

Burst into action

*The Changing Spectacle of
Glamour Heroines in
Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema* | STEPHEN C.K.CHAN

As the local people experience the transnational moment amid a seemingly endless circuit of social mediations in Hong Kong, and as that very process allows them to be dynamically involved in re-articulating various identity flows, tensions and negotiations through the collective shaping of contemporary culture (not least via a globally mediated form such as cinema), *the constituencies of the local* change. My question for now is: in what ways have the new currents of transnationality affected existing forms of cultural sensibility in the 'postcolony'? Realised as a system of representation of the global popular, recent articulations of popular experience tend to be absorbed into generic cross-cultural media representations shared on the *glocal* level of operation by cultural producers, consumers and practitioners across geographical borders. In this paper, I shall focus on the changing spectacle of 'the local' through its cinematic action (along with its alternative heroine mediation), in light of such a transnational articulation as the emerging dominant. My purpose is to examine how *local action* has been re-imagined and can be re-aligned in relation to the specifically historical, national and postcolonial mode of imagination under the contemporary glocal context of the Hong Kong 'Special Administrative Region' (HKSAR), as this particular post-colony is officially renamed.

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The complex cultural formation of experience has changed over time, giving rise to various patterns in the re-configuration of the collective in the individual. In *Cultural Complexity*, Hannerz points out that 'the individual is surrounded by a flow of externally available, culturally shaped meaning which influences his ordering of experiences and intentions'.² I want, indeed, to argue, via the case of Hong Kong action cinema, for 'the individual's share, or version, of a culture as a collectively held structure of meanings'.³ I do this by conducting textual and contextual analysis of the interplay of (heroic) actions in local filmic representations, especially those as conveyed through narrative realisation and bodily performance by the unlikely female 'action stars'. Against this background, I intend to demonstrate how some of the local heroines of Hong Kong action cinema have *fought*, in style and with glamour, the intricate forces of the national and transnational—competing factors in the emergence of the global popular in any localised context, where specific sociocultural experiences are generated and mediated through a perspective grounded in the formation of particularised individual sensibilities.