

TRANSMEDIA

Wikanda Promkhuntong

Film Authorship in Contemporary Transmedia Culture

The Paratextual Lives
of Asian Auteurs

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Film Authorship in Contemporary Transmedia Culture

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I hope that this book is useful to everyone interested in East Asian cinema in the global film market and those exploring post-auteurism and self-reflective auteur studies in the future.



Introduction

This book retrospectively looks at the phenomenon surrounding the global emergence of East Asian cinema through the figures of filmmakers and their persisting influence in transmedia domains fostered by networks of paratextual productions. As the landscape of contemporary auteur culture is fluid, then multi-agents, and continuously expanding, transmedia paratexts – plus a mode of self-reflective analysis – allow for the study of this auteur culture that involves diverse practices in different creative domains. Through following the life cycle of festivals' digital archives, distributor marketing materials, official collectibles, cinephile writings, fan pilgrimage stories, fanvids, directors' self-projections, and short films, all made by and in relation to East Asian filmmakers, collaborators, and supporters who have been associated with auteur culture, this book explores the intersections between academic and promotional discourses, as well as participatory cultures and performative self-reflections that have shaped contemporary film and media authorship in the last two decades.

The first part of the book pays particular attention to paratextual assemblages surrounding film festivals, multi-platform distribution, and cinephile/fan creative practices, where media paratexts have been individually and collaboratively created, rewritten, and shared to foster the auteur reputations of selected filmmakers. The second part examines the way individual auteurs and collaborators have responded to the transmedia circumstances that shaped their public recognition. The focus is on alternative modes of performative responses, storytelling, and creative productions that address individuals' senses of self and relations with both the industry and the public. Across different chapters, discourses surrounding film authorship and East Asian cinema in the last two decades are revisited and expanded to engage with transmedia culture. As the individual chapters that follow will work through case studies on selected filmmakers, networks of collaborators, and their circumstances, this introduction instead contextualizes the book within broader areas of transnational East Asian cinema, post-auteurism and self-reflective auteur studies that intersect with the dimensions of contemporary transmedia culture to be explored later on.

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East Asian Film Authorship in Global Film and Media Flows

Individual national cinemas from East Asia have long been the subject of interest outside the region, partly through its geopolitics as shaped by the legacy of colonialism and the Cold War divisions of geographical landscapes. In English-language writings, we can trace the interest of specific East Asian national cinemas with close associations to the West during the pre- and post-WWII period through writings by various historians, such as those on Japanese cinema by Donald Richie (see, for example, Anderson & Richie, 1982 [1959]; Richie, 1971). An earlier view on Japanese films through the recirculation of written records and references reveals an interest in humanist movies framed as film art through the names of directors, such as Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu in the 1950s (see Bordwell, 1988; Richie, 1977, 1984 [1965]). The interest in art cinema at film festivals in Europe also fostered the exploration of other East Asian auteurs beyond those from Japan, as found in film magazine columns on Hou Hsiao-hsien from Taiwan in the 1980s, despite the inaccessibility of his films for general audiences (see Vitali, 2008).

When focusing on a collective regional film unit, there had been attempts to create a pan-regional cinema in East Asia during the Cold War period by means of co-production, a regional film festival, and the import and export of films by national studios from Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea (see Lee S., 2011; Lee, 2020). Nevertheless, in the global film market and academic contexts, the notion of East Asian cinema as a unit of analysis largely emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s. What makes this period stand out as the starting point of a prosperous time for East Asian regional cinema are collective forces such as a long period of political stability and democratization, the recovery from a regional financial crisis, and the emergence of new digital technologies. These circumstances, coupled with the situation of the local film industries in the globalized film market, led to the renaissance of national cinemas and various new waves within East Asia. Take, for example, the case of South Korea. After the end of Japanese colonial rule and the military dictatorship of the 1990s, a proactive cultural policy designed to boost its local film industry in competition with the influx of Hollywood films led to the revival and expansion of its film and media industries to an unprecedented scale. This included the launch of the Pusan (now Busan)¹ International Film Festival in 1996 with links to European film festivals such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam to provide funding and film market for Asian directors

1 The festival official name has been changed to Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) since 24 February 2011 (Busan, n.d.).



(Ahn, 2012, p. 103). Through scriptwriting competitions and new directing opportunities, many new filmmakers emerged through international film festival circuits (see Ahn, 2012; Choi, 2010; Shin & Stringer, 2005).

Beyond the growth of individual national cinemas, the period of the 1990s and early 2000s also saw networks of global film production and distribution expanding support and collaboration to East Asian films. The extent to which the East Asian screen industries emerged as “an interconnected whole” (Davis & Yeh, 2008, p. 1) influencing both European and American media has been explored through regional structures of film policies, film distribution, finance and marketing, and genre cinema, especially in the context of film festivals in the early 2000s. Alongside East Asia as a regional grouping (in which the majority of countries typically included are actually in North Asia), the Southeast Asia independent cinema movement also emerged in the early 2000s following a generation of overseas film graduates, the digital boom, and cross-media cultural productions. Distinctly different from commercial studio films from previous eras, such regional production brought together elements of experimental movies, narrative cinema, and documentary filmmaking (for more on this, see Baumgärtel, 2012).

In the region, new generations of East Asian filmmakers have been celebrated within film industry networks through programmes such as the Busan International Film Festival’s special focus on the “Remapping of Asian Auteur Cinema” in 2005 (Ahn, 2008, p. 257) and the Hong Kong International Film Festival’s “Masters & Auteurs” programme in 2013 (HKIFF, 2013). In the global film market, some of the moments which illustrate the elevating position of East Asian cinema through film authorship include the discovery of Wong Kar-wai’s *Chungking Express* in 1994 at the Stockholm International Film Festival by the then up-and-coming filmmaker of *Pulp Fiction* (1994), Quentin Tarantino. A representative of the 1990s “Asiaphile” (Hunt, 2008), Tarantino enthusiastically endorsed the distribution of Wong’s film via the subsidiary DVD label associated with Hollywood’s Miramax (see Desser, 2016). In the burgeoning year of 2004, *Time* magazine’s film critic Richard Corliss used the catchphrase “Asian Invasion” to describe the situation in France at the 57th Cannes Film Festival when four out of eight of the festival’s main prizes were given to winners from South Korea, Thailand, Japan, and Hong Kong (Corliss, 2004).² Tarantino, as the president

2 At the Cannes International Film Festival in 2004, Park Chan-wook’s *Oldboy* (2003) won the Grand Prize while Apichatpong’s *Tropical Malady* (2004) won the Jury Prize. In the same year, Yûya Yagira from Japan won the Best Actor prize for *Nobody Knows* (2004) and Maggie Cheung from Hong Kong won the Best Actress award for *Clean* (2004) (Unifrance, 2004).

of the jury, also pushed forward the South Korean film *Oldboy* (2003) as the Palm d'Or winner at the Cannes Film Festival in 2004 (Pulver, 2004). *Asian Invasion* was also used as the title of Jonathan Ross's three-episode documentary broadcast in 2006 on the British arts television channel, BBC Four (Desmond, 2015). The programme was structured around a visit to survey the film industries of Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea and interviews with selected filmmakers. As observed by the *New York Times* a few years earlier, the unprecedented success of East Asian cinema in Europe and elsewhere led to the sudden "ubiquity" of films from the region in both "art and commercial theaters," including the contemplative movies of Edward Yang, stylish films of Wong Kar-wai, and the Hollywood co-productions of Ang Lee (Kehr, 2001). Through the growth of film festivals as cultural events in different global cities, increased DVD distribution, and the rise of digital culture, East Asian cinema was collectively established as a geo-cultural unit or a brand in the global film market.

It was at this time that East and Southeast Asian cinema was discussed in relation to the global cinematic landscapes of art cinema and commercial film in academic works. Existing scholarly works largely paid attention to the subjects explored in these films in relation to identity politics, national sociopolitical circumstances, and crossover genre developments. However, what remained consistent in writings on East Asian cinema was the recognition of films through the figures of key filmmakers as auteurs. Significantly, the idea of film authorship as a theoretical concept was itself contextualized in relation to East Asian cinema for the first time in film studies books in the early 2000s. The fourth edition of *The Cinema Book* (Cook, 2007), which featured a still from *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) as the cover image, added Wong Kar-wai as part of its chapter devoted to auteurism. And in 2011, Wallflower Press's *Dekalog* series also dedicated its fourth edition to introducing contemporary East Asian auteurs, including Zhang Yimou, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Naomi Kawase (Taylor-Jones, 2011).

Significantly, since the 2010s onwards, cultures of East Asian film authorship have also expanded into collaborations across creative industries, diverse supporters, and fan groups. In 2010, the first Thai/Southeast Asian filmmaker, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, won the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious Palm d'Or award. *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* was part of a large-scale transmedia storytelling project called "Primitive" commissioned by Haus der Kunst, Munich, with FACT Liverpool and Animate Projects, which expanded its audiences in different locations (see Barea, 2020). The global recognition of East Asian auteurs also significantly benefited from user-generated content and streaming platforms at a scale



that had not been possible before. Despite limited transnational promotion, the films of Wong Kar-wai have gained wider exposure through fan mash-ups and user-generated content online since the early 2000s. Through digital platforms, news of 4K restorations and global theatrical tours of every film by Wong Kar-wai were widely circulated by the industry press and film fans (Sharf, 2019). In 2020, the South Korean film *Parasite* becoming the first foreign-language film to win the Best Picture Oscar along with three other awards³ also led to the film being the most cited movie on the social media platform Twitter with 1.6 million tweets worldwide (see Kim, 2020). And during the global Covid-19 pandemic, when film events and festivals were postponed or shifted to online platforms, East Asian auteur culture has continued to proliferate through digital media. Amongst the myriad of online screenings, interviews, and publications, the Dutch film magazine *Filmkrant* published a Covid-19 essay by Jia Zhang-ke from his quarantine in Beijing and a reflection on cinema in the post-pandemic time by the Palm d'Or recipient Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul from his home in Chiang Mai (Filmkrant, 2020).

Looking back across two decades, in parallel with East Asian cinema gaining recognition in the global film industry through the figures of filmmakers, edited collections on film/media authorship have begun to add case studies on non-Anglo European directors, as well as other marginalized groups, such as female and queer directors (Chris & Gerstner, 2013; Gerstner & Staiger, 2003; Grant, 2008; Gray & Johnson, 2013; Wexman, 2003). David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger's *Authorship and Film* (2003) and Virginia Wright Wexman's *Film and Authorship* (2003) both particularly highlighted the previous dismissal of the subject of authorship in Western academic contexts at a time when marginalized directors were beginning to gain international attention. Coinciding with this group of works, the majority of academic texts on transnational East Asian cinema have paid attention to the works of those auteurs which reveal circumstances of identity politics, regional, and transnational connections, and new aesthetic experimentation (Ciecko, 2006; Hunt & Leung, 2008; Lee V. P. Y., 2011).

Expanding from these starting points to highlight the way film authorship has maintained its relevance through the growth of participatory culture and transmedia networks, this book examines the subject of East Asian cinema and film authorship through entering into dialogue with developments in reception studies, media studies, and theories of participatory culture.

3 *Parasite* won a total of four Academy Awards, namely Best Picture, Best Director, Best International Feature Film and Best Original Screenplay (Dove, 2020).

East Asian film authorship in this context is a commercial category and a media currency in the global film market, which largely privileges male film directors associated with the emergence of specific national cinemas. The exploration of East Asian film authorship as a unit of analysis here resonates with Simon Hobbs's (2018) discussion of the notion of extreme (European) art cinema as a global cultural and commercial category. In his work, Hobbs traces the legacy of extreme art films that emerged in the 1990s and highlights the "intersectional nature" (2018, p. 6) of art and cult that weave into the notion of "extreme cinema" in commercial domains. Hobbs draws on the idea of "cultural triangulation" by Mark Betz in which "one aspect or taste economy [be it art, exploitative or populist] can be situated at the apex of the triangle while still being connected to the others" (2018, p. 35). In a similar way, as a cultural and commercial category, East Asian cinema has been known globally through auteur figures associated with different taste cultures ranging from art or cult to avant-garde.

What sustains the auteur status associated with different filmmakers are clusters of discourses or frames of reference adopted by different agents in the film industry as a kind of "system of value" (Hobbs, 2018, p. 71) for film promotion, marketing, and distribution. This discursive system of value is connected to the (para)textual productions and material cultures shaping film and media authorship in different periods, from film festivals' themed programmes, catalogues, modes of distribution, and promotional materials, to different forms of fan works. As a mediated and materialist category, the notion of East Asian film authorship, similar to Hobbs's notion of (European) extreme cinema, can reveal a great deal about the "social life" (2018, p. 27) of the films and individuals shaped by circumstances in the market and public domains. Resonating with, but also extending from, Hobbs's emphasis on marketing and commercialism, the case studies in this book explore the network of media flows that has shaped East Asian auteur culture, moving from the institutional context of film festivals through to film distribution (both formally through the growth of DVD, second-hand film markets, and streaming platforms, and informally through local and transnational cinephile and fan networks). Each case study highlights how the film industry's system of value is sustained but also opened to debate by different agents beyond that of the industry as well as across different geographies. Attention will be paid to how auteur culture is shaped by various agents, promotional discourses, and memories of past authorship debates.

Although the exploration of mediated social life does not represent the totality of what East Asian cinema is all about, this book stresses the importance of the public domain in shaping a sense of self for subsequent

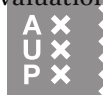


generations of filmmakers as well as the ecology of relations and connections that have supported films from this region over time. As certain frames of references have shifted or been cancelled out, others have been amplified or sustained, making them into the conditions of public visibility for films and filmmakers in transnational film markets. In taking this kind of approach, the notion of film authorship requires revisiting and expansion, as will be elaborated on further in the next part of this introductory chapter.

Post-Auteurism and Reflective Auteur Studies

In film studies classrooms, the subject of film authorship often focuses on the background of “*la politique des auteur*” (Bazin, 1985) and the “auteur theory” (Sarris, 1962) and their subsequent critiques. As an exercise, selected Anglo-European films can be examined through these past frameworks. My starting point on the subject of authorship in relation to transnational East Asian cinema is grounded in the period of the early 2000s when the analysis of film authorship was going through a revival along with shifting in focus to incorporate previously marginalized filmmakers, “the demand side” of authorship (Grant, 2000, p. 106), and collective agents that fostered this long-existing concept in contemporary film and transmedia culture. Various terms have been used to refer to this new era of auteur studies, including “post-auteurism” (Verhoeven, 2009, p. 22) and a turn “beyond auteurism” (Maule, 2008). A key characteristic of scholarly works in this period concerns recognition of the self-reflective dimensions of the construction of film authorship both by the film industry and in relation to the role of the media as well as audiences and filmmakers themselves.

Reflecting on the conditions that shaped the career and media interactions of the Australian female auteur Jane Campion, for example, Deb Verhoeven has offered an illuminating account of this transitioning period of auteur studies, broadly described as the “posthumous nature of contemporary authorship” (Verhoeven, 2009, p. 23). By this stage, there had already been long debates on the importance of, and the move away from, an “auteurism of metaphysics” (Polan, in Verhoeven, 2009, p. 22) or “authorship as origin” (Staiger, 2003, p. 31), which focused on the inner artistic vision of an individual filmmaker. Verhoeven mentions Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, whose writings on authorship were often recalled to signal the passing of classical authorship (2009, p. 23). The “post-” situation emphasizes an awareness of past debates on the power and politics of the film canon, and critical evaluations, including the issues of gender and



race, taste culture, and ideology. This “post-” stage opens up new avenues for reflective author studies.

One key line of exploration in the post-authorship period can be traced to interest in the sociology of culture and the question of aesthetic recognition and value judgement within film and art worlds. The work of Robert E. Kapsis (1992) is amongst those accounts which explored the changing reputation of a filmmaker as an auteur based on sociocultural circumstances. Kapsis used reception materials, including public biography and correspondence between Alfred Hitchcock and others, to reveal the circumstances which altered Hitchcock’s reputation over time. This method also resonates with the study of delayed appreciations of Douglas Sirk’s films by Barbara Klinger (1994). Around that same period, Timothy Corrigan also expanded the notion of authorship in relation to the commercial world. Through “the commerce of auteurism” people can and do engage with the auteur brand and star persona apart from watching their films (Corrigan, 1991, p. 101). Nuances of film authorship in the expanded film and media landscape have also been discussed in relation to the creation and promotion of “post-production” auteurs in Hollywood (Lewis, 2007, p. 71). Focusing on technologies that have shaped film auteurs on screen, academic works have explored the agency of new auteurs through DVD commentary and behind-the-scenes stories (see Brookey & Westerfelhaus, 2002, 2005; Grant, 2008; Klinger, 2008; Sheldon, 2020). Taken together, these works highlight new debates on authorship in relation to the broader film culture and media industries. What these works also shared is the sentiment and approach of being consciously aware of the appeal and the constructed nature of the term “auteur” and its continuous usage in the media by various agents for critical and commercial purposes. As film authorship engages with different sociocultural circumstances, post-auteurism “invites us to retrospectively reconsider the precepts of classical auteurism itself” and embrace a “pluralism of approaches” (Verhoeven, 2009, p. 23).

The emergence of East Asian cinema through auteur figures in the last two decades alongside the revival of academic works on authorship led to a series of questions I had regarding how and why certain directors from this region gained extensive and enduring visibility in the global media landscapes. What are the discourses shaping the consecration and celebration of these directors into the “art world”? Who are the other less visible “agents” shaping their reputations? What are the structural conditions shaping their inclusion in the group of “elite auteurs” (White, 2015, p. 22), which largely constituted male directors?

These questions shaped the two parts of this book. As mentioned, the first part focuses on the transmedia paratextual economies shaping the



reputation making of selected directors. This part draws attention to the networked and mediated spaces of film festival, film distribution, and fan practices, in order to reflect on changing discourses around East Asian film authorship over time. The second part deals with the aftermath of the highly media-saturated world of auteur culture by examining the way individual filmmakers responded to their statuses as celebrity/star-auteur⁴ in their own different ways. This part therefore engages with the way individual filmmakers adopted/performed/negotiated with the discursive system and infrastructure supporting their global visibilities through their own forms of self-projections. The formulation of these reflective auteur studies has been developed from my research in the making and marketing of Wong Kar-wai as an “auteur” through a broad survey of Wong’s reputation-making strategies using Kapsis’s (1992) combined approaches of “the art world” perspective and reception studies, and Corrigan’s (1991) notion of the “commerce of auteurism.” Through exploring various reception materials (particularly film reviews, director interviews, and public profiles), I found that Wong’s reputation was developed by self-promotional strategies and critical discourses similar to those surrounding notable Western auteurs like Alfred Hitchcock. While these directors are associated with different film industries, their reputations have both relied on a favourable critical climate, connections with gatekeepers of art house cinema, Western cinematic traditions, and a certain degree of self-promotion. This work was later developed into a paper discussing Wong’s unique public reputation and auteur persona highlighting aspects of “cultural hybridity” and branding associated with popular culture (See Promkhuntong, 2014). Another preliminary work was a doctoral project which took a multidimensional approach that investigated contexts, discourses, and agencies with a Bourdieusian reflection on the reputation making of East Asian directors.

As an extensively expanded monograph project⁵ which looks back on the mediated cultural lives of film authorship as well as its transmedia future,

4 Timothy Corrigan used the term “auteur-star” to discuss the reputations of filmmakers in the Anglo-European context who are well-known beyond their films (1990, p. 48, 1991, p. 105). Throughout this work I referred to the term “auteur-star” or “auteur-stardom” in relation to Corrigan’s work. I’ve also adopted the term “star-auteur” to highlight the public personas/reputations of the filmmakers. Here, the term “auteur” is the key noun/object of analysis while the term “star” is an adjective highlighting the characteristics of the auteur’s public visibility.

5 This project is conducted as part of the research and book writing project โครงการวิจัยและผลิตหนังสือ “Film Authorship in Contemporary Transmedia Cultures: Global Success of Asian Auteurs” at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA), Mahidol University, Thailand.



this book draws on the notion of paratext (and its related term, “palimpsest”) to bring forth the idea of self-reflexive authorship as a method of examining the global reputations of East Asian filmmakers. Before moving on to discuss the development of paratextual studies, I’d like to add further reflection on the rationale behind choosing to explore paratexts and agents surrounding three East Asian filmmakers – Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Kim Ki-duk, and Wong Kar-wai, and conditions that render them visible at the time that the notion of East Asian cinema has become a commercial category in the global film market.

One of the key aspects that dominates early discussions on East Asian film authorship and remains an influential frame of reference, particularly for new directors, is the notion of “national cinema.” This concept has been closely tied to the idea of a “new wave” or a new generation of filmmakers from a specific country outside the hegemonic market of Hollywood that gains global media attention. During the rise of East Asian auteurs in the early 2000s, films from East Asia were historicised and theorised within the context of a specific national cinema and collectively within the growing frameworks of regional and transnational cinemas, which address the global flow of festival funding, networks of film distribution, as well as expansive reception. To encapsulate the geographical discourse that has been intertwined with authorship, the selection of case studies intends to cover representative filmmakers from the then growing market of South Korea, an already established market of Hong Kong, and an emerging context of Southeast Asia – whereby specific countries such as Thailand and the Philippines have started to be included in books on transnational East Asian cinema (see, for example, Hunt & Leung 2008). Although referring to filmmakers with global visibility as a national representative can be problematic as these directors often challenge the rigid idea of identity and sense of belonging and they also work transnationally, in the promotional and commercial contexts, national cinema continues to be a discursive category to introduce directors outside the Anglo-European contexts.

Another condition that shaped the selection of the case studies was the diverse sites that generate discourses on film authorship, in other words, the sites of reputation making of canonical East Asian filmmakers. These include the space with close ties to the development of film authorship such as film festival and trade press, the context of film distribution – which generates its own promotional materials and marketing discourses, and spaces of fans and cinephile practices. As the notion of film authorship has been expanded to cover a wide range of taste cultures, the case studies also

consider the spectrum of authorship in relation to intermedia/avant-garde works, cult films, and the popular end of art cinema.

With the above criteria in mind, a collection of paratexts evolving around the careers of Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Kim Ki-duk and Wong Kar-wai were collected over time from around 2012 up until 2022. I am acutely aware that when placing these names together within the idea of film authorship, selected names are all male. Although Weerasethakul identifies himself as gay and has mentioned the desire not to be pinned down to a particular national/transnational category,⁶ when grouped with directors such as Wong Kar-wai, they are both part of the established authorial canon with prestigious awards from top-tier film festivals. As will be illustrated, this visibility requires cultivation, negotiation, and maintenance through their consistent productivity as well as the network of funders, collaborators, critics, distributors, supporters, and fans, many of whom are also women.

The mentioning of the name Kim Ki-duk is somewhat more problematic. As the book is being written and edited, the long-standing debates regarding the extreme content in his films and the incident in which an actress, Lee Na-young, became unconscious during the filming of a suicide scene in *Dream* (2008) (Lee H.-w., 2014) has been expanded out to an investigative TV exposé in the South Korean media that Kim and his regular actor Cho Jae-hyeon committed rape and assaults (Rose, 2018). The case related to the film *Moebius* (2013) further led to a court case in 2017. Kim was fined for slapping an actress but the sexual abuse charge was dropped due to lack of evidence. This led to the subsequent calling out of Kim Ki-duk at the height of the #MeToo movement in 2018 (Brzeski, 2018) and debates around his authorial position upon the news of his death during the Covid-19 pandemic. As regard to this specific director, Chapter 2 revisits the opportune moments when Kim emerged in the global film circuit along with discourses on national cinema and cult film authorship, which largely undermined the gender dimension. While a number of critics who protested the canonization of the director have signalled the sense of “knowing all along” (Boyle, 2019, p. 4) or knowing for some time about his behaviour, other supporters and fans were drawn into the debate upon the news of his death. By engaging with scholarship on #MeToo and the subject of male perpetrators with media statuses, Chapter 2 also draws attention to the discourse on authorial

6 This point was mentioned in respond to a question on whether he sees himself locating within the context of Thai cinema or those working outside. He wittily responded “Can I be both?” A personal observation from the event “In Conversation with Apichatpong Weerasethakul” at SOAS in October 2015.



ethos and ethical consumption of film fans. As regards to this director's own responses, Part II of the book (Chapter 5) also discusses performative self-confessions and the idea of an outsider/a suffering artist that functioned to disguise earlier abuses.

By tracing the global visibility of the three filmmakers, the book reveals that despite the long-time punctuating question on the male-dominated legacy of auteurism, gender has rarely been structurally included in critical and commercial discourses on East Asian film authorship. This exclusion has recently become part of the industry interest itself when an individual has been singled out as being morally corrupted or "a monstrous other" (Boyle, 2019, p. 101), which might or might not lead to future structural changes. Apart from the intersection between authorship and gender, paratextual materials discussed in the book also introduce different discursive frames that emerged in the last two decades. These include aspects of co-branding, co-creation, experiential cinema, micro-authorship, celebrity culture, and fan and cinephile participations. The examination of these expanded contexts therefore hopes to be productive in offering new ways of (re) examining film authorship in an increasingly volatile transmedia screen culture.

Examining Transmedia Auteur Culture through Networks of Paratexts

The persistence of auteur culture associated with East Asian cinema grew out of the diversification of the cinematic landscape to include broader creative industries, and where film festivals, distributors, and audiences all contributed to the idea of an auteur brand, both internally via their strategic communications across platforms as well as organically via ad hoc participation by associated parties. Film authorship is still, as it has been, crucially located at cultural institutions such as the film festival, but the festival site itself has become increasingly mediated, with different partners, collaborators, and storytellers made visible through online news releases, print publications, weblogs, video communications, and social media. This, in turn, has generated numerous materials shaping the viewing of festival-premiered films and filmmakers. In the last two decades, the funding and production of films has also increasingly been incorporated as part of a larger intermedial project, e.g. expanding out from a short film or in relation to a series of collaborative projects and comprising of different modes of communication and performative



practices facilitated by different partners in film/media industries and cultural institutions. Once a film has been purchased for circulation, distributors have also engaged in the knowledge production of auteur culture through their role in shaping the meaning of that film, with certain levels of authority being assigned to the filmmaker/stars/the distributor's own brand, amongst other parties. Facilitated by digital access to the films and extra materials in various formats, audiences are also able to engage with auteur culture in different ways, from textual production through to material creation, and even visits to various related film locations. To borrow the term that emerged around the same time as the boom in transnational East Asian cinema in the early 2000s, film authorship has become part of "convergence culture," whereby forms of engagement are shaped by communications across different media by all parties involved (see Jenkins, 2006).

The previous works I mentioned earlier (Corrigan, 1991; Klinger, 1994; Lewis, 2007) have explored media-specific or network-specific connections that played a significant role in developing a director's reputation at different times. The traces and empirical evidence of the growth of auteur culture across different platforms by different agents, including filmmakers themselves, have been addressed in areas of study such as the DVD and the making of film authorship (Brookey & Westerfelhaus, 2002, 2005; Grant, 2008; Klinger, 2008), but not in relation to the large-scale convergent media universe that has been consolidated across the past two decades.

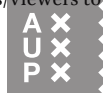
To unpack this wider *convergence auteur culture* shaping East Asian cinema, I will begin with materials associated with the career progression of representative East Asian filmmakers. I'll start with channels closely associated with the selected filmmakers, then expand outwards to cover areas of film funding and production, distribution, and film fans. In the earlier stages of this work, I employed content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis to explore recurring themes, discourses, and practices in relation to film authorship and East Asian cinema. In the process, I found that the format of different types of archival materials and their channels of circulation could also play a part in shaping collective engagements with auteur culture. The creation, circulation, and assemblage of connections across paratexts and the associated term "palimpsest" are therefore useful in drawing attention to the evolving nature of auteur culture and convergent media engagement.

Initially used in the field of literary studies by Gerard Genette, a paratext is a category of additional text that shapes the meaning of the book itself such as a book's cover, typeface, and preface (or peritext), along with

external items such as interviews and authorial correspondence (epitext) (Genette, 1997; Genette & Maclean, 1991).⁷ These versions of paratext are theorized as functioning to create a consistent impression of the work, as intended by the writer and publisher. With the advent of material and digital culture linking literary, film, and media cultures, the notion of paratext has been re-examined as a possible way to push the study of promotional texts from the analytical periphery and into the spotlight, while also destabilizing the hierarchy of the source text and its supposedly monolithic authorship. In an influential monograph by Jonathan Gray (2010) focusing on different forms of paratexts – from DVD extras, trailers, and spoilers through to user-generated content – a broader definition of the term was proposed, paying attention to the way in which we can encounter paratexts independently of the text they supposedly serve, and in different time frames before, in media res, or after the main text, or even without encountering it altogether. These paratextual contents, when paid due attention, allow for the exploration of multiple voices which play a key role in shaping the main text and imply multiple authorships/agencies which have previously been under-explored.

Apart from the development of paratextual studies as part of media studies that brings forth a network of relations surrounding the films and the filmmakers as a key object of analysis, when considering the related term “palimpsests,” paratexts can also be developed as a method to consider the temporality and persistence of auteur culture. I contend that the term “palimpsest,” which invokes a dimension of cultural memories that are linked to a burden of, and at times a longing for, the past, can be drawn on to explore the revival of film authorship through digital cinephilia in the early 2000s and the re-circulation of canonical auteur memories in today’s social media. To highlight this discursive historiography of film authorship, the next part takes a quick look into the “palimpsestuous” nature of auteur paratexts before moving on to discuss two other characteristic focal points which have driven the persistence of auteur culture in the last two decades: transmedia and participatory auteur culture, and the poetics and ethos of the self in paratexts.

7 *Paratexts*, in light of Genette’s writing after he published *Palimpsests*, focuses specifically on talks and texts surrounding source materials (the content of the book), from the closest spheres of preface, introduction, book cover, typeface, etc. (which he specified as “peritexts” or paratexts within the book) through to further associations with the source text from outside it, such as interviews with the author and reviews by critics (specified through the term “epitexts”). These materials prepare readers/viewers to get to know a text in some way.



Persistent Discourses and Affective Pasts: The Palimpsestuous Nature of Auteur Paratexts

As the title of Genette's book published prior to *Paratexts*, *Palimpsests* explores different textual practices labelled to various degrees as "imitation" or "transformation" such as genres of parody and pastiche, or texts which contain aspects of intertextuality. In these practices, layers of generative memories come into play. In his work, Genette drew a limit to the term "palimpsest" when the whole of text B had been derived from the whole of text A (1997 [1982], p. 9), analyzing relations between what he termed hypertext (the latter, indebted text) and hypotext (the earlier, source text). With this parameter, Genette focused on the history of writing through the agency of authors and publishers instead of readers. The potential function of the concept of the palimpsest has, however, been expanded by others into the process of reading, enabling an openness to unexpected memories and new imaginations.

Via an interest in memory and the processes of writing and rewriting, the term has been developed in various disciplines, including psychology, architecture, urban studies, and historiography. Sarah Dillon (2005, 2007) has traced the expansion of the term to studies of ancient manuscripts and the starting point of Thomas De Quincey's work, which connected "palimpsest" with the mind's memories. Drawing on the term "involute," noted by De Quincey as "the way in which 'our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplex combinations of *concrete* objects [...] in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled'" (Dillon, 2005, p. 4), the palimpsest becomes a metaphor that encourages the process of imagining and creating relations of new history in the present encounter with past memories. The revisiting of sites, events, and everyday circumstances can create a process of resurfacing, or a re-inscription of forgotten subjects, narratives, and discourses. This aspect brings to life the past that may have been overlooked, rubbed out, or written over. Dillon (2005, p. 253) refers to the contexts of postcolonial, feminist, and queer studies as being amongst those areas in which the palimpsest can be illuminated. This aspect of the palimpsest, which Dillon referred to specifically as "palimpsestuousness" (2005, p. 244), can function alongside Gray's (2010) notion of paratextuality. While paratexts bring to the fore textual agencies which have previously been on the margins, palimpsests likewise push forward elements of the past which have been left in the background. Revisiting Dillon's work, De Groote also addresses the incomplete nature of memories and the way that there are persistent remainders as well as things lost. The palimpsest, then,

is not only something that re-appears after being written over but rather “a thing created” (De Groot, 2014, p. 199). Such a characteristic is rooted in this book’s *post-auteur self-reflexivity*, which unearths various debates and politics that continue to haunt present-day conversations on film authorship.

Viewing auteur social life (i.e. the cultural activation of auteurist discourses) through paratexts – keeping in mind the palimpsestuousness of the materials – resonates with the way Hobbs talks about paratexts through the combined notion of Jacques Derrida’s concept of “trace” and John Ellis’s framework of “narrative image” (2018, p. 32). Trace, as Hobbs cites from Spivak’s work, is “the mark of absence, a memory bestowed with past meaning or significance” (2018, p. 32). When looking at paratexts such as the material object of a film through a designed DVD, with its choice of images, taglines, font design or colour, these elements inevitably “evoke a memory within the mind of the audience” (2018, p. 32) in relation to past usage. The combination of these elements can also shift the meanings and social life of the film in different contexts. While trace can have a positive effect in allowing under-explored voices and connections amongst conversations on film authorship to emerge, it can also have an unfavourable effect via the repetition of things that may be over-represented. In the case studies in this book, I try to tread a line between highlighting recurring aspects within paratexts while drawing attention to things on the margin and subjects that have been altered or erased over time. Through fragments of paratexts, certain pre-existing discourses can be shown to resurface while other new connections emerge.

One of the recurring kinds of memory and discourse that palimpsestuously resurfaces in relation to East Asian cinema and film authorship in the paratexts throughout my case studies is *geopolitical*. The visibility of films from various countries in East Asia in the global film market through the figures of their filmmakers has long been tied to the sense of place given to both films and filmmakers. This is due to long-standing institutional and Anglo-American structures that have promoted such films via canonical histories of film authorship in the English language. This mode of identification gives visibility to individual films in relation to the pool of movies presented in an international context. As a kind of cultural classification (visible through film profiles, director’s biography, thematic film programmes, film reviews, etc.), national and regional associations demarcate these films for wider Anglo-American audiences and give them ways to read and process the films and filmmakers. While this is not the only way to frame such films and their filmmakers, it has undeniably been the recurring mode of introduction in English-speaking public domains.



As East Asian films and filmmakers have become well-known and earned their places in global cinema, the geopolitical framework has shifted to other discourses associated with cultural landscape and supporting networks. As will be explored, the filmmakers whose works and social lives continue to encourage participation across different cultural sites and sociopolitical circumstances are the ones most likely to sustain their reputations over time.

Another discursive trace found across my case studies is the increasing intersection of the notion of authorship with different taste cultures and cultural associations. This phenomenon reflects the global movement within film and screen cultures at large in which the hierarchical distinctions between different arts and cultural histories are problematized not only by academics – see, for example, the exploration of international art cinema as “intermedia” and “intercultural” (Nagib & Jerslev, 2014, p. xviii) – but also via film funding and consumption. In the process of revisitation, the palimpsestuousness of paratexts and past traditions of auteur culture are being re-evaluated and problematized. Extending from the past paratextual lives, I now turn to the two characteristics focal points of film authorship in transmedia culture.

Transmedia and Participatory Auteur Culture

When referring to the term “transmedia,” a notion of transmedia storytelling has been established through Henry Jenkins’s exploration of different forms of convergence culture (2006). Drawing attention to the model of *The Matrix* franchise, Jenkins’s discussion focused on the expansive narratives moving across various texts and products, such as the films, games, and TV series produced systematically by industrial auteurs. The subsequent expansion of transmedia studies highlights processes of world building, including the way a particular brand encourages engagements across platforms in “a mode of themed storytelling” that may evolve in dynamic ways. This broader term has been conceptualized as

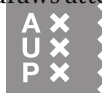
the building of experiences across and between the borders where *multiple media platforms coalesce*, altogether *refining* our understanding of this phenomenon as specifically *a mode of themed storytelling* that, *by blending content and promotion, fiction and non-fiction, commerce and democratization, experience and participation*, affords immersive, emotional experiences that join up with the social world in dynamic ways. (Freeman & Gambarato, 2019, p. 10, my emphasis)



The notion of transmedia in relation to contemporary film authorship explored in this book relates to the above definition. Nevertheless, there are different dimensions and details that can be highlighted to illuminate the aspects of transmediality that generate growth in auteur culture further. At the level of film text, the kind of films and filmmakers engaged with the notion of transmedia are those that are open to connections within and outside film culture and canonical film traditions. Transmedia storytelling further extends the notion of intertextuality which was previously associated with cinephile culture, whereby a particular film creates references to past canonical films, artworks, and/or literature as a form of tribute or homage to admired former directors/artists. Through the logic of transmedia, a growing auteur culture is facilitated by texts which encourage connections across various taste cultures and media industries beyond the art and film world, including music, fashion, and all kinds of popular culture. At the level of film reception, the experience is facilitated by both digital and material cultures, connecting the film reception experience to many other forms of cultural consumption and production. In this context, a film text can be split into snapshots or mashed up with other texts by fans, including comic strips, memes, television dramas, web series etc. (see recent case studies in Jin, 2020; Khiun & Lee, 2020). More recently, the subject of transmedia in relation to East Asian cinema has also encouraged further exploration into the connections between different forms of cultural activities and cinema, such as craft works, theatre performances, pop-up exhibitions, and interior design.

Extending from the film text and its open-ended nature, the transmediality associated with film authorship in this book also draws attention to the increasing collaboration, co-funding, and commissioning of projects by various partners in the art world, along with commercial and governmental agencies. This results in the creation of short films, video art, installations, and performance art that are connected in terms of storyline, auteurist aesthetics, film stars, and sociopolitical explorations. This dimension coincides with the increased expansion of cinema experience into multiple screen cultures. It also reflects assorted funding avenues for filmmakers beyond the realm of the traditional film industry.

One example of industrial transmediality and East Asian film authorship is the creation of various works beyond feature films that have been funded by consumer brands, and that continue to highlight a filmmaker's auteur status and creative agency while also opening up the engagement of audiences outside the film festival circuit. Amongst the many chapters on different areas of recent transmedia research, Max Giovagnoli's work on transmedia branding draws attention to the highly successful car brand



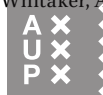
BMW's transmedia campaign which hired notable filmmakers and stars to take part in a commercial series called *The Hire* (2001). Released on the internet, sold on DVDs, and also incorporated into an alternate reality game with a luxury car as the prize, this resulted in "a hundred million views for the videos, one million DVDs sold, and 17 percent global sales growth of the two [BMW car] models involved in the project" (Giovagnoli, 2019, p. 253). Giovagnoli mentions Guy Ritchie, Madonna, and Clive Owen as the director and stars featured in one of the series. Another filmmaker involved as part of this project, and which Giovagnoli does not mention, was Wong Kar-wai. Extending from industry engagement, the part directed by the Hong Kong filmmaker⁸ was later circulated on YouTube by various film fans, and given added fan subtitles, including Spanish (Portillo, 2016) and Chinese (Ivanowa13, 2009). This content can be found on YouTube alongside a series of Wong's other commercials, mash-ups, and fan homage videos. Reflecting the ecology of textual production that shapes auteur culture, the organic spin-offs of Wong Kar-wai's brand via everyday media engagements by fans and cinephiles – often problematically omitted in writings on film authorship – are just as important as the official creation of transmedia paratexts. These transmedia fan products are explored in the first part of the book. Other instances explored in the first part include the convergence culture and themed storytelling/transmedia engagements that take place via film festivals, the art world, and associated agents in relation to Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

Significantly, in these processes of transmedia paratextual production, the very notion of authorship is expanded into network relations, thus reflecting the way in which auteur culture is now a kind of participatory culture. Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson cited Henry Jenkins's work as a starting point to reflect on participatory culture as a form of cultural participation with

relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. (Jenkins, 2006, p. 7 cited in Delwiche and Henderson, 2013, p. 3)

Keeping this definition in mind, the term "participatory culture" in relation to the notion of authorship opens up the concept to investigating the

8 Played by Clive Owen, Forest Whitaker, Adriana Lima, and Mickey Rourke.



agency of all the many participants involved in auteur culture rather than just focusing on an embodied/centred “auteur.” Film authorship involves the production and circulation of transmedia paratexts whereby the commercial and social identity of an auteur is formed through participation by collaborators, critics, fans, festival programmers, and distributors, amongst the myriads of agents which shape auteur culture at large.

While it is possible to reflect on the fact that film authorship has always been a kind of participatory culture, the involvement of different parties becomes more prominently visible in the age of digital media through paratextual links and cross-references across different cultural domains beyond institutional cinephilia. To further elaborate on the notion of film authorship as a form of participatory culture is to break down the notion of authorship into multiple clusters of agents circulating in different processes of film production, distribution, and reception. Closely associated with the global reputation of “auteur” filmmakers are the agents associated with key sites, such as transnational film festivals, whereby participatory culture can be found in the creation, circulation, and citation of news about premieres, programmes, catalogues, festival reviews, etc. The changing platforms used to promote film festivals have also resulted in various kinds of paratexts and participation in more recent years. In the context of film distribution and reception, participatory culture reveals different agents such as second-hand film distributors or those who have uploaded films via informal media channels in different geographies/territories. The notion of participatory culture here highlights the important presence of official *and* vernacular knowledge production in order to support certain works and filmmakers across different media domains.

When film authorship engages with participatory culture, *the focal authorial agency – usually “the director” – is expanded to include all those who participate in authorial discourses* across different cultural domains, whether for artistic expression, commercial opportunity, or civic engagement. A highly significant and shared sentiment across my case studies is that persistent authorial positions associated with contemporary filmmakers are that “their” works and social lives invite participations and ideals of inclusivity. When authorship is employed to perform a creative self that excludes others, then such auteur status increasingly undergoes contemporary processes of being publicly “called out” and re-evaluated. Hence, film authorship in the light of participatory culture exists not only through the filmmaker’s auteur agency and social life but also through the cultural relevance that these can give to the wider processes of self making of varied others in different social contexts.



The Poetics & Ethos of Self in Paratexts

So far, I have introduced the expanded connections of film authorship with transmedia and participatory cultures. Another key avenue of exploration in this book is that the study of transmedia paratexts reveals the varying dimensions of self for the different agents involved.

Throughout the book, I draw attention to the shifting roles of filmmakers and associated creative practitioners over time, including being a fan, cinephile, promoter, distributor, producer, programmer, or star. This shifting of roles reflects boundaries between the figure of filmmaker/auteur and audiences and supporters. This also reveals the aspect of generative authorship whereby established filmmakers continue to have their influences but other agents also take part in creating their works through networks of associations. Subsequently, the formation of a sense of self of film authorship in relation to other agents results in the consideration of *the ethos of filmmakers* in relation to all those other agents involved in the film and transmedia world. Specifically, in the second part of the book I draw attention to how paratexts can shed new light on authorship through the ways that filmmakers and associated agents mediate their sense of self in the media and in relation to others in a range of practices and performances.

It is worth noting that accounts on film authorship since the 1990s have begun addressing the public persona and increasing star/celebrity status of film directors, particularly those associated with “quality” blockbuster filmmakers (for a conceptualization of this idea, see Corrigan 1990, 1991). Explorations of the public personas of filmmakers such as Christopher Nolan (Hill-Parks, 2010) and Steven Spielberg (Fairclough & Willis, 2017), or cult/niche personas such as Wes Anderson (Dorey, 2012) and Stanley Kubrick (Egan, 2015), which were shaped by studio marketing, distribution labels, media interests, and audience discourses, resonate to an extent with the exploration of conditions shaping the transnational reputations of East Asian filmmakers explored in the first part of this book. Albeit, the contexts of exploration in this book are expanded to the geopolitical landscapes of film festival, niche distribution of East Asian cinema, and a diverse range of cinephile/fan cultures.

Seeking to examine more closely the performative practices of self-projection of filmmakers, the second half of the book pays closer attention to how individuals response to different kinds of fame and discursive framing. Works that paid attention specifically to these acting agents/performative practices can be found in the self-projection of avant-garde filmmaking (Pramaggiore, 1997) and the performativity of European directors in their own films in the pre-digital period (Sayad, 2013). Suzanne Ferriss’s chapter

on Sofia Coppola's "fashion-fame-film industrial complex" also covers this aspect for a female celebrity director through analyzing moments whereby Coppola engaged in a form of self-fashioning (2021, pp. 171–172).

In the transmedia era, the performance of auteurs in their own works can be found in formats such as short film, video essay, self-projected interview, self-portrait, and intimate cameo, some of which are packaged as marketing materials while others are exhibited as part of the directors' filmographies. These shorter forms of filmic (para)texts are arguably freer from constraints of film funding, national politics, and censorship, allowing filmmakers and collaborators to project their senses of self that respond to or deviate from certain public and commercial discourses about them. Through different kinds of self-projection, we can explore East Asian auteurs' negotiations with past representations of themselves in commercial and critical domains. This kind of practice which can be alternatively referred to as "poetic mediations" can highlight fluctuations in the commercial and public selves of auteurs across different spaces and times. The exploration of performative authorship also further illuminates the symbiosis of self as a fan/cinephile in relation to past filmmakers, or the figure of the auteur in relation to actors/collaborators. The different *modus operandi* that creative practitioners and filmmakers adopt over time can thus be unpacked, including those contributing to filmmakers' prosperous careers as well as highlighting conflicting roles between directors' past and present selves and in relation to other agents.

While the two parts of this book draw on case studies associated with specific East Asian filmmakers, together they give an overview of the interconnected network of relations – including aspects of institutional consecration, national/transnational politics, the financial climate, media industries, cinephilic affection, fan practices, and creative self-expressions – that continue to foster contemporary auteur culture. Within such explorations, this book cannot present a complete history of the global success of East Asian auteurs, and indeed it does not set out to do so. Rather, I will revisit under-explored transmedial/paratextual sites, memories, and agents that push forward transnational, self-reflective film authorship today.

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