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Golden Chicken as Historiocomedy: Sex Work in Hong Kong and Local Popular Culture

Gladys Mac

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Abstract

Golden Chicken 金雞 was released in 2002. The film traces the life of a sex worker, Kam, from the late 1970s into the early 2000s. The film is a historiocomedy that portrays local history from the life and career of a sex worker, as well as the popular culture she consumed. History is presented in a lighthearted manner, with no moral or social condemnations of prostitution. While many of the historical events in the film are serious matters with long lasting consequences, a comedic angle presents a more palatable version of events to younger audiences who did not personally experience these incidents. There is no shortage of history movies in Chinese language films, but they rarely take a comedic perspective. Chinese historiocomedy is more commonly found in fiction than in film. *Golden Chicken* thus stands out, as the film does not follow the traditional doom and gloom model when portraying historical events. In this paper, I examine how history is re-presented through the local sex industry and popular culture. I specifically focus on the dance hostess and residential “phoenix” phases of Kam’s life. Local popular culture is inseparable

from historical development and is influential in the lives of Kam and other inhabitants of Hong Kong. I focus on how local, diegetic and extra-diegetic, music, cinema, and television signify certain eras and their roles in shaping the culture.

Introduction: Golden Chicken 金雞

It all began on a stormy Saturday night, 14 November, 2002. Kam 阿金 (played by Sandra Ng 吳君如) hurries into the ATM vestibule to get out of the storm, not noticing the man walking in behind her with a knife. The man (played by Eric Tseng 曾志偉) attempts to rob Kam after she moves away from the ATM machine. But she does not take out any cash because her account has less than the withdrawal minimum. Failing to make quick money, the robber decides to leave. However, the storm causes a blackout, and the electronically operated doors are locked. Not knowing how long they would be stuck in the small space together, Kam sits down and shares some stories from work, beginning the episodic narrative of *Golden Chicken*.

Golden Chicken was released in 2002, and it was quickly followed by a sequel in 2003, *Golden Chicken 2*. The third installment, *Golden Chicken 3*, was not released until a decade later, in 2014. The word “chicken” in this context is slang for prostitute in Chinese, and “golden” is in reference to Kam’s name, which literally translates as gold.¹ Hence the English titles of the films are literal translations of the Chinese titles. My main focus in this paper is only the first film from 2002 because the second and third films do not directly address prostitution. *Golden Chicken 2* is set during

1. The pronunciations for chicken and prostitute are homonyms in both Cantonese and Mandarin.

the SARS outbreak in 2003, thus Kam's business suffers with a lack of patrons. She temporarily takes over a small restaurant and does not sell sex for that period of time. *Golden Chicken 3* is in a contemporary setting, and Kam has climbed up the sex industry social ladder. She is now a middle-aged madam leading her own troupe of high-end escorts serving the mega rich, while Kam no longer personally attends to the sexual needs of her patrons anymore.

Golden Chicken is a historicomedy that re-presents local history through the perspective of Kam. She is like the Forrest Gump of Hong Kong history, except Kam sees the world from the margins of society, as a woman and as a sex worker. Yet Kam's world is not so different from any other Hongkonger's. Her life is touched upon by important political, social, and cultural events that have also influenced the lives of the viewers. This aspect of familiarity and collective memories are very important in marketing to the local audience, especially around the time when pan-Asian blockbusters began to trend in the East Asian region. Kam is not a significant figure in these sweeping historical changes, but she represents the Hong Kong people that continue to persevere in the face of economic hardship, political unpredictability, and even widespread diseases. While *Golden Chicken* does not make any social or political statements in its portrayal of history and the local sex industry, there is a message of hope. The film begins with a heavy storm in the dark of night, but concludes at the dawn of a bright new day.

In this paper, I examine *Golden Chicken* as a historicomedy through its portrayal of local history. I specifically focus on how history is re-presented by prostitution and

local popular culture. Regarding prostitution, I focus on Kam's time as a dance hostess in the nightclub and as a self-employed "phoenix" working from her own apartment. For popular culture, I examine the importance of the diegetic and extradiegetic local music soundtrack, as well as the diegetic news programs, television dramas and cinema that have influenced Kam and Hongkongers' lives.

The prostitute is a common trope in Chinese literature and film. In early Chinese cinema, there is *Goddess* 神女 (Dir. Wu Yonggang 吳永剛, 1934), starring the legendary Ruan Lingyu 阮玲玉 (1910-1935). In Hong Kong cinema, there is the landmark film *Rouge* (Dir. Stanley Kwan 關錦鵬, 1987), and the *Unwritten Law* 法外情 trilogy (Dir. Ng See-yuen 吳思遠, 1985; Taylor Wong 王泰來, 1988; Michael Mak 麥當傑, 1989). More recent examples include *Whispers and Moans* 性工作者十日談 (2007) and its sequel *True Women for Sale* 我不賣身, 我賣子宮 (2008), both directed by Herman Yau 邱禮濤. In these films, prostitutes are victims of government institutions, the patriarchy, and social mores. These films also portray prostitution as being harmful to the sex workers, their families, and to society, in which the only cure is to not participate in this line of work.

In contrast, *Golden Chicken* stands out as a film that portrays an optimistic and hardworking prostitute. Kam is not portrayed as being oppressed or as a victim, and she does not even consider herself a victim. She has great agency in her life to make her own decisions, ranging from career changes to having a child. Her work is no different than others in the service sector, while it provides Kam with a sufficient income to be economically independent. This independence is attributed to hard work,

without being associated with drugs, and having absolutely no desires to become a long-term mistress of wealthy men. There is no condemnation of “clean” prostitution throughout the three films, and sex work is not presented as a social ill or associated with diseases. Kam resists against those who attempt to show her any sympathy as she is thought to be a “fallen” woman. She is empowered through her embrace of her identity as a “chicken.” Although she receives payment for sexual services, she is still in firm control of her life and her own sexuality. *Golden Chicken* does not glamorize sex work, nor link prostitution with decadent lifestyles. It is simply a form of labor.

Observing History Through Not So Sexy Work

Despite the protagonist being a sex worker, all three *Golden Chicken* films do not include any nudity. Any erotic and sexual aspects are diffused through Sandra Ng’s unsexy star persona. Sandra Ng was in her late thirties when filming *Golden Chicken*, but she still posed as a schoolgirl in a high school uniform with pigtails, contributing to the film’s comedic effect. Most of the films’ humor is situated in the local spoken language. Hong Kong Cantonese is peppered with local slang, puns, English cognates, and local cultural references. For example, one of Kam’s clients, Professor Chan (played by Tony Leung 梁家輝) said, “The past? The poop has been flushed down the toilet” 舊事? 舊屎沖左落屎坑. This is a pun on the pronunciations of “the past” and “feces” in Cantonese. Prostitution is thus sanitized to be safely situated in a historical context without overt erotic distractions. Even scenes of sexual intercourse are weirded to defy the sexy aura that is generally attributed to sex work, which I will discuss in more detail below.

Kam begins working at a nightclub in the 1980s into the early 1990s, an era marked by the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, and the birth of her son. Kam's nightclub career is the beginning of her economic independence and adulthood. Nightclubs flourished in Hong Kong from the 1970s all the way into the mid-1990s. Kam is very proud of her profession as a dance hostess, as reflected in her conversation with Auntie.² Auntie comments that Kam has become prettier after becoming a "chicken." Kam defiantly declares she is not a chicken, but a dance hostess. Auntie insists that Kam is a prostitute by asking, "Do you sleep with men? And do you take payment after sleeping with them? If yes, then you are a chicken!" This exchange between the aunt and niece also demonstrates that nightclubs were places of nocturnal entertainment as well as a hub for women willing to sell sex. Although Kam may be providing sexual services, she is not the typical dance hostess.

Contrary to the charm, glamour, and beauty expected of hostesses, Kam is foolish and extremely naïve. Lacking the comeliness and the cunningness, Kam takes on the role of the nightclub clown. Her tenure at the night club coincides with Jackie Chan's rise to fame by his breakthrough role in *Drunken Master* 醉拳 (Dir. Yuen Woo-ping 袁和平, 1978). She performs an imitation of Jackie Chan's drunken boxing at the tables for a tip, but she is never sitting at the tables to physically serve and entertain the men.

2. There are different forms of address for aunts from different branches of the family, and it also depends on the birth order of the individual's parents in relation to the aunts. Kam's aunt should be the wife of her father's elder brother, as she calls her *boniang* 伯娘.

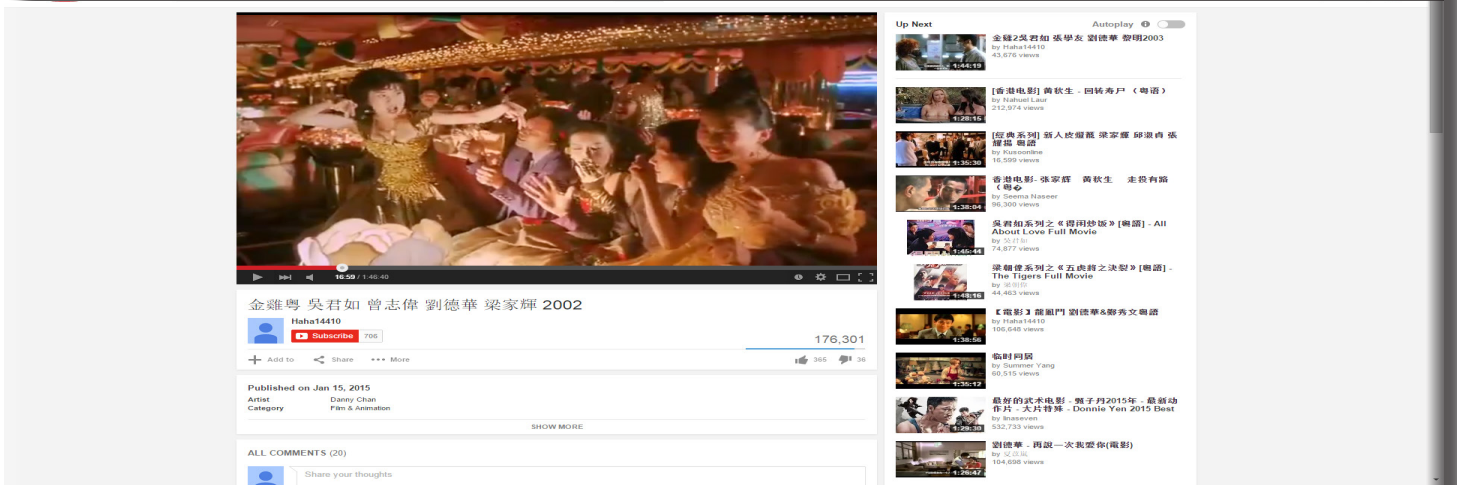


Figure 1. Kam performing tableside drunken boxing for the nightclub patrons in *Golden Chicken*.

In one scene, Kam is once again performing drunken boxing as she follows the car moving in the nightclub. The nightclub's main walkway is wide enough to accommodate an automobile, which takes the women and their patrons from one point to another. The hostess sitting in the car tells the patron beside her that she is interested in a small Louis Vuitton handbag. The man takes out a stack of cash from his pocket, and encourages her to buy a big handbag. Seeing his generosity, Kam also announces that she is interested in a red-white-blue bag 紅白藍膠袋 as she chases the car while boxing. Red-white-blues are nylon canvas bags typically associated with the lower classes. The man also hands Kam some money, but tells her she should get a red-white-blue to hide herself in. Kam's request for money to buy the tricolor nylon bag indicates that she is well aware of her social status in the nightclub and in society, therefore she asks for a grass root item instead of a luxury good. She identifies with the lower class of Hong Kong, despite serving the rich. Kam's lack of higher education and certain types of social connections disqualifies her from ever

entering the elite class. At the same time, her status better relates to the majority of the local audience.

In 1984, the same year that the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed, Kam gives birth to a son. The year is indicated by a brief scene on television, Television Broadcast's (TVB) *Police Cadet '84* 新紮師兄. *Cadet* enjoyed huge popularity upon its release in 1984, and is the first of a trilogy with an ongoing plot and veteran characters. The scene from *Police Cadet* is nothing iconic, but the main characters, played by Tony Leung 梁朝偉 and Maggie Cheung 張曼玉, are visible on the T.V. screen. Unlike the kissing scene from TVB's series *The Fate* 火鳳凰 (1981) (as discussed below), *Police Cadet* is never referred to by the characters. The camera simply pans to the television screen as Kam exits the frame. This significant year in Hong Kong history is not noted by news footage of political figures' meetings, instead it is marked by a work of entertainment and Kam's childbirth. The year of 1984 is thus domesticated, with lots of scenes inside Kam's her apartment and glimpses of a local television series. The parties that decided the fate of Hong Kong, the Chinese and the British, both "foreigners," are oddly missing. Like Kam's pregnancy and childbirth, the handover is an irreversible change inside the "body" of Hong Kong and her people.

We do not know who the child's biological father is. Kam dupes one of her nightclub patrons, Richard (played by Felix Wong 黃日華), into thinking the child is

his.³ Richard is a successful Chinese-American businessman, making him the perfect candidate because he is childless and wealthy. Most importantly, he resides abroad. In the year that Hong Kong was decided to return to the motherland, Kam has Richard take the child abroad soon after birth. Kam is separated from her child for the rest of her life. Richard's home in the United States is a subtle reference to people who left Hong Kong and immigrated to western countries after 1984 because they feared living in a communist country. It is ironic that once the colony was scheduled to return to the motherland, lots of people decided to separate themselves from their homeland of Hong Kong. Sending the child abroad is not only an escape from Hong Kong's unpredictable future, it is also an outlet for Kam's child to leave the lower social classes of her own hometown. Her child would be able to escape the stigma of being the offspring of a prostitute. Instead, her son will be the only child of an affluent and respectable overseas Chinese businessman in the United States.

In *Golden Chicken* and the other films regarding prostitutes with children (mentioned above), the women all give birth to sons instead of daughters. It is as if the reproduction of a man of her own blood can redeem what the women can never be in society. It does not matter whether the sons grow up to be successful or not, as long as they never descend into the same situation as their mothers. And even without parents, a man can start his own family, in contrast to a woman's inability to be integrated into the patriarchal order without the presence of a father or a husband.

3. We discover in *Golden Chicken 2* that the child's biological father is actually Kam's Mainland maternal cousin Qun 馮仁坤 (played by Jacky Cheung 張學友), or Quincy in the English subtitles. Since Quincy is a Chinese citizen, and Kam is from Hong Kong, the Mainland thus represents the fatherland and Hong Kong is the motherland. Yet with the child growing up abroad, he is neither Chinese nor a Hongkonger. Kam's child must adopt the national and cultural identity of America, which is only bridged through the relationship of an accepting adoptive father.

In Kam's case, she leaves her family very early in life, and her parents never appear throughout the film. Her father only appears very briefly in the second film, indicating his limited presence in Kam's childhood and youth. Kam also does not have any long-term, stable romantic relationships, hence she never even considers marriage as a life goal.

Despite giving birth to a child, Kam does not truly become a mother. She does not even spend time with her child after giving birth, since Richard takes him soon after he is born. We only see Kam cuddling another's baby, as his/her mother urges Kam to return the infant. Having given birth to a child is only a biological change, and Kam has no identity or social changes that typically accompany motherhood. The quick removal of the child leads to Kam's permanent status as a single woman prostitute, in which her body can only be used as a source of pleasure for men, but never as a nurturing parent. Her breasts, known for their great size in the pleasure quarters, never nurses her child, but are fondled by men. Kam's son never appears in *Golden Chicken* or its sequels; the only news about him is relayed to Kam through a friend. Despite the positive and uplifting portrayal of Kam, her inability to raise her child is one factor that places a touch of sadness and regret in her life. Yet, it is because she is not burdened by the responsibilities of child raising that she can continue to live a carefree lifestyle. Kam is not the self-sacrificing prostitute-mother, like in *Goddess* or the *Unwritten Law* trilogy. Her willingness to let go of her maternal responsibilities actually liberates her from shackles of traditional female roles.

Golden Chicken ends the 1980s by showing the Tiananmen Incident on television news. Kam, along with her colleagues and patrons, watch as the tanks roll into the

108 *Volume 11.3 (June 2019)*

plaza as a man walks backwards to avoid being run over. The nightclub audience is extremely emotional, wailing and raising their fists at the television. The hostesses are still wearing their ostentatious nightgowns and jewelry, and the golden light from the chandeliers still shines brightly in the background, serving as a stark contrast to the bleak cool tones emitted from the screen. The white light from the screen is casted onto the viewers' bodies, illuminating their crying faces. In a place where men pay for happiness, the patrons are overwhelmed with pain, just like the madam and her girls. Washed in the cold lighting and semi-hidden in dark shadows, these night-clubbers share the shock and pain that the rest of the world had experienced on 4 June 1989 as the event unfolded in Tiananmen Square. Just like the night-clubbers, audiences from around the world were also watching the tanks and the students on their television screens. Their experiences and memories of historical events are thus mediated through the television screens, collapsing the fictional story of *Golden Chicken* with the real television footage and fictional images of films and television series shown in other scenes.

During my research for this paper, I viewed *Golden Chicken* online. Many of the platforms I visited are Mainland Chinese websites. Chunks of the film would be missing when I searched on Tudou a few years ago, permanently removed from the website. Recently, I found the film on Facebook, which is also a censored version. The editing on the Facebook version was done well, and if one has never seen the complete version of the film, the viewer never would have known that a part of the film was missing. Even though the film was not marketed to a Mainland audience, the digital versions have been subject to the same censorship as Chinese productions. But

because the hardcopies of the film are no longer easily accessible while the digital versions are, *Golden Chicken* could easily be permanently altered due to this change of viewing habits over the last two decades.

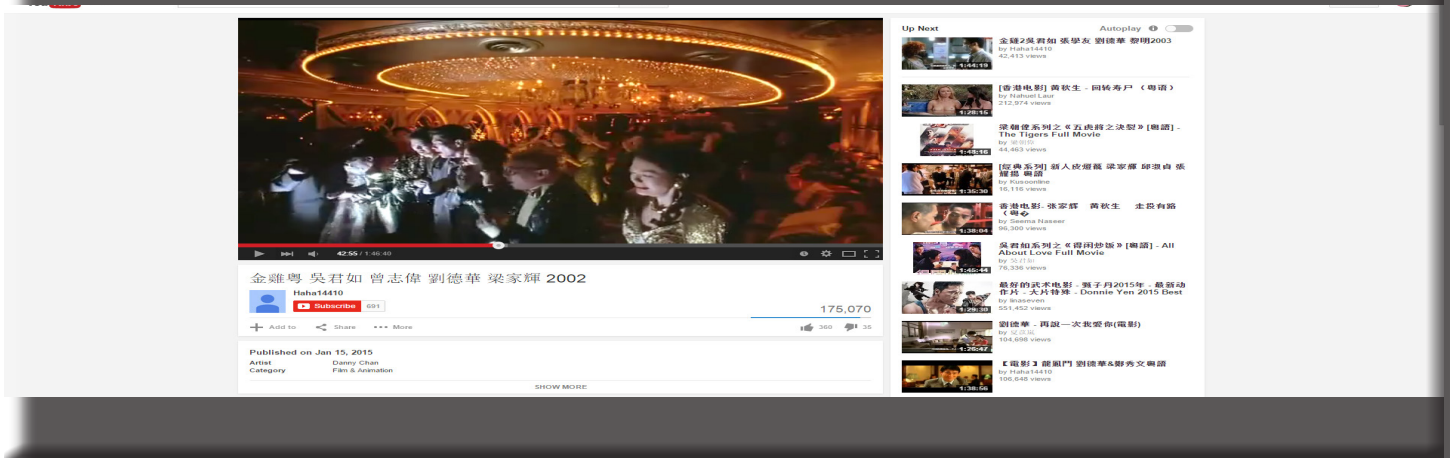


Figure 2a (top) and 2b (bottom). The television screen is not shown in full in this scene, but in between people’s buttocks, there is just enough to see the tanks and the man. In Figure 2b, we see some girls and patrons gathered in front of the television.

In the 1990s, the “northern maidens” 北姑 broke into the local sex market.⁴

These Chinese sex workers who have descended from the north, are eager to work and aggressive in their competition for patrons. In contrast to the popular local dance

4. Northern maidens is a homonym with a type of mushroom that literally translates as northern mushroom.

hostesses whose attentions and sexual services are generally ceremoniously bought by patrons through stacks of cash and promises of name brand handbags and fine jewelry, the “northern maidens” are eager to sell their sexual services for less, and without any courtship or grooming. One of the non-local hostesses speaks Cantonese with a heavy accent, and claims she has never worked in the sex industry while back home. Instead, she was a salesgirl, and did promotions on various products. But with her heavy accent, “promotion” 推銷 sounds like “playing the flute” 吹簫. “Playing the flute” is slang for fellatio. She is thus touting her skills through a declaration of innocence and inexperience of sex work at the same time.

Unable to compete with the younger and more aggressive northern girls, Kam decides to end her career as a dance hostess to work as a masseuse in a massage parlor, a thinly veiled location for alternative prostitution. Her departure from the nightclub formally concludes a chapter of Hong Kong history, in which making money and glamour were important goals in the colony. It is while working at the massage parlor that Kam encounters Chinese bank robber Ye Ziqiang 葉子強 (played by Hu Jun 胡軍), as if the immediate aftermath of glamorous decadence is a period of lawlessness, unrest, crises and instability.⁵

Indeed, the 1997 Asian economic crises brought down many businesses and small investors. Kam was one of the victims who lost her home to the stock market. Hong Kong had barely emerged from the aftermath of the economic crises when *Golden Chicken* was released, hence the memories of the crisis were still the fresh repercussions visible in society. After the foreclosure, Kam moves into a smaller

5. The bank robber Ye Ziqiang is in reference to Yip Kai Foon 葉繼歡 (1961-2017), who was notorious for being heavily armed when robbing banks and jewelry stores in the 1990s.

apartment, and sets up her own private business as a “one phoenix per a floor” 一樓一鳳.⁶

One of Kam’s clients she works for as a “phoenix” is Steely Willy 小鋼炮 (played by Eason Chan 陳奕迅). Their experience of being together is both awkward and comical, with no sexiness or lust associated with their preparation or intercourse. Kam starts off with a shower while still in her underwear, with a plastic apron on top. As she scrubs Steely Willy’s back, she picks up a bottle of dish soap from the counter and squirts it onto his body as she scrubs. Kam’s actions and “tools” closely resemble those of a cleaner more than a sex worker, emphasizing the labor aspect of sex work with no hint of sexiness.

While in bed, Steely Willy requests that Kam role-plays as his ex-girlfriend by using intimate nicknames, biting his shoulder, and popping the pimples on his back during intercourse (see Figures, 3a, 3b, and 3c). The camera is focused solely on Kam’s face, and we see her expression of both awe and disgust when she hears these requests to bite his shoulder and pop his pimples. Kam is still in disbelief as he urges her on. She fumbles to try to bite his shoulder while actually biting his upper arm. The act of sexual intercourse is not portrayed as intimate, dirty or provocative, rather it is very awkward. The man’s desire to relive his intimate moments with his ex-girlfriend produces requests that are not only unusual for Kam, but she also finds it disgusting. It is the details of provoking sexual desire, rather than the sex itself that makes her experiences with each client unique.

6. Phoenix is an alternate term for chicken. Sometimes, prostitutes are referred to as “elder sister phoenix” 鳳姐.

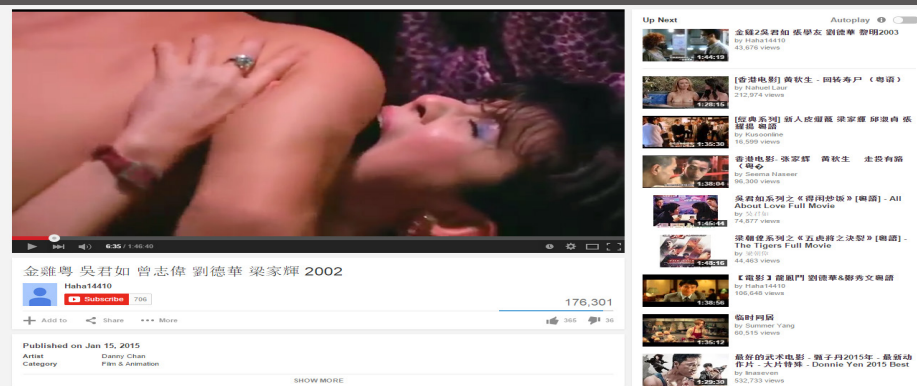
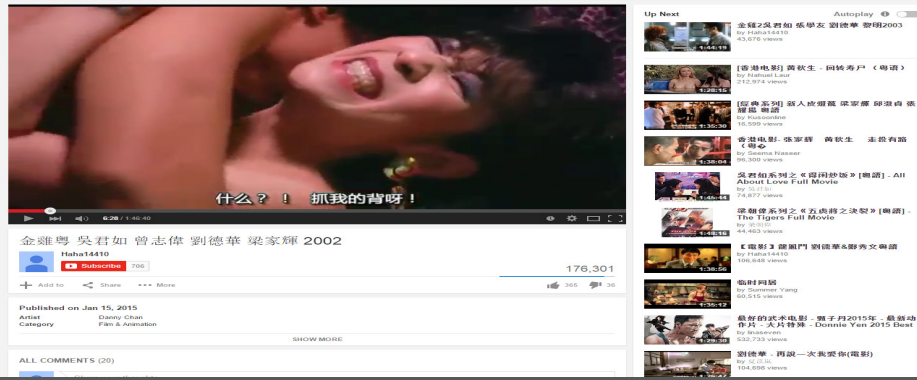


Figure 3a, 3b, and 3c. Figure 3a is Kam’s reaction when he requests her to pop the pimples on his back. Figure 3b is Kam biting Steely Willy’s arm. In Figure 3c, Kam finally bites his shoulder.

Kam is already a well-established “residential phoenix” when she encounters Steely Willy. But she owes her success to Andy Lau 劉德華 (playing himself).⁷ This is the only supernatural segment of the film, when Andy Lau crawls out of Kam’s television set in the middle of a commercial, like the ghost in *Ringu* 午夜凶鈴 (Dir. Hideo Nakata, 1998).⁸ He personally instructs Kam on how to moan in bed with passion. He points out that it is essential for Kam to tailor her moaning to clients of different ages, sizes, and ethnicities.

This is actually a real commercial commissioned by the Hong Kong government. The main message is to remind those working in the service sectors, whether they are bus drivers or saleswomen, that they must mind their attitudes when interacting with clients. Andy Lau’s lines from the commercial: “Your attitude in service is not enough in this day and age” 今時今日咁既服務態度係唔夠既 has become a popular sentence in daily life. This didactic commercial is thus superimposed onto the sex work industry in *Golden Chicken*, in which her awareness of considering services for different clients becomes the turning point in Kam’s business.

Although nothing is eerie about Andy Lau climbing out of the television set like in *Ringu*, it is significant that he crawls out in the middle of this specific commercial. Here, Andy Lau is a representative of the government, which is a haunting force in the lives of Hong Kong’s citizens who do not get to elect their government officials. *Golden Chicken*’s incorporation of Andy Lau and this commercial is a good example of how the decisions made by the Hong Kong government have impacted the common

7. Andy Lau appears earlier in the film while Kam is working as a masseuse.

8. Foreign film titles are usually translated differently when released in different locations. While *Ringu* was known as *Wuye Xiongling* in Hong Kong, the film was released as *Qiye Guaitan* 七夜怪談 in Taiwan.

people. The government's messages are "brought to life" through the materializing body of the superstar in Kam's apartment, and his role in eventually improving her flesh selling business. The parody of the government's commercial also demonstrates how the media regulates and influences the daily lives of Hongkongers.

Local Popular Culture and History

In real time, the film takes place in one night, but Kam's flashbacks trace career changes from a young teenage prostitute to a self-employed sex worker span from 1970s into the early-2000s. *Golden Chicken's* episodic, achronological narration allowed the many cameo appearances to contribute to a coherent storyline. The cameos include pop singers, comedians, as well as television and film actors. This collection of stars is homage to the local entertainment industry, and integrates the stargazing aspect into this film. These cameo appearances reflect the producers and directors' network in the industry. Sandra Ng and her longtime romantic partner, director and producer Peter Chan 陳可辛, have long-term working relations and friendships with many of Hong Kong's biggest stars. Andy Lau and Eason Chan are only two examples of star cameos in the film. Peter Chan was the producer of the first two *Golden Chickens*. In addition, his company Applause Pictures, was the distributor of the films. The couple's personal friendships and power in the industry contributed to the *Golden Chicken* films' commercial success, as well as weaving the film into the local star system and fandom into its metanarrative.

Like many places around the world, Hong Kong had once heavily depended on television for entertainment and information. With the opening of TVB in 1967,

the people of Hong Kong had free access to television programs for the first time. Since then, television and TVB have become crucial parts of Hong Kong popular culture. TVB's television dramas and their theme songs enjoyed enormous popularity because of their daily exposure to the audience, sometimes for months. The dramas and theme songs were all in Cantonese, whereas English and Mandarin songs had been popular earlier. These early dramas and theme songs have become part of the collective memories of the Hong Kong people. Even younger viewers born much later can associate these dramas and songs with a certain era through late night reruns and its availability on the internet.

This interconnectedness between television news, dramas, and the music industry is best illustrated in the segment regarding Kam's fish ball girl 魚蛋妹 days. She began sex work in her mid-teenage years as a fish ball girl, the nickname for adolescent girls that sold sex in the 1970s and 1980s. Kam's teenage years in the fish ball stall reflects the societal ills of rogue youth caught in consumerism when the local economy took off in the 1970s. Kam recalls that she took the first metro to work after it began operating on 12 February, 1980. This is the first time a television set appears in the film. The screen shows Princess Alexandra's (1936-2004) presence at the opening ceremony, and then it switches to show people waiting in the metro station for the train to move out. In addition to the anchor's voiceover telling the audience about celebration activities, the opening of Danny Chan's 陳百強 "Reaching for the Stars" 摘星 is playing along with the anchor's voiceover. Only the first few seconds of the song are played, and Danny Chan's voice is not heard until later in

other songs of the film. The setting immediately cuts to the staircase leading up to the fish ball stall, lined with young girls in school uniforms and men groping at their bodies. Inside the dark stall, we see the madam avidly watching TVB's *The Fate* while the girls and their patrons pant and moan in the dark. The madam is watching a classic scene from *The Fate*, when Chow Yun-fat 周潤發 forcefully kisses Carol Cheng as the iconic, intense piano opening of Jenny Tseng's 甄妮 "Fate" 命運 (*The Fate*'s theme song) plays in the background (see Figure 4). A fish ball girl in school uniform exclaimed, "Wow! Chow Yun-fat is kissing Carol Cheng!" 哇! 周潤發錫鄭裕玲啊! as she is pulled away by a client to perform their own dramatic kissing. The imagery of this kiss scene not only suits the mode of the business in the fish ball stall, but it is also a memorable scene from the drama, collapsing contemporary social changes into contemporary media.



Figure 4. The madam sits on the left. The schoolgirl is in the middle, and on the television screen are Chow Yun-fat and Carol Cheng kissing.

This brief but rapid change of juxtaposed scenes of news programs, popular music, and television dramas are not all in chronological order, but are approximate

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references to the time period in which these songs and television series were released. As mentioned above, the Hong Kong Metro opened in 1980, but Danny Chan's "Reaching for the Stars" was released in 1984, and *The Fate* was first aired in 1981. As Kam's flashbacks, this mixing of times and events is reasonable, since memories are seldom accurate. Accuracy is not necessarily as important as reminding the audience of their collective memories through watching the same television programs and listening to the same songs like Kam and her fish ball colleagues.

Not all the songs in the film are in Cantonese, yet it is important to note that a majority of the soundtrack is by Danny Chan (1958-1993) and Roman Tam 羅文 (1950 -2002), both influential figures in the local music industry. While Danny Chan died young, Roman Tam went on to become an iconic figure in Hong Kong Cantopop. Some of Roman Tam's most famous works are associated with TVB as theme songs, yet his most influential work is "Below the Lion Rock" 獅子山下. This song is featured towards the end of *Golden Chicken*, after Kam finally achieves success in running her own establishment. "Below the Lion Rock" serves as a reminder that hard times will pass as long as one is willing to endure hardship and push forward. Despite Kam's atypical field of work, sex workers are an important part of the local cultural fabric and are an integral service provider for the working class.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, two sequels were released after *Golden Chicken*, and Andy Lau again appears in both films as himself. In *Golden Chicken 2*, he is already the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the near future of

2046. In *Golden Chicken 3*, which is set before the frame narrative of the second film, Andy Lau is a potential candidate for the position of Chief Executive. While none of the *Golden Chicken* films make any direct statements regarding local politics, the placement of Andy Lau in the highest office in Hong Kong is an attempt to project a better future, with a leader who is popular with the people. The contemporary and forward-looking aspects of *Golden Chicken 2* and *3* departed from the first film's historicomedy approach in presenting local history through the perspective of a sex worker and through local popular culture.

Kam's life is a simplified re-presentation of local social and cultural changes. Her career as a nightclub dance hostess and later a self-employed residential "phoenix" shows the ups and downs that the people of Hong Kong experienced due to economic boom and crises. The nostalgic elements in the film derive from music, cinema, and television dramas that were produced in the 1970s into the 1980s. In addition, a good number of cameos played important roles in *Golden Chicken*, not only adding a stargazing element to the film, but these actors are all familiar faces to the Hong Kong audience. Their fame is not separated from their characters, in which the film pays homage to the local entertainment industry as well as folding the fandom into the film's metanarrative. The second and third *Golden Chicken* films, and even the sister work *12 Golden Ducks*, all use this cameo strategy as well. However, this strategy only fared well for the *Golden Chicken* trilogy, and *12 Golden Ducks* flopped in the box office. Hence, the popularity of *Golden Chicken* is based on the combination of local history and local popular culture. Locality is the most important element,

since the humor and stars are all based on familiar issues or events, and punned and parodied in Cantonese dialogue.

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