**Hong Zhang**

**English 1135**

**April 10, 2012**

**Film Journal**

**Entry #1: Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon**

**FILM: Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon**

**RELEASE DATE: December 8, 2000**

**STUDIO: Sony Classics**

**GENRE: Foreign / Action**

**DIRECTOR: Ang Lee**

**CAST: Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Zhang Ziyi, Chang Chen, Cheng Pei-pei, Sihung Lung**

**PYRDEK RATING SYSTEM: $$$$**

Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon, a Chinese-language classical *wuxia* film released in 2000 by Sony Classics, is an American-Chinese-Hong Kong-Taiwanese co-production film and based on the fourth novel in a pentalogy, known in China as the Crane Iron Pentalogy, by a pre-World War II Chinese *wuxia* novelist Wang Dulu. This movie shows a typical traditional Chinese culture. Among all the awards the movie received, the most notable ones are the two awards from the Golden Globe, including best motion picture, and four awards out of ten nominations in Academy Awards: Best Foreign Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Artistic Direction/Costume Design, and Best Original Music. And it is the highest grossing foreign-language film in North America and Britain, making over 100 million U.S. dollars in box office revenue. Thus, this movie is critically regarded as the most successful Chinese-language film in the West.

Before talking about this film, we should know what *wuxia* is. Actually, the name *wuxia* is of Mandarin origin with “*wu*” referring to the martial arts and “*xia*” meaning heroes. *Wuxia* fictions and movies are deeply rooted in Chinese popular culture, the history of the former can be traced back to the Tang dynasty, around ninth century A.D. The hero or heroine in *wuxia* fictions and films is always a skillful fighter, he or she also has the sense of responsibility to serve justice and fight for the righteousness, the common good. It seems that the two key characteristics of a *wuxia* are supreme martial arts skills and a righteous heart, which share certain similarities with Western chivalry and Japanese samurai. The director, Ang lee, tried to discuss the spirit of *wuxia*, a traditional Chinese culture topic in this movie.

The movie is set in the Qing Dynasty during the 43rd year (1779) of the reign of the Qianlong Emperor. The story line follows one stolen sword and two romances. Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat) is an accomplished Wudang swordsman. Long ago, his master was murdered by Jade Fox (Cheng Pei Pei), a woman who sought to learn Wudang skills but was rejected due to her gender. Li is also a good friend of Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), a female warrior. Li and Shu Lien have a long yet unspoken passion for each other, but some past incidents made it impossible for them to speak of their love for decades. Jen (Zhang Zi Yi), the daughter of Governor Yu, is Jade Fox’s disciple and loves a desert bandit Lo (Chang Chen). But Jen and Lo has to end their love relation because she has to obey her parents’ decision to marry a higher ranked politician.

The movie starts with Li Mu Bai visiting Shu Lien. Li, intending to give up his warrior life, asks Shu Lien to give his legendary sword, the Green Destiny, to his friend, Sir Te in Beijing. At Sir Te's estate, Shu Lien is introduced to Jen. Jen expresses her admiration of Shu Lien’s life as a free warrior.

That night, the sword Green Destiny was stolen by an agile thief and the thief flees to Jen’s residence. Meanwhile, there is a rumor in Beijing that Jade Fox is hiding in Jen’s residence. Having learned about this, Li Mu Bai wants to avenge his master and find that sword. When he finds and defeats Jade Fox in the night, the thief, with Green Destiny in hand, comes into the scene and helps Jade Fox to escape. Now, everybody knows the thief is Jen. The next day, Shu Lien asks Jen to return the sword and she will not press charges against Jen.

However, when Jen tries to return the sword in secret, Li catches her on the scene. He likes Jen’s potential in martial arts, and offers to be her master. But Jen rejects him rudely and takes off with the sword again.

In Jen’s flashback, we see a romance story between Jen and Lo. In the day of Jen’s wedding, Lo tries to persuade Jen to go with him. Jen does not agree to marry him, but she still runs away from his husband and disguised herself as a male to enter her dream world: a free life.

Actually, even a free warrior should obey some rulers and laws. Because she is unaware of these, Jen’s arrogant attitude and rude behavior irritates a lot of respected martial artists. She then turns to Shu Lien for help, but when Jen learns that Li and Shu Lien are following her father’s requests to bring Jen back home, she feels betrayed and a fight breaks out between them. Jen uses unlawful tricks to hurt Shu Lien and again runs away. Li Mu Bai traces her into a sea of bamboo where they fight each other on the top of those bamboos. Li still tries to persuade Jen to follow him as his apprentice, but Jen doesn’t seem to care. Jade Fox shows up to rescue Jen.

The last battle is between Jade Fox and Li Mu Bai in the cave where Jen and Jade Fox hide. The vicious Jade Fox is defeated and killed by Li, however, Li himself is poisoned by Jade Fox, as well. As Jen runs off to prepare the antidote for the poisoned dart, Li prepares to die. With his last breaths, he finally confesses his love for Shu Lien, and dies in her arms as Jen returns too late to save him. The Green Destiny is returned to Sir Te. Yet the tragic love story does not end here. Jen later goes to Wudang Mountain and meet Lo. The next morning, Jen flies over the side of the mountain and into the clouds.

Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon impresses me most is its mise en scene. Since the movie is a typical Chinese traditional story, all elements of Mise-en-scene show the desired image of China. These are things audiences can actually see and hear from the plots. Though the Mise-en-scene, Lee Ang speaks out the inspirit of the movie which is about traditional value judgment of different characters on different aspects, like ethics, love, enlightenment, etc. By understanding characters' behaviors and their set of value judgment, audiences are able to understand Chinese culture and its long established value more.

In the movie, physical setting, the element of mise en scene play very important role. Ang Lee is well known for his spectacular renditions of natural scenes and landscapes in the films. This movie captures the mystery and the majesty of exotic settings in the world of Chinese martial arts. By shifting camera angles, Lee grafts a dramatic touch of magic realism into mundane and every day geographical space and grasps the enchanting powers of contrasts of scenes, for example, the boisterous traditional street scene of the old Beijing with the its roofs cape and skyline from a high vantage point due to the use of modern techniques. In addition, other scenes, including a magnificent pagoda in the sunset, the remote desert canyons, a natural tub in the cave, bamboo forest and so on. Moreover, Lee creates a new brand of fantasy movie in which Chinese martial arts are magically demonstrated in amazing landscapes. Like western witches, his heroes and heroines move on the waters, run up the walls, fly over the roofs, and fight on the top of trees, which enhance the effect of magic realism and become the key for attraction.

Another important element of mise en scene in the movie is color. Ang Lee makes this film like a traditional Chinese ink. He uses green and blue as basic colors. Green is the color of life, and to the Chinese it represents growing energy and thus regeneration and transition. Pale blue is a quiet color. Most plot of the movie use blue-gray. This color presents depression and helplessness. Ang Lee uses these two colors to imply three changes that the feeling of two main characters, Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien undergo - strategically located at the film’s beginning, midpoint, and climax.

At the beginning of the movie, Li Mu Bai and Shu Lien love each other but Shu Lien’s dead Fiancé is Li’s best friend. Thus, Li and Shu Lien share their feelings “with silken restraint” and they have an understanding which is never uttered aloud. The film starts with its title in Chinese characters, the pattern of which is a still shot of a green and peaceful bamboo forest. Li visits Shu Lien. Li tells Shu Lien that he has just prematurely broken off a regimen of "deep meditation." She is startled: "You’re a Wudan warrior; training is everything. Why did you leave your meditation?" Li answers: "During meditation training, I came to a place of deep silence. I was surrounded by light; time and space disappeared. It was a place my master never told me about." To Shu Lien, this sounds like enlightenment; but Lidemurs. "I didn’t feel the bliss of enlightenment. Instead, I was surrounded with an endless sorrow… I felt something pulling me back… something I couldn’t leave behind." This "something," it is soon clear, is his attachment to Shu Lien herself. Li notices that he deeply loves Shu Lien for the first time. At the plot, these green bamboos outside Shu Lien’s house imply the start of their love.

In their second key exchange, at the film’s midpoint, Li and Shu Lien sit in an interior space, but this time one with an open: a horizontal window that opens onto the outside world of the same green bamboo forest. This green signals another change in their relationship, a whole new physical potential for them. Li goes so far as to take Shu Lien’s hand and press it to his cheek. He tells her, "Shu Lien, the things we touch have no permanence. My master would say there is nothing we can hold onto in this world…" Shu Lien replies, "Not everything is an illusion…My hand — wasn’t that real?" And he can’t deny it: "Your hand… rough and calloused from practice… All this time I’ve never had the courage to touch it…" To repress one’s feelings, he knows, only makes them stronger; yet he says, "I don’t know what to do. I want to be with you… just like this… it gives me a sense of peace." Mists soften the folds of the green-covered mountain. Finally, Li speaks out his love to Shu Lien. This time, green still presents hope.

Most revealing of all is the climactic third exchange. In this third scene, Li has been wounded, perhaps mortally. The main feeling of color is blue, reflecting on the moonlight shining into the cave. In the dying scene of Li, he told Shu Lien his true feelings about her: “"I have already wasted my whole life. I wanted 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. Yet, because of your love, I will never be a lonely spirit." This time, blue replaces green. It presents his death alone and their unspoken melancholy.

Of course, Ang Lee uses another color, red to present another main character, Jen. Different from Shu Lien who prepares to fight with purpose and wisdom, Jen wants to fight for free that is fun and adventure. She looks like Scarlett O'Hara who is the main character in Gone with the wind. She has strong feeling. This prominent use of the color red can be thought to symbolize her energy and fiery personality. Thus, in Jen’s flashback, there are yellow and red in Gebi desert. The love between Jen and Lo is a sweet memory. And in the day of Jen’s wedding, everything is red. Lo shouts desperately to Jen: “Come with me to the desert! No one marries you but me!” Then, Jen determine to run away, break an engagement and rebel her family because of that strong love feeling.

Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon is a movie that touches my heart. I always think it is the only one which presents traditional Chinese culture, *wuxia*. In Chinese film history, Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon is the first one which uses the dance-like martial arts movements, the gravity-defying jumps, the different ancient weapons characters use, the poetic beauty of the landscapes and the melancholy but melodious music, all of which are essential Chinese. Because it has positively influenced the market, Zhang Yimou made Hero and Chen Kaige made Wuji. More and more American audiences accept it and know China. Hence, DreamWorks Animation made Kung Fu Panda. That is the effect of the movie.

Crouching Tiger，Hidden Dragon is not only one of best wuxia film, but also a bridge connect with west and Chinese culture. It let west audience have a chance to know traditional Chinese culture. In the movie, Lee Ang is actually trying to show audiences something spiritual, but not just something physical about china.

**Entry #2: Gone with the Wind**

**FILM: Gone with the Wind**

**RELEASED: 1939**

**STUDIO: MGM**

**DIRECTOR: Victor Fleming [George Cukor, Sam Wood, B Reeves Eason]**

**CAST: Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland**

**PYRDEK RATING SYSTEM: $$$$**

Gone with the Wind, an English-language historical epic film released in 1939 by MGM, is adapted from Margaret Mitchell's Pulitzer-winning 1936 novel of the same name. The film was the longest American sound film made up to that time – 3 hours 44 minutes, plus a 15 minute intermission, and was among the first of the major films shot in color (Technicolor). It is one of the most beloved movies of all time. In 1998, American Film Institute voters chose Gone with the Wind as one of the greatest films of all time.

Produced by David O. Selznick and directed by Victor Fleming, the movie sets in the 19th century American South and tells a story of the American Civil War and Reconstruction era from a white Southern point of view. Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh) is the belle of the county. She participates in a seemingly endless round of parties, dances and barbecues, always surrounded by boys with whom she appears to be playing an elaborate game. She receives the first shock of her young life when Ashley Wilkes (Leslie Howard), son of a neighboring plantation owner, announces his engagement to his cousin Melanie Hamilton (Olivia de Havilland). When she cannot convince Ashley to change his plan she quickly throws herself at Charles Hamilton (Rand Brooks) who is shocked and thrilled to think that she would even consider him.

Her plans are further disrupted when war breaks out, taking the young men away as soldiers, and Charles is among the first to die. She spends several years in Atlanta where she tries to enjoy life in her own way in spite of the disapproval of other women of her class.

Her life is further complicated by the presence of Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) who is known to be a privateer and opportunist and is “not received” in his own hometown of Savannah. Scarlett admits that she is fond of Rhett, but his candor and frank observations of her character infuriate her whenever he is near. During the siege of Atlanta, she flees home to Tara along with her sister-in-law, Melanie, and the newborn baby Beau. There she learns to survive unspeakable hardships from working in the fields to shooting a Yankee soldier in defense of her home. Just when Scarlett thinks the war is over and she can finally put Tara to rights, a major crisis comes in the form of new taxes-levied deliberately by the new government administrators and scalawags to try to take Tara away from her. She returns to Atlanta, hoping to trick Rhett into marrying her so she will have access to his money. When this falls, she steals her sister’s fiancé, Franklin Kennedy (Carroll Nye) who happens to have a store and a little money saved toward his wedding. She marries him and takes his savings to pay her taxes. Two weeks after the wedding, she borrows money from Rhett to buy a lumber mill. She manages the mill herself and runs sharp bargains with her lumber, stealing customers from other lumber mills and preying on the sympathies of Yankees to sell her own. As the political climate in Atlanta worsens, Scarlett’s careless behavior turns the people even more solidly against her. Finally, expectations are fulfilled and Scarlett is attacked, and her second husband, Frank is killed.

Scarlett finally marries Rhett who believes he can’t get her any other way, and the two have a tempestuous marriage in which Scarlett often fantasizes that Rhett is Ashley. And chance of salvaging a relationship with Rhett is lost when their four-year old Bonnie dies in a fall from her pony. When Melanie dies, leaving Scarlett virtually friendless, Rhett leaves. At that time, Scarlett notices that really she is just infatuated with Ashley. It is Rhett Butler that woes her and secretly begins to fall for her. She returns again to Tara and try to find her love back.

With great actors and actresses like Vivien Leigh and Clark Cable starring in "Gone with the Wind," the movie becomes a great story and has been a classic for many years. Honestly to say, one of most wonderful performances in the movie belongs to Vivien Leigh.

Vivien owns this film. It is, after all Scarlett O’Hara’s story, and she appears in almost every scene. Scarlett is a dynamic character and the expanse of the film allowed Leigh the space to bring her to life. Over the course of four hours we see Scarlett change from carefree coquette to world-weary woman. Leigh’s interpretation of Scarlett O’Hara is perfect – she never hits a false note. We never see acting. We only see the character, as close to a real, living person to any actor could ever create for the screen.

Leigh mixes Scarlett’s selfishness with her flirty charm creating a character accustomed to getting what she wants based on her looks, her coquettishness, her family name. She’s never been challenged in any way, but the Civil War changes that, forcing her to dig deep and discover the resiliency and resourcefulness she never knew she had in her. But her arc isn’t particularly revelatory; through all her trials she still emerges on the other side as essentially the same woman, just a heck of a lot stronger.

That is the genius of Leigh’s performance. She plays Scarlett unsympathetically, but the charm she uses to butter up Ashley and Rhett spills over into the audience. We know she is manipulating these men but, in spite of this knowledge, she manipulates us as well. And she never learns to do without manipulation. Often writers and directors believe that a character arc means that their subject needs some kind of grand revelation, some major shift in her consciousness or perspective, some major lesson learned. Scarlett doesn’t learn any lessons, and she just learns new ways to get others to give her what she wants.

Matching her performance is Clark Gable’s Rhett. He delivers some of the finest acting of his career in the movie. His performance as Rhett is one that is essential to the film, and Gable is a character of great impact of the film. This all begins with his initial entrance at the bottom of the stair case looking up at Scarlett. His single look here begins the ease of performance Gable has with this performance. He says nothing but Gable has already suggested more than enough of Butler. Gable look is absolutely perfect there is no question to that look it is as Scarlett describes it, being able to see through her clothes.

For about a third of the film Rhett really does not continuously appear in scenes in comes in and out of the film. Every time though he appears he certainly makes a strong impact, this partially in the way Rhett is written but more fully due to Gable incredibly powerful presence. Gable's presence here is like none other, his natural charisma and strength are never more visible and as strong than as Rhett. Every single moment Gable is on screen his personality is simply magnetic. He always stands out in a scene and always a perfect command in them, such as his first scene where he questions the abilities of the southern gentlemen to win against the North. He shows Rhett is a man who always has command over his situation. He makes Rhett into a man who knows what he wants and how to get it, and a man who shall not be forgotten, and is not forgotten ever in the film.

Now the most important factor of his performance though that really makes it legendary is his scenes with Vivien Leigh. Vivien Leigh's performance is an astounding performance, one of true brilliance, and Gable being able to stand up along with Leigh performance is a true feat there. Both of the two work wonderfully together. They both are completely in tune with their characters and in each other to make their scenes together scenes of cinematic greatness.

Gable finally consistently appears in the final fourth of the film, after Rhett marries Scarlett. Gable got along perfectly before that point, excelling as Rhett, while Rhett was always able to stay away partially and never truly become involved with the troublesome Scarlett. Rhett when he does become even more deeply involved with Scarlett including to having a daughter together, Rhett finds great troubles with this relationship, and this really puts Gable performance to the test. Gable is more than up to the task, though and gives truly emotionally honest portrayal as Rhett. He shows Rhett desire to love Scarlet but also his sadness and regret due to her inability to shake her own selfishness. Gable is simply perfect in all of these scenes, and especially the final scene where Scarlet goes to Ashley Wilkes for the last time. His exit and final line delivery is a truly great legendary performance.

Gone with the Wind is my favorite movie. I really like Gable way of dealing with Leigh and the way she deals back toward him. In fact, twenty years ago, I cried when I saw this movie for the first time. I think Leigh’s acting can touch my heart. Of course, I am moved by Gable’s love. It is a forever picture in my memory.

The acting in this movie makes it successful, turning it into a true life tragedy that could have really happened in the old days of the Civil War in Atlanta. Vivien Leigh and Clark Cable gave an outstanding performance of chemistry to the movie creating it melodramatic and entertaining to watch. The movie captures love, sadness and poverty in great detail, which turns the movie into a weepy love story. Gone with the Wind is a truly fascinating movie that will always be entertaining and dramatic to watch.

**Entry #3: The Sound of Music**

**FILM: The Sound of Music**

**RELEASED: 1965**

**STUDIO: 20th Century Fox**

**DIRECTOR: Robert Wise**

**CAST: Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer and Eleanor Parker**

**PYRDEK RATING SYSTEM: $$$$**

The Sound of Music, an English-language musical film released in 1965 by 20th Century Fox, is an adaptation of the Broadway musical The Sound of Music and based on Maria Von Trapp’s autobiography published in 1949 The Story of the Trapp Family Singers. The Sound of Music is the most successful American musical film ever shown on the silver screen.

Directed by Robert Wise, the movie starts in Salzburg, Austria at the Nonnberg Abbey in 1938, just before the start of World War II. Maria (Julie Andrews), a young nun in an Austrian convent who regularly misses her morning prayers because she enjoys going to the hills and singing. Deciding that Maria needs to learn something about the real world, the Mother Superior (Peggy Wood) sends her off to be governess for the children of the widowed Navy Captain Von Trapp (Christopher Plummer).

Arriving at the Trapp home, Maria discovers that her new boss is cold and aloof, and his seven children virtual automatons, at least, whenever the Captain is around. But Maria soon ingratiates herself with the children, especially oldest daughter Liesl (Charmian Carr) who is in love with teenaged messenger boy Rolf (Daniel Truhitte). As Maria herself begins to fall in love with the Captain, she rushes back to the Abbey so as not to complicate his impending marriage to a glamorous baroness Elsa Schraeder (Eleanor Parker). But the children insist that Maria return, the Baroness steps out of the picture, and Maria and the Captain confirm their love in the song “Something Good.”

Unhappily, they return home from their honeymoon shortly after the Nazis march into Austria. Already, swastikas have been hung on the Von Trapp’s home, and Liesl’s boyfriend Rolf has been indoctrinated in the “glories” of the Third Reich. Von Trapp is opposed to Nazism, and stalls by insisting he must perform with his family that night in the Salzburg Festival, now politicized and showcased as a Nazi event under the patronage of Hans Zeller (Ben Wright), recently appointed as the Nazi Gauleiter. Zeller agrees, but orders the Captain to depart immediately after the performance. The choreography of the final song, "So Long, Farewell", allows the family to leave slowly, a few at a time, and as the winners are announced, they flee. At first they hide in the abbey, but are discovered by Rolfe (who had joined the Nazi party), who threatens to shoot the Captain despite being visibly scared of having to do so. The Captain unsuccessfully attempts to persuade Rolfe to join them; he calls for his lieutenant instead, and the von Trapps flee again. The Nazis are unable to pursue them, as the nuns have stolen their spark plug wires and ignition coil. The final shot shows the von Trapps climbing over the Alps into Switzerland, as "Climb Ev'ry Mountain", reprised by a choir, swells to a conclusion.

The Sound of Music is a good example of Mise-en-scene----or how the “putting-in-the-scene” in a movie. One of the most important aspects of Mise-en-scene is costume. It helps the movie to set the scene and let audience to understand main characters.

In the movie, as an anti-Nazi captain, Von Trapp is defined by a white Austrian decoration in the shape of a crusader's cross or *Kruckenkreuz* around his neck, and displays the Austrian flag in his entry hall during the ball. The counterpoint is the Nazi flag that is hung against his knowledge outside his door after the Anschluss, which he tears down. The Austrofascist Chancellor Dollfuss believed the *Kruckenkreuz* to be a Christian symbol that would show Austria to be a "better" Germany in contrast to the Third Reich, which found representation in the pagan symbol of the swastika.

As the leading actress, Maria's costumes reflect her emotional growth as the evolution from worm to cocoon to butterfly: she begins in black habit and presents herself to the Captain in an ugly earth-toned burlap skirt and jacket. This is followed by lighter but still dull-colored dirndl patterns and the blue chiffon dress of the party, which is briefly replaced by the habit in her attempt to seek refuge from her feelings for the Captain. She returns in a more elegant, strong blue-green dress, ultimately replaced by the butterfly of the wedding gown and the striking yellow suit she wears upon her return from her honeymoon. In this color, one of associated with Empress Maria Theresa, the Habsburg flag, and Schönbrunn Palace, Maria stands by her husband's side in resistance to Nazism.

Of course, everyone knows that the excellent parts of The Sound of Music are its music and cinematography. They are all top-notch and Oscar-worthy. Most of songs in the movie becomes classic. And as a musical movie, the musical numbers give the cameramen plenty of potential to get some great shots, such as the opening helicopter sequence as the camera pans over the Alps before Julie Andrews belts out the title song, the scenes in Salzburg during the number Do Re Mi, the romantic kisses in the gazebo that are shared by Liesl (Charmain Carr) and Rolfe (Daniel Truhitte) and so on.

The Sound of Music is the musical film which I like most. I have learned the first English song is Edelweiss. I enjoy its musical scenes and beautiful production. I think it is a timeless movie and you can watch it again and again just for these songs and pictures. I think it's impossible to grow tired of "The Sound of Music". It really is the happiest sound in the world!

The Sound of Music has all the makings of a successful film -- memorable Rodgers and Hammerstein songs, lush background locations, a talented cast, an experienced production team, the preceding momentum of a popular stage musical, and most importantly, a wholesome, sentimental story with sympathetic heroes, historic villains and broad family appeal. Yet the international blockbuster that resulted when all these elements finally came together in the spring of 1965 was altogether greater than the sum of its parts.