovery

The symbol of a sword is central to the plot in *Crouching Tiger*. The plot unfolds and develops around Li’s personal sword “Green Destiny”.

The film opens with conversations between swordswoman Yu Shu Lien and Li Mubai, an accomplished swordsman who has the intention to give up his warrior life to seek inner peace. Li asks Yu to pass the Green Destiny to their friend Sir Te. Five minutes into the film, an extreme long shot which reveals the old city of Beijing serves

as an establishing shot that suggests an era for the setting — the Qing dynasty. The entire architecture of the old city which is shaped like a mandala, along with a more dramatic tone of music, gives audiences a sense of ancient grandeur. This scene is directly followed by that of the sword which subtly suggests that the sword has seen its fair share of history as well. The sword is presented by Yu to Sir Te. She then gets to know Jen, the daughter of a rich family. At night, in Sir Te's study room where he is showing the Green Destiny to Chief Yu, who is Jen's father and a visiting Manchu aristocrat, an elaborate description of the sword is given. As the sword is unsheathed, a low light shines unto Chief Yu's face and the sword gives off a luminous blue glow in the dark. The camera moves to a close-up of the sword and the inscriptions on it. Audiences are told of the measurements, missing parts, and origins of the sword as Chief Yu runs his fore and middle fingers down the sword before finally flicking the tip. The sword emits a vibrant ethereal sound of "ding" created by a waterphone which gives an awakening feel. The scene evokes mystery and suspense surrounding the sword. In the middle of the night, the sword is stolen by a masked thief (whom the audience soon finds out is Jen). A breath-taking fight between Yu and Jen during the pursuit of the sword ensues. Yu later uncovers Jen as the thief and advises her to return the sword. Jen heeds the advice and returns the sword quietly. The story later reveals that from a young age, Jen has acquired martial arts skills from Fox, and has also secretly studied the Wudang manual diligently. Fox is a vengeful character who killed Li's master as he had refused to impart martial arts skills to her. Jen later steals the sword again before she leaves home to escape from an arranged marriage. Amidst the main plot is a romantic undertone: that of the unspoken love between Li and Yu, and a more expressive one between Jen and a bandit named Lo.

Symbolically, the sword represents the concept of "Self". Throughout the film, stories revolve around the Green Destiny. In the Chinese martial arts world, there is a saying: "The warrior will die with the perishing of the sword". If a warrior is without his sword, he is said to be weakened and will suffer defeat. Thus, the sword is deeply related to one's status, dignity and self-worth in the martial arts world. In Buddhism, Manjusri, the Buddha of Wisdom, is often depicted as a male Bodhisattva wielding a sword with his right hand which represents the attainment of transcendental wisdom after cutting through all illusions (Beer, 2004, p.277). In Hindu mythology, Goddess Kali is often seen with a sword and a severed head. The sword signifies divine

knowledge and the head represents human ego which must be slain by the sword to be liberated from all attachments in the world (Feuerstein, 1998, p.38).

Throughout the film, the acquiring and losing of the sword by Jen and Li point to the struggle between attachment to and letting go of the Self. Here, the perishing of the sword does not point to the death of the physical self, but an egoistic self. In the process of discovering the wholeness of Self, it is important that one attains non-self. To attain liberation through the work on Self, the paradoxical idea in Buddhism is that one has to attain non-self which involves non-attachment to one's own possessions and worldly pleasures by abandoning the three inner poisons of greed, anger and ignorance. According to Jung, the ego, which is full of distortions and projections, has to be dissolved before one can experience the unconscious (Moacanin, 1992, p.285).

In *Crouching Tiger*, attachment to material things and a worldly life can be seen from the stealing of the sword and the extensive fight sequences due to the pursuit of the stolen sword. According to Buddhist teachings, attachment to worldly concerns is a source of suffering (Thien-An, 1975, p.105). Thus, one has to cultivate non-attachment to attain ultimate happiness (Thien-An, 1975, p.107). To experience the wholeness of Self, the warriors in the film have to let go of the sword. From the beginning of the film, Li recognizes this need to let go in order to attain enlightenment. His act of giving away his sword which represents attachment shows his determination to let go of the life of a warrior, which has brought him much trouble. While Yu presents the sword to Sir Te on behalf of Li, Yu tells Sir Te:

It [the sword] has brought him [Li] as much trouble as glory. Help him to leave these troubles behind. Otherwise, he'll never be able to start anew.

Li wishes to “start anew” on a journey of self-transformation. However, he cannot surrender the sword fully as he still holds vengeance in his heart. He is unable to let go of his final mission, which is to take revenge for his master's death caused by Fox. The act of giving away the sword and then getting it back symbolizes Li's struggle between his aim to attain non-attachment and his attachment to worldly concerns. This in turn stops him from gaining the liberation of mind that he longs for.

Jen, on the other hand, deliberately seeks out the sword. Initially, she does it out of curiosity. However, gradually, she experiences a sense of power closely associated with the reputable sword and decides that she has to acquire it. Her attachment leads her on a journey of turmoil. From the perspective of Buddhism, the sword is only as

important as it is perceived to be. In a scene during the fight between Li and the masked thief (Jen), Li says to her, “Like most things, I am nothing. It’s the same for this sword. All of it is simply a state of mind”. This sentence implies that the importance of things lies in the concept of duality. It is the mind of duality that gives importance to something that may not be important by its own nature. It is the mind that labels it as “important”. Thus, the sword is not important by itself, but it is one’s attachment to it that makes it important. Jung (1992) explains similarly:

It is a fundamental mistake to imagine that when we see the non-value in a value or the untruth in the truth, the value or the truth ceases to exist. It has only become relative. Everything human is relative because everything rests on an inner polarity. (p. 75)

Jen, through her attachment to the sword and the fights that follow, realizes that she has caused many problems and much hurt to others with her vengeful, willful and rebellious behavior. Eventually, she seeks self-transformation by letting go of the physical world and putting behind all the worldly concerns, including the sword and her lover, by jumping off Wudang Mountain. Ang Lee (2000a) points out that in his film, it is the women who are “walking the path of ‘way’” in the end (p.7). Teo (2009, p.176) views the scene of Jen’s leap from the mountain as her quest for redemption and her journey towards the path of Tao. While the scene could also be read by critics as suicide, a feminist existential statement or a sign of cowardly surrender (Chan, 2009, p.89), I see the leap as Ang Lee and Teo’s interpretation of the quest for Tao, and I would also further assert that Jen does not die in the end. Throughout the film, Jen has been flying, defying gravity and leaping in the air with her adept martial arts skills. There is a scene at the lake where Li pulls the sword from Jen and flings it into the rushing water down the cliff. Jen is so attached to the pursuit of the sword that she plunges towards the sword and dives into the depth of the lake for it. In this scene, she is shown leaping from the top right to the bottom left of the screen in pursuit of the sword. In the final leap, Jen is leaping in the pursuit of something greater — Tao. She leaps in the same direction as the scene at the lake where she goes after the sword thrown by Li. The crouching leap, which occurs in both scenes, suggests that it is an act she is familiar with and able to execute as a martial artist. Her arms are open and she looks like the crucified Christ while she is floating towards the clouds, signifying that her next stage of life is not death but resurrection and redemption.

In *Crouching Tiger*, the female characters are all depicted as strong-willed fighters (Cai, 2005, p.442). Some read the representation of strong female protagonists in *Crouching Tiger* as a move to impress the American audience as “it relates itself to the current Hollywood trend of feminizing *kung fu* in popular movies like *Charlie’s Angels*” (Lo, 2005, p.228-229). However, this may not be the case, because as early as the silent film era, the women in the *wuxia* films “were often fierce and valiant fighters” as reflected in the film titles such as *The Female Knight-Errant* (1925), *Five Vengeful Girls* (1928), *The Great Woman* (1929), *The Female Pirate* (1929), *Red Heroine* (1929), *Girl Bandit* (1930) and *Woman Bodyguard* (1931) (Costanzo, 2014, p.57). Thus, the recent global representation of women was already present in the Chinese silent films (Costanzo, 2014, p.97). This is in contrast to the early Western and samurai films, where women were portrayed as weak and helpless (Costanzo, 2014, p.97). In addition, King Hu, whose *wuxia* tradition Ang Lee followed to a large extent in *Crouching Tiger*, portrayed strong female warriors demonstrating the heroism generally embodied by male warriors during the 1960s and 1970s in his *Come Drink with Me* and *A Touch of Zen* (Szeto, 2011, p.42-43). Teo (2007) highlights that King Hu’s *A Touch of Zen* is different from the preceding films of the *wuxia* genre as it is “too slow” (p.7) and it is unconventional in its treatment of the movie by putting focus on “the female knight”, “the ambiguous sexuality” and “the mysticism of Zen” (p.15), and he attributes King Hu’s greatest legacy in the martial arts cinema as the “popularization of the female knight-errant figure as a revitalizing heroine in both the *wuxia* and *kung fu* forms” (p.146). Costanzo reads Jen’s struggle for freedom as a female in the traditional Qing society as the “conflict between individual happiness and social responsibility, between the Taoist pursuit of one’s nature (“the way”) and the communal obligations of Confucianism” (Costanzo, 2014, p.98).

Archetypes and Individuation

From the narrative of *Crouching Tiger*, most audiences will understand Li and Yu as the warriors who fight for justice, Jen as the rebellious and curious youth, and Fox as the cruel yet pitiful woman. Through Jungian lenses, the key characters in *Crouching Tiger* represent the journeys into unconscious realms. Li can be viewed as the hero archetype who wishes to transform not just the environment but his inner self too. Jen is the trickster archetype that strives to be a hero but appears to be immature and self-

centered. Fox, who is driven by greed, anger and jealousy, represents the shadow archetype. Yu fits into the Self archetype (personified as a wise woman) as she is able to give sound advice to Jen and Li, and is quick to find the best ways to handle the various problems encountered.

Hero Archetype

Jung (1964) views the hero as a transforming entity that can bring positive changes on others and act in ways that benefit society (p.68). Campbell (2008) elaborates that a hero often begins his journey by leaving his community of origin and this journey is often filled with various challenges in a new environment that he has to overcome (p.331). The hero is frequently represented as having near-superhuman power which he uses to defeat the forces of evil, even in the face of temptations (Jung, 1964, p.101). Campbell (2008) states the hero as not only facing external obstacles on his journey, but also forces that operate within him (p.16). Thus, a hero does not only have to transform the people and society around him, but has to overcome all malevolent forces within him and transform his inner self too. However, in myths, the external environment of the hero is often portrayed as harsh and dangerous, as these conditions match the hero's readiness to face all challenges ahead (Campbell, 2008, p.48). In *Crouching Tiger*, Li, a wandering warrior, can be viewed as the hero who strives to remove the evils of society which includes Fox who has taken many lives.

The film begins with the stage of the journey where Li finally experiences deep silence in meditation and decides to give up his warrior life and deal with his inner obstacles. The scene is depicted with the art of drinking tea. Li is drinking tea while narrating his experience during meditation, emanating a sense of harmony and simplicity. However, he is still unable to arrive at a blissful state as he is unable to let go of his worldly concerns:

Li:

During my meditation training ... I came to a place of deep silence ... I was surrounded by light ... Time and space disappeared. I had come to a place my master had never told me about.

Yu:

You were enlightened?

Li:

No. I didn't feel the bliss of enlightenment. Instead ... I was surrounded by an endless sorrow. I couldn't bear it. I broke off my meditation. I couldn't go on. There was something ... pulling me back.

Yu:
What was it?

Li:
Something I can't let go of.

(He pauses and looks at Yu.)

In this case, “something” is seen as referring to his suppressed love for Yu which he cannot let go of. As the plot develops, we realize that he has not totally relinquished his desire to take revenge for his master's death. In the end, Li manages to kill Fox with his personal sword, but is unable to save his own life. While Li's love for Yu seems to be a worldly concern, it indicates the beginning of a new journey for him to integrate the states of opposites within him. As a masculine warrior, he has decided to give up the sword to get in touch with the emotional aspect of himself, which is an attribute of anima. According to Jung (1990), anima is the feminine aspect that a man experiences while animus is the masculine aspect that a woman experiences (p.124). The anima aspect of the male must be integrated for him to experience the wholeness of Self (Jung 1990, p.175).

Li, as an accomplished swordsman, seeks Jen out as his student, which is different from many orthodox situations where the students are the ones who seek for the master. Li has never wanted to fight with Jen on an equal ground. He is constantly trying to enlighten her through his words, and not the sword. Whenever he is involved in a fight with Jen, he chooses to fight with some form of handicap, for instance, with one hand behind his back, with his sword sheathed or using a stick instead of a sword (Chan, 2009, p.88). During the second fight between Li and Jen that takes place at night, romantic music played on cello is used to accompany the fight, which suggests the nurturing act of Li towards Jen. Prior to the fight, they are in a temple with red pillars. Low-key lighting is used in the scene where Jen is masked. This is the first time that Li conveys to Jen that she needs a master, with the underlying intention of having her as his disciple. The setting of a dim and enclosed temple represents a sacred aspect hidden in Jen which she has to discover, suggested by her masked face.

Beyond the apparently nurturing relationship of a teacher and student, there are also scenes that suggest Li has suppressed sexual desire for Jen. One of these scenes is the fights between Li and Jen in the bamboo forest. Bird's-eye shots of the fights in the bamboo forest give a sense of peace and calmness; the meeting of the master (Li) with

the disciple (Jen) is surrounded by the color green which symbolizes healing and nurturing. However, the fight scene at the bamboo forest reflects complexities of emotions and relationships. The suppressed love of Li for Jen and eroticism are portrayed through the use of slow motion close-ups of Jen's face in an arching position with Li looking deep into her face. Costanzo (2014) explains that Li is constantly in control of his movements while the two duelists "float and glide among the treetops in an ecstasy of green" and the only moment that he loses control and falls is when he "looks into Jen's beautiful face, framed in close-up by the bamboo stalks" (p.96). This also shows Li's abstinence from desires and emotions that is developed through his meditation and adherence to the Wudang code of conduct. Li sees his anima aspect in the young girl and wishes to have her under his wing, as a student or even as a lover. To him, she is a rough diamond to be polished. There is a contrast of Li's grace and even temper versus Jen's more frenetic and anxious actions in the scene.

Li's journey of individuation is completed with his connection with his anima, represented by Yu. In *Crouching Tiger*, Li connects with his own femininity by expressing his love for Yu before his last breath:

Li:
My life is departing. I've only one breath left.

Yu:
Use it to meditate. Free yourself from this world as you have been taught. Let your soul rise to eternity with your last breath. Do not waste it ... for me.

Li:
I've already wasted my whole life. I want to tell you with my last breath ... I have always loved you. I would rather be a ghost, drifting by your side ... as a condemned soul ... than enter heaven without you. Because of your love ... I will never be a lonely spirit.

This scene symbolizes Li's union with the anima aspect of his being which he has neglected throughout his life. Jung (1992) points out "the union of opposites through the middle path" as the "most fundamental item of inward experience" (p.205). Jung's emphasis on the importance of achieving a balance of opposites echoes the concepts of *yin/yang* in Taoism and the teaching of the Middle Way in Buddhism. In the psychological commentary of *The Tibetan Book of Liberation*, Jung (1992d) explains that in Chinese philosophy, the oppositions that complement each other as "cosmic principles" are named the "*yang* and *yin*" (p.66). In Taoism, one needs to attain a balance

in *yin* and *yang* to become whole, and in Buddhism, it is only through the Middle Way that one can achieve enlightenment without going through the extremes of asceticism and sensual indulgence. The recognition of polarity is also a fundamental concept in Tantric Buddhism where the integration of opposites is the core of the Tantric practice: the union of male and female energies; active and passive principles; matter and spirit (Moacanin, 1992, p.282). At the same time, the concept of getting in touch with both the feminine and masculine attributes within a person is not unknown in Christianity too⁴. Thus, Li is able to attain the wholeness of being at the final stage of his life by entering into the world of emotions which is new territory for the warrior. The opposites of masculinity and femininity are integrated within him.

Trickster Archetype

Jen, whom I classify as the trickster archetype, though a naïve and ignorant young lady, is also seeking to attain the wholeness of being in her unconscious mind. Jung (2006) describes the trickster archetype as one who is sly, mischievous and able to change his shape (p.107). Hershey-Freeman (2008) views the trickster archetype as one who can be driven by pure curiosity, which can lead to actions that are hurtful to others (p.13). A trickster is also boundary-breaking and deceptive (Alfieri, 1998, p.31).

Jung (1990) explains that it is important to study the trickster archetype as the characteristics of the trickster can be found in poltergeists and pre-adolescent children (p.256). The trickster archetype is significant in the life of a hero as the trickster has the potential to learn from his mistakes and develop into a hero (Jung, 1964, p.104). While the trickster seems to be labeled with a number of negative attributes, Jung (1964) sees him as a significant archetype in the first stage of the making of a hero — still instinctive, uninhibited and childish (p.104). The aspiring hero has to surpass a threshold guardian who can take on many forms in order to advance to the outside world (Campbell, 2008, p.64). The guardian represents morality and restrictions which include those that the aspiring hero places on himself.

Jen longs for the wandering life of a chivalrous warrior and creates her own fantasy world where she imagines herself as the warrior and plays pranks on others. She steals the sword out of sheer curiosity, fun and enjoyment. To her, the fight with Yu on the roofs and over the walls is like a game in which she takes on another character as a

⁴ See the discussion on non-duality in *The Gospels According to Thomas* on page 24 of the thesis.

masked warrior. After she leaves home to seek a life of freedom, she disguises herself as a male warrior, challenges male warriors she meets on her journey and causes much distress and physical injuries to them with her highly crafted martial arts skills. Like the trickster archetype that takes on different shapes, she tricks others with her different characters.

Jen's instinctive and uninhibited self can be seen from her persistent pursuit of a comb taken from her by the bandit Lo, despite the unknown dangers that she may encounter in the desert, depicted in a flashback of her life there. Her fascination with the Green Destiny and her desert romance show her quest for freedom. As she starts to embrace the sense of timelessness, wilderness and freedom that the desert and Lo have given her, she falls in love with both and is hesitant to return home. Her threshold guardian is her family that serves as an obstacle in her journey to freedom. Tied down by a conscious need to follow the rules of society, she agrees to an arranged marriage that she later flees from.

Jen's longing for freedom symbolizes her journey of individuation. The fight sequences between Jen and Yu on the rooftops and over the walls, as well as Jen's fight sequences with Li over natural landscapes of water and bamboo trees visually resemble flying. The flight symbolizes Jen's journey of transcendence. Jung (1964) points out that the trickster has the ability to "fly about the universe as a bird", and that the "bird is the most fitting symbol of transcendence" (p.147). Ang Lee is deliberate in creating the sense of flying in the fight scene at the lake, and movement of the actors in flight is inspired by that of a dragonfly. He explains in an interview with Abele (2007):

There is an expression in flying technique about dragonflies, because they barely touch the water and then fly away. I wanted to see that literally happen. So we painstakingly structured poles on both sides of this pond and had 20 to 30 people pulling Chow Yun Fat and Zhang Ziyi so they can dip.

The fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger* are hardly earthbound. The fights seem to be dream-like and light with characters who seem to be able to run up the walls effortlessly, leap great distances, twirl through the air, and spring from one rooftop to the next, like a graceful dance. Their weightless way of flying and the ability to float and defy gravity mirrors what is often described in *wuxia* as "*qing gong*" (literally means "light skill"). Costanzo (2014) observes that the camera "catches the action at revealing angles, sometimes from below, sometimes in an overhead shot" with aerial camerawork (p.95). Panning, following, bird's-eye shots and low angle shots are frequently used to

depict the movement of flight. Low angle shots to place emphasis on the leaps and agile movement of the legs that bring about the sense of weightlessness. The camera also flies along with the actors with crane shots, dolly shots and handheld shots to create the sense of mobility. The drumming that accompanies most of the fight scenes could be associated with how drumming is used in Buddhist and Taoist religious rituals, as well as lion dances of the Chinese tradition. The drum beats intensify the fight scenes and they grow more intense as the action ratchets up. The sounds of drumming that accompany the graceful “flight scenes”, together with the indigo hue used for the scene and the vibrant ethereal sounds made when the swords meet, elevate the action sequences into a form of spirituality, where the external fights reflect the spiritual pursuit of the characters. The blue hue used for the night scenes and the green for the bamboo forest scenes emphasize on the element of peace, not violence, of the fight. At the same time, the fusing of energetic drumming and acrobatic movements with graceful fight sequences creates a surreal realm in the cinema. While the rhythm of the fight scene between Jen and Yu at night is fast, the fights between Jen and Li in the bamboo forest are presented with a slow pacing. The fight scene in the bamboo forest is mainly rendered with wide shots, and the fights are not depicted in a vigorous manner but seem to be slow, which gives a romantic feel to the scene. The beauty of the fight in the bamboo forest is commented by Bradshaw (2001):

The brutal clash of fists and weaponry disturbs the birds in the trees and Lee interrupts our view of the fight briefly, in favour of an epiphanic vision of the birds ascending into the sky: a pleasing moment of inspiration which anticipates the climactic fight between Jen and Li Mu Bai as they float through the treetops themselves: in its exuberance and charm, it has to be one of the most beautiful moments in modern cinema.

For the fight sequences between Li and Jen at night and in the bamboo forest, low and melancholic cello music is used, heightening the sense of timelessness.

Due to a lack of proper guidance to achieve the ultimate liberation, Jen is reckless in her behavior and constantly entangles herself in worldly fights and aggressions. She is fast in learning martial arts and surpasses the skills of her master by studying the manual:

Master ... I started learning from you in secret when I was ten. You enchanted me with the world of *jianghu*. But once I realized I could surpass you, I became so frightened! Everything fell apart. I had no one to guide me, no one to learn from.

Jianghu, in the *wuxia* world of chivalry, refers to an alternate society within the real world that functions in opposition to the government or to a semi-Utopia where the knights-errant are able to act in order to punish the evil and exalt goodness (Chen, 1995, p.108).

Jen is thus left with a set of martial arts skills but without wisdom to complement her practice. The essence of Chinese martial arts emphasizes defense and making peace, and not the infliction of violence. The lack of spiritual understanding in martial arts practice leaves Jen with suppressed aggression which she unleashes as she fights with Lo across the desert over a comb and as she fights with Li and Yu over the sword. She is also attached to the shadow archetype represented by Fox.

The need for attaining a balance in life which is described as *yin/yang* in Taoism is taught to her by Li as he fights Jen with a stick instead of a sword:

No growth without assistance. No action without reaction. No desire without restraint. Now give yourself up and find yourself again. There is a lesson for you.

The stick that is moving and pointing to Jen during the fight suggests that she should seek peace and stillness from within. A balanced lifestyle with appropriate discipline and guidance is suggested in Li's words to Jen. Another paradoxical concept that Li teaches Jen about martial arts practice is to attain stillness. With the stick pointing at Jen that he holds in stillness, he says, "You need practice. I can teach you to fight with the Green Destiny, but first you must learn to hold it in stillness". Thus, martial arts practice is not about being aggressive, but rather about being grounded and alert in the face of enemies. Li's style of fighting is different from Jen's in the film. While Jen's actions are speedy and full of aggression, each move of Li's is calculated and precise. Li does not waste his energy on purposeless movements. Each movement of his is focused and defined. There is stillness and control in the moves demonstrated by Li. Again, the union of opposites — fight and stillness — is emphasized here. Jung has also always stressed on the importance of reconciling opposites as part of the individuation process, which is also reflected in the Taoist concept of *yin/yang* and Buddhist concept of the Middle Way (Jung, 1992c, p.66-67).

Furthermore, Jen is characterized as one who carries both feminine and masculine (*yin* and *yang*; anima and animus) energies. For instance, in the beginning of the film, the "female knight-errant" Jen, with her refined facial features, is presented as a homely and sweet daughter of a rich family. Jen is first introduced in the film with a

long shot which reveals her entire back before she slowly turns with delicate steps and is then shown with a full frontal view. Her movement is slow as she seems to be restricted by the stiffness of her carefully embroidered garments, revealing her femininity and wealthy background. The shot which shows Jen's back and gradually reveals her suggests that she is elusive and secretive with untold stories.

Jen seems to be “a dreamy adventuress who wants the freedom of the heroes she reads about” (Corliss, 2000, p.11). However, as the plot develops, Jen demonstrates her masculinity and surprises the audience with her skillful fight sequences and her riding ventures across the desert. Though she is seen to be vengeful, willful and rebellious, as the plot develops, she is the one who lets go of the physical world to enter into a new journey of self-transformation by jumping off Wudang Mountain. Wudang Mountain, which Jen makes her way up on long flights of steps, symbolizes the upward climb in search of spiritual truth. Wudang Mountain, known for its historic significance as a sacred place for Taoist training and practices, represents the abode of Tao.

Jen's Chinese name “Jiaolong” (“Pretty Dragon” in English) also bears significance in this film, and the name is even reflected in the title. According to Dilley (2007), “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” is a common Chinese expression that means “the undercurrents of emotion, passion and secret desires that lie beneath the surface of polite society and civil behavior” (p.138). Jen, while seen to be refined and gentle externally, has burning ambition, desires and recklessness within her.

Ang Lee (2000c) explains that the “true meaning of the film lies with the ‘Hidden Dragon’, which reflects the ‘passions, emotions, desires — the dragons hidden inside all of us’” and “reminds us never to underestimate the mysteries, the potent characters that lie beneath the surface of society” (p.76). While intensification of passions, emotions and desires can bring about negative consequences, they can also bring out creative exploration of the unknown. Ang Lee also uses “poisoned dragon” to refer to the destructive and dark side of human personality. In the film, Li tells Yu that it is important for him to guide Jen to the right path, “For her, they might make an exception. If not, I'm afraid she'll become a poisoned dragon.” Jung uses “dragon” to refer to the destructive attributes in human beings which are normally hidden in the unconscious (Jung, 1964, p.110-111). Jung (1964) expresses that man's conflict with the darkness of Self is expressed by the fight between the archetype hero and the powers of evil which are “personified by dragons and other monsters” (p.111). He further suggests that the hero should draw strength from the dragon, which represents the dark side of the

personality, by coming to terms with its destructive powers before he can overcome it (Jung, 1964, p.112). Jen, after recognizing the destructive attributes in her and in Fox, eventually overcomes these with a leap into a new journey.

Shadow Archetype

While the trickster archetype shares some similarities with the shadow archetype in that both are capable of demonstrating destructive behavior, the trickster appears as a “lawless would-be hero” (Jung, 1964, p.147) whereas the shadow “prefers to make an unfavorable impression on others” (Jung, 1990, p.123). Jung (1964) points out that the shadow in each individual represents the “hidden, repressed and unfavorable aspects of the personality” (p.110). Fox is an archetype of shadow: destructive and vengeful. In the film, Fox appears mostly in night or low-key lighting scenes. For instance, after Fox realizes that Jen has secretly learnt martial arts, their argument takes place in the middle of the night in a dim room where their faces are lit by a single candle, which suggests the dangerous allure of Fox and her hidden vicious motive (Costanzo, 2014, p.92 & 95).

Poison is one of the themes represented both literally and metaphorically through Fox and Jen. Fox uses poison as her weapon during the fight scenes, and she also uses it to take revenge on Jen who surpasses her in sword-fighting skills. The poison in the film also implies the inner poisons that both Fox and Jen have. The actions of these two characters are driven by greed, anger and ignorance. In her greed, anger and ignorance, Jen practices the Wudang manual secretly, steals Li’s sword, and fights with Li and Yu. Fox’s quest for revenge by poisoning the master of Wudang, and her attempt to poison Jen and her killing of Li are also due to the key poisons within her. In the film, the director also gives the figurative definition of “poison” through the conversation between Fox and Jen. Fox says to Jen, “You know what poison is? An eight-year-old girl full of deceit. That’s poison! Jen! My only family ... my only enemy...” The metaphorical meaning of poison is also reflected in Buddhist teaching. In such teaching, the core evils that human beings face are the three key poisons of greed, anger and ignorance that contaminate one’s body and mind, and these poisons can be overcome with the cultivation of wisdom and compassion (Gyaltshen, 2010, p.178).

Jen is attached to Fox, which is a reflection of her possessing the shadow attributes. However, Jung (1964) expresses that one should not repress the shadow, but to tame and integrate it (p.183). To Jung (1964), it is important for one to realize the existence of the shadow within oneself so that one can deal with the shadow sensibly

(p.112). Jen trusts Fox until she finally realizes that Fox has the intention to poison and kill her. Through realizing the shadow in Fox, she eventually comes to terms with the shadow within her and starts to feel ashamed of these dark qualities. Jung (1964) points out that it is particularly through the interaction with people of the same gender that one starts to see the shadow in oneself and in others:

It is particularly in contacts with people of the same sex that one stumbles over both one's shadow and those of other people. Although we do see the shadow in a person of the opposite sex, we are usually much less annoyed by it and can more easily pardon it. (p.175)

I observe that the relationship between Jen and Fox fits Jung's description of how one may see one's own shadow through another person of the same sex. Jen eventually sees the reflection of her own shadow in Fox and starts to understand the negative aspect of herself. Ashamed of this attribute, she is fast to drop her egoistic self and embark on a journey to seek an antidote to save Li's life. This journey signifies her realization of the inner shadow, reflected in Fox, and her determination to be a master of that shadow.

Self Archetype

The Self archetype is often a spiritual character with knowledge, insight, wisdom, cleverness, intuition and a readiness to help (Jung, 1964, p.209). This archetype is a "self-actualizing force" that motivates a person to attain the wholeness of being (Coolidge, 2006, p.72). Jung (1999) sees the Self archetype as the God-image within man:

As one can never distinguish empirically between a symbol of the self and a God-image, the two ideas, however much we try to differentiate them, always appear blended together, so that the self appears synonymous with the inner Christ of the Johannine and Pauline writings. (p.110)

The Self archetype is also one that possesses knowledge, insight and wisdom (Jung, 1990, p.222). In a woman, this archetype is often personified as a superior female figure or a woman with spiritual firmness (Jung, 1964, p.208).

In *Crouching Tiger*, though Yu seems to be a humble character that is led by the sequence of events, she is in fact the executor of the major events. She is quiet and often makes right judgments with her sharp observations and intuition. Frequently, she knows more than what the rest of the characters know but she is silent about it and is the puppeteer who directs the series of actions behind the scenes. Jung states that when the

Self archetype is represented by a female character, the woman is able to identify with the animus in her, and she is able to demonstrate positive attributes such as courage, truthfulness, creativity, boldness and spiritual profundity (Jung, 1964, p.207). These attributes can be found in Yu. Together with her feminine attributes, she is the representation of Tao and wisdom with her embodiment of the juxtaposed concepts found in Taoism as listed by Fowler and Fowler (2008): her outward strength is balanced with a yielding nature; external force is balanced with inner power; the feminine is balanced with the masculine; and verbosity is balanced with silence (p.96).

In all the fight scenes, while the characters are often seen to fly in a gravity-defying manner, Yu has emitted a sense of groundedness. For instance, during Yu's first fight scene with Jen, while Jen is often striving toward the sky, Yu's movements are aligned with gravity (Costanzo, 2014, p.96). She seems to teach Jen to be more grounded in her pursuit of her dreams and desires by throwing a bundle at her and telling her to "Get down here!"

Yu is also quick to identify Jen as the thief who steals the sword, Green Destiny. From Jen's way of applying her strength and strokes in calligraphy, Yu recognizes her as the thief she fought with the night before. This can be seen in the following scene where Yu hints to Jen that she knows Jen has stolen the sword:

Yu:
You're doing calligraphy?

Jen:
I'll write your name. Just for fun.

(Jen writes Yu's name with great confidence and swiftness.)

Yu:
I never realized my name looks like "sword".
(Jen freezes slightly.)

Yu:
You write gracefully. Calligraphy is so similar to fencing.

However, with Yu's compassionate and wise nature, she does not reprimand Jen directly for her actions. She advises Jen to put back the sword with her message cleverly encoded between the lines. She tells Jen on another occasion:

We know who stole the missing item. If the thief returns it, I'm sure Sir Te will pursue the matter no further. (...) Sir Te knows that even well-meaning people can make mistakes ... that can bring ruin to themselves and their families.

With Yu's intelligence, she is also able to get Jen to reveal her skillful physical reactions in daily life. As they are drinking tea and chatting casually, Yu purposefully allows the teapot to slip from her hand. Without even looking down, Jen instinctively catches the teapot with a lightning move. Jen then realizes that Yu is testing her and knows that she has to return the sword to avoid getting into further trouble.

When Yu is with Li, she is also able to lead him to understand that the true meaning of emptiness is not "nothingness" nor is it nihilistic in nature:

Li:

The things we touch have no permanence. My master would say ... there is nothing we can hold on to in this world. Only by letting go can we truly possess what is real.

Yu:

Not everything is an illusion. My hand ... wasn't that real?

Li:

Your hand, rough and callused from machete practice ... All this time, I've never had the courage to touch it.

(Li takes Yu's hand and presses it to his face.)

Yu is also able to understand the illusive nature of all forms when she comments on the Green Destiny:

Yu:

Beautiful but dangerous. Once you see it tainted with blood, its beauty is hard to admire. It's 400 years old.

This is also an understanding of emptiness which is about seeing things beyond their duality, and focuses on direct realization of the true nature of all things which is dependent upon causes and conditions (Trungpa, 1987, p.208). The essence of "emptiness" is also explained in the Heart Sutra of Buddhism. Emptiness thus means empty from the "inherent existence" (Burton, 2004, p.86) and seeing things beyond their duality (Trungpa, 1987, p.208).

In the entire film, Yu is the one who remains calm from the beginning until the end even as she witnesses the death of the person she loves. In Buddhism and Taoism, one of the goals for practitioners is to attain inner peace and clarity of mind. Suzuki (1970) observes that in the Eastern tradition of Zen or Tao, it is when one can detect greatness in small things, that one's mind is free and can be transcended beyond "all venal, base human feelings, which lifts one to a realm equal in its splendor to that of the Pure Land" (p.2-3). In Buddhism, one enters into the Pure Land as one gains

enlightenment. Thus, the state of the Pure Land can be interpreted as a blissful and awakening state that one experiences. Yu, in *Crouching Tiger*, is not just wise and compassionate but also calm when dealing with all problems. She is like the Bodhisattva figure in Buddhism. Bodhisattva is an enlightened and compassionate being who has vowed to stay in the cyclic existence of life and death to save all sentient beings. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is also taught that every human has the potential to become a Bodhisattva with the development of wisdom and compassion. Bodhisattva is thus not a God with superhuman qualities (Thomas, 1992, p.215). In Buddhism, every individual has the potential to become a Buddha, to attain enlightenment. Jung presents a similar idea. He sees that in every being, there is always an urge for “light” or a higher consciousness (Jung, 1989):

I understood that within the soul from its primordial beginnings there has been a desire for light and an irrepressible urge to rise out of the primal darkness. (p.269)

Eventually, Yu also manages to aid Jen to go on a new transformative journey by advising her to travel to Wudang Mountain.

Other than the archetypes of hero, trickster, shadow and Self, as well as universal symbols of sword and dragon that are discussed, other significant universal symbols shown in the film are related to nature.

Universal Symbols

Elements of nature: water, lake, desert, caves and trees are prominent in *Crouching Tiger*. There are a number of poetic extreme long shots of the natural environment in the film, with fights that take place in many of the natural and rustic settings. The extreme long shots of the bamboo forest and the desert give a feeling of peace through showing the wide expanse of space. The extreme wide shots of the desert slow down the sense of time, and portray timelessness, fantasy and magical aspects of the landscape, bringing audiences into a mystical world.

Symbols of nature in relation to human growth and psyche can be explained through myths and beliefs of different cultures and religions. In Shamanism, which is a religion of nature, practitioners believe in the mystical importance of natural elements such as trees, mountains, sky and water in relation to one’s spiritual development (Hoppál, 1987, p.20).

Hockley (2001) views the symbolism of water as complex and having varied meanings (p.92). Water can mean baptism, wisdom, the unconscious and even death. Thus, water can represent a new journey, initiation or the exploration of the unknown. In *Crouching Tiger*, water and the sound of it appear in a few scenes. The key scenes with emphasis on water are where Lo brings water for Jen to bathe in his cave in the desert, where Jen and Li fight across a lake and where Li and Fox are killed in a cave. The scene where Lo brings water for Jen is accompanied by an unknown song sung by Lo. The cleansing of Jen's body and the unknown song symbolize the beginning of a new inner journey into the unconscious. Jen begins to embrace the animus element represented by Lo and experiences the liberation of mind brought by the timeless desert. However, that is a transient moment of bliss for her as she eventually decides to return to her parents and is obliged to carry out the duty of a filial daughter by marrying a rich man. It is also in the desert that Jen's stubborn and aggressive behavior is tamed by Lo. The long erotic fight sequences between Jen and Lo in the desert and within the cave suggest the embrace of anima and animus in each of them. These sequences are choreographed as two bodies maintaining close physical contact and moving together at all times, forming the circular image of *yin/yang* represented by the two characters. At the end of all the fights, Jen is like a ferocious dragon that is eventually tamed by Lo; their sexual union representing the complete union of animus and anima.

In the cave where Jen and Li are poisoned and Fox is killed, water is dripping and water sounds are prominent. While such sounds are normally soothing, they are disturbing here as the scene is presented together with the drugged Jen who has her nipples protruding through her wet and translucent clothing. The portrayal of Jen in this scene suggests passion, desires and repressed emotions. Chan (2009) describes the scene as an "erotic confrontation" between Li and Jen, when Jen pulls back her outer garments to show her breasts through the wet clothing, and utters, "Is it me or the sword you want?" (p.89).

A sense of danger is created with shadows in the cave and the intense sounds of water dripping. Death is also hinted at in this scene. The water in the cave, which looks dark and dirty, also suggests the presence of poison. It symbolizes the actual poison that caused the death of Li and Fox, as well as the Buddhist view of the three key poisons that contaminate the minds of Jen and Fox.

While the barren desert is used to describe hopelessness and loss of life in many narratives, it has spiritual significance here. It is a place for divine revelation and salvation of the soul (Cirlot, 2001):

This confirms the specific symbolism of the desert as the most propitious place for divine revelation ... This is because the desert, in so far as it is in a way a negative landscape, is the realm of abstraction located outside the sphere of existence and susceptible only to things transcendent. Furthermore, the desert is the domain of the sun, not as the creator of energy upon earth but as the pure, celestial radiance, blinding in its manifestation ... burning drought is the climate par excellence of pure, ascetic spirituality — of the consuming of the body for the salvation of the soul. (p.79)

In *Crouching Tiger*, Lo manages to bring an abundance of water to the cave for Jen. Water is precious, especially in the context of a desert. Water in the desert thus indicates that Jen has begun a spiritual journey and found a new meaning in life. The reference to water in a desert as a new spiritual journey can be found in the Bible too:

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)

In the film, trees are featured prominently, especially in Li and Jen's fight amongst the bamboo trees. Jung uses the symbol of a tree to describe the journey of growth and individuation. He says that the seed of a mountain tree has in it "the whole future tree in a latent form", and factors such as quality of soil, sunlight and wind are needed to determine how the tree's growth is shaped (Jung, 1964, p.163). The tree will gradually come into existence and move into the realm of reality (Jung, 1964, p.163). He also elaborates that in ancient Chinese culture, a round or square altar is seen to be placed beneath an old tree, and that the altar symbolizes the Self, to which the ego must give in to allow the process of individuation to take place (von Franz, 1964, p.166). Li and Jen's fight amongst the bamboo trees is shot as if they are hanging from the trees, and the fight sequence symbolizes their journey of individuation to attain the wholeness of Self.

In *Crouching Tiger*, the symbol of a cave can be seen in scenes where Jen and Lo build their relationship and where Fox and Li are killed. Jung (1968a) notes that the cave signifies security and asylum, and it is often a meeting place for the archetypes (p.146). Cooper (1987) describes the cave as symbolic of the underworld where initiation ceremonies or deaths take place prior to rebirth and illumination (p.31). It is

also a place where change can occur, achieved by overcoming opposing and dangerous power (Cooper, 1987, p.31). In the film, the cave is where Jen's ferocious behavior is tamed and where she experiences a glimpse of the freedom of mind. Towards the end of the film, the cave is where the archetypes meet. In the cave, Fox uses poison to drug Jen and to kill Li. The poison in Jen signifies her mind which is also poisoned by greed, ignorance and anger, while the death of Li and Fox leads to the cleansing of poisons within Jen. The cave is thus a place where Li finally surrenders his masculine warrior persona and embraces the feminine aspect within him, and it is a place where Jen is initiated into the new journey of her life to seek liberation.

The lake where the fight occurs between Li and Jen symbolizes a reflective self. The water's mirroring surface signifies that Jen should likewise reflect and get in touch with her true nature, that of the Buddha. Thus the symbol of a lake can represent reflection, contemplation and transition between life and death. Cirlot (2001) in his *Dictionary of Symbols* suggests that the lake, which is connected with the symbol of the abyss, connotes lowness in the spiritual path, but at the same time the lake is a mirror that allows man to reflect and contemplate:

The fact that water-symbolism is closely connected with the symbolism of the abyss serves to corroborate the fatal implications of the lake-symbol, for the part played by the liquid Element is to provide the transition between life and death, between the solid and the gaseous, the formal and the informal. At the same time, the lake — or rather its surface alone — holds the significance of a mirror, presenting an image of self-contemplation, consciousness and revelation. (p.175)

This contemplative meaning of lakes is also mentioned in the ancient Taoist text *Book Of Changes*:

Lakes resting on the other,
Lakes resting one on the other:
The image of the joyous.
Thus the superior man joins with his friends
For discussion and practice.

After the fight at the lake, they arrive at a scene set amongst the greenery of bamboo trees. Here, Li says to Jen who appears to have lost the fight, "I only let you go because I wanted to see the real you." He believes that under her rebellious and vicious appearance is a heart that is untainted and free from hatred. In an earlier scene where Li fights with Jen as the masked figure, he tells Jen, "That's a risk I'm willing to take. Deep

down, you're good. Even Jade Fox couldn't corrupt you", which suggests that beyond her ignorant self is one who is capable of achieving wisdom and higher consciousness.

Jung (1990) argues that understanding the unconscious is essential for total understanding of one's mind in order for one "to see the true face":

True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (p.43)

"True face" in this respect echoes the Buddhist concept of "Buddha nature". A persona, in Jung's view, is the aspect of ourselves that we portray to others.

Fight scenes are choreographed as if they are dances in nature to show the contradiction between nature and chaos. These scenes also indicate the fight to see the nature of one's heart. Both Buddhism and Taoism have a close link to nature, and nature is not seen as a separation from "self". In fact, these two religions suggest that a person can reach a level of becoming one with nature if the inner and outer energies are balanced. Tao can be seen as a way of flowing with the rhythm of nature and embracing it. Taoism stresses the fact that human beings are essentially "natural beings", and that a person's thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) instead of acting against the natural flow of life (Adler, 2002, p.15).

Conclusion

Ang Lee (2000a) mentions that Tao cannot be defined and that Tao can only manifest itself through contradictions and through the conflicts of the heart (p.7). Several conflicts of heart and contradictions are shown in the film. All these paradoxes bring out the *yin/yang* element of Taoism, and the concept of emptiness in Taoism. Other Buddhist and Taoist concepts that are identified in the film are the Buddha nature, wisdom and compassion, poisons of the mind, attachment and non-attachment. These are discussed in relation to the Jungian theory of archetypes, collective unconscious, universal symbols, individuation and wholeness of Self. Through the understanding and embracing of opposites, the characters go through journeys of self-realization and transformation, which are represented by metaphorical or actual death and rebirth of Self. The female characters in *Crouching Tiger* are similar to those in King Hu's films

in which the “heroines occupy a superior position in these films”, and they are “tough yet graceful, energetic yet disciplined, never losing their femininity” (Costanzo, 2014, p.59), reflecting the embodiment of both *yin* and *yang* elements.

The dark cinema provides viewers a safe environment where they can go through an individuation process. They are more able to recognize and identify with the various archetypes instead of rejecting them, followed by reflecting upon how these archetypal patterns have or have not been revealed in their own lives. For instance, one that identifies with the hero archetype is more aware of the challenges posed by one’s inner shadow archetype in the process of individuation, through viewing of the hero’s process in the film. If one is at a stage where one is illusive and deems oneself a “hero” when one has not attained all that is needed to become a hero, one is able to reflect by looking at the behaviors and lessons learned by the trickster archetype, as well as the trickster’s interactions with other characters. In the cinema, one is also able to get acquainted with the dark aspect of one’s personality without submitting oneself to actual harm. For instance, by viewing the shadow archetype in the film, one is able to enter into a state of “the realization of the shadow” (Jung, 1964, p.174). The projection of the shadow archetype in film serves as an inner judge that reproaches viewers of the shadow in their own beings and makes them realize the need to tame it. I see the shadow archetype as a representation of the destructive thoughts and negative emotions in humans. In Buddhism, instead of ignoring all these negative emotions within us, it is necessary that we embrace and recognize them. It is only when we are aware of these emotions that we are on our way to transform them into positive attributes (Rāhula, 1974, p.30). In order to be aware of negative emotions such as anger, greed, hatred, jealousy or delusion, a Buddhist is taught to focus the mind so that he can be mindful of the arising of these emotions (Coleman, 2006, p.164). After understanding these afflictions and the causes of their arising, one can then cultivate wholesome mental attributes to remove them (Apple, 2006, p.161). For instance, one can cultivate loving-kindness, compassion and right understanding to remove the negative emotions (Rāhula, 1974, p.30). The method of being mindful of afflictions within us and then applying antidotes to them corresponds to Jung’s belief that we need to recognize the shadow within us before we can tame and integrate it. Jung (1964) states that it is important for one to realize the existence of the shadow within oneself so that one can deal with the shadow sensibly.

While the film received rave reviews from the Western world, it had a poor reception in China and Taiwan. The film is “accused of inaccurately representing

China's history" (Chan, 2009, p.76). Ang Lee, however, did not convey that he was painting *Crouching Tiger* according to a certain period of China's history. In fact, he made it clear that *Crouching Tiger* is the story of an imaginary China — a "China that probably never existed" (2000a, p.7). In the foreword of the book *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Ang Lee (2000a) mentions that the production team had chosen the most populist genre in film history — Hong Kong martial arts — to tell the story of "a kind of dream of China" that existed in his boyhood fantasies and arose from the martial arts movies he grew up with and "by the novels of romance and derring-do" he read instead of doing his homework (p.7). As a film for the international market, *Crouching Tiger* did not attempt to portray the history or actual cultural dimension of China. It also did not stick to the typical presentation of a *wuxia* film. The film is "located somewhere between history and myth", which contains certain "cultural particularities of China in an eclectic matrix of world culture, arising from personal motives and aspiring to universal truths" (Costanzo, 2014, p.97). The production involved five companies in five different countries: Taiwan, Britain, China, Hong Kong and the United States, and actors from different parts of the Chinese-speaking world (Costanzo, 2014, p.88-89). The film includes talents like composer Tan Dun (born in China and studied in Beijing and New York), cellist Yo-Yo Ma (born in Paris and a resident of New York), pop singer Coco Lee (born in Hong Kong and raised in San Francisco), and screenplay writers James Schamus (American), Tsai Kuo Jung and Wang Hui-Lin (both Taiwanese).

Another criticism of the film by Chinese viewers is that different Mandarin accents were used by the cast (Ota, 2007, p.138; Hjort, 2012, p.168). For instance, Chow Yun-Fat who played Li is from Hong Kong and his Mandarin has a Cantonese accent; Michelle Yeoh who played Yu is from Malaysia and has a different Mandarin accent; and Zhang Ziyi who played Jen is from Beijing and has a Beijing accent (Ota, 2007, p.138). Another criticism by the Chinese viewers is that the film is Westernized for the non-Chinese viewers. For instance, the film is criticized for having a prominent romantic plot that undermines its martial arts genre (Hjort, 2012, p.168). Furthermore, the subtitles did not convey some of the meanings in the original language. An example is "Jen" (used for "Jiaolong"), which does not provide the meaning of "Pretty Dragon" in Chinese. Teo (2009) points out that the use of "Jen" undercuts the cultural context of "Chineseness" and that "Jiaolong" has the meaning of "Pretty Dragon", which makes her the "Hidden Dragon" of the title. However, in the context of selling the film in a transnational market, a non-diegetic name was preferred and the masculine quality of

the Chinese name “Yu Jiaolong” was replaced by a feminine-sounding but foreign name “Jen” (Teo, 2009, p.177).

Though Buddhist and Taoist philosophies can be identified in the films, elements from Buddhism and Taoism that are specific in their cultural context are avoided in the films. For instance, Fung and Chan (2010) point out that in order to ensure that the morsel of Chineseness could be easily understood by the overseas audience, classic philosophy in *Hero* is repackaged. Dilley (2007) observes that cultural backgrounds of the Chinese and Western audiences are also taken into consideration while translating the lines between English and Chinese for *Crouching Tiger*. For instance, in the scene where Li expresses his love to Yu before his last breath, the literal English translation goes:

I would rather wander at your side, following you, and be a ghost in the wilderness for seven days; even as I drift into the darkest place, my love will not let me be an eternally lonely spirit. (Dilley, 2007, p.134)

However, the English subtitles do not reflect the Taoist and Buddhist belief that the dead will wander around as ghosts for seven days after death, which is alienating to the Western audience:

I would rather be a ghost drifting by your side as a condemned soul than to enter heaven without you. Because of your love, I will never be a lonely spirit.

Jay (2006) points out that the subtitles used for the scene appeal to the Western audience by “bringing in the Western notions of the condemned soul” instead of the notion of a wandering ghost (p.139). In addition, the scene could be seen as a “Hollywood-style death scene” with the hero expressing his affection to his lover with his last breath, which echoed the criticism that the romantic plot is too prominent for a martial arts film. From the cultural perspective, the Chinese audience can understand the symbol of “tiger” as being one of the strongest animals in the Chinese zodiac with characteristics of bravery, competitiveness and unpredictability (Fazzioli, 1986, p.163-164), and the dragon as a fictional creature in the Chinese zodiac that displays characteristics of dominance and ambition (Botha, 2012, p.5). For audiences who do not understand the cultural significance of the two animals in the Chinese zodiac, they may interpret it according to their understanding of these two animals within their contexts.

Thus, while the symbols, characters and themes presented to the Western and Eastern audiences are the same, the cultural perspective could affect how the audiences perceive the film. Though the element of spirituality is present in the film, there could

be audiences who do not perceive it in the same way, for instance, viewers who were disturbed by the accents of the cast or the slow pace of the film may reject the film at the first instance and prevent any possible connections with it.

The film, which includes fantasy scenes of “airy visuals” interspersed with scenes of realistic *mise-en-scène*, poses a challenge of viewing it within the conventions of realism (Lee, 2003, p.291). The film may expect viewers to “enjoy the work of arts as existing in some metaphysical sphere somewhere between reality and fiction”, which may provide the opportunity to connect to the unconscious realms of the audiences by bringing them out of the realm of realism.

This chapter has presented the symbols, myths and philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism in *Crouching Tiger* that parallel the Jungian view of development of Self. Character archetypes and their paths towards wholeness of Self, as well as universal symbols and their psychological connotations in the individuation process are analyzed in this chapter. The sword, as the central image of the film, ties in with the archetypes of hero, trickster, shadow and Self, and the universal symbols of nature (water, lake, desert, caves and trees) and dragon to form one seamless journey of individuation for audiences that go through this process collectively in the cinema. However, the chapter also takes into consideration how cultural differences, ideological power struggles and social context affect the interpretation of the film by the audience.

CHAPTER THREE

QUEST OF *THE KARATE KID*: A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

Introduction: A Stranger in a Strange Land

The wanderer. Success through smallness.
Perseverance brings good fortune
To the wanderer.
(*I-Ching*, translated by Wilhelm, 1967)

The above hexagram 56 of the Taoist text *I-Ching* describes the life of a wanderer. A wanderer is a stranger in a strange land, and “success through smallness” indicates that he should not be overbearing and “should not give himself airs”, as he has no large circle of acquaintances in the new land (Wilhelm, 1967, p.216-217). However, if a traveler is humble and knows how to integrate himself in the foreign land, he may find himself a circle of friends and activities even in a strange land (Wilhelm, 1967, p.219-220). Jung (1962) observes that the journey abroad symbolizes a calling for independence in the development of Self, and that one should not be timid and lazy, thus turning away from this call (p.304).

Dre, in *The Karate Kid* (2010), a remake of the 1984 film of the same name, is a stranger in a strange land as he moves from West Detroit to Beijing. In the 1984 film, relocation also takes place for the protagonist Daniel, though the shift is between different states in America. While the 1984 film is about the learning of karate, the 2010 remake features *kung fu* though the original title is maintained. *Kung fu* refers to Chinese martial arts forms, while karate is a martial arts form that is influenced by Chinese martial arts and developed in Japan (Rielly, 2003, p.11). The literal meaning of *karate* is “empty hands”, which suggests that it is an unarmed combat (Rielly, 2003, p.11). “*Kung fu*”, while referring to the Chinese martial arts, also means any skills that are obtained through time, patience and effort (Yang, 1999, p.3). Krug (2001) observes that the idea of “Asia” among Anglo-Americans has tended to conflate the cultures of a broad region into “a uniform and cultural mass” (p.398). Thus, Chinese martial arts (*wushu*), karate, judo and other Asian martial arts forms are all collapsed into “a homogenous, imaginary block” (Krug, 2001, p.398). The title “The Karate Kid” may mean a kid who masters any form of Asian martial arts.

The Karate Kid (1984) describes Daniel LaRusso (played by Ralph George Macchio), a high school youth who moves from New Jersey to Los Angeles with his

mother. He befriends an attractive girl Ali in the new environment. However, he angers Ali's jealous ex-boyfriend Johnny, and is beaten by Johnny and his gang who are trained in karate on several occasions. An elderly martial arts expert Miyagi intervenes and rescues Daniel from one of the attacks by Johnny and his gang, and eventually agrees to teach him karate and prepare him for a karate tournament where Johnny is to contest him publicly. The main plot of a bullied youth acquiring martial arts skills from an eccentric instructor runs in the 2010 remake. Noriyuki Morita played the role of Keisuke Miyagi from Okinawa who lived in Los Angeles in the 1984 film, while Jackie Chan played the role of a *kung fu* instructor Mr Han in China in the 2010 remake. In the 2010 version of *The Karate Kid*, Dre Parker (played by Jaden Smith) follows his mother to Beijing from West Detroit to start a new life. However, he is bullied by other kids in the new environment. He later gets to know Mr Han who comes to his rescue and tends to his injuries from a fight. Dre is then challenged by the bullies to take part in a *kung fu* tournament. Though Dre seems like a victim as he is bullied by the Chinese kids, he is not totally without fault in the first place. While *I-Ching* advises a wanderer to be humble, Dre is arrogant and egoistical as he steps into a foreign land. To prepare for the tournament, Dre learns *kung fu* and self-defense skills from Mr Han. Serenity, not punches and power, is emphasized and Dre eventually learns that the essence of *kung fu* is to "make peace", not to "fight". Through the training, Dre's learns to be humble, and acquired the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism through the practice of *kung fu*. He eventually wins the tournament despite severe injury caused by the opponent. The movie also shows the Taoist holy site located at Wudang Mountain in China.

In the remake of *The Karate Kid*, the family who moves to China is African American. The change of race may be interpreted from different perspectives. From a social perspective, Žižek (2004) claims that the first kung fu craze in the early 1970s appealed to "a genuine working-class ideology of youngsters", including the African American youths, "whose only means of success was the disciplinary training of their only possession, their bodies" (p.78-79). Jeff Yang (2009), in his commentary on the use of a black actor to play the role of the karate kid, quoted Amy Obugo Ongiri, assistant professor of English at the University of Florida who researches on the communities, on this subject:

The story of martial arts in black communities is part of a much bigger narrative of African American interest in Asian culture... Black interest in Asian culture has a long history.

Many of the black youths that grew up in the 1960s and 1970s watched *kung fu* films in the grindhouse theaters and took up martial arts training (Yang, 2009). The image of Bruce Lee as a protecting/judging super-ego was seen in *Pressure* (1975), where a Bruce Lee poster can be seen in the room of a sobbing African American teenager (Bowman, 2013, p.43). In *Black Belt Jones* (1974), the “black martial arts students battle white gangsters” and the film was the “first U.S.-lensed martial arts actioner” (Brown, 1997, p.33).

From an economic perspective, Berry (2013) notes that the racial choice of the protagonist falls into a “newer tradition of successful African American–Chinese on-screen star pairings” that fulfills a “commercially successful formula that has already been market tested” at the same time (p.186). Examples of such a formula are Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker in the *Rush Hour* series (1998, 2001, 2007), Jet Li and Aaliyah in *Romeo Must Die* (2000), and Jet Li and DMX in *Cradle 2 the Grave* (2003) (Berry, 2013, p.186). The first approach to this starring method could be seen in *Enter the Dragon* (1973) in which Bruce Lee played the “good” Chinese and Jim Kelly played the hip and promiscuous character (Bowman, 2013, p.43).

From the perspective of storyline, the race somehow highlights the protagonist’s status as a stranger in a strange land. Set in China, the people are more familiar with Caucasians who are expatriates in the country. Asians are also more familiar to the Caucasians due to American pop culture that has widely spread to the East. Johnson (2007) in his research on race and racism in China observes that there is a high level of racism toward Africans and African Americans (p.3) and an adulation of white culture in the country (p.144) despite a call by Mao Tse-Tung to support the African Americans in their struggle against racial discrimination by US imperialism in 1963. At the same time, Johnson (2007) finds that Hollywood films that portray stereotypical and racist images of Africans and African Americans may also contribute to how the Chinese view them (p.144). As an African American in China, Dre’s frailness as a minority that is generally not welcomed by the society is highlighted. The sense of “otherness”, in which he is from another place and has not been integrated into the society is created. Compared to the original version, the protagonist is even more of “a fish out of water”. Being a stranger in an “alien land”, there is a loss of power in the character. Dre has to go through a journey which represents a rite of passage, in order to get integrated into the society.

Hero Archetype

The hero archetype is represented by Dre. In this film, the hero leaves his place of origin and moves to a foreign land. The concept of a “foreign land” in *The Karate Kid* represents a new life and beginning of a soul-searching journey for Dre. Just like how Dre puts it to his mother in the beginning of the film, he is embarking on a journey of individuation to explore his unconscious:

Mum, it's like we're brave pioneers on a quest to start a new life in a magical new land.

Dre enters into an unknown realm of transformation, culturally and psychologically to explore a “magical new land” which is his unconscious mind, before he is able to experience the wholeness of being. This is also a new land where Dre battles with a world of shadows and encounters the other archetypes before he makes the discovery of his inner psyche.

Dre is reckless and egoistic as he enters into the new land. On his first day in Beijing, Dre meets some elderly table tennis players, he boasts about his skills in table tennis:

You know I have no problem beating old people. Back where I come from, they call me Ping Pong Dre, alright? I'm gonna take it easy on you.

Of course, portrayed as an egoistic character, Dre ends up losing the match. He also intervenes in the affairs of Mei Ying, a beautiful violin player and gets into a fight with Cheng and his gang on the same day. That sparks the beginning of a difficult journey for Dre in Beijing.

I-Ching describes a truculent and arrogant stranger as one who puts oneself in a dangerous position:

The wanderer's inn burns down.
He loses the steadfastness of his young servant.
Danger.
(Translated by Wilhelm, 1967, p.218)

Wilhelm (1967) explains that if a stranger “meddles in affairs and controversies that do not concern him”, he would lose his resting place (p.218). Indeed, Dre's overconfidence and restless behavior lands him in trouble.

As the plot develops, Cheng and the gang turn out to be Dre's classmates and conflicts between them spill over to their daily life. Dre is often reactive and defensive in the face of conflicts. However, as he is physically weaker, he is beaten badly by the

gang until Mr Han comes to his aid. Comparatively, another kid Harry, also a foreigner, is able to integrate into life in a foreign land. Harry is the first kid that Dre encounters in the film. Harry is able to speak Mandarin and he communicates with the locals in an amiable manner. He is also able to participate in games that the local children play.

Though Dre is initially immature and careless, these are the qualities that one may have in the beginning of a hero's journey. According to Jung (1964), the first stage of a hero's development is often uninhibited and childish. Dre is able to attain the final victory only after he has attained full control and understanding of Self through self-discipline, managing his egoistical Self and inner weaknesses, as well as embracing the unconscious.

I identify the quest of the hero as integrating himself into the society, gaining acceptance from the people around him, and finally accepting and surpassing his own fears and shadows within. His task, however, is to win the martial arts tournament before he can integrate into the community. The quest is thus a metaphor of the individuation process and suggests a rebirth of the psyche (Hockley, 2001, p.80). In addition, through Dre, the spiritual aspect of martial arts (that of growth and not destruction) is conveyed to the merciless *kung fu* master Li and his group of students. The change that Dre brings to the society is to point the wrongdoers to see the light. In the process, Dre has also overcome his inner weaknesses especially his egoistic self, and changed into a more selfless being.

Encountering Other Archetypes

On the journey of the hero, he encounters other archetypes such as the Self archetype represented by Mr Han who appears as the eccentric wise man, the shadow archetype represented by the ruthless martial arts instructor Master Li who constantly reminds his students (Cheng and his gang) not to show mercy to opponents. Dre is initially egoistic and careless with his daily belongings such as his jacket. Mr Han, the embodiment of Tao, offers Dre wise advice and transforms him from an egoistic person into someone who is humble and respectful. Dre is able to identify their archetypal roles of a hero and a wise man in the film too. On their journey to Wudang Mountain, he tells Mr Han, "You're Yoda and I'm like... I'm like a Jedi [in Star Wars]".

The shadow archetype, Master Li, poses challenges to the hero's journey, which the hero eventually overcomes. The hero, after his victory, does not only manage to

bring respect to himself but to humanity as well. The students eventually learn that the essence of martial arts lies not in violence or waging war, but in defense and creating peace. Early on, Dre encounters Mr Han and knows him only as a peculiar maintenance man who uses his chopsticks to remove a dead fly and then continues to use the same chopsticks for eating. Mr Han is often alert to his environment and observes his surroundings quietly. When Dre is beaten badly by Cheng and his gang, Mr Han enters the scene and instead of striking the gang members, he manages to make them hit and beat each other badly. In Tai Chi, this is known as “借力打力”, which means “borrowing” the force or strength of the opponent to hit the opponent back. (Zhang, 2009, p.279). Lu (2006) mentions that the “highest level of achievement in Taiji Quan training is the ability to ‘use four ounces to beat a thousand pounds’” (p.73). He explains that one has to borrow force from the opponent by following his movement (Lu, 2006):

To become more efficient, you must borrow force from your opponent. This, in turn, requires that you induce him to commit himself to an attack and then follow his movement until you sense a vulnerability in his offense. (p.73)

Lu (2006) elaborates that one has to identify the *yin* and *yang* of one’s own energy and that of the opponent, so that one can be sensitive to the energies and forces during the fight (p.73). Thus, it is when one understands the flow of the opponents and their direction of movement, that one is able to make the opponents hit each other eventually. Mr Han tells Dre, “When fighting angry, blind men, best to just stay out of the way”. Taoist philosophies which emphasize peace and harmony are embodied in Chinese martial arts techniques which are initially “developed under the motivation for self-defense, and not for offense” (Yang, 1999, p.22). Though Tai Chi is not mentioned by Mr Han, his martial arts moves resemble it as he does not rely on external force to defeat enemies. He goes with the flow of the enemies’ energies and movements and manages to overthrow them without even hitting them directly.

Dre is amazed that Mr Han is a skillful martial artist when he appears to be only a maintenance man. Mr Han thus teaches him the lesson of not judging a person by the appearance:

Dre:
I thought you were just a maintenance man.

Mr Han:
You think only with your eyes,
so you are easy to fool.

A wise man should be able to see without using his eyes and to know without grasping the tangible. This is reflected in the fourteenth stanza of *Tao Te Ching* as well as the Buddhist concept of “emptiness” found in the *Heart Sutra*. *Tao Te Ching* describes the understanding of the Way (Tao) as something intangible and that knowledge cannot be attained through the tangible forms:

Look, it cannot be seen — it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard — it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot be held — it is intangible.
These three are indefinable;
Therefore they are joined in one. (Translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.27)

The *Heart Sutra* also “emphasizes that form and sound are not the core of reality” (Mitchell, 2011, p.72):

In emptiness there is no form nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness;
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; No forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind;
No sight-organ element, and so forth...

One should thus perceive the true nature of life by understanding beyond the tangible forms.

The wise man Mr Han plays a huge role in shaping the hero's development. However, at the same time, in the film, Mr Han suffers from an emotional wound which he hides from others. Though Mr Han is a wise and observant figure, there is an aspect to him that is emotionally injured. In the film, he is often a lone figure until Dre and his mother enter into Mr Han's life. Viewers gradually get to know that Mr Han is unable to let go of the dark memory of a car crash that caused the deaths of his wife and son. Every year on their death anniversary, Mr Han would act destructively to the car that he drove in that accident by hitting it with a hammer. The destruction of the car symbolizes destruction to his wholeness of being, which is shattered into pieces. Every year, Mr Han will damage the car and then fix it back again. However, he expresses that “I fix the car. Still fix nothing”. The car here represents his inner wound. Every year, he is unable to accept this wounded aspect of him with peace and he is destructive towards this part of his memory. However, he is trying to heal the wound by fixing the car, but nothing within is fixed as he has not walked out of the shadow of the memory. A part of Mr Han's Self which is affected by the sorrowful memory of the accident is disharmonized. He finally sits in the badly dented car with Dre in a depressive state.

When Mr Han is crying in the car, there are a number of handheld shots which give raw intensity to this emotional scene. Each shot is held longer before a cut so that viewers are given time to connect with the scene.

Dre, after listening to Mr Han's story which is narrated behind the cracked glass of the car, leads Mr Han out with one end of a stick. Leading Mr Han out of the car signifies the act of bringing him out of his destructive and cracked emotions. The act is first shown with an extreme close-up of Mr Han's hands and the edge of the stick followed by a close-up of Mr Han's tearing face, which depicts the intimate exposure of his wounded self to Dre and to the audience. It provides a sense of intimacy to viewers as they can enter into his emotional world. The camera then moves to the headlights which become the high-key backlight of the later "stick training" scene. This shot also draws viewers' attention to the headlights which later will be instrumental in projecting the shadows onto the wall. Before they start with the training, the shadows show Mr Han wiping his tears away with his hand attached to the rope. This act, in the form of shadows, looks like an act of bringing the rope to one's neck in a suicide scene, symbolizing the death of the past.

During the stick training, Mr Han and Dre have to constantly use the stick to balance each other's energies and to constantly move without dropping the stick. For the session of stick training, most scenes are shown to the viewers in the form of shadows. Initially, the exercise is done with abrupt and staccato movements and "ah" sounds coming from Mr Han, which may suggest that he is confronting his own shadow. Gradually, the exercise is done with strength yet flows with graceful movements which resemble a dance. The initial staccato movements signify Mr Han's struggle with his memories, and the graceful movements show that he has started to accept the darkness and shadow within him. He recognizes the dark aspect within him which he used to hate. By facing and embracing the wound in him, he begins to accept the various aspects of his Self and thus begins to experience the wholeness of being. Dre's mother then appears from behind the window and observes the fight. Viewers have an eye-line matching of his mother from the window. She is smiling and it seems she is pleased that her son has grown up. The scene of stick training is illuminated with blue light, which provides a calm and soothing solace to both characters — one who is hurt from a past event, and one who has always been feeling dissociated from the place he is in. Sounds of the scene move from woeful slowness to a gradual increase in speed and range. When the exercise reaches the one leg stance at the end, the master has been pushed out of the shadows.

The scene ends with an iris-out, the visual of the circular iris provides an indication of a completeness in Mr Han's emotional world, where he is able to embrace his past and move forward in his life.

Though Dre is the one who initiates and leads Mr Han into the exercise, Mr Han later assumes control and leads Dre in the training. Mr Han eventually recovers from his depression over the unpleasant past. Thus, though Mr Han, as a wise man, has helped Dre on his hero journey, Dre has also taught Mr Han a valuable lesson and aided him to achieve the wholeness of being. Therefore, a more disciplined and mature Dre is able to bring about change to others at the later stage of his hero journey.

Without the shadow archetype Master Li in the film, Dre would not have set his plans to learn martial arts and would thereby have missed learning valuable lessons from Mr Han. As an obstacle, Master Li is a stimulus for Dre to work hard to achieve the task set for him. While Dre's goal is to integrate with the society, the task that he has to accomplish is to triumph over Master Li's disciples in the *kung fu* tournament before he can face Cheng and the gang without fear. Master Li teaches his students this mantra:

No mercy...
No mercy in the studio...
No mercy in competition...
No mercy in life!
Our enemies deserve pain.

Master Li presents to Dre a final test before his victory by asking his student to "break his leg" and show "no mercy" during the finals of the tournament. Dre, however, with his training in "*Qi*", the inner energy in the body, is able to fight one-legged, sustained by this. To develop the inner energy, it is important that one keeps the body in a state of *yin-yang* balance. For instance, too much of *yin* will cause the body to be weak or soft, and too much of *yang* will cause the body to be too rigid. If a person is too weak, he can be defeated easily. However, if a person is too rigid in his form, he will be hurt severely when being hit hard, just like a piece of cement that will break if it is thrown on a hard surface. Tai Chi instructor Master Sim Pern Yiau mentioned in the research film *Defining "Spiritual Theatre": Cross-cultural Study of Rituals and Traditional Body Forms in Singapore* that a person will be able to acquire a body that is elastic if *yin-yang* is in balance, and when the elastic body is thrown or hit, the body will be able to bounce back again like a rubber and recover fast for the fight (Low, 2008). Once the body of a skillful martial artist is in motion, "every part of the body is light and agile

and must be threaded together” (Yang, 1999, p.102). Thus, the body with *Qi* should be one that is light and agile with inner strength, and yet not weak or rigid.

Chinese Martial Arts Training and Self-Development

The Karate Kid and Kung Fu

The title *The Karate Kid* comes from the perspective of Dre’s mother, though the film is about Chinese *kung fu* and not about karate which is a form of Japanese martial arts. However, Dre corrects his mother and explains to her how *kung fu* is different from karate. The film later explains through the teachings of Mr Han that Chinese *kung fu* is more than just fighting, that it is about defence and about the morality of life:

Kung fu lives in everything we do, Xiao Dre.
It lives in how we put on a jacket, how we take off the jacket.
And lives in how we treat people.
Everything is *kung fu*.

Just like Tao that lives in everything we do, *kung fu* is described as an integral aspect of daily life. In fact, the Chinese meaning of “*kung*” (功) is “energy” and “*fu*” (夫) is “time” (Yang, 1999, p.3). Dr Yang Jwing-Ming (1999), founder of Yang’s Martial Arts Academy (YMAA) in Boston, explains that one can describe anything that needs a great deal of time, patience and effort to accomplish as *kung fu* (p.3). Thus, *kung fu* is about character building and spiritual attainment, and the significance of *kung fu* is beyond its external forms. Learning of martial arts should be used as a way of understanding the meaning of life, and the higher the level a martial artist has reached, the better he is in experiencing the spiritual aspect of Self (Yang, 1999, p.27).

In Chinese, martial arts technique is known as “武艺”. The word “martial” is constructed by two Chinese characters “stop” (止) and “weapons” (戈), which means “stop fighting” (Yang, 1999, p.3). Thus, Chinese martial arts were created to defend and to stop the actual fighting, as put forth by Mr Han in *The Karate Kid*:

Kung fu is for knowledge, defense.
Not to make war, but create peace.

He tells Dre that Master Li’s motto of “No Weakness! No Pain! No Mercy!” is not part of Chinese martial arts training.

Concept of Yin-Yang in Kung Fu

The concepts of *yin* and *yang* are important in the practice of Chinese martial arts. One can only be attuned to the environment as well as to oneself when both the *yin* and *yang* energies are balanced. Jaden Smith, who plays Dre, emphasized the importance of being harmonious with oneself and the environment when practicing Chinese martial arts. During an interview in *The Making of The Karate Kid*, a bonus feature on the DVD release of the film, he said, “You have to practice, you know? And you have to be in tune with everything”. The essence of Chinese martial arts points to harmony and peace-making, which is the essence of Tao that stresses on the fact that human beings are essentially “natural beings”, and that our thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) (Adler, 2002, p.15).

In the film, Mr Han manages to make the gang members beat each other badly by leading them in the direction of their own force and movement. This can be explained by the theory of *yin-yang* in *kung fu*, in which “one should be in harmony with, and not in opposition to, the strength and force of the opposition” (Lee, 1997, p.119). For example, if opponent A applies force on opponent B, B should tap on A’s own force and movement in order to lead to A’s own defeat (Lee, 1997, p.119). Lee (1997) gives an analogy of a butcher who preserves his knife:

As the butcher preserves his knife by cutting along the bone and not against it, a *kung fu* man preserves himself by following the movement of his opponent without opposition. (p.119)

The symbol of *yin/yang* can also be seen in various significant scenes. For instance, the symbol is seen on the uniforms of Master Li’s students, on the floor of the tournament hall, and on the base of the Dragon Well on Wudang Mountain.

The Middle Way in Buddhism also suggests the importance of attaining “balance” in life, which is similar to the concept of *yin-yang*. The Middle Way that one should not walk the path of asceticism or indulgence (Kyokai, 1979, p.57); instead a balance of hard work and repose in one’s approach to spiritual practice is important. In the film, the concept of “物极必反” (too much of something is not good) taught by Mr Han suggests the importance of practicing a balanced lifestyle. Mr Han gives Dre a day off from training and tells him:

Wu ji bi fan — Means, “Too much of something is not good”. You train a lot. You need rest.

The same can be applied to all other aspects of life. In *The Karate Kid*, Dre conveys the same advice to Mei Ying who practices the violin diligently to audition for the Beijing Academy of Music.

The concepts of Middle Way and *yin-yang* are similar to the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness as mentioned by Jung. While feminine energy is used to describe *yin* and masculine energy is used to describe *yang* in Taoism, Jung describes the aspect of femininity as *anima* and the aspect of masculinity as *animus*. Balance of opposites is needed in achieving the wholeness of Self (Jung, 1990):

As civilization develops, the bisexual primordial being turns into a symbol of the unity of personality, a symbol of the self, where the war of opposites finds peace. In this way the primordial being becomes the distant goal of man's self-development, having been from the very beginning a projection of his unconscious wholeness. Wholeness consists in the union of the conscious and the unconscious personality. (p.175)

He elaborates that there is a “transcendental function” at the point of tension between opposites that gives birth to “a new level of being, a new situation” (Jung, 1972, p.90). The view is similar to Buddhism where it is important to avoid all extremities to arrive at the meeting point of all opposites, in order to attain calm, superior insight and awakening (Eckel, 2002, p.44).

Kung Fu and the Unconscious Mind

One of the prominent episodes of Dre's training with Mr Han is the “Jacket on, jacket off training”. Initially, Mr Han does not teach Dre any concrete skills or techniques other than asking him to repeatedly carry out the cycle of hanging his jacket on the rack, taking it down, putting it on, taking it off and putting it on the ground, picking it up and hanging it back on the rack again for days. By doing so, Dre learns about the basic *kung fu* moves so well that he can execute the moves naturally and easily. Training using daily life actions such as “Jacket on, Jacket off” helps Dre to implement his moves so naturally and instinctively that he does not have to think about them. This is similar to Suzuki's concept of training the mind to be conscious of the unconscious (Suzuki, 1970, p.18). He gives the example of a skilled swordsman to illustrate what he means by having a trained unconsciousness. According to Suzuki, the attainment of the unconscious mind in Zen is associated with the highest degree of swordsmanship. At that level, the swordsman is no longer aware that he is engaged in a battle of life and

death; his mind is like a mirror which reflects each thought and movement of the opponent and he knows where and how to strike the opponent immediately (Suzuki, 1970, p.22). To reach this state, the mind is calm and reflective, and the action is instinctive and spontaneous.

With discipline and repeated training, the martial artist is able to perform his movements smoothly and naturally, to the extent that the mind does not have to think about the forms (Yang, 1999, p.102). At this stage, the martial artist is in the state of “regulating without regulating” and the state is reflected in the following ancient poem *Taiji Classic* (Yang, 1999, p.102):

Every form of every posture follows smoothly;
No forcing, no opposition,
the entire body is comfortable.
Each form smooth.

Thus, when the movements of martial arts become unconscious, they are like the daily activities of breathing or speaking, and the martial artist can react instantly and intuitively without thinking (Vile & Biggs, 2004, p.62). Bruce Lee (1997) in his book *The Tao of Gung Fu*, described the highest stage in the cultivation of *kung fu* as the Stage of Artlessness when a martial artist is able to perform on “an almost unconscious level without any interference from his mind” (p.25). For instance, instead of “I hit”, it is “it hits!” With the ability to react from the unconscious being, the martial artist is able to deal with his opponent “here-and-now, without thinking, without strategies, without chatter” (Tri, 1993, p.34).

Non-Self

Dre is introduced to the viewers as an egotistical and boastful boy. For instance, when he first reaches Beijing, he brags about his table tennis skills. Next, he demonstrates dance moves arrogantly to Mei Ying. Even after he is beaten up by Cheng and his gang, he is still boastful about his ability to acquire martial arts skills. He tells Mr Han:

I know that I was kind of freaking out about the tournament, but I realized something last night. I’m an athlete. My number one asset is I’m fast, okay? I’m quick, all right? I’m quick. Got speed. Cat speed. See? I’m quick, yeah? See, and I used to take gymnastics at PAL. That’s the Police Athletic League, so check it, right? (...) See, my Uncle Remy used to date this Brazilian girl. And he learned jiu jitsu, and he taught some of it to me. And it’s like locks and holds and stuff. (...) And he also taught me capoeira, so... I’ve got a good foundation here. You know, like I said, I’m just... Might not be as hard to teach

me as other people, you know?

Mr Han manages to tame Dre's egoistic mind and remove his focus on "I" through ignoring Dre's boastful speech and asking Dre to repeat the "Jacket on, jacket off" routine for days. He also demands a high level of discipline and respect from Dre throughout his strenuous training at the peak of Wudang Mountain and the Great Wall of China.

Before one can attain liberation through the work on Self, one has to attain "non-self" which involves abandoning the three inner poisons of greed, anger and ignorance. Moacanin (1992) explains that according to Jung, the ego which is full of distortions and projections, has to be dissolved before one can experience the unconscious (p.285). Thus, to be wise is to be able to see that there is "no-self" as the self "changes every moment and has no permanent identity" (Eckel, 2002, p.60). The understanding of "non-self" is expressed in the doctrine of emptiness in which all things are seen as "empty of identity" (Eckel, 2002, p.61). When one understands the inherent existence of things, one is able to stop positing an independent self (Garfield, 1995, p.Xviii). In Buddhism, Ego is the greatest obstacle to enlightenment:

Ego — or rather one's view of one's "I" — is at the root of all problems and sufferings, according to Buddhist thought. When Buddhists talk about ego they refer to the illusory belief in a solid, concrete, separate entity, independent and disconnected from any other phenomenon. In that sense naturally the ego becomes an insurmountable barrier between oneself and the rest of the world, with no possibility of true communication and communion, not only with others but also with the depth of oneself. (Moacanin, 1992, p.284)

Discipline and non-self are important for the martial artist to know himself and to control the emotional mind, so that he can reach a stage of spiritual understanding of his Self. At the end of martial arts training, the greatest enemy one has to face is oneself (Yang, 1999, p.25). It is only when one manages to control mind and body fully that one is ready to face the external enemies. Thus, diligent training and self-discipline are essential for the development of a spiritual being in a martial artist. It is only when one lets go of the importance of self that one is able to reflect and react — like a clear mirror — in a fight.

Lesson on Qi

In the film, Mr Han brings Dre on a journey to Wudang Mountain to learn the lesson of *Qi*, which is translated by Mr Han as “internal energy” and is viewed by him as “the essence of life”:

Qi. Internal energy. The essence of life. It moves inside of us, it flows through our bodies. Gives us power from within.

When they reach the peak of Wudang Mountain and enter into the temple that houses the Dragon Well, Mr Han leads Dre through a narrow corridor with backlighting. The scene shows the silhouettes of the two characters followed by emphasizing Dre’s facial expression with a close-up shot, which clearly shows that he is intrigued by something that catches his attention. The shot is cut to a medium shot that shows the back of a lady. As the lady moves with hands open to the side, a cobra is revealed. Dre is attracted by the scene. He runs to a barred window and peeps through it to watch this lady who is practicing *kung fu* with a cobra. Close-up of Dre’s intense viewing of the lady is cut to long shot of lady, cobra and landscape. The long shot is then sustained with change in angle, showing the lady who faces the cobra from different perspectives, set in a natural landscape with blue and green hue. Finally, the camera lands with a close-up shot of the lady and the cobra. Soothing music used in the scene mimics the measured quality of the lady’s movements. Throughout the scene, the lady and the cobra are moving together in perfect synergy, and their movements are like reflections of each other in a mirror. While outsiders may think that the lady is imitating the movements of the cobra, Mr Han explains that it is the cobra that is “copying the woman”:

You did not watch closely enough, Xiao Dre.
The snake was copying the woman.

The cobra is reacting instead of attacking the lady, as it is moving to the subtle movement of *Qi* emitted by the lady. Any abrupt or vigorous movement from the lady may cause the cobra to attack. When the lady is keeping still, the *Qi* is contained in its subtlety. The lady is in control of the movement of *Qi*. When she starts to move, the cobra moves together with her, in the same direction of *Qi*. Dre eventually understands that the lady “used her *Qi* on that snake”. High concentration is needed for one to be able to utilize and direct one’s inner energy to the body and the surroundings:

Use your *Yi* (Mind) to lead your *Qi*. Notice the word lead. *Qi* behaves like water — it cannot be pushed, but it can be led, it will flow smoothly and without stagnation. When it is pushed, it will flood and enter the wrong paths. Remember wherever your *Yi* goes first, the *Qi* will naturally follow.

The scene of the lady “communicating” with the cobra at a close distance on a narrow protruding beam of the temple truly reflects the above statements. The lady is in precise control of her *Qi* and she is able to flow smoothly with the *Qi* within and around her. If *Qi* is not exercised with care and precision, disaster may follow.

Understanding “*Qi*” (energy) is essential for the understanding of the essence of Chinese martial arts. It is important for martial artists to understand how energy functions internally and externally as muscular power should not be the only focus for martial arts training, though muscular strength is needed for fighting too. In order for the martial artist to exhibit strength in the fight, “the *Qi* must be led to the muscular body and manifested externally” (Yang, 1999, p.84). Yang (1999) explains that *Qi* (energy) is the “root and foundation of physical strength” and the theory holds that when *Qi* is abundant, it can “energize the body to a higher level” and “power can be manifested more effectively and efficiently” (p.17).

In the film, Mr Han often observes his surroundings without direct gazing. He observes with all his senses and he is aware of the *Qi* around and within him. To be able to sense and ride with the subtle flow of energies, one has to “empty” one’s mind. In the film, Mr Han asks Dre to empty his mind during the training and during the tournament. To train Dre to connect with the energy around him, he emphasizes the need to first empty the mind:

Mr Han:
Empty your mind.
Flow with my movement.
Connect to the energy around you.

Dre:
I kind of just want to learn the cobra thing.

Mr Han:
Cobra takes a lifetime.
Requires great focus.

Dre:
But I have great focus. (*Dre almost falls into the lake.*) Oh, my God. Mr Han?

Mr Han:
Your focus needs more focus.

To empty the mind does not mean that the mind is in a daze or is distracted. On the contrary, the mind is focused on the task at hand and right concentration is exercised. It is important that one is able to “empty the mind” to be free from all distractions and

emotions, to achieve a state of “the thought of no thought”. At this level, the mind will be totally “calm, peaceful, empty, and light” and the mind will then be clear enough to feel the internal *Qi* circulation and exercise the “use of *Yi* (Mind) to lead the *Qi*” (Yang, 1999, p.96).

To empty the mind thus means using one’s consciousness to “stop the activity in the mind in order to set it free from bondage of ideas, emotion, and conscious thought” (Yang, 1999, p.96). The mind, when it is free from busy activities and thoughts, is able to concentrate better. One has to focus the mind and relax the body in order to generate *Qi* and to circulate it smoothly (Yang, 1999, p.17). Right concentration thus helps the martial artist to be aware of *Qi* within and around him. In Buddhism, right concentration refers to entering into a deep state of calm and focus, which can be developed through meditative practices (Morgen, 2010, p.80). Through mental concentration, “*Qi* can be led throughout the physical body to boost its functioning to a higher level” (Yang, 1999, p.54). To Jung, it is important for one to empty the contents of consciousness before one can allow the contents of the unconscious to break through the consciousness (Jung, 1992d, p.22). The connection between conscious mind and unconscious mind is important (Jung, 1992d):

The unconscious contents bring to the surface everything that is necessary in the broadest sense for the completion and wholeness of conscious orientation. (p.22)

Thus, other than external training on agility, body strength, stamina and martial arts techniques, Dre is taught to work on his *Qi*. One of the training exercises requires Dre to sense the movements of *Qi* around him by avoiding the attacker or fighting the attacker without seeing him (the attacker is behind a large piece of white cloth). Here, Dre is taught not to just rely on the five senses, especially the sense of sight, but to trust his whole being in sensing and responding to the flow of *Qi* around him. It is only when he has the right concentration that he can respond to the subtle energies and movement of *Qi*.

Universal Symbols on the Journey of Quest

Universal symbols can help viewers to link their conscious mind to the unconscious mind. Jung (1977) states that symbols produce a wider “unconscious” aspect of meaning that is beyond the grasp of reason:

A term or image is symbolic when it means more than it denotes or expresses. It has a wider “unconscious” aspect — an aspect that can never be precisely defined or fully explained. This peculiarity is due to the fact that, in exploring the symbol, the mind is finally led towards ideas of a transcendent nature, where our reason must capitulate. (p.185)

Prominent symbols identified in the film are the image of a labyrinth, Wudang Mountain, a serpent and still water.

Labyrinth

The camera shots follow Dre as he runs through the maze-like streets of Beijing, especially when he is chased by Cheng and the gang. The streets form an image of a huge maze in the city and Dre runs through them. Such a maze that comprises numerous streets and roads of Beijing form the image of a labyrinth. Mazes and labyrinths are constructed with lines that indicate pathways and they are ancient symbols used to gain deeper understanding of human spirituality and to create inner transformation of Self (Wass, 2009). The main difference between a labyrinth and a maze is that a “labyrinth has one path leading to a center and then out again” while a maze can be more complex in nature with dead ends and a variety of entrances and exits (Wass, 2009, p.3). Labyrinths, together with mazes and corridors, are often explained as symbols of the unconscious in Jungian psychology. Diehl (1986) points out that the maze symbolizes inner journey and spiritual search:

Like the post-modern mazes, these medieval mazes [labyrinth] were apparently experiential. The experience of following the paths of the church maze, however, would not have been the modern one of fear, panic and impotence, but instead a spiritual experience, one of meaningful action and, upon reaching the centre, deep fulfillment. (p.284)

Von Franz (1964) explains the maze as a powerful symbol of the unconscious which opens one to the unconscious shadow aspect of Self:

The maze of strange passages, chambers, and unlocked exits in the cellar recalls the old Egyptian representation of the underworld, which is a well-known symbol of the unconscious with its abilities. It also shows how one is “open” to other influences in one’s unconscious shadow side and how uncanny and alien elements can break in. (p. 176)

Curry (2000) records that there are people who find walking in a labyrinth a transformative experience and there are others who express that they hear their inner voice or feel a sense of grace and divinity (p.90). In medieval times, the labyrinth symbolized the path to God when one eventually reached its center (Doob, 1992, p.74).

According to Campbell (2008), as the hero enters into the wider world, he normally travels to “his own spiritual labyrinth” and encounter various symbolical figures on the way that may be helpful or pose an obstacle to him (p.84). The labyrinth signifies the difficult path that the hero has to go through, before he can find his way to its center. Hockley (2001) explains that “the symbolic act of entering the labyrinth, and the labyrinth itself, are images of individuation process” (p.96). Towards the end of the film, Dre emerges as the champion of the *kung fu* tournament standing on the center of the floor mat with its circular *yin/yang* symbol. That is the moment when Dre reaches the center of the labyrinth and emerges a hero with a deep sense of fulfillment. As the hero takes his victory with him, I as an audience member, have also traveled the whole journey of ignorance, defeat, fall and eventually victory with the hero. The film serves as a mirror that reflects my situation in life where there are battles to be conquered and destination at the center of the labyrinth to be attained.

Wudang Mountain — The Vertical Labyrinth and the Serpent

Dre travels from Detroit to Beijing, which signifies a journey to the unknown. When he reaches Beijing, he is a restless and immature kid who gets into trouble and fights with the local kids. However, after receiving much training from Mr Han, he is ready to enter into an advanced stage of martial arts training. I view his journey to the Dragon Well of Wudang Mountain as his initiation to the deeper wisdom of martial arts training. The first stage of the training is akin to the preliminary stage of Tibetan tantric training, where the foundation training places the focus on discipline, morality, as well as physical and mental endurance. After the foundation training, the disciple is ready for the secret training required for the path. In *The Karate Kid*, the next level of training for Dre is the learning of Qi. Wudang Mountain, known to be the birthplace of *kung fu* and a place for Taoist training, is also where Tai Chi originated (Yang, 1999, p.1). The film shows people dressed up in Taoist costumes sitting in meditation and practicing Tai Chi and various forms of Qi Gong. The practitioners move with fluidity in relation to their environment, and their bodies are operating in tune with the surroundings. Dre’s formal initiation to the knowledge of Tao can be marked by his journey to this sacred mountain.

The image of Dre and Mr Han journeying up to the top of the sacred Wudang Mountain symbolizes a vertical labyrinth, which signifies elevating to a level of spiritual practice for Dre. In the film, Dre is asked to place his skateboard at the foot of the mountain before heading up to the Dragon Well in a Taoist temple. This shows that the

characters are only using one path up the mountain and that they will eventually use the same path down the mountain too. This can be interpreted as Mr Han leading Dre to the path of Tao. At the center of the vertical labyrinth where the Dragon Well is found, Mr Han and Dre stand on the diagram of *I-Ching*'s hexagrams on the temple floor. Mr Han tells Dre that the journey is complete and he asks Dre to drink the reflective water from the Dragon Well which has a *yin-yang* symbol at its base:

Mr Han:
Xiao Dre. The journey is complete.

Dre:
Is this the Dragon Well?

Mr Han:
Yes. I stood here with my father when I was your age. He told me it's magic *kung fu* water. You drink, and nothing can defeat you.

Dre immerses his face into the well and drinks the water. This act can be seen as a form of rebirth to a new self that embarks on a new journey. The immersion in the water can be seen as a form of "baptism" where Dre is initiated into the world of Tao. The circular *bagua* (eight diagrams used in Taoist cosmology) which comprises a circular symbol of *yin/yang* surrounded by *I-Ching*'s hexagrams symbolizes Dre's transformative journey to Tao.

As discussed in the paragraph on *Lesson on Qi*, the lady is using her *Qi* to manipulate the cobra's movement. Cirlot (2001) explains that the symbol of the serpent or snake is energy itself, and the force it represents is pure and simple (p.36). In Indian yoga tradition, the symbol of a serpent is drawn at the lower spine of the body to describe Kundalini energy (corporeal energy). This symbol of the serpent at the lower spine represents the "Serpent Power" which is essential for the awakening of Kundalini energy (Morgen, 2010, p.17). Awakening of Kundalini energy is also described as a form of spiritual awakening. In the Bible, the Serpent plays the role of a seducer which leads to the awakening of Adam and Eve's sexual awareness as well as the awareness of evil in the outside world and within their selves (Vandermoere, 1995, p.112). Jung (1962) describes the snake as a symbol with a paradoxical nature:

In actual fact the snake is a cold-blooded creature, unconscious and unrelated. It is both toxic and prophylactic, equally a symbol of the good and bad daemon, of Christ and the devil. (p.374)

Here, the cobra symbolizes spiritual awakening and the utilization of *Qi*. While the scene of the lady's interaction with the cobra gives a sense of harmony and balance,

there is an element of danger too. The meaning of the scene is paradoxical in a way, as there are elements of spirituality and darkness; harmony and danger; and concentration and freedom. The lady is leading her *Qi* with care and precision, and the cobra is led by her *Qi*. If she were to exercise the energy with the wrong level of strength or channel the energy to the wrong path, the cobra may just attack her with a forceful strike. The cobra scene is also important for Dre as it serves as a significant lesson in the understanding of *Qi*. Dre eventually emerges as the champion in the *kung fu* tournament due to the utilization of *Qi* when he is badly injured and unable to rely on physical strength.

Still Water

The reflection of images from still water can be seen in various scenes — at the Dragon Well, the fountain and the lakes. Reflections from still water are used frequently as analogies to illustrate the importance of stillness and viewing the inner self. At the Dragon Well, Mr Han teaches Dre a lesson on stillness:

Mr Han:

Look. What do you see?

Dre:

Me. Well, my reflection.

Mr Han:

Yes. (*He stirs the water*) Now what do you see?

Dre:

It's blurry.

Mr Han:

Yes. The woman [who trains with the cobra] was like still water. Quiet, calm. (*Mr Han points to Dre's mind and heart*) In here and in here. So, the snake reflects her action, like still water.

Dre:

Like a mirror.

Mr Han:

Yes.

Dre:

So she controlled a snake by doing nothing?

Mr Han:

Being still and doing nothing are two very different things.

Just like the Taoist principle of *wuwei* (acting through not acting), stillness is not about doing nothing, but one is to act without acting. Acting through not acting emphasizes “naturalness, spontaneity, passivity” (Smart, 1993, p.197). While actions are carried out in “*wuwei*” manner, they are aligned to natural ways harmoniously (Fowler & Fowler, 2008, p.109). The lady who trains with the cobra is moving with subtle energies and she is acting in tune to the environment with naturalness.

“Pauses” which are part of stillness are important in different aspects of life. In the film, these include playing the violin or practicing *kung fu*. Mei Ying is taught not to rush through her music, but to play the “pauses”. Her violin instructor reprimands her, “You’re rushing it [the music]. You must play the pauses”. It is only when one is still internally that one is able to “play the pauses”.

The scene of a fountain with reflective water is shown too. Jung (1968a) sees the symbol of a fountain as the source of inner life and spiritual energy. The water from the fountain shows the reflection of Dre and Mei Ying, and signifies the understanding of inner life. Dre is able to tame his agitated being and embrace the *Qi* within his body; Mr Han eventually accepts the shadow within him and goes through an inner healing process; and Cheng and the gang are able to reflect upon their vicious attitudes and turn over a new leaf after the tournament. Suzuki (1970) points out that to be busy and “run about among your neighbors in a confused state of mind” does not aid one to “master the Way” (p.35). It is only when one is still at mind and at heart that one is able to reflect like clear and still water and get in touch with the inner Self. Embracing the inner Self includes understanding both the conscious and unconscious minds, as well as embracing the shadows within the Self. Only when one is still, able to reflect on the nature of Self and embrace the unconscious Self can one eventually attain the wholeness of being.

Conclusion: Hero’s Journey and Victory

The journey of the hero archetype in the film represents the hero’s journey in urban life. There is a hero in all of us, though the tasks to be accomplished are different for each individual. While not everyone can identify with Dre’s process of *kung fu* practice, one may identify with archetypical situations such as the quest, the task to be accomplished, the journey, the obstacle, the initiation to knowledge, the battle between good and evil, the symbolic archetypes and the character archetypes that can be found across all cultures.

Through the journey of the hero, while the final victory shown to the audience is the act of defeating enemies (Cheng and the gang) at the *kung fu* tournament, the greatest victory is in fact the control of Self. Mr Han, while teaching Dre the techniques of *kung fu*, also conveys to him the importance of managing and controlling one's mind:

Dre:
She used her *Qi* on that snake, didn't she?

Mr Han:
Very good.

Dre:
You've got to teach me that, like, how to control people.

Mr Han:
There's only one person you need to learn how to control.

The last part of the film shows the battle between participants of the *kung fu* tournament on a circular *yin-yang* symbol in red and blue clothing. The warm color of red and the cool color of blue moving on the circular disc symbolize the constant movement and embrace of Tao. Red symbolizes the aggressive energy—the *yang*, and blue signifies calmness—the *yin*. Dre eventually triumphs over the aggressive opponent with both stillness and appropriate leading of *Qi*. He is quiet and still when facing the opponent before his last strike. However, once he starts moving, a sharp and precise strike is executed that defeats the opponent.

The journey of the hero is the journey of every person, and eventually, the only enemy we need to face and the only person we need to learn how to control is ourselves. The cinema provides the simulated reality of the spiritual and symbolic world for us to experience the journey of the hero, and reflect upon our individual journey as a hero in urban life. The hero myth in the cinema serves as a part of individuation for the viewers. Similarly, we could have started out as immature and arrogant as Dre, trying to integrate into our environment. Through Dre's *kung fu* training, we are taught the principles of balance (*yin-yang*), stillness, compassion, and the cultivation of inner strength that can be applied to urban living. One is also more conscious of the potential of tapping into the unconscious mind, where inner strength and a focused mind are powerful weapons that aid one to achieve beyond what we can perceive. It is only when one's consciousness has been freed from all emotions, conscious thoughts and busy activities, that one is able to attain a deep state of calmness. It is also through stillness that we can be more alert to our environment and make sharp observations in a quiet manner without

alarming our environment and opponents. This is reflected in the scene of the lady with the cobra where the lady is extremely still while dealing with the cobra. While a cobra can be dangerous and its attack fatal, the stillness of the lady allows her to manipulate the cobra's movement. As one is still and obtains a balance in energies, one is able to have an introspective view of the Self, and embrace the unconscious Self to attain the wholeness of being.

The cinema thus provides the space for audiences to live through an individual journey while viewing the journey of other characters on the screen. During the journey, the principles of Taoism are presented through the art of learning *kung fu* depicted in the film. While the master (Li) in *Crouching Tiger* teaches his disciple (Jen) Buddhist and Taoist philosophies through words that he utters to her during all their encounters, the master in *The Karate Kid* is a man of few words and he teaches Buddhist and Taoist principles to the disciple by guiding him through his actions and allowing him to gain gradual realizations through his experiential learning of martial arts. While both masters are different in their approaches in illuminating the essence of martial arts to their disciples, what is similar is that they have never failed to emphasize the non-duality of mind and the material world.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOURNEYING THROUGH TIMELESSNESS IN *THE PROMISE*

Introduction

The Promise (2005) was first released in China and other parts of Asia in 2005, before it was released in America in 2006. The film is stylized and mythical in nature. Chen Kaige, the director admits that it is a “commercial blockbuster” for both Asian and Western markets, and commercial elements which include themes of love and war as well as high-tech audio-visual effects are used for the film. It is a US\$35 million film that includes a pan-Asian cast of Korean star Jang Dong Gun, Japanese actor Hiroyuki Sanada, and Hong Kong starlets Cecilia Cheung and Nicholas Tse. *The Promise*, the creation of a new myth by director Chen Kaige, is set at a time when the world was still young and when gods and men lived together (Pan, 2005). The version that is released for the Western audiences is 18 minutes shorter than the version released in China. The General’s yearning for a woman and the conversation between the Goddess and the General are trimmed in the version for the audience, as the delicate moment of a warrior and the elements of “destiny” and “fate” are reduced for the Western audience.

The film provides the viewers a sense of myth right from the beginning, when a black screen is shown with the text:

When this world was still young, men and gods live together. At that time, there was a free country existing together with the Snow Land. In this country, there was a mighty General Guangming and an envious Duke Wuhuan. There was no end to the grievances between them. The Goddess of Destiny — Manshen — holds the destiny of all mankind. She lets them choose their own fate but does not reveal the outcome. Our story begins twenty years ago, under a cherry blossom tree.

This provides a setting and background of a mythical story surrounding the theme of fate and destiny. A long shot of a cherry blossom tree with shedding petals is shown in the next scene, zooming in to the extreme close-up of a flower petal that falls into the middle of a pool of blood and a clenched hand. A starving girl, Qingcheng, removes a bun with a red dot in the center from the clenched hand of a dead soldier. The shot of a bird picking nectar from a red flower emphasizes the state of hunger and longing for food in the character. The red blood, along with the flower and dot, which are remainders of blood, coalesce into the high angle shot of a scene of dead soldiers.

Qingcheng then meets another boy on the way who ties her up, and promises to release her if she is willing to be his slave. Qingcheng promises to be his slave, but hits him hard and runs away instead. She meets the Goddess of Destiny, Manshen, who offers her beauty and a life of luxury, with the condition that she shall never experience true love for eternity unless time flows backwards and winter falls in spring. Qingcheng agrees to this offer. Twenty years later, Qingcheng becomes the King's concubine. General Guangming, who is renowned for his military skills, defeats an army of 20,000 barbarians with 3,000 men and the assistance of a slave Kunlun. After the battle, he engages Kunlun as his slave. Kunlun is later instructed to disguise himself as the General to save the King. However, Kunlun kills the King and saves Qingcheng instead. Though General Guangming is angry with Kunlun for killing the King, he realizes that Qingcheng has fallen in love with him, as she thinks that he is the one who killed the King. The General, Qingcheng and Kunlun are later put on trial for regicide. During the trial, Kunlun confesses that he was the one who killed the King, and Qingcheng realizes that she has loved the wrong man. In the end, Kunlun, the General and Wuhuan are involved in a fight which only Kunlun survives by putting on a magical cloak. Kunlun takes Qingcheng with him and they travel against time into the limitless horizon of clear light.

In *The Promise*, the symbols of labyrinth and *mandala* as well as archetypes can be identified within its spiritually rich scenes. Viewers are invited to go on a journey of individuation together with the characters in this mythical world created by the director. Chen Kaige said in *The Making of The Promise* (2006), a *bonus* feature on *the DVD release of the film*:

The world of *The Promise* is a world within everyone's heart. However, one can choose to embrace it, or one can choose to deny it.

This "world" within everyone's heart may refer to a world of liberation and hope. Chen said in another interview (Knight, 2006):

In the beginning of the film they are prisoners, locked up by their own hearts and their own destinies. The story is about how they're going to liberate themselves. The Chinese people always have a feeling that there is a destiny that cannot be broken. But now we have a hope that everything can be changed in a positive way.

Let me discuss these elements that form the spiritual world of *The Promise* through a Jungian lens and how the archetypes, universal symbols and theme of the film form the inner world of the audience.

Wuji (Limitless)

While the English title is “The Promise” which reflects the empty promises that the characters give to each other with little trust amongst people, as well as the promises that men give to gods in the story, the Chinese title for the film is 无极 (*wuji*), which can be translated as “limitless” (Zhang, 2002, p.71) or “ultimateless” (Chang, 2011, p.100; Robinet, 1993, p.106). It gives the meaning of vastness and infiniteness. The concept of *wuji* is found in Buddhism and Taoism. While the Chinese title emphasizes on the religious dimension of the film, the English title has no religious meaning. Thus, the Chinese title gives an importance to the concept of “limitless” in both Buddhism and Taoism.

The first chapter “Free and Easy Wandering” of Taoist master Zhuangzi’s writings refers to a state of being when one is free like a fish called Kun which changes into a bird called Peng that is able to rise ninety thousand leagues and leave the wind under him. He is able to “mount on the back of the wind, shoulder the blue sky, and nothing can hinder or block him” (Zhuangzi, n.d., p.30). In the text, there are tiny birds that “scoff and sneer at the gargantuan proportions” of Peng above them (Coutinho, 2004, p.70). These are the small birds that cannot understand what lies beyond the confinements of their mundane experience (Coutinho, 2004, p.70). I link this to the concepts of the conscious and unconscious minds. Often, we are aware of the coarse level of beings — our physical body, our mundane thinking, feelings and desires. However, we may not fully understand ourselves until we go beyond the conscious level of mind and delve into the unconscious mind which includes our dreams and collective unconscious that are important for obtaining the wholeness of Self as put forth by Jung. Jung (1964) also describes the psyche as “limitless” — “Our psyche is part of nature, and its enigma is limitless” (p.6).

The story of Peng points us to the potential of limitless experience that one can have when one starts to explore beyond the mundane realm. The collective unconscious is to be discovered beyond this realm and towards a primordial state where understanding of it can be derived from “primeval dreams and creative fantasies” (Jung, 1964, p.42). The unconscious is “the psychic area with an unlimited scope” (Moacanin, 2003, p.74) with the “matrix of all potentialities” (Jung, 1963, p.197). In the same chapter “Free and Easy Wandering”, Liezi is described by Zhuangzi as one who “would ride the wind and go soaring around with cool and breezy skill” and “wandered through

the boundless” (Zhuangzi, n.d., p.32). Coutinho (2004) explains that one should let go of one’s preconceptions and diminish one’s sense of self-importance, before one can be open to learn from what is alien: nature, spirits and dreams (p.72). This is to “transcend the parochial limitations in its search for a deeper understanding of the world and our place in it” (Coutinho, 2004, p.72).

In Tibetan Buddhism, when one develops the mind at a high level of meditation, one is able to experience a form of limitless consciousness. At a much higher level of meditation beyond the form realm lies the formless realm (Lati, 1997, p.46). In the formless realm, the meditators seek limitless consciousness where they abide in a realm without coarse discrimination and without forms for eons (Lati, 1997, p.113). Metaphorically, it means that humans are not only restricted to their physical bodies. When the physical bodies die, the consciousness is the one that continues. A meditator at a high level of meditation is able to transform the coarse level of consciousness to a limitless consciousness beyond the need for body and form (Lati, 1997, p.113). In chapter eleven of Zhuangzi’s writings (p.120), the limitless horizon of consciousness and perceptions is described:

To enter the gate of the inexhaustible and wander in the limitless fields,
to form a triad with the light of the sun and moon, to partake in the
constancy of Heaven and earth.

The Land of Snow in *The Promise* represents an expansive realm where people can run at incredible speeds, similar to flying, and it is glowing with the vastness of light:

Snow Wolf tells Kunlun:
You are a man from the noblest land of all where there was only light
and trust and clarity, where we ran like the wind, and flew. I will show
you the land of your ancestors...the Land of Snow.

The “light” is often used to describe the limitless state. The Dalai Lama explains at the Fourth Mind and Life Conference attended by representatives of Western science and humanism, as recorded by Francisco Varela, that the state of clear light is experienced as a form of “ultimate reality” (Varela, 1997, p.94) when one lets go of the sense of Self. This could be experienced during deep meditation and daily occasions such as “sneezing, fainting, dying, sexual intercourse, and sleep” (p.49). This experience of the clear light is explained by the Dalai Lama as a “clear, cloudless autumn sky just before dawn” (Varela, 1997, p.229). In Buddhism, one has to obtain “non-self” by letting go of one’s egoistical mind before one can attain the ultimate self, which consists of both the conscious and unconscious mind (Suzuki, 1970, p.19-20, 58). It is only when the mind

is free from all projections and biasness that one is able to experience the highest stage of consciousness known as clear light (Moacanin, 2003, p.76). The desire for light is used metaphorically by Jung as a state of mind that is always seeking a higher consciousness within the Self (Moacanin, 2003, p.79):

...within the soul from its primordial beginnings there has been a desire for light and an irrepressible urge to rise out of the primal darkness... (Jung, 1989, p.269)

Towards the end of *The Promise*, Kunlun travels with Qingcheng against time at a formidable speed in his black cloak. In his feathered cloak, he looks like the bird Peng in Zhuangzi's story that travels in the boundless sky and with Qingcheng, they both head towards a ring of clear light in the sky, which represents the realm of infinite vastness. Kunlun says to Qingcheng:

Time sometimes flows backwards. Snow can fall in the spring and even a frozen heart can come back to life.

The Promise may be absurd in the treatment of time and space in its storyline. Time seems to be limitless at the end of the film as the characters are able to travel through horizons of time and space. However, at a state when there is no bias in the mind, and when one does not hold on to the duality of things, the consciousness can be as vast as the universe and the notion of time ceases to exist. The concept of flowing backwards in time or moving against the current can also be interpreted as having metaphoric signification of embracing the source. In Taoism, to truly understand oneself, one has to embrace the source (the mother):

The beginning of the universe
Is the mother of all things.
Knowing the mother, one also knows the sons.
Knowing the sons, yet remaining in touch with the mother,
Brings freedom from the fear of death. (Translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.55)

When the character holds on to the concept of duality in forms, they are still trapped in the world of external senses where the impermanent nature of all things exists. The attainment of enlightenment consists of making a change in our perception of reality when the "I" or self-consciousness has placed its attention on the universal consciousness (Moacanin, 2003, p.79). The terms that the Goddess of Destiny offered to Qingcheng when she was still a child is in fact the experience of every being in the cyclic existence — impermanence:

You can have the most delicious food, the prettiest clothes, and everyone will adore you. All the riches of the world will be yours in return for a small sacrifice. Every man you love, you will lose. Any happiness they bring will be fleeting. Are you willing to accept this?

One would always suffer if one remains trapped in the state of duality. It is only when one obtains the non-duality view of things that one can be fully liberated. When one sees beyond the duality, there is “*neither permanence nor impermanence, and neither the cycle of life-and-death nor nirvana*” is the *ultimate truth* (Cheng, 1984, p.51). The Goddess of Destiny reveals that the only way to obtain eternal love is when time flows backwards:

It can never be changed, unless time flows backwards, winter falls in the spring, and the dead come back to life.

I see this as an advice to embrace the Tao by understanding its source (mother). It is stated in *Tao Te Ching* that returning to the source allows one to obtain divinity and a limitless state of mind:

Returning to the source is stillness,
which is the way of nature.
The way of nature is unchanging.
Knowing constancy is insight.
Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.
Knowing constancy, the mind is open.
With an open mind, you will be openhearted.
Being openhearted, you will act royally.
Being royal, you will attain the divine.
Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.
Being at one with the Tao is eternal.
And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.
(Translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.31)

By traveling upstream to the source which is the state of Tao, one can transcend beyond the state of worldly life that is constrained by the cycle of life and death, and that is when one can receive ultimate happiness and richness. At the same time, it also suggests that as one travels into the open space of limitlessness, there is no exclusiveness, and that is the world of non-duality known as emptiness in Buddhism (Moacanim, 2003, p.281).

Towards the end of the film, Wuhuan manages to tie Kunlun, Qingcheng and General Guangming up. Kunlun is tied up on a tree, which makes him look like a red flower on the tree. The image of Kunlun hanging from the tree is thus symbolic when Wuhuan talks about falling petals:

When the last of the cherry blossoms have withered, you too will cease to exist. Like petals falling from a branch, you too will return to the earth.

The image of falling petals also occurs in the beginning and ending of the film. The robes of the General and Qingcheng are also designed with flower prints. It may signify that while flowers are pretty to look at, they will eventually wither, which highlights the impermanence of life. The cherry blossom tree with its shedding petals which ends the film signifies the cycle of life. Unless one can travel against time, one is unable to prevent the reality of death. In the piece, traveling against time has to be read metaphorically, from the perspective of attainment of limitless Tao and freedom of mind.

From the view of Buddhist *Tantra*, each being contains the whole universe, which is similar to Jung's conviction that the unconscious in man is as wide as the world itself (Jung, 1976):

... that unknown quantity in man which is as universal and wide as the world itself, which is in him by nature and cannot be acquired. Psychologically, this corresponds to the collective unconscious. (p.312)

Wuji thus reflects the limitless nature of mind at the realm of a collective unconscious which can be found in the Buddhist concepts of emptiness and non-duality.

The Beginning: Loss of Innocence

In the beginning of the film, two children are introduced and the interaction between them sets the context for the themes of promise, deception and trust. The film starts with a little girl, Qingcheng, who searches through the ruins and dead bodies for food and useful items. She finds a bun on a dead body under a withered tree. The scenes of lifeless ruins symbolize poverty in human souls in contrast to a sole cherry blossom tree with pink flowers that opens the film, which symbolizes hope. While children are representations of purity and innocence, there is a loss of innocence in this scene. The bloodshed and the withered trees suggest the deterioration of human minds which are contaminated by the three poisons of greed, jealousy and ignorance posited in Buddhism.

The girl and the boy fight over the piece of bun, and through deception by the girl, the boy loses the bun to her, marking the beginning of distrust in the boy for the rest of his life. This scene reminds me of the biblical recount of Adam and Eve, which is the beginning of sin and consciousness of wrongdoings. The bun reminds me of the

apple from the Tree of Knowledge in the Bible. Adam and Eve were initially pure and innocent, unashamed of their naked bodies. After eating the apple, Adam and Eve's awareness of good and evil, and sense of shame are formed. The bun is like the apple, which is the object of desire, brought about by the three poisons. It causes the children to be aware of evil in mankind. The serpent in the Bible that lured Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge can be interpreted as temptation in Buddhism too. The Buddha, before gaining enlightenment, successfully defeated the three temptations of sense pleasures, malice and power caused by Mara under the Bodhi Tree (Strong, 2008, p.17).

In *The Promise*, the first scene serves as the characters' initiation to the world of evil where promises can be broken and where one starts to learn not to trust others. The innocence of the children is lost in this scene. The sin that Qingcheng commits here is lying. Sin in the context of Buddhism can be interpreted as the negative karma accumulated by the character. Karma is governed by the principle of cause and effect relationships, and it refers to any deed that brings about corresponding effects in current or future lifetimes (Strong, 2008, p.369). In Buddhism, when one commits a sin of killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, or taking intoxicating drinks and drugs, one is said to have accumulated negative karma which one has to pay back either in the present life or in future lives. The opening scene also reflects the first two of the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism: 1/ The nature of life is suffering and 2/ Suffering is caused by the three key poisons of greed, jealousy and anger. The other two noble truths are: 3/ There is a way to be free from suffering; and 4/ The path leading to the end of suffering. The poverty of life where the children search through the debris and dead bodies for food signifies the suffering in life. The tension and conflict between the two children that arise due to greed, jealousy and anger have caused them much suffering throughout their journeys in life. In the film, the act of Qingcheng as a child has caused Wuhuan to take revenge on her. This echoes the Buddhist concepts of Karma, and Cause and Effect. Though Qingcheng is able to obtain external love eventually, she has gone through broken relationships and hardships in the process due to the revenge of Wuhuan. It is described in the Buddhist *Milindapanho* text that space and enlightenment are not bound by the law of Karma (Strong, 2008, p.118). All elements in the cycle of death and rebirth known as Samsara exist relative to their causes and conditions (Williams and Tribe, 2000, p.123). A thing would only pass out of existence when "its causes and conditions cease to exist" (Baroni, 2002, p.54). As Qingcheng obtains the state of

limitlessness with Kunlun, she is no longer bound by the law of Karma, and thus is broken free of the vow that she gives to the Goddess in exchange for a luxurious life.

Visions and Dreams

There are visions and prophecies given to Qingcheng and General Guangming by the Goddess of Destiny in the film. The Goddess says to Qingcheng:

My child, the Eye of Infinity (*Wuji*) contains each individual's destiny, every contour of their fate, their every smile, every tear. Yours... is also included.

The Goddess also predicts to the General that someone wearing his Crimson Armor will kill the King, tarnish his reputation and win the heart of the beauty Qingcheng whom he likes.

The exercise of making predictions can be seen in Buddhist and Taoist practices where a medium is involved in connecting the world of the spirits to the world of humans, where a sage or monk receives visions through dreams, or where predictions about the future are made with the aid of other objects such as *I-Ching* and divinity dice. In Tibetan Buddhism, predictions can be made by various means (Sumegi, 2008):

Prognostications can be made by means of rosary beads, dice, arrows, bootstraps, drums, stones (skipping them over a lake or throwing them), pebbles, animal scapulas, religious books, butter-lamps, animal entrails, astrology, songs, lots that are cast, clairvoyant pronouncements, omens that are interpreted, manner of breathing, smoke, phrases, the cries of living creatures (especially ravens and crows), movement of the eyes, humming in the ears, sneezing, pronouncements by oracles and the god-possessed, and dreams.” (p.85-86).

Wilhelm (1967) states that *I-Ching* — The Book of Changes — has an origin of a “mythical antiquity” (p.xlvii) and has served as an oracle in ancient times and in today's society. However, one needs to have a clear and tranquil mind that is receptive to cosmic influences hidden in the *I-Ching* before advice can be revealed through it (Wilhelm, 1967, p.liv). At the same time, the *I-Ching* is not an ordinary book of soothsaying as it demands a right course of action from one who consults it (Wilhelm, 1967, p.liii). For instance, a course of action may not be needed in the context of fortune telling as one could just wait for the predicted events to occur. Most interpretations emphasize the type of person or action required in a given situation rather than just accepting a rigid oracular

determinism (Smith, 2008, p.25). The *I-Ching* requires one to actively take the right course of action for each situation (Wilhelm, 1967, p.liii).

Predictions about the future or the giving of oracular advice can be found in other religions too. In the Bible, there are instances that show how Jesus prophesied about events such as his death and resurrection. A Christian also receives messages from God through prophecy and visions (Brill, 2008, p.391). In Islam, the Qur'an states that "For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know" (Qur'an, 6:67).

Similarly to Jung (1989), the unconscious communicates beyond what the conscious logical mind knows through visions about the past or future. This is part of the Self that has an understanding of knowledge above and beyond that of the conscious mind:

The unconscious helps by communicating things to us, or making figurative allusions. It has other ways, too, of informing us of things which by all logic we could not possibly know. Consider synchronistic phenomena, premonitions, and dreams that come true. (p.302)

Jung (1964) further explains that our unconscious can also detect dangers that we consciously fail to see, and such information may be passed to us through dreams. He says that "timelessness" is a quality to be experienced at the realm of the collective unconscious, and that one can reintegrate all forgotten memories and knowledge of the past through dreams, mythology or the understanding of Self (Jung, 1992c, p.73). He states that our psyche "is not subject to the law of space and time" and that a complete picture of the world includes the dimension of timelessness and spacelessness (Jung, 1989, p.304). This sense of timelessness is conveyed in *The Promise* where Kunlun is able to travel through time and where time can flow backward:

Kunlun says to Qingcheng:
Time sometimes flows backwards. Snow can fall in the Spring and even a frozen heart can come back to life.

The unconscious mind does not only contain primordial myths and ancestral images, but future contents too (Jung, 1972):

...everything of what I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness... (p.185)

Moacanin (2003) explains that Jung sees that the unconscious mind can make wiser and more objective judgments than conscious thinking, thus, the unconscious is a guide that points one to a destination that is true to one's self and not led by prejudices of the conscious mind (p.75-76).

Dreams as prophecies do not exist only in Buddhism but in other major religions too. While dreams of the Buddha's birth and visions of Buddha on the night of enlightenment have been described, prophetic dreams were also recorded in the Bible and Hadiths (Young, 1999, p.7-10). It is believed that some dreams contain prophecies and are messages sent by gods (Young, 1999, p.7). In the Fourth Mind and Life Conference as recorded by Francisco Varela who received a PhD in Biology from Harvard University, the Dalai Lama mentioned that in Tibetan Buddhism, there is also a state of dreaming which is known as the "special dream state" (Varela, 1997, p.38). In that state, the "special dream body" is "created from the mind and from vital energy" and it is able to disassociate from the gross physical body and travel elsewhere (Varela, 1997, p.38-39). In Buddhism, when one's body withers away, one is left with "mind" or "soul" (Desjarlais, 2003, p.212). After the disappearance of a body, the deceased's soul wanders around "in a dreamlike fugue" (Desjarlais, 2003, p.213).

All these concepts of timelessness, spacelessness and special dream body illustrate the meaning of *wuji* (limitless consciousness) in the film too. Predictions and prophecies revealed through visions and dreams manifest from the unconscious mind. Moacanin (2003) explains that prophetic visions and dreams can only be experienced without the conscious interference of the ego (p.40). The symbolic meaning of gods and humans living together that the film describes with Chinese texts in the beginning also refers to the divinity within humans. As one is able to attain the limitlessness of mind, one is able to get in touch with the divine within the inner self. Both Jung and Buddhism believe that the major task one has to accomplish is to get in touch with this divine spark (Moacanin, 2003, p.93). The Buddhists believe that "it is not God who creates man, but man who creates God in his image", and that the divinity in man leads one towards enlightenment and wholeness (Govinda, 1976, p.141). The Goddess in the film appears to the characters at different points in their life to show them visions of the future. That could be the work of the unconscious mind that foresees future events. Thus, the Goddess might not be a separate entity but the embodiment of the characters' unconscious minds.

Archetypes

Hero Archetype

Drawing from the Jungian concept of archetypes, I have identified the key figure archetypes of hero, child and shadow in the film. I classify Kunlun as a hero who brings benefits to the people around him and who is faced with various challenges in a new environment that he has to conquer. Kunlun's name may come from the Kunlun Mountains, the range of mountains on the western border between China and Tibet, which Taoists believe to be sacred and is a paradise of immortality (Kohn, 2009, p.225).

Unlike my analyses of *Crouching Tiger* and *The Karate Kid*, the hero of *The Promise* does not have a specific task that he sets out to accomplish and is not even aware of his journey as a hero or that he is bringing about positive changes to the society. As a hero archetype, Kunlun also has near-superhuman power which he uses to defeat the forces of evil (Jung, 1964, p.68). He is able to survive the ferocious bulls, prevent the General from being killed by Snow Wolf, and eventually free Qingcheng from the curse of losing every man she loves. Born a slave, Kunlun is able to run at amazing speeds and with this special talent, he is engaged by General Guangming. Kunlun becomes the slave of the General after his previous master, the leader of slaves, dies in a war against barbarians:

The reason for Kunlun to serve the General is simple — to have meat for consumption in return:

The General:
How long have you been a slave?

Kunlun:
For as long as I can remember.

The General:
Do you want to be my slave?

Kun Lun:
Yes, I want to.

The General:
Why?

Kunlun:
If I serve you, I get to eat meat every day.

In the film, the character Kunlun is established as a slave who has no free will and does not make his own decisions. As General Guangming asks him for his name, he habitually inserts the word “slave” before his name as he has been one all along:

The General:
What is your name?

Kunlun:
The Slave Kunlun.

Wuhuan’s line to Kunlun best reflects his position as a slave — “As a slave, even your life is not your own”. Kunlun’s motivation for his actions is driven by external factors such as food and shelter. He has been listening to external powers, and as a slave, he has been serving one master after another. In Buddhism and Taoism, all external forms are regarded as impermanent, and grasping at external forms is illusive. It is only when one truly understands the inner self that one is able to be free from suffering. For the first three quarters of the film, Kunlun’s mantra is “Yes, Master”. He has always viewed himself as a slave who cannot make up his own mind. Though he falls in love with Qingcheng the moment he saves her from being killed by the King, he suppresses his feelings for her. The first time he makes up his mind in the entire film is when he decides that he will not kill Qingcheng. Before this decision is made, he is instructed by the General to kill Qingcheng but she requests that he decide if he really wants to:

I cannot change my destiny, Kunlun, but you can learn to make up your own mind. When you know whether or not you should strike, come and find me.

Snow Wolf also assures Kunlun that he is not a slave and he is capable of controlling his own destiny:

Kunlun, I will take you home. The snow will restore your strength and you will learn who you are. You are not a slave. You are a man from the noblest land of all.

By traveling back through time to his homeland, Kunlun catches a glimpse of his mother and sister. The scene of his return to the homeland starts with a blank white screen. Following this, the audience sees a close-up shot of him resting on a bed with a fish tank as the headboard. The whole set is made of ice, which gives viewers a cold sensation, and denotes the bleak situation that Kunlun has been living in. The fish may symbolize the freedom that Kunlun longs for, just like the fish, Kun, in Taoist master Zhuangzi’s writings. Kunlun opens his eyes and through eye-line matching, the audience views full

shots of the room he is in where he sees his deceased mother for a brief second. The vision dissipates when he reaches for it. As Kunlun moves, the audience is brought to a low-angled upward-panning extreme long shot of the snow-laden field he was likely to have been in the previous scene. The sequence ends as it begins, with a blank white screen fading in to the next scene. Because of the absurdity of the set, viewers may feel as confused as the character. This thus puts them in his shoes and creates a sense of suspense. All these are depicted as visions that Kunlun sees while his mind travels to the unconscious realm with Snow Wolf:

Kunlun:

I saw my mother with a little girl. Who was she? Was I dreaming? Where was that place?

Snow Wolf:

This was your home — the Land of Snow. I had to travel backwards in time to show you who you are.

Kunlun:

The Land of Snow? Where is it now?

Snow Wolf:

You were only two years old when you were taken away as a slave.

The journey to the past is akin to the state of the dream body in Tibetan Buddhism, in which the dream body can travel elsewhere and “the technique is accomplished entirely by the power of desire, or aspiration” as mentioned by the Dalai Lama (Varela, 1997, p.39). In the film, Snow Wolf also assures Kunlun that traveling through time can be done with a purpose and desire:

Kunlun:

I want to see my mother and sister again.

Snow Wolf:

Learn to run then! If you run with purpose, you will be able to see them again.

Kunlun:

I know how to run!

Snow Wolf:

That is not running. That is fleeing. To achieve real speed, you must discover your heart's desire.

Kunlun:

What does it mean — desire?

Snow Wolf:

That is something you must find for yourself. This is as far as I can take you. I have taught you everything I know.

This scene suggests that with trained meditation and focus of mind, one is able to travel through time and consciousness. “Desire” in this context as spoken by Snow Wolf does not refer to the inner poison of desire which means attachment, but to an aspiration or purpose which gives rise to the state of a focused mind. The scene of “going home” by traveling backwards in time serves as an initiation for the character to gain awareness of his mind and inner self. Kunlun eventually understands the way of Tao in order to “run faster than time itself”, which he tells the General. He has learnt to embrace Tao to attain a limitless and boundless state of being:

I have learnt that real speed cannot be perceived. Real speed is like the swelling of a breeze, the gathering of clouds, the sunset, the moonrise, or the leaves turning red, like a baby’s first tooth emerging, or when we fall in love.

By going with the flow, with the natural rhythm of things where the Tao resides, Kunlun has learnt how to travel with speed limitlessly. His birthplace also reflects the ancestral quality of the universal unconscious mentioned by Jung (2008, p.129-130). In Jung’s view, it is also this ancestral quality that gives the feeling of mysticism, oneness and indefiniteness (Jung, 1992c, p.67). Thus, the journey home with Snow Wolf is an important moment for the transition of the character in the film. It is after the journey that Kunlun begins to make decisions and takes charge of his life. He tells Qingcheng, “I have learned to make up my own mind. I could never harm you”. Then, with a strong mind of desire, Kunlun travels five years back in time to his homeland to witness how the place and people were being destroyed by Wuhuan. With the ability to control his consciousness, he is able to travel through time and space. Snow Wolf comments on his traveling back in time — “Your desire has carried you back five years”. He also finds the courage to confess his love for Qingcheng by revealing his identity towards the end of the film. He tells General Guangming, “I am going to put on the armor and confess my true identity to Qingcheng”.

As the plot develops, the character starts to make his own decisions and transforms from being a slave to a man who is in control of his mind. Kunlun’s individuation journey is thus to get in touch with his Self and become aware of his own thoughts. From being portrayed as someone who has no mind of his own, Kunlun is shown to take control of himself gradually by developing the conscious aspect of his

mind, followed by the unconscious mind. Eventually, he is a slave to none, and in charge of his own destiny. While Jung, Buddhism and Taoism emphasize the importance of getting to know the unknown realm of the mind, the cognitive function is not minimized. Buddhism sees that intellectual understanding aids one to be attentive to the activities of one's mind, thoughts and ideas before one can attain wisdom (Dhargyey, 1974, p.99). Jung (1977) also maintains that the unconscious can only be observed through conscious expressions (p.186).

The hero eventually obtains liberation through internal transformation and attains the wholeness of his Self. In the end, Kunlun acquires the divinity within man as he breaks through the veil of time and travels in the limitless time zones of past, present and future. Moacanin (2003) observes that both Jung and Buddhism present the lack of self-knowledge as the source of enslavement by unconscious impulses (p.96). He has to learn to use his own mind as a guide before he can discover the truth from within (Moacanin, 2003, p.96). Ultimately, Kunlun is presented as a hero who is able to ultimately find his own inner potential for liberation, break free from external authority and attain self-knowledge.

Child and Shadow Archetypes

As mentioned earlier, the film opens with images of a boy (Wuhuan) and a girl (Qingcheng). These are the child archetypes in the film. The symbol of a "child" is important in the understanding of Tao. "Child" is mentioned three times in *Tao Te Ching*:

Be the stream of the universe!
Being the stream of the universe,
Ever true and unswerving,
Become as a little child once more.
(Chapter 28, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.55)

The sage is shy and humble —
To the world he seems confusing.
Others look to him and listen.
He behaves like a little child.
(Chapter 49, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.97)

He who is filled with Virtue is like a newborn child.
Wasps and serpents will not sting him;
Wild beasts will not pounce upon him;
He will not be attacked by birds of prey.
His bones are soft, his muscles weak,
But his grip is firm.
(Chapter 55, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.109)

Wang (2004) explains that in those texts, a child symbolizes the embrace of simplicity as an approach to the attainment of Tao, which is characterized by “naturalness, innocence and purity” (p.204), and that a Taoist sage should have “a genuine, innocent and pure state of soul” (p.216). Laozi thus teaches people to return to a state of innocence without desires, in order to avoid “jealousy, hatred and danger” (Wang, 2004, p.82). In Christianity, the quality of a child is required to enter through the door of heaven too:

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew, 18:3-6)

In Christianity, it is important for one to be humble and pure of heart in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jung (1990) points out that “one of the essential features of the child motif is its futurity” (p.164) and “is a picture of certain forgotten things in our childhood” (p.161). Segal (1999) notes that the child archetype is a symbol for psychological maturation of personality (p.84). While children could be representations of innocence, the film opens with the stage of their evolvment towards independence. It is a phase where the children start to build their ego and adapt to the outer world (Von Franz, 1964). They start to realize the “imperfections of the world”, and the evil within themselves and outside, and from then on, seek ways to deal with the chaos internally and externally (Von Franz, 1964, p.168). The beginning scenes also set the future of the two characters. We see the transition of innocence to a realization of evil in the children.

Jung (1990) views the child archetypes as “insignificant” and “helpless” but they are not just any ordinary children (p.170). He points out that the mythological children possess powers that pull them through enemies and dangers in life (Jung, 1990, p.170). At the same time, the environmental influences can be obstacles to their path of individuation in achieving wholeness of being (Jung, 1990, p.166). Both children in the film lead a life of poverty amidst the debris of dead bodies. Ruins and withered trees and trunks presented suggest a disoriented being and psyche that require revival. They are orphans who have to find ways to survive despite the harsh conditions surrounding them. Wuhuan deals with the harshness of his situation by rejecting trust and love with others

and within him while Qingcheng meets a Goddess and exchanges love for a luxurious life. Both give up love for survival.

Elements of fantasy and the otherworldly realm appear in the scene where Qingcheng encounters the Goddess. The backdrop and the river give a dreamlike feel with the turquoise reflective water and the stormy sky. A long shot shows the two characters together with their reflections in the river. In contrast to the child's sunburnt face and wretched clothes, the Goddess with her radiant flawless face, is shown with silky flying robes and hair, seemingly depicting opposite ends of the world — the poor and the rich. To attain a life of luxury, one has to make sacrifices. After Qingcheng makes the promise with the Goddess, she walks into a white horizon of light. This suggests the limitless expanse and the unknown that she is entering into.

As Qingcheng encounters futile love in her life, she regrets the pursuit of a luxurious life in exchange for love, "It's my destiny to lose every man I love, a foolish promise I made as a child. I cannot change it". Eventually, with the help of Kunlun, Qingcheng manages to be free from the bondage of the curse cast on her and obtains the ultimate liberation. However, Wuhuan is trapped in his own mind which is caged with negative emotions of anger, jealousy and ignorance. He is unable to trust anyone until the moment of death.

Wuhuan is the shadow archetype in the film. His Chinese name means "without happiness". Since having been deceived by Qingcheng in his childhood, he has blocked his heart from the world. Wuhuan's heart is filled with vengeance, hatred, jealousy and ignorance. He says to Snow Wolf, "Anyone can take anything from anybody as long as they are cunning enough. Unfortunately... you are not".

One of his prominent weapons in the film is a golden stick with the mould of a pointing finger at the edge. This parallels Wuhuan's act of blaming others for the unpleasant incidents he has experienced instead of pointing to himself to contemplate his wrongdoings. Twenty years after Wuhuan and Qingcheng meet as children, he reveals to her towards the end of the film:

You were the first person in the world to lie to me. Have you forgotten?
"Let me down and I will be your slave"... You took the bun and ran away.
And you promised! You were the one who first made me lose my trust
in the world, even in myself. Now, look at me, neither trusting nor to be
trusted, and always in the shadow of a greater man. But you, beautiful
Princess, you have the adoration of everyone!

Jung does not promote the rejection of the shadow within. In fact, Moacanin (2003) explains that Jung encourages one to deal with one's shadow and not to repress the emotional turmoil one experiences (p.88). It is only as one recognizes the shadow within that transformation of the Self is possible. However, Wuhuan has been rejecting the emotional turmoil that he has experienced as a child by blocking out trust and compassion in his life. To Jung, the shadow archetype is not totally evil but "merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad" and "contains childish or primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but — convention forbids". (Jung, 1938, p.95)

It is only after Wuhuan reveals the childhood incident which has affected him greatly, that Qingcheng realizes the shadow within her and how her empty promise has led a man on to the dark path. Wuhuan's revelation also prompts General Guangming to confess his mistake, "I allowed a woman who is in love with somebody else to suffer for me. I too am a liar". Through Wuhuan, they begin to face the shadows within them. Those who are without trust in their hearts eventually die in the film. General Guangming and Wuhuan never open their hearts to trust, even at the moment of death.

In Taoism, a realized being has the virtue of helping and trusting people with or without goodness (Wang, 2004, p.217). The need to trust and have faith in others is highlighted in chapter 49 of *Tao Te Ching*:

I am good to people who are good.
I am also good to people who are not good.
Because Virtue is goodness.
I have faith in people who are faithful.
I also have faith in people who are not faithful.
Because Virtue is faithfulness. (translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.97)

The film shows images of two huge cages that Wuhuan built. One is a golden cage that he uses to lock Qingcheng, and another is an iron cage where a fight between Kunlun and Snow Wolf takes place. Wuhuan's fascination with cages is portrayed as a reflection of his heart, which is locked just like the cage. He cannot free his own heart to embrace others. Unable to find redemption of Self as his heart is locked throughout, he is unable to trust anyone, including himself. Wuhuan, the shadow archetype, has caused harm to others, but at the same time is a pitiful character. Viewers can see that he is a victim of poverty and lies too. The experience of being deceived as a child caused an irreversible hatred in him, which blocked his journey of individuation.

Universal Symbols

Bird-Like Figures and Cages

In *The Promise*, not only do Kunlun and Snow Wolf travel with the speed of the wind, some of the characters also look like birds in various scenes. Snow Wolf is clothed in a black cloak made of feathers. His image resembles that of a crow. As Wuhuan captures Qingcheng for the first time, he makes her wear an outer coat made of white feathers and places her in a huge golden birdcage. Wuhuan desires to lock her there as his caged bird:

How do you like my golden birdcage? (...) Put it on, my caged bird! (*he passes a white feathery coat to Qingcheng*)

She looks like a white ibis in the white coat. In her coat, she is rescued by Kunlun who lowers a red rope from the small opening above the golden cage, ties it to her and pulls her out. He flies her like a kite with a red rope, through a dark tunnel to the exterior of the building. The movement of the characters in the tunnel seems to transport the audience to an “otherness”. While Kunlun is running swiftly, Qingcheng is flying in the air, against the azure sky. The scene is depicted with a low-angle shot that presents Qingcheng as a kite in the sky, which symbolizes the free state of being. Qingcheng is like a bird flying on her own before Wuhuan cuts the rope off, making her fall into the labyrinth again. Wuhuan has a mask that looks like an eagle, and he is often seated on a throne with white feathers that resemble those of an eagle. While eagles are powerful, the fact that he is moving in and out of the cage suggests that he is nevertheless caged and a slave to his own unpleasant memories of childhood, unable to free himself from the dark event that impacted his life.

The scene where Kunlun and Snow Wolf are fighting in the giant iron birdcage can be a visual metaphor of ‘fighting cocks’. Before the fight between Kunlun and Snow Wolf begins in the cage, the shots initially shown between the two are eye-line matching while the camera moves back and forth. Kunlun leaps to the side of the cage before jumping in and is attacked by Snow Wolf. The audience then sees from a low angle into the cage as the two men are running, with Snow Wolf chasing after Kunlun. When he finally manages to catch up, the audience is brought back into the cage to watch the men fight. The sequence ends with the two men flying into a light which appears to be coming from the top of the cage.

Towards the end of the film, before the court scene, the fight between Snow Wolf and Wuhuan takes place in a room filled with screens painted with images of birds. The action occurs both in front and behind the screens through a variety of camera shots. The fighting stops when several screens align, and back and forth shots of the two characters are shown — one in the center of the screens and another hiding in the darkness. The fight then continues when Wuhuan laughs and Snow Wolf flies into and around the room as he attacks. The movement of Snow Wolf resembles the birds on the screens. The fight sequence ends with Wuhuan holding on to one end of the black cloak and trying to remove it from Snow Wolf.

Don Fredericksen (2002) analyzes that there is a relation between the experience of ecstatic flight and spirituality, and that “flight” symbolizes the understanding of metaphysical truths (p.45-46). Eliade (1960) points out that in Hindu texts, one can find descriptions such as “he who understands has wings” (p.105). Shamans in an ecstatic trance also claim to leave the body and take flight like a bird (Fredericksen, 2002, p.45). The images of a bird in flight can thus signify the wish for freedom and spiritual development:

One can only interpret all the myths, rites and legends to which we have been referring by a longing to see the human body behaving like a “spirit”, to transmute the corporeal modality of man into spiritual modality... the yogis, the alchemists, the arhat, are able to transport themselves at will, to fly, or to disappear. (Eliade, 1960, p.106-108).

While the images of a bird in flight can signify the wish for freedom and spiritual development, they also signify entrapped souls like caged birds that thirst for freedom.

Towards the end of the film, Wuhuan ties Qingcheng to a chair with huge wings made of both soft and hard materials. This is the same chair that Wuhuan uses in preceding scenes. The image of Wuhuan sitting in the chair with wings suggests that his soul is trapped while he longs to be free. While he is unable to free his own soul, neither does he want others to enjoy the freedom that he lacks. Thus, tying Qingcheng to the chair gives the impression of restraining the freedom of a being. As a selfish person, he does not want anyone else to enjoy the state of freedom as he himself is incapable of obtaining it too.

While Qingcheng is portrayed as a white ibis that symbolizes purity and the pursuit of spiritual development, Snow Wolf is clothed in a black feathered cloak. He is fearful of death, and gives his life to serve Wuhuan for the opportunity to live. Without the cloak, Snow Wolf will turn into smoke and disappear from the world. He is like a

spirit without the black cloak as his form is dependent on it. The following lines of Wuhuan before he offers Snow Wolf the black cloak sums up its qualities and those of a slave:

Now I believe you are a native of the Land of Snow. But one who is afraid of death. Still, only a man who fears death can be a good slave. Put this on, and you will live. But you have to wear it always. If you ever remove it, you will become a wisp of air and vanish forever. From now on, you will serve as my swiftest assassin.

Cirlot (2001) explains that a crow with its black color is associated with the idea of beginning as expressed in symbols such as the primogenital darkness or the maternal night (p.71). At the same time, because of its flight, it is associated with spiritual strength, and it is also considered as a messenger. Snow Wolf teaches Kunlun the way to return to their homeland, the Land of Snow, and Kunlun gets to witness the massacre of their people and the process of how Snow Wolf became the slave of Wuhuan. Kunlun accuses Snow Wolf of being a traitor:

Kunlun:
You betrayed your own people!

Snow Wolf:
I never hurt anyone. I did not betray anybody. All I wanted was to live.

Though Snow Wolf is misunderstood by Kunlun initially as a traitor of his own race, Snow Wolf is in fact a representation of “home” and its origin. It is Snow Wolf who brings Kunlun home, and who teaches him how to travel faster than time. He serves as the messenger that links Kunlun from a world of ignorance to a world of wisdom. Snow Wolf is created as a character that serves the vital role of bringing about the conscious and unconscious states of Kunlun that are depicted in the film. The audience thus gets to see how Kunlun transforms and eventually takes control of his mind. In the later part of the film, Snow Wolf offers himself as a sacrifice in order to save Kunlun when Wuhuan allows either him or Kunlun to survive. Before he removes his cloak, he tells Kunlun:

I told you once that the day Wuhuan came and massacred our people, I did not wrong anyone, nor did I betray anyone. But now I realize I was mistaken. I have wronged somebody, and betrayed somebody — myself. I have to thank Wuhuan for showing me the futility of a life without honor. It makes me realize that death is not as terrifying as I had imagined.

In Buddhism, the self is the greatest enemy, as the mind is unable to experience the non-duality nature of things, and clings on to external experiences which give rise to negative qualities of jealousy, anger and ignorance.

Another symbol that is related to birds is a cage. Two huge cages are presented in the film, both situated in the palace: one is a golden cage with a flight of steps in it; another is a round iron cage without steps in it. Qingcheng is locked in the golden cage twice in the film. While the steps suggest a search for spiritual truth, her elevation of Self is restricted by her confinement within the cage. There is a small opening above each cage, which signifies hope for any trapped soul.

In the film, a couple of characters are caged in their own poisons of greed, desire and ignorance. Red ropes used throughout the film and the red costumes worn by the General, Goddess and Kunlun signify the passions, emotions and cravings of the characters. The film also shows that the human mind can be easily manipulated by desires based on sight through the way Qingcheng manipulates the actions of the soldiers in the palace by removing pieces of her clothing. She first makes Wuhuan's soldiers put down their weapons, then makes them direct their weapons at the King:

Qingcheng:
Would anyone like to know what I am wearing underneath this garment?
If so, put down your weapons.
(The soldiers put down their weapons.)

The King:
It's working! Strip! Keep stripping!

Qingcheng:
Would you like to know what is underneath this layer? If so, pick up your
weapons again and aim them at that heartless man!
(The soldiers pick up their weapons again.)

In Buddhism, external stimulations and desire for external things can be seen as attachment, which occurs from the motive of wishing to acquire the objects that we want to possess (Nishijima, 2004, p.93). The beauty of Qingcheng is an external stimulation for the men by sight and it becomes a strong motivation for them to carry out her instructions. Thus, one can be easily manipulated by external factors if one is not grounded in inner truth and belief.

In the film, General Guangming's Crimson Armor is a representation of power. The General and Wuhuan are two characters who show attachment to the Crimson Armor:

This (*Crimson Armor*) has been my heart's dearest desire. I cannot give it to you. It now belongs to me, not because of any of this god-of-war nonsense, but because it's a symbol of my power!

Their attachment to the armor brings much suffering to them. Wuhuan, the duke, has been fighting for power, and wishes to outdo General Guangming as he has always been jealous of the General's capabilities. Due to his jealousy, he has always been vengeful and is unable to attain peace and happiness. It is also the Crimson Armor that brings General Guangming irreversible problems that lead him to his death. With the intention of saving the King, he allows Kunlun to put on his armor in his disguise to enter the palace. However, Kunlun mistakes Princess Qingcheng for the King and kills the King. Due to this, he bears the blame of killing the King as predicted by the Goddess:

You are innocent, yet you have been forced to bear the blame for the King's death. Fate (*wuji*) works in mysterious ways. There are more losses to come and there is nothing you can do to stop them. Soon you will lose even your cherished armor and be left with nothing. There will be a new Master of the Crimson Armor.

In the film, there is a stage in General Guangming's life where he gives up his Crimson Armor. It is a blissful life for him after letting go of his attachment to the armor. He lives in a hut in the middle of a vast grassland with the view of a wide horizon and enjoys a domestic life with Qingcheng. However, Wuhuan sends Commander Yeli to lure the General out of his domestic life by conveying the message that he has been killed by the commander and his men. Commander Yeli says to the General, "He would never have parted from his armor, even for a second. Our Great General... is truly no more". Qingcheng advises the General not to follow the commander back to the palace but he refuses to heed her advice. He is still unable to let go of his power and status. Commander Yeli tempts the General, enticing him to reclaim his Crimson Armor. As General Guangming follows the Commander back to the palace, he realizes that Wuhuan is still alive, but it is too late.

As long as the characters have not let go of their desires and attachments to worldly things, they are living in a world of a cage, and are unable to attain happiness which is represented by the limitless realm. While the birds are symbols of freedom, many of the characters are trapped in the cage of life. Eventually, only Kunlun and Qingcheng manage to attain ultimate freedom, depicted by the scene where Kunlun carries Qingcheng and flies up to a compound of waters which seemingly replaces the air. As they break through the waters, an azure sky is seen. Kunlun and Qingcheng

gradually disappear into the sun in similar fashion to proverbial film heroes who ride into the sunset. A lowering of the camera angle to an eye-matching level that shows a cherry blossom tree shedding its petals in a field ends the film.

Labyrinth and Mandala

Symbols that resemble the labyrinth and the *mandala* can be found in numerous scenes. Von Franz (1964) explains that the labyrinth, which is normally in a circular shape, can also be found in the shape of a square and is a powerful symbol of the unconscious. The *mandala* often contains “a quaternity or a multiple of four, in the form of a cross, a star, a square, an octagon” (Jung, 1990, p.387). In Tibetan Buddhism, the drawing of the *mandala* with fine sand by monks or nuns is an aid to assist meditation and concentration (Jung, 1990, p.387). However, symbols of *mandala* can be found in other cultures too, such as the rose windows in Christian medieval cathedrals, the *yin-yang* symbol and the whirling Dervish (Jaoudi, 1998, p.70; Jung, 1990, p.387). In Taoism, *wuji* is represented by a blank circle which signifies the completion and return to the infinite Tao (Pregadio, 2008, p.1058). In the film, a circular formation can also be seen when General Guangming obtains victory in the war against the barbarians. His soldiers surround him in a circular formation and throw him high up into the sky, which signifies the power he is still holding before the King is killed by Kunlun in disguise. Kunlun and Snow Wolf move anti-clockwise during their fight in the circular iron cage. While circumambulating the stupas and Buddha statues in a clockwise direction means accumulating “the merit of construction”, circumambulating in an anti-clockwise direction represents destruction (Sodargye, 2012, p.22-23). The fight between Kunlun and Snow Wolf, who are from the same hometown, suggests the destruction of homeland and identity.

The King who is killed by Kunlun resides in the center of the palace which is designed like a labyrinth. The circular palace also looks like a *mandala* that contains a quaternity with the design of four gates facing four directions. The labyrinth-like construction and the *mandala* “are projections of an inner landscape” (Hockley, 2001, p.161). The center of the *mandala* is the spot of power and the innermost divinity of man, which is represented by the deity in the center of *mandalas* in Tibetan Buddhism. As Kunlun rescues the princess from the palace for the first time, the image of the *mandala* can also be seen in the background while both of them ride on horseback out

of the labyrinth gate. In the film, Kunlun travels into the labyrinth through different means and different ways. The first time is through the main gate on a horse, the second time is from the top opening of the labyrinth with a red rope to rescue the princess, and for the third time, he flies right to the center of the labyrinth to rescue the General. The various visits to the labyrinth represent the different phases of his individuation process. The first time when Kunlun visits the labyrinth, he is just a slave who obeys instructions from his master; the second time as he rescues the princess, he has close contact with the anima aspect within him as he carries the princess and fights the shadow represented by Wuhuan; his last visit to the labyrinth shows a development of his consciousness where he starts to question the General and seeks his own destiny. In one of the scenes during Kunlun's second visit to the palace, Kunlun in red robes and Qingcheng in white robes are wrapped in Wuhuan's huge long black flag during the fight. The red and white images wrapped in the black cloth symbolize the embrace of anima and animus (*yin* and *yang*). However, wholeness can only be attained when the shadow represented by the black cloth is overcome. The labyrinth is a maze of the underworld where the hero has to pass through the different challenges posed by evil before he can attain the wholeness of Self in his individuation journey.

The meeting of archetypes take place several times in the labyrinth. Kunlun, in the General's Crimson Armor meets Wuhuan for the first time in the center of the labyrinth. The hero rescues the princess out of the labyrinth and it is the first time he experiences the embrace of his anima represented by the princess. Von Franz (1964) observes that in myths, a common expression of anima is the damsel in distress, whom the hero seeks to rescue, and from the event, the hero rediscovers the feminine aspect of himself.

In the final court scene where the General, Qingcheng and Kunlun are put on trial for killing the King, a *mandala* formation with the Star of David in it can be seen on the floor in the center of the room. The Star of David comprises two triangles. In Christianity, the first triangle represents God in three entities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the second triangle represents man: mind, body and spirit (Martin, 2009, p.67). The walls of the court room are filled with labyrinth symbols, and the windows resemble the design of the *mandala*. The court scene is where revelations take place. Kunlun is finally able to reveal his act of killing the King. General Guangming, who wants Qingcheng's love, has to admit that he does not want to reveal the real killer of the King whom Qingcheng has fallen in love with.

Through the symbols of labyrinths and *mandalas* presented in the film, the journey of individuation and transformation is put forth to viewers. The palace as a symbol of a labyrinth is a journey that the characters have to go through to encounter various archetypal figures before they experience their inner Self and the transformation of being. General Guangming gives up his Crimson Armor to live a blissful life with Qingcheng in the countryside; Kunlun starts to gain control over his mind and is no longer a slave to others; Qingcheng learns to believe in love again; and Snow Wolf learns that death is not as horrifying as living under humiliation. Wuhuan, though still unable to trust anyone, including himself at the end of the film, realizes that there is someone (Kunlun) who has great trust in others.

Realm of Liberation

The realm of liberation, which I identify as heaven in Christianity, the Pure Land in Buddhism and Tao in Taoism, is a “place” where people attain the ultimate freedom. Jung (1990) asserts that symbols of places such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, and the Heavenly Jerusalem represent our longing for redemption (p.81). The land for redemption is also a place where one finds the ultimate freedom of the soul.

In the film, the Land of Snow gives the idea of a Pure Land. The citizens are clothed in white, and they are known to be a race of trustworthy people. Here, people are truthful to each other, a land without lies and deception. The massacre of the whole race leaving one survivor represented by Kunlun suggests that the quality of trust is deteriorating in our society. At the same time, it indicates the difficulty to achieve a state of purity and trust within one’s mind. Jung (1992c) also acknowledges the difficulty in gaining access to the mind, to understand it, as it is in the unconscious (p.68). The Land of Snow is a land of light, trust and clarity as described by Snow Wolf:

Kunlun, I will take you home. The snow will restore your strength and you will learn who you are. You are not a slave. You are a man from the noblest land of all, where there was only light, and trust and clarity.

In one scene, Kunlun also trusts Snow Wolf and sets him free. Snow Wolf exclaims that Kunlun is indeed from the Land of Snow as he has trust in people, “You have great trust. You really are from the Land of Snow”. Thus, the Land of Snow is a distant land that contains the virtues of trust and clarity. Kunlun, the only survivor from the land is the embodiment of light and clarity. A hero archetype and the one who has attained the

limitless state of mind, Kunlun obtains the wholeness of Self in the end. He represents the way to liberation for viewers who follow his transformation process.

Conclusion

The characters in *The Promise* have all entered into the labyrinth and the *mandala*-like palace at different stages of their lives. From the start of the film, they are trapped in the worldly realm where they have to either give their life or fight for survival. They encounter each other in the palace and go through a transformation process. General Guangming initially clings on to his Crimson Armor which represents power and status. However, he later gives in to his external desire — his lust for Qingcheng — and abandons his Crimson Armor. Kunlun initially serves his master but later gains control over his mind and is able to make wise decisions that help himself and others. Snow Wolf agrees to be Wuhuan's swiftest assassin as he wants to stay alive. He later realizes death is not as detrimental as being humiliated by Wuhuan constantly. Wuhuan is still trapped in his unpleasant past, but he eventually recognizes that there is still trust in life, which is found in Kunlun.

In Buddhism, the cyclic existence of life and death brings about suffering to human beings as we have not let go of all the inner negativities. We could let go of our pursuit of one external object only to go after another, just like General Guangming who lets go of power in pursuit of lust. To attain enlightenment or ultimate liberation, one needs to understand both the conscious and unconscious minds. The conscious mind enables one to discipline oneself and make the right decisions that can be used to open up the unconscious realm in the being. The cinema allows viewers to look at the characters on the screen with conscious identification or even judgment, and at the same time, allows the unconscious aspect to go through a journey of individuation together with the characters presented.

Jung (1990) maintains that the contents of the archetypal characters “are manifestations of processes in the collective unconscious” (p.156). For instance, as one looks at the child archetype, one views oneself as a child and can reflect upon one's own childhood (Jung, 1990, p.161-162). From there, we are able to examine the formative years of our personality and events that lead to our development of Self. For instance, as we view how the children in the film transit from a state of innocence to a consciousness of evil, we also reflect upon our transition from childhood to adulthood.

That makes us more aware of our individuation journey. The repressed memories and emotions can be triggered during viewing. Similarly, by looking at one's shadow within, one can deal with it through a gradual healing process which may take place through acceptance and change. We are more aware of the emotions and feelings in us that could have led us to suffer.

However, while the philosophical undertones are evident in *The Promise*, and the symbols of the unconscious are presented in the film, the film has been criticized for "cinematic excess" (Chan, 2009, p.173). Thus, while a transcendental style may not be the only way to transport the audience to a spiritual realm in cinema, "a play of excess" may also block the spiritual experience of some viewers. Though *The Promise* aspires to "engage audiences with the loftier philosophical concerns of destiny, fate, free choice, and human agency" (Chan, 2009, p.173), the aesthetic excess "undercuts the tale's emotional textures" (Koehler, 2005). Nevertheless, the film is among the top twenty five in Chinese box office earnings of all time (Berry, 2013, p.175).

The Promise, with richness in its *mise-en-scène*, certainly does not have the "sparseness" of what a transcendental style entails. However, there are definitely elements of stylistic expressions, abstraction and the elimination of the conventional interpretations of reality found in the transcendental style. The story may seem to be flimsy due to its abstractness and the intention of allowing space for interpretation, as the story itself is not logical in a "real-life" manner. The Chinese-opera manner of delivering of the texts by the King and Wuhuan in the piece, the controlled yet deliberate articulation of texts by Kunlun, the General, Snow Wolf and Qingcheng, and the distant voice of the Goddess, together with their stylized movements, have given a stylistic way of acting to the piece. The stylistic acting and the vibrant colors used in the film, together with its fantasia story and surreal set that largely comprises images of birds and cages, offer a realm of fantasy and dream for the audience to experience a narrative and visuals that are out of the ordinary.

The Promise ultimately aims to bring viewers to explore beyond the mundane realm as Kunlun and Qingcheng soar towards the limitless realm. Kunlun obtains the divinity within man as he breaks through the wall of time and travels in the limitless zones of the past, the present and the future. *Wuji*, the main theme of the film thus represents the limitlessness of mind which can be found in the concept of formless Tao and the Buddhist concept of emptiness. I would like to end this chapter with a famous Zen *Koan* about a goose and a bottle:

A man has a young goose and he puts his young goose inside a bottle. This bottle has a small neck and a large base, so the goose has room to grow, but no way to get out of the bottle.

The man feels and cares for this goose, and it grows up.

Then, one day, the man wants to take the goose out of the bottle. He wants the goose to come out alive and healthy, and he also wants to make sure that his precious bottle is not broken.

How does he get the goose out of the bottle without killing the goose or breaking the bottle? (In Mathews, 2010, p.220)

The *Koan* is suggesting that we choose to live our lives in a confined manner that we are unable to experience true freedom (Magid, 2005, p.42). In fact, all along, there has been no barrier as the bottle has not been in existence (Magid, 2005, p.42). It is the mind that identifies with the bottle and sees its existence. The mind is like the bottle as the mind defines the boundary. This was a riddle that Lu Geng used in testing his master, and his master answered, "It's out", as the bottle is not material, and it is just an imagination (Suler, 1993, p.90).

In *The Promise*, the characters are just like the goose in the bottle. They can choose to get out of the bottle or stay within it. The symbol of a huge cage is prominent in the film. The characters are living in an invisible cage. For instance, Wuhuan chooses to stay within his cage of suspicion and misgiving, and he lives a life without trust. General Guangming chooses to live in the cage of attachment and desires. It is also when one sees beyond the cage that one can attain the ultimate freedom. When one is able to attain a state of mind where the ego and attachment to worldly concerns dissolve, boundlessness becomes the source of transformation for all beings (Suler, 1993, p.75).

CHAPTER FIVE
***SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET* — FROM CONQUERING ADVERSITY TO
CONQUERING THE MIND**

Introduction

Hollywood's first intervention into mystical Tibet was Frank Capra's 1937 film *Lost Horizon*, based on a novel of the same title written by James Hilton in 1933 (Bishop, 2000, p.646). James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* described Shangri-la as a mystical, peaceful and innocent place set in the mountainous region of Tibet. The next few prominent Hollywood films about Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, *Little Buddha* (1993), *Kundun* (1997) and *Seven Years In Tibet* (1997), came fifty-five years later, after the Dalai Lama was thrust under an international spotlight due to his exile and active appearance in the Western media.

While Western scholars started to visit the Dalai Lama and published books on Tibetan Buddhism in the 1960s when he was residing in India, the Dalai Lama was actively involved in internationalizing the Tibetan issue in the early 1980s by framing it within prominent political topics in the West — human rights and the environmental issues (Shakya, 1999). In 1987, the Dalai Lama was invited to address the Congress in the United States and brought up the Tibetan issue for discussion at an international level. The Dalai Lama's international fame and media exposure expanded especially after he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his non-violent appeal for Tibetan independence. This may be one of the reasons why films on Tibetan Buddhism started to emerge in the 1990s. In addition, *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Kundun*, which was released in 1997, could have been a strategically timed reaction to the handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China (Chan, 2009, p.57). The films, while portraying Tibetan religion and culture, also carry the "Free Tibet" propaganda. Chan (2009) points out that though *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Kundun* do not directly depict the handover, the films reflect its political implications by presenting the cruelty of China's military in the invasion of Tibet (Chan, 2009). Emerson and Power (1997) analyze that the support for the Free Tibet movement and Hollywood's interest in it peaked in the mid-1990s when a rising China became a major worry for the West. *Newsweek* (1997) reported that "fear of China translates readily into sympathy for Tibet" and the Dalai Lama's exile has become Hollywood's favorite theme (Emerson & Power, 1997, p.24). The three films about Tibet — *Little Buddha* (1993), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) and

Kundun (1997) — were also released at a time when there was a “Tibet craze” due to the active Free Tibet movement extensively promoted by celebrities and through popular music concerts, and audio CDs (Bishop, 2000). “Tibet craze” was used as the headline of an article written by Topden Tsering in an official journal of the Tibetan Administration in exile (Tsering, 1996, p.26).

While these films portray Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and spirituality, there is an undertone of propaganda on behalf of the Free Tibet movement in these films. However, the core of this thesis is to focus on the spiritual aspect of the film and not delve into its political intonations. While all the other films analyzed in this thesis are purely fictional, *Seven Years in Tibet* is based on an autobiography of the same name written by an Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer about his experiences in Tibet from 1944 to 1951.

Heinrich (played by Brad Pitt) leaves his country and his pregnant wife in 1939 for a Himalayan expedition that he had always dreamt of going on. However, while he is in Northern India with a group of mountaineers, they are accidentally held as prisoners of war by the British due to their involvement with the Nazi party. Among those who are captured is the leader of the expedition, Peter Aufschnaiter (played by David Thewlis), who becomes a close friend of Heinrich’s. While Heinrich is in the prison camp, he receives a letter from his wife demanding a divorce. Together with Peter, Heinrich is successful in his fifth attempt to escape from the prison. They eventually arrive in Lhasa where Heinrich meets the boy Dalai Lama. Before their meeting, the Dalai Lama had continually been observing the two foreigners with great interest, through a telescope from the Potala Palace. Heinrich gradually becomes a tutor and close friend of the future Dalai Lama, and also assists him in building a movie theater in the palace. In 1951, after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Heinrich leaves to meet his son in Austria.

As the plot of *Seven Years in Tibet* places emphasis on Heinrich’s experience in Lhasa, a Buddhist holy place, and his meeting with the Dalai Lama, this chapter will deal more with Buddhism, though it will also offer insights from the perspective of Taoism. Moacanin (1992) observes that the ultimate aim of both Jungian psychology and Tibetan Buddhism is “spiritual transformation” (p.280). While Jung refers to this as wholeness or realization of Self, Tibetan Buddhists call it enlightenment.

Ego

Ego, in Buddhism, is seen as the greatest obstacle on the path to liberation. Buddhism believes that before one embarks on the path to enlightenment, one's actions are solely motivated by egocentric desires to acquire power, wealth and other possessions (Moacanin, 2003, p.9). It is only as one loses one's ego in a selfless activity that one is able to find one's Self (Moacanin, 2003, p.12). In Taoism, a humble person is one who has the power to accomplish great things. The symbol of water is used in Taoism as a metaphor for the quality of a humble being:

The highest good is like water.
Water gives life to the ten thousand
things and does not strive.
It flows in places men reject and so is
like the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.
In meditation, go deep in the heart.
In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.
In speech, be true.
In ruling, be just.
In daily life, be competent.

In action, be aware of the time and the season.
No fight: No blame.

(*Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 8, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.15)

Water is an element that travels to the lowlands and through cracks. It flows on the highlands and also to low places such as dirty drains that people reject. Water is willing to travel anywhere, despite the conditions of the place. Thus, one should be just, humble and non-egoistic, like water.

In the first two-thirds of the film, Heinrich is portrayed as an egoistic and selfish person. While his wife is pregnant with his son in 1939, he insists on traveling to the Himalayas for his dream expedition — to conquer the ninth highest peak on earth, the Nanga Parbat. He chooses to leave his wife behind with his good friend Horst for an egoistic trip to conquer nature. It would be a glorious achievement if he were to reach the peak of Nanga Parbat as none of the German mountaineers had been to reach its summit:

The ninth highest peak on Earth, Nanga Parbat. Germany calls it “Unserberg — Our Mountain”. Before us, four German expeditions attempted it. All failed. Eleven climbers were killed in storms and avalanches. By now, the conquest of Nanga Parbat is a national obsession — a matter of German pride.

Nanga Parbat does not only represent the egoistic journey that Heinrich is embarking on, it signifies an egoistic mind that many hold, as it is known as “Our Mountain” by a whole nation. The political undertone criticizes Germany as a self-centered and arrogant nation during the Second World War. Heinrich’s mountain climbing mission eventually fails and he is taken as a prisoner of war by the British in India as Germany was battling Great Britain and other countries then.

Heinrich makes four failed attempts at escaping from the prison. However, he is regarded as a celebrity among the prisoners due to his courageous behavior. A group of prisoners including Peter invites Heinrich to join them in their escape, but Heinrich rejects this invitation immediately. Just before the group begins with their plan, Heinrich changes his mind and decides to join them. His six fellow prisoners plan to disguise themselves as British officers and Indian workers. Heinrich initially laughs at their idea but decides to follow the group in the escape. After the group manages to flee successfully, he leaves the group immediately and wants to continue the journey alone. While in both Jungian psychology and Buddhism, the path to wholeness is carried out individually, I do not see Heinrich’s separation from the group in that light. His act of leaving the group hastily is a selfish and self-centered act, as he feels that he has the ability to perform better than others. This arrogant personality can also be seen in his attitude towards the Himalayan expedition prior to his imprisonment. When the expedition team is facing an enormous ice storm, Heinrich insists that he wants to get to the summit alone despite the team’s wish to retreat for everyone’s safety:

Peter:
We are going down now!

Heinrich:
If they’re frightened of a storm, send them down to Camp Two. I could summit on my own! Always give the best man his shot!

Peter:
He’s trying to tell us he’s the best man.

However, Heinrich is not able to carry on his journey alone after the escape as he is down with food poisoning after consuming food on the altar of a Hindu temple in

Northern India. As he suffers through the night, Peter suddenly appears and offers him medication. The next day, they decide to travel together to Tibet. Heinrich's selfish personality is seen in another instance in Tibet when he persuades Peter to trade his precious watch for food by telling Peter that he is broke and unable to trade anything for food. Peter eventually agrees to trade, only to discover later that Heinrich possesses three watches but had hidden them from his sight. He is aghast and furious at Heinrich's selfish behavior.

After Heinrich arrives at Lhasa with Peter, he gets to know a lady tailor, Ngawang Jigme. Both of them are fond of her. Heinrich is constantly eager to impress her with his past achievements and skills. For instance, he tries to awe Ngawang with his demonstration of mountaineering techniques and shows her press cuttings on his mountaineering achievements:

Heinrich:

Look at this. Go ahead... *(He shows Ngawang a press article)* That's after I climbed the Eiger North Face. *(He shows her another press article)* That's Olympics. Gold medal. Not important.

Ngawang:

Then this is another great difference between our civilization and yours. You admire the man who pushes his way to the top in any walk of life, while we admire the man who abandons his ego. The average Tibetan wouldn't think to thrust himself forward this way.

Heinrich therefore views his "I" to be of utmost importance and has self-cherishing thoughts which are opposite to what is valued in Buddhism. He is constantly focusing on the skills that he can exhibit. In another scene where Heinrich goes ice skating with Peter and Ngawang, he is preoccupied with displaying his ice skating skills instead of helping Ngawang, who has just been introduced to the sport, to learn it. Heinrich spirals and glides on the ice with ease, showing off his techniques invariably. However, Ngawang ignores him throughout and chooses to stay with Peter who is humble and patient in guiding her through the activity.

Heinrich is full of self-importance and has an egoistic personality. He is eager to flaunt his abilities and talents to others. However, to the Tibetan Buddhists, having an egoistic mind is an obstacle to attaining ultimate bliss:

The greatest obstacle is the ego. Ego — or rather one's view of one's "I" — is the root of all problems and sufferings... When Buddhists talk about ego they refer to the illusory belief in a solid, concrete, separate entity, independent and disconnected from any other phenomena. (Moacanin, 1992, p.284)

The ego's misconceptions about the world around keep us in bondage to worldly existence or false philosophies (Yeshe & Zopa, 2000, p.31). As a result, those who are egoistic build a barrier between themselves and the rest of the world, and are unable to establish true communication with the inner self (Moacanin, 1992, p.284). Moacanin (2003) concludes that to find one's Self, one has to paradoxically lose one's ego in a selfless manner (p.12).

Though to Jung and the Buddhists, liberation of Self can only be attained through one's own effort, the support of a community or social group is also important on the journey of religious practice in Buddhism. Buddhism recognizes the benefits of group practices, especially for meditation and rituals, and believes that as people practice together, there will be powerful energy generated from the group (Moacanin, 1992, p.287). A Buddhist takes refuge in the Three Jewels — the Buddha, his doctrine (*Dharma*) and the spiritual community (*Sangha*) (Gyatso, 1988, p.15). The spiritual community is composed of "those who assist one in achieving refuge" (Gyatso, 1988, p.15). The *Sangha* includes the monastic and lay practitioners of Buddhism. Thich Nhat Nanh (2009), a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and writer, professes that there can be many things that we are unable to accomplish when we are alone, but in the presence of the *Sangha*, we can be uplifted by the group energy emitted and also learn from other members (p.v).

While Buddhism aims at eliminating the ego from the Self, Jung asserts that one should not destroy the ego, but to place it in subordination to the Self (Moacanin, 1992, p.285). Jung (1992a) describes such subordinating as a re-centering:

If we picture the conscious mind, with the ego at its center, as being opposed to the unconscious, and if we now add to our mental picture the process of assimilating the unconscious, we can think of this assimilation as a kind of approximation of conscious and unconscious, where the center of the total personality no longer coincides with that of the ego, but a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious. This would be the point of new equilibrium, a new centering of the total personality, a virtual center which, on account of its focal position between conscious and unconscious, ensures for the personality a new and more solid foundation. (p.221)

Thus, in both Jungian psychology and Buddhism, the ego should always play a subordinate position in one's life before one can accomplish redemption of the divinity within (Moacanin, 1992, p.292).

Streams of Consciousness, Prophecy and Dreams

In its prominent theme of reincarnation, *Seven Years in Tibet* also reflects the state of consciousness which is limitless, where it passes on from one body to another as the previous physical body dies off. In Tibetan Buddhism, as a lama is reborn as a baby, his consciousness from his past life will be passed on to the baby (Das, 1971, p.139). However, this consciousness is not remembered in totality by the new life. An explanation for this is that even within the same life, there are things that we experience yet do not remember during the latter part of our life. This applies to a reborn being too. Though consciousness from the past life is passed on to the reborn being, most of the memories and experiences may have been forgotten. However, all the subtle impressions of the past life are all stored in the unconscious mind of the reborn being and it is easy for the reborn being to relearn all the skills and knowledge of the previous life, given the right environment and conditions (Tigunait, 1997, p.143).

The Dalai Lama is believed to be the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. The Dalai Lama in this research paper refers to the 14th Dalai Lama. The 1st Dalai Lama was born in 1391, and it is believed that he and other great practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism can consciously direct their rebirth and return to succeed the unbroken lineages (Martin, 2004, p.11). All the Dalai Lamas have served as the spiritual and political leader of Tibet. In the film, as a young boy, the 14th Dalai Lama is asked to make decisions with the help of his Tibetan governors. The Tibetans believe that as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, he has the wisdom passed down from the previous master and is perceptive enough to make the right decisions for the country.

While the Chinese soldiers enter Tibet, the Tibetans appeal to the government for the Dalai Lama to be enthroned with the power to govern the country:

Ngawang (*in prayer*):

We pray that His Holiness, the Dalai Lama will be granted the power to unify his people. We humbly ask the Tibetan government to honor our request and let the Dalai Lama attain his political majority.

Signages of “Give the Dalai Lama the Power” can be seen everywhere in Lhasa. Though still a teenage boy, the people have faith in him and believe that he has the capability to protect the country as he is a reincarnated enlightened being. The Dalai Lama is officially enthroned and takes over the role of the spiritual and political leader of Tibet at the tender age of fifteen.

There is a difference between “rebirth” and “reincarnation” in Tibetan Buddhism. While rebirth suggests transmigration from one life to the next, the next life may not have the identification of personality which reincarnation suggests (Fowler, 1999, p.37). Tibetan Buddhists believe that high lamas may direct their reincarnation consciously and choose to be reborn in a place that they feel best benefits all sentient beings (Fowler, 1999, p.133). According to Buddhism, all beings can be reborn in any of the six realms of hell, animals, hungry ghosts, demi gods, humans and gods (Strong, 2008, p.28). One’s rebirth is dependent on the merits or good *karma* that one accumulates. Those who accumulate more merits will be reborn in more favorable conditions than those who perform bad actions (Eckel, 2002, p.88). Those who are born as humans and gods are known to be more fortunate compared to those born in the other realms, as measured by the amount of suffering involved in the realms and the accessibility to Buddha’s teachings (Strong, 2008, p.28). However, rebirth as a human is known to be more precious than rebirth as a god because those who are in the god realm may grow too complacent with their lives, cease to perform good deeds, deplete their merits and thus slip back to the human realm (Eckel, 2002, p.88).

The film also deals with the world of prophecy and visionary dreams. The film shows a prophecy written by the 13th Dalai Lama that has turned into reality for the Tibetans. A Tibetan man points out to Heinrich and Peter on their way to Lhasa that foreigners are not welcome in Tibet as the 13th Dalai Lama had prophesized that Tibet would be attacked by “outside forces”, a reference to the foreigners:

Tibetan man:

It is the prophecy. It says here in the final testament of the great 13th Dalai Lama. “It may happen that, in Tibet, religions and government will be attacked by outside forces. Unless we can guard our own country, monks and their monasteries will be destroyed. The lands and property of government officials will be seized. The Dalai Lama and all the revered holders of the faith will disappear and become nameless.”

Now you understand why we are not welcoming of foreigners here?

The existence of prophecies can be explained with the concepts of non-duality and emptiness, which is represented by the open space that contains “the principles of both causality and synchronicity” (Moacanin, 2003, p.80). In that space, there is no notion of space and time, and only the universal consciousness exists. It occurs when the unconscious aspect of Self has an understanding of knowledge beyond what the

conscious mind knows (Jung, 1989, p.302). Thus, the unconscious includes primordial myths as well as future contents and it anticipates future fate (Jung, 1990, p.279).

In the film, the Dalai Lama receives dreams about the destruction of his homeland. He is very sure that this vision does not come from his imagination as he has not been exposed to such violent scenes in his life:

The Dalai Lama:

They were destroying the village I was born in, Takster in Amdo. It was terrible.

Heinrich:

It was just a dream. You had a bad dream. That's all.

The Dalai Lama:

But it was so real. Where did it come from? My mind could never imagine such terrible things.

Shortly after the dream, the governors in the Potala Palace receive news of damage caused by the Chinese army to Amdo.

In an ordinary conscious realm, the violent images of killings and bloodshed would not have entered the mindstream of the Dalai Lama. However, at the level of his unconscious perception, he is able to detect dangers or situations that he is unable to perceive at an ordinary consciousness. This is similar to Jung's description in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* as he writes about the irruption of hidden contents from the unconscious mind:

Hidden contents may irrupt involuntarily. (...) We are continually surprised when something unknown suddenly appears "from nowhere". (Jung, 1990, p.279)

Jung (1964) agrees that our unconscious mind can pass to us information that we fail to receive with the conscious mind (p.36). He elaborates that our psyche is not restricted to the dimension of space and time, and is able to perceive primordial myths, ancestral images and future contents (Jung, 1972, p.44). Dreams are normally regarded as "anticipations of the future" throughout the ages (Jung, 1990, p.279).

The phenomenon of perceiving things that have happened somewhere else during a similar period is termed a synchronistic event by Jung. He describes synchronicity as "a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved" (Jung, 1972, p.520). Our conscious state that paints a picture of the world is incomplete, and a complete picture of the world

requires the involvement of the unconscious mind that is not limited to space and time (Jung, 1989, p.304).

Archetypes

The Hero

Heinrich in *Seven Years in Tibet* is portrayed as the hero archetype. Jung (1970) sees that a hero is always the embodiment of man's highest aspiration or the ideal goal that man wants to attain (p.44). A hero's journey is often filled with various challenges in a new environment that he has to overcome (Campbell, 2008, p.331). In the film, Heinrich spends seven years out of his homeland, with his journey first beginning at the Himalayas.

The contrast between scenes of Tibet and those of Heinrich's life in the Himalayas are shown through the use of colors and shots for the first twenty minutes of the film. For scenes that portray Tibet, there are lots of orange hues showing warmth and very little long shots, thus giving a sense of closeness and intimacy. For the scenes set in the Himalayas, there are lots of blue hues and long shots of the great expanse, reflecting a certain coldness and aimlessness as if mountaineers are drifters with no homes. Indeed, the coldness of the scenes of the Himalayas ties in with the character of Heinrich who is an adventurous, selfish individual who cannot be tamed even with his marriage and unborn child.

As a stranger in the foreign lands of India and Tibet, he experiences hardships and obstacles presented by both the external environment and his inner psyche, but eventually gains illumination and is freed from the darkness within. Though Heinrich's son does not appear until the final part of the film, the son is a representation of his wholeness of Self. Right from the beginning of the film where Heinrich goes on the Himalayan expedition, he carries with him the burdens of heavy-heartedness and guilt of not being with his son when he is born, though he does not express them explicitly. During his climb of Nanga Parbat, his mind is distracted with the thoughts of his newborn child and he injures his leg as a result:

We have already made Camp Four at 22,000 feet. Overhead is the Reklak Glacier and a difficult climb up the icefall. The baby must be at least one month old now. I have been so confused and distracted. I can't climb with my usual confidence.

Jung (1992c) explains that as one's unconscious mind fails to cooperate, one can be at a loss in any activities which are caused by failure of coordinated action or concentration (p.63).

His wife's request for a divorce puts him in a state of loss and self-denial. By refusing to return to Austria, he keeps his life going by rejecting the wounded self and emotional trauma. Jung mentions in his various writings that one must face one's shadow and not repress emotional turmoil before one is capable of transforming to attain the wholeness of Self (Jung, 1964, p.73; Jung, 1990, p.183). Heinrich's eventual decision to return to his son, and the film ending with a mountain climbing trip together signify the healing of his inner self. Their reunion marks the completion of his individuation journey. Thus, as a hero, Heinrich's greatest enemy on the journey is himself.

In myths, the hero is often found at a marginal situation on a frontier, and it is in this position that he internalizes the problems and deals with them intimately as though they were private issues to be addressed (Thomas, 1992, p.219). However, this private struggle, which is an aspect of the hero during his last crisis stage towards maturation, becomes the model of behavior for everyone (Erikson, 1962, p.260-263). Heinrich has to internalize all types of problems that are posed to him, which include the stay at the prison, divorce, separation from his son and hardships on the journey to Lhasa. All these private struggles represent his transformative journey towards the wholeness of being, and this journey represents the inner life of many.

In the film, Heinrich is introduced as an aggressive and arrogant person. He is portrayed as having qualities that are seen as negative emotions in Buddhism. For instance, as he is leaving for the Himalayas, he screams at his pregnant wife in the car, and insists on the importance of the expedition:

Heinrich (*with anger*):

Why must you be this way? Why is there always a problem? It's a good question. Do you want to go home? Do you want to turn around?

Heinrich's wife:

Yes!

Heinrich:

It's the Himalayas! (*screams*) How long have I been talking about the Himalayas? How long?

His insistence to go on a trip to climb the Himalayas while his wife is going to deliver within a month indicates his attachment to power and status. The expedition signifies his egoistical trip to the ninth highest peak on earth. According to Buddhist teachings, clinging on to power and status will not bring the ultimate bliss as they are illusive and temporal forms in life. As one is attached to worldly things, including people, situations and objects, one is living in the delusion that all phenomena are permanent (Moacanin, 2003, p.9). To attain enlightenment, one has to be free of thoughts and emotions stemming from one's "attachment or compulsive identification with them" (Streng, 1992, p.241). In Buddhism, though there are external rules that practitioners have to practice consciously, virtuous actions do not only mean doing good and being moral, but also abandoning power and efficacy generated from greed, pride and anger (Moacanin, 2003, p.10). Taoism also emphasizes the importance of abandoning the negative trait of selfishness:

It is more important
To see the simplicity,
To realize one's true nature,
To cast off selfishness
And temper desire.

(*Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 19, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.37)

Heinrich also exhibits his selfish character while traveling with Peter. While Peter has been sharing his food with Heinrich, Heinrich is unwilling to sacrifice any of his possessions in exchange for food. He talks Peter into trading his watch for food without him realizing that he has been deceived. Peter is disappointed with Heinrich when he discovers that Heinrich has been hiding his three watches from him, and he reprimands Heinrich for being self-centered:

Caught being a selfish brat and you're gloating! No wonder you are
always alone. No one can stand your miserable company.

After being reprimanded by Peter, Heinrich starts to recognize his negative behavior. I see that as the beginning of his individuation journey towards liberation of Self. He offers his watches to Peter and apologizes for his actions. After this incident, he starts to be conscious about the dark aspect of his Self. This realization is important in both Buddhism and Jungian psychology for the transformation of being to take place. Heinrich eventually confesses his regrets and negativities through a letter to his son describing his journey to Lhasa:

People believe if they walk long distances to holy places, it purifies the bad deeds they've committed. They believe the more difficult the journey, the greater the depth of purification. I've been walking from one faraway place to the next for many years — as long as you have lived.

I have seen seasons change across the high plateaus. I have seen wild kiangs migrate south in winter and sweep back across the fields when spring appears. In this place, where time stands still, it seems that everything is moving, including me. I can't say I know where I'm going nor whether my bad deeds can be purified. There are so many things I have done which I regret.

This letter signifies a leap in Heinrich's inner experience of his unconscious. He is not as egoistic as before and sees himself as a pilgrim on his journey to Lhasa too. He confesses his wrongdoings and seeks purification. Making confessions and seeking purification is important in Tibetan Buddhism. One can perform the act of confession through many different ways such as rituals, chanting, prostrations, circumambulating around a stupa (a Buddhist monument that contains scriptures and prayers in it), turning the prayer wheel and making a journey of pilgrimage.

Jung (1976) receives a link between psychoanalysis and confession, and sees the beginnings of all analytical treatment of the soul as confessional:

The first beginnings of all analytical treatment of the soul are to be found in its prototype, the confessional. Since, however, the two have no direct causal connection, but rather grow from a common irrational psychic root, it is difficult for an outsider to see at once the relation between the groundwork of psychoanalysis and the religious institution of the confessional. (p.55)

Though it is not easy for people to understand the need for confession in the work of psychoanalysis, Jung explains that one who does not confess may turn to psychic concealment, and repression of thoughts and actions may occur (Jung, 1976, p.54). Heinrich, by articulating his confessional thoughts through the letter, is surfacing his hidden emotions and thoughts from the unconscious realm to the conscious realm. For a person who suppresses his thoughts and emotions, his secret may work like a burden of guilt and therefore cut him off from himself or his community (Smith, 2003, p.36). Thus, bringing secrets to the level of conscious expression can be cathartic for a person (Jung, 1976, p.55). At this point in time, Heinrich starts to reveal feelings and thoughts he previously suppressed and becomes aware of his inner transformation.

After staying in Lhasa for about two years, Heinrich and Peter introduce the celebration of Christmas to the Tibetans. Heinrich gives Peter a special gift — the watch that Peter traded for food before they arrived at Lhasa. By this time, Heinrich is a changed person — much more grounded and appreciative of others. He tells Peter in a written note:

I found it (the watch) in a shop in the Barkhor. It has traveled a long way and finally come back home. Thank you for your friendship.

Before Heinrich's first meeting with the Dalai Lama, he has to go up a long flight of steps of the Potala Palace. A long shot of Heinrich climbing up concrete steps to the temple is cut to a medium close-up of him from a high angle before a backward full shot of him climbing up wooden steps. The high angle shot of Heinrich suggests that he, devastated at that point of his life, is looking for guidance from a higher force by advancing up the steps. Gradually, the shot of him from a low angle climbing the steps seems to signify that he is looking heavenwards. Following this is a low angle shot of him walking through the low light corridor of the temple to a hall with low-key lighting, where his silhouette is seen. As he enters the room where the Dalai Lama is, a full shot of him entering a brightly lit room is shown. This short journey of walking through the temple from dark spaces to the bright room suggests that it is the beginning of his journey to get out of his past shadows which haunt him and signifies his spiritual development.

Towards the later part of the film, Heinrich talks about mountain climbing with the Dalai Lama and the way he speaks about it has changed too. When he first arrived in Lhasa, he was boastful about his mountaineering techniques and achievements, and eagerly displayed his skills and newspaper cuttings as he talked about mountain climbing. This time, in the presence of the Dalai Lama, Heinrich speaks about the intrinsic quality he experienced from mountain climbing instead of bragging about his achievements or the importance of conquering the peak:

The absolute simplicity. That's what I love. When you're climbing, your mind is clear, freed of all confusions. You have focus. And suddenly the light becomes sharper, sounds are richer and you are filled with the deep, powerful presence of life.

The descriptions that Heinrich uses on mountain climbing are like those of meditation. He also associates this transient feeling of bliss with being in the presence of a holy being:

Heinrich:
I've only felt that way one other time.

The Dalai Lama:
When?

Heinrich:
In your presence, Ku-Dun.

In the presence of holy beings or even holy objects, one may experience another state of mind or an altered state of consciousness which is marked by an unexplained blissfulness. Though Heinrich is able to attain temporal peace while he is with the Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lama advises him to return to Austria towards the last part of the film:

Heinrich:
I don't go [back to Austria] either.

The Dalai Lama:
Why not?

Heinrich:
Because you are my path to liberation.

The Dalai Lama:
The Buddha said, "Salvation. It demands strenuous effort and practice. So work hard and seek your own salvation diligently".

I am not your son... and I never thought of you as my father. You were much too informal with me for that.

The back and forth shots of the Dalai Lama and Heinrich talking are presented in close-ups of their faces as the conversation moves from the joy of mountain climbing and the Dalai Lama's safety to Heinrich and his son. The close-up frontality shots of the Dalai Lama and Heinrich throughout the conversation seems to show that they are exposing their inner souls to each other. The close-up frontality shots of the characters are also used to create intimacy with viewers, as if they are conveying their inner thoughts to us.

In Buddhism, holy beings are neither saviors nor God. One should not be attached to them as this is just another form of attachment to external things. One should attain enlightenment with one's own effort and the enlightened beings are only there to guide all beings to enlightenment. This is reflected in how Buddhist master Fen-yang (947-1024) speaks about Manjusri, a bodhisattva of wisdom (Chang, 1969):

There are some Buddhist learners who have already made the mistake of seeking for Manjusri at Mount Wu-tai. There is no Manjusri at Wu-tai. Do you want to know Manjusri? It is something at this moment

working within you, something which remains unshakable and allows no room for doubt. This is called living Manjusri. (p.60)

Thus, instead of seeking for Buddha in the temples or at the holy mountains, the Buddha actually resides in every individual. All of us are capable of attaining enlightenment. Heinrich is advised by the Dalai Lama to not rely on him or the sacred Tibet for liberation. He has to go on an individual journey to attain the ultimate liberation. Before Heinrich is able to attain the wholeness of Self, he also has to face his past and embrace his wrongdoings. He has to conquer the fear of looking at his past by returning to his son. From going through an adventurous trip of the body to an adventurous trip of the mind; from physical endurance and conquest to mental exploration; from going beyond the limit of physical body to going beyond the limit of perceptions and mind, Heinrich learns that the greatest challenge to be overcome is one's own mind. He eventually returns to Austria and reunites with his son, which signifies the healing of his inner self.

The Self

In the film, the Self archetype is represented by the Dalai Lama though he is only a boy. In Tibetan culture, the Tibetans do not view the Dalai Lama as only a boy. He is the embodiment of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and possesses the spiritual consciousness passed down from the previous Dalai Lama. Jung (1962) views that the Self archetype has the quality of a hero and a god-man, which is significant as a ruler of the inner world. The boy Dalai Lama is first shown in his room at Potala Palace with low-key lighting. In that scene, the camera zooms in on him seated on his bed. His face is half lit. The chiaroscuro lighting effect shows that the Dalai Lama is one who is divided between a child and an adult. He is a child, and yet he has the responsibility of an adult. The Dalai Lama looks around, seemingly trying to grasp his surroundings before climbing up to the window to have a glimpse of the external world. Followed by that, the camera shifts audiences from being in the room to looking into the room. The scene seems to suggest that while the Dalai Lama is treated as a sacred being and is separated from the commoners, he is also curious about life outside the temple.

The Dalai Lama, in the eyes of the Tibetans, has a god-man quality. As a reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Dalai Lama is believed to have the following qualities of a Bodhisattva:

He comes where an all-embracing love abides, because he desires to discipline all beings; he comes where there is a great compassionate heart, because he desires to protect all beings against sufferings; he comes out of the skillful means born of transcendental knowledge because he is ever in conformity with the mentalities of all beings. (Suzuki, 1968, p.120)

In Jung's view, as one is much in touch with the inner self, one has developed communion with the world too and he sees the important need for an effective bond in a society — "Where love stops, power begins, and violence, and terror" (Jung, 1959, p.117-118). Though the Dalai Lama is seen as an enlightened being, he is close to the human realm as the bodhisattva figure presents itself as a human with great wisdom and compassion (Thomas, 1992, p.211). Bodhisattvahood is a representation of wholeness and completion of potentiality (Thomas, 1992, p.222).

While the Tibetans believe that the Dalai Lama has wisdom that is continued from his past lives, he still has to gain knowledge about the environment he is born in. The Bodhisattva is one who has vowed to remain human to guide all sentient beings towards enlightenment (Baroni, 2002, p.6). The Bodhisattva is different from the Buddha whose image has been elevated by followers to a superhuman level (Thomas, 1992, p.211). The Bodhisattva is thus similar to any other human being. He or she may also have a spouse or children and possessions (Thomas, 1992, p.211). Jung is interested in the human facet of Buddhism. He reflects in his writing "The Holy Men of India" that he is intrigued by the one who encompasses both light and shadow; silence and noise; wisdom and foolishness:

The man who is only wise and only holy interests me about as much as the skeleton of a rare saurian, which would not move me to tears. The insane contradiction, on the other hand, between existence beyond Maya in the cosmic Self, and that amiable human weakness which fruitfully sinks many roots into the black earth, repeating for all eternity the weaving and rending of the veil as the ageless melody of India — this contradiction fascinates me. (Jung, 1938, p.578)

Evans-Wentz (1935) translates Avalokiteshvara as "The Lord looking down in pity" and "The Lord seen within" (p.233). While Avalokiteshvara in the Tibetan culture is in a male form, it appears in female form in Chinese culture and is known as 观世音, which means "Lord who perceives the cries of the world" (Leeming, et. al., 2010, p.368). The importance of the Dalai Lama as a holy Buddhist figure to the Tibetan community in the film can be seen in the following dialogue between the mother of the Dalai Lama

and Heinrich before he is allowed to meet the boy Dalai Lama. This dialogue emphasizes on the respect that the Tibetans have for the Dalai Lama:

When you are in the presence of His Holiness, you must always be standing, bent in obeisance, hands folded in supplication. If seated, you must always be seated lower than he. Never look him in the eye. Never speak before he does. Always refer to him as “Your Holiness”. Never turn your back to him. And never, never, never touch him. He is the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. After his recognition, he was renamed Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso — Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Eloquent, Compassionate, Learned Defender of the Faith, Ocean of Wisdom.

At the same time, two opposite aspects of the Dalai Lama are shown in the film. He is not solely portrayed as a wise person but as a wise child who has mundane concerns at the same time. This echoes the importance of union of opposites suggested in Taoism, Buddhism and Jungian psychology. The Dalai Lama is not portrayed as a perfect monk, but is depicted as someone who cries in the middle of the night, and someone who is helpless when asked to make political decisions in front of the Chinese government. He says to the Chinese general, “My experience of such things [politics] is limited. I am a simple Buddhist monk”. His attitude is humble and non-power seeking. The fragility and the worldly aspects of the Dalai Lama are shown in the film.

In the film, as Heinrich walks to meet the Dalai Lama for the first time, the director establishes a mood of mystery and sacredness by creating a misty effect along the corridors leading towards the room of the Dalai Lama and in the room itself. However, a line from the Dalai Lama breaks the atmosphere of sacredness created — “Do you like movies?” After a short pause, the Dalai Lama continues:

I have a movie projector. And films. I want to build a movie house. Here, at the Potala. With seats and everything. Can you build it?

The Dalai Lama expresses his interest to know about the physical world around him to Heinrich:

And you will have to come here every day to build it, every single day. When you are here, you’ll visit me. We can have conversations on many topics. I would like to learn about the world you come from. For example, where is Paris, France? And what’s a Molotov cocktail? And who is Jack the Ripper? You can tell me many things.

Thus, viewers see the Dalai Lama as someone who loves watching movies and desires to know about the Western world, and he is like any other human being who shows different emotions including fear and sadness.

From the Dalai Lama, the embodiment of a Bodhisattva who has great wisdom and compassion, Heinrich also learns about the great compassion and a new way of life. The Tibetan workers who helped to build the movie theater in *Seven Years in Tibet* stop excavation work as digging of the soil would mean that numerous earthworms will be killed. To the Tibetans, all living creatures could have been their mothers in a past life. One Tibetan worker says to Heinrich, “In a past life, this innocent worm could have been your mother”. The Dalai Lama later explains to Heinrich the concept of past lives and rebirth:

Tibetans believe all living creatures were their mothers in a past life. So we must show them respect, and repay their kindness. Never, never harm anything that lives.

The Tibetan workers eventually continue with the construction of the movie theater but they “rescue” the worms in the process of digging the ground for construction work. In addition, there is a group of monks that perform prayers and rituals at the site for the worms that might die in the process. Close-up shots of worms rescued in bowls are shown to highlight the compassionate act of the Tibetans towards all beings, not only towards humankind. A compassionate being will thus be interested in the welfare of all other beings:

Like oneself, all sentient beings are afflicted by suffering, thus even the smallest insect is similar to oneself in not wanting suffering and wanting happiness. (Gyatso, 1975, p.46)

The concept of rebirth is not totally new to the Western society. In Christianity, once a person is baptized, the person is recreated or reborn in Christ:

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-5)

Though the concept of a “newness of life” is different from the notion of reincarnation in Buddhism, both suggest entering into a stage of life which leaves the past life behind.

At times of difficulty when the Chinese army marches into Tibet and causes chaos to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama chooses to meditate in his palace. While the act of retreating into the palace may seem to be an act of escapism, it is in fact a journey towards the inner world when the external world is in a chaotic state. He is taking a retreat from the external world of power struggle into the inner world of peace and

contemplation. It is only when one's mind is relaxed and focused, that one is able to make the right decisions in times of crisis. The Dalai Lama explains to Heinrich why he is "hiding from the world":

I'm hiding from the world for a day. (...) If the problem can be solved, there is no use worrying about it. If it can't be solved, worrying will do no good. So stop worrying.

The Dalai Lama's explanation echoes the Taoist concept of *wu wei*, and a similar text can be found in *Tao Te Ching*:

Less and less is done
Until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.

The world is ruled by letting things
take their course.
It cannot be ruled by interfering.

(*Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 48, translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.95)

The Dalai Lama, at times of danger, is not thinking of escaping from his responsibility. Instead, he sees his role as protecting the whole of Tibet. He refuses to leave Tibet when Heinrich advises him to do so:

Heinrich:
We should leave after the enthronement. The Chinese would never expect it —

The Dalai Lama:
How can I help people if I run away from them? What kind of leader would I be? I have to stay here. Serving others is my path to liberation.

The Dalai Lama demonstrates his Bodhisattva quality in the critical political situation, and chooses to stay in Tibet to help his people. He also goes to the rooftop, and offers his blessing to all beings through his prayer. The Dalai Lama points the telescope down to the village. As he looks at the village through it, he starts to recite prayers. The shot of the Dalai Lama reciting his prayers is a low angle shot, establishing him as someone with power and authority. After some time, he moves his head away from the telescope and with folded palms, he continues with the prayers. Overlooking Lhasa from the rooftop signifies the Dalai Lama's watching over all sentient beings with pity and compassion, as reflected in the name of Avalokiteshvara which means both "The Lord looking down in pity" and "The Lord who perceives the cries of the world". The Dalai Lama, as the reincarnation of a bodhisattva, is fully involved in world affairs, together

with all the struggles and sufferings, while attempting to guide all sentient beings to liberation (Moacanin, 2003, p.7).

Moral expectations of abstinence from killing and abandoning, non-virtuous killing of even a small living being, and Buddhist values of right action (doing no harm to other living beings) and right livelihood (making one's living without bringing harm to other living beings) are emphasized through the scenes of rescuing the earthworms and preventing them from being harmed. The emphasis on showing compassion to all beings, even earthworms, can be seen as a strong juxtaposition to the violent acts of the Chinese army described in the film.

Though the Dalai Lama is highly respected by the Tibetans and none should be seated higher than him, as he faces the Chinese officers, he is willing to lower his position to be seated together with them. He is a humble, wise and compassionate being with human characteristics. As a Bodhisattva, he displays the opposites of nirvana/samsara, truth/illusoriness, maleness/femaleness, and *yin/yang* (Thomas, 1992, p.223). Ultimately, Heinrich learns about the spiritual world from the Dalai Lama while the Dalai Lama learns about the daily outside world from Heinrich. Thus, as Heinrich transmits to the Dalai Lama knowledge of the physical world, the Dalai Lama imparts to Heinrich wisdom of the inner world.

The Shadow

The shadow archetype is represented by a group of Chinese generals who are not willing to compromise through peaceful means and eventually attack Tibet. The Chinese generals are concerned with power and status, and the attainment of external glorifications. They are chasing after wealth, power and gratification of desires which do not bring permanent bliss (Moacanin, 2003, p.9).

During the visit of the Chinese generals to Lhasa, they are welcomed by the Tibetans with Tibetan music and deity dance, as well as a huge *mandala* (around 3.5 meters wide) formed with colorful fine sand. The Tibetan minister tells the Chinese generals that “the monks have been making the *mandala* for many days” and that it is “a symbol of enlightenment and peace”. The scene where a general steps on the *mandala* is shown in a full shot under a bright light, with a cut to an extreme close-up of the general's feet stepping on the *mandala*. This is followed by an aerial shot of the general's men mimicking his stepping of the *mandala*, and by extreme close-up shots of their legs. The stepping on the *mandala* presented with close-up shots is a powerful

image that signifies the destruction of religion. From Jung's perspective, a *mandala* suggests a totality of being and a union of opposites (Jung, 1990, p.357, 389). Moacanin (2003) explains that the *mandala* contains symbols that express the external world and the inner world of the psyche (p.71). Thus, destroying the *mandala* suggests the destruction of the self and the totality of being.

The shadow archetype in the film also allows the hero to recognize his own limitations and wrongdoings. Heinrich views that his past actions were as violent and aggressive as Germany and China at war:

The spectacle of a peace-loving nation (Tibet), vainly attempting to create a military... Echoes of the aggressions of my own country, the will to overpower weaker peoples bring shame to me. I shudder to recall how once long ago I embraced the same beliefs, how at one time I was, in fact no different from these intolerant Chinese.

By confessing his negative actions and emotions in the past, and relating them to the tyrants at war, he is coming to terms with his own shadow.

The Dalai Lama as a Self archetype is not aiming to eliminate the shadow he faces. Despite the rude behavior of the generals as demonstrated by their stepping on the *mandala*, the Dalai Lama is willing to lower his status, and treat them as equals. Instead of being angry with the generals, he puts across Buddhist thinking that emphasizes the showing of compassion to them in a humble and calm manner:

I am a simple Buddhist monk. All I know is the scripture and the words of Lord Buddha. He said, "All beings tremble before danger and death. Life is dear to all. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill". You must understand. These words are ingrained in the heart of every Tibetan. It is why we are a peaceful people who reject violence on principle. I pray you will see this is our greatest strength, not our weakness.

The Dalai Lama is hoping that the generals can be transformed with wise words, and not by arguments or force. He is receptive towards the generals and is patient while communicating with them. The Dalai Lama, thus, does not deny or abandon the shadow aspect of the world, but attempts using positive ways to transform their negative mindset to embrace virtue. However, the generals do not feel the need to change their mindset. After listening to all that the Dalai Lama has said, a general drops a line "religion is poison", suggesting the rejection of humanity and compassion from their world.

Universal Symbols

Rituals

From the film's introduction, the audience is brought into its ritualistic feel through a loud sound made by cymbals, accompanied by the gradual filling of the screen with blue smoke and the long low-pitched sound of a Tibetan horn. The smoke can be associated with that emitted from incense in religious rituals. The smoke-filled scene with low-toned Tibetan percussion playing continuously in the background, creates a mystical atmosphere right from the beginning. The blue smoke dissipates and silhouettes of a mountainous range are seen, suggesting that we can expect a story that is set in mountainous regions. This image turns into a black-and-white shot of a mountainous range on a Tibetan *tangka* (a Tibetan painting of Buddha and deities), which suggests that the film is based on history or an ancient past. Next, viewers are presented with a scene of people watching a religious event. Multi-phonetic chanting with the tinkling of bells can be heard. The believers are carrying gifts with bowed heads to the boy Dalai Lama on a throne. The Dalai Lama is soon presented in a full shot of him seated. The soundtrack gradually incorporates the tune of a music box which soon replaces the initial sounds of chanting and bells. Unlike other gifts which the boy nods at and are then put aside, he reaches out for the music box. To viewers, the music box carries a more familiar tune as compared to the blare of Tibetan horns. That is where the camera cuts to a wide shot of mountains which leads the viewer to interpret that the music is from a faraway place, not originating from Tibet. Thus, the film sets a historic, mystical and religious tone, implying that there are other foreign elements represented by the music box, which will also be present in the film.

While the opening sets a ritualistic precedent for the film, rituals such as initiation ceremonies, turning of prayer wheels, chanting, performing hand mudras and prostrations, circumambulating around a stupa and drawing of *mandalas*, are shown extensively throughout the film. Tibetan Buddhist religious ceremonies that include low multi-phonetic chanting, sounds from Tibetan horns and long trumpets, the colorful prayer flags, and the *tangkas* with images of deities are also shown in the film. In a scene where a huge colorful butter offering is made and a traditional deity dance is performed, a stylized ritualistic world is painted to the viewers, with a voice-over that describes the significance of making such offerings:

The Tibetans say an enemy is the greatest teacher, because only an enemy can help develop patience and compassion. They believe with rock-like faith that the power of their religion will protect them against these Chinese. In preparation for the generals' visit, sacred ceremonies are performed throughout Lhasa. Sculptures of deities have been carved with great care in butter. As the sun melts them, they become a reminder that nothing lasts.

Thus, there are rituals performed to remind one of the various truths of life, and one of which is that the only permanent thing in the world is impermanence. Tibetan Buddhists constantly meditate on the impermanent nature of life in order not to cling on to external objects which are illusive and non-concrete in nature.

While knowledge can be gained through its teachings, Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes the practice of the religion through the extensive use of rituals and meditation techniques in order to achieve the goal of the spiritual practice: enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings (Shi, 2006, p.69-71). Ritual is defined by Combs-Schilling (1989) as “a circumscribed, out of the ordinary, multiple media event — recognized by insiders and outsiders as distinctively beyond the mundane — in which prescribed words and actions are repeated and crucial dilemmas of humanity are evoked and brought to systematic resolution” (p.29). Bobby Alexander, an anthropologist of religion, defines ritual as “a performance, planned or improvised, that effects a transition from everyday life to an alternative context within which the everyday is transformed”, and he points out that traditional rituals “open up ordinary life to ultimate reality or some transcendent being or force in order to tap its transformative power” (Alexander, 1997, p.139). Despite the variations in theoretical definitions of ritual, “what is common across them is a stress on the physicality of performance, of bodies engaging in symbolic actions, using formalized speech, music and movement” (Plate, 2008, p.69). The common element that is shared by all religious rituals is the experiencing of divine or spiritual energies.

Buddhist ritual practices include precise procedures in making offerings and chanting mantras. It is believed that by chanting the mantras with concentration and right motivation, the practitioners “awaken their own latent potential for enlightenment” (Shi, 2006, p.72). Tibetan Buddhists believe that performing mantras and mudras can evoke profound feelings and incite higher states of consciousness, thus enabling them to connect with the primeval and universal forces (Moacanin, 2003, p.55-56). Rituals are used extensively by the Tibetan Buddhists to cultivate virtuous behavior through the

purification of body, speech and mind (Moacanin, 2003, p.12). While one can practice right behavior through daily actions such as refraining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and developing compassion, there are rituals in Tibetan Buddhism that can aid in the purification of body, speech and mind. Some of these actions include performing ritual gestures (hand mudras) and prostrations that involves one's body, recitation of mantras (sacred words) which involves one's speech, and meditation and visualization that involve the mind (Moacanin, 2003, p.22).

Jung sees ritual as a channel to bring one to understand the secret of the unconscious, which is the extraordinary truth of the psyche, and that ritual participants are close to the state of divinity (Jung, 1977, p.238). Bell (1997) points out that elements of ritual possess the ability to evoke "extra meaningfulness and the ability to evoke emotion-filled images and experiences" (p.105), point to something beyond itself, and express "values and attitudes associated with larger, more abstract, and relatively transcendental ideas" (p.157). Rituals, thus, can serve as a tool to link the world of "reality" (how things are) with "ideality" (how things ought to be) (Bell, 1997, p.12). Tibetan Buddhist rituals and practices are designed to transport individuals from a mundane reality to a higher realm of consciousness.

Paradise

Jung (1990) sees that there are places that hold spiritual meanings such as the Kingdom of God, Heaven or Paradise (p.81). In *Seven Years in Tibet*, Tibet is established as the symbol of a place of redemption. Pilgrims travel on a long journey so that all their negativities can be cleansed; there is no war or violence in the place and it is a land of holy beings. The spiritual vastness of Tibet is presented right from the beginning of the film with the sound of horns, clear light, monks clad in maroon robes and a vast mountainous landscape. The film opens with a dark sky which is slowly replaced by a rim of light that turns into clear light. When the clouds that cover the sky are dispersed, its clarity will be seen. This symbolizes the removal of the veil of ignorance that obscures the pure essence of human beings, and the uncovering of the Buddha nature that is dwelling in all of us (Moacanin, 2003, p.6). When we are still holding on to false views and performing actions with poisons of greed, anger and ignorance, our hearts are like the sky that is covered with clouds— dark and unenlightened. It is when we start to clear away false views and negative actions that our hearts and minds become as clear as a cloudless sky.

In the film, the Potala Palace is first presented to the viewers in a long shot with believers performing full-length prostrations towards it, highlighting its importance in the life of Tibetan Buddhists. The interior of the palace is shown with low-key lighting. The light is mainly streaming in from windows and candles. Smoke from incense fills the interior, which obscures the background from the audience. This gives viewers a sacred and mystical feel of the temple.

Heinrich's description of Tibet and Lhasa symbolizes a spiritual journey to the unconscious which is hidden:

If you can imagine a hidden place tucked safely away from the world, concealed by walls of high, snowcapped mountains — a place rich with all the strange beauty of your nighttime dreams — then you know where I am. And today, we have reached the gates of the forbidden city of Lhasa. It is as difficult a goal as Mecca... Even in our miserable condition, we feel the lure of Tibet's holiest city, home of the Dalai Lama. Only a few foreigners had penetrated its mysteries.

By associating the visit to Lhasa with the visit to Mecca by Muslim pilgrims, a sacred journey is suggested. At the same time, the journey to understand the highest consciousness is a difficult one, and not many are able to reach the core of it.

Lhasa, as a place filled with compassion and trust, is also established in the film. While foreigners are forbidden in Tibet, one of the Tibetans, an ex-defence minister Tsarong convinces the other governors to allow Heinrich and Peter to stay in his place. He feels that he does not need to justify a helpful gesture:

Regent:
Invited them to stay at your place? But why?

Tsarong:
Must one have reason to help those in need?

By extending help to the foreigners, Tsarong is practicing what is preached in the scriptures — to show compassion to all sentient beings.

Tangkas can be seen widely in Lhasa and are used by Tibetans to aid meditation. Images of a single Buddha or a symbol of male and female deities in embrace can be seen on the paintings. During meditation which includes visualization and identification with the deities, one is motivated to attain the positive qualities represented by them. The Buddhas and deities should not be seen as external beings, but reflections of one's mind; by identifying oneself with the enlightened deities, one has transformed the profane consciousness to that of a higher consciousness (Moacanin, 2003, p.61). The

male–female couple in embrace does not represent physical sexuality but portrays the “union of our male and female nature in the process of meditation” (Govinda, 1969, p.103). The concept of male–female union in all human beings parallels the Taoist concept of *yin-yang* and the Jungian concepts of anima and animus. Thus, the images of Buddhas and deities that one uses for meditation are symbols of transformation (Moacanin, 2003, p.61). The purpose of these images is similar to that of archetypes in Jungian psychology. With the identification with archetypes or enlightened beings, one can enter into a spiritual and transpersonal realm of reflection.

A contrast between the state of a peaceful Tibet and its destruction is shown in the film, suggesting the disappearance of a paradise. A line that Peter says to Heinrich affirms such connotation, “History [of war] repeats itself, even in paradise”. Citizens of Tibet are portrayed as peace-loving, compassionate and non-violent individuals by the Dalai Lama. He says to the Chinese generals:

All I know is the scripture and the words of Lord Buddha. He said, “All beings tremble before danger and death. Life is dear to all. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill”. You must understand. These words are ingrained in the heart of every Tibetan. It is why we are a peaceful people who reject violence on principle.

Low-toned multi-phonetic chanting of monks, Buddhist rituals and prayers set against the vastness of landscapes give a transcendental feeling of Tibet before the Chinese troops enter into Lhasa with their communist songs played on the streets. The Chinese army is shown to have broken the meditative and harmonious environment of Tibet in the film. Tibetans are portrayed as a community who lead a simple and non-violent lifestyle before the need to carry weapons to battle against the Chinese soldiers. Scenes of the Chinese setting up their military stations in Lhasa are juxtaposed with scenes of Tibetans carrying out their religious practices such as praying, chanting, performing prostrations and turning of prayer wheels in their daily life. It is also shown that the field Tibetans traditionally used for picnics and kite flying has been converted into an airstrip to receive the plane of the Chinese generals, and the Tibetans who have no warfare experience make vain attempts at creating a military:

On the same field where Tibetans traditionally gathered for picnics, ground was cleared to build an airstrip so that the plane carrying three Chinese generals could land. Nearby, the Tibetan army practiced its maneuvers. Some of the soldiers wear ancient mesh armor. They bring old muskets and spears as artillery. The spectacle of a peace-loving nation, vainly attempting to create a military.

These scenes show the contrast between Chinese agitation and Tibetan spirituality and stillness. The desecration of Tibetan Buddhism which is an integral part of the Tibetans' lifestyle is shown in the scene where the Chinese generals deliberately march through the sand *mandala*. The destruction of a paradise suggests that our Buddha nature or unconscious mind, which is originally pure, can be defiled by desires for power, status and wealth.

Overall, the Potala Palace is presented with a dreamy quality with dark rooms and bright yellow walls, as well as dim altar rooms lit with butter lamps, suggesting a mix of shadow and light which form the inner Self. The scenes in the palace are a compilation of long shots, edited at a deliberate pace. The hypnotic and stylized manner of presenting the scenes in the Potala Palace breaks the sense of reality for viewers and creates an inner world of individuation for them.

Conclusion

In *Seven Years in Tibet*, through the journey away from home, the hero archetype Heinrich eventually realizes his own negativities and starts to show compassion to people around him. He also learns to embrace his wounded self and develops the courage to embrace all the polarities within him. Self-knowledge is important for an individual to recognize the dark side of the psyche, the unconscious mind, and to reconcile the oppositions within oneself (Moacanin, 1992, p.298). Heinrich's Self is also slowly illuminated by having close contact with the Dalai Lama and other compassionate Tibetans. In the process of interacting with them, he experiences genuine love and altered states of consciousness. Such moments that one encounters in daily life could bring one to another state of existence but these could be fleeting (Moacanin, 2003, p.11).

The film begins and also ends with a mountain climbing expedition. The expedition at the beginning shows an egoistic journey to conquer the world's ninth highest peak and the expedition that ends the film is one that signifies the healing of a relationship. Here, a mountain is still a mountain, but it is the attitude towards climbing the mountain that is different. The climb is now a different climb; it is no longer an egoistic one. As the "ego" ceases, the focus of the climb is on helping others and enjoying the journey of climbing instead of trying to possess the mountain. This is

similar to a Zen phrase “a mountain is still a mountain and a river a river” which conveys that a sage is no different from what he was before, but only in what he does (Fung, 1953, p.225). Thus, one continues with what one has been doing in daily life, but it is the mindset towards the external environment that is different. This is reflected in another similar Zen saying “Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water” (Clark, 2009, p.29). To realize the ultimate truth is not to abandon worldly things, but it is to not cling on to the mundane world which is illusive in nature:

To realize the ultimate is not to abandon the mundane but to learn to see it “with the eye of wisdom” (...) What needs to be abandoned is one’s perversions and false clings. (Ramanan, 1966, p.284)

One can continue to experience worldly pleasures without being attached to them, as reflected in *tantra*, a method adopted in Tibetan Buddhism to transform worldly pleasures into the path to enlightenment (Gyatso, 2011, p.55). It is how we can transform the experience of worldly pleasures into a profound spiritual path which is important (Gyatso, 2011, p.55). Thus, it is not the worldly pleasures and environment that cause human suffering, but the pursuit of external gratifications and attachment to the worldly pleasures.

The environment that Heinrich sets to conquer is adverse and filled with dangers. These include embarking on climbing one of the world’s highest mountains, numerous attempts to escape from a prison and proceeding on a difficult journey to Lhasa. Heinrich has been focusing on overcoming various external obstacles. It is when he faces his inner thoughts and emotions, that he is able to accept his deepest wound and attain true bliss within him. Through the seven-year-long journey away from home, he has realized his egoistic and selfish character, learned about compassion and grown to accept both the brightness and darkness within him fully.

The film recreates an elevated realm of reality with the use of images from rituals and chanting sounds. The contrast of shadows and lights, and the hypnotic manner of presenting the scenes in Lhasa break the sense of reality and create an inner world of individuation for viewers in the cinema. The intimate and personal struggle of Heinrich and his spiritual strivings become an archetypal journey for everyone. Over the different phases of Heinrich’s psyche development — from status-driven motivation to self-centeredness to guilt and confession, and finally spiritual yearnings — we understand how egocentric behavior can block one’s path to true bliss and happiness.

The Dalai Lama, who is wise yet retains a human touch, enables viewers to identify with the divinity in them. Thomas (1992) states that the Bodhisattva figure, which is represented by the Dalai Lama in this film, corresponds to our inner needs, and that the Bodhisattva as a metaphor is a valuable tool for the individuation process (p.221). However, instead of saying that the Dalai Lama is a wise person in the film, I would say that he is viewed by the Tibetans as a wise person who has the qualities of a Bodhisattva. As a child in the film, the Dalai Lama is portrayed as a simple monk who has emotions such as fear and anxiety and he avoids making political comments or decisions. However, the Tibetans place their trust in him to make the right decisions for the country.

Though there is Buddhist philosophy and a portrayal of spirituality in the film, it is filled with political overtones. The Dalai Lama, as presented in the film, seems to carry with him an agenda of politicizing the Tibetan cause. Buddhist themes of compassion to all sentient beings and not killing any, including insects, are amplified in the film. Schwartz (1994) mentions in his research on the role of monks in the 1989 protests in Lhasa that Tibetan monks symbolize the Tibetan political protest for freedom. Buddhism, which provides “coherence and identity” to the exiled and non-exiled Tibetan communities (Bishop, 2000, p.653), has become politicized to represent the Tibetan cause for human rights (*Kolås, 1996*). Fisher (2011) views it as the case with the Dalai Lama. Sautman (2010) comments that “the perception of the Dalai Lama as a ‘man of peace’ is constructed mainly by Western politicians and media” (p.90). However, he is being criticized for not making peace with or for anyone despite his reputation as a peacemaker (Sautman, 2010, p.101). The politicized image of the Dalai Lama at the time of making *Seven Years in Tibet* may explain why, even though his fragility and worldly aspects are shown in the film, he is portrayed as a leader of Tibet who is supported fully by his citizens. Other than giving advice to Heinrich towards the end of the film, the Dalai Lama does not give advice to the generals or the monks. At the same time, as a young boy in the film, the Dalai Lama is able to deliver philosophical lines about life and views on non-violence. His character, fragile yet wise and pure, could have been designed to emphasize the contrast between the virtues of the Dalai Lama and the cruel and rude behaviors of the Chinese as portrayed. Chan (2009) points out that speaking up against the lack of democracy in China “is undermined by the representational excess configured through Hollywood’s imaginings of China’s terrifying cultural Otherness” (p.31). Thus, the Chinese people in the film are demonized, and identified as shadow archetypes in the film.

In the movie theater which Heinrich has helped to build, the Dalai Lama poses the question to him, “Do you think someday people will look at Tibet on the movie screen and wonder what happened to us?” “Look at Tibet on the movie screen” could refer to the viewing of this film *Seven Years in Tibet* on-screen. The film thus served as a channel that spread the political and social agenda of the Tibetan community. At the time of the release of the film, there was tension between China and some of the production studios and Hollywood, with China taking offence at some of the images and messages conveyed through the film. The dominant imagery of traditional monastic Buddhism and the portrayal of the brutal acts of the Chinese have caused much unhappiness to China (Bishop, 2000). Beijing did not allow any filming to be done in Tibet and thus the film was actually shot in Argentina (Emerson & Power, 1997). The government of China banned the screening of the film and Hong Kong also did not screen the film so as not to offend China.

Nonetheless, despite the complexity of its political implications, *Seven Years in Tibet* emphasizes that the journey to attain enlightenment or the wholeness of being is an individual one. While guidance can be given, one’s individuation journey has to be embarked alone ultimately. Likewise, while the viewers in the cinema are presented with the same images and story, each person participates in his or her own unique inner journey.

CHAPTER SIX

ACTIVE IMAGINATION AND INDIVIDUATION IN *HERO*

Introduction: Background of *Hero*

This chapter examines how the concepts of Buddhism and Taoism in relation to the development of Self are portrayed in the Chinese swordplay film *Hero* (2002). While people tend to associate “fights” with “violence” and “killing”, Chinese martial arts embody the principles of non-violence, discipline, balance and peace, which are also fundamental concepts in Buddhist and Taoist teachings. A central theme of chivalry, which features swordsmen who seek justice and righteousness, is presented in the film. However, the key idea that is portrayed throughout the film is the spirit of seeking peace and not waging war. In this thesis, the spiritual aspect of swordsmanship in the film is interpreted from the perspective of Buddhism and Taoism.

While *Hero* resembles *Crouching Tiger* in terms of the archetypes and universal symbols presented, as well as the philosophy demonstrated through the martial arts film genre, what makes *Hero* different from *Crouching Tiger* is the active use of imaginative narratives presented by its characters. In fact, half of the plot in *Hero* is based on the imaginative worlds presented by two characters — Nameless and the King, while the other half of the plot presents events that actually happened. Thus, *Hero* is different from *Crouching Tiger*, where the plot presents what the characters have been through. “Real world” is created for the characters in *Crouching Tiger*, whereas both “imaginary world” and “real world” are presented in *Hero*. Jungian concepts of active imagination, individuation, archetypes and universal symbols are applied to the analysis of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies presented in this film.

Active Imagination: Stories within Stories

Hero is set in the Warring States period of ancient China. The film ushers audiences to a “mythic faraway historical past” with the following prologue that appears on the screen (Chan, 2009, p.93):

People give up their lives for many reasons. For friendship, for love, for an ideal. And people kill for the same reasons... Before China was one great country, it was divided into seven warring states. In the Kingdom of Qin was a ruthless ruler. He had a vision — to unite the land to put an end, once and for all, to war. It was an idea soaked in the blood of his enemies. In any war there are heroes on both sides...

While white words initially appear against a black background which is gradually replaced with a map of the seven warring states. The different states on the map are painted in reddish brown, which resemble dried bloodstains. Melancholic and deep cello music is played in accompaniment to the prologue. Next, we see the title of the film *Hero* in both English and Chinese. The Chinese characters “ying xiong” (hero) which are in red and look like map patterns, fill the whole screen. The reddish brown map and the red Chinese characters portray the visual image of fragmentation of land and bloodshed, bringing to mind the key themes of the film — revenge and all under heaven. The next shot is a close-up of the running legs of war horses. Shots of this army of war horses alternate with time-lapsed extreme long shots of a moving sky above a mountainous range suggesting that the peace of the land is disturbed, and the contrast between peace and war is highlighted.

The main plot surrounds the King of Qin who has survived attempts on his life by three assassins (Long Sky, Flying Snow and Broken Sword), and these assassins are said to have been killed by a warrior known as Nameless. Nameless arrives to meet the King of Qin in his palace to narrate how he had managed to kill the assassins. However, the King does not believe Nameless’ story and narrates his version of what happened. The King suspects that the three assassins had surrendered their lives to Nameless in order for Nameless to gain the King’s trust and then take his life. Nameless finally admits that his family was killed by Qin soldiers and he is here to take revenge. However, he is advised by Broken Sword that the King of Qin is the one who can bring harmony within China by unifying all the seven states under a common dynasty. He also gets to know from Broken Sword that the latter had a chance to kill the King but gave it up for the sake of “all under heaven” (天下). Nameless has the chance to kill the King as well but abandons his mission. Just before leaving the palace, Nameless is executed by showers of arrows. The film closes with a text that informs the audience that the King of Qin eventually unified China and became its first Emperor.

The Rashomon effect is used in narrating the different versions of the story. The term Rashomon effect is derived from Akira Kurosawa’s film *Rashomon* which gives four mutually contradictory accounts of a crime witnessed by four individuals (Davenport, 2010, p.55.) This manner of presenting a narrative allows viewers to read the film in multiple ways, and even interpret the message differently in the process of finding the “truth”. In *Hero*, the viewers are also thrown the question, “Who is the ‘hero’

in the title?” — Is the King the hero as he eventually owns the sword and unifies the seven states; or is Nameless the hero as he sacrifices himself for the sake of all under heaven; or is Broken Sword the hero as he is the one who gains realization from calligraphy that the King should not be killed in order to bring peace to all?

In the first half of *Hero*, a version of an imagined story is narrated by Nameless, and a second version of another imagined story is narrated by the King. For the second half of the film, Nameless eventually narrates the true story of what actually happened between him and Long Sky, Flying Snow and Broken Sword. All three versions of the stories are painted with poetic landscapes and use different color schemes boldly. There are scenes presented solely in dominant color hues of red, orange, blue, green and white. The first false narrative by Nameless is presented largely in red and orange for most scenes. The second imagined description given by the King is painted largely in blue. The third version, which is the true version, is presented largely in white, a color which is seen to represent the transparency and revelation of truth. Scenes of flashbacks that show Broken Sword and Flying Snow’s initial meeting and their assassination of the King are in green. The use of a single-toned prominent color for each narrative may suggest that it is often difficult to differentiate between what is true and what is false (Zhang, 2005).

The two “fake versions” of stories could be a journey of the active imagination that has been envisioned by Nameless and the King. Jung sees “active imagination” as one of the important methods for understanding the conscious and unconscious minds in the individuation process. The process of active imagination involves turning one’s attention toward the inner world of the imagination, while going through a journey of self-reflection at the same time (Chodorow, 2006, p.237). Jung (1976) explains that the unconscious mind is to be uncovered through conscious engagement with active imagination or dreams (p.199-200). Samuels (1999) sees the active imagination as a channel for messages from the unconscious to be expressed through different media (p.9). Kast (1991) regards active imagination as the process by which “a strong but flexible ego complex allows intangible unconscious material (complexes, dreams, and images) to be expressed in a tangible product such as painting, poetry, or song” (p.161). Henderson (1984) describes the active imagination as a self-reflective psychological attitude drawn from the religious, the aesthetic, the philosophic and the social imaginations (p.62). Chodorow (2006) elaborates that a religious imagination includes inner visions and voices that establish a dialogue with the divinity within; an aesthetic

imagination includes the imagination of beauty expressed through rhythmic harmony; a philosophic imagination is about understanding of symbols in their personal, cultural and archetypal dimensions; and a social imagination includes the imagination of relationships (p.237). During the process of an active imagination, there is “an ongoing dialogue between two opposites, that is, consciousness and the unconscious”, and the unconscious message has to be reconciled with the position of the conscious mind in order to be understood (Moacanin, 2003, p.46).

The imaginative world of Nameless is largely presented in warm colors of red and orange. In his journey of the active imagination, he holds a high regard for the people of Zhao who practice calligraphy and deems the highest level of swordsmanship as a supreme state of mind. The King’s imagination is mainly in the cool color of blue, and he believes in the existence of true love and romance, as well as the willingness of warriors to sacrifice their lives in order to kill him. Images of magnificent nature and people who fight as if they are flying in the air are perceived in both their imaginations. The characters’ movements in the imagined versions are much swifter and dance-like. The warriors seem to defy gravity and have the ability to fly and swirl in the air while they fight. In the true version, the movements of the characters are much more grounded though they flip into the air at times. The out-of-ordinary way of fighting brings viewers to experience an ultimate reality during the imagined scenes.

At the same time, all three stories which are stylistically presented could be the imagined stories of the King. The King’s final appearance in the film is shown in an extreme long shot which presents his tiny figure in the background. This may suggest the distance between the King and the people, and how he is often kept guarded from everyone at a great distance. In his world which is isolated from humanity, he may have imagined facing possible enemies and assassinations. These different scenarios may have better prepared him in assessing risks and developing strategies to counter possible deceptions and adversities.

The characters in *Hero* are often featured with shots of close-up frontality throughout. This could be a deliberate approach to express the transcendent state of the stories to viewers. Schrader (1972) relates that the technique of frontality is “considered as an aspect of transcendental style” and the use of such technique is found in films of Ozu and religious paintings and sculpture “to inspire an I-Thou devotional attitude between the viewer and the work of art” (p.53). According to Levinas (2002), when we face another subject, we are put in the “proximity of the unknown” (p.535). The face of

another person on screen thus “alerts us to the other person’s inner life” (Gerbaz, 2008, p.20) and “implores us to listen and look beyond the narrative” (p.22). With a character addressing the audience directly, the subject of perception is asked “who is being faced or addressed?” (Gerbaz, 2008, p.23). In the opening sequence of *Hero*, a close-up frontality of Nameless is shown, with a self-introduction through a voiceover, which is almost a direct address to the viewers:

[voiceover] I was orphaned at a young age and was never given a name. People simply called me Nameless. With no family name to live up to, I devoted myself to the sword. I spent ten years perfecting unique skills as a swordsman. The King of Qin has summoned me to court, for what I have accomplished has astonished the kingdom.

The use of voiceover in this segment of self-introduction seems to be communicating an inner thought to the audience, thus ushering them into the inner life of Nameless. Close-up and extreme frontality shots that focus on the faces and eyes are also shown frequently during the dialogue between Nameless and the King, the fight scene between Nameless and Long Sky, the fight scene over the lake between Nameless and Broken Sword, and the desert scenes.

Greater details of the active imagination of the King and Nameless will be discussed in relation to their archetypal characters later.

Yin-Yang of Fights

In *Hero*, martial arts and fights are not just solely represented by aggressive action and violence. Instead, poetic and spiritual qualities are added to the descriptions of martial arts. The active sword-fighting scenes are balanced with stillness. In the film, music, chess and Chinese calligraphy are used to describe the principles of martial arts skills. Martial arts, as an active form, is associated with the principles of other art forms which are externally still. The *yang* (martial arts) is balanced by the *yin* (music, calligraphy and chess), which forms the Tao of swordsmanship. Broken Sword says to Nameless:

The essence of calligraphy has to be intuitively grasped. It is the same with swordplay. Both seek to return to a state of simplicity.

Both the essence of calligraphy and swordsmanship point to truth and simplicity, which is the essence of Tao that stresses the fact that human beings are essentially “natural beings”, and that a human being’s thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the

patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) (Adler, 2002, p.15). At the same time, both calligraphy and swordsmanship require skill in applying the right physical and spiritual strength which encompasses the *yin-yang* principle. Nameless says to the King, “calligraphy and swordplay both rely on merging the power of the wrist and the spirit in the heart”. In addition, the state of martial arts is also associated with the beauty of music in the film as a supreme level of mind:

Nameless:

Martial arts and music are different, but they share the same principle.

Both stress attaining a supreme state.

The concepts of *wu wei* and stillness are prominent in the film and are used to teach the essence of martial arts practice, which is not about being aggressive, but about being grounded and alert against one’s enemies. In *Hero*, the “perfect fight” happens in the mind of the warriors (Lau, 2007). In the imagined story narrated by Nameless to the King, Nameless and Long Sky remain motionless for hours and enter into the spiritual dimension of fight:

Long Sky and I stood facing each other for a long time. Though neither of us made a move, our combat unfolded in the depths of our minds.

This scene is an imagination within the imagination. The fight takes place in Nameless’ imagination. A white-bearded musician plays on the string instrument *guzheng* while Nameless and Long Sky fight the battle in their minds. As the musician starts playing, both warriors take steps back towards two pillars without losing focus on their opponent. The two pillars show the divide between the two warriors. Stylistically, the shot is to draw viewers’ attention to the musician with the music played in the center. As the music is playing, the viewers get ellipses between reality and the imagined fight. The ellipses vary in color and speed. The imagined fight that takes place in the mind is fast and in black and white, while the fight that takes place in reality is drab and slow. Slow-motion shots of rain droplets create the feeling of unhurried calmness in the hearts of the warriors. This shows that though the warriors are fighters, they are calm, focused and unhurried. The chess set, with its black and white pieces, also reflects the fight in the warriors’ mind which is depicted in black and white (Costanzo, 2014, p.61). At the same time, while a chess game is seen to be a quiet activity, chess players are highly active in their minds as they strategize their moves to win the game by eliminating the opponent’s pieces. Thus, the chessboard shown in the foreground of many shots in the fight scene between Nameless and Long Sky is also a visual metaphor for war which is depicted at

the start of the film. The chessboard is also a symbolic representation of the states on the map shown in the beginning of the film, and the chess pieces signify those who fight for the land. During the fight that takes place in the mind, shouts of the warriors which represent chaos are juxtaposed with music from the *guzheng* which represents inner peace. The actual scene where the warriors stand in stillness is portrayed more poetically with the slow-motion shots of rain droplets and music. The scene that portrays the fight in the mind is much faster in pacing and swifter in movement, with less poetry but more dramatic tautness.

The music from the *guzheng* gets more dramatic as the fight in the mind develops. At one point, the string breaks and the warriors start to attack each other. You-Sheng Li, a Chinese physician and a Ph.D. graduate from the University of Cambridge, points out that this scene purports the same idea of spiritual perfection shared between music and swordsmanship: “The perfect tune makes no sound”, which is a direct quotation from Laozi, the founder of Taoism (Li, 2008) and is also similar to the idea of a swordsman’s ultimate goal of requiring no weapon. This spiritual dimension is equivalent to the spiritual state of music, calligraphy and chess which is emphasized throughout the film (Lau, 2007). After long hours of stillness, Nameless attacks Long Sky with a precise and swift stroke that takes his life. The simplicity of fighting by executing one stroke of the sword echoes the direct realization in Buddhism which can be obtained when the mind is free from all distractions and desires after much meditation or stillness. This fight scene that happens in stillness resembles the story of training a gamecock by Zhuangzi. The story goes:

Chi Hsing-tzu was training gamecocks for the king. After ten days the king asked if they are ready [to fight].

“Not yet. They’re too haughty and rely on their nerve.”

Another ten days and the king asked again.

“Not yet. They still respond to noises and movements.”

Another ten days and the king asked again.

“Not yet. They still look around fiercely and are full of spirit.”

Another ten days and the king asked again.

“They’re close enough. Another cock can crow and they show no sign of change. Look at them from a distance and you’d think they were made of wood. Their virtue is complete. Other cocks won’t dare face them, but will turn and run.” (Translated by Watson, 1970, p.204)

The cocks are trained to stay as still as a piece of wood before they are ready for the fight. The best warrior is not warlike and does not lose his temper easily; he is one who can keep still and is not easily affected by his environment. Li (2008) observes that in

this fight scene that takes place in stillness between Nameless and Long Sky, they are resolving disputes by the demonstration of power rather than by a real fight.

Hero, through linking the highest ideal of swordsmanship with calligraphy and stillness, delivers the message of the Buddhist philosophy of no killing and the Taoist philosophy of “non-action” that emphasize adopting actions that are not aggressive or forceful. Broken Sword tells Nameless that he did not kill the King as he realized from calligraphy that the King could bring harmony within China and end all wars.

The highest state of swordsmanship is presented in the film as no killing, through the King’s interpretation of writing the character for “sword”:

Swordsmanship’s first achievement is the unity of man and sword. Once this unity is attained, even a blade of grass can be a weapon.

The second achievement is when the sword exists in one’s heart when absent from one’s hand, one can strike an enemy at 100 paces even with one’s bare hands.

Swordsmanship’s ultimate achievement is the absence of the sword in both hand and heart. The swordsman embraces all around him. The desire to kill no longer exists. Only peace remains.

The highest state of a swordsman’s attainment echoes Laozi who “sought an alternative to the feudal warfare of his times in the balance and harmony of nature” (Costanzo, 2014, p.62). Nameless, after planning for a long time to assassinate the King, eventually abandons his sword and gives up the idea of killing the King. He leaves behind his final words which highlight the theme of “peace” in the film, before he is killed by the soldiers of Qin:

Remember those who gave their lives for the highest ideal: peace. No more killing.

The spirit of seeking peace and not waging war is one of the key foundations in the practice of martial arts. Thus, though *Hero* is a film about chivalry, it has its spiritual ideals presented poetically to the audience. The use of natural landscapes is prominent in the film, and most of the fight sequences are set in nature. The element of “nature” is important in Taoism which stresses that human beings are essentially “natural beings”, and that the human being’s thinking and behavior should be harmonized with the patterns and rhythms of nature (the Way or Tao) (Adler, 2002, p.15). In Buddhism, “nature” is referred to as the Buddha nature in all sentient beings. The director Zhang Yimou mentioned in the bonus features of the *Hero* DVD that years after the film, he wants people to remember certain poetic points:

You are going to remember the colors. You are going to remember in a sea of golden leaves, two ladies dressed in red are dancing in the air. You are going to remember, on a lake as still as a mirror, two men are using their swords to convey their sorrow, like birds flying on the water, like dragonflies. It is images like these that will leave lasting impressions in the minds of the audience.

Thus, amidst a plot comprising fights, revenge and blood, there is a *yin-yang* balance, that of poetry, calligraphy, music, meditation, stillness, the Taoist ideal of *wu wei*, and stunning scenes of nature.

Archetypal Characters and Individuation Journey

Hero Archetype

Hero begins with an introduction of the warrior “Nameless”. In Taoism, “nameless” is a term that represents the formless and nameless Tao, which is defined by Fowler and Fowler (2008) as “the undifferentiated Void and potentiality that underpins all creation, immutable, unchanging, without form” (p.101). The famous first stanza of *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi also describes Tao as “nameless”:

The way that can be spoken of
Is not the eternal way;
The name that can be named
Is not the eternal name.
The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth. (p.5)

While there could be different interpretations on who the hero of the film is, I would propose Nameless, who opens and closes the film as the hero archetype. Nameless is different from the hero archetype in the previous four films analyzed as he is made a hero not by attaining his goal, but by letting go of it instead. Nameless had worked on the plan to kill the King for the last ten years since he found out that his parents were killed by Qin soldiers. However, after going on his individuation journey through a phase of the imagination by telling stories, he eventually gives up the aim of killing the King. He lets go of his vengeful heart for the sake of “*tian xia*” which literally means “all under heaven”. By not killing and allowing the King to unify China, he believes that the war will end, which will benefit all the people under heaven. He is able to let go of his personal vendetta for the sake of the greater good of society.

Before meeting the King, Nameless has to go up a long flight of steps, which symbolizes that he is ascending to his unconscious mind through a journey of active imagination. In the active imagination of Nameless, we can see that in his unconscious mind, he sees swordsmanship as a form of spiritual attainment. In his imagination, he paints a very poetic setting for the chess house where his fight with the warrior Long Sky occurs. According to his description, Long Sky is one who loves art and music. Associating a warrior with chess and music evinces Nameless' deep belief that the core of martial arts is strongly linked to the quality of patience, beauty and peace. It rains throughout the fight and the courtyard where this takes place is moist. Thus, in addition to the sound of music, the sound of raindrops is prominent too. Rain is a mediating agent between the gaseous and solid elements (Cirlot, 2001, p.271), which can be interpreted as the bridge between the conscious and unconscious minds too. In this imagined story, the fight takes place in the unconscious mind before the final physical movement, which also suggests the movement between unconscious and conscious states of the warriors. The *yin-yang* strength of Nameless as a warrior is seen in his active imagination as he demonstrates agility and steadfastness in movement in the scene where he repels the storm of arrows from Qin's army together with Flying Snow. He whirls and leaps into the air to deflect thousands of arrows, and demonstrates great physical competence. Thus, he has both the ability to stay in stillness and in constant momentum.

Nameless travels through the desert to look for Broken Sword and Flying Snow. The desert is another significant symbol in the whole film. This symbol is also used in *Crouching Tiger*. According to Jung, the symbol of the desert plays an important role in the understanding of one's inner self. Jung (2009) associates the depth of one's soul with a desert. To him, to be with oneself is to discover that the inner self is a desert (Jung, 2009):

I came to the place of the soul and found that this place was a hot desert (...) The soul has its own peculiar world. Only the self enters in there, or the man who has completely become his self, he who is neither in events, nor in men, nor in his thoughts. Through the turning of my desire from things and men, I turned my self away from things and men, but that is precisely how I became the secure prey of my thoughts, yes, I wholly became my thoughts. (p.236).

At the desert, one can find an abundance of visions, as it is only when one "turns to the place of the soul" that one can see how one's soul "becomes green and how its field bears wonderful fruit" (p.236). In the film, it is in the desert that Nameless learns about

the ideology behind *tian xia* (meaning all under heaven) from Broken Sword, an important realization that leads him to give up the idea of killing the King.

In his active imagination, Nameless manages to find Broken Sword and Flying Snow at a school of calligraphy and asks Broken Sword to write the character for “sword”. In his imagination, the students there stay still by their tables and continue with their calligraphy practice instead of escaping from the furious arrows fired by the Qin troops. The focus of the mind on calligraphy practice while the physical environment is filled with danger suggests that while the physical body can be destroyed, the inner spirit will continue to live on. This is similar to the Buddhist ideology which holds that the human body is just a temporal place for the soul. Master Chinul points out that while the body is temporal, the “real mind” is unending and unchanging:

When the physical body decays and dissolves back into fire and air, one thing [the mind] remains aware, encompassing the universe. (Chinul, 1995, p.26)

Nameless also views narrow-mindedness, jealousy and ignorance as the key factors of man’s fallacy. In the story created by him, he is able to bring separation to the relationship of Broken Sword and Flying Snow as they both allow their negative emotions such as jealousy and hatred to become a liability. In his story, Broken Sword sleeps with his servant Moon to spite Flying Snow on purpose. The resentful Flying Snow kills Broken Sword and Moon but is eventually killed by Nameless as she loses focus and concentration during the fight.

The fight scene between Flying Snow and Moon where Moon is eventually killed is depicted with sorrow, hatred and vengeance as represented by yellow falling leaves and the strong use of red which represents bloodshed. In the beginning of the scene, Flying Snow is not facing the camera. She does not welcome the confrontation that Moon wanted. Flying Snow is overtaken by hurt and sorrow. With a melancholic tone, she tells Moon, “I will not fight with you”. In the scene, the yellow fallen leaves indicate the season of autumn, which signifies death. Both ladies are in red flowing costumes, signifying passion, blood and violence. Moon carries an exasperated look right from the beginning. Her constant shouts while chasing after Flying Snow through the forest and treetops are jarring compared to the soothing soundtrack. The music reflects Flying Snow’s inner world of hurt and sorrow, and the shouts are the unleashing of frustration and hatred experienced by Moon. The drumming creates the urgency of Moon’s chase after Flying Snow. There are tilted shots used in this fight sequence that

portray Moon's madness, which brings a disturbing feel to viewers at the same time. During the fight, Flying Snow makes use of the wind direction and stirs the leaves into the air with her sword. The leaves serve as her weapons which she uses to defeat Moon eventually. The leaves also give an eye-matching moment for the audience as their view is blocked by the leaves, just like that of Moon. The scene ends with a long shot similar to its opening, but this time, the falling leaves and all the leaves on the trees turn from yellow to red, which gives a visual image resembling a big pool of blood. In this fight sequence, the camera moves with the actors in many of the shots, which gives the feeling of a chase and momentum. Low shots are used frequently on Flying Snow to show her superiority and power over Moon.

According to Nameless, he is able to defeat Flying Snow easily as she is distracted by her personal emotional entanglements, "When Flying Snow was fighting me, she was disturbed and disoriented; I defeated her easily". In Buddhism, a distracted mind blocks one's path to enlightenment as it is considered a weak mind that dwells in mental afflictions and is unable to attain an awakened mind (Wallace, 2005, p.169). The first version of the story narrated by Nameless is rejected by the King who suspects that it is entirely a lie. Nameless hesitates to carry through his plan of killing the King while listening to the King's version of the narrative. He eventually reveals the truth, and tells the King that he has been told by Broken Sword that to abandon the plan of killing the King is to bring peace to all the people. After the King's realization that the highest state of swordsmanship is no killing, Nameless decides not to kill the King, as he believes that the King is committed to attain this ideal of "ultimate swordsmanship". From the perspective of Buddhism, Nameless could have understood that "good" or "bad" are concepts of duality and that they do not exist on their own, and that the actions of the King could be dependent on causes and conditions which could eventually lead to the peace of the country. Such understanding is an understanding of emptiness, which means to be empty from the "inherent existence" and to see things beyond their duality (Burton, 2004, p.86). Nameless might have let go of his personal vengeance after gaining this insight.

Nameless has the chance to kill the King but chooses to set him free. However, he is eventually killed by a rain of arrows fired by the Qin soldiers. He is given a royal funeral and buried as a hero. Jung (1962) observes that in mythologies, the hero voluntarily sacrifices himself for a higher goal which is a type of "cosmic sacrifice" that may lead to the creation of the world (p.415). Nameless, in the film, sacrifices himself

for the sake of “all under heaven” — this can be seen as a form of “cosmic sacrifice”. He believes that his sacrifice brings an end to the sufferings of all the people under heaven.

Self Archetype

In *Hero*, Broken Sword is introduced as one who has been rootless since childhood, like Nameless who has left his homeland since he was a child:

Broken Sword:

She knew I had been rootless since childhood, living nowhere and everywhere, calling no place home. She often said to me, once we had succeeded in killing the king, she would take me back to her home. She said no swords existed there, and no swordsmen. There would only be a man and a woman.

Flying Snow wishes to return to Tao, however, she cannot let go of her final mission which is to kill the King of Qin. “Home” in this context can refer to “Tao”; “man” and “woman” refer to the balance of “yang” and “yin”. The text suggests that once they return home (Tao), they will be free from all warfare and hatred. Broken Sword initially agrees to aid Flying Snow to avenge her father’s death by assassinating the King, so that after the completion of the task, he can retreat to a place of bliss where no fighting and no war exist.

As a wise person, he finds that calligraphy and swordplay share the same principles, and with diligent practice of calligraphy, both Broken Sword and Flying Snow manage to refine their swordplay skills and power. He is the one who teaches Nameless about the similar fundamental principles between swordplay and calligraphy. From him, Nameless gets to attain an epiphany about the higher state of swordsmanship and the connection between swordplay, spirituality and the arts (music, calligraphy and chess), which is reflected in his active imagination.

However, Broken Sword changes his mind after going through an inner transformation in the process of assassinating the King at the palace together with Flying Snow. Broken Sword enters the palace filled with floating green drapes that create a maze-like zone for the fight with the King to take place. The symbol of the maze is often used to signify one’s inner journey and spiritual search (Diehl, 1986, p.284). The green drapes give a stylized representation of the palace. Broken Sword is calm and collected while the King is agitated and uses his sword to cut the drapes from different directions

in different strokes. The King, with his frantic movement, is creating more obstacles for himself, as the falling drapes block his vision and create more movements around him, thus making him uncertain of the position of Broken Sword. Broken Sword, by staying still, is able to stay focused on his target. The drapes fall and a wave-like pattern is created which resembles water. The scene of drapes falling signifies the falling of the people at war and the decline of humanity. Through the fight with the King in the maze, Broken Sword realizes he should not kill the King in order to attain a higher ideal — peace for all under heaven. The color green used in this near-assassination scene may signify healing and growth, which indicates Broken Sword's wish for the growth and development of the land by not killing the King. Green also represents rebirth and rejuvenation. Broken Sword has the opportunity to kill the King but decides to give him a new life, hoping that he can bring peace to all under heaven.

Broken Sword also recognizes that in order to attain ultimate bliss, one has to abandon negative emotions such as hatred and anger. He advises Nameless to abandon his plan to avenge the King:

Broken Sword:

Was all your training motivated by hatred and revenge?

Nameless:

That's right. For ten years, I worked relentlessly without a moment's rest.

Broken Sword:

What will it take to dissuade you?

Nameless:

Only by killing me.

He gives Nameless a gift of two words *tian xia* (meaning all under heaven) by writing them on the sands of a vast desert and hopes that he can understand the significance of not killing the King. Though Nameless does not immediately agree to relinquish his plan, he eventually decides that the King should not be killed after his conversations with the King. Nameless tells the King:

Broken Sword said — for years there has been continuous warfare, causing huge suffering to the people. Only Your Majesty has the power to bring peace by uniting all under heaven. He hopes that for the sake of the greater good, I would abandon my plan to kill you.

Broken Sword also said, one person's suffering is nothing when compared to the suffering of all. The conflict between Zhao and Qin is trivial when compared with peace for all.

Broken Sword's willingness to sacrifice his life for the notion of "all under heaven" is like that of a Bodhisattva who chooses to remain in cyclic existence to protect all beings from sufferings.

Knowing that Nameless has failed to kill the King, Flying Snow is angry with Broken Sword and draws her sword to fight him in order to vent her frustrations. Broken Sword, in proving his love for Flying Snow, does not fight back as Flying Snow attacks him. The sword of Flying Snow stabs through the heart of Broken Sword. She is shocked that he does not defend himself against her attack. However, it is too late for her to regret her action and Broken Sword dies in her arms. Flying Snow eventually also kills herself with the same sword that passed through the body of Broken Sword.

While the Buddhist concept of "poison" is not put across explicitly in *Hero*, the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance are seen in Nameless, Flying Snow and the King. Despite advice given by Broken Sword, Nameless embarks on the journey of revenge out of anger, and Flying Snow kills Broken Sword out of anger and ignorance. The King of Qin, out of greed, kills numerous people in order to conquer all the seven states. Broken Sword also sacrifices himself to prove his love for Flying Snow. While he is concerned for all under heaven, he is always connected to the anima aspect of himself represented by Flying Snow. The image of Flying Snow with Broken Sword dead in her arms on a cliff, connected by a sword conveys a tragic, yet romantic and peaceful mood. This image resembles the Taoist *yin-yang* symbol, where masculine energy is joined with feminine energy in nature. They eventually manage to go "home", a place where there is no killing, revenge, violence or fighting:

Flying Snow:
No more drifting, no more roaming
I'm taking you home now
To Our home — where peace is.

It is at the moment of death that Broken Sword and his lover can be at rest and with the Tao.

Shadow Archetype

The ferocious actions of the King, in his personification of the shadow archetype, are not fully presented. His vicious character and wrongdoings, however, are conveyed through the narratives described by the other characters, as well as his dialogue with Nameless. He is painted as one who fights for power and kills mercilessly in order to

conquer the surrounding states. The King is introduced right at the beginning of the film as a ruthless ruler in the captions on screen:

The King of Qin was the most ruthless in his efforts to conquer the land and unify all under heaven. He was regarded as a common threat by the other six Kingdoms.

From the tale recounted by Nameless, viewers know that Qin soldiers have killed his family in Zhao when he was still a child; and from the story told by Broken Sword, it is revealed that the father of Flying Snow was a Zhao general who died in a battle against Qin forces. Qin troops are also described as strong and ruthless by Nameless:

Your Majesty's army is invincible, not only because it is brave, but also because of its archery, with a greater range than any other army. The Qin archers are like artillery intimidating the enemy.

Several hundred thousand Qin troops were readying for the next onslaught.

Towards the end of the film, the King's advisors also describe Qin as a merciless state. They advise the King not to show any sympathy, but to kill Nameless who has spared his life:

Your Majesty, permission to execute? Permission to execute? He conspired to assassinate Your Majesty. Show no mercy! This is the law of Qin! To conquer all under heaven, the law must be enforced. Set an example for the world!

The King craves power and demonstrates no mercy to people in order to attain his goal of unifying China. He expresses to Nameless that it is not in his plan to stop at conquering the six Kingdoms but to "conquer vast lands" in order to "establish a great empire".

The King is also a highly observant person. It is due to his constant fear that he may be assassinated at any moment that he is trained to be aware of his surroundings and people around him. From the movements of the candle flame, he is able to tell the intentions of Nameless during their meeting. He is quick to detect the lies that Nameless narrates to him, and gives his version of the story. Through his active imagination, the King unconsciously exhibits an aspect of himself which is not commonly known by those around him.

While he is described as a ruthless and aggressive King by many, there are elements of romance and justice in his inner world. Though he is the target of many righteous warriors, he can understand the attitudes and principles of the honorable

warriors, whom in his opinion, would sacrifice their lives in order to kill him. The King also holds very high regard for the chivalrous and does not perceive them to be narrow-minded. Due to this perception, he does not believe that Broken Sword and Flying Snow have conflicts between them and are enemies to each other. He also perceives the love between Broken Sword and Flying Snow as unshakeable. As a shadow archetype, he knows that he is hated by many warriors, and in his view, they are courageous as they willingly sacrifice their lives in order to kill him:

You were not fast enough to defeat Long Sky. He died willingly under your sword. Such devotion deserves true respect. He was the first to sacrifice himself for your mission.

He also imagines that Broken Sword and Flying Snow are also willing to sacrifice their lives so that Nameless is able to be positioned within ten paces of the King.

The romantic story between Broken Sword and Flying Snow has a prominent place in the King's active imagination. The King has fantasized a beautiful romantic story about the death of Flying Snow. He imagines that the dead body of Flying Snow is resting by a still lake. It is a scene with shades of blue and purple. Broken Sword is mourning by the scenic lake. He continues to imagine that Nameless and Broken Sword have a fight in the depth of their minds as a tribute to Flying Snow. The fight is choreographed like a poetic piece of dance above the lake. This fight scene begins with an extreme long shot of the landscape which shows a pavilion on a lake with forested hills in the background, followed by close-up frontality of Nameless and Broken Sword positioned in the center of the screen. This dissolves into an extreme long shot of the lake which gives a sense of peace through the symmetry of the scenes presented. The scenes remain mostly symmetrical throughout the fight. — the movements of the two warriors and their reflections are carefully framed to achieve this. Close-up frontality of the two warriors is also superimposed on the extreme long shots of the fight. During the fight, the warriors dip their swords into the water and stroke them across it. This resembles the act of dipping the calligraphy brush in the ink slab. This fight scene portrays the *yin-yang* of Tao — the duality of inner and outer world which is emphasized in the water reflections; slow motion shots versus shots of frantic fighting; high-pitched screaming sounds versus silence and water sounds; and close-ups of their emotionless faces versus extreme long shots of fight scenes. Nature seems to be a silent observer with several bottom-up views of the warriors from within the river and shots from the direction of forested hills that frame the trees in the foreground with the warriors in the

background. The fight comes to an end when the warriors hit a droplet of water to each other which eventually strikes the face of Flying Snow. After Nameless leaves, the close-up frontality of an expressionless Broken Sword is shown again, which gives a surreal and ungraspable sense of sorrow. The close-up shot of Broken Sword's face is shown before the fight sequence and again after the fight sequence, giving a sense of a complete circle which symbolizes perfection in Tao for the fight sequence.

In this segment of imagination, there is no violence and bloodshed involved, but the whole sequence is carried out in a meditative and graceful fashion:

You and Broken Sword fought in the depth of your minds. Except neither of you wanted to harm the other, but were content to go through the honourable motions. This was also a tribute to Flying Snow.

The King's active imagination shows a sense of stillness in his inner being. Though he is known to be a cruel king from his external persona and actions, his inner journey is meditative and reflective, without blood and violence. In Buddhism, everyone has a Buddha nature in them, and every being is capable of attaining Buddhahood. Even the vilest person has the potential to attain enlightenment from the perspective of Buddha's teachings. This is similar to what Jung has said about the shadow archetype — that while the shadow is the dark side of human personality, it is not inherently evil (Jung, 1990, p.270, 272). In fact, to Jung (1958), the shadow and the God-image coexist within a human being. He mentions that both the God-image and the shadow archetype form the totality of being which comprises the inner opposites (p.82). This also parallels the concept of *yin-yang* in Taoism.

While the King is portrayed as a masculine character, his inner world is filled with romance and softness. His narrative sequences take an unhurried pace and the images are presented in a slow and steady rhythm. Wide shots of natural landscapes such as the desert and the still lake are used frequently for the King's active imagination. The King is getting in touch with his anima aspect in his individuation journey through telling the story. The anima aspect of man is referred to as the feminine quality in man by Jung. Attributes of the anima aspect include feelings, sentimentalism, kindness, romance and gentleness (Coolidge, 2006, p.67). The King gets in touch with the romantic and gentle aspects of his inner being during the process of narrating his version of the story to Nameless. As a shadow archetype, the King is the target of many who desire to kill him. However, Broken Sword recognizes that one should not destroy the shadow archetype but to work together with it in harmony to achieve greater good for

all under heaven. The King demonstrates moments of considerable reflection and realization through his dialogue with Nameless. Thus, the King does not possess only the darkness aspect of being, but inner light and wisdom too.

Universal Symbols — Sword, Circular Images and Nature

As in *Crouching Tiger*, the sword in *Hero* symbolizes the concept of “Self” and wisdom. The aspiration to understand the true meaning of “sword” in the film represents wisdom in the individuation process and a spiritual journey for the characters. At the same time, it is also a symbol of power. Thus, the sword represents both spirituality and power, which is also reflected in the symbol of Manjusri Buddha in Buddhism who wields a sword with his right hand signifying the attainment of wisdom after cutting down all illusions (Beer, 2004, p.277). The chivalrous life of a warrior comes to an end with the perishing of the sword. Thus, the symbolic meaning of a sword carries huge significance in the film.

In the imagined version of the story narrated by Nameless, he goes to a school of calligraphy to ask for the word “sword” to be written. The act of asking for a “sword” can be interpreted as the pursuit of wisdom. Symbolically, by presenting the sword of Broken Sword and the scroll with the word “sword” to the King, Nameless is transmitting wisdom acquired through Broken Sword to the King. The warriors and the King are able to understand that swordplay is beyond fighting and violence, and that the highest level of swordsmanship is to attain peace.

Circular images are used in the film to represent the formless characteristic of the Tao and the emptiness that is intrinsic in Buddhism which emphasizes the lack of inherent existence of objects. The formless Tao bespeaks the naturalness and spontaneity of things while emptiness indicates the notion that all things are dependent upon causes and conditions. At the same time, “formless” in Tao and “emptiness” in Buddhism do not mean “nothingness” and they do not carry a meaning of nihilism. Fights between Flying Sword and Nameless take place within the circular space created by the Qin soldiers. Towards the end of the film, in the scene where the Qin soldiers surround Nameless, they move together in circular motion as a huge group with Nameless in the center. The visual image of constant circular movement suggests the natural movement and rhythm of the nameless Tao, which is fluid and circular in its essence. A sense of isolation can be felt as Nameless is positioned by himself in the

center of the circular empty space created by the soldiers. He undertakes a sacrificial ritual alone for the sake of all under heaven. The fight between Moon and Nameless in the third story takes place on a huge circular disc. The male and female bodies while fighting, move on the disc and form the *bagua* (eight diagrams used in Taoist cosmology) symbol of Taoism. A *bagua* diagram comprises a circular symbol of *yin-yang* surrounded by the hexagrams usually seen in the *I-Ching*. Throughout the film, the warriors fight with great fluidity, and they whirl, spiral and twist in the air with swaying hair and clothes, forming circular motions during their combat.

Most of the fight scenes are choreographed as if they are dances in nature. The warriors fly as they fight, akin to the flight of birds; their dance-like spiral movements set in nature portray the naturalness of the Tao. Fight scenes are poetically shot as a form of art that reflects the fluidity of nature. The scene where Nameless and Long Sky fight at the courtyard without movement is accompanied by music from the Chinese string instrument *guzheng*; the battle between Nameless and Broken Sword over the lake is choreographed in such a way that they seem to be writing calligraphy on the water with their swords; the poetic fight scene between Flying Snow and Moon is set in a field of leaves. These duels are choreographed with fluidity and movements that are analogous to the beautiful strokes of calligraphy. The symbol of a still lake serves as a mirror that allows man to reflect and contemplate (Cirlot, 2001, p.175). In Buddhism, a clear mind is described as a calm lake, as it is able to reflect any detail or movement such as a cloud moving across the sky (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2003, p.79). Constanzo (2014) observes that in the film, “a scene’s emotional textures are reflected and magnified in the landscape, in the serene surface of a lake or the steady pulse of rain dropping from the eaves of a pavilion” with an “aesthetic sensibility rooted in the graceful rigors of classical Chinese music, poetry, and painting” (p.60). In the bonus features section of the *Hero* DVD, actor Jet Li points out that director Zhang Yimou insisted on shooting the scenes at the lake only when the lake’s surface was perfectly still. It was a tough process for them as on each day, the water was only still for two hours. Zhang insisted on the lake being still so that it could function like a mirror to express inner emotions as well as the kind of cinematic aesthetics he wanted to convey. I do feel that the total stillness of the lake aids in amplifying each movement of the warriors above it. The notion of stillness appears in two versions of the story narrated by the King and Nameless. Stillness is related to the highest state of swordsmanship in the film — through the stillness that the calligraphy students demonstrate while attacked by the

wave of arrows, the stillness of warriors when fights materialize in the depth of their minds, and the relationship between swordplay and art forms such as calligraphy and music.

The power of stillness is also emphasized in the scene where the King uncovers the actual plan of Nameless through his quiet observation of the flames in front of him. The King understands from the flickering flames that Nameless is there to assassinate him. He says, “The flames of these candles are disturbed by your murderous intent”. As Nameless hesitates to kill him, he is also able to detect the change in mindset from the movement of the candle flames. He says to Nameless, “It would seem that today I am doomed, and yet you hesitate”. Such subtle observation of the “*qi*” (energy) in the environment through the moving flames of the candles can only be done with a sharp mind, coupled with the stillness of the surroundings. The stillness implicit in the scenes where conversations are exchanged between the King and Nameless also creates high tension and suspense. In Taoism, “all nature and all life have the stillness of Tao at their source” (Fowler, 2005, p.124):

Empty yourself of everything.
Let the mind become still.
The ten thousand things rise and fall
while the Self watches their return.
They grow and flourish and then
return to the source.
Returning to the source is stillness,
which is the way of nature.
(Chapter 16, Translated by Feng & English, 2011, p.31)

In Buddhism, it is through stillness that one can discover the “movements of mind” and the “consciousness of such movements”, and one has clear awareness of one’s thoughts but is not distracted by them (Clifford, 1984, p.21). However, stillness is not without movement, and should not be seen in opposition to movement, as there is movement in stillness (Davis, 2010, p.145).

This film places great emphasis on the message of stillness and peace through the picturesque natural landscapes, concentration on practicing calligraphy, subtle observation of flames, the fights that occur in the minds of its protagonists, and the music that accompanies these fights. Overall, the film upholds “peace” as the highest ideal of humanity.

Conclusion

In *Hero*, the warriors fight to seek justice with the aim of bringing peace to society. The controversial twist of the plot in not killing the Qin Emperor so that all the kingdoms can be unified conveys the message of universal peace. Zhang Yimou has been seen as making a fascist statement with *Hero* by implying that the Qin Emperor in the film could be the hero as he is a master of swordsmanship and his need to unify all the kingdoms under *tian xia* (all under heaven) gives the meaning of universal peace which is emphasized in the film (Teo, 2009).

Chan (2004) asserts that the film “promotes a personality cult that claims oneness with the progression of the national destiny, and which inspires willful, bloody sacrifice” (p.18). He explains that the historicism in the prologue which introduces the King of Qin who was ruthless in his efforts to “unify all under heaven” and the “glorious pan shot of the Great Wall of China” which closes the film with an accompanying epilogue describes how the unification of China that produced its first dynasty emphasizes on its nationalist ideology (Chan, 2009, p.94). Chan (2009) further analyzes that *Hero*’s appeal to middle-America in a post-9/11 era led to its box-office triumph in the United States (p.77). He explains that it is because *Hero* entered America “at a time when American patriotism is at its fever” after the trauma of the September 11 attacks and George Bush’s Iraq War policy, and this somehow resonances the film’s message — “that conquering the world is the best way to stop violence in separate regions of the world” (Chan, 2009, p.99).

Wang (2006) observes that *Hero*’s plot that strips “an important Chinese historical scenario of all its complexities” and its straightforward theme that centers on notions of peace and non-violence worked well for the audiences in the West (p.237-238). Unlike traditional Chinese martial arts films, Zhang Yimou expressed to the BBC (2004) that *Hero* is unique in its form due to the daring use of colors, grand spectacles and attractive plot:

For a *kung fu* movie, its form is quite unique — its colors, its rhythm, its scenery, and the method of shooting.

Teo (2009) sees Zhang’s use of colors, fashion and décor in *Hero* as a form of self-orientalism, by presenting an orientalist notion of history that panders to the occidental expectations of the orient (p.188). I view that by emphasizing peace and not violence through martial arts, the director has portrayed the spirituality and ideals behind the forms of Chinese martial arts. Though the director’s treatment of the Qin Emperor

sidesteps political issues, I think that critics who focus on the political ideology of the film's tendency to defend a brutal dictatorial leader have ignored the merits of its spiritual dimensions. Zhang Yimou claims that Chinese audiences "are missing the point" by focusing on the ideology represented by his portrayal of the Qin Emperor and fail to appreciate the "form and style of *Hero*" (Cardullo, 2008, p.134).

The main difference between *Hero* and the films analyzed in previous chapters is the use of imagined narratives in more than half of the film. In *Hero*, the characters appear in imagined stories within the plot most of the time. For instance, Long Sky is only mentioned largely as an imagined character in the imagined story. No one knows exactly who he is and even in the truth version, Long Sky is only described as one who has taken a blow from Nameless that has entered at precise pressure points that will not cause any fatal injury, in such a way that a make-believe death scene can be created in the presence of the King's men. Two out of the three tales presented in the film are imagined versions of what happened to Nameless and the assassins. I associate these imagined stories with the active imagination of what the King and Nameless have been through as part of their individuation process. In the film, Broken Sword is the first to gain realization about the highest state of swordsmanship and to equate that to the idea of "peace". Through the narration of stories, both the King and Nameless begin to understand Broken Sword's insight on swordplay and realize that the highest ideal of swordsmanship is about peace and "no killing". Taoist and Buddhist ideals such as *yin-yang*, emptiness, non-duality and non-violence are integrated into the stories narrated.

The King, though as a shadow archetype, manages to attain epiphany of the highest ideal of swordsmanship towards the end of the film. This shows that all beings have the potential to attain Buddhahood if they continue to nurture the spark of light, which is the Buddha nature in them. However, instead of nurturing this spark, the King continues to be ruthless and succeeds in unifying all the seven states eventually. In Buddhism, "mind" and "nature" are used to designate one's "Buddha nature" (Mokusen, 1992). It is only when one attains the full epiphany of mind that our Buddha nature is revealed. A famous Zen poem illustrates the connection between "mind", "nature" and "Buddha nature":

A special transmission outside the scriptures,
Not depending upon letters, pointing directly to the Mind
See into Nature itself and attain Buddhahood.
(Taken from Suzuki, 1955, p.48)

Taoist teaching also suggests that everyone has the potential to attain the highest level of Tao:

Even in the human mind there is the mind of Tao; even in the mind of Tao there is the human mind. (Cleary, 2003, p.3)

In *Hero*, the warriors fight with great fluidity, and the fight scenes are choreographed as if they are dances in nature. The fights which look like flights of birds set in nature portray the naturalness of Tao. Throughout the film, different color schemes of red, blue, white and green are used. The bold use of prominent colors for different versions of the story provides a dream-like and illusory quality to the film. It is perhaps inviting the viewers to embark on a journey of the unconscious. In Buddhism, life itself is like a dream and is an illusion, as nothing is permanent and there is non-duality in all things (Hsing, 2005, p.24, p.56). The film seems to suggest that whether the stories are imagined or did truly happen, they are real and yet are unreal. The stories including the imagined versions can be real as they reflect the inner unconscious individuation journeys of Nameless and the King. Using imagination and amplifying the incidents of the inner world, a person is able to raise his conflict or dilemma to a higher level of consciousness (Moacanin, 2003, p.103). At the same time, the stories can be all unreal, as they are told according to how the narrators perceive them and the incidents cannot be grasped permanently. The third version — the truth — could be the biggest dream, which is life itself. The famous Taoist text “The Butterfly Dream” by Zhuangzi (n.d., p.49) suggests that dream and reality are indistinguishable:

Once Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou. Between Zhuang Zhou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the transformation of things.

Chan (2011) perceives the following key ideas from the text: 1/ through dreaming, one's existence in reality can be transformed into another existence; and 2/ life as dream, and dream as life. The “free world” is “beyond reality and beyond dreams”, and the wholeness of self can be attained through “spiritual imagination” (Chan, 2011, p.160).

While audiences who are unaware of the film's political implication surrounding the Qin Emperor may be more able to be absorbed in the stylized movements, colors, spirituality and message of peace in the film, there are audiences who may find the

theme of lauding the Qin Emperor disturbing and overlook its spiritual aspect. Nevertheless, the stylized treatment of *Hero* in its bold use of color tones and movements has the potential of bringing audiences through a dream-like journey into the unconscious mind through their encounters with the various archetypes and scenes of nature, together with the richness of Buddhist and Taoist thoughts underlying the plot. By reflecting on thoughts and images that emerge from the unconscious mind, viewers can gain a greater understanding of the inner being after going through an individuation journey in the cinema.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Analyzing Buddhism and Taoism in Popular Films

Archetypes and Universal Symbols

With this concluding chapter, I have reached the end of my thesis which employs a Jungian perspective to form an interdisciplinary framework for the analysis of a selection of popular films in order to determine Buddhist and Taoist approaches in the development of Self and its relation to human consciousness and unconsciousness. I therefore conclude my thesis by revisiting some of the Jungian concepts, the archetypes and symbols, with which I will attempt to summarize the films in my study and reach a form of Buddhist and Taoist closure through understanding their final meanings or states of epiphany attained by the characters.

Buddhist and Taoist ideas seep through the journeys of the archetypes presented in the films analyzed. Archetypes, according to Jung, have the ability to bring out a sense of identification with the characters and situations from the viewers. By going through the journeys of the various characters in a dark setting in a cinema, viewers experience the inner conflicts and psychic development of the characters as the plot develops. While traveling together with the characters in the space of the cinema, viewers are presented with ideologies and symbols from Buddhism and Taoism that have the potential to bring about transformations in their own minds. The images on screen compel viewers to go through a journey of individuation similar to that gone through by the characters (Lennihan, 2002).

Some of the cultural symbols could be universal symbols while the rest are culturally bound with specific meanings that could be understood at the cognitive level. If the culturally-specified symbols are also universal symbols, for example, bamboo symbolizes youth and endurance (due to its ability to survive the strongest of storms) (Welch, 2012, p.5), these symbols according to Jung would work on the unconscious level and connect one to the primordial aspect of being. However, as a universal symbol of a plant, it represents growth into totality by overcoming obstacles that may obstruct it (von Franz, 1964, p.163). Both explanations, however, suggest an ongoing development of being, be it through endurance or overcoming of obstacles. Thus, when

there is culturally-specific meaning in a cultural symbol which is at the same time universal, archetypal universality is possible. In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, though the “dragon” in the title may have specific connotations for the Chinese, the universal association of “dragon” is often a creature with strength, power and courage. No one would associate “dragon” with “weakness”. While the dragon is a fictional creature in the Chinese zodiac, it is also a fictional creature in many western folklores and Western popular films.

On the other hand, there could be cultural symbols that are totally culturally specific and do not have its universal connotation. An example is the number “8” which symbolizes wealth in Chinese culture, as it is pronounced as “prosperity” in Cantonese, one of the Chinese dialects. This category of cultural symbols works at a cognitive level. Thus, these symbols do not affect viewers’ encounter with universal symbols in a cinema, even though they do not understand the connotations of these symbols.

In addition, there could be cultural specific symbols that have turned into universal symbols due to the popularity of the symbols. For example, most cultures recognize the yin/yang symbol and the Asian martial arts forms, and see these symbols as a representation of balanced living and strength respectively. With globalization, more culturally-specific symbols have become transcultural icons that are recognized by people of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

While the Western viewers may not be able to perceive the Chinese meanings of certain words used in the films, for instance, Jen’s Chinese name which means “Pretty Dragon”, and thus do not understand Jen’s relation to the title of the film, this sort of understanding is again viewed from the cognitive level. Visually, viewers are presented with Jen as a trickster, and whose appearance and actions show that she embodies the qualities of an immature and mischievous person, and is in pursuit of a life of liberation. Furthermore, not being able to perceive the full meaning of a symbol or word is not a unique problem faced in the reading of films, but in all literature or artistic works that are translated from one language to another or presented to another culture that is different from the culture of creation. If a Chinese were to read a Russian literature, the Chinese can definitely enjoy the piece of work, however, there would also be culturally-specific terms or ideas that the Chinese may not be able to perceive as how a Russian does. The same problem about interpretation could also occur within the same culture while one is interpreting works from the culture that one is in but were created from another era. Such gap in understanding the “true meaning” of work is thus present in

almost any form of literature and the arts. Therefore I would say that this is not a unique problem in understanding meanings in a film.

Four out of the five films analyzed are martial arts films. Martial arts carry an inherent philosophy of Buddhism and Taoism, and the archetypes identified in these films are specific to the religious aspects of the films. Jen of *Crouching Tiger* and Dre of *The Karate Kid* learn about non-violence, along with the importance of non-duality and *yin-yang* through the journey of pursuing the craft of martial arts. The highest ideal of swordsmanship which is linked to the art of music and calligraphy is portrayed in *Hero*, and fight scenes are translated into artistic forms of graceful dance in both *Hero* and *Crouching Tiger*. In *The Promise*, the characters, depicted as birds, are unable to fly even with wings as they are still bound by vengeful and deceitful hearts. It is only when they let go of the desire for weapons and power, and develop trust, that they are able to attain bliss. *Seven Years in Tibet* is not a martial arts film. However, the explicit story that is based on Tibetan culture and Buddhism allows the archetypes to be analyzed within the setting of religion and spirituality. Having encountered a holy being in the sacred land of Tibet, Heinrich has learnt about his inner psyche and eventually gains illumination and is freed from the darkness within him.

Through interactions with other archetypes, the respective heroes reach the light at the end of their journeys and they achieve some sense of self-realization and an understanding of their true selves. Yet Jungian psychological theory proffers the efficacy of not just archetypes but also symbols in the attainment of this comprehension. Among the different universal symbols discussed in the analyses of the films, recurring ones across some films include images of a bird, flights of steps, nature, reflective water, desert, labyrinth/maze, *mandala* and the notion of a home or paradise. Universal symbols have the potential to provoke emotional reactions at a numinous level (Hollwitz, 2002, p.87). Such symbols are not restricted to the interpretation of any particular culture and they can aid the audience to get in touch with the primordial and unconscious realms.

While images of a bird in flight can signify the wish for freedom and spiritual development, they also signify entrapped souls like caged birds that thirst for freedom. In *Crouching Tiger*, the fight sequences between Jen and Yu on the rooftops and over the walls, as well as Jen's fight sequences with Li over natural landscapes of water and bamboo trees depict the warriors battling in flight. The flight symbolizes Jen's journey of transcendence. In *The Promise*, not only do Kunlun and Snow Wolf travel at the speed of wind, some of the characters also look like birds in different scenes. Towards the end

of *The Promise*, Kunlun travels with Qingcheng against time at a formidable speed in his black-feathered cloak; he looks like the bird, Peng, in Zhuangzi's story that travels in the boundless sky with Qingcheng. Another symbol related to birds is a cage. Two huge cages are presented in the film, both of which are situated in the palace. One is a golden cage with a flight of steps in it; another is a round iron cage without steps. In the film, a couple of characters are caged in their own poisons of greed, desire and ignorance. While birds are symbols of freedom, many of the characters are trapped in the cage of life. Eventually, only Kunlun and Qingcheng manage to attain ultimate freedom. In *Hero*, the warriors fight with great fluidity, and the fight scenes are choreographed as if they are dances in nature. In *Hero*, the fight between Flying Snow and Moon in Nameless' imagination is set among yellow leaves. With their red flowing costumes, they resemble birds in flight. The imagined fight of Nameless and Broken Sword above a lake in the imagination of the King paints an image of two birds (represented by both warriors) in flight.

In the films, flights of steps are shown and these stairs represent the key characters making significant journeys of individuation in their lives. In *Crouching Tiger*, Jen makes her way up long flights of steps on Wudang Mountain, which symbolizes an upward climb in search of spiritual truth. In *The Karate Kid*, the image of Dre and Mr Han journeying to the top of the sacred Wudang Mountain signifies an elevation to a level of spiritual practice for Dre. In *The Promise*, Wuhuan possesses a golden cage with a flight of steps in it. Qingcheng is locked in the golden cage twice in the film. While the steps suggest the search for spiritual truth, her elevation of Self is restricted by her confinement. There is a small opening above each cage, which signifies hope for any trapped souls. In *Seven Years in Tibet*, before Heinrich's first meeting with the Dalai Lama, he has to scale a long flight of steps of the Potala Palace. That signifies the beginning of his spiritual meeting with an enlightened being. In *Hero*, before meeting the King, Nameless has to climb a long flight of steps, which symbolizes that he is ascending to his unconscious mind through a journey of active imagination.

Elements of nature such as water, lake, desert, caves and trees are prominent in all the films. Both Buddhism and Taoism have a close link to nature, and nature is not seen as a separation from "self". In *Crouching Tiger*, fights are choreographed as if they are dances in nature. The contradiction between nature and chaos is portrayed in these scenes. They also indicate the fight to see the nature of one's heart. In *The Promise*, the General lives a blissful life with Qingcheng in a hut in the middle of a vast grassland

with the view of a wide horizon after he let go of his attachment to the armor. However, his inability to let go of his power and status gradually leads to his death. In *Seven Years in Tibet*, the country's snow-capped mountains symbolize the spiritual realm of an unknown zone which is hidden. Throughout *Hero*, there are scenes where the warriors fight in nature with great fluidity, and they whirl, spiral and twist in the air, forming circular motions throughout their combat. The use of magnificent sceneries in *Hero*, especially the reflective still lake, suggests that the Buddha nature resides in the depth of our minds.

In *Crouching Tiger*, the lake where Li and Jen fight symbolizes a reflective self. The water's mirroring surface suggests that Jen should likewise reflect and get in touch with her true nature, that of the Buddha. Similarly the reflection of images across still water can be seen in various scenes in *The Karate Kid* — at the Dragon Well, the fountain and the lake. Dre drinks from the water that reflects his own image in the Dragon Well, where Mr Han teaches him a lesson on stillness. Dre's martial arts training with Mr Han is also conducted by the lake in several scenes. A fountain with reflective water is also shown, which symbolizes the source of inner life and spiritual energy (Jung, 1968a). In *Hero*, the fight of Nameless and Broken Sword in the imagination of the King is choreographed like a poetic piece of dance above the still lake. In his imagination, there is no violence and bloodshed; the whole sequence is carried out in a meditative and graceful fashion.

While a barren desert is used to describe hopelessness and the loss of life in many narratives, it has spiritual significance in *Crouching Tiger* and *Hero*. It is a place for divine revelation and salvation of the soul (Cirlot, 2001). The symbol of the desert plays an important role to Jung in the understanding of the inner self. To him, to be with oneself is to discover that the inner self is a desert (Jung, 2009, p.236). In *Crouching Tiger*, Lo manages to bring an abundance of water to the cave for Jen. Water is precious, especially in the context of a desert. Water in the desert thus indicates that Jen has begun a spiritual journey and found a new meaning in life. In *Hero*, it is in the desert that Nameless learns about the ideology behind *tian xia* or "all under heaven" from Broken Sword, an important realization that leads him to give up the idea of killing the King. Images of the desert also appear in the King's active imagination.

Mazes and labyrinths are constructed with lines that indicate pathways, and they are ancient symbols used to gain deeper understanding of human spirituality and to create the inner transformation of Self (Wass, 2009). In *The Karate Kid*, Dre runs

through the streets that are like a huge maze in the city. Such a maze that comprises the numerous streets and roads of Beijing form the image of a labyrinth. Towards the end of the film, Dre emerges as the champion of the *kung fu* tournament standing on the center of the floor mat with its circular *yin-yang* symbol. That is the moment when Dre reaches the center of the labyrinth and emerges a hero with a deep sense of fulfillment. In *The Promise*, the King resides in the center of the palace that is designed like a labyrinth. Kunlun travels into the labyrinth through different means and different ways. The various visits to the labyrinth represent the different phases of his individuation process. The meeting of archetypes takes place several times in the labyrinth. Kunlun, in the General's Crimson Armor meets Wuhuan for the first time in the center of the labyrinth. The hero rescues the Princess out of the labyrinth and it is the first time he experiences the embrace of his anima represented by the Princess. The palace as a symbol of a labyrinth is a journey that the characters have to go through to encounter various archetypal figures before they experience their inner Self and the transformation of being. In *Hero*, Broken Sword enters the palace filled with floating green drapes that create a maze-like zone for the fight with the King. Through the fight with the King in the maze, Broken Sword realizes he should not kill the King in order to attain a higher ideal — peace for all under heaven. He also recognizes that in order to attain ultimate bliss, one has to abandon negative emotions such as hatred, anger and a vengeful heart.

In *The Promise*, the circular palace looks like a *mandala* that contains a quaternity with the design of four gates facing four directions. The characters in *The Promise* have all encountered each other in the palace and go through a transformation process. In *Seven Years in Tibet*, during the visit of the Chinese generals to Lhasa, they are welcomed by a huge *mandala* formed with colorful fine sand. However, the generals step on the *mandala*. This act signifies the destruction of religion. From Jung's perspective, a *mandala* suggests a totality of being (Jung, 1990, p.357, 389). Thus, destruction of the *mandala* suggests the destruction of the self.

Symbols of places such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, and the Heavenly Jerusalem represent our longing for redemption (Jung, 1990, p.81). This realm of liberation is known as Heaven in Christianity, the Pure Land in Buddhism and Tao in Taoism. In *The Promise*, the Land of Snow gives the idea of a Pure Land. The citizens are clothed in white, and they are known to be a race of trustworthy people. It is in that land where people are truthful to each other, and there are no lies and deceptions. The Land of Snow is Kunlun's homeland. After the journey home with Snow Wolf, Kunlun

begins to make decisions and takes charge of his life. With the ability to control his consciousness, he is able to travel five years backwards to witness events that occurred in his homeland. The act of “going home” by traveling backwards in time serves as an initiation for Kunlun to gain awareness of his mind and inner self. In *Seven Years in Tibet*, the country is established as the symbol of a place of redemption. Pilgrims travel on a long journey so that all their negativities can be cleansed; there is no war or violence in the place and it is a land of holy beings. Heinrich, by associating the visit to Lhasa with the visit to Mecca by Muslim pilgrims, gives the suggestion that Tibet is a sacred and holy land. A contrast between the state of a peaceful Tibet and its destruction is shown in the film, suggesting the disappearance of a paradise. The destruction of a paradise suggests that our Buddha nature or unconscious mind, which is originally pure, can be defiled by desires for power, status and wealth. In *Hero*, Flying Snow tells Broken Sword that she would take him back to her home, where no swords and no swordsmen existed, and there would only be a man and a woman. “Home” in this context can refer to “Tao” or a land of paradise; “man” and “woman” refer to the balance of “yang” and “yin”. The text suggests that once they return home (Tao), they will be free from all warfare and aversion. The final image of Flying Snow with Broken Sword dead in her arms resembles the Taoist *yin-yang* symbol. It is at the moment of death that Broken Sword and his lover can be at rest and with the Tao.

Spirituality in Cinema

Some descriptions of the transcendental style can be seen in all five films, though these films have richer visuals and production elements and are nowhere close to a bare and sparse state in films typical of the transcendental style. For instance, the use of stylistic expressions and the elimination of the “conventional interpretations of reality” (Schrader, 1972, p.11).

All the five films somehow draw viewers from the familiar world to “the other world” progressively, which is an approach of the transcendental style (Schrader, 1972, p.159). The films first provide a more grounded view of the story, so that viewers may be able to relate to their own personal stories, followed by the ultimate reality that may provide further aspirations, problem-solving propositions and transformations to the viewers. The characters in the films seem to be able to move freely between the perceived “real” world and the esoteric dimension or spiritual plane, which creates juxtapositions of reality and fantasy (Vigilant Citizen, 2010, p.2). *Crouching Tiger* has

taken the first 15 minutes to provide background on the Green Destiny sword, introduce the emotional tensions between the main characters and allow the plot to emerge, before bringing viewers to the surreal scenes where the characters run up the walls and fly between rooftops or bamboo trees, the dream-like desert scene and the final esoteric leap of Jen through the void of space. *The Karate Kid* brings the audience from the familiar urban life to the mystical Wudang Mountain where Dre witnesses the enigmatic practices of *kung fu* which include meditation, lifting one's body above the ground with fingers, and interacting with a cobra. *The Promise* begins with simple dialog between two children followed by dialogue between the supernatural figure (the Goddess) and humans (Qingcheng and the General), and the action of the film brings the audience from a reality of hunger and war to a journey back in time which carries the characters Kunlun and Snow Wolf back to their homeland, and finally the travel through horizons of time and space to the limitless realm. *Seven Years in Tibet* opens with a religious ceremony set in the midst of the Tibetan plateau, emphasizing the lives of the Austrian and German mountaineers during the Himalayan expedition and in the prisoner-of-war camp for the first hour of the film, before moving on to the life of Heinrich and Peter in sacred and colorful Tibet where rituals and prayers are presented to the audience. *Hero* shows the audience the familiar war scenes that one can see in other films, the dialogue between Nameless and the King in the palace, and the fight between Nameless and Long Sky at the courtyard before exhibiting the surreal scenes where Flying Snow is able to repel a storm of arrows, the fight that takes place amidst trees which turn from yellow to red, the two warriors flying above the lake as they fight and the assassination that transpires in the palace filled with green drapes. The initial familiarity of the plot draws the audience to identify with human conditions and heightens the awareness of their existence. Gradually, the "other world" presented to the viewers may trigger the subconscious mind, culled from ancient myth and religion (Sayers, 2007, p.29) to reveal the innermost emotions, desires and thoughts (Beebe, 2001, p.78; Liu, 2008, p.407-408).

Stylistic expressions and abstraction can be found in all the five films to varying degrees. The stylistic expressions and abstraction of *Crouching Tiger* are shown mainly through the dream-like fight scenes that resemble dance sequences which are accompanied by hollow cello music or ancient sounds of drumming. The movements of the warriors are stylized and defy gravity at the same time. They can run on water, float through the air, move through treetops and bamboo forests, demonstrate wondrous feats of strength and appear invincible to the enemy (Beebe, 2001, p.78). *Hero* makes use of

both stillness and movements, color or the lack of it to create stylistic expressions. The visual treatment of the film in its bold use of color tones for each segment, the stark use of black and white for the fight that occurs in the mind and the meeting of Nameless and the King, the moments of stillness when the warriors stand in the courtyard which are portrayed poetically with slow-motion shots of rain droplets and music, and the enchanted dance-like movement of the warriors in battle bring about a surreal and dream-like journey for viewers. The scenes of *Hero* are described as “dances of color, highly choreographed moments that interrupt the story like lyrics in a musical”, “using movement instead of words to drive the story forward” and conveying “a wide range of feelings in balletic lunges, swoops, and glides” by Costanzo (2014, p.59-60). The stylized movement of humans in flight is widely seen in *The Promise* too. The bizarre set and props that largely comprise images of birds and cages, and the slow and deliberate opera-like way of speaking by the characters used in *The Promise* add on to the abstraction of film. All these, together with stylistic acting, the vibrant colors used in the film and its fantastical story, offer a realm of fantasy and dream for the audience. Most of the stylistic depiction in *Seven Years in Tibet* are presented in the Potala Palace and the rituals in Tibet. The Potala Palace is presented with a dreamy quality with dark rooms and bright yellow walls, as well as dim altar rooms lit with butter lamps. The hypnotic and stylized manner of presenting the scenes in the Potala Palace breaks the sense of reality for viewers and creates an inner world of individuation for them. Stylized ritualistic worlds are also presented in the film with traditional religious dance, Tibetan percussion music, and the low multi-phonic chanting. The ritualistic scenes have the potential to open up the experience of ordinary life to ultimate reality (Alexander, 1997, p.139). As a film set in a city, most of the scenes in *The Karate Kid* are depicted with realism. However, the stylistic representations in the film can be found in scenes of fights and martial arts training. For instance, the stick training which is conducted with graceful and stylized movements, the fight sequence between Mr Han and the gang where Mr Han manages to make the gang members beat each other by leading them in the direction of their own force and movements, the subtle movements of the lady who interacts with the cobra at Wudang Mountain, Dre’s training on the Great Wall of China where he practices his kicks, and the training exercise that requires Dre to sense the movements of *Qi* around him by avoiding the attacker or fighting the attacker without seeing, and the final moment of Dre’s match where he is quiet and still when facing the opponent before his last strike.

All the films either have scenes of flashbacks or remembrances of the past, which suggest that there are prior events which need to be confronted or reconciled. Flashbacks in *Hero* do not always present the truth but blur the boundary between truth and lies to viewers. These flashbacks do not only tell personal stories, but stories that concern a large community. The story of the assassination of the King is a flashback within a flashback. In *Crouching Tiger*, the flashback of Jen's life with Lo in the desert reflects the beginning of her inner journey into the unconscious where she starts to embrace the sense of timelessness and freedom. In *The Promise*, Kunlun's journeying back in time allows him to understand his inner self. In *The Karate Kid* and *Seven Years in Tibet*, Mr Han and Heinrich are able to confront and embrace their past and thus resolve the pain that it has caused them. Flashbacks or memories in films thus reflect the significant or unresolved issues that the characters have experienced. At the same time, keeping the past distant through flashbacks or narration allows the audience to view problems of the past at a distance and be entertained, but "at the same time the preoccupation with time and memory indicates that it concerns us now more than ever, and that in the future it will become an even bigger preoccupation" (Pisters, 2012, p.192).

The technique of frontality is used in all five films, though it is much more prominent in *Hero*. This technique provides a sense of intimacy and confrontation with the characters (Gerbaz, 2008, p.18) which alerts us to their inner lives (p.20). Frontal close-ups of faces also help to draw viewers into the film's narrative and allow us "to recognize aspects of ourselves on screen" and "become caught up in the action ourselves" (Gerbaz, 2008, p.21). The film technique of frontality, the stylistic expressions and the presence of "other worlds", together with a reservoir of archetypes and universal symbols and aesthetically alluring landscapes, engage viewers in a visceral experience which enable us to "work out the psychic tangles of our inner lives by proxy, leaving us elated, cleansed, and satisfied" (Costanzo, 2014, p.63).

Socio-political Ideology

By reflecting on the thoughts and images that emerge from the conscious and unconscious minds, viewers can gain a greater understanding of the inner being after going through an individuation journey in the cinema. The cinema allows viewers to look at characters on screen with conscious identification or even judgment, and at the same time, allows the unconscious aspect to go through a journey of individuation together with the characters presented. Through films with Buddhist and Taoist elements,

viewers are presented with ideologies and symbols from these religions that have the potential to bring about transformations in their own minds. However, the socio-political inferences and the ideological stance of the films may complicate the cinematic representation of religious symbols and connotations.

Crouching Tiger may lead viewers to a feminist reading of the film with its female characters who are depicted as wise and who eventually walk the path of Tao — Li even recommends that Jen become a disciple of Wudang where only male disciples are typically accepted. Spiritual attainment of women is also strongly featured in *The Karate Kid*, where Dre is inspired by the lady who practices with the cobra, and eventually wins the tournament based on the lesson on “Qi” which he learnt from her. Thus, historically, while men such as the Buddha, Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi and the Dalai Lama were the ones who attained enlightenment, the films provide a feminist perspective by portraying women as the ones who demonstrate the way of Tao.

In addition, while the transnational films of *Crouching Tiger*, *Hero* and *The Promise* attempt to bring universal themes to a global audience, they have been criticized for refashioning “Chineseness” as a recognizable “icon culture that feeds into the global commercial media culture” (Wang, 2013, p.611). *The Promise* was criticized for its “cinematic excess” that undercut the film’s emotional and spiritual textures; *Crouching Tiger* was panned for representing the history of China inaccurately and the different Mandarin accents delivered by the actors; *Hero* bore the reproach of its nationalist ideology of defending a brutal dictatorial leader; *Seven Years in Tibet* though filled with Buddhist philosophy and ritualistic images, carried with it a politicized message that may have overshadowed its spiritual aspect.

The religious connotations of each “symbol” within Buddhism or Taoism identified in the films do not merely depict apparent religious spirituality but provide the audience a journey to explore one’s inner landscape and to face one’s fears and emotions (Jung, 1997, p.2). According to Jung, the symbols are not to be understood at surface value but they allow viewers to identify with archetypes and thus usher us into the story and trigger our unconscious state, so that we are able to reflect on our conditions and make changes or advancements to our lives. However, the extent to which we are engaged by the archetypes and symbols in the films will be different according to their stylistic presentation and our background and experiences.

Furthermore, audiences do not have to like a film in order to go through their individual journey of individuation in the cinema. Audience may love or hate the film,

just like how they may embrace or reject the archetypes portrayed on the screen. Audiences can enjoy or dislike a film, and can be impacted at a psychological level at the same time. Hockley (2007) explains that the same film can be boring and dull to some, and exciting or violent to others, but all these “represent careful astute psychological judgements” that are based on individual psychological needs (p.26-27).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One limitation of adopting the Jungian framework of archetypes and universal symbols for film analysis is that archetypes and universal symbols form the core of the analyzed meanings. Other aspects such as that of the narrative, structure and plot development of the films may be undermined. There may be a need to combine the Jungian framework with other film theories and disciplines to give a more holistic analysis of the films.

Another limitation concerns the scope of this research. By necessity, I have had to limit the range and number of films for analysis. This thesis has hopefully demonstrated that the films selected are excellent models for the enquiry of the relationship between religion and film, in particular, the relationship of Buddhism and Taoism with film. There are, however, many other films that can be seen as suitable models for further scrutiny. I would recommend some of these films to be included for future research by scholars who may be moved by this study to undertake their own investigations of films as vessels of Buddhist and Taoist thought: *Himalaya* (1999) by French director Eric Valli, *Samsara* (2001) by Indian director Pan Nalin, *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) by Korean director Kim Ki-duk, *Travellers and Magicians* (2003) by Bhutanese director Khyentse Norbu and *Sri Siddhartha Gautama* (2013) by Sri Lankan director Chandran Rutnam.

Himalaya (1999) is based largely on the true stories and lifestyles of Tibetans who have to cross the Himalaya to exchange salt for grain. Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, especially insights on the issue of “death”, is the main theme. The film is filled with images and objects from Buddhism such as Buddhist amulets, *stupa*, prayer flags and prayer wheels. *Samsara* (2001) tells the story of a monk, beginning from the time he was five years old. As he reaches adulthood, he encounters a peasant girl, Pema, and falls in love with her. He renounces monkhood and marries her. Living as a layman, he

experiences worldly desires and emotions of greed, jealousy and anger. Towards the end of the film, he goes through a retrospective process after receiving a letter from his deceased Buddhist master delivered by a fellow monk and decides to embark on a journey back to the monastery. Similar to *Samsara, Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) also centers on a monk. As the title of the film suggests, each season presents a stage of the monk's life. The first segment *Spring* introduces to the audience a very young Buddhist apprentice who lives with his master in a monastery; the second segment *Summer* depicts the teenage monk's sexual voyage with a young girl, and his departure from the monastery in pursuit of her; *Fall* shows how the apprentice returns to his master after murdering his wife for committing adultery and his eventual arrest by officials; and the segment of *Winter* depicts the apprentice's search for a life of peace in the mountains. The cycle returns to *Spring* where the monk becomes the master of the monastery and he has an abandoned boy as his apprentice. The film gives a strong sense of cyclic existence described in Buddhism. *Travellers and Magicians* (2003) depicts the journey of a young Bhutanese Dondup who dreams and strives to enter into a foreign land — the United States — with the belief that he would be able to lead a better life in that part of the world. However, the trip to Thimphu where he is going to board a plane to the United States is not a smooth one. Among his companions on the journey to Thimphu is a monk who relates to him the story of Tashi who, like Dondup, sought to free himself from the life of the village. Through the story, viewers are presented with the inner worlds of lust, jealousy and desires of both Tashi and Dondup. *Sri Siddhartha Gautama* (2013) depicts the life of the prince Gautama Buddha who leaves the palace and gives up all worldly comfort, in search of enlightenment.

The films I have mentioned above can constitute another cluster for the kind of analysis that I have already undertaken in this thesis. There is no doubt that many more such films are available for research, too many to mention here — classic films produced in earlier eras as well as films from more contemporary times. It is certainly my hope that further research can be stimulated on the topic of religion and film and that it can address other religions such as Islam, Jainism or Hinduism, just to name some religions that seem to have been neglected in this type of study.

Finally, while this thesis focuses on the textual analysis of the films, it would be ideal that interviews could be conducted with the directors and screenwriters to understand more about their intentions and challenges in creating the films. Thus,

beyond the scope of this study, more research could be done to understand the directing and writing processes of the films.

Popular films should be probed more for the presence of spiritual and religious sentiments and values or indeed, how such values may be manifested in cinema as a search for transcendence and universal understanding. If this thesis has contributed to such an urge, it will have done its work. As a final word, I conclude my thesis by declaring that there is a need to engage in such research not just because it fills a lack or that it fulfills the interdisciplinary imperative in academia, but also because the cinema is almost an exact mirror of both the conscious and the unconscious mind, and it would be essential to acknowledge the deep association of cinema and religion that flows naturally out of the confluence of our consciousness and unconsciousness.

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