

Senior Comprehensive Research Proposal

During 1950's and early 1960's, a recurring theme in U.S. films was the interracial romance between Asians and whites. The fact that motion pictures that portrayed Asian-white interracial relationships – such as *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955) and *Sayonara* (1957) – became Academy Award winning hits is a testament to their importance in U.S. history. These films were released during a time of a burgeoning Civil Rights Movement at home and an increasing dialogue amongst the newly decolonized Third World nations abroad. Such developments pushed race to become a more prominent part of U.S foreign policy. In order to appeal to the non-white Third World nations, the U.S. government attempted to adjust its stance on race issues and civil rights. At the same time race was becoming an important foreign policy issue, there was a crackdown on communism in Hollywood, as suspected communists were investigated and blacklisted beginning in 1947. Hollywood, thus, became more conscious than ever of the larger political agenda of Washington D.C. My senior comprehensive project will focus on the construction of Asian-white interracial relationships in U.S. films in the context of U.S. foreign policy during the 1950's and early 1960's. How were Asian-white interracial relationships depicted in these films? How did Hollywood actively try to censor and regulate depictions of these interracial relationships? How did Hollywood's censorship and depictions of interracial relationships comply with the larger U.S. foreign policy agenda?

My main primary sources will be the films released during the 1950's and early 1960's that feature interracial relationships. The six films I have compiled are: *Japanese War Bride* (1952), *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *Sayonara* (1957), *China Gate* (1957), *The Crimson Kimono* (1959), and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960). These films all portray an Asian-white romance as one of their key plot points. There are other films from the time period that

feature Asian-white relationships that may be included in the final project. The films are available in online and physical versions through the Occidental College library. Additionally, I will heavily utilize the Production Code Administration (PCA) files at the Margaret Herrick Library Collections. The PCA was the primary office of censorship in Hollywood. Thus, the PCA files provide significant insights into how depictions of race and interracial relationships were carefully monitored and regulated by the industry.

For my project, my first goal is to read Gina Marchetti's *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Marchetti's work is one of the most prominent cultural analyses on the topic of Asian-white relationships in film. Her book will help set up a framework for the critical cultural analysis needed when watching the films. I will then watch the primary source films on my list in chronological order. After viewing each film, I will also read the corresponding PCA censorship files from the Margaret Herrick Library. During the summer of 2015, I visited the Margaret Herrick Library for research. I already have extensive notes of the needed PCA files from those visits. If more films are added into my project later on, I will re-visit the Margaret Herrick Library to find and read the corresponding PCA files. After this, I will read Ellen C. Scott's *Cinema Civil Rights: Regulation, Repression, and Race in the Classical Hollywood Era*. The work – newly published in 2015 – specifically focuses on the relationship between film censorship and race during the time period of my research topic. I will then read Thomas Patrick Doherty's *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & the Production Code Administration* to better understand the history of the PCA and film censorship. Finally, I will read further secondary sources on the history of U.S. cultural representations of Asians and U.S. film censorship, especially in relation to foreign policy.

Working Bibliography

Primary Sources

Motion Picture Association of America. Production Code Administration Records. Margaret Herrick Library.

China Gate. Directed by Samuel Fuller. 1957; Los Angeles, CA: Republic Pictures Home Video, 1989. VHS.

The Crimson Kimono. Directed by Samuel Fuller. 1960; Culver City, CA: Sony Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Japanese War Bride. Directed by King Vidor. 1952; San Mateo, CA: Retro Flix, 2010. DVD.

Love is a Many-Splendored Thing. Directed by Henry King. 1955; Beverly Hills, CA: Twenty Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

Sayonara. Directed by Joshua Logan. 1957; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2004, DVD.

The World of Suzie Wong. Directed by Richard Quine. 1960; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004. DVD.

Secondary Sources

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