**Tiny Asian Female Seeking Analysis: Representation, Aesthetics, and Performativity in Ali Wong's "Baby Cobra" (edited)**

Cinophile; May 13, 2023; Amela Li Published; 2021-06-01; University of British Columbia’s Film Journal

Amila Li said when she arrived at work, she was met with a latte from a managing partner. A coworker made the jarring and familiar remark, “He likes pretty Asian girls”. Li further states that this designation has become routine.

We Asian women are categorized by our: appearance + race + gender. Our image precedes our merit.

Asian women’s place in the North American culture indicates a peripheral existence (submissiveness, subordination, etc.) in a male-dominated Westernized society. This points to a deficit of power. The Western imperialist lens imagines the West as “self” and the East as “other”.

Sianne Ngai contends this (lens) brings forth “an aestheticization of cuteness, but also eroticization of powerlessness”. The term “pretty Asian girl” objectifies Asian women well into adulthood. Further, it signals a paternalistic relationship between the childlike, Asian object and the powerful Western subject.

More recently, in contemporary North American media, caricatures of Asian women are less frequent than in the past. Yet the ideologies behind new images remain largely unchanged.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Do Asian women in Eastern societies traditionally assume a “peripheral existence in male dominated…societies”?

2. Do Asian men in Eastern societies simultaneously assume this same “peripheral existence” for women?

3. If true, what should Asian women do in Eastern societies? ….in Western societies?

(for Abstract and full text, see below)

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**Tiny Asian Female Seeking Analysis: Representation, Aesthetics, and Performativity in Ali Wong's "Baby Cobra" (Abstract)**

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Abstract

In contemporary North American media, caricatures of Asian women are less frequent than the past, yet the ideologies behind new images remain largely unchanged. Although Hollywood has attempted to include more Asian women on screen, most of their roles remain limited to one of two trajectories: stereotypically Asian, always marked by otherness, and thus seen as a separate entity from North America; or assimilated, adopting Western imperialist ideals, and rejecting cultural ties to the East. Curiously, the latter approach to writing Asian characters is often seen as progressive because of its departure from recognizable archetypes. Rather than incorporate the cultural backgrounds of Asian characters into their narratives, much popular media insists on muting any discussion of ethnic differences. These representations, which profess inclusivity, actually “function to domesticate and fold in colour, thereby recentering the desirability of cultural whiteness as mainstream” (Kim). In her comedy special Baby Cobra (2016), Ali Wong rejects being synonymous with lesser in favour of a platform from which she can control public perception. As the second Asian-American woman to achieve mainstream recognition in stand-up comedy, she demands visibility with her presence alone. Moreover, Wong’s performance at once exaggerates and subverts conventions of Asian femininity to deconstruct regressive social categories and, ultimately, call for new ways of imagining.

For full text, see: http://cinephile.ca/wp-content/uploads/Cinephile15.1Final.pdf

https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/cinephile/article/view/198219