Cinematic Remapping of the Taiwanese Sense of Self: On the Transitions in Treatments

of History and Memory from "The Taiwanese Experience" to "The Taipei Experience"

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ABSTRACT

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<u>Cinematic Remapping of the Taiwanese Sense of Self: On the Transitions in Treatments</u>

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This thesis, with the particular focus on Taiwanese films set in Taipei, investigates how the Taiwanese cinema, through its diverse treatments of history and memory, enacts its role as a cinematic interpretation of the envisioning of Taiwanese national identity within the transnational context.

The first chapter centers on the Taiwanese New Cinema's portrayal of "The Taiwanese Experience," which refigures Taipei as a site of cultural hybridization, and further contends against the Kuomintang's configuration of Taipei as a site coherent to the nationalist One-Chinese narrative. The second chapter examines the instability of recollection, and the artificial and invented quality of history and historiography through the emerging Post Taiwan New Cinema's utilization of collage of fragmentary shots that shuttle between Taiwan's past and present. The third chapter explores the Post Taiwan New Cinema's depiction of "The Taipei Experience," which transfigures Taipei as a postcolonial city of layers of historical inscriptions, and therefore suggests an alternative route to locate Taiwan and the Taiwanese identity within the transnational context.

With the concentration on the context of postcolonialism and the awareness of what Taiwan is and has been, this thesis discovers that the cinematic layerings of different phases of Taiwan's past and present can illustrate the emergence of "The Taipei

Experience" through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience." This thesis therefore reevaluates "The Taipei Experience" as an alternative embodiment of "The Taiwanese Experience," which in consequence paves a way for an innovative perspective to (re)imagine and (re)negotiate the Taiwanese sense of self.

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INTRODUCTION

ENVISIONING TAIWAN: DISPERSION, AMBIVALENCE, AND HYBRIDITY

Taiwan's exclusive past of colonization, a past of incessant intercourse and interaction with diverse political, economic, and cultural forces, has been decisive in shaping Taiwan's own national identity. In virtue of Taiwan's persistence in striving for its distinct cultural identity, as opposed to the oppression and suppression of voices in its history of colonization, Taiwanese cinema and the politics of forming the Taiwanese sense of self have always intertwined. In this regard, the concluding scene of *Yi Yi* (Edward Yang, 2000), in which 8-year-old Yang-Yang reads aloud his letter to his grandmother at her funeral, cinematically traces out the significant connection interwoven by a series of successions, overlappings, and breakthroughs, and the dilemmas this connection implies:

> I'm sorry, grandma. It wasn't that I didn't like to talk to you. I think all the stuff I could tell you, you must already know; otherwise, you wouldn't always tell me to "listen." They all say you've gone away, but you didn't tell me where you went. I guess it's someplace you think I should know. But, grandma, I know so little. Do you know what I want to do when I grow up? I want to tell people things they don't know. Show them stuff they haven't seen. It'll be so much fun. Perhaps one day I'll find out where you've gone. If I do, can I tell everyone and bring them to visit you? Grandma, I miss you, especially when I see my newborn cousin who still doesn't have a name. He reminds me that you always said you felt old. I want to tell him that I feel I am old, too.[1]

In this closing passage of *Yi Yi*, the "newborn cousin who still does not have a name" arouses Yang-Yang's innocent yet wise beyond his years feeling, and allegorically brings into view a postcolonial dilemma, in which Taiwan, after long being a silent colonial subject, strives to position itself as a recognizable, independent national entity within the

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[1] *Yi Yi* [一一]. Dir. Edward Yang. 2000. Film.

new world system. Moreover, to consider it in the context of Taiwanese cinema, Yang-Yang's speech outlines particularly the cinematic movements, emerging following the lifting of Kuomintang's (KMT) Martial Law in 1987. This closing passage not only delineates the sense of generational transition from the Taiwanese New Cinema in the late 1980s to the Post Taiwan New Cinema in the 1990s and afterwards, but also implies the transmigration of the cinematic approaches to re-state, and re-think the modern history of Taiwan and its impact on the Taiwanese people.

The pursuit of an independent identity in the transnational capitalistic world system motivates the rapid globalization of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, and potentially alienates the Taiwanese New Cinema's depiction of the modern history of Taiwan through its cinematic recuperation of "The Taiwanese Experience." The drastic changes following Taipei's globalization bring into view the emergence of "The Taipei Experience," and initiate a shift in the focus of Taiwanese cinema. "The Taipei Experience," in place of "The Taiwanese Experience," becomes the core element for the Post Taiwan New Cinema's participation in the discussion on Taiwan *now* instead of Taiwan *then*. In this regard, critiques have forcefully suggested that the Post Taiwan New Cinema has drastically departed from the Taiwanese New Cinema's initiative to distinguish an independent Taiwanese political and cultural consciousness made possible through the portrayal of "The Taiwanese Experience." These earlier studies read the trend of Taipei city films in the 1990s as taking the post-modernized Taipei cityscape as a symptom of a crisis in Taiwanese national identity. In that crisis, historical sense has been dramatically washed out by capitalism, which results in disintegrating the foundation of

the Taiwanese New Cinema's project of reestablishing a sense of Taiwanese national identity.

The particular focus on Taiwanese films set in Taipei—from the late 1980s, and into the following decades—will, in fact, demonstrate an involved interrelationship between the Taiwanese New Cinema and its offspring, and moreover, between "The Taiwanese Experience" and "The Taipei Experience" inscribed upon each cinematic movement. From a postcolonial standpoint, the exploration of Taipei city films' cinematic engagement with the debates on Taiwanese cultural and political subjectivity will reveal the dual aspects of the complex connection. Such a connection, compounded with generational transformation and fundamental distinction, on the one hand, joins with the dialectical concept of the postcolonialism, in which "the determined achievement of sovereignty [is constantly confronted by] a new imperialistic context of economic and sometimes political domination."[2] On the other hand, it proposes a perspective that emphasizes the inseparable connection between "The Taiwanese Experience" and "The Taipei Experience." Consequently, this perspective takes "The Taipei Experience" as the core element for the examination of how this corpus of city films dynamically enacts its role as a current interpretation and construction of Taiwanese national identity.

Therefore, in opposition to those arguments that take Taipei city films as an evidence of a crisis in Taiwanese national identity, the central aim of this thesis will be to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the Taiwanese cinema's intervention in the discursive dialogues on the envisioning of Taiwanese identity than the earlier studies. With the focus on the context of postcolonialism and the awareness of what Taiwan is

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[2] Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001. 57.

and has been, the investigation seeks to reevaluate "The Taipei Experience" as an

alternative embodiment of "The Taiwanese Experience." The emergence of "The Taipei

Experience" critically reflects the dynamic changing world; it emphasizes and discusses

the ways in which Taiwanese cinema's diverse treatments of the Taipei urban

environment participate in the conversation of what Taiwanese identity is. To conclude,

the Post Taiwan New Cinema, in comparison to the Taiwanese New Cinema, although

very different in character, structure, and style, has had the same concern toward the

positioning of Taiwan as an national entity within the new world order.

The first chapter will investigate Taiwanese New Cinema's confrontation with the

KMT's myth of a single Chinese narrative. The KMT nationalist pedagogy tends to

revoke the ambivalence and heterogeneity of the common Taiwanese people's

performative narration of history. *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989), *Banana

Paradise* (Wang Tung, 1989), and *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan Jen, 1996), all center on the

debates between the notion of official history and that of local popular memories by

foregrounding "The Taiwanese Experience" as distinguished from the Chinese history

and cultural tradition. Keeping in mind the notion of restoring native culture in order to

reestablish cultural self-determination, this body of films emerged immediately after the

lifting of KMT's Martial Law in 1987. These films endeavor to narrativize Taiwanese

national identity from a historical perspective, a perspective that paves the way for

politically mapping popular memory's argument with official history. These films take

the February 28th Incident in 1947 and the White Terror from 1949 to 1987 (long

considered taboo) as the center of their cinematic rewrites of Taiwan's modern history;

"The Taiwanese Experience" is recollected in an almost voiceless form through the practice of a variety of discursive texts—sound (voiceover in particular), writing (diary and correspondences), and photography—and the conflicts among them. These films' cinematic recapitulation of "The Taiwanese Experience" depends extensively on the heritage of popular memory, and undertakes "a rescue mission," which aims to "recover, privilege and articulate the historical significance [of the local Taiwanese popular memories.]"[3] Correspondingly, these films' cinematic embodiments of the spirit of popular memory, deriving from their utilization of discursive texts, incorporate them into a battle for and around history. They further construct a Taiwanese national identity by means of deconstructing the Nationalist KMT's official narration of the national identity that focuses on the consolidation of the sense of Chineseness.

The second chapter will explore how the selected Post Taiwan New Cinema films fit within the confines of history and memory. *The Puppetmaster* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1993), *The Red Lotus Society* (Lai Sheng-Chuan, 1994) and *Good Men, Good Women* (Hou, 1995), set in Taipei, although slightly portraying the urban environment and its urbanites, profoundly explore an examination of history and memory with the postmodern practice of metafilmic self-reflexivity. This corpus of films, on the one hand, inherits the Taiwanese New Cinema's commitment to confront the KMT's official One-Chinese narrative by cinematically recollecting and elaborating "The Taiwanese Experience." On the other hand, these films consciously bring into view the instability of recollection, and the artificial and invented quality of history and historiography through

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[3] Cham, Mbye. "Official History and Popular Memory: Reconfiguration of the African Past in the Films of Ousmane Sembene." *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. Ed. Marcia Landy. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2001. 261-68. 263.

their juxtaposition of the island's past and present. The collage of fragmentary shots that shuttle between Taiwan's past and present elaborates the dialectics between truth and invention, and accordingly implies a departure from the Taiwanese New Cinema's tradition of realism, one aligned with a segment of Taiwanese subaltern history. The collage, "provid[ing] a critique of Taiwan's politics of memory,"[4] not only suggests the fickleness of performative narrations that rely on memory, but also indicates that "[historical] memory cannot be inscribed onto the city or be retrieved from it,"[5] what Benjamin would put as the crisis of Taiwanese history at the moment.

For the third chapter, an examination of the Taipei city films' participation in the discussion of constructing Taiwanese national identity will be conducted. The Taipei-based urban films came into view around the turn of the century, *Terrorizer* (Yang, 1986), *Vive L'Amour* (Tsai Ming-Liang, 1994), *Good Men, Good Women* (Hou, 1995), *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan, 1996), and *Connection by Fate* (Wan, 1998), depict the globalized Taipei urban environment as a haunted city, in which "discarded memories and/or disoriented individuals hauntingly return and roam as ghosts."[6] In regard to the aforementioned dual features—interwoven with generational transformation and fundamental distinction—embedding in the complex interrelationship between the Taiwanese New Cinema and the Post Taiwan New Cinema, the cinematic approach of this set of Taipei city films gradually alters and replaces "The Taiwanese Experience"

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[4] Braester, Yomi. "If We Could Remember Everything, We Would Be Able to Fly: Taipei's Cinematic Poetics of Demolition." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (Spring 2003). 29-61. 33.
[5] Braester 46-47.
[6] Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "The Presentation of Taipei in Taiwan Cinema at the Turn of the Century" [世紀末台灣電影中的台北]. *The Proceedings of the 2nd Inernational Conference on Taipei-ology: Taipei Entering Globality: In Search of Chinese Sea Culture.* Eds. Hsien-Hao Liao, and Chiu-Fang Lin. Taipei: Taipei City Archives, 2006. 113-26.18 Feb. 2011. <http://www.ncu.edu.tw/~wenchi/paper.html> (My translation.)

with "The Taipei Experience." "The Taipei Experience," in place of "The Taiwanese

Experience," features the 1990s as "the age of 'Confucian Confusion,' [in which] people

[living, or surviving, in Taipei,] become alienated souls, struggling to catch something

out of their meaningless lives, and to find a place they can call 'home.'"[7] Therefore, in

response to the postcolonial circumstance Taiwan has been in, the Post Taiwan New

Cinema films begin to engage in the problematic discourse of global capitalism through

their cinematic representation of "The Taipei Experience." This body of city-based films

elaborates a richness of "The Taipei Experience," which is derived from a delineation of

the Taipei cityscape and its urbanites around the turn of the century, yet does not draws

Taipei away from "The Taiwanese Experience." These Taipei city films, in fact, propose

an innovative approach to interpret the interrelationship between those two themes, which

blend together the series of successions, overlappings, and breakthroughs. These city

films, from the perspective of a generation of Taiwanese people with no memory of "The

Taiwanese Experience," convey a rendering of Taipei as a series of heterotopian spaces

that carry dual meanings, and accordingly put forward the manifestation of the spectrality

of Taiwanese history. In this regard, the Post Taiwan New Cinema's cinematic

remapping of Taipei takes the urban environment as a site of temporal and spatial

palimpsests to manifest the spectrality of history. The visual layerings of different phases

of Taiwan's past through temporal and spatial palimpsests illustrate the emergence of

"The Taipei Experience" through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience," and

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[7] Chen, Ru-Shou Robert (陳儒修). "Focus on Taipei: An Introduction." *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema* [尋找電影中的台北]. Eds. Ru-Shou Robert Chen, and Gene-Fon Liao. Taipei: Wanxiang, 1995. 17-9. 19.

therefore pave a way for an innovative perspective to (re)imagine and (re)negotiate the Taiwanese national identity.

In order to connect Taiwanese cinema to Taiwanese identity, a consideration of cinema as "a vehicle for the manifestation of identity"[8] is essential. For this purpose, in "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Homi Bhabha's observations about the (mis)conception of the nation becomes an appropriate reference to consider the Taiwanese New Cinema's rearticulation of Taiwanese history: "[that nation] refuses to accept any tangible idea such as history, or language that has become a foundation for the discourse of the nation [and instead] emphasizes the hybridity and ambivalence that problematize the notion of the nation."[9] This rearticulation confronts the myth of the nation's totality by drawing attention to a Taiwanese identity that has "built up its cultural hybridity[,] generated by the waves of people moving to Taiwan and their cultural specificities."[10]

In his "Dispersion, Ambivalence and Hybridity: A Cultural-historical Investigation of Film Experience in Taiwan in the 1980s," Ru-Shou Chen explicitly proclaims that dispersion, ambivalent, and hybridity constitute the unique characteristics in Taiwan's cultural identity,"[11] reminiscent of Bhabha's theory of the hybrid and ambivalent nature of nations. The history of Taiwan's colonization by the Japanese and the Nationalist KMT plays a decisive role in the development of the typical thesis for Taiwanese New Cinema. Such history brings up a necessary discussion on the concept of

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[8] Chen, Ru-Shou Robert. "Dispersion, Ambivalence and Hybridity: A Cultural-historical Investigation of Film Experience in Taiwan in the 1980s." Diss. University of Southern California, 1993. 105.
[9] Chen (1993) 106.
[10] Chen (1993) 101.
[11] Chen (1993) vi.

nation and nationhood in the context of postcolonialism, in which cultures that, like

Taiwan's, experienced colonization, and "some concepts, such as language, cultural

identity, the diasporatic experience, the experience of modernity, and [gender roles,]"

become highly uncertain, and therefore require some modifications.[12]

Chen, focusing his argument on the awareness that the Taiwanese have long

lacked a sense of national consciousness due to Taiwan's distinct history of colonization,

further draws upon Bhabha's deconstructive logic, and elaborates that Taiwan should be

conceptualized in ways other than that of a nation:

> [Taiwan's existence] is more like a place, a locus, and a site where a hybrid
> mixture performs. Due to the process of hybridity that Taiwan has undergone in
> its history, the meaning of "Taiwaneseness" becomes a trope, in the sense that
> Bhabha specifies, through which "all forms of cultural meaning are open because
> their enunciation resists totalization."[13]

Like Chen, in *Envisioning Taiwan*, June Yip also proclaims that "the artistic and

experimental films of the Taiwanese New Cinema movements have sought to undermine

[the idea of an essentialized and unitary nation-state], opening up 'fissures and fault lines

in the nationalist discourse' and 'setting in motion a de-totalizing dialectic.'"[14]

Therefore, the investigation of Taiwanese cinema after the lifting of KMT's

Martial Law should take into serious account the awareness that "the Taiwan of the

present can never be divorced from Taiwan of the past."[15] In this sense, the historical

significance of Taiwan should be considered as an outcome of a cumulative process,

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[12] Chen (1993) vi.
See also Bhabha, Homi K. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990. 1-7.
[13] Chen (1993) 107.
[14] Yip, June. *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 66.
[15] Chen (1993) 25.

arising from the island's long history of colonization, not only by the Nationalist KMT, which the Taiwanese New Cinema mainly aims its attention at, but also by Japan and by European countries in earlier periods of time. Such a history of colonization results in Taiwan's "hybridization of the cultures of nations that at one time or another occupied or claimed sovereignty over it."[16] These phases of colonization in Taiwan's history, leading to "a reconsideration of the questions of nation-space and of double narrative movement,"[17] thus become crucial to the examination of the cultural-historical significance of Taiwanese New Cinema's investigation.

Taiwanese cinema has always been inseparable from the politics of forming national identity in Taiwan. Due to the long-lasting controversy over the politics of national identity between Taiwan and The People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwanese cinema has been placed in discussions of national identity since its advent. The Taiwanese New Cinema, through collective life experiences and memories distinct from Chinese history and cultural tradition, provides the source material for its viewers to picture Taiwan's independent national subjectivity. In this regard, in his "The History, Space, and Home: Nation in Taiwanese City Films of the 90s," Wenchi Lin illustrates that Taiwanese New Cinema in one way serves to deconstruct KMT's Chinese nationalist narration of the history, and in another way functions to construct a cinematic interpretation of Taiwanese independent national identity.[18]

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[16] Chen (1993) 26.
[17] Chen (1993) 111.
[18] Lin, Wenchi. "The History, Space, and Home: Nation in Taiwanese City Films of the 90s" [九〇年代台灣都市電影中的歷史、空間與家／國]. *Chung-Wai Literature* [中外文學] 27.5 (1998): 99-119. 99.

Bhabha's attempt to "write of the nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture,"[19] which is "more *around* temporality than *about* historicity"[20] joins very much with the Taiwanese New Cinema's desire to rearticulate Taiwanese identity as a hybrid mixture. The Taiwanese New Cinema, creating a space of liminality, allows "the nation [to reveal], in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity, and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference."[21] Bhabha's reasoning and the controversy he brings up surrounding the question of the nation propose a channel for us to investigate and to reveal the multiple features of Taiwanese history and culture by addressing different ethnic groups' various narrations of Taiwan. Such an investigation further illustrates the evidence that the Taiwanese New Cinema and its offspring embrace "a hybrid, never a homogeneous, culture, [which] can hardly be classified as a part of China, Japan, or any other countries once colonizing Taiwan."[22]

In their respective writings, Yip and Chen both address the importance of Taiwanese New Cinema as an initiation for the emergence of Taiwanese identity. In "Constructing a Nation: Taiwanese History and the Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien," Yip states definitively the Taiwanese New Cinema films' significant devotion to accomplish their narration of Taiwanese memories:

> One of the chief objectives of 1980s Taiwanese New Cinema, therefore, was to challenge the narrow view of Taiwan's modern history institutionalized by civic education and official culture by describing the great diversity of experiences in contemporary Taiwanese life. Taiwanese New Cinema has contributed to the

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[19] Chen (1993) 107.
[20] Bhabha 292.
[21] Bhabha 300.
[22] Chen (1993) 15-6.

definition of a distinctly Taiwanese 'nation' through its groundbreaking attempts to construct historical representations of the 'Taiwan experience' on film, to claim cinematic space for Taiwanese 'popular memory.'[23]

In regard to the Taiwanese New Cinema's initiative to rearticulate the Taiwanese history, Chen not only addresses the significance of *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989), but also defines it as the originator of this trend. Chen states,

> Not until the rise of New Taiwanese Cinema is the notion of Taiwan having a complete social/political/cultural entity established. *A City of Sadness* is again the most prominent example. Others like *Growing Up*, *The Sandwich Man*, and *A Summer at Grandpa's* can all be seen as parts of the effort to build up Taiwan's identity.[24]

Consistent with Bhabha's strategies of writing the nation that aims to problematize the consideration of nation, the binary structuring of classical nationalism is no longer appropriate to the envisioning of Taiwanese national identity in the context of postcolonialism. The conceptualization of an independent yet integrated national identity of Taiwan, therefore, requires "a more evident shift toward a more postcolonial or postmodern understanding of nation that is neither essentialist nor caught up in notions of cultural authenticity."[25]

To conclude, we need to remember Chen's elaboration on the history of Taiwan and the history of its cinema, which demonstrates the distinguishing characteristics of dispersion, ambivalence, and hybridity, and its expressive dialogue with Bhabha's provocative strategies of writing the nation. Taiwanese cinema exemplifies a transition from an assimilating conception of defining a nation to one that recognizes the fact that

[23] Yip, June. "Constructing a Nation: Taiwanese History and the Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien." *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Ed. Hsiao-Peng Lu. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1997. 139-68. 140.
[24] Chen (1993) 259.
[25] Yip (2004) 66.

individuals and nations can no longer be considered as unified, stable entities in the modern global system in which diverse cultures come into contact. All of those intersecting cultures, instead, promote a constant development of shaping and reshaping the idea of individuals and nations.

The Taiwanese New Cinema films, emerging as an immediate reflection of the lifting of KMT's Martial Law, endeavor to distinguish Taiwanese independent nationality from the Nationalist KMT's forced imagination of the One-China policy through the presentation of Taiwanese indigenous and shared historical experience. Consistent with the initiative, these films disintegrate the Nationalist KMT's configuration of Taipei as a site unified with the Mainland, and also of Taipei's history as coherent with the One-Chinese narrative. The Taiwanese New Cinema films re-remember the local Taiwanese culture and history from a perspective that refigures Taipei as a site of cultural hybridization with distinct Taiwanese experiences. From this perspective, this body of Taiwanese New Cinema films aims to trace "The Taiwanese Experience" from the colonial to postcolonial experiences, and becomes aware that "no fully formed and homogeneous national culture and identity can be reflected or expressed from cinema"[26] These films, instead of trying to achieve a unity that puts together all diverse and contradictory discourses existing in the Taiwanese culture, strive for the unfolding of the Taiwanese dynamic cultural-historical features with "The Taiwanese Experience" extracted from the narratives of popular memory.

While Taiwanese New Cinema in the late 1980s sought a way to read the Taiwanese past away from all those filters of the Nationalist KMT's propaganda and

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[26] Chen (1993) 111.

away from all the restrictions imposed by censorship, the decline of the Nationalist colonial government, resulted from the lifting of Martial Law, put into question the possible relationship between Taiwanese cinema and its envisioning of Taiwanese national identity. Summarizing Li-Jung Wang's analysis of the representations of nationalism in Taiwanese cinema from the 1970s to 1980s in "Nationalism in Taiwan's Film," Lin specifies that "the construction of national identity has to not only rely on the cultural 'other' serving in contrast, but also resort to an imagined historical continuity."[27] The colonial Chinese Nationalist KMT authority, as both the political and cultural "other" occupying the official historical narration that diminished the Taiwanese sense of subjectivity, plays a vital role in Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1980s. Taiwanese New Cinema contrasts with the KMT's nationalist narrative and establishes its referential meaning of Taiwanese national identity based on its narration of plebeian history and local space. Once Taiwan (in its subsequent search for a recognizable postcolonial independent national subjectivity) joined in the rapid globalization process, "the [Taiwanese New Cinema's] task, depending on homogeneity to carry the national and historical narration, became challenging,"[28] and therefore sought to go beyond "The Taiwanese Experience" in order to locate Taiwan and the Taiwanese identity within the transnational context.

Taiwanese New Cinema, after freeing itself from the KMT's Martial Law and challenging the censorship taboo, provides a necessary notion of historical continuity for the envisioning of Taiwanese national identity. The Post Taiwan New Cinema, however,

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[27] Lin (1998) 109. (My translation.)
[28] Lin (1998) 112. (My translation.)

can no longer rely on the history and local space to carry on the identity being assembled. Therefore, the Post Taiwan New Cinema films, emerging around the turn of the century, express an analytical conversation to the rapidly growing Taipei with its awareness of the loss of connection to "The Taiwanese Experience." By blending together the Taiwanese New Cinema's nostalgic theme that aims at the resurrection of the local Taiwanese popular memory and the Post Taiwan New Cinema's proposition that engages in the dialectical relationship between past and present, this corpus of city films critically suggest the prospect that Taiwan is no longer the same as imagined by the previous Taiwanese New Cinema films.

Taiwanese New Cinema's narration of the shared Taiwanese historical experience employs the Taipei cityscape as merely a backdrop in which those historical events took place. Due to the fact that the Taiwanese New Cinema, during its earlier stage, depends on the presentation of historical events that took place mainly in Taipei, the presence of the urban environment is not fully a conscious choice made by the filmmakers, and therefore does not play a decisive role in narrating the "popular memory." The urban environment depicted in these earlier films has not yet engaged in the narrative in a dynamic form as an animated character. The historical flow from indigenization to modernization, and further to globalization and hybridization in the age of transnational capitalism leads to the essential emergence of urban space in Taiwanese cinema. The cinema thus shifts its focus from nostalgically recounting the historical events to examining the current urban areas of Taipei, a location that emphasizes economic development.

Taiwan, taking a trajectory familiar to many postcolonial states, strives to distinguish its independent identity from the PRC in the transnational capitalistic world system by rapidly globalizing its capital, Taipei. The subsequent economic liberation, however, results in a crisis in the envisioning of Taiwanese national identity: the initial discussion of a Taiwanese identity relies on the historical sense that has been dramatically washed out by capitalism. The independent cultural and political subjectivity, which the Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1980s aims to differentiate from the Chinese culture, consequently becomes more difficult to find in the Taipei urban cinema presented around the turn of the century. In this regard, the cinematic theme of which "The Taipei Experience" is brought into view through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience" emerges in the Taipei-based urban cinema. The portrayal of "The Taipei Experience" in these Taipei city films collectively becomes a critique of the history of Taiwan's urbanization, modernization, and colonization, and in consequence expressly suggests an alternative interpretation of the establishment of a Taiwanese national identity.

CHAPTER 1

TELLING HISTORY FROM BELOW: DEBATES BETWEEN LOCAL TAIWANESE

POPULAR MEMORY AND THE NATIONALIST KUOMINTANG'S OFFICIAL

HISTORY

Models for Taiwanese identity have benefited considerably from Taiwanese

cinema's intervention in the discourse of Taiwanese history. This study of Taiwanese

New Cinema's confrontation with the Kuomintang's (KMT) myth of a single Chinese

narrative draws inspiration from contemporary cultural studies, which shows that nations

possess an arbitrary and mythical quality, rather than considering them as inherent,

essentialist entities.

Contemporary cultural studies—bearing awareness that certain established

political ideologies promote the perception, selection, elaboration and construction of

history—advance innovative interpretations to the concept of nation and nationalism.

Contemporary historians such as Ernest Gellner extend the view of traditional nationalist

historiography and argue that "[t]he cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are

often arbitrary historical inventions."[29] Nationalist historiography makes itself appear to

be "the least contingent and accidental," transforming old shreds and patches into myth

and legend through an intentional collective process of remembering and forgetting:[30]

> Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though
> long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes
> pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and
> often obliterates pre-existing culture: *that* is a reality, for better or worse, and in
> general an inescapable one.[31]

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[29] Gellner, Ernest. *Nation and Nationalism*. New York: Cornell UP, 2006. 55.
[30] Gellner 55.
[31] Gellner 47.

Gellner's illustration is inherited from Ernest Renan's idea about the necessity of forgetting in shaping nationalism, that in turn corresponds with Benedict Anderson's interpretation of the nation state as an imagined community and Homi Bhabha's argument on the nation's ambivalent nature (all three will be illustrated later).

Mark Abé Nornes and Yueh-Yu Yeh argue that "a typical characteristic of the nation is its propensity for sinking its roots to the furthest reaches of history, to stake a claim for its origin in a past which it simultaneously erases."[32] In Renan's words, in a nation it is crucial that "all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things."[33] In pursuit of "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories,"[34] the significance of remembering and forgetting is brought into view when constructing a nation. In his "What is a Nation?" Renan emphatically puts forth the necessity of forgetting by comparing the notion of forgetting with "historical error," considering forgetting as "a crucial factor in the creation of a nation."[35] This exercise in remembering and forgetting deals with the past by generating "a shared heritage, which through repeated articulations creates and reinforces a sense of historical continuity and community."[36]

The growing awareness of the Taiwanese people's political consciousness, up to the lifting of KMT's Martial Law, has contributed to an anxious longing to dig out the

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[32] Nornes, Abé Mark, and Yueh-Yu Yeh. "Narrating National Sadness: Cinematic Mapping and Hypertextual Dispersion." 1998. *Cinema Space*. University of California, Berkeley: Film Studies Program. 16 Aug. 2010. <http://cinemaspace.berkeley.edu/Papers/CityOfSadness/table.html> "Introduction."

[33] Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990. 8-22. 11.

[34] Renan 19.

[35] Renan 11.

[36] Yip, June. *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 69.

historical past that was systematically buried under the practice of suppression. This suppression was dedicated to "creat[ing] and reinforce[ing] a sense of historical continuity and community [between post-World War II Taiwan and China]."[37] Society's craving for an account of its local experience encouraged "the Taiwanese people [to accelerate] their attempts, through political as well as cultural efforts, to challenge the narrow perspectives of the KMT's official view of the island's modern history in order to resurrect forgotten memories and reclaim the island's historical past."[38] Taiwanese New Cinema, through its emphasis on the socio-historical role of cinema, initiates an innovative artistic discourse on the confrontation with the KMT's dominant narration that enforces a series of collective remembering and forgetting in favor of the One-China Nationalism. Simultaneously, the Taiwanese New Cinema films' pursuit of a Taiwanese identity is deployed through their engagement of the dialectics between the genuine portrayal of "The Taiwanese Experience" and the KMT's myth of a coherent Chinese narrative. The Taiwanese New Cinema films are dedicated to overturning such autocratic politics.

Anderson's definition of the nation as an "imagined community" has been one of the most profoundly useful terms in the discussion of Taiwanese national identity. His perception not only engages in the studies of the nation's allegorical nature, but also unfolds the interrelation between mass-media and national identity.

> What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and

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[37] Yip 69.
[38] Yip 69.

productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.[39]

Anderson bases his argument on the influence of the "print-capitalism." He believes that "imagination" plays an important role in seeking and constructing national identity. Such a "collective imagination" is thus encouraged and consolidated by print communication's widespread circulation of certain ideas. That is to say, Anderson's theory of "print-capitalism" becomes important because it connects mass-media and national identity. His interpretation further draws our attention to the significance of cinema within the context of national identity, which extensively influences and intensifies the collective imagination among a group of people through a variety of cinematic narrations of national history.

With a strong sense of responsibility for writing Taiwan's history, Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1980s assigns to itself a historian's mission. It desperately worships the Taiwanese historical past and devotes itself to restoring the island's memories in order to atone for the lack of "historio*photy*"[40] of Taiwan due to "the KMT's suppressed censorship concentrated on the development of Taiwan as the Republic of China."[41] Albert Memmi's examination in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* is particularly useful for annotating the Taiwanese New Cinema's unwavering commitment to make Taiwan the center of its cinematic narration of Taiwan's history. Citing Renan's emphasis on the

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[39] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 2006. 45.

[40] White, Hayden. "Historiography and Historiophoty." *The American Historical Review* 93.5 (Dec. 1988): 1193-1199. "While historio*graphy* is the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse, 'historio*photy*' is considered as the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse." (1193)

See also Rosenstone, Robert A. "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting Historyonto Film." *The American Historical Review* 93.5 (Dec. 1988): 1173-1185.

[41] Yip 60.

necessity of forgetting in the confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, Memmi provocatively notes that "[t]he most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community."[42] As a result of the colonizer's ambition to posit a false coherence between themselves and the colonized, conquered nations are frequently "condemned to lose their memory"[43] through a series of rigorous policies that replaces the colonized's history by one "that is not of his own."[44]

Early Taiwanese New Cinema's anxious longing for Taiwanese local history drives the filmmakers to enthusiastically reminisce about "Taiwan Then" as source materials, nostalgically trying to re-remember local experience, while developing a realist film style devoted to memories. On the one hand, Taiwanese cinema in the 1990s continues to cast light on the Taiwanese collective historical past through individuals' reminisces, carrying forward the formalist approach established by early Taiwanese New Cinema. On the other, it begins to reveal a more integrated Taiwanese society, history and cultural subjectivity.[45] The films of the 1990s centre on the debates between the notion of official history and that of local popular memories by foregrounding Taiwanese popular memory as distinguished from the Chinese history and cultural tradition. Such an approach, marking a clear departure from the KMT's propaganda films and the mainstream cinema, reassesses the past by "open[ing] a window to the private sphere of the common people, giv[ing] voice to the multifarious experiences of the colonized that

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[42] Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991. 91.
[43] Memmi 103.
[44] Memmi 105.
[45] Su, Tzu-Chiao (蘇子喬). "'Taiwanese' or 'Chinese': Reflection on National Idenity and Contemporary Studies on Nation in *City of Sadness* and *Banana Paradise*" [「台灣人」還是「中國人」:「悲情城市」與「香蕉天堂」中的國族認同及其對當前主流國族研究的啟示]. *Con-Temporary Monthly* [當代] 219 (Nov. 2005): 98-125. 101.

have been suppressed or denied by the dominant [colonizer's] culture,"[46] and further

deconstructs the Nationalist KMT's One-Chinese narration of the nation.

In this regard, "Bhabha's comparison [in "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and

the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*.] between 'pedagogical' (the

linear, sufficient and complete master narrative), and 'performative' (the supplementary

and temporal) evocatively describes an innovative strategy in reading the [Taiwanese]

New Cinema [in the 1990s], which intentionally shifts one's attention from the search for

the [nation's mythical] whole to the fragmentary [of people's divisive memories]":[47]

> Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing
> boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres
> through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities.[48]

In Bhabha's post-structuralist account, Anderson's observations that considers the nation

as an imagined community, "a special kind of contemporaneous community which

language alone suggests,"[49] becomes a site for resistance:[50]

> The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time
> of national production and threatens binary division with its difference. The
> barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal
> form of social representation, a space that is *internally* marked by cultural
> difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic
> authorities, and tense cultural locations.[51]

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[46] Yip 70.
[47] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography: Introduction."
[48] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. 291-322. 300.
[49] Anderson 149.
[50] Mühleisen, Susanne. *Creole Discourse: Exploring Prestige Formation and Change across Caribbean English-lexicon Creoles*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002. 175.
[51] Bhabha 299.

Nation as a liminal form of social representation "holds the potential for other cultural identities and political solidarities."[52] To consider it in the context of Taiwanese cinema's narration of Taiwan's past, this liminality of the nation "gives way to the contentious space of minority discourse"[53] within its totalizing boundaries, revealing not only the ambiguous and heterogeneous textures of the hybrid cultures and histories coexisting in the Taiwanese society, but also the contending relationships among these antagonistic subjects.

Bhabha considers the essentialist identities and integrity of the nation to have been invented and implemented by a narrative apparatus which develops national identity through a series of "ideological displacements" while "[t]he liminal point of this ideological displacement is the turning of the differentiated spatial boundary, the 'outside', into the unified temporal territory of Tradition":[54]

> [T]he political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. Quite simply, the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One.[55]

In the process of ideological displacement—in Renan's consideration the operation of remembering and forgetting—"the nation creates a master narrative offered for the identification and participation of its people, who not only 'belong' to it: they 'constitute' and 'perform' the nation."[56] Bhabha, whose theory is most interested in the disruptive

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[52] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography: Introduction."
[53] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography: Introduction."
[54] Bhabha 300.
[55] Bhabha 300.
[56] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography: Introduction."

potential of the nation's deconstructive project, advances the liminality of the nation state and further elaborates his observation on people as a double narrative movement, in which "the people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politics, [but also] a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference where the claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address."[57] "By focusing on the liminality of people within the essentializing borders of the nation, [the Taiwanese New Cinema] reveal[s] how people are both the objects of the nation's pedagogy and subjects of its performance."[58] The Taiwanese New Cinema, therefore, critically values "the restoration of [Taiwan's local] memories and the reclamation of [Taiwan] as a subject, rather than a mere object, of history"[59] as an important step the colonized people can take toward liberation.

The notion of restoring native culture in order to reestablish cultural self-determination further paves the way for politically mapping popular memory's contention against official history. The revitalization of the Taiwanese popular memory is crucial to confronting those various forces of invasion, and colonial-rule by the Spanish, Portuguese, Manchus, Japanese, and Nationalist Chinese, which give every effort to permanently suppress and mute the voice of the island. In a discussion of "Film and Popular Memory," Michel Foucault caught sight of "the tensions between official histories and their contestation in 'popular' or unofficial memory, analyzing the bearing

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[57] Bhabha 297. Original Text: "The people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'object' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process."

[58] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography: Introduction."

[59] Memmi 103-5.

of historical and memorial knowledge on formations of identity and operations of power."[60] Foucault suggests that "it's vital to have possession of [specific] memory, to control it, to administer it, tell it what it must contain"[61] due to the important role memory plays in struggle. "If one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism."[62] Foucault claimed that "the bearing of historical and memorial knowledge [determines the] formations of identity and operations of power"[63] in reference to the urgency of recovering and deploying the knowledge of the long-concealed and almost forgotten popular memory.

    Consistent with Foucault's emphasis on delivering the popular memory from oppression or persecution under the culture of the ruling class, Teshome H. Gabriel, in his studies of the Third World Cinemas, also elaborated the conflicts between popular memory and official history, "envision[ing] 'official history' and 'popular memory' as two historiographical forces locked in a constant battle for access to power and representation":[64]

> Official history tends to arrest the future by means of the past. Historians privilege the written word of the text - it serves as their rule of law. It claims a "center" which continuously marginalizes others. In this way its ideology inhibits people from constructing their own history or histories.
>   Popular memory, on the other hand, considers the past as a political issue. It orders the past not only as a reference point but also as a theme of struggle. For

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[60] Grainge, Paul. "Introduction: memory and popular film." *Memory and Popular Film*. Ed. Paul Grainge. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003. 1-20. 2.

[61] Foucault, Michel. "Film and Popular Memory." Foucault, Michel. *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. Trans. John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series, 1989. 89-106. 93.

[62] Foucault 92.

[63] Grainge 2.

[64] Yip 70.

popular memory, there are no longer any "centers" or "margins," since the very designations imply that something has been conveniently left out.[65]

Bearing in mind the significant role of popular memory on reestablishing cultural identity, Gabriel further argues that,

> Popular memory, then, is neither a retreat to some great tradition nor a flight to some imagined "ivory tower," neither a self-indulgent escapism, nor a desire for the actual "experience" or "content" of the past for its own sake. Rather, it is a "look back to the future," necessarily dissident and partisan, wedded to constant change.[66]

In this regard, the key factor of popular memory is no longer the truthful comprehensive portrayal of past experiences, or the faithful documentation of people's past struggle; instead, it explores the possibility of establishing a subjectivity through the performative aspect of memory, arranging and connecting the selected facts of the past struggle to the present people's struggle.[67]

Local Taiwanese popular memory's antagonistic relationship with the KMT's official history is the core of the conversation on Taiwanese identity because of Taiwan's position as a postcolonial country. Such a tension has also been highlighted in Bhabha's postcolonial theory. The KMT nationalist pedagogy tends to conceal and remove the ambivalence and heterogeneity of the common Taiwanese people's performative narration of history. The essentialist tendencies, in this regard, become a means to connect the KMT officially-molded history of Taiwan with that of Mainland China to

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[65] Gabriel, Teshome H. "Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a Third Aesthetics." *Questions of Third Cinema*. Eds. Jim Pines, and Paul Willemen. London: BFI Publishing, 1989. 53-64. 53-4.

[66] Gabriel 54.

[67] Liang, Hsin-Hua (梁新華). "*Banana Paradise*: Evocation of a Divisive Era" [《香蕉天堂》：分裂時代的心情故事]. *The Death of Taiwanese New Cinema* [新電影之死：從《一切為明天》到《悲情城市》]. Eds. Mi Tsou, and Liang Hsin-Hua. Taipei: T'ang-Shan Publications, 1991. 108-13. 209.

picture a history of the greater China. From Bhabha's perspective, such tendency further illustrates the production of the nation by narration:

> In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation* …. The pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, … as a moment of becoming designated by *itself*, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represent an eternity produced by self-generation. The performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* by casting a shadow between the people as "image" and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other or the Outside.[68]

Soon after the Taiwanese celebrated their liberation from Japan, it became clear that the Mainlanders basically intended to maintain the colonial structures of exploitation only with Nationalist KMT Chinese in control.[69] Throughout Decades of the Martial Law, the Nationalist KMT maintained the myth of a coherent Chinese nation unified with the Mainland by systematically enforcing Taiwanese people to forget much of the popular memory they once held. Therefore, the act of re-narrating the voices and perspectives that the KMT's historiography ignored, concealed, and obliterated became crucial, leading the Taiwanese New Cinema to see the recuperation of Taiwan's national history, its cultural and political recognition, as one of its chief objectives.

Analogous to Bhabha's perception of "expand[ing] the concept of nation" with the postcolonial notions such as double temporality, Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1990s*,* in its own way, adopts "diasporic narration, subaltern writing, minority discourse and any form of articulations based upon deconstructionist rhetoric."[70] Taking the

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[68] Bhabha 297-99.
[69] Nornes and Yeh "Behind *City of Sadness*. Context I: The History of Taiwan."
[70] Nornes and Yeh "The Concept of National Cinema Re-addressed."

historical era long considered taboo—the February 28th Incident in 1947 and the White

Terror from 1949 to 1987—as the center of their cinematic rewrites of Taiwan's modern

history, *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989), *Banana Paradise* (Wang Tung,

1989), and *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan Jen, 1996) depend extensively on the heritage of

popular memory. Moreover, those films distinctively mirror the mode in which popular

memory, under the KMT's dominion, was recorded and remembered until it got a chance

to circulate. Similar to Memmi's emphasis on the way the voice of the colonized island

was permanently suppressed and muted by the colonizer's effort, and Foucault's

perception of the relation between film and popular memory, these films recollect "The

Taiwanese Experience" in an almost voiceless form, penetrating their narratives with a

variety of conflicts among discursive texts—sound (voiceover in particular), writing

(diary and correspondences), and photography.[71] These discursive textualities

provocatively evoke the struggle to preserve banned popular memory by providing an

alternative approach to the writing of Taiwanese history, and consequently connect it

with today's struggle to re-remember its memory in the search for Taiwanese cultural and

political consciousness.

As presented in *A City of Sadness*, "history is written and memory is

recollected"[72] through still photographic images, and the deaf-mute photographer, Wen-

Ching's correspondences mostly with Hiromi—either displayed as intertitles or revealed

through flashbacks. Additionally, Hiromi's diary, conveyed through her own voiceover,

provokes textual contention against the KMT's official One-Chinese narrative that asserts

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[71] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography."
[72] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."

the myth of social integrity between post-World War II Taiwan and China. Wen-Ching

and Hinomi are condemned to lose their voices due to their role as the colonized under

the KMT's ruling power. Their photographs, correspondences, and diary, "superimposing

individual experience against the political context," not only become "a comment on

history" but also emerge as "a non-verbal access to [Taiwan's popular memory]."[73] The

voiceless colonized's personal writings are deliberately presented as voiceover. Hinomi's

voiceover, spoken in Taiwanese, anticipates its performative, antagonistic function,

deconstructing the pedagogical narration spoken by Chen Yi[74] in Mandarin Chinese—the

voice of public political history—in radio broadcast.

Photographic images shown in *A City of Sadness* embody Bhabha's notion of

double temporality by foregrounding the photograph as "a double play of arrival and

departure."[75] They not only signify a "different phase of historical development,"[76] the

photographs also serve as annotations to those historical moments. The photograph of

Little Shanghai evidently manifests "the motif of rebirth and restoration" by paralleling

the re-opening of Little Shanghai with the historical rebirth of Taiwan.[77] The photograph

of a Japanese teacher and his students taken before the Japanese evacuation "encapsulates

the ambiguous relationship between the colonizer and the colonized," which further

points out how the fifty-one-years of Japanese Occupation separates Taiwan from the

Chinese experience. Wen-Ching's family portrait is deliberately arranged to set up the

most devastating moment in the film. The freeze-frame shot, after the timed shutter clicks,

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[73] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."
[74] Chen Yi was the Chief Executive and Garrison Commander of Taiwan at that time.
[75] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."
[76] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."
[77] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY: Photograph 1."

merges the filmic frame with the photographic frame as if stopping the time of the diegesis in the photo taken. Layered with Hinomi's voiceover that informs of the arrest of Wen-Ching and the teething of their son, this freeze-frame image composes "the most powerful accusation against the pedagogical history written by the Nationalist regime for the way it teases out the double meaning of the coexistence of presence and absence in the photographic image."[78]

Similar to the Taiwanese New Cinema's attempt to actively recollect and elaborate "The Taiwanese Experience" in pursuit of the island's cultural and political subjectivity, those aforementioned non-diegetic techniques "constitute the most revealing performative representation undermining any pedagogical interpretation of history."[79] They, in consequence, grant the originally voiceless and passive colonized Taiwanese "the faculty of speech for articulating [their] relationship with history," and therefore "actively react against the ruling power."[80] After being compressed and condensed, recollected popular memory finally provides a means for Taiwanese people to call out their national identity in an explosive yet painful way. In the train scene, Wen-Ching desperately cries out aloud, "I am Taiwanese" in his own language when a group of Taiwanese question him about his nationality. The awkward accent caused by his disability leads them to ask him, in Japanese, where he is from, and to conclude that Wen-Ching must be a Mainlander after seeing his inability to answer. This scene portrays the way Taiwanese people finally sought out their Taiwanese identity after the February 28th Incident and discloses the dilemma of establishing that identity in a more radical way.

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[78] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY: Photograph 3."
[79] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."
[80] Nornes and Yeh "PHOTOGRAPHY."

Taiwanese identity can only be distinguished by proving the ability to speak Japanese in this case and so identify with a past colonizer. Wen-Heung faces a similar dilemma when he is hiding from the KMT government's accusation of treason. He curses in rage that, "They make laws, and they change laws… First the Japanese, then the Chinese…" and, finally, he considers Taiwan equal to Japan and Mainland China, identifying Taiwanese on the level of nationality instead of ethnicity. Furthermore, the intellectuals also repeatedly confirm the ambivalence of searching for their identities. While they at first express their suspicion about the KMT government's exploitive policy towards the island from the viewpoint of the Taiwanese against the Mainlanders, at the same time they are portrayed as left-wingers when they gather and study Marxism together. Moreover, the death note of one of the intellectuals who is executed by the KMT, states that, "In life, far from the motherland. In death, returning to the motherland…" Such a manifestation explicitly calls attention to Taiwanese people's perplexed relationship with the mainland and sorrowfully expresses the complexity and ambivalence of envisioning the Taiwanese identity.

Super Citizen Ko correspondingly unfolds that ambivalence by challenging the nationalist propensity to "sink [the nation's roots] to the furthest reaches of history"[81] with its constant alternations and contrast between the present in Taipei, filmed in color, and Ko's memories, filmed in black-and-white. Recapitulating the filmic approach in *A City of Sadness*, this film utilizes Ko's diary, his voiceover, reminiscence, dreams, and those black-and-white photographic images of Taipei city in the past, all of which become a mode of non-verbal narration of Taiwanese popular memory. Taken as a whole,

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[81] Nornes and Yeh "Sound/Writing/Photography."

those images unearth a true portrayal of the White Terror years in the 1950s, not only signifying the dispute between the performative popular memory and the pedagogical Nationalist official history, but also beginning to define popular memory's ambivalent role in the complex discourse on establishing Taiwanese identity.

The constant alternations between the past and present, weaving in Ko's wanderings around Taipei in search for the recognizable landmarks, form a double narrative movement and constitute "a portrait of a past through Ko's personal remembrances that contrasts sharply with the present-day Taiwanese society."[82] Such contrasts are rendered by means of sound, writing, photography, and flashback, which through various interlacings and layerings embody a sense of double temporality.

An aerial shot of Taipei's cityscape from Ko's perspective interrupted by his own voiceover depicts the city as "a city at once vaguely familiar, and utterly alien."[83] Ko's voiceover, contrasting the aerial shot's function of building up a connection between the landscape and its beholder, states that Machangding—originally a military site during the Japanese Occupation, and later serving as the execution ground where many people were put to death during the White Terror—is now named Youth Park. People who joyfully linger there no longer know of the atrocities committed there. Black-and-white photographs of past Taipei landmarks also aim at alienating Taipei from Ko's remembrances. When the picture of the Taiwan Provincial Security Command of the 1950s moves off-screen, revealing today's Shizilin Shopping Square standing behind it, Ko's voiceover concurrently gives an account of the historical transition of this landmark.

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[82] Yip 123.
[83] Yip 122.

It was first built by the Japanese as the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, and then became the martial court where Ko and his friends were imprisoned and tortured by the KMT.

As Ko visits each site that is for him "a signpost of his memories of political persecution,"[84] and desperately tries to tie his past to the present, "he is dismayed to find the history of pain and injustice erased, replaced by landmarks of Taiwan's materialistic new consumer society."[85] At perhaps the most despairing moment in his journey, Ko is fully overwhelmed by his memories of the past—triggered by the landmarks on the roadside—when he travels along Zhongxiao East Road on a taxi. Ko's voiceover again discloses the shifts of this site: Zhongxiao East Road was named Zhongzheng Road in the 1950s, one of the major sites of the White Terror. The five-star Grand Hyatt Taipei Hotel was originally a military storehouse during the Japanese Occupation, which later became the Military Court of the Taiwan Garrison Command during the White Terror. The juxtapositions of shots showing present landmarks, with the audio of the past (gunshots, moans, and prisoners walking with foot shackles), and flashback images of the persecution, motivate Ko's breakdown into tears that serves as a transition between this sequence and the intertitle of Ko's grievous diary.

The verses that open *Super Citizen Ko* exquisitely serve as a prologue to the sense of disconnection presented in the aforementioned sequences, and therefore appropriately foreshadow the complexity of envisioning Taiwanese identity in the context of rapid political and cultural changes:

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[84] Yip 122.
[85] Yip 122.

> The fog has lifted; landscapes and objects are finally becoming clear…
> But then why, why are they all brimming with tears?[86]

While the juxtaposition of the past and present reveals the popular memory of the1950s through Ko's personal remembrances, it also accentuates how such a popular memory fails to be received by today's Taiwanese by portraying the incommensurability between Ko's memories of the island and contemporary society. The rapid changes in Taipei have cruelly neglected Ko's history and the memories he possesses, made it almost impossible to connect with the present Taiwan society. Such a gap, blocking the past from the present, echoing Renan and Gellner's arguments, calls attention to the importance for the nation to reach into its past through a series of organized rememberings and forgettings. The failure to provide a continuous history presented in *Super Citizen Ko* produces a vacillation of establishing national identity.

In addition to the Taiwanese New Cinema's resurrection of forgotten memories, the emergence of a cinematic investigation of the hybrid culture that draws attention to "the multiple strata within Taiwanese society" becomes another core element in the Taiwanese New Cinema's participation in the conversation on Taiwanese identity.[87] Taiwanese New Cinema draws attention to another long-neglected segment of Taiwanese society: refugee families from the Mainland. The inclusion of this group is an important development because it not only distinguishes the lower class and ragtag KMT army from the KMT officials and other upper class Mainlanders, but also addresses the various

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[86] *Super Citizen Ko* [超級大國民]. Dir. Wan Jen. 1996. Film.

[87] Ho, Fang (何方). "Foucault, Film and Popular Memory" [傅柯、電影與人民記憶]. *The Death of Taiwanese New Cinema* [新電影之死：從《一切為明天》到《悲情城市》]. Eds. Mi Tsou, and Liang Hsin-Hua. Taipei: T'ang-Shan Publications, 1991. 194-96.

narrations of Taiwan by that previously marginalized group.[88] In this regard, *Banana Paradise* not only points out a crucial period in modern Taiwanese history—the KMT government's paranoid witch hunt for communist spies in the 1950s—it also takes a vital first step toward "reconstruct[ing] a passage of history in which a group of people other than local Taiwanese tell their story."[89] Taking the form of popular memory, the film's realistic representations of the two marginalized honorary veterans' diasporatic experiences and the dilemma of their identities attempts to explore the complicated political and emotional ties between Taiwan and China, hinting at the ambivalence of the establishment of Taiwanese identity. "Although it ends with the re-connection, or mis-connection, of their lives with their past in China, the film foregrounds the same issues as exemplified in *A City of Sadness*, for instance, identity, language, and the notion of the motherland,"[90] which also appear in *Super Citizen Ko*. The question of identity, constantly presented in *Banana Paradise*, "underlines the instability and fragility of a person's identity in a turbulent times,"[91] which could be referring to the discussion of the construction of Taiwanese identity after the island's long history of colonization.

The notion of remembering and forgetting reaches its acme in *Banana Paradise* through its reconstruction of past events and by tracing their impact on the present. The two protagonists, Zhang De-Shen and Latch, are constantly forced to adopt new names as a result of turbulent political circumstances. Through its illustration of Zhang and Latch's

[88] Ho, Fang (何方). "Reshaping Memory" [記憶的重塑：一九八九年幾部國片中的台灣形貌]. *The Death of Taiwanese New Cinema* [新電影之死：從《一切為明天》到《悲情城市》]. Eds. Mi Tsou, and Liang Hsin-Hua. Taipei: T'ang-Shan Publications, 1991. 184-89.
[89] Chen, Ru-Shou Robert. "Dispersion, Ambivalence and Hybridity: A Cultural-historical Investigation of Film Experience in Taiwan in the 1980s." Diss. University of Southern California, 1993. 143.
[90] Chen 143.
[91] Chen 143.

incessant changing of names, *Banana Paradise* devotes itself to portraying the experiences of those "insignificant common people whose fate is determined by external factors over which they have no control,"[92] and, more importantly to emphasizing the uncertainty of the notion of identity. Each name change becomes a ritual of remembering and forgetting. Zhang and Latch have to forget their past to be able to conceal their original identities and further adapt themselves to the new identities.

In several scenes Zhang sings military songs about reclaiming Mainland in victorious battle. His yearning for his hometown in the Mainland is evident, fortifying his identification with the motherland. Zhang's memories of his hometown hinder him from successfully adapting to the new identities attached to his new names. The contradictions between various identities as well as the torture he went through during the KMT's interrogation of communist spies result in the madness he exhibits throughout most of the film. Therefore, Zhang's madness figures people's bewilderingment at the government's paranoid witch-hunt for Communist spies.

The ending sequence of *Banana Paradise* depicts the instability and manipulative nature of remembering and forgetting in establishing a person's identity. Yueh-Hsiang, Lee Chi-Lin's wife, reveals her true identity and calls him by his real name, Latch. Their subsequent embrace and weeping becomes the most intimate moment of their relationship. This shared memory brings back Latch and Yueh-Hsiang's identification with their motherland and consolidates their relationship. The re-remembering of their past results in a further conflict of identities when Lee/Latch speaks to Lee's father on the phone. The misconnection, between Lee and Latch's life, brings forward the possibility

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[92] Chen 146.

of Latch mistaking Lee's father for his real father; this possibility, therefore, leads Latch

to over-identify with the death of Lee's mother causing Latch to break down and weep.

At this moment, remembering and forgetting entirely undermine and juxtapose the two

identities, further highlighting the ambivalence and complexity of lower class

Mainlanders' attempts to establish their identities under Taiwan's distinct history of

colonization.

In Mbye Cham's words, "[t]hese films may partly be seen as undertaking what

Gabriel has labeled 'a rescue mission,' to the extent to which their recourse to popular

memory aims to recover, privilege and articulate the historical significance and the

contemporary, as well as future, implications of what official histories insist on

erasing."[93] Their embodiments of the spirit of popular memory, with their respective

ambivalent and heterogeneous textures, incorporate them into a battle for and around

history. In Bhabha's deconstructionist vocabulary, "the temporal dimension in the

inscription of these political entities… serves to displace the historicism that has

dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force."[94] This happens by means of

presenting a more authentic history, and simultaneously contesting, revising and/or

rejecting the official versions of the history.[95] "Rather than reducing the complexities of

human existence into a single authoritative truth," they adopt the perspectives of those

that are socially marginalized, taking them as the personal performative narration of the

historical moments confronting the official nationalist pedagogical narration, and further

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[93] Cham, Mbye. "Official History and Popular Memory: Reconfiguration of the African Past in the Films of Ousmane Sembene." *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. Ed. Marcia Landy. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001. 261-68. 263.
[94] Bhabha 292.
[95] Bhabha 299.

opens history up to "include multiple voices, multiple narratives, and multiple forces that coexist and are in constant contention."[96] As "a liminal form of social representation," they alienate the KMT's official nationalist pedagogy "from its eternal *self-generation*"[97] and in consequence deconstruct the Taiwanese people's identification with the One-China Nationalism and the coherent history of unification with the mainland.

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[96] Yip 67.
See also Wu, Ch'i-Yen (吳其諺). "Historical Memory, Film Aesthetics and Politics" [歷史記憶、電影藝術與政治]. *The Death of Taiwanese New Cinema* [新電影之死：從《一切為明天》到《悲情城市》]. Eds. Mi Tsou, and Liang Hsin-Hua. Taipei: T'ang-Shan Publications, 1991. 229-34.
[97] Bhabha 299.

CHAPTER 2

IF WE COULD REMEMBER EVERYTHING, WE WOULD BE ABLE TO FLY:

HISTORY/PRODUCTION/MEMORY

The Taiwanese New Cinema's tradition of realism is confronted by the diverse

historical discourses of the island's past that emerged following the lifting of

Kuomintang's (KMT) Martial Law. Such circumstance inspires filmmakers to devote

their works to the dialectics between truth and invention through their cinematic writing

of the island's historical memories. Based on the theoretical foundations that will be

deployed later, this chapter will investigate how the selected Post Taiwan New Cinema

films—*The Puppetmaster* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1993), *The Red Lotus Society* (Lai Sheng-

Chuan, 1994) and *Good Men, Good Women* (Hou, 1995)—fit within the confines of

history and memory through their attachment to postmodern dialectics and the departure

from realistic filmic styles this attachment implies.

Berry Schwartz identifies the 1960s and the 1970s as "the decade[s] in which

'conflict theories' of social order replaced 'consensus theories,' the decade[s] in which all

certified accounts of the past, as of everything else, were repudiated."[98] Three intellectual

perspectives—multiculturalism, postmodernism, and hegemony theory—are mentioned

as advocates of the rise of "contemporary interest in the construction of the past,"

defining the late twentieth-century intellectual environment:[99]

> Multiculturalism conceives [historiography] as a support for its cultural
> dominance and a standard that marginalizes women and minorities.
> Postmodernists feed the multicultural program by celebrating the "petit

[98] Schwartz, Barry. "Introduction: The Expanding Past." *Qualitative Sociology* 19.3 (Fall, 1996): 275-82.
277.
[99] Schwartz 277.

narratives" of minorities who would be otherwise deleted from history and by deconstructing the "grand narratives" that answer ultimate questions about the dominant culture's origin, purpose, and fate. Hegemony scholars, too, treat memory as a contested object of differently empowered communities, but their interests are class-based. They see the politics of memory reconciling the masses to elite claims and privileges.[100]

To interrogate Taiwanese films using Schwartz's account, memories of suppressed, marginalized groups were employed to challenge the dominant pedagogy and to "attack the conceptual underpinnings of linear historicity, truth, and identity."[101] "Memory contestation, popular memory, and the instrumentalization of the past"[102] are thereby promoted through the cinematic inquiry into the interrelations among history, memory and power.

"Memory inevitably gives way to history as we lose touch with our pasts."[103] Taiwanese New Cinema's utilization of memory—considered as a political force that can "function as a site of potential opposition and resistance"[104]—can be understood as an immediate response to the lifting of Martial Law that addresses the KMT's myth of a One-Chinese narrative in order to pave the way for the envisioning of a Taiwanese identity.

> Like contemporary theories of autobiography, recent critical reconsiderations of other forms of historical writing have witnessed a shift away from conventional notions of recovering the truth of the past toward analyses of the various attitudes and motivations that shape discursive acts of memory in the present.[105]

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[100] Schwartz 277-278.
[101] Olick, Jeffrey K., and Joyce Robbins. "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24.1 (1998): 105-40. 108.
[102] Olick and Robbins 108.
[103] Olick and Robbins 111.
[104] Grainge, Paul. "Introduction: Memory and Popular Film." *Memory and Popular Film*. Ed. Paul Grainge. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003. 1-20. 2.
[105] Yip, June. *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 85.

The Taiwanese New Cinema's pursuit, however, bears on not only the resurrection of the

forgotten memories of popular movements, but the employment of memory and history

in the service of each other. It is, in consequence, vital to reconsider the entanglements of

history and memory, which are tied up by works of production.

Correspondingly, in his article, "History and the Production of Memories," Keith

Tribe deploys an inspiring insight into the title of a special film event at Edinburgh in

1977, "History/Production/Memory."[106] Tribe's interpretation, exposing the possible

conceptions of the title when reading from two different positions, renders inspiration to

the study of Taiwanese films' investigation of the island's memories and the writing of its

history:

> If we travel from left to right, as it were, a conception is exposed in which history
> is seen as a collection of past events, incidents, significations, persons and so on.
> By a work of production we move to the presence of a memory, the trace of this
> history in the present: a trace which is recorded in the utterances of persons and in
> the constitution of commemorative events. 'Production' here is primarily a work
> of recovery, the kind of activity that is associated popularly with women's history
> and radical labour history. But it must be noted that the conception of 'history'
> that we have here is a double one: it is at the same time the past, a collection of
> representations ascribed a prior existence, and also the process of its writing.
> 'History' thus denotes a non-discursive past and a discursive present. This double
> form conspires to render these two elements mutually validating: the past informs
> and underwrites the validity of the present, and the writings on the past are
> guaranteed by their very involvement with the past. The past is history, and the
> writing of history is thus endowed with an autonomous effectivity. History not
> only exists, it is truth: the truth of past experience, and the truth of present
> historical accounts of it. To learn lessons from the past, it is necessary only to
> unlock this truth.[107]

At first glance, Tribe's analysis of this position might appear more likely to side with the

conception of traditional historiography; nonetheless, the impression of the

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[106] Tribe, Keith. "History and the Production of Memories." *Screen* 18.4 (1977): 9-22. 11-2.
[107] Tribe 11-2.

constructedness of history has come into view while history is noted as a "[double form]

that denotes a non-discursive past and a discursive present."[108] Tribe further extends his

interpretation of the relation of history and memory from a more anti-historicist

standpoint. Tribe's usage of "fabricated history" provides a view similar to contemporary

historians who "abandon the past as a principle of validation which dominates all other

concerns." Tribe argues that "history is something perpetually constructed in a specific

conjuncture:"[109]

> If on the other hand we travel from right to left in this title, a quite different
> set of relationships appears. Beginning with memory, a work of production takes
> us to the past as history. This work of production is no longer a work of
> discovery, of revelation, but is rather a process in which specific materials are
> combined together and used to fabricate a history. This 'fabricated history' is not
> thereby false, nor erroneous; what is of importance is that its principles of
> validation have become disconnected from the simple existence of a prior
> chronology. Put simply, this conception is an anti-historicist one, denying that the
> past through its existence and transcription is a principle of validity in itself. The
> first position that was outlined assumes that History is something that is real and
> tangible, that can be effectively recapitulated, discovered, or of course distorted;
> but whatever the modality, it is and always will be. This fact of existence is the
> guardian of truth and the subverter of error. In the case of much women's history,
> traditional accounts are denounced for having omitted in a systematic manner
> female historical agents. The restoration of such agents into history is an act
> which restores the truth to historical discourse.[110]

Tribe's explanation of the relation among memory, production, and history indicates the

circumstances of Taiwanese popular memory in contrast to the KMT's hegemonic

national memory. More critically, it outlines the challenge that the Taiwanese cinema

encounters while attempting to reform a Taiwanese identity through its cinematic

reproduction of the island's memories and history; this reproduction builds massively

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[108] Tribe 11-2.
[109] Tribe 12.
[110] Tribe 11-2.

upon the connection between the island's past and present. Tribe's rationale of the two

positions in reading "History/Production/Memory" draws inspiration from Michel

Foucault's conception of popular memory that emphasizes the nature of resistance. This

rationale and inspiration constantly bring into view to mind two related aspects that take

the ever-changing dynamic between past and present—Maurice Halbwachs's perception

of the collective memory and Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history and the writing of

history.

Halbwachs's critical examination of historical remembrances within the context

of sociology, in conjunction with Benjamin's conception of history, becomes

considerably useful to investigate the selected Post Taiwan New Cinema films' extensive

usage of historical remembrances and their manifestations of various types of memory.

Both remembrances and their manifestations introduce cinematic interpretations of the

dialectics between historical memories and reconstructed history, and between truth and

invention. Foucault's "popular memory"—together with the provocative insights of the

constructed nature of nation addressed by contemporary historians influenced by

Marxism and/or post-structuralism—is an appropriate way to define the Taiwanese New

Cinema's initial attempt to confront the KMT's dominant narrative. The Taiwanese New

Cinema's realistic filmic style, a style that aims for a sense of genuine portrayal of the

local Taiwanese popular memory without imposing any apparent judgments upon the

historical matter itself, concentrates on overturning the KMT's autocratic politics of

remembering and forgetting that fortifies the sense of Chineseness. The political and

cultural liberation following the forty years of Martial Law brings into view a heated

debate among a variation of historiographies of Taiwan's past in the 1990s. Such a debate

motivates the Post Taiwan New Cinema to deploy a cinematic investigation on the nature

of historiography and its employment of memories through the practice of metafilmic

self-reflexivity, which is parallel to the concept of postmodern dialectics.

Martita Sturken's definition of "cultural memory" in *Tangled Memories: The*

Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering is helpful in better

understanding the Post Taiwan New Cinema's attempt to connect Taiwan's past with its

present:

> [T]he process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and
> meanings. It both defines a culture and is the means by which its divisions and
> conflicting agendas are revealed. To define a memory as cultural is, in effect, to
> enter into a debate about what that memory means. This process does not efface
> the individual but rather involves the interaction of individuals in the creation of
> meaning. Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which
> different stories vie for a place in history.[111]

In Sturken's more recent study, Foucault's conception of "popular memory" has become

"more varied and ambiguous," but at the same time "retains a notion of contestation

[without giving] memory a prescribed politics or cultural orientation."[112] Sturken's

conception of cultural memory gives prominence to the production of memory through

representations, "but that neither inherently celebrates nor castigates manifestations of

memory in the cultural terrain," which therefore provides a beneficial "model for the

negotiation of memory in popular film"[113] Moreover, Sturken's consideration of memory

as "socially produced and bound in the struggle and investments of cultural and national

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[111] Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997. 1.
[112] Grainge 2.
[113] Grainge 2.

identity formation"[114] also is suggestive of Halbwachs's analysis on "collective memory," in which he views collective memory as performed and achieved through diverse collective interactions within a society.

Correspondingly, in their penetrating writing, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins note frankly that contemporary approaches within the historiographical discourse have "broadened [their] focus from the official to the social and cultural, memory [in consequence] has become central 'evidence'. Theorists now recognize, moreover, that memory frequently employs history in its service."[115] Olick and Robbins base their argument on postmodernists, who forcefully "[challenge] the 'truth claim' of professional historiography by questioning the distinction between knowledge and interpretation, and derivatively between history and memory (White 1973, Veyne 1984)."[116] Olick and Robbins reaffirm that "[h]istory is written by people in the present for particular purposes, and the selection and interpretation of 'sources' are always arbitrary."[117]

Contemporary studies of memory under sociopolitical vicissitudes are often traced to sociologist Halbwachs's thesis on "collective memory," in which Halbwachs articulates that "our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the

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[114] Grainge 2.
[115] Olick and Robbins 110.
[116] Olick and Robbins 110.
[117] Olick and Robbins 110.

past in the light of the present."[118] Halbwachs's examination of historical remembrances within the context of sociology and his emphasis on the socially constructed quality of memory are indispensable for exploring the Taiwanese cinema's reliance upon the reconsideration and representation of the past—history and memory—to rewrite the island's history and to form a Taiwanese identity.

Halbwachs's provocative investigation of the realm of memory accords not only with "modern analyses of ideological forgetting and structural amnesia,"[119] but with contemporary perceptions of the concept of nation and nationalism as he asserts that "we think our consciousness is unified, [but] this is an illusion; just as we think our actions are undetermined, they are not."[120]

> For me, [collective memories, borrowed memories that much rely entirely upon the memories of others while recalling them] are conceptions, symbols. I picture them pretty much as others do. I can imagine them, but I cannot remember them.[121]

Halbwachs challenges the unified, natural quality of memory in a similar sense as historians influenced by Marxism and/or post-structuralism disagree with the concept, which promotes history as "the 'eternal' image of the past"[122] and considers nation as an inherent, essentialist entity. Halbwachs and the historians both retort by provocatively laying emphasis on the sense of illusion and constructedness the subjects of their debates carry—the concept of memory in Halbwachs's consideration and the notion of nation for those historians.

[118] Coser, Lewis A. "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945." Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Ed. Lewis A. Coser. Trans. Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992. 1-36. 34.
[119] Douglas, Mary. "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs." Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. Trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper Colophon, 1980. 1-21. 17.
[120] Douglas 12.
[121] Halbwachs, Maurice (1980) 51-2.
[122] Benjamin 262.

Halbwachs's crucial distinction among autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory appropriately serves the investigation of how the roles of history and memory with their dialectical manifestations of historical remembrances emerge from various types of memory within the Post Taiwan New Cinema. While autobiographical memory is "memory of events that we have personally experienced in the past," historical memory can "[reach] the social actor only through [historical records]—written records and other types of records, such as photography [and in this study, film]."[123] Historical memory is "formal history," in which "the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions."[124] Based on Halbwachs's analysis, historical memory bridges together history and collective memory that are distinct from each other, which qualifies historical memory to be "either organic or dead" since we can "[keep] the given past alive for us" by celebrating the past that we "no longer have an 'organic' experiential relation," or by keeping them in historical records.[125] "History is a collection of the most notable facts in the memory of man."[126] It is the remembered past to which we no longer have an organic relation. Collective memory, opposed to history, "is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have seemingly disappeared."[127] It is the lived memory that serves as "a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the

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[123] Coser 23-4.
[124] Coser 24.
[125] Olick and Robbins 111.
[126] Halbwachs (1980) 78.
[127] Halbwachs (1980) 64.

groups keeping the memory alive."[128] It is the active past that "the individual memory, in order to corroborate and make precise and even to cover the gaps in its remembrances, relies upon, relocates itself within, [and] momentarily merges with."[129] Moreover, to contribute to our studies of the envisioning of a Taiwanese identity, it is worth mentioning that collective memory is what the formation of our identities relies on.

In *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs asserts emphatically that "[every person] carr[ies] a baggage load of historical remembrances that [one] can increase through conversation and reading. But it remains a borrowed memory, not [one's] own."[130]

> If our personal memory is understood to be something that we know only from within, while the collective memory would be known only from without, then the two will surely contrast sharply.[131]

While "collective memory" is viewed as a collection accumulating through interactive experiences, memory recollection is "not a given, rather a socially constructed notion."[132] Memory recollection in the socially constructed sense becomes a collective act, performed and achieved through diverse collective interactions and combinations of social elements, in which "the individuals [have] little agency in their identity and in their recollection of memories:"[133]

> The succession of our remembrances, of even our most personal ones, is always explained by changes occurring in our relationships to various collective

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[128] Halbwachs (1980) 80.
[129] Halbwachs (1980) 51
[130] Halbwachs (1980) 51.
[131] Halbwachs (1980) 52.
[132] Coser 22.
[133] Green, Romina A. "Violeta Parra: Collective Popular Memory, Counter-Memory and Historical Consciousness." Paper. Tufts University. 2010. 10 Apr 2012. <http://star-uci.academia.edu/RominaAGreen/Papers/151563/Violeta_Parra_Collective_Popular_Memory_Counter-Memory_and_Historical_Consciousness>

milieus—in short, by the transformations these milieus undergo separately and as a whole.[134]

Halbwachs's controversial thesis explicitly argues that an individual's memory is not simply mediated but structured, socialized, and educated by various collective milieus, provocatively specifying that "our memories remain collective, however, and are recalled to us through others even though only we were participants in the events or the things concerned."[135] Accordingly, his emphasis on how "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories [and how] it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories"[136] leads us to consider the constructed nature of memory and historical remembrance. His emphasis also leads us to further investigate how such a quality of constructedness weaves into Taiwanese cinema's attempt to compose a counter-memory that relies upon memory recollection of subaltern voices from history and re-define a Taiwanese identity.

Halbwachs's argument on how memory is socially constructed implies that collective memory constantly changes to conform to the current needs of the social actor recollecting the past; therefore, memory is an unreliable notion, which is only the representation of the past, instead of bringing history back to life. Such an argument fits with the deviating relationship between memory and forgetting, and therefore notably illustrates the instability of collective memory:

> For Halbwachs, the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concern of present. It is [through] this presentist approach he argues that the

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[134] Halbwachs (1980) 49.
[135] Halbwachs (1980) 23.
[136] Halbwachs (1992) 38.

beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch.[137]

Sociologists like Halbwachs attempt to reveal the power relations hidden behind any specific historiography in order to promote awareness of to whom the history belongs. To them, there is never a single authoritative version of historiography. Due to their pursuit to dissect and analyze people's understanding to the historical memories and to maintain and promote particular marginalized collective memories, their deconstructive project—confronting a dominant collective identification—subsequently advocates the establishment of a variety of identities.

Analogous to the conception that "all representations of the past are inevitably shaped and defined by the political and cultural concerns of the specific moment from which they emerge,"[138] Benjamin "sees historicism as marked by a double falsehood: in its acceptance, first, of the past as given and thus as unmediated by the present; and, second, in its evolutionist notion of progress."[139] Benjamin argues against historicism, which he considers as a linear narrative of continuum, "[as contenting] itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history"[140] by articulating how historical materialism sees history as "time filled by the presence of the now" and aims "to blast open the continuum of history."[141]

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.[142]

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[137] Coser 25.
[138] Yip 85-6.
[139] Brooker, Peter. *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*. New York: Oxford UP Inc. 2003. 123.
[140] Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. 1969. 253-64. 263.
[141] Benjamin 261. See also Brooker 147.
[142] Benjamin. 255.

Benjamin envisions such moments as "pregnant with tension,"[143]—similar to theorists'

awareness of the notion of contestation in their debate on nation and nationalism or

between official history and popular memory—thereby emphasizing his historiography

on rupture and fragmentation. Considering history as "discontinuous, catastrophic and

always in crisis,"[144] the Benjaminian historiography "rejects the claims to authority and

objectivity that typified nineteenth-century historical writing," and instead argues the

"emphatically critical and interventionist" quality of it.[145]

     Parallel to the Benjamin's conception of historiography, Taiwanese cinema's

pursuit of the island's history contributes to the comprehension of the "current crisis in

Taiwanese history."[146] *The Puppetmaster*, *The Red Lotus Society*, and *Good Men, Good*

Women as a group—carrying the self-reflective spirit of Meta-Film—deploy an

investigation of history and memory. Their exploration, aligned with the Benjaminian

historiography, "recognizes a dialectical relationship between past and present, and

actively engages in the constant construction and reconstruction of the past."[147] They, on

the one hand, inherit the Taiwanese New Cinema's commitment to recollect an

essentialist history and elaborate "The Taiwanese Experience" and, on the other,

consciously examine the process of the writing of history and therefore challenge the

essentialist quality of history and memory through the juxtaposition of the island's past

and present. These films cinematically recapture a segment of Taiwanese subaltern

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[143] Benjamin 262.
[144] Brooker 123.
[145] Yip 85.
[146] Yip, June. "Constructing a Nation: Taiwanese History and the Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien." *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Ed. Hsiao-Peng Lu. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1997. 139-68. 142.
[147] Yip (2004) 86.

history once ignored by the dominant narrative of Taiwanese history to confront the

KMT's official One-Chinese narrative. The films, in consequence, bring into light the

instability of recollection, and the artificial and invented quality of history and

historiography through their interpretations of the relationship between past and present.

  The Puppetmaster's original Chinese title, *Play, Dream, Life*, implies explicitly

the film's potential of the blurring of illusion and reality by way of its constant

alternation among performance, recollection, and documentary. Presented through the

cinematic portrayal of a passage of Li T'en Luk's life,[148] covering the years of the

Japanese Occupation*,* dialectical dialogues between truth and invention are unfolded

within its complex blend of documentary and fiction. Collocated with the three

components of the Chinese title, three integrated principles drive the narrative of *The*

Puppetmaster. *Life* indicates the dramatic reenactment of Li's life by actors in a

representational mode while *Dream* refers to the documented on-screen presence of Li

recounting his life in a presentational mode. The juxtaposition of the two modes transmits

the sense of ambivalence, which penetrates the entire film, by coupling *Dream* with

"documentary," and *Life* with "fiction." In addition, puppet shows and traditional

operas—associated with *Play*—serve as cultural annotation of historical vicissitudes.

Consequently, the correlation among *Play*, *Dream*, and *Life* "raises a host of interesting

questions about history, identity, and the possibility of apprehending truth."[149]

  Hou's arrangement of *The Puppetmaster*, which not only dramatizes the life of Li

but also includes Li narrating his past in voiceover and directly addressing the camera,

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[148] Li T'en luck is the pronunciation of Li T'ien Lu in Taiwanese, which will be used in favor of the studies
of this thesis.
[149] Yip (2004) 120.

can align with Halbwachs's exploration of the distinction of the memory recollection

performed by old people:

> Society, by giving old people the function of preserving the traces of its past,
> encourages them to devote whatever spiritual energy they may still possess to the
> act of recollection.[150]

Meanwhile, Li's role as an old man recollecting his memory is analogous to what

Benjamin defines as a "storyteller" if we take both Li's previous performance as a

grandfather in Hou's earlier films and *The Puppetmaster*'s deliberate emphasis on

autobiographical storytelling into consideration. Benjamin—separating "the 'wisdom'

transmitted through oral culture" from "the 'information' that circulates in literate

cultures"—considers "wisdom" as an accumulation of lived experience that "can only be

transmitted through human interaction, passed on through the oral tradition from one

generation to the next."[151] Li, as a storyteller, delivers the "wisdom," the heritage of

popular memory; therefore, Li's personal narration provides a medium for the society to

recollect the island's past, which is vital to define a Taiwanese identity. In this sense,

Benjamin's definition of "wisdom" appears to conform to the notion of popular memory

and collective memory, and consequently becomes appropriate for the distinction

between the pedagogical and the performative historiography, and the interrogation of the

truthfulness of memory recollection.

 The Puppetmaster, then, on one hand, carries over the Taiwanese New Cinema's

historiographical theme of telling the island's history from below, from the perspective of

common people rather than ruling class, through its portrayal of the life of a figure from

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[150] Halbwachs (1992) 48.
[151] Yip (2004) 148.

the margins of Taiwanese society. On the other hand, the film devotes itself

comprehensively to the practice that focuses on "the details of everyday life by those who

lived through history, and whose most vivid memories are left out of conventional

historical records," rather than "the 'significant' events of history marking the annals and

textbooks."[152]

> Like *City of Sadness*, [*The Puppetmaster*] is a bricolage that juxtaposes a
> polyphony of heterogeneous discourses and multiple perspectives in an attempt to
> undermine conventional paradigms of historical and personal narrative.[153]

The significance of historical moments has been significantly reduced in *The*

Puppetmaster, compared to the pedagogical narration of public political history in radio

broadcast penetrating the private sphere of the Lim family in *A City of Sadness*, and the

black-and-white flashbacks and dreams in *Super Citizen Ko*.

> From a private perspective, then, political history appears merely as a series of
> hurdles to overcome, pragmatic adjustments to be made in order to survive."[154]

The Puppetmaster consequently mutes as much historical controversies as possible by

only allowing pedagogical history, "conventional historical representation,"[155] to be

mentioned in the remotest forms. While the marginalized Taiwanese is allowed to

verbally narrate the Taiwanese past, the puppet performance and the intertitles that mark

the opening and ending of the film become the most definite instruments allowing the

emergence of pedagogical history, and marking the historical changes. Even if the

representation of pedagogical history is sometimes granted with verbal manifestation, the

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[152] Udden, James. "History in Its Place: *City of Sadness* (1989) and *The Puppetmaster* (1993)." Udden, James. *No Man an Island: The Cinema of Hou Hsiao-Hsien*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2009. 87-130. 121.
[153] Yip (2004) 119.
[154] Yip (2004) 112.
[155] Yip (2004) 120.

historical events that are mentioned in the representation remain merely minute in Li's

personal recollection on the soundtrack. For example, Li's commentary on Japan's loss in

World War II in 1945 bears no consideration at the level of nationality, but relates

heavily instead with ordinary things—his family's suffering and passing away from

cholera, and the Taiwanese people disassembling the Japanese fighter planes to sell for

living.

Furthermore, *The Puppetmaster*'s emphasis on "challeng[ing] both the narrative

continuity and naïve referentiality associated with conventional historical

representation"[156] has been exemplified through its attempt to radically transform from

the mode of non-verbal narration of the Taiwanese popular memory to a verbal narration

that depends extensively on oral histories.

> In addition to the discourse of official history—whether information presented
> through the intertitles or knowledge that the viewer is assumed to bring to the
> film—there are Li's memories, which he narrates in voice-over and direct address
> to the camera; Hou's restagings with actors of the events in Li's life; and the
> many performances of opera and puppetry included in the film. All four of these
> voices are introduced in the pretitle sequence and interact with each other
> throughout the rest of the film.[157]

In addition to interrogating the KMT's pedagogical historiography in terms of

constructedness, *The Puppetmaster* possesses metafilmic reflexivity and questions the

possibility of fully and accurately reconstructing the past through the operations of

memory. The sense of reflexivity gets explicitly displayed when the real Li is suddenly

inserted on the screen, and when the viewers are constantly shown the images of the

backstage of puppet shows. In a similar sense, the variance among the portrayal of Li's

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[156] Yip (2004) 120.
[157] Yip (2004) 119.

relationship with Lei Tzu—presented once in a representational mode through the actors'

dramatic reenactment of events from Li's life, and twice in a presentational mode through

the on-screen presence of the real Li personally recounting the times he spent with Lei

Tzu—highlights the fictional nature of each representation, and the unreliable operation

and constructedness of memory.[158] The juxtaposition of the presentational and

representational modes, together with Hou's "strategy of inserting the documentary

elements in the same setting as the fictional ones,"[159] transmits the sense of ambivalence

between illusion and reality each narration possesses.

The interplay among performance, recollection, and documentary introduces a

field for the emergence of multiple perspectives, either verbally or visually presented. In

contrast to the non-verbal narration—photography, diary and correspondences—utilized

in *A City of Sadness*, *Banana Paradise*, and *Super Citizen Ko*, verbal narrations from

multiple perspectives presented in *The Puppetmaster* not only highlight the

constructedness of all forms of representation, but consequently interrogating the

possibility of comprehending the truth of history through memory recollection by

foregrounding the ambivalent relation among different perspectives and voices. It should

come as no surprise that *The Puppetmaster*'s expression of "an ambivalent hybridity, a

sense of mixed blood and a much more hesitant identity overall"[160] critically outlines the

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[158] For a comprehensive analysis of *The Puppetmaster*'s complex composition see Brown, Nick. "Hou Hsiao Hsien's *The Puppetmaster*: The Poetics of Landscape." *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*. Eds. Chris Berry, and Feli Lu. Aberdeem: Hong Kong UP, 2005. 79-88.

[159] Udden 124.

[160] Lu, Tonglin, *Confronting Modernity in the Cinema of Taiwan and Mainland China*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002: 338-41.

See also Udden 118.

challenge that the Taiwanese cinema encounters while attempting to reform a Taiwanese identity though its cinematic reproduction of the island's memories and history.

As an adherent to the literary trend that considers oral histories and interview-based victims' biographies vital to local history, *Good Men, Good Women* partially derives its narrative from Lan Bozhou's "Song of the Covered Wagon," but, in the process, radically transforms the personal testimony in the novel with a different narrative strategy devoted to the interrogation of history as memory and imagination. *Good Men, Good Women* performs an investigation similar to *The Puppetmaster*'s interplay among performance, recollection, and documentary. Diverse perspectives and identifications emerge through the film's quadripartite narrative structure revolving around Liang Jing's past and present, and Jiang Bi-Yu and Zhong Hao-Dong's patriotic story in multiple moments in time. Although the cinematic representation of a momentous segment of the local Taiwanese history—the White Terror anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1950s—occupies the film to a certain degree, *Good Men, Good Women*, rather than exclusively approaching the notion of popular memory, determinedly explores the dialectical interplay among imagination, recollection, and impersonation, and further "rais[es] questions about our knowledge of the past, both personal and national,"[161] and the possibility of establishing a Taiwanese identity through the recollection of Taiwan's complex, contentious past.

Transcending *The Puppetmaster*'s weaving together of Li's life depicted in both the representational and presentational modes, *Good Men, Good Women* instead arranges

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[161] Lin, Sylvia Li-Chun. *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan: The 2/28 Incident and White Terror in Fiction and Film*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. 103.

for the same actress to perform two different roles with its setup of "a film within a film"—Annie Shizuka Inoh plays the role of Liang Jing playing a historical figure, Jiang Bi-Yu. Many scholars have approached *Good Men, Good Women* by breaking the narrative into pieces according to the time zones covered or cinematic styles employed. June Yip's analysis, breaking the film into four categories, brings out the ambiguous ways in which the Taiwanese approach their past. Revolving around Liang are two sets of scenes, both shot in color. First are the present-day scenes of Liang's daily life. The other set includes scenes that depict Liang's memories of her love affair with Ah-Wei till Ah-Wei's death three years ago. In addition, two other sets portray Taiwan's historical past, in particular the patriotic story of Jiang and Zhong. One, presented as "a film within a film," traces the past through black-and-white images in an almost documentary fashion. The other—set apart from the "film within a film" scenes by the fact that they are in dull color—depicts Liang and the other actors rehearsing scenes from the film about Jiang and Zhong.[162]

The film within the film has the same title as the original film—*Good Men, Good Women*—suggesting the interplay among imagination, recollection, and impersonation. While the black-and-white scenes can be considered as memories that the present society anxiously longs for, scenes in color portray the present days in which certain memories were left behind. In between the alternation, the notions of imagination, recollection, and impersonation come into view through those almost black-and-white scenes revolving around Liang's reenactment of Jiang's life, in which the past and present are layered together. Therefore, the similarity and contrast between scenes portraying historical

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[162] Yip (2004) 126-8.

events revolving around Jiang and Zhong in black-and-white, and those depicting Liang and other actors' reenactment of that particular historical story in dull color are notably vital to the investigation of the notion of history as memory and imagination.

The interrogation of the authenticity of those sequences blended with a documentary quality has been constantly brought into view. Almost at the end of the film, Jiang mentions that the film shoot was just about to start. The possibility that the black-and-white scenes of the past might be her imagination is evoked. Furthermore, in the second-to-last shot of the film, Jiang is seen burning spirit money as she reads aloud Zhong's death note to her. When Jiang looks up and wails, the black-and-white shots gradually turn into color. Such changes radically interrupt those black-and-white shots of the past that could "conceivably be read as transparent depictions of historical events," by inserting vigorously, although gradually in terms of visual, "the scenes of acting [in color] that are clearly marked as fictive reenactments."[163] Moreover, the wailing shot is followed by the final shot in which Zhong and Jiang, with other patriots, are on their way to join the Communists to fight against Japan. This same shot was presented once as the opening shot of the film, but in black-and-white instead, which later cuts into Jiang's apartment in the present day. Such a technique—presenting the same shots twice, once in black-and-white and later in color—once more deconstructs the realistic or documentary tradition of black-and-white images, and consequently foregrounds the awareness that the cinematic historiography is only another version of "the present-day construction of the past."[164]

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[163] Yip (2004) 126-8.
[164] Yip (2004) 126-8.

The attempt to build a connection between the past and present—analogous with the national historiography's attempt to reach into its ancient past—sets the tone and defines the theme of *Good Men, Good Women*. Accordingly, Liang's dairy, stolen and then redelivered back to her as faxed documents, and her voiceovers, both manifest such attempts. Regardless of their seemingly integrating and promising function of weaving together all the fragmentary and discontinuous scenes from multiple time zones to provide a window for the present day Taiwanese to seek and connect with their past, these techniques, as a matter of fact, are utilized to provocatively "[problematize] the historical events that have been presented,"[165] underscoring the ambivalence of providing a continuous history and consequently questioning the possibility of fully comprehending the past.

It becomes conceivable that a continuous history linking together the past and present is an illusion. According to Liang's voiceover, which deliberately states that "I feel as if I'm turning into Jiang Bi-Yu," such an illusion seems to be achievable at moments of imagination that blur the past and present, character and actress, and illusion and reality. Schwartz's description of history as "a continuous film in which, even though other images usually appear, the shots hang together and form a continuous stream of images,"[166] points out the provocative quality of such an illusion of history. Accordingly, the setup to present Liang's diary as a faxed document also draws attention to the notion of the illusion that history is a complete and continuous entity; fragments of Liang's past

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[165] Shie, Elliott Shr-Tzun. "Historical Film, Authenticity, and the Postmodern: On Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Good Men Good Women*." *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly* 38.4=427 (Apr. 2004): 211-41. 222.
[166] Coser 26.

are redelivered to her in the form of faxed document, singled-pieced without any gap between each fragment.

Triggered by her faxed dairy, Liang begins to serve as a storyteller, similar to Li's role in *The Puppetmaster*, and she delivers the "wisdom" about the past gradually by reading out her personal diary. She describes her preparation for and feeling about the film about Jiang and Zhong, and eventually reveals a national past by narrating Jiang's life. Liang's voiceovers are utilized to accentuate the ambivalent authenticity of performative historiographies by revealing the constructed nature of nationality and the discontinuity between each sequence from the past. Along with Jiang's voiceovers recounting her love affair, and narrating the historical events, she speaks twice of the real-time Jiang, describing a visit to Jiang in the hospital, and later announcing Jiang's passing. These two times seem to claim the authenticity of Jiang's voiceovers while the rest reveals the uncertainty and ambivalence of it.

Good Men, Good Women "can be regarded as a comment on the complex, contentious past that cannot be easily understood or interpreted but is nevertheless intricately connected with the present."[167] On one hand, it interrogates the illusion of continuity and totality of the pedagogical historiography that develops national identity through a series of the ideological displacements. On the other, it foregrounds the constructed nature of nationality; the gaps and diversity emerge while passing down history through each performative historiography the film presents.

In consonance with *The Puppetmaster* and *Good Men, Good Women*'s attempt to link together Taiwan's past with its present through individual's narration of history,

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[167] Lin 112.

there exists the role of "storyteller" in *The Red Lotus Society* as well. The connection, however, becomes frailer while it relies on the search for the legend of the martial art of qinggong that allegedly allows its practitioners to vault, and the depiction of the anecdotes of the Red Lotus Society. "Rather than tapping into the dominant identity politics, whose proponents seek to reconstruct and enshrine the past," *The Red Lotus Society* is "critical of the transformation but also of nostalgia" by attaching its images to Taipei and taking the "erasure of memory" as one of its central themes.[168] An old Mainlander, Mao, telling the tale of the Red Lotus Society—a group of vaulting adepts' resistance to the KMT's persecution—serves to manifest the dialectics between truth and invention with a hint of nostalgia. Meanwhile, Ah-Da's quest of qinggong, leading him to become apprentice to masters of diverse background, envisions the cultural transformation from the search for the past to the exploration of the connection between the Taipei cityscape and the erasure of Taiwanese collective memory.

The portrayal of Mao's storytelling about the Red Lotus Society performs the dialectics between truth and invention. The arrangement of an old Mainlander telling stories about Taiwan's past attempts to gain authority to the storyteller reflects the tradition that the KMT's narrative often dominates the national history of Taiwan. Accordingly, various documentary practices are utilized to claim the authenticity of the story being told. The legend is always depicted through black-and-white sequences, with on-screen texts indicating its time and location. Moreover, to assert the credibility of his role as a storyteller and his story, Mao frequently claims his participation of the event by

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[168] Braester, Yomi. "If We Could Remember Everything, We Would Be Able to Fly: Taipei's Cinematic Poetics of Demolition." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (Spring 2003). 29-61. 33.

either stating his relationship with the members of the Red Lotus Society or showing Ah-Da pictures taken back then.

The illusion of authority and authenticity, however, is constantly called into question. The selection of the locale of Mao's storytelling explicitly sets forth the contrast between the performative and the pedagogical. Mao's performative narration of a segment of Taiwan's past takes place right next to the National Museum of History, a symbol of the pedagogical collection of Taiwan's past. Although the black-and-white sequences extensively follow the documentary tradition, they often point to a location in the present by layering the images of past and present, its set and lighting design more likely follow the theatre practice, which consequently intensifies the artificial nature of the story. Furthermore, one of Mao's listeners often interrupts Mao's storytelling by scornfully suggesting the tale is false. The authenticity of Mao's narration finally collapses after apoplexy suddenly takes away his ability to speak. When Ah-Da is collecting Mao's personal belongings at Mao's apartment, Mao's sister reveals the fact that the person in the pictures Mao showed to Ah-Da was not Mao at all, which further unmasks the reality of Mao's participation in those past events. More radically, the anecdotes Mao's Taiwanese apprentice told determinedly emphasizes the manipulative quality of each performative narration of the past. When Mao's Taiwanese apprentice substitutes for Mao and becomes the storyteller, he starts to tell the legend in a more dramatic way, which sometimes contradicts with what Mao already told. Mao sometimes intervenes and corrects him, which leads the Taiwanese apprentice to switch his language between Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese. While Taiwanese is a dialect that Mao does

not understand, the Taiwanese apprentice therefore inventing successfully another version of the same tale.

While an old Mainlander's account of the past portrays the ambivalent nature of historical narrations, the ambivalence of the erasure of memory emerges through a young Taiwanese's wanderings through the urban space.

> As Ah Da wanders through Taipei, the city is revealed to be a monument for forgetting, a space not only of decadent consumerism and speculation but also a metropolis in the process of being reconstructed and demolished, a city that burns itself down and leaves no space for memory.[169]

Ah-Da's quest for vaulting allows him to witness the reconstruction and deconstruction of specific geographical or architectural spaces, which carry collective memories crucial for the establishment of national identity. His practices of qinggong therefore unfold *The Red Lotus Society*'s proposal of the fragile connection between Taiwan's past and present through the elaboration on the complex relationships between history and urban environment. Thus, Halbwachs's mention of such relationships, which he considers vital for the maintenance of a collective memory become beneficial:

> [E]very religion also has a history. Rather, there is a religious memory composed of traditions going back to events, often very far in the past, that occurred in definite locations. It may well be difficult to evoke the event if we do not think about the place itself. Yet in most cases, we are acquainted with this place not because we have seen it but because we know that it exists and could be seen. At any rate, its existence is guaranteed by the testimony of witnesses. That is why there is a religious geography or topography.[170]

Similar to Halbwachs's perspectives on religious history, Yip states in *Envisioning Taiwan* that the fickleness of national history is concealed by the constancy of the space. *The Red Lotus Society*, on the contrary, chooses to present the erasure of memory through

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[169] Braester 40.
[170] Halbwachs (1980) 154.

its portrayal of the fierce change of Taipei's cityscape, and the course of Ah-Da's quest to

fly. As consuming spaces gradually replace those "definite locations," "[u]rban spaces

[thus become] metaphors for an economy of memory whereby experience is fetishized,

consumed, discarded, and forgotten."[171] Meanwhile, references to the past begin to serve

the economic development of the city. Faxed documents no longer offer a bridge to the

memory as they do in *Good Men, Good Women*, but become tools for doing business.

Similarly, the martial art of an ancient vaulting skill, as Ah-Da's boss notes, transforms

into "the martial art of earning money." In Wenchi Lin's words, "Ah Da's vaulting

[consequently] signals the advent of Taiwan's 'cultural schizophrenia'" since "he is

nevertheless surrounded by a vanishing mnemonic landscape" regardless of how

quinggong allows him a bird's-eye view to comprehend Taipei as an integral entity.[172]

Departing from the Taiwanese New Cinema's tradition of realism, *The Red Lotus*

Society, *The Puppetmaster*, and *Good Men, Good Women* "[provide] a critique of

Taiwan's politics of memory"[173] through their collage of fragmentary shots that shuttle

between Taiwan's past and present. They blend together the Taiwanese New Cinema's

nostalgic theme that aims at the resurrection of popular memory and the Post Taiwan

New Cinema's proposition that engages in the dialectical relationship between past and

present. These Post Taiwan New Cinema films not only suggest the fickleness of

performative narrations that rely on memory, but radically indicate that "[historical]

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[171] Braester 46-47.
[172] Braester 45.
See also Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "The History, Space, and Home: Nation in Taiwanese City Films of the 90s" [九〇年代台灣都市電影中的歷史、空間與家／國]. *Chung-Wai Literature* [中外文學] 27.5 (1998): 99-119.
[173] Braester 33.

memory cannot be inscribed onto the city or be retrieved from it."[174] Their meta-

narratives, carrying a self-reflective spirit, in consequence manifest expressly what

Benjamin would put as the crisis of Taiwanese history at the moment.

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[174] Braester 46-47.

CHAPTER 3

SPECTRAL NATIONALITY: "THE TAIPEI EXPERIENCE" IN PLACE OF "THE

TAIWANESE EXPERIENCE"

Taiwan, taking a trajectory familiar to many postcolonial nations, strives to

distinguish its independent identity from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the

transnational capitalistic world system by rapidly globalizing its capital, Taipei. The

independent subjectivity which the Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1980s aims to

differentiate from Chinese culture, consequently becomes more difficult to find in the

Taipei urban cinema presented around the turn of the century. The shift in the cinematic

figurations of the city through the Taipei urban cinema's portrayal of the spectral urban

space appears to conform with the political, economical, and cultural movement

proceeding in Taiwan, generally from indigenization and nationalization to

modernization, globalization and hybridization in the age of transnational capitalism. In

this regard, Taipei-based urban films came into view around the turn of the century—

Terrorizer (Edward Yang, 1986), *Vive L'Amour* (Tsai Ming-Liang, 1994), *Good Men,*

Good Women (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1995), *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan Jen, 1996), and

Connection by Fate (Wan, 1998)—and manifest the spectrality of Taiwanese history

through their rendering of Taipei as a series of "postmodern liminal spaces," spaces that

"[slip] and [mediate] between nature and artifice, public use and private value, global

market and local place."[175] From the perspective of a generation of Taiwanese people

with no memory of "The Taiwanese Experience"—namely the arrival of the Nationalist

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[175] Zukin, Sharon. "Postmodern Urban Landscapes: Mapping Culture and Power." *Modernity and Identity*. Eds. Scott Lash, and Jonathan Friedman. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 221-47. 222.

Kuomintang (KMT) and the subsequent atrocities committed on the island—the

emergence of this cinematic theme where "The Taipei Experience" replaces "The

Taiwanese Experience" collectively becomes a critique of the history of Taiwan's

urbanization, modernization, and colonization, and in consequence illuminates expressly

an alternative route to the envisioning of a Taiwanese identity.

In the introduction of *Transnational Chinese Cinema*, Hsiao-Peng Lu proclaims,

"Chinese *national* cinema can only be understood in its properly *transnational*

context:"[176]

> Transnationalism in the Chinese case can be observed at the following levels:
> first, the split of China into several geopolitical entities since the nineteenth
> century—the Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—and consequently the
> triangulation of competing national/local 'Chinese cinemas,' especially after
> 1949; … third, the representation and questioning of 'China' and 'Chineseness' in
> filmic discourse itself, namely, the cross-examination of the national, cultural,
> political, ethnic, and gender identity of individuals and communities in the
> Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diasporas.[177]

Correspondingly, in *Envisioning Taiwan*, June Yip—quoting from Marsha Kinder's

analysis on national cinema under the "new world order" of the 1980s and 1990s—points

out that the Taiwanese New Cinema provides an alternative vision of nation by carrying

forward the search for a "cultural authenticity," adding it to the quest for "cultural

hybridity" and toward a postmodern perspective:

> [National cinema] must be read against the local/global interface, which has
> become increasingly important in the new world order of the 1980s and 1990s.
> This interface operates in every national cinema, primarily because the film
> medium has always been an important vehicle for constructing images of a
> unified national identity out of regional and ethnic diversity and for transmitting
> them both within and beyond its national borders and also because, from its

[176] Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-Peng. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Honolulu:
University of Hawaii Press, 1997. 3.
[177] Lu 3.

inception, the history of cinema has always involved a fierce international competition for world markets.[178]

Yip elaborates upon cultural hybridity from a perspective similar to Chris Berry's exploration on Chinese cinema and nationhood. In a section titled "Taipei or Not Taipei," Berry argues that through the enunciation in *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989), "we have a collective self that is hybridized and riven with difference, a subject that cannot speak, and at least the shadow of a post-national imagined community found on hybrid space."[179] Taking in these lines of thought, Yip therefore states that such hybridity provides a platform for Taiwan to successfully connect itself to globalization, and consequently allows Taiwan to be considered as a "post-nation," which features profoundly postcolonial and postmodern characteristics.

Wenchi Lin embeds both Lu and Yip's arguments, and presents "The History, Space, and Home/Nation in Taiwanese City Films of the 90s" from the perspective that neither the singular *Chinese* identity, nor the varying *Taiwanese* and *Mainland Chinese* identities could be indicated in Taiwan's urban cinema due to the fact that the relationships between Taiwanese cinema and Taiwanese national identity have wavered since the 1990s in a transnational context.[180] Accordingly, Jerome Chenya Li draws on a similar argument and concludes that "the tendency of Taiwanese Cinema in the 1980s to set its geographical space in the rural areas is in fact a denial of the fact that Taiwan has

[178] Kinder, Marsha. *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 7-8.
[179] Berry, Chris. "A Nation T(w/o)o: Chinese Cinema(s) and Nationhood(s)." *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*. Ed. Wimal Dissanayake. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994. 42-64. 59.
[180] Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "The History, Space, and Home: Nation in Taiwanese City Films of the 90s" [九〇年代台灣都市電影中的歷史、空間與家／國]. *Chung-Wai Literature* [中外文學] 27.5 (1998): 99-119. 99.

been rapidly capitalized by transnationalism."[181] Therefore, when filmmakers began to

take the metropolis of Taipei as the foundation of their cinematic projects, they realized

that the earlier focus on Taiwan, which cinematically refigured Taipei in the Taiwanese

New Cinema as a site of cultural hybridization with distinct Taiwanese experiences,

faded.

Taking into account Homi Bhabha's postcolonial thoughts on hybridity as "a

familiar and ambivalent trope," in his study of "Globalization as Hybridization," Jan

Nederveen Pieterse suggests that "we can construct a *continuum* of *hybridities*: on one

end, an assimilationist hybridity that leans over towards the centre, adopts the canon and

mimics the hegemony, and, at the other end, a destabilizing hybridity that blurs the

canon, reverses the current, subverts the centre."[182] In many ways, Taipei urban films'

cinematic remapping of the city exemplifies what Pieterse calls "destabilizing hybridity."

As a consequence of its speedy capitalization, Taipei has lost its capability to recapture

the sense of "The Taiwanese Experience." "Taipei has been transfigured as a series of

heterotopias, where a wide range of postmodern [liminal] spaces are (re)imagined and

(re)negotiated"[183] as they speedily replace the "absolute spaces," which Henri Lefebvre

coins to describe "[specific spaces that have] acquired fixed social and political meanings

over a long period of historical accumulation, and manufactured for the express purpose

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[181] Lin (1998) 102.
See also Li, Jerome Chenya (李振亞). "Historical Space/Spatial History: The Construction of Memories and Geographical Space in *A Time to Live, a Time to Die*" [歷史空間／空間歷史]. *Passionate Detachment: Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien* [戲戀人生—侯孝賢電影研究]. Eds. Wenchi Lin, Shiao-Ying Shen, and Jerome Chenya Li. Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2000. 113-140. 136. (My translation.)
[182] Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Globalization as Hybridization." *Global Modternitie*s. Eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson. London: Sage Publications, 1995. 45-68. 56-7.
[183] Zhang, Yingjin. "Cinematic Remapping of Taipei: Cultural Hybridization, Heterotopias and Postmodernity." *Remapping Taiwan: Histories and Cultures in the Context of Globalization.* The Fifth Annual Conference on the History and Culture of Taiwan, UCLA, 2000. 2. (Unpublished paper.)

of legitimation of an identification with the nation-state."[184] Due to the city's rapid

urbanization, the Post Taiwan New Cinema's Taipei-based urban films distance Taipei

from "The Taiwanese Experience" and imply the possibilities of the emergence of "The

Taipei Experience" as a replacement for "The Taiwanese Experience" to serve as the

initiation for the envisioning of the Taiwanese national identity around the turn of the

century.

The investigation of the Taiwanese cinema's intervention in the envisioning of a

identity for Taiwan, from a postcolonial perspective, has employed a variety of critical,

theoretical and cinematic approaches in the fields of history, memory and identity studies.

This corpus of theories and films emerges as a response to "the contemporary cultural

challenges result[ing] from the enormous social and political transformations that have

occurred globally in the last decades of the twentieth century."[185] Remarkably, in addition

to the discursive debates of memory and collective identity these selected theories and

films endeavor to unfold, sharing among them has the potential to radically redraw the

traditional boundaries delineating the contours of their respective subjects.

In this regard, Bhabha evocatively describes an innovative strategy in reading

between the "pedagogical" and "perfomative," in which "counter-narratives of the nation

continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries of the imagined communities."[186]

With an emphasis on its postcolonial provenance, Bhabha draws from Frantz Fanon's

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[184] Lin (1998) 112.
[185] Colmeiro, José. "Nation of Ghosts?: Haunting, Historical Memory and Forgetting in Post-Franco Spain." [online article], *452ºF. Electronic Journal of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature*, 4, 2001. 17-34. 21. <http://www.452f.com/index.php/en/jose-colmeiro.html>
[186] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. 291-322. 300.

explanation of the nature of colonial struggle, and further considers the "Third Space of

enunciation" the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference, which in

consequence embraces his provocative arguments on the hybridity, liminality, and

ambivalence of cultural analysis:

> The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of
> meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of
> representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as in
> integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges
> our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force,
> authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the
> People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the
> narrative of the Western nation which Benedict Anderson so perceptively
> describes as being written in homogeneous, serial time.[187]

Through its introduction of an ambivalence in the act of interpretation, the Third Space

therefore "ensure[s] that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or

fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read

anew."[188]

> [T]he theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way
> to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of
> multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation
> of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the
> cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the
> burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national,
> anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we
> may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.[189]

Bhabha considers the difference in the process of language, the linguistic difference,

crucial to the production of meaning, which requires that the two places—the subject of a

proposition and the subject of enunciation—to be mobilized in the passage through a

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[187] Bhabha. *Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. 54.
[188] Bhabha (2004) 55-6.
[189] Bhabha (2004) 56.

Third Space. The Third Space, redrawing the boundaries of the process of language, appropriately becomes the site to embrace any narratives of cultural hybridity. Bhabha's idea of expanding the concept of nation with postcolonial notions, such as double temporality, therefore provide a critical approach in reading the Taiwanese New Cinema's mission to "recover, privilege, and articulate the historical significance and the contemporary, as well as future, implications of what [KMT's] official histories insist on erasing."[190] *A City of Sadness*, *Banana Paradise* (Wang Tung, 1989), and *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan Jen, 1996), with their respective ambivalent and heterogeneous textures concerning popular memory, therefore serve as a liminal form of social representation that holds the potential for other cultural identities and political solidarities to emerge.

The Puppetmaster (Hou, 1993), *The Red Lotus Society* (Lai Sheng-Chuan, 1994) and *Good Men, Good Women* not only inherit the Taiwanese New Cinema's mission of recovering popular memory, they together provide a critique of Taiwan's politics of memory through their engagement in the dialectical relationship between past and present with their collage of fragmentary shots that shuttle between Taiwan's past and present. Their investigation in the usage of historical remembrances recalls Walter Benjamin's conception of the present as "the time of now," *Jetzizeit*, which seeks to blast open the myth, the homogeneity of a historicist conception of time:

> A materialist historian stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a
> rosary. Instead he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a

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[190] Cham, Mbye. "Official History and Popular Memory: Reconfiguration of the African Past in the Films of Ousmane Sembene." *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. Ed. Marcia Landy. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001. 261-68. 262.

definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as "the time of the now" [*Jetztzeit*] which is shot through with chips of messianic time.[191]

Benjamin's "now-time" challenges the traditional perception of history through his discussion on the orientation of time. "In opposition to the conventional modern view that the present's expectations of the future determine its appropriation of the past," *Jetzizeit*, bearing a historical materialist viewpoint, becomes an "emphatic renewal" of a consciousness that espouses a radical orientation toward the past, in which "the past's horizon of expectation is one to which our present and our future are acutely responsible."[192]

In his analysis on the ghost films' manifestation of spectral temporalities as historical allegory, Bliss Cua Lim links together Benjamin's "now-time" and Jacques Derrida's disjointed time with specters and focuses on both theories' call to historical accountability mindful of the dead.[193] Along with Benjamin's description that "for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably,"[194] Derrida's disjointed time with specters, which leads to a radicalized conception of historical justice, also "undermines modernity's homogeneous time, fomenting instead a radicalized accountability to those who are no longer with us [yet still there]."[195] To put this in Benjamin's words, "haunting as a recognition of commonalities between those who are and those who are no longer"[196]

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[191] Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections.* Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. 1969. 253-64. 263.
[192] Lim, Bliss Cua. "Spectral Times: The Ghost Film as Historical Allegory." *Positions* 9.2 (Fall, 2001). 287-329. 318-19.
[193] Lim 297-318.
[194] Benjamin 355.
[195] Lim 319.
[196] Lim 319.

becomes a solidarity with specters made possible by remembering, "[and] blast[s] a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history."[197]

Similar to "Benjamin's image of the tiger's leap of the revolution as the messianic blasting of a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history,"[198] Derrida's notion of hauntology developed in *Specters of Marx*, as a discourse on death—seeking to get beyond the sharp dividing line between the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it—necessarily "involves a rhetoric of borders."[199]

> A spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now," future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time.[200]

The specter exceeds conventional knowledge of time. It collapses departure and return, life and death, presence and absence, seen and unseen, death and survival. Therefore, "the specter represents temporalities that cannot be grasped adequately in terms of present time;"[201] the apparition, instead, can be grasped "only in a dislocated time of the preset, at the joining of a radically dis-jointed time, without certain conjunction."[202] As Derrida observes, because death delimits "the right of absolute property, the right of property to

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[197] Benjamin 263.
[198] Postone, Moishe. "Deconstruction as Social Critique: Derrida on Marx and the New World Order." *History and Theory* 37.3 (Oct. 1998). 370-87. 374.
[199] Cheah, Pheng. "Spectral Nationality: The Living On *[sur-vie]* of the Postcolonial Nation in Neocolonial Globalization." *boundary 2* 26:3 (Fall, 1999). Cornell UP. 225-252. 240.
See also Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*: *The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Bernd Magnus. New York: Routledge, 2006. 48.
[200] Derrida xix.
[201] Postone 371.
[202] Derrida 20.

our own life," it is the ultimate border, a border "more essential, more originary and more proper than those of any other territory in the world."[203]

Derrida considers hauntology, the specter's "ontology," as the repetition of first-time-and-last-time that potentially undermines not only the conventional perception of history, but also the order of knowledge, the ontology of being and time.

> Repetition *and* first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. *What is* a ghost? What is the *effectively* or the *presence* of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there *there*, between the thin itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time*, makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology*.[204]

Derrida's concept of hauntology illustrates the spectral aspect of history—a past that is already not there but at the same time makes itself present by way of the ambiguous appearance of the specter. Derrida's spectrality's linking of modalized presents, carrying forward Benjamin's now-time's demanding of a radical orientation toward the past, inspires the discussion of the future of a Taiwanese identity in a postcolonial context. This postcolonial culture constantly struggles to "mark the broad historical facts of decolonization and the determined achievement of sovereignty, but also [marks] the realities of nations and peoples emerging into a new imperialistic context of economic and sometimes political domination."[205] Together with Bhabha's provocative strategy for reading between the pedagogical and perfomative that provides a site for the discussion of cultural hybridity, Derrida's reflections on hauntology and Benjamin's perception of

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[203] Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias: Dying-Awaiting (One Another at) the "Limits of Truth."* Trans, Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993. 3.
[204] Derrida (2006) 10.
[205] Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001. 57.

now-time, illuminating the discourse of history and memory through their critical reviews emphasizing the temporal dimension, express an awareness that "contemporary historical developments require a different and more adequate theoretical response, one that also addresses directly the problematic of global capitalism."[206] In consequence, these theoretical approaches emerge as a significant intervention in the discussions about the future of a Taiwanese identity at the turn of the century.

Taiwanese films that emerged after the Taiwanese New Cinema movement in the 1980s have been given many names. In his "The Telepathy in Downgrading History: On the Fluid Imaging of Taiwan's 'Post –New Cinema,'" Song-Yong Sing seeks to delimits films in the 1990s and labeled them as "The Post Taiwan New Cinema," in contrast to what Hsiung-Ping Chiao calls the "New New Wave" films, through an elaborate investigation of "the significance interwoven by a series of successions, overlappings, and collusions within Taiwan cinema itself since the 1980s."[207] His examination begins on two interwoven levels:

> On the first, where historical-cultural representation and the ontology of film aesthetics form a symbiosis, we trace the genealogy and generative structure presented by the transition from Taiwan's "New Wave Cinema" (1982-1987) and subsequent works in the 1990s to the "Post-New Cinema" films. On the other level, we attempt, by examining the constitutive mode and meaning of Taiwan cinema's new aesthetical genealogy, an initial look at how the "Post-New Cinema" constructs a prototype of fluid imaging that detects and perceives various historical experiences and memorable events.[208]

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[206] Postone 378.

[207] Sing, Song-Yong (孫松榮). "The Telepathy in Downgrading History: On the Fluid Imaging of Taiwan's 'Post–New Cinema'" [輕歷史的心靈感應：論台灣「後-新電影」的流體影像]. *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* [電影欣賞學刊] 28.2=142 (Jan.-Mar. 2010): 137-56. 138.

[208] Sing 138.

Sing's attempt to explore how the Post Taiwan New Cinema inherits the Taiwanese New Cinema's tradition while initiating, at the same time, a variety of innovations Aligns with Chiao's claim in *New New Wave of Taiwan Cinema 90's*. Based on her argument that the tradition of the Taiwanese New Cinema requires a necessary transition in order to reflect the diverse historical discourses that emerge by the end of the century, Chiao labels films in the 1990s as "New New Wave" films.[209] "New New Wave" as a tag seems to properly reflect the cinematic transition that takes place in the 1990s; however, while "new" implies a thorough departure, Sing's conceptualization of the "post" becomes more pertinent not only to illustrate the genealogy presented by the generational transition from the Taiwanese New Cinema to the Post Taiwan New Cinema, but to trace the accommodations, evolution, and innovation of the former tradition of realism and the anxiety for historical remembrances, which the Post Taiwan New Cinema manifests in response to the postmodern, postcolonial circumstance it is situated. The Post Taiwan New Cinema's generational inheritance and the simultaneous break from the Taiwanese New Cinema demonstrate an indivisible dialectical relationship between the two cinematic movements, which Sing, reminiscent of Derrida's reflection on hauntology, concludes as "the *specters* of the [Taiwanese] New Cinema hauntingly linger on Taiwanese cinema."[210]

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[209] Chiao, Hsiung-Ping (焦雄屏). *New New Wave of Taiwan Cinema 90's* [台灣電影 90 新新浪潮].
Taipei: Rye Field, 2002. vii.
[210] Sing 141. (My translation.)

Derrida, while developing his provocative conception of hauntology, considers

specter as a paradoxical incorporation, in which "[t]he specter is *of the spirit,* it

participates in the latter and stems from it even as it follows it as its ghostly double:"[211]

> [T]he specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain
> phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some "thing" that
> remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it
> is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which
> disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the *revenant* or the
> return of the specter.[212]

Spectralization, therefore, becomes "the incarnation of autonomized spirit in an a-

physical body that is then taken on as the real body of the living subject."[213]

> The production of the ghost, the constitution of the *ghost* effect is not simply a
> spiritualization or even an autonomization of spirit, idea or thought, as happens
> *par excellence* in Hegelian idealism. No, once this autonomization is effected,
> with the corresponding expropriation or alienation, and only then, the ghostly
> moment *comes upon* it, adds to it a supplementary dimension, one more
> simulacrum, alienation, or expropriation. Namely, a body! In the flesh *(Leib)!* For
> there is no ghost, there is never any becoming-specter of the spirit without at least
> an appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility, like the dis-appearing of
> an apparition. For there to be ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a
> body that is more abstract than ever. The spectrogenic process corresponds
> therefore to a paradoxical *incorporation.* Once ideas or thoughts *(Gedanke)* are
> detached from their substratum, one engenders some ghost by *giving them* a *body.*
> Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and thoughts have been torn
> loose, but by incarnating the latter *in another artifactual body,* a *prosthetic body,*
> a ghost of spirit.[214]

By considering the specter as the carnal form of the spirit, Derrida illustrates the notion of

spectrality as invisible, intangible, neither substance nor essence, living nor dead, present

nor absent. The notion of hauntology, perceived as the repetition of first-time-and-last-

time, therefore, "does not belong to ontology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or

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[211] Derrida (2006) 156-157.
[212] Derrida (2006) 5.
[213] Cheah 240.
[214] Derrida (2006) 157-158.

to the essence of life or death."[215] Deriving from his elaborate analysis on the apparition

of the specter of the King in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Derrida further demonstrates

how the specters of those who are no longer with us yet still there, through its temporal

disjoining with the living present, change, influence, and command the present us

unobtrusively and imperceptibly. Consequently, looking back to the consideration of the

labeling of the Post Taiwan New Cinema, Derrida's definition on hauntology

appropriately serves as a reference to the conceptualization and manifestation of

the intertextuality between the Post Taiwan New Cinema and its predecessor, the

Taiwanese New Cinema. Moreover, Derrida's utilization of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a

beginning of his theory further directs to the genealogical connection between the two

cinematic movements. This utilization not only assists Derrida's elaboration

on hauntology as a solidarity with specters through the apparition of the specter of the

King, but also emphasizes how the specter of history imperceptibly unites and instructs

its descendants, the present us, through the consanguinity between Hamlet and his father,

the King.

The Taiwanese New Cinema's cinematic approach, which endeavors to reveal a

more integrated and distinct Taiwanese historical subjectivity and cultural hybridity, and

seeks to establish a cinematic aesthetics that departs from mainstream cinema,

reminiscent of Derrida's concept of hauntology, never ceases to inspire its followers. Its

cinematic rewrites of Taiwan's modern history, as a response to the Taiwanese people's

desperate searching for their cultural identity after the lifting of KMT's Martial Law,

depend extensively on the revitalization of Taiwanese popular memory of the historical

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[215] Derrida (2006) 63.

era long considered taboo. In addition to their inheritance of the Taiwanese New Cinema's social and cultural practices, The Post Taiwan New Cinema's cinematic approach, at the turn of the century, features the 1990s as "the age of 'Confucian Confusion,' [in which] people [living, or surviving, in Taipei,] become alienated souls, struggling to catch something out of their meaningless lives, and to find a place they can call 'home.'"[216] Through gradually altering and replacing "The Taiwanese Experience" depicted through the recovery of popular memory and traumatic history, The Post Taiwan New Cinema films begin to engage with the problematic of global capitalism through their cinematic representation of "The Taipei Experience" deriving from their diverse treatments and delineation of the Taipei cityscape and its urbanites around the turn of the century.

In his lectures at Peking University, Fredric Jameson elaborated the postmodernist perspective of time in reference to György Lukács's conception of history expressed in his influential *The Historical Novel*.[217] Jameson explains that the decline of the historical novel reflects the circumstance that people no longer possess any historical consciousness in regard to their glorious past, resulting in the emergence of science fiction that provides an alternate view and expression of time. While historical novels consider the present as the accumulation of the past developments, and thus determine the present by the past, science fictions perceive the present as the "past" of the future and picture the present

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[216] Chen, Ru-Shou Robert (陳儒修). "Focus on Taipei: An Introduction." *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema* [尋找電影中的台北]. Eds. Ru-Shou Robert Chen, and Gene-Fon Liao. Taipei: Wanxiang, 1995. 17-9. 19.
[217] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism and Cultural Theories* [後現代主義與文化理論]. Trans. Tang Xiaobing. Peking: Peking University Press. 1997. 203-4.

from an historical view.[218] Jameson's interpretation, recalling both Derrida and Benjamin's theories on time and history, describes the diverse cinematic styles emerging in the Post Taiwan New Cinema, which bring forward the Taiwanese New Cinema's tradition of realism and express a critique to the rapidly growing Taipei with its awareness of the loss of connection to "The Taiwanese Experience," namely the historical consciousness of Taiwanese history and land.

As the globalization of Taipei accelerates, the discussion of a Taiwanese identity is confronted by the massive transformation of the Taipei cityscape, most significantly the rapid demolition of the absolute space. While *Good Men, Good Women* presents how Taiwan in the 1990s loses its connection with "The Taiwanese Experience" by shuttling between multiple moments in time, *Super Citizen Ko* and *The Red Lotus Society* radically indicate that "[historical] memory cannot be inscribed onto the city or be retrieved from it" with their decided awareness of the rapidly shifting urban spaces.[219]

> In their willingness to replace Taipei's past landmarks with virtual, on-screen monuments, the films exercise what may be called a poetics of demolition. At their foundation is the paradoxical practice of writing through erasure, building through tearing down, remembrance through amnesia, and identify formation though the unmaking of social ties. The filmic images capture the liminal moment at which demolition sites can be taken at face value rather than as markers of what has been destroyed or what will be constructed.[220]

In this regard, through the cinematic poetics of demolition, the Taipei urban cinema embraces the changing cityscapes and consequently "establish[es] a dialectics between mourning the erased places and recognizing the cinematic and ideological potential of

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[218] Jameson (1997) 203-4.
[219] Braester, Yomi. "If We Could Remember Everything, We Would Be Able to Fly: Taipei's Cinematic Poetics of Demolition." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (Spring, 2003). 29-61. 47.
[220] Braester 32.

placing urban spaces under erasure."[221] Yomi Braester's conception of the poetics of

demolition provocatively points out the necessity to take the spatial parameters of "The

Taipei Experience" into account in the investigation on the future of a Taiwanese

identity. Braester's awareness of the intervention of the urban spatial parameters brings to

mind Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopian space.

Foucault's elaborate categories of spaces that "have the curious property of being

in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the

set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect"[222] also challenge the

traditional boundaries of time and history as he argues that the contemporary obsession

and anxiety of history has to do fundamentally with space rather than with time:

> [B]etween utopias and these other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent; such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.[223]

As Foucault explains the characteristics of heterotopias with the example of the mirror,

the heterotopia therefore becomes a site "capable of juxtaposing on its base several

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[221] Braester 32.

[222] Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring, 1986). 22-7. 24.

[223] Foucault 24.

heterogeneous, incompatible spatial significations, it is the discontinuity and chasm in space. It has the potential of erupting and subverting the autonomy and consistency of the existing order or system."[224] In consequence, Braester's consideration of the cinematic poetics of demolitions—along with Foucault's examination of the mirror that make the established certainties of space vacillate—captures "the particular economy of space and memory in Taipei in the 1990s"[225] through its manifestation of the liminal moment, at which the "paradoxical practice of writing through erasure, building through tearing down, remembrance through amnesia, and identify formation though the unmaking of social ties [becomes possible]."[226]

Wan Jen's cinematic rendering of Taipei as "a heterotopian space haunted by historical ghosts" in *Super Citizen Ko* and *Connection by Fate* expressively "manifests his poignant critique of the political impasses in the 90s."[227] *Super Citizen Ko* depicts Taipei as "a city at once vaguely familiar, and utterly alien"[228] through a political prisoner's difficult reintegration into Taiwanese society due to the lack of the sense of historical continuity. Ko's voiceover, constantly interrupting the shots of Taipei's cityscape, laments people not knowing of the atrocities committed in the sites of the

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[224] Chang, Hsiao-Hung (張小虹), and Chih-Hung Wang (王志弘). "Mapping Taipei's Landscape of Desire: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of the Family/Park." *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema* [尋找電影中的台北]. Eds. Ru-Shou Robert Chen, and Gene-Fon Liao. Taipei: Wanxiang, 1995. 115-25. 116.
See also Genocchio, Benjamin. "Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Space." Eds. Sophie Watson, and Katherine Gibson. *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1995. 35-46. 37.
[225] Braester 53
[226] Braester 32.
[227] Chen, Ping-Hao. "Projecting Taiwan's Urbanization: Class, Gender, and History in Wan Jen's Films." Thesis. National Central University. 2009. 61.
[228] Yip, June. *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 122.

White Terror in the 1950s. Correspondingly, Ah-De in *Connection by Fate* also regrets

the fact that young Taiwanese people have become a generation without a sense of

historical memory.

The perspective of a generation of Taiwanese people with no memory of "The

Taiwanese Experience" becomes one of the dominating themes that differentiate the Post

Taiwan New Cinema from the Taiwanese New Cinema. In this regard, Derrida's

conception of hauntology—"delineating the contours of a critique of the contemporary

world which calls for a fundamental break with the present"[229]—becomes an appropriate

reference for the cinematic envisioning of a Taiwanese identity around the turn of the

century. The selected Taipei-based urban cinema of the Post Taiwan New Cinema, in

which "discarded memories and/or disoriented individuals hauntingly return and roam as

ghosts in the city,"[230] dialectically elaborate the spectrality of history and suggest an

alternative interpretation of the establishment of a Taiwanese national identity from the

perspective of a generation of Taiwanese people with no memory of the historical past.

Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Edward Yang, pioneers of the Taiwanese New Cinema,

establish a distinctive cinematic style regarding Taiwan's cultural and political

subjectivity. Yang's *Terrorizer* and Hou's *Good Men, Good Women* extend the cinematic

form of the Taiwanese New Cinema but both address the Taiwanese historical past, and

therefore bring into view their explicit concerns about Taipei and its urbanites, which

further become references for the Post Taiwan New Cinema's city films. *Terrorizer*

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[229] Postone 370.

[230] Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "The Presentation of Taipei in Taiwan Cinema at the Turn of the Century" [世紀末台灣電影中的台北]. *The Proceedings of the 2nd Inernational Conference on Taipei-ology: Taipei Entering Globality: In Search of Chinese Sea Culture.* Eds. Hsien-Hao Liao, and Chiu-Fang Lin. Taipei: Taipei City Archives, 2006. 113-26.18 Feb. 2011. <http://www.ncu.edu.tw/~wenchi/paper.html>

consists of what Jameson terms as the narrative of "synchronous monadic simultaneity,"[231] exploring the coincidental interactions between people in Taipei, and therefore engages in a reflexive kind of story-telling discourse through unfolding the multitude of relationships between characters, spaces, and genres. As the Eurasian girl during her literal confinement by her mother begins to invent stories to tell the unknown people randomly picked out of the phone book, the novelist Chou Yufen, suffering from writer's block, on the other end of the interrupted phone calls thought she learned about her husband's adulteries and began to feel empowered to seek her own independence, which leads her to finish her award-winning novel. A young photographer observes the life of the city unfolding around him through his wandering around the city with his camera, and becomes obsessed with the Eurasian girl after he stumbles into a crime scene the girl is involved with on a regular morning in Taipei. Among the controversial characters, Chou's husband, Li Li-Chung, is a stereotype of people living or surviving in Taipei. His losing out on his promotion at work and even his wife in his private life, in Jameson's words, "allegorically serves as evidence for an unconscious mediation on the positioning of [Taiwan as an] national entity within the new world system of late capitalism."[232] The Eurasians girl's random phone calls at first seem to bind together the independent plot strands deriving from these separated groups of people; however, the final sequence forcefully denies their interwoven relationships. Three possible endings, all resulting in violent death, are unfolded through Yang's arrangement of synchronous monadic simultaneity penetrated by Li's grief/revenge for his wife's betrayal. The

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[231] Jameson, Fredric. "Remapping Taipei." Jameson, Fredric. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. 114-57.
[232] Jameson 145.

synchronous editing of the gunshots, the broken vase, the police kicking open the hotel room, and the police and Chou's sudden wakeup interweaves together multiple space-time. The temporal overlaps not only confuse our perception of the established relationships between the characters and the plot lines they deploy, but simultaneously blur the boundaries between truth, dream, and fiction, which at the end leads to an open ending allowing various interpretations.

The cinematic approach of interweaving multiple space-time also comes into view in Hou's *Good Men, Good Women*. Although this film shows only a little information about the Taipei cityscape, it forcefully suggests how Taiwan in the 1990s loses its connection with "The Taiwanese Experience" by shuttling between multiple moments in time. Different from *Terrorizer*'s open ending that dialectically engages in a postmodern discourse, through the layering of Jiang Bi-Yu's mourning of her husband's death in the past, and Liang Jing's reenactment of Jiang Bi-Yu's mourning in the present time, *Good Men, Good Women* attempts to merge together Taiwan's past and the present in order to suggest the everlasting specter of the past and its call to historical justice.

The utilization of modern technology in both *Terrorizer* and *Good Men, Good Women* weaves together an emerging theme of the Post Taiwan New Cinema, which concerns the spectrality of Taiwanese history and the Taipei urban space. In *Good Men, Good Women*, a fax machine keeps sending Liang Jing, from an unknown source, pages of her diaries written three years ago, blurring Liang's perception of time-space. The memories brought back by the faxed paper serve as the specter of history hovering between temporalities. The specter of history imperceptibly advises Liang to merge her

own private memories with the historical drama she has been rehearsing. In consequence,

the spatiotemporal nonsynchronism deriving from Liang's merging of past and present

suggests "the solidarity with specters made possible by remembering,"[233] which recalls

Derrida's conception of hauntology. Aligned with the springing awareness of the Taipei

urban space in the Post Taiwan New Cinema, the fax machine in *Good Men, Good

Women* turns into the Eurasian girl's phone calls in *Terrorizer*. While the fax machine

delivers Liang's diary that is taken as a symbol of the specters of history, the Eurasian

girl's phone calls imply the circumstance, in which the Taipei urbanites are haunted by

the rapidly modernized city. In *Terrorizer*, Taipei is depicted as a terrorizer itself through

Yang's choice of urban setting, especially inscribed in the opening sequence. A police car

shuttles though the city of Taipei, breaking the peaceful morning with the wailing of the

siren. The image of an incredibly large-scale green gas tank dangerously placed in the

midst of a heavily residential area appears several times throughout the film and later in

Connection by Fate. In this regard, the depiction of Taipei as a terrorizer, with the

insertion of the police siren and the incredibly large-scale gas tank, becomes the most

dynamic critique, which not only joins with the explosive ending of the film, but also

more significantly implies the explosive issues of Taipei of which the later Taipei city

films would explore.

If we consider the *Terrorizer* and *Good Men, Good Women*'s cinematic

techniques of blurring the boundaries of time and space in a postmodern context,

Foucault's conception of heterotopias and Braester's idea of the poetics of demolition

then become beneficial to the investigation of the Post Taiwan New Cinema's cinematic

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[233] Lim 319.

remapping of Taipei and its envisioning of a national identity. Accordingly, the emerging

theme shared among Taiwanese urban cinema in the 1990s "increasingly configures

Taipei as a globalized city."[234] The rapid development that turns Taipei into a globalized

city sweeps away Taiwanese historical memories by the incessant flow of transnational

capital, and consequently the "[Taipei] cityscape becomes [barely] recognizable, and its

identity hybridized and dubious."[235] The "postmodern liminal spaces" portrayed in Tsai

Ming-Liang's *Vive L'Amour*, deriving from his noticeable subversion of the idea of home

within the urban consuming space, "may [therefore] be obtained from the interstices

between public and private, demolished and reconstructed, [disappearance and

reinscription,] natural and artificial."[236]

The shot following the title of *Vive L'Amour* embodies precisely Foucault's

description of the "mirror." In this shot, we see Lee Kang-Sheng picking up commodities

in a convenience store. The camera slightly pans to the left as Lee moves around in the

store, and then zooms to a medium shot to center Lee in frame as he walks toward the

camera, stops, looks straight into the camera, and fixes his hair. As we might notice from

the mirror edges that sometimes present in the shot when the camera pans or the reversed

words of the commercial posters, this entire shot is a shot reflected by a convex

surveillance mirror. It is a shot of a reflection of the shot itself, which potentially blurs

our perception of the absence and presence, virtual and real, and utopias and heterotopias.

Likewise, behind the surface of the mirror opens a virtual space of the actual space being

reflected by the mirror and shot by the camera, in which Lee is at the same time present

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[234] Zhang 9.
[235] Zhang 9.
[236] Zhang 12-3.

and absent. This cinematic embodiment of Foucault's theory of the "other place," expressly unfolds *Vive L'Amour*'s attempt to transfigure Taipei into a series of heterotopian spaces.

  Vive L'Amour, parallel to *Terrorizer*, clearly demonstrates the sense of imprisonment of the urbanites through its portrayal of urban alienation as the glimmering architecture and interweaving thoroughfares of the contemporary Taipei and "frame the blank spiritual lives of characters who drift through the city in a state of melancholy disconnection."[237] Similar to *Terrorizer*'s usage of the Eurasian girl's phone calls as a joining of the independent plot strands, in *Vive L'Amour* three Taipei loners with their distinct plot lines, without confronting each other, co-exist in a vacant duplex apartment in a new high-rise; two of them find their temporary "home" there. In this case, the idea of home has been ironically transfigured as an alienated space, in which one no longer feels emotionally attached to anyone or anything. Hsiao-Kang, a salesman selling columbarium for living, picks up the keys May Lin left at the door of one of the apartments she tries to sell, and begins living there surreptitiously. Likewise, Ah-Jung, having casual sex with May Lin in the same apartment, steals the key from May Lin, returns and secretly lives in one of the bedrooms. Although owning her own home, May Lin still comes back to the vacant rental to have sex with Ah-Jung in order to seek for a temporary emotional belonging that she could not obtain from her real home.

  While the living ones no longer feel emotionally attached to anyone or anything, not even to their homes, as they drift through the city in a state of melancholy

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[237] Hoden, Stephen. "Rev. of *Vive L'Amour*." *New York Times*. 23 May 2012.
<http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=990CE6DE133DF930A15750C0A963958260>

disconnection, the columbarium business, a business associated with death, in contrast, ironically bears a significant sense of belonging. As part of the vocational training for those columbarium salespersons, Hsiao-Kang's colleagues play a group activity that labels each player as one of the family members, and moreover, the slogan of the columbarium business emphasizes the feeling of being at home with the beloved ones.

The temporary belonging May Lin obtains from her casual sex with Ah-Jung is not enough to soothe her long depressed spirit, just as in *Terrorizer* the comfort Li Li-Chung gets from his friend fails to stop him from committing a crime or suicide. Aligned with the close-up shot of Li crying as he wakes up the next morning after his wife refused to move back home with him, the end of *Vive L'Amour* consists of an extended tracking shot of May Lin unhappily walking through a desolate park under construction, and ends with a prolonged, highly emotional close-up of May Lin weeping in grief. These emotional close-ups, which will later be employed in *Connection by Fate* to depict Ah-De's sorrow for having no way out from the memory haunting him, emerge as an evident portrayal of the urbanites confined in the Taipei cityscape. Such portrayal manifests Wenchi Lin's argument that Taipei city films around the turn of the century expressively depict the tableau in which "discarded memories and/or disoriented individuals hauntingly return and roam as ghosts in the city,"[238] and therefore align with the emerging theme that transfigure Taipei into a haunted city.

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[238] Wenchi 114.

Emillie Yueh-Yu Yeh and Darrel William Davis describe *Connection by Fate* as a

political ghost film.[239] It expressly responds to Derrida's hauntology by rendering Taipei

as a haunted city. As Chen Ping-Hao observes, both *Super Citizen Ko* and *Connection by*

Fate, by means of Wan Jen's cinematic manifestation of the "'present past,' rather than

the historiographies of classical reconstruction and postmodern deconstruction,"

transfigure Taipei as a postcolonial city:[240]

> [Wan Jen's concept of "present pasts"] is in fact a historical epistemology: history
> could only be approached (written, represented, made possible and meaningful)
> from the stance of the present. In other words, the central idea is that "the past is
> within the present," and what one could grasp is only the "present past."[241]

Wan Jen's historiography of the "present past" not only recalls both Derrida and

Benjamin's conception of time and history in a spatial term, but also demonstrates

Foucault and Braester's strategy of reading history that demands a spatial term. Adopting

the politics of "present past," *Super Citizen Ko* and *Connection by Fate* turns Taipei into

"a [postcolonial] city of layers of historical deposits, strata, and inscriptions"[242] by

"embodying the temporal 'present past' in spatial 'urban palimpsest.'"[243] In terms of the

interrelationship between temporality and spatiality, the "present past" and "urban

palimpsest," Lim, quoting Benjamin's idea that "in the ruin history has physically merged

into the setting," also concludes "temporality is inseparable from spatiality."[244] While

palimpsest is "a textual doubling that allows one stratum to be constructed via

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[239] Yeh, Emillie Yueh-Yu, and Darrel William Davis. *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*. New York: Columbia UP. 2005. 87.
[240] Chen 64
[241] Chen 66.
[242] Chen 74.
[243] Chen 67.
[244] Lim 291.
See also Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998. 177–79.

another,"[245] *Connection by Fate* embodies the multiple spatiotemporal inscriptions

through its portrayal of Taipei by means of the poetics of demolition.

 Connection by Fate's cinematic portrayal of Taipei as a spectral postcolonial city

falls into various categories. The film inherits several elements from *Super Citizen Ko*,

and expressly emphasizes its attempt to enter the debate of a Taiwanese identity. While

Ko in *Super Citizen Ko* is a political victim of the White Terror, Ah-De and Mah-Le in

Connection by Fate stand for those sacrificed for Taipei's rapid modernization and

urbanization. Likewise, their monologues all deliver political and historical significance.

Ko and Ah-De's monologues—addressing the political idealism they were once

passionately involved with and their laments for the people's ignorance of the Taiwanese

past—serve as critiques of the KMT's colonization of the Taiwanese people, whereas,

Mah-Le's monologue, as a native Taiwanese aborigine, draws our attention to a past way

earlier than the arrival of the Mainland KMT. He attempts to comment on the Han

people's domination of Taiwan's aboriginals, which gets worse during Taipei's trajectory

to urbanization. Moreover, both films' arrangements of the protagonists riding on

particular vehicles imply political meanings. Ko and Ah-De's urban tour with taxicab, in

fact, brings into view a highly politically-loaded scene since taxicabs in the 1990s are

often associated with the democratic movements against the KMT after the lifting of

Martial Law. As a cab driver, Ah-De not only continues Ko's mission that digs out

Taiwan's colonial past as a cab rider, but more enthusiastically is involved with the

cinematic transfiguration of Taipei as a heterotopian city of spectral cityscape. Parallel to

Ah-De's taxicab association, Mah-Le is associated with the Taipei Metro Rail Transit

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[245] Lim 291. See also Benjamin (1998) 177-79.

(MRT), which doubles up with his character as an aboriginal constructor working on a construction site that is devoted to Taipei's path to become a capitalistic city, once again brings about Wan Jen's critique of urbanization.

In addition to its potential to engage in the political debate, its narrative centers on the encounter between a walking dead man and a ghost. Ah-De is an ex-activist of political movement, now a taxi driver, who has attempted to suicide several times due to his incapability to cope with the accidental death of his son and the disillusion of his political idealism. Mah-Le is an aboriginal construction worker, who was executed for murdering his supervisor out of the resentment of incessant racial abuse, and turned into a wandering ghost in Taipei. Based on the theoretical foundations that have been deployed, the fatal connection of the two politically inflicted characters in the ghostly Taipei not only criticizes the history of Taiwan's urbanization, modernization, and colonization, but also seeks for an alternative possibility for the Taipei urban cinema to enact its role in the consideration of a Taiwanese national identity.

The first scene of Ah-De explicitly foreshadows the motif of the film that aims to turn Taipei into a series of heterotopias. Ah-De, sitting on the enclosures on the rooftop, in deep grief, sees Taipei as a city of traffic flows and viaducts when he looks down to the Taipei streets. Furthermore, his cruising taxicab consistently traces out Taipei as a city of mobility. These shots from Ah-De's perspective, either high-angled from the rooftop or transient due to the cab's cruising, no longer present Taipei as a panoramic city, solid and stable, that allow its dwellers to build up a connection with it by a satisfying

"cognitive mapping" of the urban space.[246] In contrast, the fleeting and constantly

shifting images of the Taipei streets, to consider in Derrida's conception of hauntology,

"now present and then absent, or at the same time present and absent," replace the urban

space with ghostly traces and therefore transfigure Taipei into "a 'haunted city' that

manifests itself in the 'spectral cityscape' of speed, flows, and mobility."[247]

 Aligned with the theme of rendering Taipei into a haunted city, the portrayal of

Ah-De in the meanwhile profoundly implies Ah-De as an urban ghost. Ah-De's

pessimistic monologue explicitly speaks of death. Such a topic deriving from his past that

forever haunting him—the accidental death of his son, his breakup with his wife, the

disillusion of the political idealism he once passionately involved with—penetrates the

entire narrative and turns Ah-De into a grave digger as Ko; however, while Ko unearths

the various layers of history inscribed in the urban space, Ah-De is more like a grave

digger, digging a place in the other world for himself and his tragic past and getting

himself ready for the suicide he finally commits at the end. Coherent to his monologue

that signifies the absence of communication with the outer world, his encounter with the

specter of Mah-Le from the other world, his haunted behavior of craving names of people

from his past, including his owns, onto a tombstone, and more significantly the stopped

clock hang on the wall of his apartment, showing the time of his son's death and

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[246] See Jameson, Fredric. "Cognitive Mapping." *The Jameson Reader*. Eds. Michael Hardt, and Kathi Weeks. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000. 277-87.
See also Chen 80: "Cognitive Mapping" is a concept termed by Fredric Jameson to "describe and demand the totalistic ability of grasping the knowledge of capital flows, which regulate and retransform our daily-life spaces."
[247] Chen 80.

presumably can be read as his death, all turn Ah-De into a wandering ghost in the city, "out of joint" with both real time and space,"[248] and hovering between life and death.

Ah-De and Mah-Le, a walking dead man and a ghost, hover around Taipei and "turn Taipei into a 'heterotopia,' where both the encounter with the "Other" and the production of Difference take place."[249] Foucault's categories of heterotopian spaces with the description of the mirror's ambiguous existence come into view not only to describe their encounter in spatial terms but also become appropriate to the analysis of the fatal relationship between the two protagonists. The encounter of them generates a joint experience and renders Mah-Le as Ah-De's "mirror." Mah-Le's ghost not only embodies Ah-De in the other place, but at the same time, through its apparition, "'projecting out' [Ah-De], a former activist's political disillusion."[250] Carrying forward the notion of "mirror," the windows of the MRT Mah-Le rides on, the windshield of Ah-De's taxicab, and Ah-De's digital camera mounted on the pilot seat recording, through the windshield, Ah-De's cruising in the city, bear a reflexive function by reflecting the fleeting images of the cityscape. Taipei, in this sense, is transfigured as a series of heterotopias washing away traces of absolute space with ghostly traces of motor vehicles, and consequently "suggest the spectral nature of the cityscape."[251] Moreover, the reflections of the windshields function as a series of spatial palimpsests grasping the "liminal moments." In those reflections, Taipei is flattened and becomes a "spectral surface of only limited opacity," and behind the reflection is the Other Taipei, the heterotopian city, bearing

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[248] Chen 80.
[249] Chen 62.
[250] Chen 90.
[251] Chen 81.

other times and places. Therefore, to the protagonists, "there can be no absolute sense of time and place," and therefore Taipei becomes a "'spatial palimpsests' traversed by divergent temporalities."[252]

Two edifices haunted by historical and political ghosts—a construction site of a skyscraper located opposite to Ah-De's dwelling, and the ruins of the former Mayor Office—are employed in *Connection by Fate* to illustrate the poetics of demolition through a textual doubling of the spatial palimpsest that allows the cinematically writing of "The Taipei Experience" to be constructed through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience." The ambiguous orientation of these two sites expressly manifests the alternative way for the discussion of the future of a Taiwanese identity in a postcolonial context. The former Mayor office, although collapsing into ruins, seems to be the only site in the film inscribed with dense historical and political deposits, which becomes an appropriate "absolute space" in contrast to other "abstract spaces." On the other hand, the construction site, bearing no historical meanings, ironically serves as a sufficient site for Ah-De's cognitive mapping of the city as he is often drawn back to his memories of the past when he gazes at it. In terms of the ambiguous positioning of these sites, Chen observes these two sites bearing "a grotesque resemblance to each other: one is under construction and the other is collapsing into ruins, and they are both in a state of being "in-between," thus a spectral "liminal state" and a perfect space for ghosts."[253]

Grasping these lines of thought, the Post Taiwan New Cinema's cinematic remapping of Taipei, which calls for a radical orientation of temporalities, should be read

[252] Lim 291.
[253] Chen 86.

as a collective critique of the problematic of global capitalism. Their utilization of the poetics of demolition as a reflection to Taipei's rapid urbanization and globalization deploys an innovative perspective that Taipei can become a site for temporal and spatial palimpsests, on which "The Taipei Experience" can emerge through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience." Therefore, projected through the Taipei urban cinema's diverse treatments of the Taipei cityscape and its urbanites, the heterotopian city composed of a series of postmodern liminal spaces appears to be not only a treasure metropolis of past memories and history, but also a field—manifesting the spectrality of history—that introduces an alternative route though which the Taiwanese national identity can be (re)imagined and (re)negotiated, and appropriately paves the way to position Taiwan within the new world system as an national entity at the turn of the century.

CONCLUSION

RETROSPECT AND CONTEMPLATION TOWARDS THE EXPLORATION OF THE

TAIWANESE SENSE OF SELF

> December 1949.
> Mainland China is lost.
> The Nationalist government moves to Taiwan.
> Taipei becomes provisional capital.[254]

The closing intertitle of *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989) deliberately

calls attention to Taipei's fateful role as the center of Taiwanese cinema's intervention in

the discourse of national identity. The painful chapters of Taiwan's colonization—fifty

years of the Japanese Occupation (1895-1945) and the subsequent Nationalist

Kuomintang's (KMT) autocracy until the lifting of Martial Law in 1987—play a decisive

role in the development of the typical thesis for Taiwanese New Cinema's initiative in

confronting the KMT's autocratic politics of remembering and forgetting, and

consequently brings into view a necessary discussion on the concept of nation and

nationhood in the context of postcolonialism. The political and cultural liberation,

following the lifting of Martial Law, leads to the emergence of a variation of

historiographies of the island's past, and proposes a necessary investigation on the nature

of the writing of history and its utilization of recollection. The Post Taiwan New

Cinema—shifting its contestation away from the Taiwanese New Cinema's engagement

with the contention between "The Taiwanese Experience" and the KMT's myth of a

coherent Chinese narrative—deploys the investigation on truth and invention through its

cinematic manifestation of "The Taipei Experience," which focuses on the dialectical

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[254] *A City of Sadness* [悲情城市]. Dir. Hou Hsiao-Hsien. 1989.

conception deriving from the practice of metafilmic self-reflexivity. The rapid urbanization and globalization of Taipei illuminates an alternative approach to the conceptualization of a Taiwanese identity through the dialectics between demolition and construction in the Taipei urban space. A textual doubling of the spatial palimpsest allows the cinematic writing of "The Taipei Experience" to be constructed through the erasure of "The Taiwanese Experience," and therefore paves the way for an innovative perspective that considers "The Taipei Experience" in place of "The Taiwanese Experience," and proposes an alternative route for the renegotiation of Taiwan's position as an national entity within the new world system, around the turn of the century.

With the inclusive concentration on the context of postcolonialism and the awareness of what Taiwan is and has been, the inclusion of a variety of social, political and cultural references has expanded the horizons of this reading of the Taiwanese cinema's intervention in the discourse on envisioning Taiwanese national identity. Based on the theoretical foundations that have been employed, this investigation thus reevaluates "The Taipei Experience" as an alternative embodiment of "The Taiwanese Experience." Instead of a thorough departure from "The Taiwanese Experience" that results in discouraging the envisioning of a Taiwanese national identity as earlier studies have forcefully suggested, "The Taipei Experience," in contrast, illustrates a genealogical relationship with "The Taiwanese Experience." In response to the postcolonial circumstance Taiwan has always confronted, and moreover to engage with the problematic of global capitalism that has drastically come into view, "The Taipei Experience" performs a necessary generational transition from "The Taiwanese

Experience." This generational transition, through a series of accommodations, evolution, and innovation, in order to find ways to talk about Taiwan and the Taiwanese *now*, simultaneously continues the purpose of "The Taiwanese Experience" and critically values the distinctive Taiwanese collective life experiences and memories, and manifests the modern history of Taiwan as people have actually lived it and experienced it. Therefore, "The Taipei Experience," in this sense, becomes an eloquent discourse of a unique Taiwanese identity in a transnational and postcolonial context. "The Taipei Experience" critically reflects the dynamic world evoked by the ways in which Taiwanese cinema's diverse treatments of the Taipei urban environment participate in the discursive conversation of what Taiwanese identity is.

The Taiwanese cinema's artistic reflection of Taiwanese historio-political significance and the innovative intervention in the complex discourse help establish an independent yet integrated Taiwanese identity. The manifestations and interpretations of Taiwanese history and identity in Taiwanese cinema, after the cultural and political liberation following the lifting of Martial Law, have been cinematically rendered into diverse appearances. *A City of Sadness*, *Banana Paradise* (Wang Tung, 1989), and *Super Citizen Ko* (Wan Jen, 1996) all perform a macroscopic view of history as an immediate reflection of the alleviation of KMT's autocracy. In their search for a more integrated Taiwanese society, history, and cultural subjectivity, they cinematically rewrite Taiwan's modern history through the resurrection of forgotten memories of those integral historical passages long considered taboo. *The Puppetmaster* (Hou, 1993), *The Red Lotus Society* (Lai Sheng-Chuan, 1994) and *Good Men, Good Women* (Hou, 1995), in response to the

emerging diverse historiographies at the time, reveal the predicament of marking Taiwan as having a national identity through their careful investigation of the ever-changing dynamic between past and present and the constructed quality of memory and historical remembrance. These films deploy the postmodern dialectics between truth and invention in their cinematic writing of the island's historical past. *Terrorizer* (Edward Yang, 1986), *Vive L'Amour* (Tsai Ming-Liang, 1994), and *Connection by Fate* (Wan, 1998) unfold an expressive concern for the envisioning of Taiwanese national identity in a transnational and postcolonial viewpoint through their depiction of the modern life in Taipei. They manifest the spectrality of Taiwanese history through the spatiotemporal nonsynchronism derived from their rendering of Taipei as a series of heterotopian spaces. These spaces merge together the past and present from the perspective of a generation of Taiwanese people with no memory of "The Taiwanese Experience." Instead of continuing the Taiwanese New Cinema's mission of retracing "The Taiwanese Experience," this other body of urban films poignantly speaks to the condition in which Taiwan is fogged by an anxiety due to the cultural and political impasses. These impasses result from the rapid capitalization and globalization in favor of an economic breakthrough, and in consequence embrace "The Taipei Experience" not only as an alternative embodiment to "The Taiwanese Experience," but also as a substitute route to the envisioning of a Taiwanese identity.

Taking the diverse cinematic unfolding into account, the arrival of *Yi Yi* (Edward Yang, 2000), at the border of the 20th and 21st centuries, becomes an ingenious reference to conclude and to further envisage the Taiwanese cinema's approach to the exploration

of the Taiwanese sense of self in the 21st century. This approach is grounded upon a sense

of ambivalent equilibrium that is constantly established and disrupted by a variety of

political and cultural forces. *Yi Yi*'s careful depiction of Jian's family in Taipei

allegorically compiles the contemplation of establishing a Taiwanese sense of self, which

has accumulated since the appearance of the Taiwanese New Cinema. On the one hand,

Yi Yi's ingenious composition, which opens with a wedding that receives little blessing

and ends with a funeral that is somehow portrayed as inspirational and comforting,

expressly speaks to the politically sensitive moment, the regime change from the long-

term governing Kuomintang to the then opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

On the other hand, the coexisting equilibriums and conflicts among the multigenerational

casts encompass the center of *Yi Yi*'s poignant critiques on the modern life of Taipei's

urbanites, and therefore reveal innovative perspectives on the positioning of Taiwan in

the new world system.

The complexity of the film's design consists of three integrated principles of

composition explicitly marked by the three generations of the Jian family and its

peripheral members, in which each generation serves as a unique allegory for the

discussion of a Taiwanese national identity in a transnational and postcolonial context.

The portrayal of Grandma in *Yi Yi* fits with the Taiwanese New Cinema's "rescue

mission" of Taiwanese popular memory and the Post Taiwan New Cinema's dialectical

investigation on the interrelations among history, memory, and power. Taiwanese New

Cinema's resurrection of "The Taiwanese Experience" in an almost voiceless form

reflects the fact that Taiwan has long been a silent colonial subject. The later

investigation deployed through the dialectics between truth and invention derived from

the Taiwanese New Cinema's attempt to re-define a Taiwanese identity through

cinematically composing a counter-memory that weightily relies upon the constantly-

constructing collective memory. The portrayal of Grandma concerns the everlasting

dilemma of Taiwan's national identity. The depiction of Grandma as the eldest member

of the family and a retired schoolteacher always wearing the traditional Chinese suit

assumes her role to unite and instruct her descendants with the heritage of "The

Taiwanese Experience" she stands for. The insertion of her unexpected falling into coma,

by contrast, ingeniously situates her existence in a state of ambiguity—simultaneously

present as her body lying in the recovering room, and absent as her falling into coma

leaves her with little signs of life—potentially disintegrating the envisioning of

Taiwanese nationality. Such a portrayal of Grandma, encompassing the notion of a

specter hovering between life and death, presence and absence, joins with contemporary

cultural studies' critique on the narrow view of the examination of Taiwanese identity

accomplished from a western point of view. These cultural studies argue against the

general perception from the West, which defines the third-world nations' identities

through their reaction against the colonialism imposed by western culture, and elaborate

upon how Taiwan's unique history of colonization has complicated the discussion of the

Taiwanese identity. These cultural studies further suggest that the consideration of

Taiwanese national identity should take into account the ongoing intricate contention

about the definition of Taiwanese identity taking place both inside and outside of Taiwan, either domestically or internationally.[255]

The theme of spectrality continues to dominate *Yi Yi*'s narrative, and serves not only as a national allegory for the envisioning of an identity for Taiwan, but also as an explicit critique of the disappearing of humanity and individual subjectivity due to Taipei's rapid modernization and globalization. Connected to the theme shared among *Terrorizer*, *Vive L'Amour*, and *Connection by Fate* that "disoriented individuals hauntingly return and roam as ghosts in the city,"[256] Grandma's unconsciousness projects other characters' loss of their individual subjectivities in the Taipei urban jungle.

The awareness of the notion of subjectivity further radically points to an intimate camerawork that has been expressly utilized to underscore Yang's poignant commentaries on the cultural and political impasses that result from the rapid capitalization and globalization of Taipei. At many times, the camera gazes at the adult characters through plate glass windows that reflect the cityscape. This camerawork unfolds a portrayal of the targeted character layered with the cityscape reflected on the glass. These spectral moments, resulting from the layering of the urbanites and the cityscape surrounding him, mix the man and the metropolis together. These moments

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[255] Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "Home-coming, Ancestor-nation, and the Two-two-eight Incident: the History and Nationality of Taiwan *in A City of Sadness*" [「回歸」、「祖國」、「二二八」—悲情城市中的台灣歷史與國家屬性]. *Passionate Detachment: Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien* [戲戀人生—侯孝賢電影研究]. Ed. Shiao-Ying Shen, Jerome Chenya Li, and Wenchi Lin. Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2000. 157-79. 157-58.
See also Chen, Ru-Shou Robert. "Dispersion, Ambivalence and Hybridity: A Cultural-historical Investigation of Film Experience in Taiwan in the 1980s." Diss. University of Southern California, 1993.
[256] Lin, Wenchi (林文淇). "The Presentation of Taipei in Taiwan Cinema at the Turn of the Century" [世紀末台灣電影中的台北]. *The Proceedings of the 2nd Inernational Conference on Taipei-ology: Taipei Entering Globality: In Search of Chinese Sea Culture.* Eds. Hsien-Hao Liao, and Chiu-Fang Lin. Taipei: Taipei City Archives, 2006. 113-26.18 Feb. 2011. <http://www.ncu.edu.tw/~wenchi/paper.html> 113-26. 114.

further achieve a sense of visual palimpsest—making plain the Post Taiwan New Cinema's cinematic transfigurations of Taipei by rendering the urban space as a series of heterotopian spaces—through which a new figure of both the urban space and its urbanites can be (re)imagined and (re)negotiated. Moreover, "The Taipei Experience" can be reevaluated as an alternative embodiment of "The Taiwanese Experience" to properly serve for the renegotiation of Taiwan's position as a national entity within the world.

Aligned with both the New Cinema and Post Taiwan New Cinema's demands of a radicalized historical consciousness, *Yi Yi* also locates Taiwan and the Taiwanese identity within the transnational and postcolonial context. In addition to the portrayal of Grandma as a specter of "The Taiwanese Experience" involving memories about Kuomintang's sense of Chineseness, NJ's wandering around Japan with his ex-girlfriend, Sherry, during his business trip implies a nostalgic allegory of "The Taiwanese Experience" associated with the colonial past during the Japanese Occupation. It also embeds a sense of transnationalism as it deploys synchronicity embodied by the parallel editing across space and time between NJ's date with Sherry in Japan, and his daughter, Ting-Ting's date with Fatty in Taiwan at presumably the same time.

Finally, the portrayal of the youngest character, Yang-Yang, is a simple but eloquent allegory of Walter Benjamin's "angel of history." Yang-Yang further illuminates an innovative view of how Taiwanese cinema enacts its role of a cinematic interpretation of the construction of Taiwanese national identity in the coming ages. Yang-Yang is often depicted as being teased from behind by those bullying older girls at

school, so he becomes fixated on the possibility that people might only know half of the truth, since people can only see what's in front, not what's behind them. In order to resolve his dilemma and to fulfill his curiosity, Yang-Yang begins to take pictures of the backs of people's heads. While almost every grown-up in *Yi Yi* is mentally or physically enslaved by someone or something from the past, and can barely take any meaningful action to figure out their problems, Yang-Yang inspires and further saves those adults, especially his father, NJ, with his "messianic power" embodied in an aesthetic form of photography, which helps people see what they cannot see on their own through pictures of the backs of people's heads.

Yang-Yang's imagination and curiosity are evoked by his trouble at school and spurs an aesthetic answer in the form of photography. His attempts to picture the mosquitos, which no one minds to pay attention to, and to shoot the backs of people's heads, which no one can see on his own, signifies a mission to provide perspectives we cannot find on our own. Take into consideration that Yang-Yang in many ways emerges as a director surrogate; Edward Yang also arranges his visuals to reflect Yang-Yang's adventure that takes photography as a means of better seeing and understanding the world. Yang's pursuit of new cinematic perspectives, dealing with the limitations and impasses can further be projected through Yang-Yang's attempt to make sense of the world by transcending the limitation of our perspective through the pictures of people's backs. In this regard, the arrival of *Yi Yi* at the border of the 20th and 21st centuries also expressly embodies Benjamin's theses about the "angel of history." The arrival of *Yi Yi* brings into view retrospect and contemplation towards the exploration of the Taiwanese

sense of self through its inclusive portrait made of Taiwan's uneasy urbanites, a family of three generations in Taipei.

In addition to the innovative perspectives Yang-Yang's photography indicates, the backs of people's heads can also be read as times that have been passed and as truth hidden beneath the surface. These pictures thus comprehensively symbolize contemplation of the past, of history, and bring into view that *Yi Yi*'s multi-layered look at modern life is deployed in a transnational and postcolonial perspective. These photographs encapsulate the most comprehensive commentaries on the history of Taiwan's colonization, modernization, urbanization, and globalization by reflecting the contemplation accumulated from the arrival of the Taiwanese New Cinema. Furthermore, Yang's illumination envisages possible ways in which Taiwanese cinema in the coming age can enact its role of a cinematic interpretation of the construction of Taiwanese national identity.

A new generation of filmmakers emerged around the beginning decades of the 21st century; they demonstrate a variety of perspectives depicting Taiwanese society through diverse cinematic themes and techniques. These emerging Taiwanese films profoundly speak to the Taiwanese New Cinema's emphasis on the socio-historical role of cinema and continue to engage in the discourse of an independent yet integrated Taiwanese identity. In response to the political, economic, and cultural conditions Taiwan's society has come across, notably occurring with the first time ever regime change from the long-term governing Nationalist Kuomintang to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in year 2000, the portrayal of modern life, the representation of

identity, and the delineation of history have been cinematically (re)imaged and

(re)negotiated.[257]

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[257] The diverse interpretations and representations of Taiwanese history, society, and identity can be found in the following films that emerged in the beginning decades of the 21st century:

Darkness and Lights [黑暗之光] (Chang Tso-Chi, 1999) and *The Last Rice Farmer* [無米樂] (Yen Lan-Chuan and Juang Yi-Tseng, 2005) draw attention to marginalized social groups, for examples, massage therapists with visual disability and elderly rice farmers, with the careful portrayal of their the everyday lives.

Pinoy Sunday [台北星期天] (Ho Wi-Ding, 2009) and *The Fourth Portrait* [第四張畫] (Chung Mong-Hong, 2010) bring forward the cultural hybridity of Taiwanese society, notably the emergence of foreign workers and foreign spouses, and the social problems they implies through the depiction of foreigners and their next generations.

Cape No. 7 [海角七號] (Wei Te-Sheng, 2008) illustrates the collective dilemmas challenging the local cultures and life experiences in Taiwan from a potential postcolonial and transnational perspectives.

Blue Brave: The Legend of Formosa in 1895 [一八九五] (Hung Chih-Yu, 2008) and *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* [賽德克·巴萊] (Wei Te-Sheng, 2011) are devoted to resurrecting the forgotten history of Taiwan beyond the contention between Taiwanese and Chinese through Taiwanese aboriginals and Hakka's battle with the colonialist Japanese.

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