

# The Value of an Impoverished Aesthetic:

## *The Iron Ladies* and its Audiences

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*The Iron Ladies* directed by Yongyoot Thongkongthun

*The Iron Ladies* is a landmark film in the recent internationalisation of Thai cinema.<sup>1</sup> This story of a gay, lesbian and transsexual volleyball team who surprised everyone by winning the national championships was the first Thai film to be commercially distributed in the United Kingdom, following its remarkably enthusiastic reception at the 2000 London Film Festival. The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), a venue with an avant-garde history and track record of promoting East Asian auteurs, programmed the film as the centrepiece of its summer 2001 schedule. Despite being a big hit on the international festival scene, *The Iron Ladies* provoked some interestingly hostile reviews and failed to perform as well as expected in London.

We are not intending to explain the entertainment value of the film by supplying a culturally specific corrective reading to those repelled by it. Rather, what makes

*The Iron Ladies* particularly interesting is its unusual passage from domestic commercial hit to festival favorite, and finally, arthouse flop in London. The film's sharp reversal of fortunes before different audiences reveals the tension that exists between different modes of "world cinema" spectatorship. The indifference of the ICA's core audience and the aversion of serious critics in the United Kingdom to the film make apparent what is implied in the idea of world cinema. Their sense that *The Iron Ladies* had failed to meet a standard of artistic sophistication highlights one important structuring principle of world cinema reception: connoisseurship. By contrast, during the London Film Festival, the screening of *The Iron Ladies* became a unique cultural event, fostering the articulation of collective identity. As event, the screening of the film opened up an alternative mode of viewing, displacing the connoisseur structure with a popular mode based on pleasurable

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identification. To be seen enjoying the film as it raced to its utopian resolution, where homophobic prejudices are neatly swept aside, was a collective act of queer identification in public space.

### Defining Moments

*The Iron Ladies* was released in Thailand in early 2000 and became an immediate hit, reinforcing the growing sense that a revival of the so-called golden age of Thai national cinema was on its way. In the 1990s new Bangkok multiplexes began to grow at an extraordinary rate, screening a much wider range of foreign (mainly Hollywood) movies. In the early part of the decade Thai cinema itself was still too strongly identified with the despised *krapong baan kaa san* (school skirts'n'shorts) high-school genre. Then a few key figures in the industry recognised that Bangkok multiplexes were not only popular with youths but were also attracting an urban bourgeois audience. Among the most influential was Visut Poolvorarak, the head of production house Tai Entertainment whose family has a major stake in one of the country's biggest multiplex chains. Tai Entertainment financed the first wave of New Thai Cinema films, such as *Nang Nak*, *Dang Bireley and the Young Gangsters*, and *The Iron Ladies*.<sup>2</sup> The success of these films is not a mere box-office phenomenon, but needs to be seen within the wider context of an economically confident bourgeoisie's participation in cultural production and consumption.<sup>3</sup> Broadly speaking, the urban bourgeoisie's struggle to transform Thai cinema into its own image of national culture has resulted in this visibly more "sophisticated" body of films. This is precisely what has attracted international attention to New Thai Cinema. And unprecedented international interest, in particular the international recognition of seemingly independent-minded directors with auteur aspirations, notably Pen-ek Ratanaruang and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, has done much to reinforce the sense in Thailand that a new cinema age has indeed emerged.

Based on its domestic success, *The Iron Ladies* was picked up by Fortissimo Film, an independent sales agent highly experienced in launching films from East Asia on the international market. The ovation after *The Iron Ladies'* screening at the Toronto Film Festival was an early indication of the warmth that would greet it elsewhere on the festival circuit. The London Film Festival screening we attended in November 2000 was no different. Critic Tony Rayns writes of its "rapturous audience response" – "after the festival screening, the house manager of the Odeon West End [one of the bigger festival venues in Leicester Square, central London] reported that it went down better than anything he'd seen all week."<sup>4</sup> Playing to a packed auditorium, the audience that night clearly found the film good fun. They giggled at its stream of coarse jokes, cheered the protagonists boisterously, and when the affable director Yongyoot took to the stage after the film there was sustained, hearty applause. Most people stayed to listen to what he had to say, rather than staging the usual discreet exodus. *The Iron Ladies* won no major critical awards from the global festival circuit, but scenes like London and Toronto lent it the reputation of an audience favorite.

The buzz created at festivals helped persuade the ICA that the film might be suitable for distribution. David Sin, its cinema director at the time, recalls:

We were interested in the film. Someone like Tony Rayns suggested we look at it. He'd been to a lot of the festivals where the film had shown, and he'd seen the overwhelming audience reaction to the film. He said if you buy this film it's a sure-fire winner for audiences, it's almost guaranteed. On the basis of that kind of recommendation, we hummed and hawed for a while. We weren't sure whether the film would have enough critical impact for a distributor like the ICA to be releasing it. The sort of films we were looking to release then don't simply have to reach a certain box-office level, but they need to add something to the ICA's catalogue of films. They inevitably say something about the ICA, so they need to say the right thing.<sup>5</sup>

As distributor and exhibitor, the ICA has been key to establishing the critical reputation of East Asian auteurs since the 1980s, especially Wong-Kar Wai and Takeshi Kitano. First and foremost known as a venue for experimental visual art, its cinema department is small but high profile. The ICA's place within British and European film culture is defined by Sin the following way:

It's a distributor of cutting edge world cinema. By that it's quite prescriptive; the company takes the responsibility of telling the audience what that might be. Within the distribution industry in Britain, it also acts as R&D. More than any other distribution company in the UK, and in a European context to an extent as well, it discovers new talent. It makes claims to support the development of those filmmakers or those forms of cinema.

The difficulty *The Iron Ladies* posed for the ICA was, principally, that a case could not be made for it as part of an established auteur's oeuvre. This is not only because the film was a first feature, but also as we discuss later, there was little room to make a case on behalf of its artistic merits. A deal with the United Kingdom television company Channel 4 minimised the financial risk involved in buying *The Iron Ladies*. But critically the film was something of a risk for a distributor and exhibitor with a "cutting edge" reputation. On their own account, Sin and colleague Ed Fletcher justified the ICA's purchasing of the film on the basis that they would be the first commercial distributor of a Thai film in the United Kingdom, and, judging from festival audiences responses, they would be releasing a Thai film which seemed to have the most commercial potential. More importantly, both assumed that the already established London audience for gay-themed films would provide a platform for launching *The Iron Ladies* as their summer 2001 hit.

### Critical and Commercial Failure

So, what went wrong? Contrary to the ICA's expectation, audience figures in London were disappointing. Prior to the release, Sin and

Fletcher felt that the ICA had generated good national publicity for *The Iron Ladies*. Fletcher reflects:

We had a feeling that if you market a foreign language movie well, then it can be a potential goldmine. I got carried away, the signs were there but it didn't happen at all.<sup>6</sup>

*The Iron Ladies* did not provide them with a commercial "crossover" hit in the way that the Japanese horror *Ring* also an ICA Projects release, had delivered.<sup>7</sup>

We would argue that *The Iron Ladies'* commercial failure had a lot to do with its failure to attract Londoners attached to the idea of film as art, who look upon the ICA as their regular exhibition venue. The aesthetic sensibility of this group – the cinematic value judgment brought to bear unfavourably on *The Iron Ladies* – can perhaps be most clearly gauged from specialist film criticism. Scholar José Arroyo, writing for the British film magazine *Sight and Sound*, was openly hostile. Prefacing his review with an acknowledgment of the film's popularity in Thailand – "it is of undoubted sociological significance" – Arroyo took offence to what he describes as its failure to "offer a fresh take on its references," its "impoverished aesthetics," and "lack of nuance and delicacy."<sup>8</sup> Veteran broadsheet critic, Nigel Andrews, long-time champion of distinctive world cinema talents (notably Abbas Kiarostami), was similarly unimpressed. Like Arroyo, he acknowledges the film's popular appeal, granting it the backhanded complement of a "festival hailed" work. Yet, repelled by *The Iron Ladies'* obviousness – "the Hundred Oldest Jokes about limp-wristed chaps trying to be macho" – Andrews reports that he could not bring himself to stay to the end of the screening, unlike "many others [who] stayed to applaud and adore."<sup>9</sup> Contrast this with his giddy enthusiasm a month later for the "cineliterate brio" of Yongyoot's contemporary, Wisit Sasanatieng, director of the celebrated *Tears of the Black Tiger* (2000). In a lead review of the film, Andrews christens Wisit "the most inventive stylist east of anywhere"; the artist responsible for

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“put[ting] a new country on the world movie map.”<sup>10</sup> For him, this achievement can only be brought about through the aesthetic property of cinema, in this case through the “eye-smacking Warholian colour coordination” that a director “born with a silver viewfinder in his mouth,” from a land preposterously described as in its “high-tech infancy,” can bring to the medium.<sup>11</sup>

For both critics, then, *The Iron Ladies*' crime was its lack of visual sophistication and narrative originality. It is significant to note, however, that in another field of criticism, the film's utterly predictable narrative was, in fact, regarded as its primary pleasure, something to appreciate. Perhaps this is more evident in queer film criticism and gay/lesbian festival commentary, but by no means exclusive to it. One particularly thoughtful review in *Gay Times* highlights, not the formal properties that *The Iron Ladies* apparently lacks, but instead what the film *does*. It invites audiences to identify with the team in a remarkably direct way. Obstacles are clearly laid out according to the code of the sports film genre – underdog team gets to the final and wins, and the characters are engaging in a cartoonish sort of way. Contrary to Arroyo's somewhat disingenuous suggestion that enjoyment of the film probably requires “local cultural knowledge,” there is nothing to not “get,” providing you've seen *Teen Wolf* and can stomach vulgar jokes. *The Iron Ladies*' commitment to ‘popular’ enjoyment works particularly well within the context of gay/lesbian festivals. Although they are sites of conflicting definitions of queer cinema, gay/lesbian festivals are nonetheless events that retain a celebratory inflection. Rather than its accessibility and exuberance being something “so sweet and simple as to be patronising,” the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival organisers chose to describe *The Iron Ladies* as “a spirited and gleeful plea for tolerance.”<sup>12</sup>

### What is World Cinema?

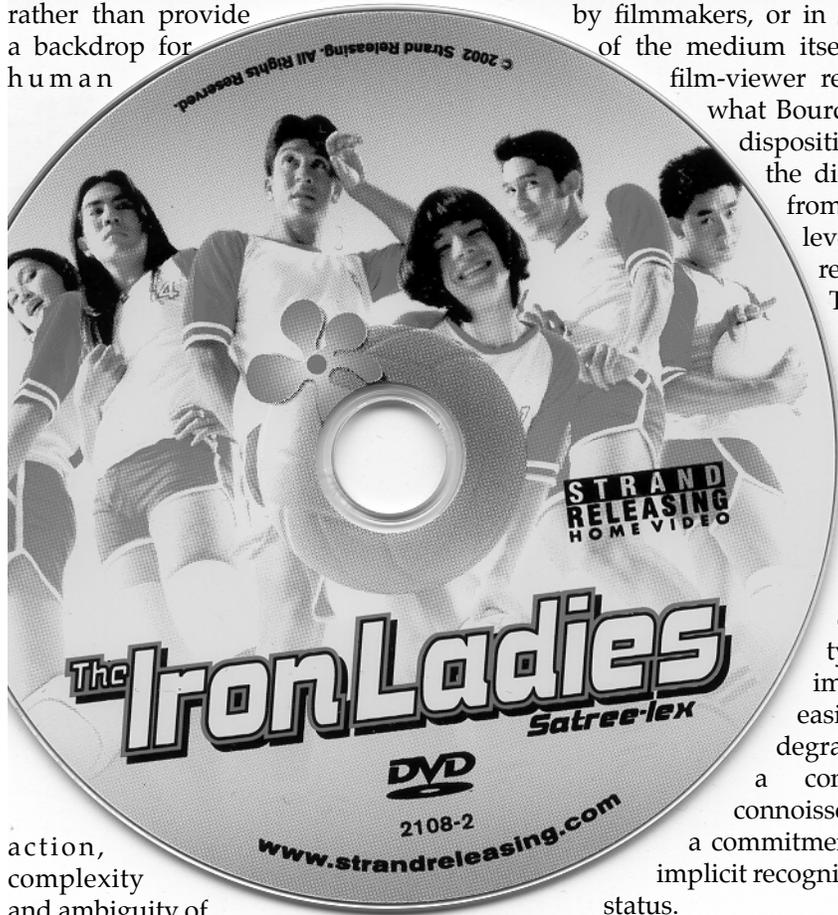
*The Iron Ladies*' commercial and critical failure, in the sense described above, is

worth dwelling upon because it highlights the persistence of residual art cinema values in world cinema reception. At the same time, these art cinema values, precisely because they are residual, do not exhaust the way films from “marginal” nations are seen.

The residual, in Raymond Williams's sense, refers to values formed in the past which are nonetheless still active in the present. Residual values can be alternative or oppositional to the dominant culture, are subject to incorporation and thus have an unstable and unpredictable presence.<sup>13</sup> Many have pointed out that the institution and tradition of art cinema emerged more systematically in Europe after WW II, and can be traced to the imperatives of defending national markets against the penetration of Hollywood imports. This was not just an economic concern; the notion of a national cinema of quality was framed as a cultural response: state supported attempts to develop artistic cinema formally distinct from Hollywood.<sup>14</sup> The figure of the director, already a central aspect of the artistically oriented European film movements before the war, gained critical currency during the 1950s, eventually drawing directors from outside of Europe into the canon. Since the 1970s the auteur has become a highly contested figure in academic discourse, but in distribution, marketing and most film reviewing, the figure of the director has become, if anything, a more precious commodity now than before.<sup>15</sup> *Auterism*, a term of criticism formed in an earlier period, is an example of one element of art cinema which has been substantially incorporated by the dominant film culture. But the elements of the art cinema tradition which retain the potential to be taken up as alternative to mainstream film culture are those stylistic features associated with formal rigour and intelligence.

The attempt to assert the values of art cinema actively in the present applies equally to the domain of reception. Here, connoisseurship is the practice through which residual art cinema values are actualised, with the conscious intention of preserving an alternative film culture perceived to be

in permanent decline. Steven Neale has influentially pointed out that art cinema has historically defined itself in contrast with Hollywood. Among the textual features he and others have singled out are an emphasis on visual style, de-dramatisation of action through the long take and deep-focus shot, landscape and décor that speak for themselves rather than provide a backdrop for human



action, complexity and ambiguity of character, interiorisation of dramatic conflict, and, of course, the inscription of authorial traces.<sup>16</sup> Initially serving a “function of differentiation” from Hollywood movies, these strategies have now become an instantly recognisable part of the repertoire of art film language.<sup>17</sup> The spectator knows that s/he is apparently set free from the urgency of narrative development and immediate emotional identification. Other competencies are expected than the ability to understand generic plots, other extra-textual

knowledge which enables the spectator to recognise and assess the significance of what he/she is seeing in broader terms than plot development. Above all, the kind of competency required is aesthetic: the spectator is well aware that s/he has to be able to read “meaning” in relation to artistic styles, movements, other works by filmmakers, or in terms of the ontology of the medium itself. This inscription of

film-viewer relation corresponds to what Bourdieu calls the aesthetic disposition, characterised by the displacement of interest from the represented, the level of the referent, to representation itself.<sup>18</sup>

The connoisseur mode of spectatorship not only differentiates but also elevates itself over the “popular” mode of viewing film. It refuses the pleasure and involvement of popular narrative, dismissing the types of text that are immediately accessible, easily decoded, as facile, degraded, or vulgar. As a contemporary practice, connoisseurship demonstrates a commitment to film as art in the implicit recognition of its own residual status.

In film, arguably the most significant development over the past two decades has been the “discovery” of new national cinemas. The process of discovery itself, needless to say, involves institutions and agencies with contending goals. In the heyday of post-war art cinema, the European international festivals primarily assumed the role of articulating a cultural-artistic definition of quality, fostering the reputation of auteurs who operated outside of the commercial sphere. Few festivals now exercise their

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authority with such conviction. Recently an entry on the Berlin 2004 website asked:

Which country will produce the next film culture to succeed Bollywood in its *pop cultural influence*? Thailand. Or Korea. Or may be [sic] South America. Really hard to say.<sup>19</sup>

What would once surely have been beneath the concern of the festival has now become a valid topic of speculation.

Still, against so “populist” a trend, those committed to preserving art cinema as alternative culture exercise their cultural authority through a selective definition of what is of value in new national cinemas. Consequently much of New Thai Cinema, with its privileging of spectacle, genre entertainment or amusing deconstruction of genre – legacy of an exclusively commercial tradition of cinema – presents this constituency with something of a problem (as the earlier reviews by Arroyo and Andrews testify). Of ultimate value in their selective definition is the way a filmmaker resolves the age-old problem of the ontology of film. When Peter Wollen wrote about the two European and American avant-gardes he noted the tendency towards two extremes in the quest to capture “the soul of cinema,” either what he calls an introverted (exploring the specifically cinematic) or extroverted (indexing the pro-filmic) ontology.<sup>20</sup> Similarly in the context of European art cinema, John Ellis has contrasted the critical discourse of the late 1940s, which values the neo-realist claim to index the actual world, with the reflexive turn of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>21</sup> In the contemporary attempt to incorporate peripheral cinema nations within the terms of art cinema’s cultural authority, far from being opposing strategies, it seems the two tendencies are required to coexist.

One way in which it is possible to see this double structure of expectation in operation is through the aesthetic preference for naturalism in world cinema. On the one hand, world cinema naturalism brings remoteness into representation, valuing landscapes, places and locations which

connote authenticity rather than artifice and continuity over change. World cinema naturalism is a direct legacy of the art cinema convention for landscape composition. The long take and minimal editing has come to be taken as more truthful to the organic quality of the environment than, say, rapid editing. Whether the long take actually conveys reality with greater adequacy than montage has long been a contested point. What is beyond contention is that it operates as a complex sign of both documentary-like authenticity and artistic seriousness, and it does so as a function of its centrality within the stylistic tradition of art cinema, in which the refusal of plot driven momentum has been fundamental. Yet in the category of world cinema, remoteness will not be valued if it is naively rendered using crude cinematic techniques, or in a film language recognisably mass commercial. The buzz generated by New Thai Cinema’s avant-garde exception Apichatpong, especially with *Blissfully Yours* (2002), in cinephile publications such as *Film Comment* and *Cahiers du Cinéma* can be attributed to his fluent understanding of such expectations.

In short, indexing the remoteness of geographical places is an indispensable part of the connoisseur reception of peripheral cinemas, even if the films themselves set about exploring the medium’s “introverted” ontology. We would suggest that this is one manifestation of what Doreen Massey calls a geographical imagination formed through uneven relations of power.<sup>22</sup> In the incorporation of peripheral cinemas to art cinema values, the films face a doubly constituted set of expectations, one issuing from the aesthetic realm – ideas of art – and the other from the realm of geographical representation – ideas of place, particularly one that stems from the pastoral symbolism attached to the periphery. This has to do with the desire to imagine the existence of settled communities “out there,” which transcend on behalf of all humanity the upheaval and turmoil of modernity. As the global form of visual culture, cinema has become the key site

for producing and sustaining geographical imaginations. The pastoralism we are referring to has both specifically cinematic content, and is a consequence of recent historical changes. In his seminal book, David Harvey suggests that the intensification of processes of globalisation has severely challenged the notion of place as settled and bounded community, yet the yearning for stability represented by such a notion is compounded by the quickened pace of globalisation itself.<sup>23</sup> However, rather than perceiving “the time-space compression” as a universal global postmodern condition, Massey cautions that it is necessary to look concretely at how this is happening, particularly in the light of uneven processes of development in the core and peripheral world.<sup>24</sup> Intense globalisation is experienced across the world, but its consequences are not uniform. The nostalgic yearning for the settled place has to be seen in its concrete manifestation, charged with specific social and political motivations.

Still, as we have argued, art cinema values are residual rather than dominant. Although they possess cultural authority, their vulnerability is evident in the face of competing kinds of investment in the idea of world cinema. Evidently many emergent film nations occupy a subordinate position in the world system, a fact not only pertaining to the economic and political realms but one with significant cultural ramifications. Peripheral nations have few channels for self-representation within global media; their image is highly reductive. For this reason a director upon whom international critical acclaim is heaped cannot avoid the burden of national representation. One aspect of this is the state’s appropriation of their achievement as a symbol of the nation’s ability to take its place within the international community as a modern nation among others, notwithstanding the reluctance of most world cinema auteurs to fly the national flag. Filmmakers work within a medium closely associated with modernity, one undergoing constant technological innovation, which is perhaps another reason why they are highly

susceptible to the role of conveying the nation’s parity with more powerful nations on the global stage.

Connoisseur spectatorship’s investment in the “rigorous” film form as basis for discovering world cinema is potentially undermined by another kind of discovery. Here the mere fact that a film from somewhere previously not associated with filmmaking is shown at all is regarded as cause for celebration. This is a manifestation of the postmodern sensibility in world cinema reception. What is being celebrated is simply the appearance of cultural variety; the availability of films from an ever-wider range of countries stands as an emblem of a more multicultural world. From this perspective the merit of a foreign language film is not derived from what it has to offer on cinematic terms; the film is a de-substantiated sign of a host culture’s ability to embrace difference. The ICA’s promotion of *The Iron Ladies* as the first Thai film to be commercially released in the United Kingdom appeals directly to this strain of the multicultural celebration of difference. While the ICA acknowledged that it was difficult to make a critical case for showing the film in its cinemas, since it was not something which could be described as pushing the creative boundaries of filmmaking, it compensated by making the argument partly in multicultural terms. This is an argument which might conceivably have greater appeal to a non-connoisseur audience. It forms part of an attempt to draw in the kind of audience which would turn the film into the anticipated crossover hit. That this failed to materialise demonstrates that an established venue for art cinema, such as the ICA, remains bound by connoisseur judgements, even though they may be trying to appeal to other values.

### ***The Iron Ladies* as Event**

Connoisseurship, in order to be actualised, also entails a specifically dedicated mode of viewing, narrowly focused on the text as the object of aesthetic experience and knowledge.

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This is similar to Bourdieu's distinction between the connoisseur's austere approach to cinema going and the viewer who treats the cinema as a space for ostentatious spending, as part of a good night out.<sup>25</sup> The connoisseur mode of viewing is routinised to the extent that it is geared to the acquisition of specialist knowledge. It is an ongoing work of viewing, thinking about and reading up on films. In this sense, the connoisseur is generally indifferent to the non-filmic aspects of cinema going, location of cinemas and convenience of viewing times matter a lot less than getting to see the films which are important.

Film festivals are interesting in the way that they simultaneously reinforce and undercut the conditions of connoisseurship. The fundamental premise of most festivals is that they showcase quality films and indicate emerging trends. Yet, at the same time festivals rely on the non-filmic elements to sustain the sense of their significance as cultural events. For a start, any festival worth its salt has to fly in some directors to introduce their films and participate in Q&A sessions, not to mention the conventions of gala openings, workshops, parties and receptions, all of which add value to the occasion. These non-filmic aspects of festival exhibition draw attention to the uniqueness of each particular screening, which can foster a sense of collective presence among the audience, a sense that they are a select group participating in a unique cultural event. One impact this tends to have is that the audience claims a more active participatory role to underline its presence. A festival audience will frequently clap at the end of a film to show its appreciation, whereas it would be considered absurd to be so demonstrative at a regular screening. Aside from encouraging a more collective form of audience behaviour, the nature of the festival screening as event may engender something akin to the "intersubjective horizon of experience" that Hansen identifies with early cinema reception.<sup>26</sup> This is the sense of a public constituted through commonality rather than difference. The articulation of a collective identity within that particular context

of screening powerfully shapes how the audience read the film. This can undermine connoisseur judgement and reading, as the London Film Festival screening of *The Iron Ladies* demonstrates.

In order to understand why the London festival reception of the film was exceptionally warm, it is crucial to consider the way the audience positioned itself as a collective on that particular occasion. Festival screenings and film seasons lend themselves especially to appropriation by social groups who are consciously engaged in an ongoing struggle of public self-representation. That night, it was clear that the screening of *The Iron Ladies* had become a queer cultural event. There was a visible gay and lesbian presence, but it would be gauche to suggest that this alone was sufficient to bring about the transformation from routine cinephile viewing to queer event. Instead, what we are suggesting is that queer identity formed the basis of the intersubjective horizon for this audience. Queer identity provided the point of identification and a sense of commonality, which was expressed through the manifestly empathic participation, a readiness to laugh and cheer throughout the film, and by the sustained applause at its conclusion. The audience's response was characterised by a willingness to be swept along by the utopian resolution, that homophobic prejudices could be transcended. The festival audience connected powerfully with the rousing climax, which showed the team winning both the national volleyball contest, and more importantly, the heart of the nation, the latter being something of a fictional embellishment.

If this queer-identified festival audience connected so strongly with *The Iron Ladies*, why did this fail to happen upon the film's commercial release in London, even though the ICA believed that it has an established audience for "gay-themed world cinema"? Releasing the film commercially at the ICA appeared to act as unwitting barrier, discouraging the appropriation of each screening as event: claiming public space for articulating collective queer identity. The film

played twice a day for six weeks. This pattern of commercialised programming meant that each screening could scarcely be considered a unique occasion. Once the sense of uniqueness is taken away, so too the collective dimension of reception dissipates. As a result, a strategic political reading of *The Iron Ladies*, which shaped the festival reception, was much harder to sustain. What comes to replace it is the residual mode of world cinema reception. Only in this restricted context, in which connoisseurship predominates, can Arroyo claim that “[a]ny self-respecting drag queen would barf on the first bite.”<sup>27</sup>

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>*The Iron Ladies*, directed Yongyoot Thongkongthun (2000). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Asian Cinema Studies Society, ‘Cinema and Visual Culture in Asia’, University of Washington, 31 May-1 June 2003.

<sup>2</sup>*Nang Nak*, directed by Nonzee Nimibutr (1999) and *Dang Bireley and the Young Gangsters*, directed by Nonzee Nimibutr (1997).

<sup>3</sup>See, May Adadol Ingawanij, “The bourgeoisification of a ‘vulgar’ cinema: *Nang Nak* and Thai cinema’s coming of age” (paper presentation, Trading Culture Conference, AHRB Centre for British Film and Television, July 18-20, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>See, Tony Rayns, “Thai anything once,” *Time Out*, July 18 – 25, 2001, 81.

<sup>5</sup>David Sin, interview, May 2003.

<sup>6</sup>David Sin, interview, May 2003.

<sup>7</sup>*Ring*, directed by Nakata Hideo (1998).

<sup>8</sup>See, José Arroyo, review of *The Iron Ladies*, *Sight & Sound*, September 2001, 46.

<sup>9</sup>See, Nigel Andrews, “Monster fun in an earthly hell,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2001, 18.

<sup>10</sup>See, Nigel Andrews, “Tiger savages monkey,” *Financial Times*, August 16, 2001, 18.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>See, José Arroyo, review of *The Iron Ladies*, *Sight & Sound*, September 2001, 46 and *Fifteenth London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival*, festival programme, 2001, 13.

<sup>13</sup>See, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 122 – 123.

<sup>14</sup>See, Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1989), 40.

<sup>15</sup>See, John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), 190 – 193.

<sup>16</sup>See, Stephen Neale, “Art cinema as institution,” *Screen* 22.1 (1981): 13 – 14.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>See, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1986).

<sup>19</sup>See, Songyos Sugmakanan, “From Berlin with love,” *Bioscope* 28 (March 2004): 60. The italics are our own.

<sup>20</sup>See, Peter Wollen, “The Two Avant-Gardes,” in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), 97.

<sup>21</sup>See, John Ellis, “Art, Culture and Quality – Terms for a Cinema in the Forties and Seventies,” *Screen* 19.3 (1978): 9 – 47.

<sup>22</sup>See, Doreen Massey, “The contestation of place,” in *A Place in the World, Places, Cultures and Globalisation*, eds. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1995), 134.

<sup>23</sup>See, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>24</sup>See, Doreen Massey, “The contestation of place,” in *A Place in the World, Places, Cultures and Globalisation*, eds. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1995), 52 – 53.

<sup>25</sup>See, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1986), 270.

<sup>26</sup>See, Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>27</sup>See, José Arroyo, review of *The Iron Ladies*, *Sight & Sound*, September 2001, 46.