

Cinephiles, music fans and film auteur(s): Transcultural taste cultures surrounding mashups of Wong Kar-wai's movies on YouTube

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Abstract:

Much has been written about the Chinese-born Hong Kong-based film director Wong Kar-wai and his films, particularly in relation to the socio-cultural contexts of Hong Kong before and after the handover to China, and the transcultural aesthetic traditions in his works. Beyond academic and critical domains, Wong's reputation has largely been generated by fans. Taking advantage of the large scale user-generated content associated with the director on YouTube, this essay explores day-to-day discourses that shape Wong's persistent auteur reputation. The essay proposes a multimodal discursive and textual analysis of YouTube mashups that takes into account long-standing debates on cinephilia, media fandom and film authorship. The findings reveal a discourse of pleasure surrounding the appropriation and ownership of canonised movies, a taste homology between cinephiles and cult music fans, and tension among audiences with different identity politics. The circulation of these videos in the public domain by different agents can be seen as the exchange of 'forms of capital' (Bourdieu, 1993: 2) that creates distinctions among transcultural fan groups, which are connected in an ad-hoc basis. In the process, the reputation of the director as a film auteur is affirmed, expanded, and occasionally challenged.

Keywords: authorship, cinephilia, transcultural fandom, multimodal discourse analysis, mashup, taste culture, Wong Kar-wai, YouTube

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, Wong Kar-wai has been positioned at the popular end of the arthouse film circuit. The director's reputation has been established by cinephiles/critics who championed such films as *Chungking Express* (1994) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000) at international film festivals as part of the 'new' generation of East Asian auteurs. Having worked in the Hong Kong film and TV industry and having collaborated with Canto-pop idols, Wong's career has also been fostered by fans of Hong Kong cinema (Chin, 2007: 217) and followers of pan-Asian pop idols who regularly starred in Wong's movies (Hu, 2006). In the last two decades, the director has attracted a wealth of academic writing¹ and inspired fan works to the extent that fellow filmmaker Ang Lee notes that he does not know 'any contemporary filmmaker/auteur [other than Wong] that draws more interest, argument, articles, even essays, admiration...and imitations' (Lee, 2008). Despite a shared interest in Wong's films, within academia, followers have been divided between arthouse cinephiles and East Asian film fans. A number of scholars note that 'art-film lovers' who admire Wong's films are not necessarily fans of 'traditional Hong Kong films' (Brunette, 2005: 4) or that cinephiles with a cultish bent are different than fandom (Desser, 2005). Others have made the general observation that fans, cinephiles and critics, after all, share a similar kind of 'obsession'.² While not suggesting that works in these fields should be conflated or that one term should replace the other, I am interested in auteur paratexts³ created by diverse audiences that can reveal day-to-day discourses associated with the director in public domains, particularly YouTube. Posted online alongside, before or after audiences encounter the actual films, paratexts can 'create texts' by 'fill[ing] them with many of the meanings that we associate with them' (Gray, 2010: 6). The construction and circulation of user-generated content illustrates shared practices and discourses associated with different types of audience, which I argue help affirm and expand Wong's auteur reputation within and beyond film culture.

In the period between November 2013 and May 2014, there were 16,765 (Google estimated) results associated with the keyword 'Wong Kar-wai' found on YouTube, of which 400 videos could be considered user-generated content (UGC).⁴ These videos are not explicit marketing materials (e.g. official trailers, interviews and recirculated-content that can be found in traditional media) but are fan-made videos. Taking advantage of this extensive data on a public domain dubbed 'an over-grown fan site' (Garfield, 2006), this essay proposes an alternative approach to studying the relationship between a film auteur and audiences in the context of multimedia culture, where cinephiles/fans are not necessarily part of a fixed singular community but are connected in an ad-hoc basis based on their objects of interest. To scale down the area of analysis, the essay focuses on the largest cohort of videos associated with Wong, i.e. mashups.⁵ The term 'mashup' here refers to videos that combine together various elements associated with Wong (including pre-existing soundtracks, film sequences and ancillary materials such as DVD covers, posters,

deleted scenes, stills and Wong's portraits); and videos that combine materials from Wong's films with alternative content (particularly soundtracks) selected by video makers.

Through a comparative theoretical discussion, followed by a discursive and textual analysis that takes into account the multimodality of mashups, this essay highlights three recurring discourses associated with the director. These are discourses associated with the notion of pleasure gained from the appropriation and ownership of DVD content and other ancillary materials, the cultish associations and taste homology between Hong Kong genre films and indie music fans, and the tension among audiences with different identity politics. Circulating on YouTube alongside a small number of official promotional materials, the production and reception of these mashups can be seen as an exchange of 'forms of capital'⁶ that creates cultural distinctions and connections among different kinds of audiences and help construct Wong's reputation online. Such forms of capital include 'economic capital' (having the access to particular objects that can be converted into money or property rights), 'cultural capital' (having certain cultural knowledge and being able to appreciate or understand cultural relations and cultural objects), and 'social capital' (networks of relations that can be converted to economic capital) (Bourdieu, 1993: 7). While Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'capital' is tied in with the notion of 'habitus' or internalised social conditions that influence the position taking including class and education that displayed through individual dispositions,⁷ the digital field of YouTube (which exists beyond a national culture) facilitates diverse types of players whose dispositions may or may not have derived from their upbringings. In this context, audiences also engage in the exchange of subcultural capital (having shared cultural knowledge that is not embedded in cultural institution but developed by 'being "in the know"') (Thornton, 2001: 27). Significantly, the design of YouTube encourages the exchange of 'emotional capital' (voluntary personal investments of time and energy, attention and affection) that can be embedded with other forms of capital (Allat in Reay, 2000: 572). The circulation of different forms of capital revealed through the production and reception of mashups resonates with recent works on the new cinephilia (Elsaesser, 2005; Russell, 2012) and East Asian cinema fandom (Chin, 2007) that provide a theoretical background to audience practices facilitated by DVD culture and the Internet.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Cinephilia studies and fan studies emerged around the same time in the 1990s but from separate historical contexts and differing viewpoints on authorship. When considered alongside each other, particularly in the context of East Asian cinema, these separate groups share some similar practices. As discussed below, the differences in their research focuses are the basis for the discursive and textual analysis approach developed in this article.

Self-declared cinephiles write about their encounters with film texts and auteurs of world cinema in response to two early generations of critics. The first group comprises anti-cinephiles who dismissed the subject of pleasure and authorship that are seen in association

with mass cultural products and bourgeois values respectively (Keathley, 2006: 1-3). The second group is a number of critics who lamented the death of cinema along with great auteurs and the intense site-specific film viewing experience. For the 'new' generation whose cinephilic interest is fulfilled by audience-driven film festivals, home viewing culture and the Internet, the notion of authorship is expanded from Euro-centric film culture and the discourse of originality of genius directors⁸ to the discourse on intertextuality and intimate pleasure with transcultural film texts (Elsaesser, 2005; Quandt, 2009; Rosenbaum & Martin, 2003). Directors whose works obliterate 'high' and 'low' cultures, including Quentin Tarantino and Wong Kar-wai, are also seen as cinephiles who express their love of cinema through practices of 'transcultural fusion' (Ng, 2005) and 'intertextuality' (Steele, 2012). These terms generally refer to the borrowing of different aesthetic traditions and the act of paying homage to one's favourite directors. In a way, this practice is reiterated and proliferated through YouTube mashups by audiences who do not necessarily declare themselves as fans or cinephiles. Video makers and commentators re-emphasise Wong's use of pre-existing transcultural music and genre elements in order to highlight the relationships between Wong, established auteurs and their own objects of interest. This kind of expanded intertextuality in fan works is out of the scope of cinephilia but has gained significant attention in fan studies.

Fan mashups and other textual appropriations are among research subjects of fan studies scholars. Nevertheless, early accounts that explore the relationship between fans and film directors in the West tend to focus on fan works as a form of creative resistance from official narratives (notably Jenkins, 1992). This is partly related to the legacy of Roland Barthes's 'the death of the author' (2008, originally published in 1968) that initiated academic interest in audiences in general. When it comes to the subject of authorship, the focus is shifted to the agency of fans, as opposed to the media source previously seen in close connection with the towering authority of the director figure. Recent works that explore the relationship between fans and auteurs pay attention to the controversy of ownership and copyright issues (e.g. Phillips, 2012; Shefrin, 2004). In the East Asian context, many directors including Wong also hold positive views towards the circulation of their works by fans due to the prevalent issue of film distribution (Pang, 2006: 103).

Recent case studies on East Asian cinema and transcultural fandom offer a departure from resistance discourse by paying attention to fans' affective engagements with films and the figure of the director, which point to a crossover between cinephilia and fandom. Bertha Chin notes in her study of Wong's English-language fan site that fans of media texts, particularly cult TV shows, thrive on the 'longevity' of the programme, which fosters the production of fanworks such as fan fiction (Chin, 2007: 215). It could be argued that the intertextuality between audio-visual content associated with Wong and other cultural products in mashups creates a different kind of longevity within and beyond film culture. In addition to the intertextuality of auteur films and fan mashups, cinephiles and fans of East Asian cinema also share a discourse of pleasure. As previously noted, cinephiles often write about their encounters with specific films and their favourite directors. While in many cases

this kind of writing adopts a self-reflective narrative that resists critical discourse (Willemen, 1994), a productive model for audience and reception studies research is to ground the discussion of pleasure and film moments within socio-historical contexts of the film production and reception. Catherine Russell's (2012) study of cinephilic pleasure draws connection between spectacular objects such as costumes and props in Wong's *In the Mood for Love* and the object of the film itself available as a Criterion DVD along with extensive special features. For cinephiles that experience Wong's films through home video distribution, pleasure is based on moments of spectacle, additional knowledge of Hong Kong diasporic culture included in the extras, and the wider consumerist culture of DVD collection. This viewpoint can be developed further in the context of YouTube, whereby recurring sequences from Wong's films are quoted, combined with promotional materials or additional content unrelated to Wong's films, and shared amongst a wide range of audiences beyond DVD buyers. The pleasure gained from being able to identify sources of materials and create connections across different cultural objects can be compared to fans' emotional connection with their idols and the mode of intimacy through obtaining knowledge others may not know about in Wong's fan site (Chin, 2007). In order to address the discourse of pleasure associated with Wong's films and other discourses found in mashups and associated comments, I combine the method of multimodal discourse analysis and textual analysis to organise and analyse the videos.

Discursive Mapping and Multimodality in YouTube Mashups

One of the challenges of conducting a discourse analysis of YouTube content is finding a way to trace discursive threads across different mashups, while also taking into account individual videos, associated comments, and agents that shape the meanings of recurring discourses. This aspect is facilitated by considering the 'multimodality' of YouTube content. In relation to audio-visual culture, multimodality is 'a phenomenon rather than a theory or method whereby a variety of "semiotic modes" (means of expression) are integrated into a unified whole' (Van Leeuwen & Kress, 2011: 107). With this in mind, the overall meanings of the videos or 'collective symbolism' reveal certain kinds of constructed knowledge or discourse in relation to pre-existing knowledge and ideas about a particular subject (Jäger & Maier, 2009: 35).

To gain an overview of mashups associated with Wong, I organise audio-visual materials and comments based on their frequency of occurrence.⁹ From this process, there are three main sets of discourse associated with Wong. The first group, which makes up fifty percent (87 of 174 mashups), combine soundtrack(s) featured in Wong's film(s) with visuals associated with at least one film by the director. These videos are either in the style of a music video¹⁰ or a slideshow.¹¹ The design, the production and the reception of these videos share the most recurring discourse of pleasure related to intimate film moments and insiders' knowledge on the director, which resonate with academic works on cinephilia and East Asian cinema fandom. The second group, which makes up the other fifty percent of the

mashups, are videos that combine sequences from Wong's films with additional music and/or visuals selected by video makers. Additional content comprises those which share taste homology including visuals/music associated with established arthouse directors from Europe and Asia, or soundtracks that can be described as 'indie' and/or cult. Small in number, there are also videos that use music that does not fit into the category of indie or cult, which either generate minimal response or initiate conflicting views in relation to taste culture and socio-political contexts.

Following this discursive mapping, instances in which recurring and distinctive discourses play out and the implications these works have for different agents involved are discussed through sample videos. This process is facilitated by further consideration of the multimodality of YouTube content. Each video comprises audio (dialogue, music and lyrics) and visual content (and sometimes subtitles) which carry 'a *meaning potential* that is based on their past uses' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001: 110). The four domains or strata that can generate meanings are discourses,¹² design, production and, distribution (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). The domain of discourses refers to 'resources' that users draw on to construct and interpret meanings (including existing fan practices and knowledge on Wong previously discussed). On YouTube, the strata of design and production are closely connected to each other. This aspect refers to the choice of audio-visual content, the design and the editing of a mashup video. Meanings are generated from the combination of visuals and sound in the mashup. The stratum of distribution can highlight aspects that may get excluded such as comments and the position of the video in relation to other content in the video maker's channel. By viewing content on YouTube as a 'multimodal text', we can consider elements on a YouTube page in relation to one another and broader pre-existing discourses about the director generated by video makers and commentators. The rest of this essay offers a textual analysis of sample videos and observations on the exchange of forms of capital and implications to Wong's reputation making. The essay concludes with a wider reflection on cross-disciplinary debates between cinephilia, fandom, and authorship for future works on transcultural fandom.

Cinephiliac Intimacy and Materialist Pleasure

This first set of representative videos highlights how user-generated content is closely associated with theatrical and home video distribution contexts, which provide resources for the mashups. Common materials adopted by video makers are high-resolution stills, sequences of movie trailers, making-of videos, and deleted sequences from DVD extras. In the case of films that have limited special features, video makers incorporated images of physical objects such as different versions of movie posters, DVD covers and collages of screenshots. These visuals are edited along with pre-existing soundtracks from Wong's films, particularly public domain music or music that have been in public domain for a long time that is used repetitively in his movies, such as 'Perfidia' and 'Quizas Quizas Quizas'. As materials released by distributors highlight a discourse of authenticity and quality under the

auteurist brand of Wong Kar-wai, the recirculation of this content on YouTube adds to it a discourse of pleasure through moments of intimacy in the films and special features, different degrees of knowledge about the selected visuals and sound, and the ownership of these objects. These affective engagements resonate with Russell's (2012) discussion of cinephiliac pleasure associated with the world of things associated with Wong's films. Updating this notion in the context of online culture, the pleasure of viewing exclusive content and knowledge about the movie are generously shared and discussed beyond the circles of critics and DVD collectors. Audiences on YouTube who have not seen the films but recognise similar music in other movies or videogames also offer additional intertextual connections between Wong's works and other cultural products. This discourse can be illustrated in two sample videos. The first mashup combines one of the public domain soundtracks, 'Quizas Quizas Quizas' sung by Nat King Cole, with deleted scenes from Wong's most well-known film, *In the Mood for Love*, which can be found in the Criterion DVD special features.¹³ The second sample is a slideshow of stills and ancillary materials from Wong's first film, *Days of Being Wild* (1990), with 'Perfidia', by Xavier Cugat, which was used in the film¹⁴

In the first video, the discourse of pleasure is significantly reflected in the domains of design and production through the selection of content for the mashup and the editing process. Combining sequences from the film and deleted scenes of *In the Mood for Love*, this mashup is a fulfilment of physical intimacy between the protagonists Mo-wan (Tony Leung) and Li-zhen (Maggie Cheung), which did not take place in the narrative of the film. As neighbours whose respective spouses are having an affair, the conservative Mo-wan and Li-zhen befriend each other through reading and writing martial art stories. The moment of intimacy is related to a scene in the film in which Li-zhen is stuck inside Mo-wan's room when her landlady and friends return home early, and the two do not want to appear to have been in the same room. The video presents individual portraits of Mo-wan and Li-zhen and shots of the two characters in a bedroom together. Li-zhen is on the bed holding a cigarette and stroking the hair of Mo-wan who sits on the floor by the bed lighting his cigarette. The sensuous gesture of Li-zhen moving her hand around her sweaty neck before gazing at Mo-wan heightens the sense of intimacy between the characters. In this deleted scene Li-zhen wears a square neck dress, more revealing in comparison to the high-collar *cheongsams* featured in the actual movie. Mo-wan is also in a white undervest instead of a suit that he wears throughout the film. The song 'Quizas Quizas Quizas', which is played in the film to suggest that Li-zhen has missed a chance to be together with Mo-wan, is adopted to narrate a reverse story.

Through the editing process, the mashup further reveals hidden secrets in the narrative of the movie. The video features close-up shots of the face of Mo-wan's spouse (which is never shown in the film) and a shot of her lying in bed with the back zip of her dress undone, revealing her black bra. This image alludes to the affair that was hidden away from the main characters and film audiences. When Mo-wan's spouse turns her body to face the camera, the subsequent shot reveals that the person on the bed is Li-zhen, lying in

the same position. The sequence of the two women rolling their bodies from one side to the other and back again on the same bed mirrors occasions in the movie when Li-zhen and Mo-wan act out as their partners to find out how their affair with each other might have begun, only to realise that they too have fallen in love. Viewed on YouTube as part of a fan paratext, the deleted scenes are not presented alongside interviews nor introduced as behind-the-scenes extras to enhance the 'secrets of the cinema', in which the director and the industry continue to be gatekeepers of meanings of the film (Grant, 2008: 111; Klinger, 2006: 89). In this case, the agency of the video maker, who narrates an alternative story by borrowing extra materials from the Criterion DVD, is acknowledged in comments as coexisting alongside other agents such as the singer, actors and the director.

Comments on the beauty of the video, the song and the movie, further shape the meanings of the film. A small number of commenters who have knowledge of the Criterion Collection discussed that the deleted scenes may suggest how the story is supposed to be. The pleasure from recalling different parts of the movie is shared with like-minded viewers through comments that express love for the movie, the director, actors and the costumes. This affective engagement reflects the practice of the new cinephilia that is 'revived by fandom and cult classics' facilitated by DVD and the Internet, which is different from earlier generations whose love for cinema is being deferred due to the delay in accessibility and site-specific screenings (Elsaesser, 2005: 41). The mashup also invokes audiences' memories of Wong's film that can be replayed, liked, and marked as a favourite video. Importantly, the discussion is not restricted to the text and special features, as commentators make references to Wong's other films (*Days of Being Wild* and *2046*) or other auteur directors (including Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and the Nouvelle Vague). Spanish-speaking audiences also discussed their knowledge of the covered song and the lyrics by Nat King Cole, which highlight their cultural distinctions.¹⁵

In the case that the film is not released along with abundant extras, this kind of textual intimacy is substituted with viewing rare versions of the movie poster and DVD cover, and collecting a physical copy of the movie or the soundtrack. In the mashup of *Days of Being Wild* and 'Perfidia', the design and the production of the mashup is more rudimentary. It is constructed as a slideshow comprising images from the film in loose chronological order and ancillary materials with different transition effects. Instead of the pleasure stimulated by moments of spectacle in the film and extras, commenters focus on the inaccessibility of the movie and the soundtrack such as 'I looooooooooove this early Wong Kar Wai's movie so much and all its music soundtrack. Damn I've lost this original dvd ... hard to find now ... siiiiiggggggh' (fahrenheitchic). This kind of emotional engagement fulfilled by close contact with the object of interest can be understood in relation to a rhetoric of intimacy among fans of East Asian popular culture, where by fans 'act in ways that go beyond the bounds of self to seek greater communion with the object of their adoration' (Yano in Chin, 2007). While, in the context of fandom, the drive for this intimacy is the physical closeness between fans and their idols, the lack of this connection in the

context of Wong's films is redirected to intimate bodily moments within the movie that others may have not seen or the ownership of the movie.

Beyond the context of Wong's body of work, users share their familiarity with the soundtrack 'Perfidia' by noting that the cult classic *Casablanca* (1942) is 'the first' to have used the song (Mrskyrocker1983) or that s/he came across the video while looking for Cugat's music and went on to stream the film on Netflix (Lionessgirl88). Numerous users commented that they came across the mashup through the videogame *Gravity Bone*, which features the song 'Perfidia' at the end of the game. As a prequel to the award-winning *Thirty Flights of Loving*, this 'quality' indie game is an emblem of transmedia homage to film history inspired by Cugat's music and the films of established directors, including Wong's body of work.¹⁶ Comments from those with knowledge of the film soundtracks in relation to other cultural texts illustrate how the use of the music in Wong's film and in the mashup placed the movie in a transcultural intersection between cinema, music and popular culture. This kind of border-crossing not only initiates shared pleasure but also generates product cross-selling.

The discourse of pleasure associated with these two sample videos can be explored in terms of the exchange of different forms of capital in the 'field of cultural production' (Bourdieu, 1993) of YouTube. Adopting content from the Criterion DVD, which is well-known for promoting canonised auteurs, video makers make use of their financial resource to obtain cultural capital (official knowledge about Wong's films). Others highlight their subcultural capital of having access to hard-to-find movies by the director or having additional knowledge of materials that others might not know about. Furthermore, the production, the circulation, and the viewing of videos require personal investment of time and energy which can be discussed through the notion of emotional capital. While voluntary physical labour and emotional investment place users within the subfield of small-scale (not-for-profit) cultural production, users also participate in the commercially-driven space of the first- and second-hand DVD markets and the online video-sharing site. These exchanges of cultural, economic and emotional capital add extra layers of meaning to Wong's films that would have had limited online exposure without fan paratexts. Significantly, transcultural fan practices add nuance to the age-old academic debate on the contentious relationship between auteurs and audiences.

Cultish Associations and Musical Taste Homology

Mashups in this group incorporate alternative content that share some characteristics with Wong's works instead of drawing fully on audio-visual materials supplied by film distributors. A small number of mashups reiterate the intertextuality between Wong and other directors discussed in academic and journalistic domains. These include a mashup of clips from Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960) superimposed on deleted sequences from *In the Mood for Love*, and mashups of the soundtrack from Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003) or Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) with visuals from Wong's films. A number of these videos are

explicitly designated as 'tribute' or 'homage', which frames their reception in terms of discourses of film authorship and cinephilia. There are also mashups that address Wong's collaboration with pop idols and celebrity figures, such as those that used the music by Leslie Cheung (one of the lead actors in Wong's early films) and DJ Shadow (for whom Wong directed a music video).

This section focuses on the surprisingly large number of mashups that adopted 'indie' music that shared a taste homology with Wong's early genre movies. While what constitutes 'indie' is highly debatable, music featured in these mashups is closely aligned with the description provided by David Hesmondhalgh - 'a contemporary genre which has its roots in punk's institutional and aesthetic challenge to the popular music industry but which, in the 1990s, has become part of the 'mainstream' of British pop' (1999: 34). In the US, the genre is known as 'alternative rock' and highlights a convergent relationship between creativity and commerce within music industry in the 1990s, which is parallel with the confluence of Hong Kong genre films and arthouse movies associated with Wong. This music is experimental in nature, 'prided itself on its care over design...but set itself against the concentration on "image" in the pop mainstream' (Hesmondhalgh, 1999: 38). The majority of bands whose music is used in the mashups have pre-existing cult followings, e.g. British trip-hop remix artists such as Portishead, Broadcast and Joy Division; and acid house sound such as Velvet Acid Christ. This kind of music is combined with transgressive musical moments in Wong's early films, particularly those with action and crime genre elements.

The combination of Hong Kong cinema and Western music with existing cult followers can further generate cult status for associated agents (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011: 182-183). This is particularly the case when users suggested other mashups or films with a similar kind of music. In these mashups, the taste 'homology' is created by video makers and commentators who express their fandom of the director, the bands, and their works. The notion of homology here refers to the homological relationship between film and music that are agreed by fans of both objects. This definition is adopted from Paul Willis's discussion of 'cultural homologies' in which audiences seek for objects that 'consistently serve the group at a number of levels with meanings, particular attitudes, bearings and certainties...' (Willis in Hills, 2002). Based on the skills in identifying cultish taste homologies between films and music that emerged in the same period in different cultural contexts, video makers often receive acknowledgement and praise from other fans.

A sample video in this category is the mashup of sequences from Wong's lesser-known film *Fallen Angels* (1995) with the track 'Ghost in the Circuit' by the Canadian electronic-industrial band 'Velvet Acid Christ' (VAC), which was well-known in European underground nightclub and Goth subculture in the 1990s. The video combines different themes, images, and sounds that connote cultish means of expression. The mashup loosely follows the story of the film, about the unspoken and unfulfilled relationship between a hit man and his agent/partner. The opening sequence indirectly reveals the occupations and the relationship of the characters, as the unnamed female agent (Michelle Reis) smokes quietly while asking the hit man (Leon Lai), who sits behind her, if they are still partners. The

man responds in a voiceover that they have been partners for 155 weeks, this is the first time they've sat next to each other, and that partners 'should never get emotionally involved with each other'. This short dialogue, which is smoothly synchronised with the slow electronic instrumental track by the VAC, sums up the non-conformative lifestyles and attitudes of the protagonists. These cultish associations are further enhanced by the characters' outfits. Reis wears a leopard print top and a black leather miniskirt or short dress with a chain-strap purse. Throughout the film and the mashup, Lai wears a black shirt over a white undervest and a silver chain necklace. Highlighting the iconography of Asian cult films, the mashup only features shots at night of restaurants, apartments and busy Hong Kong streets with neon lights.

In both the film and the mashup, the lack of physical intimacy between the characters is fulfilled by the fetishisation of objects and sound in moments of excess. The video features sequences of the female agent making a floor plan of the restaurant she surveyed for the hit man, cleaning his flat and scrutinising his garbage. Identifying traces where her partner had been is the moment of intimacy between the two characters. In the film, after cleaning her partner's room, the agent masturbates over Laurie Anderson's electronic track *Speak My Language*, which is replaced with the VAC's music in the mashup. As for Lai, his repressed emotion is released through sequences of him loading his guns, entering a gambling den, and starting a shooting spree. Resonating with the hidden pleasures discovered in DVD extras, this mashup plays out erotic and suppressed emotions with electronic sound as an aural stimulant. This fetishisation of objects and substituted pleasure can also be seen in relation to the figures of Wong and the video maker. The mashup features the final image of Lai hopping on a bus after the shootout. Lai's figure fades into a black-and-white portrait of a man with a pair of glasses looking downwards. Presumably, this is a photo of the video maker, whose portrait is reminiscent of Wong's iconic profile photo. The contextual 'body double' of the video maker and the director could point to the video maker's knowledge of Wong's auteur-star status and how audiences seek greater contact with the director they are fans of. As the portrait has a watermark from Vampirefreaks.com, which is one of the largest online communities for gothic industrial culture that also features the VAC music, the video also helps introduce other related cultural objects that share potential taste homologies with Wong's movie.

Within the domain of distribution of this video, commenters express delight over the 'perfect' combination of music and film and the joy of having found two of their favourite things together. There are requests for names of similar films by the VAC fans or references to specific bands that are similar to the one featured in the mashup. For example, commenter Bolderiks recommends another mashup combining music from Burial (an electronic/psychedelic band with subcultural associations) and sequences from *Fallen Angels*. Those who are familiar with the director refer to Wong's other cultish film *Chungking Express* and acclaim *Fallen Angels* as a 'spot on Asian cinema with style and substance' (Christopher Williams) and as Wong's 'best film' (susiaway, bolderiks, John Raga). Audiences' awareness of the transcultural homology associated with Wong's films also

means that content and comments that deviate from the perceived norm are marginalised and excluded. When a user commented that the music ‘is just as it is in the film. This [sic] is not a fan-made video’ (Osiris Jenkins), others responded in frustration that it is a fan made-video, and wondered why there were five likes to the incorrect information (GrivonTube). Another user gave further details that the track used for the mashup had not yet been released when the film came out (Eric Visser) and clarified that the song and the film might have ‘similar feel’. While the film and the music were released in the 1990s and the mashup was posted in 2009, this conversation is resurrected again in 2015. Although digital content can be short-lived, the longevity of the mashups through comments continues to generate cultish intertextuality between Wong’s films and music fans.

By combining film sequences and additional music with cultish associations, fans display subcultural capital that is established in opposition to highly commoditised film and music such as Hollywood and pop music of the time. These types of mashups continue to address the connectedness between emotional and economic capitals amongst those who share taste cultures. The meeting of different types of content introduces agents with less media exposure to related subfields of cultural production, which can potentially generate economic capital through cross-referencing and cross-viewing. It is through these mashups that Wong’s reputation is expanded beyond film culture. Importantly, the mashups in this group highlight an emerging research strand in film authorship that moves away from writer-oriented practice that focuses on the narrative and visuals to a new ‘musically oriented’ authorship, which pays attention to the relationship between film and music in the works of contemporary directors (Ashby, 2013). In the context of YouTube, this subject is expanded further to the practice of film and music fans that are able to identify and illustrate shared taste homologues across different subfields of cultural production.

Displaced Voices and Identity Politics

This last set of mashups offers a counterpoint to the agreed norms of mashups and comments associated with Wong’s films on YouTube. These mashups do not set out to shed new light on the story of the film or enhance cultish themes through the music. Some of the music used could be grouped based on its origins. A small number of videos adopted ‘world music’ with sequences from Wong’s films such as *Ashes of Time Redux* (2008) mashed with a live-recording of music by the Chinese experimental electro folk artist Xiao He¹⁷ and mashups of Iranian music and Wong’s movies.¹⁸ These videos attract a small number of viewers and often have no comments.

The last sample video is distinctive as its combination of film sequences and alternative music attracts contentious comments from different fan groups. While the domains of design and production reveal the discourse of pleasure and taste homology, since the video is available on a YouTube channel that pays attention to the subject of identity politics, this subject dominates the discussion in the comments. The representative mashup combines sequences from *2046* with the music by Techung, a Tibetan singer in

exile.¹⁹ Sequences used in the mashup are those related to the protagonists of *2046* (Tony Leung, Faye Wong and Zhang Ziyi) edited in a loosely chronological order. The slow-paced Tibetan folk song talks about a long distance relationship and a wish that the lover would keep in touch, which could be read in relation to the story in Wong's film.²⁰ The lyrics of the song correlate with the long distance separating the character Wang Jing Wen (Faye Wong) and her Japanese boyfriend. The song could also relate to the relationships of Mo-wan (Tony Leung) who moves away from his lover in Hong Kong to Singapore (a reference to *In the Mood for Love*), and of Bai Ling (Zhang Ziyi) who decides to leave her uncaring partner for Hong Kong. The long distance love story could also relate to the sci-fi sub-plot of *2046* about an endless train ride between the past and present to find a former lover. Beyond the film, the song could highlight the distance between the director and singer and their respective homelands, due to political conflicts related to the People's Republic of China. Techung is of Tibetan descent, born in India and currently based in the US, while Wong is a Shanghainese-born director based in Hong Kong.

When positioning the video in the domain of distribution, the potential intimacy and taste homology of the visuals and sound is interrupted by a political conflict seen in relation to the nationalities of the director and the musician. A user from India posted that it is shameful to mix images of a film by a Hong Kong/Chinese director with a Tibetan music (MrThupsyt). In this statement, Hong Kong and Wong Kar-wai are seen as part of the PRC which is positioned in contentious political situation with Tibet. It is likely that this concern was raised because the video was uploaded on the YouTube channel of VajraTV, a Tibetan Television network based in New York. While an introductory comment by the video maker notes that the mashup was edited 'just for fun', the majority of content on VajraTV's YouTube channel is serious records of political protests and videos featuring artworks of Tibetan singers and actors in exile.

Significantly, the socio-political conflict over the juxtaposition of content associated with the musician and the director here is shifted to a discussion on the artistic agency of the video maker by other users. A small number of comments defended the video maker by noting that the song and sequences from the film have nothing to do with Tibet. *2046* was described as a good Hong Kong (not Chinese) movie by Wong Kar-wai, and the video's combination of film and music were deemed beautiful. A number of comments placed the aesthetic evaluation and the appreciation of the mashup and of the film above political tensions, e.g. Tendho notes that the editing 'gave new life to this wonderful song by [T]echung' and Tsewang adds that the video and the music 'goes hand in glove'. Tsewang also addresses the video maker that s/he hopes to see more of Thupten la's 'creativity'. Other users draw attention to the agency of film stars to diplomatically ease out the tension such as comments noting that Tony Leung looks Tibetan or that Wong could consider using Techung's music for his next film. In this context, aesthetics and political agencies of Wong and associated agents shaped by their contacts with one another are also mediated by fans.

Beyond discourses of pleasure and taste homology, the focus on identity politics reflects a sub-topic in film authorship and cinephilia on the national and regional origins of

auteurs and ethical positions of supporters that shapes the reception of their works despite the debate on 'deterritorialization' and transnationalism (Ashby, 2013:24; Grant, 2000: 101-108). This view also correlates with the discussion on media authorship and fandom in which identity politics surrounding auteurs and fans continue to be an important subject for fans and non-fans alike (Busse, 2013). The multiplicity of responses to the mashups discussed in this essay reveals how transcultural fans draw on popular and fan cultural discourses to negotiate their positions (Chin & Morimoto, 2013: 92). The access to economic and emotional capitals or the lack thereof among associated agents not only reflects audiences' taste cultures but is also 'significant in the formation and maintenance of political and social identities and collective behaviour' (Barbalet 1998 in Zembylas, 2007). In the process of viewing and commenting on the video, fans highlight their cultural and political stakes and safe-guard the reputations of the musician and the director.

Conclusion

Piotr Siuda notes in his critique on the conception of global and transnational fandom that it is not possible to identify one fandom as a global phenomenon, since participants are restricted to those with access to media (particularly the Internet) and 'global pop-cultural narratives' (2014: 295). User-generated mashups on YouTube reveal that transnational/transcultural fandom is far from one large phenomenon detached from local/global conditions that shape the day-to-day lives of fans. Through surveying videos associated with Wong, the findings reveal how content and comments are shaped by discourses associated with different audience groups from cinephiles, music fans, to fans of other cultural objects from various countries and taste cultures.

The negotiation of discourses in relation to the exchange of forms of capital engages with wider contexts of home video film distribution and reception and has implications for the individuals involved. Through creating and commenting on mashups, different fan groups can discover their personal obsessions, transcultural taste homologies and share political viewpoints. As for the director whose films fit in with different cultural products, Wong benefits from direct and indirect promotions through the intertextuality of fan paratexts. The multiplicity of audiences on YouTube also helps introduce Wong and his films beyond the networks of cinephiles and fans of East Asian cinema. In this context, the notion of authorship is maintained through cinephilic pleasure and updated through taste homologies in music and other cultural products. The agency of the director is also problematised and negotiated based on contacts with other agents in the field of cultural production.

The proposed method of discursive and textual analysis that takes into account the multimodality of YouTube content allows a discussion of different discourses and instances in which audiences express their mutual or differing views on the production, distribution and reception of the mashups. By moving away from the chronic deadlock of academic debates between film vs. media, auteur vs. audiences or fan vs. cinephiles, we can begin to

explore other abundant and productive areas of transcultural fandoms with multiple objects of interests across different taste cultures and dialogic agents who are at once cinephiles, fans and cultural producers with personal love stories, power politics and cultural investments.

Biographical note:

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Notes:

¹ In 2007 and 2008, the two pivotal years in terms of publications, there were 32 and 34 academic works on Wong Kar-wai respectively (Worldcat.org).

² The affinity between fans and cinephiles was particularly addressed in an online roundtable discussion at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 2011 with participants such as Frances Morgan (editor of *The Wire*) and Mike Everleth (editor of *The Underground Film Journal*). See: Morgan, F. (2011). *Of Cinephilia(s) and Fandom* [Online]. Available: <http://projectcinephilia.mubi.com/page/6/> [Accessed 13 April 2015].

³ The term 'paratext' is coined by Gerard Genette who refers to additional materials associated with literary texts that shape the meanings of these works such as book covers and prefaces. Jonathan Gray (2010) has developed this term in relation to film and media content including user-generated mashups. See: Gray, J. (2010). *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*, New York: New York University Press.

⁴ While I limit my resource to YouTube and the English language keyword, the dataset reveals participants from different continents and there are comments in 22 languages. The majority of the content is in English, Spanish and French in that order. Inevitably, there are restrictions to the kind of content available, who can access YouTube and take part in producing and viewing the content in relation to the site's policies, national censorship regulations and the accessibility to technology.

⁵ Based on formal elements, there are four main groups of video associated with Wong, namely, mashups (174 videos), re-enactment videos/short films (113 videos), vlog film reviews (35 videos) and other works including edited film excerpts, video essays, videos of a film soundtrack with a title card, edited trailers/teasers, educational videos and candid videos generated from events (77 videos).

⁶ In the 'field of cultural production', individuals and/or groups attempt to engage in a 'space of position takings' in order to gain distinctions and profits through exchanging different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1993: 30). Pierre Bourdieu has discussed four main capitals in his works: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals. Others have expanded from these concepts such as

the notion of 'subcultural capital' proposed by Sarah Thornton (2001) and 'emotional capital' by scholars in the fields of education and psychology (Reay, 2000 and Zembylas, 2007).

⁷ Through his ethnographic studies conducted in France in the 1960s, Bourdieu's key argument is that goods with high degree of economic capital and lower degree of cultural capital 'tend to be favoured by the dominant fraction of the dominant class' (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 214). The reverse also applies for goods with low degree of economic capital and higher degree of cultural capital which are favoured by the dominated fraction of this class.

⁸ The discourse of originality of genius directors is closely associated with the traditional concept of film authorship, which was established to justify film as an art form. Since the 1970, the discourse has been problematised due to the exclusivity of film directors over other individuals including film audiences. For background on the development of auteur traditions in film studies, see for example: Grant, B.K. (ed.) (2008). *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

⁹ This process is facilitated by NVivo software which allows the categorisation of different videos and the grouping of comments into different nodes. I also used a separate Excel sheet to categorise the data including mapping the genres of the videos.

¹⁰ Music videos in this context refer to videos that combine sequences taken from Wong's film(s) with soundtrack(s). The majority of videos combine a soundtrack from one of Wong's films with visuals from another such as visuals from *Ashes of Time Redux* and a soundtrack from *Chungking Express* and a combination of visuals and soundtracks from *In the Mood for Love* and *2046*.

¹¹ Slideshows in this context refer to videos that combine stills and images of ancillary materials (DVD covers, soundtrack CD covers, posters and stills) with soundtrack(s) from Wong's film(s). Different transition effects (e.g. dissolve and wipe) are used to display one image after another.

¹² Discourses can be described as 'socially constructed knowledges...developed in specific social contexts and in ways which are appropriate to the interests of social actors in these contexts' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001: 4)

¹³ The video was created and uploaded by PolarEmerald. It had 892,696 views as of 08/10/14 and 935,693 views as of 09/05/15. See: PolarEmeral. (2008). Quizas: In the Mood for Love [Online]. YouTube. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wQ4gJo0bII>. [Accessed 13 March 2015].

¹⁴ The video was uploaded by champs0606. It had 287,259 views as of 08/10/14 and 360,977 views as of 09/05/15. See: champs0606. (2009). Xavier Cugat - "Perfidia" [Online]. YouTube. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtEXWP5JHEM> [Accessed 13 March 2015]. There are also other mashups similar to this one with different sets of film stills and behind-the-scene images.

¹⁵ The discussion focuses on the difficulty in translating the lyrics from Spanish to English and the fact that Nat King Cole sang with an American accent.

¹⁶ References to the film include the title, the setting and the lighting. The game is set in a claustrophobic building in a Chinese quarter with the look and feel of Hong Kong. This topic could be discussed further in a separate context on transmedia intertextuality and authorship. The correlation between the game and the music is mentioned in a conversation with the game creator. See: Valjalo, D. (2013). The 27 Homages Of Thirty Flights Of Loving [Online]. Available: <http://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2013/02/01/the-27-homages-of-thirty-flights-of-loving/>. [Accessed 13 April 2015].

¹⁷ See: YulongGroenewegen. (2009). *Ashes of Xiao He's Time in Paris* [Online]. YouTube. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3K5mWQi76k>. [Accessed 13 April 2015].

¹⁸ An example video is Marinaperez9090. (2013). *Mazyar Fallahi-Akharin Nafas-Movie Clip of Wong Kar Wai" Movies* [Online]. YouTube. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iFKZFTWby8>. [Accessed 13 April 2015].

¹⁹ See: VajraTV: Global Buddhist Television Network. (2006). *Techung - Wong Kar Wai* [Online]. YouTube. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3RsrsSE0Vg>. [Accessed 13 April 2015].

²⁰ A Facebook page set up as part of a campaign to free a Chinese political activist/Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and his wife offers this translation. See: Anon. (2014). 关注刘霞年 Saving Liu Xia 2014 [Online]. Facebook. Available: <https://www.facebook.com/221300274717079/posts/519181864866606> [Accessed 13 April 2015].