

## 7.11 Portraying the Human

CHAIR           Valentina Adami  
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DISCUSSANT   N/A

PANELIST 1    Janny Leung  
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*Law against humanity in Peter Chan Ho-sun's Wu Xia*

This paper explores the cinematic treatment of law, justice, morality and human relationships in *Wu Xia* (2011). *Wu Xia* is not just another Hong Kong martial arts film; in fact, it has only three fight scenes and is dialogue heavy. From its stunningly detailed visual recreation of a Chinese rural village in 1917, its incorporation of medicine and physics in its action elements, to a refusal to infuse black and white morality in its character development, the film stands out in its realism. The paper argues that the film ridicules a legalistic approach to justice and places the practice of law at opposite extremes with humanity. I will analyse its jurisprudential musings about free will, punishment and blame attribution for human behaviour. Since the film is a mainland Chinese-Hong Kong co-production, I will also compare the language used in the two different versions released in Hong Kong and mainland China and interpret the contrasts in their respective social, political and historical contexts.

PANELIST 2    Bill MacNeil  
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*From Rites to Realities, and Back Again: The Televised Spectacle of Human Rights in The Hunger Games*

In her 2012 Griffith University Fitzgerald Lecture, prominent Australian critical legal feminist and international lawyer, Prof Hilary Charlesworth, characterised the current condition of human rights as one of empty 'ritualism' oblivious to any sort of tangible objective or outcome. Calling for a strategy that would turn this ritualism of human rights rhetoric into the *reality* of respectful and efficacious human rights protection, Charlesworth examined at some length a new 'rite of passage' for the discourse and practice of international human rights: the travelling spectacle of the Universal Periodic Review. The 'reality', however, that this spectacular review process realises is one of a particularly staged and crafted televisual type; indeed, according to this paper, the Universal Periodic Review is a kind of assize version of *Survivor*, *The Biggest Loser*, *The Eurovision Song Contest*--or better yet, the most recent pop culture depiction of the 'reality' TV programming phenomenon, Suzanne Collins's bestselling novel, *The Hunger Games*. For there, at the story-line's very narrative centre, is a nationally broadcast 'battle royal' between contestants of the various vassal states of Panem, a dystopian North American hegemon of the future, over that most basic of rights: to live or die. This paper will canvass *The Hunger Games's* representation of rights, as well as its critique of that discourse, arguing that, in its climactic scene—with protagonists Katniss and Peeta, both forfeiting the ultimate prize, survival, by threatening to kill themselves—Collins's novel may not only combust Panem (and our) legality