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*Et la vie continue...*

In Memory of Ms Wong Ain-ling



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## Prologue

In preparation for its official opening in 2001, the Hong Kong Film Archive's planning office actively reached out and built extensive contacts with the film industry and cultural community during the 1990s. Conversant with both Eastern and Western cultures, Ms Wong Ain-ling was by then a prominent film critic and film programmer. And with the retirement of Mr Yu Mo-wan as the head of the Archive's Research Unit in 2001, Ain-ling took up the post of Research Officer that year and stayed until 2009.

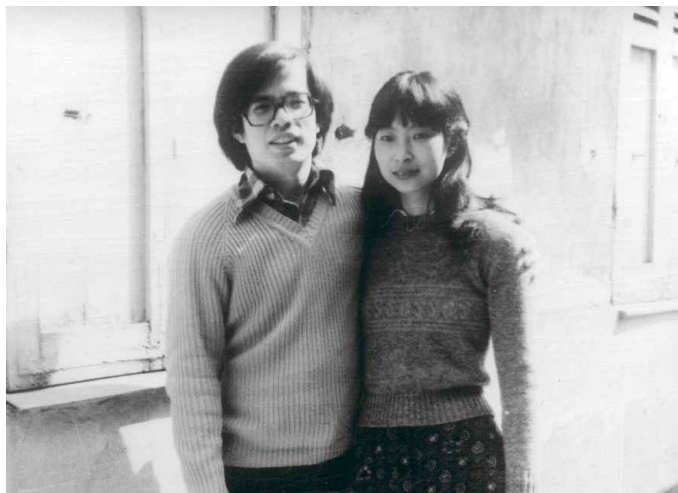
After the Archive's opening, Ain-ling built on the *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective* catalogues, a foundation set down by the Hong Kong International Film Festival for over 20 years. She synthesised a wealth of information over the following years, and produced more than a dozen of research publications. After leaving her post, Ain-ling continued to support the Archive's work, acting as adviser, as well as editor-in-chief for publications such as *Fei Mu's Confucius* (2010) and *Chinese Cinema: Tracing the Origins* (2011). Each monograph always culminated in a triple launch with a publication, screening programme and exhibition; Ain-ling worked closely with the respective programmers, analysed the design and scope of content for each publication with brilliant results. A few years ago in the United States, the Archive was fortunate enough to uncover dozens of old Hong Kong films from the 1930s and 40s. Ain-ling was naturally an integral part of the research team. She often contributed important insights on how to contrast such works with their counterparts in the Mainland and Hollywood.

Two long-term projects managed by the Research Unit continued to grow during Ain-ling's tenure. One was the Oral History Project, and the other Hong Kong Filmography Series; the Research Unit collated all the data, as well as provided the research and analysis necessary for the latter. The former task ensured all interview records are perpetually preserved within the Archive, while the latter involved the overall thinking and interpretation of information or ambiguities, besides the significant amount of research required. Relevant team members often sought out Ain-ling to lead discussions on such issues. Each aspect of this work was closely interrelated, such that every monographic study was like a jigsaw puzzle; where an image of Hong Kong cinema slowly emerged as the pieces were put together, from which we decided how the study could expand deeper or wider.

Besides research, Ain-ling was also deeply concerned with the overall development of the Archive. At the adviser meeting in November last year, focus of discussions was dominated by the digitisation of archival materials and copyright issues for their use. Afterwards, Ain-ling wrote especially to expound her perspective on these topics. Faced with the rapid development of digital technology, the archival community worldwide are doing all that we can to accelerate the digitisation process; regarding issues around access to archival materials, we will also strive to strike a balance between respecting rights of copyright holders and providing open access to our collections. We appreciate the exceptional and earnest aspirations our advisers hold for the Archive, and we will work tirelessly in different ways to meet their expectations.

From Research Officer to adviser, through the years Ain-ling's concern for the Archive had never waned. She always lit the way for us with the best possible light, whether restoring a film or leading a conference. We are all devastated by Ain-ling's passing. Her invaluable contributions will stay with us always, and the ways in which she had inspired us will never cease to grow and evolve.

Hong Kong Film Archive



Left The late 1970s, the halcyon days of youth: Mr and Mrs Louie in front of their home in Paris.

Right With son Wen-hsiu in New York in the early 1980s.



## A Few Things about Ain-ling and Film from the Early Years

✿ Louie Kin-sheun ✿

The Hong Kong Film Archive will publish a memorial volume in honour of Ain-ling and has asked me to write something. While this is a request I wouldn't think twice about agreeing to, it is a challenge. Ain-ling passed over just a fortnight ago. I'm still emotional. It is not easy to write something decent. I could only try.

In 1985, we returned to Hong Kong from our studies in France. Ain-ling went on to take up jobs at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong International Film Festival and Hong Kong Film Archive. Her contributions to film studies, if any, were mostly made while in the employment of these organisations. Although we were constant companions, I rarely paid attention to her work. Her colleagues, people who shared her interest, even certain of her friends would know more thoroughly than I of her connection with film in the last 30-odd years. There's not much left for me to say. So I am going to write about a few incidents that took place during the early years of Ain-ling's relationship with film. In this regard, I am more competent.

Ain-ling had loved the cinema since she was little. This was something she mentioned in her articles. I met Ain-ling and we fell in love after we got into the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I liked going to the cinema, but shouldn't be called a film buff. As a young man, I enjoyed war movies and cowboy movies. After we fell in love, I would go to the cinema with Ain-ling. I recall just one incident from this period, an embarrassing one. In 1973 I was the president of the Chinese University Student Union then. Another university student union was doing a film fundraising event. They gave me

two tickets for Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971) at the Lee Theatre. I appropriated the tickets and invited Ain-ling to come along. I had never watched a film at such a classy place. After it finished, I was completely baffled. It had gone over my head. As we stepped outside, Ain-ling was a little emotional. She said, hugging me, what a wonderful film. I didn't know what to say. I felt so stupid. I fudged my response. Ain-ling would get very sentimental watching movies. It was my first experience of it. Later in Paris, I passed the cinema on Rue Monsieur le Prince one day and noticed that *Death in Venice* was on. I quickly bought a ticket and went inside. And finally I managed to make heads or tails of the theme. When I got home, I told Ain-ling the entire story. She laughed very hard.

We went to France in the autumn of 1976. We spent two years in Bordeaux, studying French in the first. When the second year came round, I somehow found myself enrolled in African Studies while Ain-ling audited courses in art history at Bordeaux Montaigne University. We moved to Paris in the third year, where Ain-ling began formal film studies. This was something she had been wanting to do for a long time. She was with the film department of Université de Paris III. The university is located around the Censier metro station, so most people call it Censier. But its real name is Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. At the end of three years, she received a diploma in film studies. This was not easy. Most people who went to France for serious studies were like me. They would take higher degree programmes where the main requirement was the thesis, while classes and exams were few. This was the easier path. Ain-ling, however, started from





Left Members of the Film Programme Department of the Hong Kong Arts Centre in 1990: (From left) Wong Ain-ling, Yau Ching, Celia Lee, Kwok Ching-ling.

Right As Programmer (Asian Cinema) of the Hong Kong International Film Festival, 1990–96.



undergraduate studies. Undergraduate classes had more students, the teachers gave little guidance, and there were exams at the end of each term. You just can't hack it if your command of the language falls short. Besides French universities are known for being easy to enter but hard to graduate. Elimination is fierce. Starting from the first undergrad year, as Ain-ling did, was very rare in my social circle.

After three years of undergraduate studies, Ain-ling went to Université de Paris I for a diploma course in cinema and television, which she completed in autumn 1982. After that she went to Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales for the first year of doctoral studies. The abbreviation of this postgraduate degree was D.E.A. and her thesis supervisor was Christian Metz, a famous semiotics scholar at the time. At this research institute, she specialised in linguistics, not film, and the title of her dissertation was 'On Chinese Cinema of the 1930s'. She had discussed with Metz about this as a possible topic, and he had remarked that he could only supervise the theoretical aspects as he wasn't familiar with Chinese cinema. I remember Ain-ling was hugely influenced by Lin Nien-tung at the time. Her dissertation had to do with the long take and the film *Spring Silkworms* (1933) was the focus of discussion, or one of the focuses. She finished this postgraduate course in autumn 1983. The next step was to embark on the thesis for doctoral studies. But we left France the next year and she didn't continue. Ain-ling did not lament this as degrees did not mean much to her. After her dissertation, she already knew that academic research was not for her. Later whenever that dissertation came up in conversation, she would laugh in spite of herself. It should be lying somewhere in our house. When I feel better, maybe I will dig it out.

We didn't go to the cinema very often in our seven years in

France. Tickets were a luxury for poor students. Though most cinema houses had student discounts, they were still expensive. We usually waited until the bargain day (I think it was Tuesday) to go. Despite this Ain-ling would still buy *Pariscopes* every week. The magazine has listings of performances in Paris in the coming week, which includes films of course. We lived on Boulevard Voltaire, not far from a small cinema named Saint Ambroise, that occasionally showed art house titles. Ain-ling would sometimes see those. The time she watched films most frequently and systematically was at Université de Paris III. The film department had screenings at noon every day. The facilities were less than desirable but they showed all kinds of genres, especially old films. Ain-ling would be there watching in the dark, bread or a simple pastry in hand. The foundations of her knowledge of Western cinema were formed at that time.

Around 1983, Lin Nien-tung came to Paris after attending the Chinese Film Festival in Turin, Italy. We met up. Later Lin Nien-tung and Koo Siu-sun et al initiated an old-film-watching tour to the China Film Archive in Beijing. Ain-ling flew to join them from Paris. Such expenses were not easily affordable for poor students like us. Not long after, La Pagode cinema house in Paris threw a Chinese film festival. Ain-ling and I watched a few old movies there. This was how Ain-ling nurtured her knowledge and interest in Chinese cinema despite being in France.

My emotions are still raw, but time is short. So these reminiscences will have to do for now. I will tidy them up when there's a chance. (Translated by Piera Chen)

22 January 2018

Louie Kin-sheun, Honorary Research Fellow, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The French Connection, 1981: (Far right) Painter Tai Hoi-ying; (2nd right) Koo Siu-sun; (far left & centre) Tsang Wing-chuen, wife Lau Siu-bing & daughter Camille; (2nd left) Wong Ain-ling.



## Wong Ain-ling, Dreamer within a Dream

✿ Koo Siu-sun ✿

Wong Ain-ling once said: 'I'm able to dream day or night. I was born a dreamer.'

Only dreamers who love to dream truly appreciate dreams. Literature represents the dreams that you can hear; painting represents the dreams that you can see. But cinema represents the dreams that you can both see and hear. *Dreamy Talks* is the title of her collection of essays on cinema.

In Wong's writings on the relationship between dreams and cinema, she moved fluidly between film, literature and painting. Recounting the first time that she read *Dream of the Red Chamber*: 'Each night, Baoyu, Daiyu, Xiangyun, Third Sister You, etc (characters from the novel) would slip into the nether regions of my consciousness, and become as intimate as close friends and family. Over the past month, I would enter the red chamber nightly and dream with none of the dread of a nightmare from which I could not awaken.' When reading works of literature, she immersed herself into the dreams of the writer, embracing the same emotions as the writer, tragic or otherwise.

Her critical appreciation was not limited to just sweet dreams; she did not discriminate against strange dreams and nightmares. Regardless of how odd a dream might appear, it could always be traced back to its source in reality. When viewing the portrayal of ordinary lives and events in the films of Arturo Ripstein, she was reminded of how the famous painting, *The Persistence of Memory* by surrealist painter, Salvador Dali, perfectly captured the mundane details that could be observed in our everyday lives:

Each object appears to be infused with the weight of the past—the clock folded over a tree branch like a wet towel, linen draped over the edge of a table—forever clinging to us like a ghost that refuses to move on.

She was an expert on the subject of dreams, and its Western and Eastern cultural-historical significance in both cinema and painting. She identified parallels in Eric Rohmer's *Die Marquise von O...*

(*The Marquise of O*, 1976) to Kunqu opera, *The Peony Pavilion* and Henry Fuseli's painting, *The Nightmare*:

Each time I viewed Eric Rohmer's *Die Marquise von O...*, I was reminded of Tang Xianzu's *The Peony Pavilion*... The two stories were written two centuries apart in completely different cultural contexts, yet the themes of irrepressible yearning for love is universal to both.

The young and widowed Marquise... (after spending a romantic evening with the Russian officer) is presented on screen, deep in slumber with her arms draped over the side of the bed, as if her soul had been unleashed. Her languorous form somehow appears even more sensual. Perhaps she's in the midst of a romantic dream, like Du Liniang in *The Peony Pavilion* from two centuries earlier. The tableau calls to mind the sexual fantasy in Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, and the voluptuous female figures depicted in the oil paintings of Ingres.

Eric Rohmer clearly made direct reference to Fuseli's *The Nightmare*.

'With love comes dreams, with dreams come drama.' If dreaming is a performative act in the service of love and desire, complete with stage makeup, then cinema is the manifestation of dreams on the silver screen. Wong Ain-ling's writings on film brilliantly explicated this relationship between dreams and cinema.

Her appreciation of dreams was not derived from the concept of illusion commonly associated with Buddhist philosophy. On the contrary, it came from her love of life, encompassing aspects both good and bad. Because she was able to immerse herself in life, she was filled with the vitality of life. Because she was able to distance herself from life, she rose above the mundane and saw far and wide. Should her soul one day be reincarnated, she is destined to return as a dreamer who loves to dream. (Translated by Sandy Ng)

Koo Siu-sun, veteran writer on cultural topics.

# A Return to *Paradis*—Remembering Wong Ain-ling

✧ Leo Lee Ou-fan ✧

When I first received news about Wong Ain-ling's sudden passing in her sleep, I was overcome with sadness. A friend forwarded me online an essay of hers entitled 'My Red Balloon'. Transfixed, I read it till the end, unable to set it down. I felt her presence there in those candid words imbued with poetry. A feeling struck me in that instant. Much like the French classic *Le ballon rouge* (*The Red Balloon*, 1956) cited in her essay, I imagined her spirit rising up slowly into the sky, as if entering an otherworldly paradise.

Wong had always been this 'wonder woman' to me. Even though we were only casual acquaintances, every time we met, I always walked away with a singular impression of her: a down-to-earth person, who was sincere and genuine. Despite her seemingly ordinary and unassuming demeanour, she was incredibly dedicated and conscientious in her professional life; her research on films was meticulous to a fault that could only inspire respect. I had always felt that hidden inside her was another world of wonder and beauty, which she might have only shared with her husband and family. After reading her 'Red Balloon' essay, I felt as if I had been granted a precious glimpse into a part of that world.

Louie Kin-sheun sent a request for me to say a few words at Wong's funeral. I felt moved by a solemn duty to write a tribute for her, but was unsure where to start. These last few nights, I unconsciously pulled out a few DVDs from the 'François Truffaut Collection' re-released in Hong Kong. They included special commentaries by Wong and Shu Kei on *Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*, 1959) and *Jules et Jim* (*Jules and Jim*, 1962). I was just about to view them again, when I recalled Wong's anecdote in her essay on a different French film: Wong described how on a return visit to Paris, she inadvertently discovered an old movie magazine in a bookstore for cinephiles; a magazine that specialised in publishing screenplays and inside was the script to *Les enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, 1945). She was as excited as the little kid who found the red

balloon, and she bought that magazine even though it cost 45 euros. Her 'red balloon' was old movies. I also share many such experiences. Time and again I would tell myself to stop spending exorbitant sums to buy that rare DVD of a classic movie or master conductor, only to do it over and over again. This is what film 'addiction' or 'obsession' is. I regret not having taken the opportunity to discuss old movies with Wong, including the film *Les enfants du paradis*. I will simply translate it as 'The Dream of Return to Paradise,' because movies are paradise to fellow film devotees like us. To watch a film is like entering the realm of dreams, each shot of a film renders the sceneries of an imaginary world onto the silver screen. I spent countless hours and the better half of my life 'lost' in cinema halls, something that I do not regret even now. Memories exist in much the same way: a series of fragments connected together by train of thoughts and feelings like the montage of a film, at times becoming a story. I recalled the title of Wong's collected works also contained this very word 'dream' twice.

In her essay, Wong also mentioned another French film *Sundays and Cybele* (*Les Dimanches de Ville d'Avray*, 1962), a story about a middle-aged man and a young girl. Wong recollected how she was overcome with tears the first time she saw it, and went on to name her niece after the film's title character. I had also seen the film at an old theatre in Chicago and was unexpectedly moved. Subsequently, I visited an old friend Chang Shi-kuo in the outskirts of Chicago, and met with his wife and two daughters. As it turned out, one of his daughters was also named Cybele after the same character from the film. Our generation of literature and art aficionados appears to share quite a lot in common. I am perhaps around ten years older than Wong and Chang, but I still very much identify myself as part of their generation of 'literary youths', who grew up on European arthouse films.

I arrived in Hong Kong in 1970, as a lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I attended a film club event



## Prochainement

Michael Lam



Leo Lee Ou-fan accepted Wong Ain-ling's invitation to contribute a piece to *The Cathay Story*.

at the City Hall Theatre organised by Studio One. At the time I did not know Wong. It was not until decades later, when I returned and met Law Kar at a screening in the Hong Kong Film Archive, that I finally got to know Wong as Law's colleague. It was also at that time that I had the chance to see some of Wong's writings on the aesthetics of Chinese cinema. I had always been interested in old Chinese movies and it was then that I began researching into the field. I remember once I wanted to watch a couple of Cantonese film adaptations of modern literature classics, and had especially contacted Wong to arrange for a viewing with my wife at the Film Archive's screening rooms. I didn't want to interrupt her work after the viewing and thus lost a precious opportunity to discuss Chinese films with her. Afterwards Wong invited me to contribute an article, which I happily accepted. Our interaction was only limited within the scope of this writing collaboration. A gentleman's friendship is as tranquil as water; this idiom could be aptly used to describe my friendship with both Wong and Louie.

When Wong left us so abruptly of late, I, like many of our friends, felt a sudden loss and a feeling of despondency. How I long to see that usual smile on her face whenever we met. Last night as I revisited *Les enfants du paradis*, I imagined Wong also watching this timeless classic: when the film opens on a stage with its curtains drawing apart, within it another vibrant and idyllic world begins to emerge before our eyes. I see Wong smiling as she walks serenely into the scene—that is her *paradis*, her bliss. May she rest in peace there forever. (Translated by Hayli Chwang)

*Paradis* in the essay title is 'Paradise' in French.

Leo Lee Ou-fan, Sin Wai Kin Professor of Chinese Culture, Faculty of Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

You said, during your days in Paris, you'd bring your kid to this neighbourhood theatre close to your apartment which showed movies for children at weekends. I am not familiar with Boulevard Voltaire and its vicinity, but while living in the 16th arrondissement, I would take the bus to the town centre; one of the routes was rather twisty, with a theatre along the lines of what you described on the way. It wasn't the same district, but still I would let myself imagine you, a family of three having a whale of a time there. What was that you were watching? Charlie Chaplin shorts, Walt Disney cartoons, or *Le ballon rouge* (*The Red Balloon*, 1956)? By the early 1980s, Miyazaki Hayao had yet to come on the scene, I believe.

It was perhaps serendipity that we belonged to the same time, that we loved the same movies. Even though the part of Paris you frequented was not exactly the same as mine, thanks to memories in films it felt like we were crossing paths every day. Today, the old home of Robert Bresson in Île St Louis still carries the same nameplate at the front door. Last month, I took a picture of it as I was passing by. I'd meant to send it to you but was out and about running Christmas errands. A moment's inattention, as it is, has turned into wistful pangs of regret.

Arletty in her twilight years lived somewhere not far away from the famous Pont Mirabeau. As I looked up to her residence from the pavement, this classic quote from *Les enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, 1945) sprang to mind: 'Paris is small for those who share so great a passion as ours.' Almost boastfully I wrote you a letter, bragging about my encounter with the retired actress separated by a mere





Left A 'selfie' by Michael Lam in Wong Ain-ling's photo album.



Photo by Michael Lam

Right Robert Bresson's name is still there at his old home's entrance.

wall. Ever since Emmanuelle Riva's departure, the mailbox at her home has been left to stand forlorn. I miss her sorely, and I know you know my sore: *If Spring in a Small Town* (1948) were brought to France in the 1960s, she would be the best candidate to fill Wei Wei the heroine's shoes.

At the Chinese restaurant in Belleville where the dialect spoken went right over my head, the Wenzhou *Tanci* narrative-singing you introduced to me has stuck in my mind ever since. All those tales about the scholar and the beauty, the emperor and the commander lilt on and on, glimmering in the dust of Shaoxing opera. And here comes the old master's heartfelt advice for his protégées in *Two Stage Sisters* (1965): 'Let not your name be tainted. Pour heart and soul into *the roles you play*.' Change it to *the films you watch*, and it would best capture you.

One day when you were talking about Jean Renoir's greatness, you said it lies in his effortless, thorough understanding of the human condition which permeates his works, even beyond the frame. We both happened to like *Partie de campagne* (*A Day in the Country*, 1936) more than *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939) and *La grande illusion* (*The Grand Illusion*, 1937) enshrined in the hall of fame—most likely a result of our dispositions. Last year when I came back to Hong Kong I brought you the disc set of *Cinéma Cinémas*, a French television programme all the rage back in the 1980s and 90s. Its rerun some ten years ago has left me spellbound to this day. I figured you should've watched it in Paris, only to find a clueless look on your face

when I mentioned the name. A collection of interesting short snippets, such as filmmaker interviews and introduction to new releases, this consummate event guide put together by amateur film buffs weighs no less than the *Bible*. It has also trailers, my favourite since childhood. That's why I've always been punctual as a moviegoer, raring to enjoy the joy brought by 'Showing Next'. What makes the magic of light and shadow so fascinating? This could well be a perennial riddle. For its keenest followers, film is their most sacred religion.

As for those trailers at second-run theatres, upcoming films are said to open not sometime in the future but in the past. The audience, however, find nothing odd about it, as if it were an allusion to the concept of reincarnation: all great films transcend the limits of time, living one life after another. Last week, didn't I just rewatch *L'Atalante* (1934) at a small theatre in the 5th arrondissement? The bride dancing gracefully in the water is just as beautiful as the first time I saw her.

Apparently, your quiet serenity leaves nothing to be said by an unsophisticated blabber like me. Just as many Ozu films which end with an empty shot, let me wrap up this short piece with this: Across the sky, sounds could be heard no more. Yet flowers must be blooming on the opposite shore. (Translated by Elbe Lau)

*Prochainement* in the essay title is 'Showing Next' in French.

Michael Lam, freelance writer based in Paris.

## A Few Memories and Reflections

❖ Sek Kei ❖

I had known Wong Ain-ling for a long time, perhaps more than 30 years? At first, I only knew her as a friend of Ada Loke's 'French Connections'. There were various young people leaving Hong Kong to study, live abroad or backpack around France at the time, and for some to return again after. Many were writers or painters and usually film buffs. Loke and Wong both shared a passion for French New Wave directors such as François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette; often the two would arrange movie dates to watch more obscure French films together.

Since Wong worked at various times for the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong International Film Festival and Hong Kong Film Archive, we would often cross paths as acquaintances. The most time we spent together was about 20 years ago, when I travelled with Wong to Taiwan for the annual Chinese-language films selection hosted by *China Times Express*.<sup>1</sup> Among those present were Peggy Chiao and Edmond Wong from Taiwan, England's Tony Rayns, and Sam Ho also flew back from the United States for the invitation. We spent every day watching films and engrossed in discussions, between breaks of eating and drinking.

We also met with Taiwanese directors Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang and Chen Kuo-fu amongst others, as well as Chiu Kang-chien who returned from Hong Kong to prepare for shooting of his next film. Wong and I even caught up for lunch with an old friend from home, Koo Siu-sun, in Taipei.

Koo Siu-sun was then the editor for Taiwan's *Han Sheng Magazine*. During the early 1980s, Lin Nien-tung, Koo Siu-sun, William Tay, Wong Kai-chee and others established the Chinese Film Association in Hong Kong. Still studying abroad in France at the time, Wong was already a member and had accompanied the association both to Beijing and Shanghai to see important films preserved by the China Film Archive. The purpose was to make a selection for screening at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, which became 'Early Chinese Cinema: The Era of Exploration'.

With the start of China's economic reforms, old films from before the founding of the People's Republic of China and the Cultural Revolution were able to be 'unearthed' and screened

in Europe and Hong Kong. A Chinese cinema retrospective was first organised by the Hong Kong Film Culture Centre. It was followed by the Chinese Film Association's 'The Era of Exploration', with a focus on early Chinese films from the 1920s and 30s that included some rare silents. Those retrospectives were especially unforgettable, because they offered us the opportunity to view such classics as *Way Down West* (1927), *The Big Road* (1934), *The Goddess* (1934) and *Spring in a Small Town* (1948).

Afterwards, Wong continued to explore early cinema at the Hong Kong International Film Festival and Hong Kong Film Archive. In fact, besides her vastly admired elegant and perceptive critiques of international arthouse films, Wong's research and publications on early Chinese cinema are a seminal body of work that must not be ignored, particularly her achievements at the Film Archive. Early Cantonese and Mandarin films, which she paid much attention to, are closely related to Chinese-language cinema at large. The influx of Chinese filmmakers from Shanghai to Hong Kong and also Taiwan is an important page in film history.

I remember once Loke and I accompanied Wong and another colleague at the Film Archive, Angel Shing, to the staff dormitory of Shaw Brothers Studio for an interview with retired film director Chang Cheh. Wong drove us and on the ride she mentioned how her son knew about King Hu, but not the respected master Chang Cheh, whose influence played a significant role in revolutionising the *wuxia* genre. Indeed, the inevitable passage of time had seen many film legends fade into obscurity for a new generation. Although lamentable, it also served as a reminder of the importance of our work in preserving knowledge of past works and old masters, to preclude the tragedy of memories of them fading.

Soon after, Chang Cheh passed on in 2002. Wong and Shing both attended his funeral, and after the service they joined Chua Lam and myself for lunch.

Ironically, I saw a lot more of Wong after her departure from the Film Archive, because I went hiking often with her husband Louie Kin-sheun. Due to her heart condition she could not join in our mountaineering adventures, but would sometimes have



Soulmates and kindred spirits: (From left) Louie Kin-sheun & wife Wong Ain-ling; Sek Kei & wife Ada Loke.

dinner with us afterwards at a restaurant or at their home. Her son with Louie would also join us, whenever he was back in Hong Kong. I was thus given a glimpse of another side to Wong as a caring wife and mother, as well as a loving daughter. I even got to sample her Jiangnan cooking.

A few months ago, Wong suffered a mild stroke. Even after that we had dinner together and she appeared to be fine. Although we heard that she would occasionally faint, Wong was still keeping busy with travels and moving plans. We all thought that she would fully recover after everything was more settled; little did we know she would not wake up from her sleep. It was a small comfort to know that she passed without much pain while sleeping. More telling was the rush of sentiments in the news and online commemorating Wong, which was perhaps even more fervent than the passing of other high-profile celebrities and directors.

Wong Ain-ling is someone worthy of committing to our collective memory, so are the countless filmmakers Wong so respected who came before her, and of course her life's work in studying old films, mainly from Hong Kong, but also extending beyond to all Chinese-speaking territories and the world at large.

Just over a month ago, we had consulted together with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. After the meeting, she wrote down 'A Few Reflections' for the department and other advisers who were present, with suggestions on improving the Film Archive's efficacy. The day before her passing, she still gave a lecture honouring the late Barbara Fei and her father Fei Mu.

We live at a time where relentless pursuit of the new often means devaluating the past, but we must not forget this great woman, her vision and her invaluable contributions. (Translated by Hayli Chwang)

#### Editor's Note

1 The year was 1990.

Sek Kei, veteran film critic.

## We Were All Looking for You

✧ Yau Ching ✧

Many people remember you as erudite and sophisticated. I want to talk about other qualities of yours.

During her tenure at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Ms Wong disrupted the status quo and programmed the first women's film festival in the Chinese-speaking world.<sup>1</sup> Amongst her cohorts, I was almost her sole supporter and cheerleader. So she decided to give me the title of 'co-curator'. The festival inspired our friends in Taiwan. They even sent letters to Hong Kong, seeking information about our film sources. Ms Wong later forwarded the letters to me. I was in New York at the time. They were particularly interested in *The Arch* (1970). Ten years later, director Tong Shu-shuen and women's cinema ended up being the subject of my thesis. 'Women Make Waves', the women's film festival in Taiwan, is still going strong after 20 years. Ms Wong was also responsible for the first gay and lesbian film festival in the Chinese-speaking world.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the act of sodomy was still a criminal offence in Hong Kong.

In colonial culture, English was the language predominantly used in cultural organisations. The subtitles for art films were only available in English. It was a common practice. Even discussions were conducted in English. Everyone refused to even acknowledge that there was a problem. But what about post-screening discussions with audiences at the Arts Centre? Ms Wong's directive was: 'They should be conducted in Cantonese.' What about the foreigners in the audience? 'They should learn Cantonese. When we're abroad, don't we all learn the local language?' How radical! Winnie Fu said she had once enrolled in one of Ms Wong's film studies classes. Ms Wong made it clear from the onset that students were required to view every film screened in her class or they would receive a failing grade. In Hong Kong today, who would dare take such a radical approach?

Film criticism has never been taken seriously in Hong Kong. But Ms Wong's books on film always included a bilingual index of film titles (in Chinese and foreign language) accompanied by page numbers. The index was arranged according to the number of strokes of the film title's first Chinese character. This was even more radical. It has taken me over three decades to even begin to appreciate how forward-thinking she was and to learn from her example. It had nothing to do with the provincial attitudes





Yau Ching (left) & Wong Ain-ling in 2013

surrounding localism. It was about not submitting to the hegemony of Western cultural imperialism—it was a way of putting a critique of colonialism into practice and reinforcing a sense of our own agency and the value of our culture. From curating and teaching to writing, she took everything more seriously than anyone I knew. She wasn't concerned with how much she sacrificed and how much there was to gain. As a result, she burned herself out physically and mentally.

The public may remember Ms Wong for resigning from her post at the Hong Kong International Film Festival over the film embargo controversy. But we should also remember her political sensitivity and decades-long contributions to the study of Chinese cinema. Thanks to Ms Wong's efforts, the centre of discourse for leftist Chinese cinema (including Hong Kong) was not the resource-rich Beijing but the culturally-deprived Hong Kong. In the late 1990s, after the book on director Fei Mu was published, I asked her: 'What's next?' She replied: 'It almost killed me putting this book together!' Still, Ms Wong brought out one book after another—acting as researcher and writer, and serving as editor. During this period, the Film Archive was the envy of our Mainland and Taiwan counterparts; it was the only government cultural institution with such vision and intellectual rigour in the history of Hong Kong.

Ain-ling is the best editor I've ever encountered. When I was working at the Arts Centre, I was responsible for the text of the Chinese publicity materials for all film programmes. Ms Wong had final approval. She never amended my text, even my translations of foreign film titles. She once stood in front of my desk and addressed me in her usual peaceful, slightly jesting tone: 'A friend just called to complain. *Gilda* (1946) was originally translated ages ago into Chinese as (lit.) "Loose Woman Gilda", we couldn't just change the Chinese title to (lit.) "Gilda". I don't remember my exact response, but I must have dismissed it with laughter since I was quite young then. We stared at each other without ever resolving the issue. In the end, we left the title as (lit.) 'Gilda' in Chinese. In hindsight, in a place like Hong Kong

where social values were so skewed, Ms Wong offered me a form of refuge. I learned from her how to persevere and not care about what others thought, but never managed to achieve her level of sangfroid.

This freewheeling approach was also my downfall; I developed the habit of expanding simple blurbs into prose poems and essays. Later on when I was studying in New York, I was contracted to write for the Hong Kong Arts Festival but my work was ultimately rejected. The editor retorted: 'Are you trying to ruin me?'

Ms Wong was the sole reason why I became hopelessly addicted to old movies. When she gave me an assignment, she would always prepare a list of films along with a bag of VHS tapes from undisclosed sources. She assumed that I would be interested. Even if I wasn't initially, I would be converted by the time I completed the assignment, with Ms Wong's expert guidance. She shepherded me like a sheep towards the bright, open path and the bountiful surprises ahead. I always assumed that this path was only beginning.

Ain-ling, we were all looking for the right person but to no avail, and so we kept coming to you over and over again. You countered the criticism that Sun Yu was a 'utopian', asserting that Sun's purity and naivety allowed him to filter out the grim realities of life in order to create kind, virtuous characters. Wu Yonggang was also 'introspective, sensitive and intuitive,' 'more interested in the nature of things than the phenomenon itself.' His works were full of self-reflection and profundity, rarely found in Chinese cinema. You saw Fei Mu as 'worldly and observant but free of the trappings of entitlement and ambition.' His works 'reflected middle-class morality while also transcending middle-class conventions.' Between ethics and self-interest, between tradition and modernity, Fei was able to establish his own worldview. Ain-ling, you transposed light and shadow, the real and the unreal, internalising the experience. Your writing was sensitive, and always expressed your authentic self.

You will be remembered in the annals of Hong Kong and Chinese cinemas. If the films and the freedom that you aspired to were heaven-sent, you have finally returned to a place more liberating than any film or any world. (Translated by Sandy Ng)

#### Editor's Notes

- 1 Held in May 1990, the festival featured multiple programmes including 'A Tribute to Two Pioneers: Dorothy Arzner and Maya Deren,' 'She Tells Stories Too, But...,' 'Film of the Month: *The Arch*,' 'Language, Identity, Sexual Politics,' 'German Women Filmmakers Showcase,' 'Telefilms by Hong Kong Women,' and 'Moving Images: Videos by Hong Kong Independent Female Filmmakers Ellen Pau and May Fung' (screening & seminar).
- 2 'Gay and Lesbian Film Season (1 to 3)' was held at the Hong Kong Arts Centre from January to March 1989. Edward Lam served as guest programmer.

Yau Ching, Honorary Professor, The University of Hong Kong.





Between *hiver* ('winter') and *printemps* ('spring'): Wong Ain-ling at the 17th Hong Kong International Film Festival.

## Remembering Ain-ling

❖ Shu Kei ❖

In the still of the night, memories of Ain-ling came flooding back. Having known her for over 30 years, there were quite a few things to reminisce.

I can no longer recall how or when we met (I am sure it must have been a film-related gathering, screening, conference or discussion). However, I do remember the first time we had a tête-à-tête together. It was in a restaurant (or cafe) near the Hong Kong Arts Centre, between April and May of 1990; my documentary *Sunless Days* had just been screened at the Hong Kong International Film Festival. At that time she was the film programmer for the Arts Centre, and she knew that *Sunless Days* would have little chance to be screened at commercial cinemas. Therefore she planned several screening sessions for the film at the Arts Centre during the first anniversary commemorating the 'Tiananmen Square protests of 1989' (in the following years, every 4 June commemoration of the protests held at the Arts Centre would always screen *Sunless Days* or another film distributed by me, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*). The details of our discussion escape me now, but I still remember the warm glow of the sun that day shining over Ain-ling, as she picked up the coffee cup gently and took a sip with such grace and composure. Back in the day, I was by contrast restless and impatient (I am a little better these days, but still the same). Ain-ling taught me what it meant to be 'serene'.

There was once in Japan, (it might have been a cocktail reception at the Tokyo International Film Festival, a rather dull event) when suddenly, a Japanese friend mentioned

Momoi Kaori was also present and could introduce us. Momoi had always been my favourite contemporary Japanese actress. I was elated, but also unnerved. Although Momoi was getting on in age, she was as vibrant and charismatic as ever, especially her distinctive and magnetic voice. After I shook hands at the end with Momoi, I turned away only to bump straight into Ain-ling. My stunned awkwardness was on full display; Ain-ling became one of the rare few people who had ever witnessed my crimson blush.

There was another time (I have forgotten the year), when Ain-ling was the Asian film programmer for the Hong Kong International Film Festival. She was planning a tribute event for Hara Setsuko. However, the Japanese film company Toho in Hong Kong was exceedingly difficult to deal with and the film rental was incredibly expensive. Ain-ling wanted very much to show the two films Hara had collaborated on with director Naruse Mikio, *Sudden Rain* (1956) and *Daughters, Wives and a Mother* (1960). Toho insisted that 35mm prints of the films would not be available, until the rights for Hong Kong to both films were sold. They would not make a new print just for the film festival. Ain-ling knew Naruse was my favourite director and approached me to help purchase the rights for the films (I was running a distribution company, Creative Workshop, at the time), with her footing some of the costs privately. It was an offer that I could not refuse, and we both managed to get what we had wished for. Unfortunately, the films never made it to the grand public; we never garnered enough interest from local cinemas.

## My Friend Wong Ain-ling

❖ Sam Ho ❖

Another ‘collaboration’ I had with Ain-ling was when I purchased Jacques Demy’s *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* (*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, 1964) and *Les demoiselles de Rochefort* (*The Young Girls of Rochefort*, 1967). I invited her to translate the Chinese subtitles for the latter one; it was my turn to offer her something she could not refuse. Ain-ling worked industriously on the project, with oratory of the translated song lyrics especially beautiful. A copy of the film still exists in good shape. I must organise a special screening as a tribute to her. I am sure it would make her very happy.

The last memory I had of Ain-ling was our final correspondence on WhatsApp. It was after a film consultation with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department where we saw one another. I had made a couple of recommendations to the Hong Kong Film Archive, in regard to the digitisation of and public access to their collections. And I asked Ain-ling about the Archive’s feedback. She responded that she was drafting an email to urge the Archive to take action as soon as possible. We both abhorred bureaucracy and had often discussed strategies to deal with that over many shared issues. Soon after, the Archive sent me Ain-ling’s last email; a bittersweet text filled with earnest sentiments that were at times heartrending. She passed away quietly just after that.

On 13 January, I communicated with Sam Ho. He replied: ‘We lost a great friend. And the world, a great person.’

Indeed, we did. (Translated by Hayli Chwang)

Shu Kei, Hong Kong film director and seasoned film critic.

Ain-ling was one of my best friends. Yet we were never very close, though we shared a love for cinema and we had similar tastes. We would call when I was in town: ‘Let’s chat...’ and our talks often went all over the place, covering whatever was in our minds, seldom serious but—I’d like to believe—often intelligent.

I treasured that relationship when she was alive. Now that she’s gone, it’s another form of treasuring.

Ain-ling liked to praise people for being ‘genuine’. That’s because she was genuine. I had great respect for how she kept a balance between being genuine and being human, a kind of balance found in ordinary Chinese people. In our chats, she would sometimes say, smiling sweetly, ‘let me gossip a little...’—Not only was what she gossiped not mean-spirited or agenda-serving, but, it turned out, actually quite humanistic in her gentle concern for people. That was a balance I had always wanted to learn from her but never managed.

We had both lived in the West for some time and shared a view of the West, the world and Hong Kong quite different from those around us. I often told her I envy her and Kin-sheun, her husband, for having come back to Hong Kong much earlier than I did and been able to study Chinese culture much earlier, integrating that effort with their experience in the West to think about Hong Kong, the world and humanity.

That, and her unique character, realised another balance. She was highly principled, yet had the sophistication to understand the importance of accord. Facing unjust situations, or simply people or happenings with which she didn’t agree, she was able to summon a serenity that would ease the tension. To be able to live in an environment that allowed her to be herself while also having the ability and personality to realise that environment was a blessing for Ain-ling.



Left Visiting Singapore in 2005 for a research project on Kong Ngee Company: (From left) Wong Ain-ling, Grace Ng, Sam Ho.

Right Sam Ho (right) and Wong Ain-ling visiting China Film Archive, Beijing in 2006 to view rarely accessible works of Zhu Shilin et al produced by the Japanese-controlled China United Film Company during wartime.



Many had said that working with Ain-ling was a pleasure. I totally agree. We had similar views on art, allowing us to work in rapport. We both held strong opinions, but didn't like to change others' views, which happened to enable us to influence each other. Working at the Hong Kong Film Archive, we were discovering at the same time brand-new interests in old films, acquiring brand-new learnings and experiencing brand-new artistic inspirations. We in turn were able to inspire each other and grow together.

The study of history is a rich arena that can be accessed through many different entries. At the Film Archive, we had a shared direction for artistic and research endeavours, that it should fall between academic pursuit and film criticism. Working together for only a few years, I felt we had done some good, meaningful work. And it was fun too.

My Film Archive experience had a lot to do with Ain-ling. I had been working on a project basis with the Archive before its official opening but, because my family was in the United States, I was reluctant to get more involved. When the Programmer position became available a few years into the Archive's official opening, Ain-ling asked me to consider. I was not interested, working instead with her to find a candidate. When those efforts turned futile, she asked me to reconsider. I must confess that I had quite a few reservations when I finally decided to take the job. If not for Ain-ling, I would have missed my wonderful experience at the Archive.

Tracing back further, I actually owe it to Ain-ling for my returning to work in Hong Kong. We first met in 1990, in Taiwan, when we served on the jury of the Chinese-language films selection hosted by *China Times Express*. Also on the jury was critic Sek Kei. It was a wonderful experience and all the jury members from Hong Kong got along well. We were cooped up in a screening room at Taipei's Hsi-men-ting and,

if we finished watching films early, taken to nice restaurants to savour different Taiwan cuisines. One day, jury organisers took us to the set of a film Edward Yang was making; later, we learned that the film was titled *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991). Another evening, we were taken to sing karaoke with Hou Hsiao-hsien. It was under such pleasant circumstances that my friendship with Ain-ling began.

After jury duties wrapped and I went back to Houston, Texas, Ain-ling called, asking me to write a short essay for the Hong Kong International Film Festival catalogue. Thus started my involvement with the Film Festival. Less than two years later, the phone rang again. The Retrospective section of the Festival needed an English Editor, and she asked if I was interested. I signed on immediately, having just left a full-time job. It was fortuitous that the theme of that retrospective happened to be Mandarin Films and Popular Songs, an especially fun topic, educating from me an interest in old Hong Kong films, leading me towards a cinema I didn't bother to care while growing up, towards a path of reliving a childhood I managed to miss. Thus began my journey of working in Hong Kong.

Ain-ling was good, kind and intelligent. She loved to consider herself lazy, but with things she cared about, she was good in planning and quite effective in realising the plans. She believed in *yuanfen*, inadequately translated here as 'serendipity', and loved to associate with those who were *touyuan*, inadequately translated as 'serendipitously congenial'. It was on *yuanfen*, arrangement and *touyuan* that my friendship with Ain-ling was built and nurtured.

Sam Ho, film researcher and former Programmer of the Hong Kong Film Archive.





Gratitude knows no bounds: Kiki Fung (left) with Wong Ain-ling at the Archive office.

## An Enduring Passion for the Silver Screen

❖ Kiki Fung ❖

Ain-ling was always caring and curious about people. Ever since we knew each other, the good times had been many, but there were also moments when I was caught up in my own sorrows. With her, though, one didn't need to address the latter directly. Joy and misery, she saw them all clear as daylight. And with a casual word, shrewdly placed, she let you know that she had read your mind. I revisited her article 'My Red Balloon' a few days ago and came to the part about her elder brother taking his own life: 'How could I not have known that behind our daily romps and squabbles, he was so unhappy?' Could this experience have made her more acutely perceptive and sensitive since?

I had the good fortune to join the Hong Kong Film Archive's editorial team after graduating from university. I wasn't directly under Ain-ling's supervision, but I was inspired by her nonetheless. Our interactions tended more towards the personal than the professional.

There was a time when I was troubled over something. Ain-ling seemed to notice that I needed reassurance. In a big-hearted gesture, she took me out for a meal and gave me a ride home. On the way back, an Ozu movie soundtrack was playing in her car—brisk, breezy, poignant, but overall, expansive. I can't recall the details of our conversation, but I vividly recall that visceral realm evoking Ozu's. That may be the first time I found my personal feelings tied up with cinema, and fell into a deep admiration for Ozu's emotional world.

Ain-ling was extremely compassionate and accommodating. She understood that misery and setback have their place in life, and saw the positive even in the direst of situations. Every chat we had led me to realise that the world

is an enormous place, with room for all sorts of beings and feelings, and there is no need to attach too much importance to external gain or personal loss.

Years later, work required me to rethink Ozu. It's often opined that Ozu views life's imperfections with an unflappable broad-mindedness. However, influenced by a close friend's insight, I believe that while Ozu may set off melancholy with calm, it is the former that prevails. As Ain-ling said, 'In Ozu's cinematic world, loneliness is loneliness. There's no escaping from it. Every time I watch *Late Spring* (1949), I'm reminded of the winter in New York, when I was face to face with my father's wordlessness.'

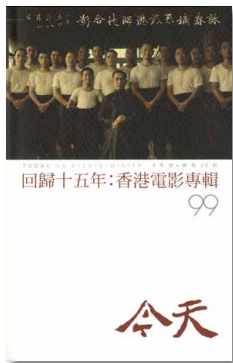
\*

Ain-ling advised me: 'No matter what, you should spend time overseas. You don't necessarily have to study. You can just enjoy yourself—not as in travelling but in seeing the world and living it. Travel is fun, but to have the living experience is something else. You'll be exposed to so much more than you would as a traveller. You'll come to realise that there is no such thing as "paradise". With that in mind, you'll appreciate life all the more.'

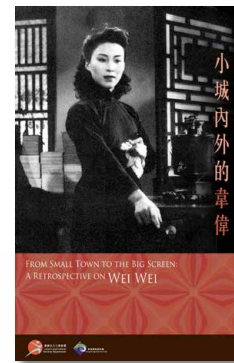
I was stirred by her words. I kept them in mind, but did not plan anything on purpose. Much to my surprise, the opportunity appeared naturally. In 2010, I left Hong Kong for Australia and shortly after arrival, I got involved in programming for the Brisbane International Film Festival.

Since then, I had worked and lived in Australia for seven years. Recently, thanks to Ain-ling's encouragement, I returned to Hong Kong to take up the position of Programmer for the





'A sophisticate speaking of poetic dreams.'



Sharing a timeless bond with Fei Mu and Wei Wei, Wong Ain-ling was the editor of *Fei Mu*, *Poet Director* and *Fei Mu's Confucius*. In October 2017, she ably and enthusiastically assisted the Archive in publishing a special issue, *From Small Town to the Big Screen: A Retrospective on Wei Wei*.

Hong Kong International Film Festival. Before my return, she rang me and spoke to me about the future of film programming in Hong Kong. There is so much more to explore, but life is an inexplicable mystery: all these years, I had never failed to meet up with Ain-ling whenever I visited Hong Kong; but this time, when I came back with the intention of staying for an extended period of time, I missed the chance to meet and thank her personally.

All my connection with and passion for cinema began at the Film Archive, and began with Ain-ling. When Ain-ling was in office, alongside several open-minded veterans, an air of freedom and self-assurance prevailed at the Film Archive. On our way to and from work, at coffee breaks or meal-times, we never stopped talking about film or research—not only on Hong Kong cinema which fell within the scope of our jobs, but also films transcending temporal and geographical boundaries. Our workplace then was truly a cultural salon.

Every time I watched *Spring in a Small Town* (1948), I had unconsciously avoided scrutinising Yuwen's final decision (of staying with her husband, rather than leaving with her old love) in a 'moral' light, as if that would render my perspective old-fashioned. The ending was, after all, an unfinished romance, a forced compromise, I had thought. In 2010, the Film Archive organised a Fei Mu retrospective. Ain-ling spoke after the screening of *Children of the World* (1941) and it dawned on me that it was my viewpoint that wasn't modern enough. 'Moral' was precisely the word Ain-ling used. She observed that Fei Mu had taken it upon himself to ponder how to contextualise decisions in a larger scheme of things—morals, friendship, magnanimity—rather than personal desires and partialities. Here is the gist of some of what she said: 'Fei Mu had all along depicted how people respond to situations, how they make their decisions. We don't have control over our circumstances, but we can choose how to respond to them. Fei Mu believed that decisions like that in the film are rooted in lofty and noble

sentiments... and he reminded us that we humans are capable of making decisions with integrity, even if those decisions come with a lot of pain.'

Ain-ling laid a solid and deeply-rooted research foundation for Chinese cinema and contemporary Chinese independent cinema. It is a model for the rest of us. There are still a lot of space and possible directions for development that require our serious contemplation.

Several years ago, Ain-ling was editor-in-chief of one issue of *Today Literary Magazine*. In her discussion of *The Grandmaster* (2013), she described Wong Kar-wai as 'a sophisticate speaking of poetic dreams'. I say Ain-ling's writings, too, are capable of achieving great sophistication with few words. Poised and seemingly effortless, her language moves steadily from film to love, art, joy and misery, rising far above the realm of film criticism.

Ain-ling, I remember how you ended your essay 'The Many Bitter Joys of Life: Naruse and Ozu' (in *Naruse Mikio: 110th Anniversary*). Now this is another Ozu scene, isn't it? In *The End of Summer* (1961), one sunny afternoon, Nakamura Ganjiro, content with life at his lover's home, leaves the world without bidding goodbye. We know he was happy that afternoon. This is how you described the film's final scene: '(After the funeral), the chimneys exhale wisps of smoke, the crows on the ground wait patiently, an elderly couple chat idly by the river, all engaged in a prayer for reincarnation.'

No matter where your reverie has taken you, I believe that all existences are tied, as are destinies, until the end of time. (Translated by Piera Chen)

Kiki Fung, currently a film programmer who had worked at the Hong Kong Film Archive's editorial and venue management units.



*The Golden Era* (2014)

Photo by Jupiter Wong

## The Golden Era

✿ Jupiter Wong ✿

I first got to know Ain-ling through her graceful and elegant, yet affectionate writing from her film reviews. She has since become the film critic and scholar I admire most in Hong Kong.

Later, I had the serendipitous pleasure of meeting her. Luckily she did not seem to mind a ‘boorish man’ such as myself, and even accepted me into her circle of friends. Whenever we all met, my uncouth manners would at times catch her by surprise, but she always reprimanded me with a smile to stop my over-indulgence.

I remember one day, when I was reading Zhang Yunhe’s memoirs—*The Last Fair Maiden*, Ain-ling’s refined temperament and mannerism immediately came to mind. I feel very fortunate and grateful to have known such a

distinguished and exceptional friend. I kept thinking to myself: ‘I must shoot my first film and have Ain-ling use her beautiful words to discuss and dissect my work!’ What an honour that would have been. Regrettably, I never managed to seize that opportunity. Instead, I only have the forewords she wrote to my three published collections of film stills, which I fought for desperately. Recently, I also invited her input on the layout to my latest anthology of film stills on set. I recall how tirelessly she worked that day, to help me handpick the highlights from a sea of vast and chaotic images. The picture from *The Golden Era* (2014) featured here was her favourite image. (Translated by Hayli Chwang)

Jupiter Wong, veteran Hong Kong film stills photographer.





# Ain-ling in the Frame: When you were with us at the Archive...



'Conference of the Cold War Factor  
in Hong Kong Cinema, 1950s-1970s'  
co-presented with The University of  
Hong Kong [2006]



Greeting director Hou  
Hsiao-hsien: (From left)  
Mable Ho, Angela Tong,  
Mr & Mrs Hou, Wong  
Ain-ling, Sam Ho [2005]



On the HKFA's 10th  
anniversary: (From left)  
Director Yonfan, Cynthia Liu,  
Wong Ain-ling [2011]



Happy birthday to a sleepless editor:  
Ain-ling celebrated her birthday working  
overnight at the design house [2003]

Photo by Winnie Fu



Director John Woo gracing the HKFA:  
(From left) Cynthia Liu, John Woo,  
Li Cheuk-to, Wong Ain-ling, Angela  
Tong, Kwok Ching-ling [2002]



'History of Early Chinese Cinema(s)  
Revisited' Conference [2010]



At the retirement celebration for HKFA Programmer  
Law Kar (2nd right). (From left) Jess Wong, Wong  
Ain-ling, Grace Ng & Angel Shing (1st right) from the  
Research Unit [2005]



Sam Ho (left) & Wong Ain-ling  
leading a discussion



Revisiting Zhu Shilin's  
classics: (From left)  
Wong Ain-ling, Li  
Shaobai, Shu Kei,  
Ding Yaping [2008]



Fruitful exchange with conservation professionals:  
(From left) Edward Tse, Richie Lam, Winnie Fu,  
Martin Koerber, Tochigi Akira, Koven Lo, Sam Ho,  
Wong Ain-ling [2010]



Back to our school days! (From left)  
Sam Ho, Kwok Ching-ling, Jennie Sit,  
Wong Ain-ling, Kiki Fung, Edith Chiu,  
Joyce Ma, Elbe Lau [2005]





(From left) Wong Ain-ling, Barbara Fei, Donna Chu [2001]



(From right) Wong Ain-ling, director Chang Cheh, Angel Shing [2001]



With director Wong Tin-lam [2007]



With Chu Fung [2001]



(From right) Tso Kuei-fang, Wong Ain-ling, director Peter Pan Lei, Angel Shing. [2002]



Photo by Wong Ain-ling

At the Venice International Film Festival with Wei Wei [2005]



Visiting painter Irene Chou (director Evan Yang's wife) in Australia [2007]



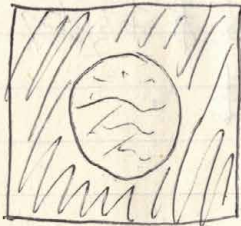
(Front) Bao Fong; (back, from left) Nina Paw Hee-ching, Wong Ain-ling, Ho Wai-leng [2001]



# Manuscripts

西廂記

1927



圓圈代表人物投向遠處的視線。  
 如：崔鶯鶯看張生爬牆。  
 小和尚看孫兵虎及其手下兵臨寺的  
 門前。

誇張的, burlesque 的手法：小和尚向大和尚報告  
 孫兵虎率之的消息時，先是小和尚驚恐的  
 特寫 → 跟着他繞桌跑了一圈 → 特寫  
 → 再繞桌一圈 → 特寫 → 再繞桌一圈

有很多 plans dans le même axe.



—— 遠處的混戰  
 —— 寺門欄

小和尚背向觀眾  
 (背光, 全景), 這處  
 是兵馬混戰場面,  
 跟着是混戰場面  
 的全景, 以俯  
 鏡攝, 疊影 →

刀光劍影的特寫 → 全景 → 特寫  
 節奏越來越快。

Montage hollywoodien — plans alternés 的運用  
 如：張生與崔鶯鶯的化狀，互相交替



25. 我们是子女，双子星下凡

28. 喜爱轻快调子，喜俏皮文字

31. ~~青春~~ 青春无敌

32. 等待爱来买 ~~来~~

33. 管热血奔腾，管苦心荡漾

35. 我们不怕 ~~高声~~ 高声叫

36. ~~心灵~~ 心灵浪漫 ~~身~~ 身娇俏

37. 热爱艺术，样样奇妙

40. ~~梦中~~ 梦中情人在何方？

42. 小小缺点亦何妨

43. 我们是子女，双子星下凡

46. 雨足踏地上，心野飘远洋

49. 教琴生涯 ~~甚~~ 甚无味

50. 只有志音，没有缤纷

51. 乡镇生活太单调

52. 我的梦在巴黎

53. 教琴生涯亦刻板

54. 我的梦也在巴黎

55. 为什么终日教旋转

56. 管我想的是大居院？

Subtitles for Les demoiselles de Rochefort (The Young Girls of Rochefort, 1967)



羅維明、鄧靜寧、黃  
黃愛玲整理

# 訪童月娟

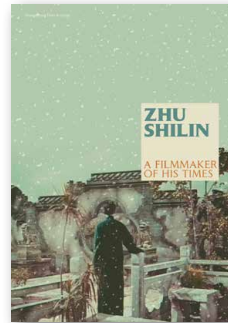
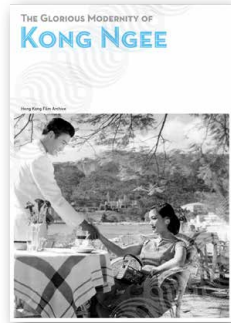
(一)

我原名高書英，浙江杭州人，一九三三年六月十六日生於杭州，父親在當地做官，他去世時我才十四歲。兩年後我去學戲，家裡都不贊成。童月娟是我的藝名，抗戰時期又改名字，<sup>5</sup> 叫梁瑞英，身份證一直沿用這個名字。我學了大概六個月的平劇，就出去賺錢，第一個碼頭是江西南昌，自己沒有固定班，都是人家聘請的，什麼王虎辰呀、雪艷芳呀、潘雪艷呀，都一起演過。我就是唱戲時認識張善琨的，那時候他是共舞台上海的總經理。他接辦共舞台之初，就打了一個電報給我，叫我班師回滬，當其後台經理；那時我正在寧波演出。我沒有膽量擔任後台經理一職，但還是接受了他的邀請，到共舞台演出，做第一齣戲<sup>15</sup> 就是《紅羊豪俠傳》，王虎辰演洪善全，我演洪宣嬌。共舞台以連環戲為噱頭，京戲中加上電影放映<sup>①</sup>。那個舞台劇的提問佈景是由張善琨想出來，台會轉動，燈光一黑一亮，佈景一下子便全部換了。他學出古靈精怪花樣，錢又不<sup>20</sup>

愛玲訪的

20 x 20 = 400 字





## 📖 Biography and Her Works

Wong Ain-ling was born on 28 March 1952 in Hong Kong. Her family originated from Wenzhou in the Zhejiang Province. She graduated from St. Mary's Canossian College, and began her studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1970. Despite majoring in sociology, after graduation she decided to pursue further studies in film. In 1976, Ain-ling accompanied by her son and husband Louie Kin-sheun embarked on a study tour in France, with the express purpose of studying cinema. By happenstance in 1982, the Torino International Film Festival was screening early Chinese films. This led to Ain-ling writing a paper on Chinese films from the 1930s, which marked the beginning of her research into Chinese cinema.

After completing her studies, Ain-ling returned to Hong Kong in 1985, and assumed the role of English Editor for the 10th Hong Kong International Film Festival. From 1987 to 1990, she was the film programmer for the Hong Kong Arts Centre, where she set up the Film Programme Department to screen both Chinese and foreign films every month on diverse themes. From 1990 to 1996, she took over as Programmer (Asian Cinema) for the 15th to 20th Hong Kong International Film Festival, where she was a trailblazer in presenting works of up-and-coming directors from China, Japan, Korea and Iran amongst other places. Ain-ling then edited *Fei Mu, Poet Director* (1998), which has been recognised as the most definitive study on Fei Mu.

Between 2001 and 2009, Ain-ling was prolific as Research Officer at the Hong Kong Film Archive; after her departure, she remained an adviser to the Archive and also guest coordinator for the 'History of Early Chinese Cinema(s) Revisited' conference. The well-respected Ain-ling had also been a film educator, as well as a frequent juror at various local and international film festivals. Ain-ling's health had begun to deteriorate of late, due to a congenital heart condition. She passed away in her sleep on 3 January 2018.

### Authored Books

- An Affair with Film (In Chinese) (Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 2000)
- Dreamy Talks (In Chinese) (2 volumes) (Oxford University Press, 2012)

### Edited Books

- Fei Mu, Poet Director (Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 1998)

### Published by the Hong Kong Film Archive

- Oral History Series (2): An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days (2001)
- The Cathay Story (2002)
- Chang Cheh: Memoirs and Criticism (In Chinese) (2002)
- The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study (2003)
- Chang Cheh: A Memoir (2004)
- The Cinema of Lee Sun-fung (2004)
- The Hong Kong–Guangdong Film Connection (2005)
- The Glorious Modernity of Kong Ngee (2006)
- Li Han-hsiang, Storyteller (2007)
- Oral History Series (4): Director Wong Tin-lam (In Chinese) (Co-edited with Angel Shing, 2007)
- Zhu Shilin: A Filmmaker of His Times (2008)
- The Cold War and Hong Kong Cinema (In Chinese) (Co-edited with Lee Pui-tak, 2009)
- Fei Mu's *Confucius* (2010)
- Chinese Cinema: Tracing the Origins (In Chinese) (2011)
- 15 Years after Reunification: Feature on Hong Kong Cinema (In Chinese) (*Today Literary Magazine*, No 99, *Today Literary Magazine*, Winter 2012)
- The Cinema of Wong Kar Wai (2015 Edition) (In Chinese) (Co-edited with Bono Lee & Lawrence Pun, content provided by Hong Kong Film Critics Society, published by Joint Publishing Hong Kong, 2015)





# Epilogue

## Film, Dream, and Life

❖ Kwok Ching-ling ❖

It was a true privilege to have worked alongside Ain-ling all these years, a sentiment shared by each contributor to this special edition. She had always touched others with her amazing generosity and kindness; she was without doubt a most beloved, most respected and most caring soul in every way.

From her study of early Chinese cinema in the 1980s, to her work at the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Hong Kong International Film Festival, to the founding of the Hong Kong Film Archive, which provided invaluable opportunities for research into Hong Kong cinema—so many ‘best moments’ in life were made when the right time, the right place collided with the right people. Ain-ling’s love of cinema was an unwavering constant; she could always be spotted around the plethora of local film festivals and special programmes, exploring both novel works and old classics, as well as Chinese and foreign films. Ain-ling also had a particular talent for uncovering great works from new directors. She was an open-minded visionary, gracious and well educated, who soared to the pinnacle of her domain. She was a much-loved fixture in the film circles, and a free spirit who always strived to connect with fellow cinephiles and art lovers the world over with her film reviews and ‘dreamy talks.’

In Ain-ling’s career, her time at the Hong Kong Film Archive was by far the longest. I would like to take the opportunity here to paint a picture of Ms Wong, as we knew her in the office. She was a natural talent, eloquent with words and proficient in all her undertakings, yet with a playful side that came out whenever she laughed and joked with those close to her. Furthermore, she was one of those precious few who truly excelled at what they did. She was a real expert, whether curating a retrospective or editing a publication, she always found different ways to approach the subject and brought together the perfect team of writers and specialists to create content that was unique and insightful. She was a distinguished and remarkable figure, who inspired and shaped a generation.

Our Helmslady, every year you were always awarded the ‘golden snail.’<sup>1</sup> Why did you jump aboard ‘L’Atalante’ and set sail for that endless horizon?

Thinking back on all the books you penned, all the talks you gave, all the knowledge, forbearance, and encouragement that you bestowed upon us, all these will stay with us for the rest of our lives. They will be the things that keep us ruminating, keep us carrying your torch further down the ‘big road’ you have lit for us, to continue exploring and evolving together...

<sup>1</sup> Whenever Ain-ling was editor-in-chief, she would be forever chasing authors to submit their essays, in addition to the countless tasks involved in compiling a publication. It meant that her own writing would never be started till late, earning her a reputation for coming in last on the race for author submissions, and hence the ‘golden snail’ awards from her fun-loving workmates.



## The Women Who Don’t Fall

❖ Elbe Lau ❖

Cinema is said to be an instrument for a better understanding of the human condition. Ain-ling’s passion for cinema is, I think, largely a result of her compassion for humanity—and that’s why her film reviews are so much more than mere critiques.

As a Chinese saying goes, ‘I write what is there in my heart.’ Running through Ain-ling’s writings on film is a gentleness from within, as well as the warmth and strength that comes with it. For instance, on Kore-eda Hirokazu’s *Nobody Knows* (2004), a tragic story about a few kids abandoned by their fickle young mother, Ain-ling would mention the teenage daughter’s fading nail polish the mother had painted on her—the director’s subtle reference to the daughter’s craving for motherly affection; in her piece titled ‘The Women Who Don’t Fall’, Ain-ling would cite the memoirs of Ruan Lingyu’s fellow actress and friend Butterfly Wu, who had happened to spend a very ‘human’ afternoon with Ruan shortly before the latter committed suicide. It was also perhaps Ain-ling’s care for humanity that made her so eager to introduce Fei Mu’s restored classic, *Confucius* (1940), a long-lost gem from a time in China when moral integrity was quickly giving way to power struggles upon the imminent invasion by the Japanese.

Ms Wong was one of the rare few people who didn’t judge others; instead, she observed every one of us deeply and widely, in turn trying to do justice to each of us as a human being. Known for her graceful and relaxed manners, she took her work more seriously than anyone else; and above all, she always considered people first in every decision she made at work.

After her passing, someone wrote: ‘Once we’re with Ain-ling, those who were unkind will be kind, those who didn’t know what love is will get to know.’ This is so true. With someone like Ain-ling, one becomes a better person, and the world becomes a better place.

Ms Wong, thank you for being you. We miss you, and we’ll miss you forever.





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Mr Michael Lam

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人生如夢，  
希望你的夢都美好。

愛玲

*Life is like a dream—I hope your dreams are all good.*

*Ain-ling*