

MR JIA Zhang Ke:

Good morning. Just now I heard John Chan mentioning the Hong Kong culture's influence on China in the 80s. That was my formative years. I was born in 1970. In my primary education, that was the year 1977, in our textbooks, almost every other text in the textbook would be Chairman Mao's quotation, so we were born with the concept of class struggle and class struggle being the key link so the revolutionary philosophy was running in our bloodstream.

Such education penetrated all aspects of life, including daily life. For example, in the morning when we did our morning exercise, we did jogging in the morning. We would do it collectively together. It was very dark in winter, about 5.17 we had to get up. At 6 o'clock in total darkness. We were very poor, we didn't have streetlights, we would run to the school, to the campus, we would line up, we would sing, "We are successors to communism", we would be jogging while holding some torches. We did not doubt that because we were born into that world, philosophy, mindset.

So from music's perspective, we had to learn a lot of songs. For example, in 1980, when I was 10, there was a song which all of us had to sing, "We are the new generation of the 80s", that's the title of the song, and in the radio broadcasts we have the song called, "We working class are the strongest". And some of us are tuned into Taiwan radio station and we heard Teresa Teng singing, "The moon represents my heart". And she was singing, "The moon represents my heart", not "our hearts". That's different. And afterwards with the introduction of reform opening-up policy we were allowed to thank people of (Chinese spoken). They smuggled many ghetto blasters and hi-fi and tapes into mainland China. We heard the campus songs from Taiwan by (Chinese spoken) and other musicians.

So when the music came in, we found it very familiar, although it was new. And we began a journey of self-discovery.

By junior secondary school, we had video auditorium or video cinemas from (Chinese spoken), James Woo, those movies from Hong Kong. So for three years we were watching martial arts movies, Kung Fu movies. They had not been found in mainland China, because after 1949, cultural and undertakings were monopolised and censored. We did not understand the swordsmen and we did not know anything until then about the spies of the

Ming dynasty, the eunuchs or the tricks they were up to or the atrocities they committed, et cetera.

However, there did not become any conscious cultural awareness, because in our bloodstream there was a DNA which had injected into our bloodstream from a very young age and that was red culture revolutionary culture.

After I entered Beijing Film Academy, I started writing screenplays, scripts. I forgot myself, because we had to imagine, we had to imagine something. Because revolutionary culture by definition is popular culture plus romanticism or legend. Reality is we have all the people as our audience. On the other hand, we need imagination, we need fantasy to escape from reality because each of us was only at school in the machinery of the state. Individuals were not allowed to exist. So we lost our own identities.

So I wrote about life and death and big broad historical background.

However, the culture from other Chinese language communities, for example Ho Show Shine's (?) movie, that movie was about a group of young people in Taiwan in the 80s who worked in cities.

After watching that film, as someone from Xian Zi(?) in mainland China, I found that very familiar, as if it was a depiction of the life of my friends. I was mesmerised for several days. I did not know why I reacted that way. Later I realised maybe Ho Show Shine's movie had personal experience and personal individual memory. And that habit had not been felt in my body for a long time. From then on, I began to realise the limitations of the culture I was in.

I want to talk about the experience of this generation of directors or, more broadly, artists. When we were born, there was a lot of negative factors flowing in our blood vessels. The modernity, modernisation, is a process of overcoming our own cultural limitations and negative impact.

From Ho Show Shine's movie, I studied this thinking process and then at one point I saw Angels of the Road directed Yen Wu Zhe and I realised that there was a big gap in our cultural heritage because that movie was about the ordinary people in the neighbourhood in Shanghai. The lead actor was Zhou Zhan (?), the lead actress was Zhou Shuen (?).

There was an imagination of very familiar day-to-day life, and that kind of genre had been missing from the Chinese screen for a very long time at that time.

After 1949, maybe within a broader life structure, the employer, the organisation you work for, the unit, or rather that way played or featured importantly in your life. There were no individuals to speak of. The attitude of respecting daily life had disappeared and my predecessors, the fifth generation of directors, their artistic space did not show daily life. Their movies tended to portray western China, the desert, the landscape, and the stately homes, nothing to do with ordinary people's ordinary life.

But when I saw the Angels of the Road by Yen Wu Zhe, I started thinking why was there such departure or a gap in our historical heritage lineage? I was born and bred in mainland China. There were so many classics, so much literature, so much ancient literature and all the history took place more or less on the territory of mainland China. Naturally we considered ourselves as the main players in Chinese language culture.

Later I realised that was not necessarily the case. Actually different forms of culture such as pop culture. The traditional culture was extended and developed by places like Hong Kong and other Chinese community diasporas. For example, in the new love story by Dung Scherping in Hong Kong, I saw snippets of Yen Wu Zhe's movie, and also in Hong Kong we see this long form of Chinese script everywhere, which is the traditional long form of Chinese script. In mainland China, we don't see that. This semiotic familiarity is something we cannot describe with words because it's again flowing in our blood.

In Hong Kong, the Cantonese, Hong Kong Cantonese retains a lot of ancient phraseology and usage, such as when we refer to the police, the term is something that was used in ancient times.

And that changed my previous mindset about the positioning of our culture in mainland China being the dominant Chinese language carrier or Chinese culture carrier.

And I realised the limitations, I realised I had a lot to learn. That understanding came from the recognition of our own limitations and also from our understanding of the heritage. If we cannot make up for the gap, we cannot make up for the discrepancies. We cannot talk about modernity.

This self-awakening is important in another sense. For example, after the end of the cultural revolution, for many years, recently I realised when I was watching mainland Chinese movies, those mega-blockbusters, I think they were a continuation of the cultural revolution culture. There was a mass movement, movement of struggle, slogans shouted, "Let Wing come". That's dreadful, because there's no self-awakening in this. There's a consciousness of fascist ideology, surreal commercial packing, it has flowed back into our life and into our culture, and therefore we realised that the education that we have is very limited and we have not been able to accumulate culture. What is needed right now is the gene for self-awakening, so as to be able to adjust our creativity, our mindset.

I'll give you an example. A lot of people ask me, those of you who are young directors, you make a lot of movies in China, starting in 1999. The first movie was made by the fifth generation director's mother and starting from 1990 to now -- and of course this sort of division is problematic because directors who start to make movies in China in 1990 are being called sixth generation directors. Up until now we are still sixth generation directors. This is problematic. However, what is most problematic is the effort that we're making.

Now, from a more comprehensive way, there's been some improvement. For instance, movies in the past, most of them are of the mainstream, of the mainstream ideology, of the mainstream mindset, including the Yellow Soil, which was made in 1984. But it has a lot of limitations as well. For instance, it's not a feeling from the bottom of the heart of one individual. Instead it was directed by the mainstream culture and ideology, and the movie Hong Guo Leung, I think it was made in 1987, 1988, at the height, at the peak of the reform, so the society, the masses wanted someone very strong, and then we saw this movie being made and so this movie tried to accommodate the masses' mindset.

Starting in the sixth generation, the role or the identity started to change. Gradually it changed from a collective to the individual, which is in line with the songs we were listening to, as I mentioned earlier in my

presentation, where in the very beginning we were listening to songs glorifying, praising the party and then gradually moving to songs praising the heart of the moon, et cetera.

Now at that time we wanted to reflect the individuality so such genre we could see that these movies are being very critical, being critical of our helplessness. This is actually very healthy, because in the way of reform and changes, a lot of individuals are feeling very helpless, and this really is therapeutic to the audience and this really is the truth. And this really is the thrust of creativity, the thrust of creation, because movies, after all, is part of the creativity process.

So at that time we started to read fiction by Eileen Chang or the Spring of a Little City, which is very famous nowadays. However, when I was in school, this sort of what we call soft movies were not known at all. And because of the movie industry here in Hong Kong, because of the different efforts, these sort of movies were introduced to China, which becomes a very important genre for us.

Now so us directors, our role has been changing from just movie directors to an author, to a writer.

We like to use long lenses. A lot of people ask us why do we like to use long lenses? Is it because we want to cut down our cost? I don't think so. Not because it's very convenient. However, it has certain attitude. We want to be very objective of what we are shooting. We want to keep a distance between what we are shooting and ourselves, or between the audience. We could have a more holistic respect to the space. Especially the Hollywood genre where the audience is being forced to watch.

What we're trying to do is to allow the audience to seek the message that they want. This is an attitude, because there's no absolute objectivity. Because the context is the choice being made by the director. It is a reflection of the consciousness of the director.

And the public awareness, including justice, respect, freedom, can be penetrating into the genre of the movie; and therefore this is not just a reflection of the theme of the movie. The movie also needs to reflect the consciousness of the moviemaker.

This of course also refers to the subject that we are talking about, also refers to the audience that we are talking about. For instance, the underprivileged people, the marginalised people. This is all very natural development. Marginalisation of the public became a very important issue starting in 1990 in China. For instance, in the past, factory workers used to have a very stable life. The whole country was built upon the masses which composed of the farmers and workers and workers were treated as the major carrier of the state. However, because of reform and opening up, factory workers became jobless. This is a drastic change. And this change also marginalised the workers. Therefore we need to be very conscious of the contemporary social issues.

What is the issue then? The issue is: how can a movie play an important role in the midst of these drastic changes? My own feeling is individual is limited. My own effort is very limited. The effort, impact of one individual movie is very limited.

However, I think movie is still a very good pool for us to seek freedom. For instance, in 1980, feminism was not such a popular idea. However, people started to make movies based on feminism. Now, because of the discourse of the movie, because of the narration of the movie, people became more aware of the importance of feminism and feminists became to actively seek a space. And also this has to do with homosexuality. For instance the movie *Wedding Banquet* made by director Ang Lee.

Therefore, these movies provided a channel for us to channel out, because in China we are still being provided by the government a platform created by the government and therefore this movie provided us different channels and therefore it provided us another level because it allows us to reflect and also allows us to seek freedom.

Why do I say this provided us with freedom? Because in the process of creation, in the process of making a movie, we can enjoy the freedom of creation.

All these years, started from 1978 up until now, during this open-up policy, we have been focusing on the economy, on the well-being of the economy. We have not been focusing too much on individual. I was born in 1970 and I started to be educated in the 1980s, and therefore I think that a lot of moviemakers are being influenced by this misunderstanding that we need

to focus on the economy. Instead we need to be able to help people, we need to be able to provide the masses, the public, with a dream, with a channel for freedom.

So I've talked about the limitation and the value. Why is it a limitation? Maybe we are carrying a very heavy load of baggage, because we were heavily influenced by the public affairs.

I still remember this instance where somebody probably had done something wrong and this person was pushed up to the stage and everybody was accusing him, and this was very common during cultural revolution, and yet I still remember this. This is a collective memory and such collective memory still exists in the bottom of our heart.

And this may become an important issue that we need to tackle, and this can become a strong -- a support to our creativity as well. I don't know, but it does exist.

So I've talked about many different things, not in a very coherent way. I talk about modernity. We need of course to locate the negative elements within us and overcome them. Second of all, to learn from the tradition, to respect the past.

Thank you.