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“Hollywood and the Chinese Other”

Online talk by

Dr. Tan Ye

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University of South Carolina

3 p.m. Wednesday, November 18, 2020



Dr. Tan Ye studied Shakespeare under Northrop Frye at University of Toronto and Film History at NYU Cinema Studies. He received Ph.D. in Comparative Theater from Washington University in 1990. Having taught at Washington University and Vassar College, Dr. Ye joined USC in 1992. His publications include the books, *Common Dramatic Codes* (1997), *Theory and Practice of Screenwriting in China and America* (2008), *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Theater* (2009), *The A to Z of Chinese Theater* (2011), and *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Film* (2012). He has written extensively essays and book

chapters on Chinese cinema theater, and culture, including “Film: China,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World* and “Hollywood and the Chinese Other” in *Film Quarterly*.

Abstract: In the post-colonial era, Hollywood films have often been treated by scholars on both sides of the Pacific as a form of cultural invasion; and the Chinese “Other,” the reluctant victim of this invasion. My discursive review of the interaction between Hollywood and China is intended not to negate the invasion-and-resistance theory in general but to repute the generalization of the “Otherness” in the Chinese context. In China, there has never been a uniform opinion of Hollywood, because there has never been a single, faceless entity of the Chinese Other. In China, authorities’ opinions, art elites’ opinions, filmmakers’ opinions, cineastes’ opinions, and masses’ opinions have always differed, sometimes polarized, from one another. Two perspectives, to treat Hollywood as a political entity and to treat it as a provider of entertainment, have been the major demarcation of the differences. Any failure to differentiate these opinions is a failure to understand the complexity of the Chinese mentality and history. In this essay, the term, “Hollywood” is used to distinguish commercial ventures from auteur films, independent films, or underground films made in the United States, and “audience” is referred to the average cinema goers who view films, not just Hollywood films, as sheer means of entertainment era of engagement.



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