

Film Censorship and Female Chastity: Exploring State's Discourses and Patriarchal Values in Reconstructing Chinese Film Stardom of Tang Wei

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Abstract : The rapid fame of the renowned female film star Tang Wei has made her a typical subject (or object) entangled with sensitive issues involving the official ideology, sexuality, and patriarchal values of contemporary China. In 2008, Tang Wei's official ban has triggered the wave of debates concerning state power and censorship, actor's rights, sexual ethics, and feminism in the public sphere. Her ban implies that Chinese film censorship acts as a key factor in reconstructing Chinese film stardom. Following the ban, as sensational media texts are re-interpreting the official discourses, the texts also functioned as a crucial vehicle in reconstructing Tang's female image. Therefore, the case study of Tang's film stardom allows us to further explore how female stardom has been entangled with the issues involving official ideology, female sexual ethics, and patriarchal values in contemporary China. This paper argues that Chinese female film stars shoulder the responsibility of film acting which would conform to the official male-dominated values. However, with the development of the Internet, the state no longer remains an absolute control over the new venues. The netizens' discussion about her ban reshaped Tang's image as a victim and scapegoat under the unfair oppression of the official authority. Additionally, this paper argues that similar to State's discourse, netizens' discourse did not reject patriarchal values, and in turn emphasized Tang Wei's female chastity.

Keywords : film censorship, Chinese female film stardom, party-state's power, national discourses, Tang Wei

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