RESHAPING TAIWANESE IDENTITY:
TAIWAN CINEMA AND THE CITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between Taiwan cinema and the city, tracing the transformation of the cinematic representations of the city from the Japanese colonial period to the present. Placing the emphasis on the city within the wider context of national identity, this thesis argues that despite its cosmopolitan character, 'the city', as a backdrop, setting, motif and indeed a character in its own right, has helped directors to probe the collective memory and experience of Taiwanese people. The thesis begins with the historical background of the intertwined relationship between film history, urbanization and Taiwanese identity, especially how this relationship was transformed after the Nationalist government's relocation to Taiwan in 1949. The thesis continues with a series of in-depth case studies, focused on the most renowned directors from Taiwan (Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang and Tsai Ming-liang) to illustrate how they reveal the complexities of Taiwan's nation- and identity-building processes hidden beneath the cosmopolitan appearance of urban life. It concentrates in particular depth on how these directors explored the shift from the Kuomintang (KMT) ideology of Taiwan as part of a Greater China to the emergence of a more distinct Taiwanese consciousness that seeks nonetheless to acknowledge the different ethnicities and languages that make up the nation. The existing scholarship on Taiwan cinema has regarded urban themes in Taiwan cinema primarily as purely global and incapable of constructing a meaningful dialogue with Taiwanese identity, and at the same time it has interpreted them from within distinctively Western theoretical paradigms. This thesis aims to provide a countervailing viewpoint. The thesis will reveal how the city in Taiwan cinema has gradually transformed into a means to explore the most local aspects of contemporary Taiwanese identity and experience, which are simultaneously multicultural, global, hybrid and yet unique to Taiwan's position in the Sinophone communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NAMES AND ROMANIZATION

This thesis follows the different Romanization practices in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China whenever applicable. If a widely accepted usage does not exist, the pinyin system is adopted since it is the most commonly used system in academia. All the Chinese names are addressed with the surname first, followed by given name, unless there is a more widely known usage in English publications, such as Edward Yang, Yingjin Zhang and Robert Ru-shou Chen. To follow the different conventions in Taiwan and China, a dash is inserted between the two characters of the given name for directors and authors from Taiwan, such as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang, but this rule does not apply to Chinese directors or authors, such as Zhang Yimou.

If a Chinese film, monograph or article is not presented with an English translation provided by its production company, author or publisher, it is listed by an adequate literal translation in English in the footnote (either widely accepted in existing scholarship or translated by the author of this thesis), but the pinyin version of its original title is provided in the bibliography.

Introduction

Research background

This thesis aims to explore how 'the city' has been deployed as a means to explore and reshape national identity throughout Taiwan's film history, and how it achieved its peak after Taiwan New Cinema emerged in the 1980s to represent true-to-life depictions of Taiwanese society. To date, scholars have argued that compared to the rural images and historical subjects in Taiwan New Cinema, directors' representations of Taipei, the capital and the biggest city in Taiwan, have approached a more general definition of Third-World character, as argued famously by Fredric Jameson.[1] This theoretical strand segmented Taiwan New Cinema into two halves: the locally specific rural and the globalized urban, without addressing the crucial fact that Taiwanese identity has never been about the essentialist mode of the local, and that it has been established upon the interconnections between the local and the global, which are more evidently captured in the urban-oriented films.

First, it is necessary to stress the contribution of Taiwan cinema, especially Taiwan New Cinema, to the construction of Taiwanese identity. Taiwanese identity is a hybrid form shaped by various foreign influences taking in Dutch colonial history (1624-62), the Qing Dynasty in China (1684-1895), the Han Chinese Culture brought by immigrants that came to Taiwan from the late 17th century (the major group of modern 'Taiwanese' in terms of ethnicities), Japanese colonial history (1895-1945), the period of US aid (1951-1965), and the Chinese Nationalism institutionalized by the Kuomintang (KMT, or the Chinese Nationalist Party)

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[1] Fredric Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp. 114-57.

specifically to combat Chinese Communism (1949-1993)[2]. Adding to this already complex mix is the aboriginal culture that existed in Taiwan for more than eight thousand years. Instead of identifying with a singular source of cultural influence, Taiwanese identity nowadays is based on a mutual acknowledgement of the need to integrate the island's complex past into "a collective sense of self specific to the island of Taiwan that transcend other group identities".[3] Taiwanese identity is therefore less about the government's institutionalized efforts and more about how common people interpret their own existence. I shall argue that this tendency of deconstructing a grand narrative to reshape a collective sense of Taiwaneseness is at the creative core of Taiwan New Cinema.

It is exactly because of this hybrid background to Taiwanese identity that scholars now tend to use the term 'Taiwan cinema' rather than 'Taiwanese cinema', in order to prevent people from misunderstanding 'Taiwanese cinema' as simply cinema by native Taiwanese and not including mainlanders who retreated to Taiwan in 1949, or the island's aborigines.[4] The hybridity of Taiwan cinema has to be examined from multiple perspectives, but language is an essential point of departure. When the KMT retreated to Taiwan after their defeat by the Chinese Communist Party, they imposed a 'National Language (Mandarin) Movement' on the island, where people mainly spoke the Hokkien dialect (which was later termed 'Taiwanese') and Japanese, as a result of fifty years of Japanese colonization. During the 1950s and the 1960s, major studios owned by the Nationalist government released mainly Mandarin films, in which characters spoke standard Mandarin without any regional accent, while small

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[2] 1993 was the year when the Nationalist Government officially dropped the slogan of 'striking back at the mainland', and the whole nation is on its way to 'Taiwanization' (indigenization).
[3] Evan N. Dawley, 'The Question of Identity in Recent Scholarship on the History of Taiwan', in *The China Quarterly* 198 (2009): p. 442.
[4] Chris Berry, 'Re-writing Cinema: Markets, Languages, Cultures in Taiwan', in Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François (eds.), *Re-writing Culture in Taiwan* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 140-41.

private companies seized the opportunity to produce Taiwanese-dialect cinema to satisfy the wider audience. After Mandarin films flourished in the early 1960s, Taiwanese-dialect cinema became less and less popular, and the number of productions has dropped drastically since 1970, only one year after Mandarin films first exceeded the number of dialect films in 1969. The situation deteriorated, since only two Taiwanese-dialect films were made between 1975 and 1980, and only six were made throughout the 1980s.[5]

However the diversity of language usage did not disappear from Taiwan cinema entirely. Indeed it became an important element of Taiwan New Cinema, such as Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1985), *Dust in the Wind* (1986), *A City of Sadness* (1989) and Edward Yang's *Taipei Story* (1985). In these films, people no longer speak perfect Mandarin, but rather they speak Taiwanese dialects, Chinese dialects, Mandarin with various accents and even English. Having been started as a small-budget experiment of the KMT-led studio 'Central Motion Picture Corporation' (CMPC) as a way to save the failing domestic box office for films, which were focussed on reifying the grand narratives of the Nationalist government and Chinese traditions, Taiwan New Cinema denotes the end of the strict segregation between Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect cinemas and the beginning of a new kind of national cinema that pays attention to common people's real lives on Taiwan. Although some scholars claimed that Taiwan New Cinema was dead as early as 1987,[6] the same year of the lifting of martial law, the spirit of Taiwan New Cinema was in fact maintained by representative figures like Hou and Yang in their later works, which should still be considered as a continuation of Taiwan New Cinema. Therefore, in this thesis I adopt a broader sense of Taiwan New Cinema in line with

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[5] Feii Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics, 1949-1994* (Taipei: Yuanliou, 1998), p. 449.

[6] Mi Zou and Liang Xin-hua (eds.), *The Death of Taiwan New Cinema* (Taipei: Tangshan, 1991).

that of Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley, rather than following the rigid definition of Taiwan New Cinema as a short movement which lasted between 1982 and 1987 under the CMPC's support. The reason for adopting this broader sense is to fully explore these directors' continuous efforts in exploring Taiwanese identity since the early 1980s.[7]

Acknowledging Taiwan New Cinema's prominent status in shaping Taiwanese consciousness, this thesis seeks to argue that the urban-oriented films made by Hou and Yang, the major representative figures of Taiwan New Cinema, and Tsai Ming-liang, who belongs to the second wave of Taiwan New Cinema, have contributed to the ongoing process of resituating Taiwanese identity from the 1980s to the present. It is necessary to clarify what I mean by 'the city' in this thesis. The cinematic city has long been regarded as a genre, grabbing the attention of audiences from the very beginning of film history with the Lumière brothers' images of daily life in Paris. The city then developed into a character and subject matter in itself in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and Dizga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and then transformed into the backgrounds for various genres, including film noir and science fiction. The most frequently quoted definition of city film was given by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, who addresses the city's "inability to be subordinated to the demands of the narrative" and its role as a non-fictional protagonist.[8] Nonetheless, this thesis does not analyse city film's role from the perspective of genre studies, nor does it adhere to the strict criteria of city film suggested by Nowell-Smith. The thesis seeks to discuss a wider range of films that include the city as a major platform for reflecting Taiwanese specificities, such as Hou's films that focus on the contrast between the rural and the urban, and Tsai's

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[7] Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley, 'Observational Realism in Taiwan New Cinema', in Lúcia Nagib and Cecília Antakly de Mello (eds.), *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 96.
[8] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', in Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Cinema and the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 104.

films that focus on a specific urban location rather than the entire city. To fully acknowledge an ongoing concern for establishing Taiwanese characteristics and identity in relation to urban life, this thesis focuses on how these directors register locally specific traces of social changes and historical backgrounds in their aesthetically rich depiction of the rapidly urbanizing Taiwan.

The thesis will also explore more recent developments in Taiwan cinema. Local audiences stopped consuming Taiwan cinema from the early 1990s onwards, but a single film from 2008 changed everything. When *Cape No.7* (2008, dir. Wei Te-sheng) grossed over NT$530 million and was listed as the best-selling Chinese-language film (including 'national cinema' in Taiwan, Hong Kong cinema and Chinese cinema) in Taiwan's entire film history, the phenomenon was labelled 'the renaissance of national cinema' (*guo pian fu xing*) and 'the take-off of national cinema' (*guo pian qi fei*). Since then, a large number of city films have been made with the active participation of various local governments, and the geographical focus has been extended from Taipei to other major cities, such as Kaohsiung and Taichung.[9] The historical and aesthetic system contained in the development of urban cinema indicates that the linkage between Taiwan New Cinema and contemporary cinema (or 'Post-New' Cinema) is closer than people might think, and a contextual analysis is necessary for a better understanding of Taiwan cinema's latest pursuit in localization and national identity.

In summary, this thesis will explore the relationship between Taiwan cinema and the city with a view to demonstrating the cinematic city's capacity for engaging the

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[9] Both terms 'the renaissance of national cinema' (*guo pian fu xing*) and 'the take-off of national cinema' (*guo pian qi fei*) were commonly used to refer to the series of successes brought by *Cape No.7* in all kinds of media, social networks and even governmental reports. Discovery Channel also produced a programme called 'Amazing Taiwan: the Big renaissance of Cinema' to introduce the rebirth of the local film industry. The programme was aired on 30 October 2011 in Taiwan and on 26th November 2011 in 34 countries in Asia.

filmic text in the exploration and transformation of local identity not only through characterization, narrative and content, but also through the highly distinctive – and possibly unique – aesthetics of Taiwan New Cinema. The following part of the introduction will look briefly at existing scholarship on cinema and the city in general, as well as the major arguments on this topic in the Taiwanese context, before moving on to outline the research method and the key research questions.

Prior work in the field

Research on the representation of the city in Taiwan cinema was begun in 1995, when the committee of the Golden Horse Film Festival published *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema: 1950-1990* as a companion reader for a special film programme focusing on Taipei-centred films, such as Lee Hsing's *Our Neighbor* (1963)*,* Liang Che-fu's *Early Train from Taipei* (1964)*,* Wu Fei-chien's *Kang-Ting's Tour of Taipei* (1969), Bai Jing-rui's *Home Sweet Home* (1969), Lee Hsing's *Good Morning Taipei* (1979), Yu Kan-ping's *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*, Edward Yang's *Taipei Story* (1985), Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Dust in the Wind* (1986), Tsai Ming-liang's *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992) and Chen Kuo-fu's *Treasure Island* (1993). In the preface Bai Jing-rui, the first Taiwanese director who studied abroad in the early 1960s and who contributed to the stylistic shift in Taiwan cinema with his experimental style, passionately advocated the importance of examining the representation of the city on the grounds that urban life can reflect the timeliest transformations of people, nation and the film industry itself. Although his preface was not intended as a sophisticated theoretical piece, he proposed an attractive notion of city film in relation to their meditation on time:

Without "the past", "now" doesn't exist; without "now", there is no "future"! For "the future", we must find our "the past". For "the past", we can't give up - the space of life - Taipei.[10]

Bai affirmed the necessity of analysing Taipei as a key means for understanding life in Taiwan from the past to the present. However most articles in this volume did not respond to this historicizing perspective when it came to discussing films made after the 1980s. Wang Wei argued that the major difference between the representation of Taipei in Taiwan cinema of the 1980s and 1990s is Taipei's relation with the whole island. In Taiwan New Cinema made in the 1980s, Taipei does not exist on its own terms but tends to be placed in relation to the transformation of Taiwanese society on the whole, whereas Taipei films in the 1990s represent Taipei as an individual phenomenon, somehow distant from the rest of the island nation.[11] Lin Wen-chi shared Wang's argument of Taipei's dominant status in 1990s Taiwan cinema and further argued that Taipei had been completely overshadowed by international capitalism, which resulted in the collapse of local identity.[12] Overall, this publication did not settle on a single argument although it was clearly bound by a chronological tendency, under which scholars discussed city film according to social and political differences between each decade from the 1950s through to the 1990s. For example, Duan Su-chen contextualized her analysis into charts, rigidly divided into the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and concluded that there has always been a coherent set of

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[10] Bai Jing-rui, 'Preface', in Robert Ru-Shou Chen and Liao Gene-fon (eds.), *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema: 1950-1990* (Taipei: Wanxiang, 1995), p. 7.

[11] Wang Wei, 'Taipei in Transformation: Taiwan cinema from the 80s to the 90s', in *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema*, pp. 56-58.

[12] Lin Wen-chi, 'The Representation of Taipei in the Taiwanese Films', in *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema*, p. 78.

characteristics pertinent to the representation of the city in each decade.[13] This was on the whole an important volume although many complexities were elided through its commitment to a rigid chronological framework. Moreover the writers emphasized the narrative of city films and how this related to social reality, while neglecting to look at how the new filmic aesthetics stimulated by the city may also have something interesting to say about the Taiwanese context.

This early volume may not have provided entirely satisfactory results, and since its publication research into the representation of the city in Taiwan cinema has not been conducted as enthusiastically in Taiwan as it has been in Western academia. Since the 1997 publication of urban geographer David B. Clarke's volume *The Cinematic City*, a myriad of related publications have emerged, including Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice's *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (2001) and *Screening the City* (2003), Nezar AlSayyad's *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real* (2006), Andrew Webber's *Cities In Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis* (2008), Richard Koeck and Les Roberts's *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (2010), Richard Koeck's *Cine-scapes: Cinematic Spaces in Architecture and Cities* (2012), Francois Penz's *Urban Cinematics: Understanding Urban Phenomena Through the Moving Image* (2012), and so on. The extensive amount of research spanning the last decade and, indeed, continuing to flourish today has shaped this topic as a unique inter-disciplinary subject. Over recent years, scholars of Chinese cinema have paid growing attention to this field and have also published extensively, including Yingjin Zhang's pioneering work *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time and Gender* (1996) and his later *Cinema,*

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[13] Duan Su-chen, 'Sisyphus: A Sociological Study of Portrayals of Taipei through Films, 1960-1990', in *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema*, pp. 64-77.

Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China (2010), Zhen Zhang's edited volume *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (2007), Harry H. Kuoshu's *Metro Movies: Cinematic Urbanism in Post-Mao China* (2010), Yomi Braester's *Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract* (2010) (which features a chapter dedicated to Taiwan cinema) and *Cinema at the City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia* (2010), a volume he co-edited with James Tweedie.

Compared to this booming trend in Western academia and the growing interest in Chinese cinema, the literature focusing on Taiwan cinema has proved largely incapable of working past the assumptions of that first exploratory volume from 1995.[14] Although scholars have continued to publish journal articles on the topic of Taipei, the results remain sporadic and the methodology has been limited mainly to thematic analyses sustained by various cultural theories. For example, Lin Wen-chi borrows Henri Lefebvre's concept of 'absolute space', arguing that Taiwan cinema of the 1990s is characterized by the disappearance of absolute space, interpreted here as a kind of national space bestowed with specific social and political meanings.[15] This argument is extended through Lin's wide-ranging references, taking in Charles Jencks's concept of post-national society and Eric Hobsbawm's doubts about the nation-state, to Benedict Anderson's arguments on portable nationality, by combining which Lin seeks to emphasize the disappearance of national identity in Taiwan and to characterize it as a Third World country serving the system of

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[14] Hong Yue-qing's *City Zero: the Representation of Taipei in Cinema*, which was a Master's thesis from the department of architecture at Tamkang University, is the only book-length monograph following this path, but it focuses only on Lee Hsing and Wen Jen's works and overlooks other more important Taipei films. See Hong Yue-qing, *City Zero: the Representation of Taipei in Cinema* (Taipei: Garden City, 2002).
[15] Lin Wen-chi, 'History, Space and Home/Nation in 1990s Taiwanese City Films' in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 27.5 (October 1998): p. 112.

transnational capitalism.[16] Another case in point is Ivy I-chu Chang's essay on *The Terrorizers*, in which she applies even more diverse sources from Western theorists, ranging from Gilles Deleuze, Laura Mulvey, Julia Kristeva, Susan Sontag and Jacques Lacan, to shape her own argument that Yang applies the power of fiction to emphasize the symbolic meaning of simulation in postmodern times.[17] Li Chi-she applies Lefebvre and Marshall Berman's research on global space and combines it with Walter Benjamin's concept of 'urban melancholy', through which he expresses his doubts over cinema's ability to envision a better city.[18] These summaries provide only a glimpse of how extensively Taiwanese scholars have applied a myriad of Western theories to analyse the representation of the city in Taiwan cinema.[19]

Within the existing scholarship, there are two scholars who have made the most substantial efforts in theorizing city film in Taiwan, and it is mainly their arguments with which my thesis aims to construct a dialogue. The first is the aforementioned Lin Wen-chi, which we need to return to in a little more detail here. Following his essay 'The Representation of Taipei in Taiwan Cinema' in *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema: 1950-1990*, Lin continued to research this topic and published two more articles: 'History, Space and Home/Nation in 1990s Taiwanese city films' (1998) and 'Taipei at the End of the Century in Taiwan Cinema' (2004). In the earlier piece, Lin argued that Taiwanese people have been transformed into a symbol of capitalism and

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[16] Ibid., p. 115.

[17] Ivy I-chu Chang, 'The Falsifying Force of Forgers: Sex, Lies, and Violence in Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers*', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 33.3 (2004): pp. 15-37.

[18] Li Chi-she, 'The Representation of Global Space in *Yi Yi* and *What Time Is It There?*', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 33.3 (2004): pp. 95-97.

[19] Other works that adopt this methodology include Ban Wang, 'Black Holes of Globalization: Critique of the New Millennium in Taiwan Cinema', in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (Spring 2003): pp. 90-119; Tong-lin Lu, *Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); James Tweedie,'Morning in the New Metropolis: Taipei and the Globalization of the City Film', in Darrell William Davis and Robert Ru-shu Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 116-30; Hong Guo-Juin, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

have lost control of their own fate and identity formation in the era of globalization. In his second essay, Lin takes a step further and argues that globalizing themes in the representation of Taipei in films made in the 1990s reflects the disappearance of both Taipei and Taiwan cinema in the system of international capitalism. In Lin's opinion, although these films are branded as national cinema in international film festivals, they actually symbolize the disappearance of national history.[20] In 'Taipei at the End of the Century in Taiwan Cinema', Lin argues that the representation of Taipei at the turn of the millennium contradicts the optimistic atmosphere symbolized by the "upright building and bright interior of Taipei 101".[21] In Lin's opinion, Taiwan cinema made since the 1990s fails to uphold Taiwan New Cinema's tradition of exploring history and social reality.

The other noteworthy scholar is Yomi Braester, who posits an alternative approach of applying the history of urban planning to analyse city film, yet his analyses of urban planning seem to replace the importance of the films themselves and ultimately yield to a discussion on the symbolic meaning of demolition in urban spaces. In his earliest essay 'If We Could Remember Everything, We Would Be Able to Fly: Taipei's Cinematic Poetics of Demolition' (2003), Braester examines Taipei films through "the poetics of demolition", since a large number of city films have tackled the issues of urban gentrification and the disappearance of the old communities.[22] He believes that there is a poetics of demolition which amounts to "a paradoxical practice of writing through erasure, building through tearing down, remembrance through amnesia, and identity formation through the unmaking of

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[20] Lin, 'History, Space and Home', pp. 99-117.
[21] Lin Wen-chi, 'Taipei at the End of the Century in Taiwan Cinema', in Liao Xien-hao and Lin Chiu-fang (eds.), *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Taipei Studies, 2004* (Taipei: Cultural Bureau, 2006), pp. 113-26.
[22] Yomi Braester, 'If We Could Remember Everything, We Would Be Able to Fly: Taipei's Cinematic Poetics of Demolition', in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (Spring 2003): pp. 29-61.

social ties."[23] Furthermore he regards the poetics of demolition as a strategy for filmmakers to engage with the debate on urban planning. The argument was continued in his next essay, 'Tales of a Porous City: Public Residences and Private Streets in Taipei Films' (2005), in which the cinematic vision is said to "channel civic resistance to more a complex politics of memory".[24] Braester believes that directors like Tsai Ming-liang and Edward Yang propose an optimistic possibility of appropriating and creatively reinterpreting Taipei even though what they focus on might be "sites of erasure of memory and destruction of identity".[25] He explains this paradox as "an apocalyptic vision", which interweaves a new world "that lives on beyond its doom" and "reconstructs the city through the history of its ruination", achieved by the cinematic vision carried out by various characters, especially "camera-yielding characters" in Yang's *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi*.[26] However, in his next essay 'The Impossible Task of Taipei Films' (2007), he took a more pessimistic tone:

> The next thing in Taipei will appear sooner or later. It remains to be seen if it will only be, like *My Whispering Plan*, a response to the growing burden of forgetting, or, like *Twenty Something Taipei* (2002, dir. Dai Li-ren), a sign of the full disappearance of Taipei's daily life under the gloss of the city's gentrification.[27]

Braester's argument changed, then, from a more hopeful interpretation of "an apocalyptic vision" reconstructed by the cinematic vision, to his frankly arbitrary

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[23] Ibid., p. 32.
[24] Yomi Braester, 'Tales of a Porous City: Public Residences and Private Streets in Taipei Films,' in Charles Laughlin (ed.), *Contested Modernities in Chinese Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 158.
[25] Ibid., p. 168
[26] Ibid., pp. 168-69.
[27] Yomi Braester, 'The Impossible Task of Taipei films', in *Cinema Taiwan*, pp. 58-59.

prediction of cinema developing into "a sign of the full disappearance of Taipei's daily life". Although in his latest essay, 'Angel Sanctuaries: Taipei's Gentrification and the Erasure of Veterans' Villages' (2010), he reasserts the importance of looking into the historical background of urban planning and gentrification, pointing out the insufficiency of regarding city films only as mirrors of urban anxiety, his full concentration on the erasure of inner-city areas still leads him to conclude that Taipei cinema will be mainly about the memories that will fade away along with the changes to the cityscape.[28]

Braester's concern for Taipei's disappearance under relentless urban gentrification resonates with Frederic Jameson's 'Remapping Taipei' (1992), which is the only article about Taiwan cinema and Taipei that has attracted attention and debate uniformly across both Western and Taiwanese academia. Jameson's argument is significant in numerous ways. First of all, 'Remapping Taipei' is undoubtedly the first and the most pivotal essay to point out that Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers* responds to Taiwan's status in the late-capitalist world system through original ways of representing urban space.[29] Placing the urban condition as the central force to shape this film's unique aesthetics, which echoes both modernist tradition in Western literature and post-modernist characteristics, Jameson unpicks the film through the concept of simultaneity, arguing that the city provides the best setting for chance happenings, accidents and the intersection of multiple destinies that make up the basic structure of *The Terrorizers*. Furthermore, his detailed analysis of the film's architectural motifs, ranging from the general housing forms in Taipei to city dogs kept in cages, also raises people's awareness of the intertwined relationship between

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[28] Yomi Braester, 'Angel Sanctuaries: Taipei's Gentrification and the Erasure of Veterans' Villages', in Yomi Braester, *Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 187-223.
[29] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 146.

the space and the national, the local and the global, the modern and the postmodern. The most conspicuous example is his argument that the character Li Li-chung's personal frustrations, which have been emphasized through his relationship with both public and private spaces, are "well-placed to offer figuration to the 'national allegory' of a post-Third-World country that can never really join the First World".[30] Through his examination of this film's representation of urban space, Jameson concludes that a film like *The Terrorizers* has to be regarded as an example of "some generally late-capitalist urbanization",[31] and as a series of "powerful expressions of the marginally uneven and the unevenly developed issuing from a recent experience of capitalism".[32] All of these concluding remarks have been established on his observation that *The Terrorizers* is "a film about urban space in general".[33]

Secondly, Jameson's theoretical framework of the late-capitalist world system proposes an alternative angle from which to examine cinema from a non-national nation state like Taiwan and expands the possibilities of theorizing a problematic national cinema. Jameson insightfully points out that "the opposite of Westernization […] cannot be China itself, but that its empty place must rather be filled by the question about some putative Taiwanese identity that is itself as much a problem as it is a solution."[34] Positioning *The Terrorizers* as a counterexample of Hou Hsiao-hsien's Taiwanese countryside, Jameson concludes that *The Terrorizers*, judged by its focus on the general problems faced by most Third-World cities, is distinguished from Taiwan New Cinema, which "has tended to mark its images as specific to the island".[35]

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[30] Ibid., p. 145.
[31] Ibid., p. 117.
[32] Ibid., p. 155.
[33] Ibid., p. 153.
[34] Ibid., p. 117.
[35] Ibid., p. 120.

Inspired by Jameson's argument, but acknowledging some aspects that have been left aside, this thesis responds to 'Remapping Taipei' through some aspects that are worth further exploration. Jameson argues that *The Terrorizers*' freedom to keep its distance from both modernist and postmodernist aesthetics but to enjoy the advantages of both strands, "may owe something to the situation of Third-World cinema itself, in which neither modernist nor postmodern impulses are internally generated". [36] In other words, Jameson regards the aesthetic richness of *The Terrorizers* as something which has been generated mainly externally (in this case, the 'First-World' that stands in opposition to the Third-World), as well as part of a more generally shared situation of Third-World cinema on the international stage. Conversely, this thesis will also demonstrate that 'the uncharacteristic urban' in Taiwan cinema may generate meaningful responses to the specifically Taiwanese contexts, including social, political and historical changes and the unique development of Taiwan New Cinema, which may distinguish it from other Third-World cinema.

Another point worth noting is that throughout the essay Jameson has made a considerable number of errors when explaining the plot, mistaking characters' professions, and the order and location of various events. [37] These mistakes should not be underestimated, since they are applied as evidence to strengthen Jameson's argument about how the power of 'simultaneity' has associated *The Terrorizers* with

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[36] Ibid., p. 151.

[37] For further details about the whole plot, see Chapter 4. Here, I only provide some examples of Jameson's misreading of *The Terrorizers*. One of the main characters, Li Li-chung, who is actually a lab technician in the hospital, is mistaken for a doctor (p. 135); his wife leaves Li Li-chung much later, not on the same day as the gunfight in the opening scene, as Jameson suggests (p. 135); the breakup between the photographer and his girlfriend, mistaken as "simultaneous with the shoot-out and Li Li-chung's exercise" in the opening sequence, also happens much later (p. 136); Jameson describes how Shu-an is treated in the hospital where Li works, and how this arrangement emphasizes "the meaning of this kind of urban simultaneity in the multinational system today", however, there is no direct proof that they are indeed in the same hospital, not to mention that the hospital in which Shu-an stays is much more outdated than the modern glass cubicle of Li's office (p. 136); Li Li-chung's boss, who is only the head of their department, is mistaken as the hospital director (p. 148).

various traditions in Western literature and has enabled it to represent general urban alienation. In terms of its methodology, Jameson's essay is no less problematic than those of other scholars who exhibit a similar over-reliance on Western theories and interpretative paradigms. Jameson's analysis of diverse traditions in Western literature, which covers more than one third of the whole essay and includes Ann Banfield's research on *style indirect libre* (sentence structure that only exists in written rather than spoken form), [38] the narrative of synchronous monadic simultaneity (the SMS plot, which Jameson defines as "a Western modernist narrative paradigm"), [39] classical English detective stories, *mise en abysme* and Greek novel, to name only a few, provides the main discursive context of modernity and postmodernity in *The Terrorizers*. The context of local literature, along with other traces of local politics and history, has been left aside. Although we can discern a film's foreign colours when comparing its thematic and iconographical attributes with works from abroad, meanwhile we should also look into the film's capacity to respond to the local. As the following chapters will show, the definition of Taiwanese identity has always been eager to integrate global and local colours, and finding the balance in the dialogue between the local and the global has been crucial to the conception of Taiwanese characteristics, a tradition which occurred long before postmodern philosophy celebrated multiculturalism and hybridity.

It is necessary to note that I do not deny that the methodologies mentioned above, which are most thoroughly exemplified by Jameson's 'Remapping Taipei', have yielded important and interesting interpretations of Taiwan cinema, and indeed they represent a strong tendency within critical writing on most non-Western cinemas. However, I would argue for the need for an alternative way of explaining the

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[38] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 115.
[39] Ibid., p. 116.

distinctive aesthetic richness and the drastic transformations that Taiwan cinema has undergone when viewed on its own terms. Fran Martin's observation of studies of Chinese-language cinema provides some insight into the limitations of these approaches. As Martin notes, studies of Chinese-language cinemas tend to depend on cultural theory imported from abroad and spend "scant attention to the formal elements of filmic representation".[40] Scholars who do put filmic representation under the spotlight tend to compare local directors with the stylistic features of European art cinema without paying attention to the social background of film production. Martin therefore concludes that "the intertwining of film form and ideological meaning production",[41] which has been developed as a common approach in Euro-American film studies, should be applied to studies of Chinese-language cinema as well. Since most of the arguments outlined above do not provide a balanced approach between cultural/sociological and aesthetic/formal analysis, this thesis aims to draw these two tropes together in order to illuminate their intertwined relationship.

There are, however, several scholars whose arguments and approach have helped shape my own. June Yip is the first scholar to present a more balanced view without being tied to the myth of the rural/urban dichotomy that has been applied by most scholars when arguing that films focused on the city speak less about Taiwan as a whole. She points out, for example, that Hou refuses "the black and white view that glorifies the rural past and condemns the urban present", and goes on to argue that Hou is more fascinated by "the dynamic tension between the many different forces that shape modern Taiwanese society".[42] Yip also reminds us that Taiwan New

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[40] Fran Martin, 'Introduction: Tsai Ming-liang's Intimate Public Worlds', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1.2 (2007): p. 85.
[41] Ibid.
[42] June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary* (Durham,

Cinema's value is not only in its historical concerns, but also in its aesthetic innovation, which continues to influence contemporary filmmakers who are characterized "not only by growing thematic diversity but [by] stylistic unpredictability as well".[43] Therefore she does not see 1990s' Taiwan cinema as failing to continue the tradition of Taiwan New Cinema; instead, she argues that these films "seem to have found a sense of liberation and possibility in Taiwan's fast-paced, globally connected and ever-changing new culture of the 1990s".[44] Yip's subtle observations into Taiwan New Cinema's formal, stylistic achievements are the crucial component of many other attempts by Taiwanese scholars to explore "the intertwining of film form and ideological meaning production", which Martin has identified as the next stage of the study of Chinese-language cinema.[45] Lee Hsiu-chuan argues that the complex visual and audio articulations in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* (2000) reflect Yang's innovative attitude, which makes his films participate in the formation of new urban culture.[46] Wu Pei-tsyr also focuses on *Yi Yi*'s formal system and argues that this film has explored technology in a philosophical level.[47] Chang Hsiao-hung analyses Tsai Ming-liang's style of long takes and argues that this slowness provides the audience with an alternative version of Taipei.[48] Furthermore, this increased attention to the formal aspects has encouraged scholars to reaffirm the connection between Taiwan New Cinema and contemporary Taiwan cinema. As Sing Song-yong notes, the spirit of Taiwan New Cinema has never stopped influencing filmmakers in Taiwan, and the connection between Hou and Yang's

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N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 67.
[43] Ibid., p. 240.
[44] Ibid., p. 244.
[45] Martin, 'Introduction: Tsai Ming-liang's Intimate Public Worlds', p. 85.
[46] Lee Hsiu-chuan, 'Who Knows What S/he Wants?': Taipei in Edward Yang's Meta-Discourse of Newness', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 33.3 (2004): pp. 39-61.
[47] Wu Pei-tsyr, '*Yi Yi*: Gaze at the Fading Image of the Back', in Huang Jian-ye (ed.) *Edward Yang: the Contribution of Taiwan to World Film History* (Taipei: Yue Sheng Publisher, 2007), pp. 173-204.
[48] Chang Hsiao-hung, 'Taipei in Slow Motion: The Temporal Magnification of the Body-City', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 36.2 (2007): pp. 121-54.

films made in the 1980s and 1990s is strong and evident, if people consider the creative usage of both audio and visual articulations in these films.[49] The burgeoning dual interest in both the formal system and its relationship with a wider social context is the main methodological line that is pursued and developed in this thesis.

Research questions and structure

This thesis seeks to explore the city in Taiwan cinema as a productive strategy for filmmakers to participate in the ongoing process of national identity formation. The case studies will focus on the works of Hou Hsiao-hsien (1947-), Edward Yang (1947-2007) and Tsai Ming-liang (1957-). There are three reasons why I chose to focus on these three directors. First, Hou and Yang are the most well-known figures of Taiwan New Cinema, while Tsai was also supported by the CMPC as the figurehead of a second wave of Taiwan New Cinema. Together they have established the reputation of Taiwan cinema on the international stage, with films focusing on common people's lives in Taiwan. Ironically, it is perhaps their international success that led many scholars to argue that they had abandoned national themes. Second, their backgrounds respectively represent the hybridity of the Taiwanese experience. Hou and Yang were both born in 1947 in mainland China and moved to Taiwan at a very young age. Hou grew up in a small town in southern Taiwan and learned to speak both the Mandarin and Taiwanese dialects, while Yang grew up in central Taipei. Hou never studied or lived abroad, whereas Yang left Taiwan to study and work in the USA for ten years (1970-1980). However, after Yang returned to Taiwan to pursue his dream of filmmaking, his films were always about Taipei, whereas Hou

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[49] Sing Song-yang, 'The Telepathy in Downgrading History: On the Fluid Imaging of Taiwan's "Post-New Cinema"', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (Spring 2010): pp. 137-56.

also makes films set wholly in other metropolises, such as Shanghai (*Flowers of Shanghai*, 1998), Tokyo (*Café Lumière*, 2003) and Paris (*Flight of the Red Balloon*, 2008). Tsai is a Chinese Malaysian who went to study in Taiwan in 1977, but stayed on to participate in theatre, television production and filmmaking, and indeed has remained in Taiwan. Taipei became the perpetual protagonist of his films ever since his first feature, *Rebel of the Neon God* (1992). Each of these filmmakers represents a unique facet of Taiwan's hybrid culture, which resonates through varying representations of the city. The third reason for selecting these directors is that they are the only three to have dedicated themselves ceaselessly to filmmaking over this period, whereas a myriad of other directors have stopped after just a few productions as a consequence of the bleak industrial conditions. Therefore, Hou, Yang and Tsai have all been able to develop quite systematic observations of Taiwanese society from the 1980s through to the 2000s, while other directors' city films can only provide a glimpse of urban culture and imagery at a moment in time.[50]

It is worth noting that despite this thesis's condensed focus on Taiwanese identity, I am not unaware of the international colours in Hou, Yang and Tsai's films. As mentioned earlier, Hou has made films about Shanghai, Tokyo and Paris, and Yang and Tsai's Taipei films are exemplary cases of the mixture of global and local forces. However, this thesis sets out to provide an in-depth analysis of the local aspects in urban experience that often become neglected and regarded as subordinate to the city's cosmopolitan character, which may be more easily identified and emphasized by foreign scholars. By turning the main focus to how these directors' aesthetic

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[50] There were several directors presenting creative perspectives on city films in the 1990s; unfortunately, most of them stopped after making only a few films. Theatre director Stan Lai only made *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* (1992) and *The Red Lotus Society* (1994), and then went back to focus on theatre, while Chen Yu-hsun made two successful films, *Tropical Fish* (1995) and *Love Go Go* (1997), and then turned to work in advertising. Chen Guo-fu made two important films about Taipei, *The Treasure Island* (1993) and *The Personal* (1998), and then turned to work with Hollywood and presented *Double Vision* (2002), a film set in Taipei but deliberately copying the style of commercial Hollywood films.

achievements have enriched and expanded the representation of the city in the particular context of Taiwan, and to acknowledge the fact that the ideological shift from the pan-Chinese ideology promoted by the Nationalist government to the values of a truly localized Taiwanese experience is the major impetus behind Taiwan cinema's transformation, this thesis hopes to broaden the discussion on Taiwan cinema and the city, and to construct a dialogue with current scholarship that is largely inclined to the discourse of globalism. I am not reducing the films analysed in this thesis to an anti-globalization stance that only celebrates local resistance and Taiwanese specificities. Conversely, I also pay attention to how the dialogue between the local and the global has been gradually developed into a necessary framework to strengthen Taiwan's unique mode of identity building.

The main research questions will be a combination of aesthetic, theoretical and historical, and they will occasionally require a look at Taiwanese film and urban history beyond the 1980s though contemporary time-period suggested so far. The questions are as follows:

1. In what ways did the transformation of the local film industry help frame urban space as a crucial vehicle for representing the hybridity of Taiwanese culture?

2. How have representations of 'the city' evolved across Taiwanese film history? This will also require looking at the history of urban development in Taiwan.

3. How do Hou, Yang and Tsai emphasize the importance of local experience and identity specific to Taiwan through representing the city? This will require in-depth readings of their films in order to demonstrate how the social, historical and cultural specificities of Taiwan have been interwoven into their choice of formal systems.

4. How have contemporary filmmakers built upon Taiwan New Cinema to continue to explore local characteristics through city films?

I adopt an auteur model and formal analyses, instead of the chronological approach common in existing scholarship, as my primary research method. The concept of the auteur is particularly crucial in the development of my argument, as this research focuses not only on a single film's capacity to join the debate on Taiwanese identity, but how a director's persistent observation of a particular locale can form a meaningful cycle through which to reveal an in-depth discourse on filmmaking and identity formation. As Nowell-Smith indicates, auteur theory is about the hidden motifs that give an auteur's work a particular structure that is unique enough to distinguish a body of work from another.[51] The structural approach, which is based on recurrent motifs and audio-visual strategies applied to shape these motifs, is the key to understanding how a director pursues personal creativity. In terms of the relationship between cinema and national identity, observing how individuals respectively present their own observations and interpretations of social reality, but still share crucial common ground, will enable us to discern the locally and historically specific context that nurtures a diverse range of films. As Peter Wollen has reminded us, auteur theory should be regarded as more than a means of introducing the creative personality, and rather as a strategy to see beyond the end product and probe into "a structure which underlies the film and shapes it, gives it a certain pattern of energy cathexis".[52] Therefore, to adopt an auteur model in research into national identity is not contradictory, but rather is a practical approach for

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[51] Quoted in Peter Wollen, 'The Auteur Theory', in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (London: BFI, 1998), p. 53.
[52] Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, p. 114.

revealing the possible common ground and the shared ideological structure that shapes these auteurs' aesthetic diversity.

Furthermore, the emergence of the auteur has a specific meaning in Taiwan cinema. This new approach of addressing creative personality has actually coincided with Taiwan's most radical change in politics and was developed in parallel with the process of democratization, which is one of the major forces that distinguishes Taiwanese identity from pan-Chinese, Confucian-oriented identity. In the realm of world cinema, all 'new' cinema movements tend to be examined from an auteur perspective and are mutually characterized by auteurs' commitment to differentiate themselves from genre cinemas. In the case of Taiwan this commitment also coincided with and was evidenced in filmmakers' preference for unveiling local history and everyday life, areas which used to be concealed in populist and propagandist films, the only two modes of filmmaking available prior to the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema. The recurrence of particular themes, motifs, images and techniques in these Taiwanese auteurs' works were keyed in to Taiwan's shifting process of identity formation from the very beginning, since it was the filmmakers' own initiatives of advocating creative freedom that was one of the results of the relaxation of state control, which represented an important step in making a new kind of Taiwanese identity possible.

In order to analyse formalistic patterns that these auteurs show great concern for, this thesis applies the concept of the 'poetics of cinema' as posited by David Bordwell. Bordwell's approach draws attention to the artistry, the craft traditions and the stylistic texture of the way films are put together, instead of scanning the film only to look for social and political factors. Bordwell calls it a "frankly empirical"

approach that "tries to discover facts and truths about films".[53] He divides poetics of cinema into three types: analytical, which involves studying specific devices in a single work; theoretical, which involves theorizing about a specific genre; and historical, which is concerned with "how artworks assume certain forms within a period or across periods".[54] This thesis will include these three aspects, focusing on how the representation of the city has been transformed and assumed differing tendencies across periods through the work of various directors from the 1980s to the present. It is crucial however to note that my aim is different from Bordwell's implications of a poetics of cinema, since he is concerned primarily with how cinema from different regions may reveal similar poetics and therefore prove the existence of transcultural flows.[55] I do not intend to challenge this argument, because cinema is indeed an artistic medium shared by the whole world, just like painting, sculpture, printmaking, and so on, and there will always be universal elements in these media that transcend national and regional borders. However, if we do acknowledge the existence of 'trans-', it means we also acknowledge the existence of differences lurking beyond the similarities. Otherwise there is nothing to 'trans-' but merely a seamless unity. Instead of following Bordwell's transcultural theory, then, I will focus on how local conditions have enriched these auteurs' craft traditions through the nation-specific historical poetics of their cinematic representations of the city.[56]

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[53] David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 20.

[54] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[55] On the other hand, Bordwell also admits by looking into the stylistic patterns "the poetician can study how film's form and style bear the traces of the mode of production that has created then, and beyond that, how cultural processes shape film form and style". See David Bordwell, 'Transcultural Spaces: Toward a Poetics of Chinese Film', in Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh (eds.), *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 142-43.

[56] The concept of the poetics has been applied by various scholars to research on various Taiwanese auteurs. See Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, 'Poetics and Politics of Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films', in *Chinese-Language Film*, pp. 163-85; James Udden, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien and the Poetics of History', in *CinemaScope* 3 (Spring 2000): pp. 48-51, Song Hwee Lim, 'Confessing Desire: The Poetics of Tsai Ming-liang's Queer Cinema", in Song Hwee Lim, *Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male*

Although this thesis aims to reveal the complexity and richness of the styles that were co-cultivated by Hou, Yang and Tsai, and the characteristics that distinguish them from each other, it is important to acknowledge that these directors' poetics of cinema share a mutual understanding of realist aesthetics. It is not surprising that realism emerges as the central trope, and as Thomas Elsaesser notes "European art/auteur cinema (and by extension, world cinema) has always defined itself against Hollywood on the basis of its greater realism". [57] Elsaesser emphasizes the "ontological turn" of contemporary world cinema and the return of faith in cinematic reality after decades of questioning simulacra. Lúcia Nagib takes a step further and explores the 'presentational aspect' of realism, proposing to read new-wave cinema across the world with an ethics of realism that focuses on filmmakers' strategies for presenting reality with a simultaneous commitment to both the medium and the phenomenological real.[58] These recent efforts in re-theorizing realism all suggest that the research on realist aesthetics have to see beyond the ideals of realism suggested by André Bazin, exploring the individual auteur's conception of the real rather than forcing the interpretation to conform to a fixed standard.

Hou, Yang and Tsai all explore the traditional markers of realism, such as the long shot, the static shot, the long take, deep focus, on-location shooting, and so on, while constantly revising the realist principles of representation with more explorative camerawork, editing and formalistic characteristics in other media and artistic forms, such as photography and theatre. Their stylistic choices are not confined to the ideals of realism suggested by Bazin, and they each respectively

Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp. 126-52.

[57] Thomas Elsaesser, 'World Cinema: Realism, Evidence, Presence', in *Realism and the Audiovisual Media*, p. 3.

[58] Lúcia Nagib, *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (New York and London: Continuum, 2011), p. 10.

contemplate the possibilities of realism. As this thesis hopes to demonstrate, these directors' interpretations of urban Taiwan are a major force in shaping their relentless exploration of both social and cinematic realities. As the link between world cinema and realism has continued to be a significant topic in contemporary film studies, exemplified by recent books including *Realism and the Audiovisual Media*,[59] the focus on the interlaced relationship between filmmaking strategies and social realities in this thesis provides a potential angle from which to theorize Taiwan cinema's importance in the vast landscape of world cinema.

Chapters one and two will begin by placing the city in a wider scope of national identity, providing the historical background of the industrial development of Taiwan cinema. These two chapters will help illuminate the specific context of Taiwan cinema and the city, which is mediated between the rural-urban dialectic, the pan-Chinese ideology and a rising local consciousness. Chapter three traces the evolution of the concept of the city in Hou's films and explores how its differing representations allow him to set up complex interplays between art, politics and Taiwanese history. Hou's representation of the city is always linked to his attempts to rewrite Taiwan's modern history or to capture a poetic rhythm that delineates the aesthetics of everyday life in Taiwan. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse how he places the city within a wider socio-historical context of Taiwan in order to fully understand his construction of the hybridity of Taiwanese identity. Chapter four focuses on Yang's prophetic vision of the relationship between visual technologies and the city in the Taiwanese context, and examines his approach of representing Taipei as a global city with local distinctiveness. This chapter also explores Yang's emphasis on specific characters who contemplate the city through photography,

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[59] Nagib and Mello (eds.), *Realism and the Audiovisual Media.*

which helps him represent the city as a site of nurturing creativity and a sense of self. Yang's creative yet realistic representation of the Taipei cityscape has expanded by Tsai, who features in chapter five through an account of his highly original way of addressing Taiwan's uniqueness by appropriating poignant examples of local urban history and rich cultural references to Chinese culture. Through challenging the cultural stereotypes shaped by Chinese traditions, which are influential in Taiwan and also in other Sinophone communities, Tsai's representation of Taipei helps him to address Taiwan as a unique place capable of providing critical angles from which to rethink and rewrite the definition of Chineseness. In so doing, Tsai also explores the non-essentialist mode of Taiwanese identity and claims a local distinctiveness. In the final chapter I will look at several more recent films which have not yet been explored by film scholars. Not being able to duplicate the auteur model of the Taiwan New Cinema, these young directors have nonetheless tried to revise the art cinema paradigm while also targeting commercial genres. This chapter on contemporary cinema will provide the first attempt to theorize contemporary Taiwan cinema through its link with city film. It will argue also that the close affinities between films made by different generations of filmmakers demonstrate how the city has become a key motif of Taiwanese experience and a newly heterogeneous sense of national identity which nonetheless invokes a "common cultural tradition", to borrow Berry's insightful definition.[60] Overall, the structure of the thesis is meant to reveal gradually the specificities of contemporary Taiwanese culture, which are multicultural, global and hybrid, yet simultaneously also local.[61]

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[60] Chris Berry, 'If China Can Say No, Can China Make Movies? Or, Do Movies Make China? Rethinking National Cinema and National Agency', in *Boundary 2* 25.3 (Autumn, 1998): p. 150.
[61] Yoshihisa Amae and Jens Damm, '"Whither Taiwanization?" State, Society and Cultural Production in the New Era', in *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40.1 (2011): pp. 10, 12.

Chapter 1
The Hybrid Essence of Taiwan Cinema and Taiwanese Identity

There is practically no place like Taiwan − great tradition, small island; conservative state, drastic change; cultural imperialism, committed Nationalism; localist sentiment, cosmopolitan sophistication.[1]

But I would also add that what interests me most about the *City of Sadness* in terms of the topics raised in this essay is not only its potential for the mobilization of a Taiwanese collectivity that, like the films of the Fifth Generation, exceeds the unified collectivities invoked by the nation-state and modern nationalisms at the same time that it registers the violence perpetrated by them. I am also particularly interested in the insistent heterogeneity of that collectivity as it is inscribed in the film by different dialects, languages, personal histories, and so forth, which to me invokes a collectivity and perhaps even a "common cultural tradition" that not only exceeds but resists co-optation into modern, unified national formations.[2]

To ask how the city functions as a productive concept, genre and aesthetic form in Taiwan cinema, first it is necessary to return to its historical background to examine how the ambiguous nature of nationhood has shaped the development of the local film industry. After fifty years of Japanese colonial occupation, the Nationalist government (KMT) moved the Republic of China (ROC) to Taiwan in 1949, where the notorious 228 Incident, also known as the 228 Massacre, had already happened in

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[1] Edwin A. Winckler, 'Cultural Policy on Postwar Taiwan', in Steven Harrell and Chun-chieh Huang (eds.), *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1994), p. 22.
[2] Berry, 'If China Can Say No', p. 150.

1947. The incident took place as a result of the Nationalist government using violence to suppress local people's resistance to the new government, and this later expanded to the long-term political suppression known as the 'White Terror' period.

As a result, the distinction between mainlanders and native Taiwanese was deeply drawn. Native Taiwanese (*benshengren*) are Han Chinese who moved from China to Taiwan before the late 19 century and has developed their local consciousness. Mainlanders are people who retreated to Taiwan with the Nationalist government around 1949 (*waishengren*). Native Taiwanese are composed of the Hoklo (70% of the Taiwanese population), who immigrated from southern Fujian in South China in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Hakka, who immigrated from Guangdong around the same time (15% of the Taiwanese population). Hokkien (or Minnan), the language spoken by the Hoklo is known as the Taiwanese dialect, while the Hakka language also maintains its important status in Taiwanese culture. 'The four ethnic group': aborigines, two types of native Taiwanese (Hoklo and Hakka), and mainlanders, is the most common categorization to further analyse Taiwanese identity in the 1990s but was gradually abandoned in recent years.

In order to establish thorough control over the island, the Nationalist government, led by Chiang Kai-shek, practised martial law for 38 years until it was finally lifted in 1987. During the martial law period, people were taught to be 'noble and dignified Chinese' (*tangtang zhengzheng de zhongguo ren*) and to be proud of being 'descendants of Yan and Yellow Emperor' (*yanhuang zisun*). After the lifting of martial law, Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who was also the President of the ROC from 1978 to 1988, began to transfer power to native Taiwanese, including Lee Teng-hui, the next Chairman of the KMT and the President of the ROC from 1988 to 2000. Since the early 1990s, political prisoners were released,

social movements were allowed, and the slogan of 'striking back at the mainland' was officially abandoned in 1993. Lee began the period of 'Taiwanization' (*bentuhua*), during which he advocated the concept of 'New Taiwanese', which emphasizes both the specificities of Taiwanese culture and the influence of Chinese tradition.[3] In 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which is the major opposition party in Taiwan, won the presidential election and turned a new page of Taiwan's democratization. Taiwan cinema is a particularly important contributor to this process because "Taiwanization as postcoloniality is oriented towards creating and consolidating a new culture and identity",[4] rather than being limited to the process of decolonization by rejecting the China-centric historiography. As a crucial cultural medium with which to represent the nation, the transformation of Taiwan cinema is also a part of the process of reshaping national identity.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to clarify the 'Taiwanese identity' I am looking for, both in city film and in Taiwan cinema in general. First of all, it is different from the KMT's pan-Chinese, Confucian-oriented identity, which was strategically forced upon the whole island in the 1940s. Taiwanese could only speak Japanese and Taiwanese dialects at that time, while the majority of mainlanders also spoke their regional dialects and struggled to communicate in Mandarin; however, Mandarin was legitimized as the only official language and became the vehicle for promoting the concept of a unified China. Taiwanese identity, therefore, is one that seeks to be distinguished from the ambiguous pan-Chinese identity and to establish a local identity specific to Taiwan. Secondly, it is not an essentialist mode of identity

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[3] The direct translation of *bentuhua* should be 'localization' or 'indigenization', but this thesis follows recent scholarship on Taiwan studies, in which scholars have begun to propose that 'Taiwanization' is a more suitable term, because the other two cannot convey the multicultural, globalized essence that also constitutes the main characteristics of Taiwaneseness. See John Makeham and A-chin Hsiau (eds.), *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: Bentuhua* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-16.

[4] Amae and Damm, 'Whither Taiwanization?', p. 9.

formation driven by Taiwanese nationalist's resistance to the mainlander government, but rather it is a profound awareness of the hybridity of Taiwanese culture, which are revealed by nuanced and subtle differences to define Taiwanese characteristics. What I want to trace is how Taiwan cinema, struggling between the traditional model of Chinese nationalism applied by the Nationalist government, and the Taiwanese nationalism advocated by native politicians, has slowly paved the way for a more down-to-earth exploration of Taiwanese identity rooted in common people's real lives. As Berry argues, films like Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989) not only challenge the unified, singular and essentialist definition of the nation-state, they also boldly state that the heterogeneity of Taiwanese collective experience may be the major source behind Taiwanese identity formation.[5] Following this argument, this chapter traces how the elements of 'heterogeneity' have slowly arisen from a place which used to be "an unlikely source of innovative filmmaking before 1982", to borrow Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell's misguided but widely spread conception of Taiwan cinema.[6]

Cinema has been an effective and institutionalized tool to install, demonstrate, explore and also problematize the concept of nationhood since its early inception, and the development of Taiwan cinema is inseparable from this island's volatile definition of nationhood. To ask the question of what nationhood consists may already be complex in every multi-ethnic Chinese community or territory, but

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[5] Berry has emphasized this argument over and over again throughout the years in various essays. See Berry, 'A Nation T(w/o)o: Chinese Cinema (s) and Nationhood (s)', in Wimal Dissanayake (ed.), *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema* (Bloomington, Ind. : Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 42-64; Berry, 'If China Can Say No', pp. 129-50; Berry, 'Re-writing Cinema', pp. 140-53.
[6] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), p. 652. The full paragraph, which continues "yet by 1986 [Taiwan cinema] had become one of the most exciting areas of international film culture", inspired Hong Guo-juin to write the first English monograph covering the entire history of Taiwan cinema – *Taiwan Cinema: a Contested Nation on Screen* (2011). Hong expresses strong disagreement with Thompson and Bordwell's over-simplified description, and begins his book by challenging the idea of "Taiwan being an unlikely source of innovative filmmaking before 1982". See Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 1.

Taiwan certainly represents one of the most difficult cases. After two decades of claiming it as the legitimate China, in 1971 the ROC was excluded from the United Nations. Since then, Taiwan has retained its ambiguous political status quo on the international stage, and has constructed an even more complex dialectic with its status in the global economy. It was once the factory of the world, elevating its status by focusing on the computer technology industry, and it also became one of the largest nations of foreign exchange reserves. Besides economic strength, Taiwanese people have also enjoyed more and more freedom in international travelling. Rather than confronting the PRC government by proclaiming Taiwan's independence, both the DPP government led by Chen (2000-2008) and the back-to-power Nationalist government led by Ma Ying-jeou (2008-) have tried to strengthen Taiwan's status as a nation-state through diverse strategies, such as joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002 and obtaining visa-waiver status in many countries since 2005.

Today, you will rarely find a Taiwanese citizen who states that he or she is from the Republic of China, rather than Taiwan, the more commonly used name. The Republic of China has become a neglected formal name printed on documents or mentioned only during national holidays, rather than in everyday life. However, despite the fact that 'Taiwan' is also printed on the cover of ROC passports, the co-existence of 'Republic of China' and 'Taiwan' is direct evidence of how the task of defining Taiwanese identity may be troublesome. To date, Taiwan cinema has never responded to this political predicament faced by many Taiwanese people on a daily basis. However, it does not mean the contested national identity in Taiwan cinema is not significant; on the contrary, the issue of nationhood and identity is addressed in

diverse ways throughout Taiwan's film history, even before the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema.

In the first part of this chapter, I trace the development of national cinema under Nationalist rule from 1949 to the early 1980s, and examine the elements that shaped the national identity in a hybrid and unstable manner. The second part of this chapter deals with Taiwan New Cinema, addressing its discovery of a model more suitable for Taiwan's contested national identity, which challenges the supremacy of patriarchal Chinese Confucian values under KMT rule and which approaches "an anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic and anti-racial" definition of nationhood.[7]

1.1 The recurring conflicts between 'Taiwan as China' and 'Taiwan as Taiwan'

From the outset, after the Nationalist-Communist Civil War drove the Nationalist government to retreat to Taiwan in 1949, Taiwan's film history seemed to be monolithic and dominated only by a series of policies focusing on fighting against communism and left-wing thinking. The large amount of equipment brought with the transfer in 1949 assured the Nationalist government's leading status in the local film industry, determining the direction of Taiwan cinema towards full state-control. With a strong studio system behind them, the government firstly established the 'Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association' in 1950 to promote anti-communist and militant literature,[8] and then in 1955 the Ministry of the Interior announced 'the standard of movie censorship', which stated the government's determined attitude against films from China and films with any left-wing politics. Films that insulted the president, showed the underdeveloped side of Taiwan, discouraged the army, and so on, were

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[7] Amae and Damm, 'Whither Taiwanization?', p. 14.
[8] Liu Hsien-cheng, *Taiwanese Cinema, History and State* (Taipei: Associate of Communications Arts, 1997), p. 35.

also banned.[9] However, the regulations remained abstract and left space for a large amount of interpretation by the censorship board, jointly administered by the bureaux of police and investigation, the Ministry of Education and the Government Information Office (GIO). As Feii Lu argues, the ambiguous censorship law implemented in the early days of Nationalist rule seriously hindered the development of a healthy industrial environment, and eventually drove filmmakers away from the representation and critique of Taiwanese society before the state control was relaxed in the 1980s.[10]

To assure cinema's function as an anti-communist medium, the Nationalist government established comprehensive control over the local film industry by three major institutionalized studios, including the CMPC owned by the party and in charge of propaganda films, Taiwan Province Movie Production owned by the Taiwan Provincial Government and in charge of social and educational newsreel films, and China Movie Production owned by the Ministry of National Defence and in charge of short films for military education.[11] Each of these studios was established before the mid-1950s, a period of time when the government was reluctant even to put efforts into infrastructure projects. The first anti-communist film, *Awakening from a Nightmare* (1951, dir. Zong You), was a co-production between Agricultural Education Film and China Motion Pictures, aiming to reveal the true colours of the communist party from the perspective of an ordinary woman, who had joined the party but ended up realizing how monstrous and corrupted they were. The anti-communist route continued until the late 1980s. Another kind of cinema made in the early 1950s was policy film, which was encouraged by the

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[9] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, pp. 70-71.
[10] Ibid., p. 72.
[11] Robert Ru-shou Chen, *The Historical and Cultural Experience of Taiwan New Cinema* (Taipei: Wan Hsiang Publications, 1993), pp. 29-30; Chiao Hsiung-ping, *The Five Years that Changed the History: A Study of Guolian Studio* (Taipei: Wan Hsiang Publications, 1993), p. 24.

government and aimed to promote the government's new agricultural policies, such as the '375 Rent Reduction' (to reduce the tax to 37.5 per cent of the harvest) and the 'Sale of Public Land' (to ensure that peasants own their own land). *Spring in the Countryside* (1951, dir. Wu Shu-xun) is one of the most famous examples.

Besides the policies on anti-communism and agriculture, the most crucial change brought by the Nationalist government was that of the language. From 1949, local productions were divided into two groups: national-language cinema (*guo-yu pian*), which was first produced by state-owned studios and conducted entirely in Mandarin, the official language of the Nationalist government, and Taiwanese-dialect cinema (*tai-yu pian*), which was produced mainly by private companies to satisfy the local Taiwanese audience and conducted solely in the most commonly used language in Taiwan, Hokkien. The distinction between these two cinemas suggests that the government did not recognize the Taiwanese dialect as part of national culture. The distinction between the two also discouraged the development of Taiwanese-dialect cinema, since they were banned from entering the Golden Horse Awards. Established in 1962 and awarded only to national-language films, the Golden Horse Awards is Taiwan's equivalent to the Academy Awards.

However, the real situation was more complex than it appeared at first sight. I will explain this intricate situation from two major perspectives: the industrial changes brought by the civil war, and the complex relationship between Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect cinema, which both lead to the vexed question of Taiwanese identity. First of all, it is necessary to note that the only reason for *Happenings in Ali Shan* (1949, dir. Zhang Ying, Guotai Film Company) being labelled as the first 'national language cinema made in Taiwan' was because the film crew, who were originally from mainland China, could not return owing to the intensified situation of

the civil war. The circumstances of this specific film demonstrates the fact that the beginning of Taiwan's 'national-language cinema' came into existence as a result of the Nationalist government's defeat, rather than as a clearly defined and historically developed term to delineate the local film industry. The peculiar thing about this film is that it applied the story of a fictional character, Wu Feng, who was invented by the Japanese government for the purposes of 'educating' Taiwanese aborigines. The story focuses on a Han official, Wu Feng, who had a very deep friendship with aboriginal people but who could not tolerate seeing them killing people from other tribes, so he devoted his own life to teach Taiwanese aborigines the Confucian principles of kindness. An ironic fact about the first Mandarin film made in Taiwan is that mainlanders chose to follow the pedagogical language practiced by Japanese in their first attempt to make a story about Taiwan, after eight years of fighting the Japanese. Its theme music, *High Mountains Green*, also became a stereotypical totem of 'Taiwanese culture', which was constructed only through Han people's romanticization of the Taiwanese aborigine and not by any truthful depiction.

Besides the numerous contradictions in the earliest 'national-language cinema', which was ironically duplicated from the Japanese colonizers' story, the civil war had two major impacts on the local film industry in Taiwan, with both adding uncertainties to the establishment of a local consciousness in the future. Twenty percent of professionals in the film industry left China because of the civil war, and of this group 15% of them went to Hong Kong while only 5% came to Taiwan.[12] Although they settled in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the shared experience, knowledge, language and cultural background of this group of professionals ensured the increasingly frequent collaborations between these two regions, and eventually

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[12] Huang Ren, 'A General Introduction of Production Companies in Taiwan: 1949-1980', in *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema 1898-2000, Vol. I* (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 2005), p. 15.

caused radical changes in the industrial structure of Taiwan's film and cinema in the 1970s. Furthermore, since the Nationalist government tried to encourage Hong Kong filmmakers to resist communism, films from Hong Kong were granted various advantages, such as reduced taxes and no restrictions on importing them to Taiwan. In addition, Hong Kong cinema has been regarded as national-language film and winning many Golden Horse Awards since its establishment in 1962.

Another change following the segregation of Taiwan and China was the closed-door policy of the PRC, which provided the film industry in Taiwan with an opportunity to compete in the demanding market of Chinese-language cinemas in the Southeast Asia region.[13] The industrial connectivity between Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the commercial demands from other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, prompted the Mandarin cinema made in Taiwan to be trans-regional. Furthermore, this transnational tendency also ironically suited the Nationalist government's intention to consolidate its status as the legitimate China. As a result, this 'national-language cinema' was not about real life on the island, but about an imaginary China that only existed in the Nationalist government's ideology.

It is also worth noting that the distinction between Mandarin and the Taiwanese-dialect films was not based on a straightforward dichotomy before the more strict policy of the 'Mandarin Movement' was imposed in 1966. Around the same time that the Nationalist government established institutionalized studios to promote Mandarin anti-communist films as the only national cinema, Taiwanese-dialect cinema emerged as a popular form of entertainment for local Taiwanese people, and the production numbers climbed rapidly from 12 films in 1956 to 62 films in 1958,

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[13] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics,* pp. 35-37.

before reaching its climax in 1962 with 120 productions.[14] The importance of Taiwanese-dialect cinema is not only confirmed by its impressive quantity, but also by its profound relationship with the local culture, since it originated from 'Taiwanese Singing Opera' (*gezaixi*), a local form of performance. Various appealing elements of 'Taiwanese Singing Opera', such as the low cost of production, attractive visual forms, and the flexibility allowing it to be shown as a live performance or a recorded film, had a significant influence on the emergence of Taiwanese-dialect cinema in the mid-1950s. *The Story of Sit Ping-kwai and Wong Bo-chuen* (1956, dir. He Ji-ming, Hua-xing)*,* a film shot in the style of Taiwanese Singing Opera, opened the path for Taiwanese-dialect cinema.[15] This film is testimony to the hybridity of Taiwanese culture, since it combines local language and performance forms with a famous Chinese folk legend of the Tang Dynasty. It is either essentially Taiwanese or Chinese, but a hybrid form emerged to suit the public's need.

From the perspective of film production, the relationship between Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect cinema was closer than it seemed. Zhang Ying, the director of *Happenings in Ali Shan*, also directed many Taiwanese-dialect films and even won the Best Director Award at the first Taiwan-dialect Cinema Awards, which were sponsored by *Credit News* (the former name of *China Times*) in 1957, not by the government. Zhang Ying became the manager of the state-owned CMPC, but he also ran his own Taiwanese-dialect cinema company.[16] Furthermore, the 874 Taiwanese-dialect films made in the 1960s also provided a training ground for a myriad of

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[14] The source of all the production numbers is Lu's, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, p. 472. The data gathered in this book is the most complete and has been applied as the main source by other scholars writing on Taiwan's film history.
[15] Between 1955 and 1975, the local film industry produced 1115 Taiwanese-dialect films. After 1975, the number declined drastically, and only 7 Taiwanese-dialect films were made from1976 to 1989.
[16] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, p. 34.

successful directors who later turned to work in Mandarin cinema, and the stylistic choices they applied to Taiwanese-dialect cinema also influenced the look of Mandarin cinema. The most famous example is Lee Hsing, who made the first Taiwanese travelogue film, *Brother Liu and Brother Wang on the Roads in Taiwan* (1958), to capture the scenic beauty of Taiwan. As a Taiwanese version of a Laurel-and-Hardy type of comedy, the film was so popular that he made a sequel in the same year. Lee's beginnings as a director of Taiwanese-dialect cinema did not prevent him from succeeding in Mandarin cinema, and Lee even became a role model for all kinds of genres, producing good quality works of the CMPC's trademark 'Healthy Realism', romance films adapted from Qiong Yao's novels, and costume dramas that promoted the Confucian-oriented Chinese identity. It is important to acknowledge this filmmaker and master of Chineseness was firstly nurtured by Taiwanese culture.

The distinction between Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect cinema was also less explicit during the early days of Nationalist rule. In fact, even the CMPC produced at least four Taiwanese-dialect films between 1956 and 1958, including a remake of the 1930s local classic *Waiting for the Spring Wind*,[17] before entering into its golden period of Healthy Realism. Around that time, these state-owned studios also produced propagandist films with a mixed soundtrack of Taiwanese-dialect and Mandarin, such as *Descendants of the Yellow Emperor* (1956), in order to be audience-friendly. On one occasion, official prizes even encouraged the trend of mixing these two languages in filmmaking. For example, the CMPC's Taiwanese-dialect/Mandarin film *Sweet Home* (1962, dir. Zong You) won the Excellence Award for Narrative Cinema at the first Golden Horse Awards in 1962. Filmmakers'

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[17] In 1977, the CMPC again used the title *Waiting for the Spring Wind* and transformed the Taiwanese folk song into a propaganda film.

participation in both Taiwanese-dialect and Mandarin cinema and the state-owned companies' initial experiment with mixed soundtracks both remind us that Taiwan cinema started as a hybrid cultural form, mixed with the Nationalist government's essentialist nationalism and a demand from the local audience. Besides, Taiwanese-dialect cinema did not limit itself to Taiwanese subject matter either, and it even applied more Western elements from literary classics, the James Bond series, the Tarzan legend, and so on. For example, on the poster for the Taiwanese-dialect film *Tarzan and Treasure* (1965, dir. Liang Zhe-fu), the copywriting shows 'Taiwan-Macao-Singapore-Malaysia', suggesting the 'international route' of the character's adventure. The most well-known example of how Taiwanese-dialect cinema combines foreign elements is Hsin Chi's *Bride in Hell* (1965), a Taiwanese adaptation of the Western novel *Mistress of Mellyn* (written by Victoria Holt and first published in 1960). The film presents a gothic atmosphere that had rarely appeared in any Chinese-language films, and demonstrates Taiwanese-dialect cinema's early awareness of Western influences on Taiwanese society.

However, the production numbers for Taiwanese-dialect cinema fell drastically from the late 1960s, and eventually fell to zero in 1975. Most scholars have attributed the reason to Taiwanese-dialect cinema's coarse quality and the trend of over-exploiting popular subject matter until it lost its commercial value.[18] However, Hsu Le-mei argues that the Mandarin movement should be considered as the major reason for the disappearance of Taiwanese-dialect cinema.[19] Although the Nationalist government introduced and implemented the Mandarin Movement after they retreated to Taiwan, the more strict policy to promote Mandarin was not enforced until 1966. Under this policy, both the Taiwanese dialect and Japanese were

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[18] Ye Long-yen, *The Orthodox Chronicles of the Vicissitudes of Taiwanese-Dialect Films* (Taipei: Boyang, 1999), p. 133.
[19] Hsu Le-mei, *Century of Taiwan Movie Industry* (Taipei: Yang-chih Books, 2012), p. 63.

officially banned in schools, government institutions and all kinds of public spaces. In addition, since the younger population had been brought up under the Mandarin Movement, the structure of local audiences also shifted from pro-Taiwanese to pro-Mandarin. As a result, the local film industry entered its golden age of Mandarin cinema and the annual production numbers achieved a momentous 89 films in 1969. Meanwhile, the increasingly frequent collaborations between Hong Kong and Taiwan also encouraged the production of Mandarin films more than those featuring the Taiwanese dialect. As a result, the number of Taiwanese-dialect films fell drastically after 1969. Meanwhile, demand from the overseas market of Chinese-speaking audiences boosted the local film industry to produce around 1800 Mandarin films in total during the 1970s and 1980s, making Taiwan one of the most productive countries in the international film market.

However, the commercial success of Mandarin cinema cannot be separated from the government's nation-building process. In fact, the prosperity of Mandarin film in the 1960s was firstly achieved by the CMPC's new tactic of Healthy Realism, which aimed to promote anti-communism by a softer route. Gong Hong, the new manager of the CMPC, started the movement of Healthy Realism in 1963 after watching Lee Hsing's *Our Neighbor* (1963), a film that reveals how mainlanders adapted to their difficult new life in Taiwan. Inspired by Lee's realistic yet melodramatic depiction of Taipei, Gong invited Lee to direct two consecutive films, but turned the focus from the urban to the rural. The first was *Oyster Girl* (1964, dir. Lee Hsing), which was also the first colour film made in Taiwan. With a young couple's romance forming the backbone of the narrative, the film's real focus was to show how the government's policies had helped to better local people's lives, such as the improvements in the technology in oyster farming and the local election promoted by

the government as a sign of democratization. The second film, *Beautiful Duckling* (1965, dir. Lee Hsing), continued *Oyster Girl*'s dual emphasis on the government's efforts in bettering local people's livelihoods and the values of family tradition. However, the concept of the family is peculiar in *Beautiful Duckling* and merits further analysis. The story tells of an innocent girl Xiaoyue and her foster father, who runs a farm and participates in the government's experiments for raising genetically improved ducks. However, she doesn't know that she was adopted, and her foster father always tries to hide the truth in order to protect her feelings. The girl's biological brother, who is a member of a 'Taiwanese Singing Opera' troupe, finds this happy family, but blackmails Xiaoyue's foster father by threatening to tell the truth. Ultimately, the brother regrets his evil actions and begs for forgiveness. He also asks Xiaoyue to join his troupe, but she rejects his offer. Meanwhile, the father is also rewarded by the government with a flock of ducks, as a way of thanking him for his participation in their experiments. The plot is similar to *Our Neighbors*, in which the protagonist also takes a girl, whom is not his child, under his care. Both films suggest that the foster fathers can love the children as if they were their own, implying and echoing the role played by the Nationalist government in Taiwan. Meanwhile, the brother's role symbolizes local identity (especially through his association with Taiwanese Singing Opera), which is less respectable.

Most scholars criticize Healthy Realism for its prettification of reality and its wrongful depiction of everyday life, especially the language usage. Set in rural side Taiwan, where most people only spoke the Taiwanese dialect, these films present only characters with perfectly-pronounced Mandarin. Scholars have also agreed that, ironically, Healthy Realism is closer to the Soviet Union's Socialist Realism, and is far away from the Italian Neo-Realism, which the CMPC had claimed as their source

of inspiration.[20] Other scholars and film professionals argue that the importance of Healthy Realism cannot be decided only by its propagandist tone of optimism. For example, Huang Ren emphasizes how these two films denote the turning point in the technical improvement of Taiwan cinema. *Oyster Girl* was the first colour film shot completely by domestic talent. Prior to this, all the other colour film projects required the assistance of foreigners. Since colour film did not really take off until later in 1968, and only surpassed the production numbers of black-and-white films in 1970, *Oyster Girl*'s technical achievement in 1964 was a significant milestone in Taiwan's film history.[21] Hsiao Yeh praises Gong Hong's courage in departing from the government's focus on militant literature and turning to rural life in Taiwan.[22] Furthermore, although Healthy Realism's representation of Taiwan is not truthful, it does emphasize the importance of local consciousness in its own way, since Healthy Realism boosted the confidence of local audiences with stories of present-day Taiwan.

Healthy Realism also opened the possibility of gaining an international market for the local film industry. As Hong Guo-juin argues, Taiwan cinema in the 1960s and 1970s "must be understood as an active agent that partook in the representation and imaginary construction of the nation in an increasingly transnational context", and Healthy Realism's active redefinition of the 'Republic of China on Taiwan' involves a determined attempt to present the image of a nation to both domestic and foreign audiences.[23] Although *Oyster Girl* and *Beautiful Duckling* seemed to target only Taiwanese audiences, they were also the first made-in-Taiwan films to find international fame. *Oyster Girl* was screened in Japan after it was crowned the best

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[20] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, pp. 104-5.
[21] Ibid., pp. 154-55.
[22] Hsiao Yeh, *Stories of the White Dove* (Taipei: China Times Publishing Co., 1988), p. 68.
[23] Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 66.

film at the Asia Pacific Film Festival in 1964. *Beautiful Duckling* was the first Taiwan cinema to win the Best Feature Film at the Golden Horse Awards (the previous two winners were both Hong Kong films). In 1965, the copyright for *Oyster Girl* and *Beautiful Duckling* were also sold to American distributors.[24] They also established the future popularity of Taiwan cinema in the Southeast Asia Region.

Although the nationalism of Healthy Realism possesses an ambiguous transnational essence, another trend of populist film prompted Taiwan cinema to approach an even more blurred definition of nation. The development of commercial film in Taiwan has to be traced from two directions. The first is the industrial change that transformed Taiwan from an agricultural to an industrial society in the mid-1960s. Around this time, Qiong Yao's romance novels emerged as the best cultural medium with which to depict the newly developed urbanizing society, providing working-class women with a form of emotional comfort after a long day at work in factories and offices. The CMPC devoted itself to making romance films almost as early as they began to make Healthy Realism films, and Lee Hsing also directed the CMPC's earliest films adapted from Qiong Yao's novels, such as the box-office hits, *Four Loves* (1965) and *Silent Wife* (1965).

The second direction determining the development of the commercial genre is the structural shift in the local film industry. In 1965, Gong announced the CMPC's determination to turn the party-owned studio into an enterprise, and then he signed a contract to collaborate on four films per year with the Shaw Brothers, one of the biggest film companies in Hong Kong. In addition, famous directors from Hong Kong also came to Taiwan to establish studios. In 1963, the famous Hong Kong director, Lee Han-hsiang, who directed *The Love Eterne* (1963, Shaw Brothers Ltd.),

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[24] Chinese Taipei Film Archive, *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema 1898-2000, Vol. II* (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive), p. 500.

an extremely popular Yellow Plum Melody film, broke his contract with the Shaw Brothers in 1963 and moved to Taiwan to establish the Grand Motion Picture Company (GMPC), funded by the Shaw Brothers' biggest rival, MPGI. Another Hong Kong director, King Hu, also came to Taiwan to establish the Union Film Company in 1967, and he directed a series of classic martial arts and sword-fighting films, such as *Dragon Gate Inn* (1967) and *A Touch of Zen* (1971), which won the Technical Grand Prize at the 1975 Cannes film festival and was also nominated for the Palme d'Or award. The arrival of these two commercially successful directors in Taiwan denotes a new age of filmmaking, when nationalism had to make way for commercial benefits, since the number of theatres (826), seats (441,000) and cinema-goers (180,000,000) all reached a record high in 1970.[25]

The blurred concept of nationalism, which characterized the pan-Chinese martial art films that swept Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Chinese communities, encountered another turning point in 1970, when Taiwan's seat in the United Nations was threatened by the PRC. In 1971, the Nationalist government was forced to leave the United Nations, and within only one year, 27 countries had broken off diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In 1973, the USA established a Liaison Office in the PRC, despite the fact that the USA still acknowledged the Nationalist government in Taiwan as the legitimate Chinese government at that time. The extremely volatile political situation stimulated the resurgence of policy film, led by the CMPC's new manager, Mei Chang-ling. The first film made under Mei's instruction was *The Everlasting Glory* (1974, dir. Ding Shan-xi), a film focusing on a tragic general, Zhang Zi-zhong, during World War II. Since the film was well received at the box office, the CMPC soon produced its next policy film, *The Chinese Amazons* (1975,

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[25] Feii Lu, 'An Overview of Taiwan Cinema's Fifty Years', in *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema 1898-2000, Vol. I*, p. 51.

dir. Wang Ying), which also focused on the pre-1949 China. The next box-office hit, *Victory* (1976, dir. Liu Jia-chang), opened a new genre which blended folk songs, patriotism and policy film. Deploying the popular trend of 'college folk music', these films promoted the youthful and passionate folk music of young talent while responding to the patriotism of college students. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh describes this trend as a "revised nationalism", which applied the emerging "cultural commodity apparatus" to serve the authoritarian perspective.[26] Yeh's insightful observation reminds us that the representational mode of nationalism would be revised according to the taste of the new generation, and therefore would face changes in definition as well.

The resurgence of policy film reached its climax in the mid-1970s, and continued to develop various genres with more elements of popular memory, such as the 'militant educational film' focusing on Taiwanese men's shared experience of participating in compulsory military service. These films also applied the strategy of revised nationalism, adding comedic elements into the plot. Among a large number of militant educational films, the most famous example is *Off to Success* (1979, dir. Chang Pei-cheng, CMPC). This film turns the focus from heroic soldiers during World War II to common men forced into the military. Although the film still aimed to show how military life transformed common men into courageous soldiers, it also revealed the comedic side of military life. In other words, the intention of building a nation's image was no longer limited to brave acts of patriotism on the battlefield. This specific genre survived after other policy films faded out from the local film industry during the 1980s, and the *Yes, Sir* series (1987, dir. Jin Ao-xun, Montage Film Company) was so popular that the whole series expanded between 1987 and

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[26] Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, 'Beyond Visual Narration: College Folk Songs and Policy Films', in *Mass Communication Research* 59 (April 1999): pp. 41-65.

2000 with six films in total. Besides these popular policy films, the CMPC also produced a series of documentaries on the issues between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and screened them in overseas Chinese communities.[27] The official relations between the USA and the ROC were ended in December 1978, shortly before the establishment of formal relations between the USA and the PRC was confirmed in January 1979. This final shock from the 1970s boosted more major productions of policy films, such as *A Man of Immortality* (1980, dir. Chang Pei-Cheng), *The Coldest Winter in Peking* (1980, dir. Bai Jing-rui), *The Battle for the Republic of China* (1981, dir. Ding Shan Xi) and *Land of the Brave* (1982, dir. Lee Hsing), all of which focus either on the KMT's achievements during World War II, especially how heroes/heroines fought against the Japanese, or the tragic social changes witnessed during the Cultural Revolution on the mainland.

Therefore, it is clear that throughout the 1970s, Taiwan cinema was based on two extremes. The first extreme was commercial film, in which both the names of the ROC and Taiwan were deleted and replaced by the enclosed worlds constructed by romance and martial arts films. The other extreme was policy film produced both by state-owned and private studios, in which the nation was represented through strong nostalgic sentiments towards the old China. However, the ideological conflicts in the 1970s were more complex than it appears in the contradictory co-existence of these two extremes, since a rising Taiwanese consciousness also began to shape its voice and encouraged social changes. Although Taiwanese-dialect cinema disappeared from the market in 1975, a more vigorous movement of asserting Taiwanese subjectivity emerged – the Hsiang-tu Literature (which literally means literature about the native soil). Introduced as a critical examination of the nation-state, writers

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[27] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, p. 222.

of Hsiang-tu Literature, such as Hwang Chun-ming, Chen Ying-chen, Wang Chen-ho and Wang To, all advocated an essentialist definition of Taiwanese identity, which not only strictly separated Taiwanese from Chinese but also appointed rural Taiwan as the visual incarnation of Taiwanese identity. These writers wrote about lower-class native islanders' struggle in the urbanizing Taiwan, and asserted nationalism from the perspective of these common people. Hsiang-tu literature later became an important source of inspiration for Taiwan New Cinema in the early 1980s, despite the fact that the New Cinema directors developed a less-essentialist definition of Taiwanese identity.

In the realm of filmmaking, the rising awareness of local identity did not receive the same kind of attention as it did in literature and fine art throughout the 1970s. However, some crucial changes in mass media and policies still began to pave the way for a better environment in which to nourish local awareness and creative freedom. In 1971, the first professional film magazine, *Influence*, was published to introduce both Western film theory and Taiwan cinema. Major members of *Influence,* such as Lee Daw-ming, Huang Chien-yeh, Wang Hsia-chun and Christopher Doyle, all became important participants in Taiwan New Cinema. In 1978, the Taipei Film Archive was established to provide a better environment for film education. The Golden Harvest Awards for Outstanding Short Films, which provided the first platform for future talents in Taiwan cinema, such as Ang Lee, Tsai Ming-liang, Yee Chih-yen and Wei Te-sheng, was also founded in the same year. Other changes in mass media, such as the annual literature awards established by the *United Daily News* and *China Times* in 1976 and 1978 respectively, provided a training ground for young writers such as Chu Tien-wen, Hsiao Yeh, and Wu Nien-jen among others, who later became an important force in the New Cinema through scriptwriting.

These positive changes were concluded by a series of new film policies posited by James Soong (Song Chu-yu), the new director of the GIO in the late 1970s. His revolutionary project of reforming the local film industry included inviting film professionals as the jury panel of the Golden Horse Awards (the panel used to be composed of government officials only), establishing the Golden Horse International Film Festival to introduce award-winning foreign films to local audiences, changing the film law and lifting the film industry from the status of 'special entertainment' to 'cultural industry'. All these changes envisioned a future for Taiwan cinema, in which the sophistication of the local film culture would shape a better image of the nation.

1.2 No more 'Taiwan as China': the legacy of Taiwan New Cinema

Taiwan New Cinema was the result of all the changes mentioned above, rather than an abrupt phenomenon. Emerging as the CMPC's new experiment to 'invest little, but still make profits', Taiwan New Cinema was never treated as the CMPC's real focus in the 1980s, but nonetheless it determined the future development of Taiwan cinema. The first work of Taiwan New Cinema was *In Our Time* (1982, dir. Tao Te-chen, Edward Yang, Ko Yi-chang and Chang Yi), a four-part film set respectively in various periods of Taiwan's modern history between the 1950s and the 1980s, tracing the experience of growing up in post-war Taiwan. The next work, *The Sandwich Man* (1982, dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien, Wan Ren and Tseng Chuang-hsiang), is also an anthology film jointly directed by debutants (except Hou, who had previously directed three commercial films) and it was based on short stories from Huang Chun-ming's *His Son's Big Doll*, which is the representative work of the Hsiang-tu

Literature movement. Similar to *In Our Time, The Sandwich Man* also aimed to reveal the true experience of living in post-war Taiwan. The first feature-length work of Taiwan New Cinema was *Growing Up* (1983, dir. Chen Hun-hao, CMPC), a film adaptation of Chu Tien-wen's novel. The story tells the history of Taiwan in the early 1950s, when mainlanders and native Taiwanese started to marry each other and thereby established ethnically-hybrid families.

As Yip argues, Taiwan New Cinema was formed by the first group of filmmakers who consciously made films about Taiwanese experience instead of serving the government's fabrication of an ideal China. They departed from the formulaic commercial filmmaking of the 1970s and reshaped the nation's image by "writing the self into history",[28] an autobiographical approach that still influences contemporary filmmakers who seek to tell distinctly local stories. For filmmakers who actively apply Taiwan as the core of their works, a specific, essentialist concept of nationhood is not as realistic as the personal experiences of everyday life. Berry also notes that Taiwan New Cinema's focus is clearly on the national, and that it is a national vision different from "the singular and integrated national culture and identity of the classic model of a modern nation-state",[29] and that what it provides is a renewed film aesthetic to convey a national identity that is "multiply constructed and contested".[30] In so doing, Taiwan New Cinema replaces a monolithic and unified representation of national history with "a multiplicity of distinct experiences, sometimes shared, sometimes separate".[31] These earliest three films confirm Taiwan New Cinema's approach of writing the self into history and constructing a new national narrative that embraces the hybridity of Taiwanese society, and this

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[28] Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 76.
[29] Berry, 'Re-writing Cinema', p. 141.
[30] Ibid., p. 143.
[31] Ibid., p. 150.

approach was developed most diligently by Hou Hsiao-hsien, whose first feature film of Taiwan New Cinema, *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983), depicts a group of young men moving from a small island (*Fengkuei*) to Kaohsiung, the southern capital of Taiwan. The transition from a fishing village to a major city transforms the protagonist from an idler to a diligent worker who tries to follow the rules of surviving in the city. The most iconic scene in this film is the sequence depicting young men being lured into an empty building and paying for tickets to see a 'wide-screen colour film'. In the end, they realize it is only a scam and that there is no film to watch in this architectural ruin; however, the huge hole in the building provides them with a panoramic view of the city, which ironically resembles a wide screen cinema screen. Hou's 1985 film *A Time to Live and a Time to Die* takes a step further and transforms the experience of growing up into a national allegory, in which he points out both the cultural and political facts that Taiwan is not China, and that Taiwan should be represented on its own terms. This film captures Hou's personal memory of growing up in a Chinese mainlander's family, which had relocated in Kaohsiung. While at home, he speaks Mandarin and Hakka (the dialect spoken by his parents and grandmother), but he insists on speaking Taiwanese with his friends since he has clearly identified himself more as a Taiwanese than a mainlander. The hybridity of his life experience is also shown through the way his parents use their Japanese-style house, in which they place chairs on the tatami flooring instead of sitting directly on the floor as would the Japanese. Throughout the film, the radio announcer is the only 'person' who practices the standard Mandarin, however, he is invisible and becomes a symbol of the disconnected relationship between the government-controlled media and everyday life. On the one hand, the film is about the constant changes in their family life: the sudden death of the father, the mother

who dies of laryngeal cancer, and the grandmother's inevitable death. On the other hand, Hou characteristically connects different stages of the protagonist's life experience from little boy to teenager with a specific emphasis on the scenery of southern Taiwan. An empty scene, which depicts the impressively gigantic banyan tree in front of the family's house, is a poetic response to the sequences in which the grandmother embarks on a journey to reach her hometown in China by walking. According to her understanding, she only needs to find a specific bridge and walk across it. Although the protagonist always asks 'what is the point of going back to the mainland?' when his grandmother asks him to join her on the journey, on one occasion he does accompany her. Although they do not find the bridge, they still enjoy a pleasant afternoon of wandering in the countryside and picking fruits. The journey is also mentioned at the end of this film, when the protagonist concludes his memory of his grandmother. This journey is not only important in this particular film, but also in the history of Taiwan cinema, since the distance between Taiwan and China was clearly demonstrated for the first time. In doing so, Hou writes his own experience of growing up into a history of Taiwan, and this is also true for many other filmmakers, such as Edward Yang, Wang Tong and Wu Nien-jen.

Besides its renowned autobiographic approach, Taiwan New Cinema's other contribution was to stimulate more active and in-depth film criticism. For example, Hou's *A City of Sadness* (1989), which won the first Golden Lion Prize for Taiwan cinema at the 46th Venice Film Festival, received polarized comments. *A City of Sadness* focuses on the tragic 228 Incident, and Hou's approach was to focus on a particular family living in the mountain town, Jiufen. Since the main protagonist is a deaf photographer, the image of the native Taiwanese is represented as fragile and voiceless, while his ideas are delivered through written words, mainly in letters to his

family. Like *A Time to Live, A Time to Die*, the narrative of *A City of Sadness* is also disrupted by myriads of empty scenes, showing the Taiwanese landscape as a semiotic system and suggesting it was impossible to fully represent the trauma of 228 Incident by any sort of narrative. Wu Chi-yen criticizes this film for its inability to represent this traumatic historical event with a more revolutionary interpretation.[32] To be more precise, Wu expected a more direct and confrontational criticism of the Nationalist government, and was disappointed at Hou's choice of subject matter, which was to represent this historical event though a specific family's memory and how they were influenced by the incident. The doubts of the left-wing scholars towards Hou were collected in Mi Zou and Liang Xin-hua's edited volume *The Death of Taiwan New Cinema*, in which a number of scholars questioned Hou's approach. The volume has become mandatory reading on Taiwan New Cinema, the first movement in Taiwan's film history that has been subject to a diverse range of discussion, both positive and negative.

The fact that Taiwan New Cinema garnered international awards and gained popularity in international film festivals also became the point of departure for other scholars to question its validity for exploring Taiwanese characteristics. Wei Ti argues that the development of Taiwan New Cinema has to be understood in the context of the internationalization of the production of art cinemas and the reconstruction of "cultural capital and taste in national societies".[33] Chang Shih-lun argues that the efforts Taiwan New Cinema made to link up with the centre of the global power structure through international film festivals actually caused the loss of

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[32] Wu Chi-yen, 'Historical Memory, Film Aesthetics and Politics', in *The Death of New Cinema*, pp. 229-34.

[33] Wei Ti, 'Reassessing the Historical Significance of Taiwanese New Cinema in the Context of Globalization', in *20th Anniversary of Taiwanese New Cinema* (Taipei: The Golden Horse Film Festival, 2002), p. 15.

a self-sustained film culture.[34] Based on the same concern for the impact of globalization, Wu Chia-chi suggests that Hou's films can generate more rich interpretations because of the tension between "local consciousness and international perspective".[35] However, as Berry also points out, the fact that these films are labelled as 'Made in Taiwan' on the international film circuit does help to "build an international sense of Taiwan's distinctiveness".[36] This characteristic is also evident in Tsai Ming-liang's case, as someone who represents the second wave of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1990s.

Taiwan New Cinema's success in international film festivals and its failures at the domestic box office also resulted in it being blamed for the collapse of the local film industry. However, film scholars Chiao Hsiung-ping and Feii Lu defended Taiwan New Cinema forcefully, pointing out how it accounted for only 14% of local film productions during its prime period.[37] Since there were only 74 films that can be labelled as Taiwan New Cinema between 1982 and 1989, when there were 762 Mandarin films trying to reach a wider audience, Chiao and Lu argue that it was simply illogical to blame Taiwan New Cinema for the destruction of the local film industry. The main reason was that Taiwan cinema could no longer provide entertainment which was as exciting as Hollywood films, and the lifting of rationing on the import of foreign films worsened the situation. Between 1986 and 1988, the number of foreign films entering Taiwan grew rapidly from 462 to 791. In addition, the increasing popularity of television also drove many filmmakers to explore this different media. For example, in 1996 Hou's scriptwriter Wu Nien-jen, a native

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[34] Chang Shih-lun, 'Taiwanese New Cinema and the International Film Festival Approach', in *20th Anniversary of Taiwanese New Cinema*, p. 36.

[35] Wu Chia-chi, 'A Peeling Shadow: History and Memory in *Good Men, Good Women*', in Lin Wen-chi, Shen Shiao-ying, Li Jerome Chenya (eds.), *Passionate Detachment: Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien* (Taipei: Rye Field, 2000), p. 318.

[36] Berry, 'Re-writing Cinema', p. 148.

[37] Lee Tain-dow, *Society and History* (Taipei: Asiapac Books, 1997), p. 191; Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, p. 278.

Taiwanese who insisted on manifesting a Taiwanese identity distinguished from a pan-Chinese one, began a television programme called *Nien-jen's Affection for Taiwan* (*Taiwan Nien-jen Ching*) on the TVBS channel, for which he received enthusiastic responses from local audiences. In this documentary-style series, Wu travelled all around Taiwan, looking for stories, which were genuine, powerful and rarely told, but which help to define Taiwanese identity in their own way.

After the lifting of martial law relaxed the censorship laws, the film market was flooded with productions featuring violence, crime, sex and zombies. Most local genre films were merely copies from Hong Kong box-office hits and were not successful either in terms of their quality or box-office receipts. The irony was that the lifting of martial law and the relaxed authoritarianism of state-owned studios did not encourage more filmmakers to explore Taiwanese characteristics through cinema; instead, only a few auteurs remained on this route and Taiwan's domestic market was engulfed completely by Hollywood films. For the commercial sector of Taiwan cinema, the strategy of partnering with film companies in Hong Kong and sharing profits was acknowledged as the only economically efficient solution for Taiwan cinema in the 1990s. Under these circumstances, fewer and fewer films were made that explored a specific Taiwanese identity, and more and more films opted for a blurred notion of 'Chineseness', in order to cater for the growing market on the mainland. However, even co-productions with Hong Kong studios started to lose their charm, and the market was eventually occupied almost completely by Hollywood films. According to Michael Curtin's research into how Hollywood cinema took over in Taiwan, the island even became one of the most profitable overseas markets for distributors such as Warner Bros. While local Taiwanese films were experiencing their coldest winter at the turn of the century, Taiwan was "the

company's number-one territory in 2000, taking in 60 per cent of all revenues for the Asia region (not including Japan)".[38] In other words, the film market in Taiwan is one of the most profitable in the whole world, considering the country's moderate population (only 23 million). Meanwhile, local commercial cinema faded away as the nation was only just beginning to reshape its new identity through revising constitutions, allowing more native Taiwanese to participate in politics, and the rediscovery of its pre-1949 history.

Eventually, the decline of the local film industry prompted the government to take control again, and its policy of film subsidies re-established the government as the biggest investor in Taiwan cinema. In 1989, the GIO established the domestic movie subsidy policy in order to support local filmmakers by providing direct funding, and directors such as Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, Tsai Ming Liang and Ang Lee all received subsidies. The initial intention of the policy was only to provide a small amount of subsidy for each production; however, the collapse of the local market forced the government to continue raising the amount of funding in order to save local filmmaking from complete collapse. In 1990, only 12.5% of film production received a subsidy, and each was provided with only three million Taiwan dollars. Only one year later, the percentage of films receiving this subsidy rose to 33% and the figure continued to rise until it reached 50% in 1995.[39] Annual film production numbers also dropped from 76 in 1990 to 18 in 1996, then reached its nadir in 2003 with only 14 local films produced in that year. Before the local filmmakers' efforts in re-connecting with the local audience finally paid off in the late 2000s, there were only a few auteurs persisting in making films about Taiwanese society and present-

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[38] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: the Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley, Cal.; London: University of California Press, 2007), p. 86.
[39] All the statistics of local films receiving subsidies, see Taiwan Cinema Website, 'The Record of Annual Film Subsidies (1990-2010)', 10 August, 2010, http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_252_37. Accessed 18 June, 2013.

day urban life. This thesis aims to present an in-depth analysis of the films made about Taipei by Hou, Yang and Tsai from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, and to examine how these films relentlessly respond to the vigorous ongoing process of identity formation in Taiwanese society by continuing the spirit of Taiwan New Cinema.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the history of 'national-language cinema (Mandarin cinema)' in Taiwan began only because of the KMT party's defeat and retreat to Taiwan, while the development of Mandarin cinema was intertwined with Taiwanese-dialect cinema (local consciousness) and the overseas market (transnational tendencies). Even the Taiwanese-dialect cinema did not pursue a purist definition of Taiwanese identity, but sought its inspiration as widely as possible, from James Bond to Gothic fiction. The hybridity of both Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect cinema suggests the difficulty of pinning down the definition of both Taiwan cinema and Taiwanese identity in a definitive manner. In Mandarin, *guo jia*, which literally means nation and home, is the only word equivalent to nation, state, or country in the English language, which differs slightly in meaning. The song *Guo Jia*, sung by Jackie Chan in 2009 in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the PRC, was the best example to demonstrate the traditional Chinese concept of the nation-state. *Guo jia*'s simplistic and highly repetitive lyrics deliver two major ideas: first, only when the nation is powerful can people's family lives be satisfying; second, 'the nation' (the government) loves millions of homes on its land, and that is why people should love their nation in return. However, the traditional Chinese definition of *guo jia*, has

rendered a different meaning in Taiwan cinema. Instead of regarding the nation as the presupposition of the existence of home, filmmakers of Taiwan New Cinema reconstructed the image of the nation from everyday life, and positioned a large amount of attention on domestic space in particular. To be more specific, directors of Taiwan New Cinema placed the individual home ahead of a wider scope of the nation-state. As Menghsin C. Horng has argued when criticizing Healthy Realism, its weakness lies in its incapability of providing a "more true to life and true to place" representation of home.[40] The need for a more "true to life and true to place" home not only addresses the failings of Healthy Realism, but also lays the foundation for Taiwan New Cinema. Since the process of urbanization has continuously transformed people's definition of home, this thesis hopes to explore the urban side of Taiwan New Cinema from the 1980s onward, tracing how auteurs of Taiwan New Cinema confront urban experience, in order to find the "insistent heterogeneity of Taiwanese collectivity"[41] that characterizes not only Taiwan cinema, but also Taiwanese identity.

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[40] Menghsin C. Horng, 'Domestic Dislocations: Healthy Realism, Stardom, and the Cinematic Projection of Home in Postwar Taiwan' in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 4.1 (March 2010): pp. 27-43.
[41] Berry, 'If China Can Say No', p. 150.

Chapter 2
Historical Background of the Relationship between Cinema and the City in Taiwan

This chapter reviews the transformation of both urban development and the representation of the city before Taiwan New Cinema consciously articulated the imagery of Taiwan as a unique geopolitical entity which became worth looking into in its own right. The aim is to provide a deeper historical context for case studies in the second part of the thesis. As this chapter will reveal, 'the city' in Taiwan cinema is not an agency for declaring Taiwan's universal modernity, but rather it is a dialogue between the past and the present of the unique history of the island.

By the end of 2011, Taipei City covers an area of 271.8 square kilometres and has a population of 2.6 million people, which makes the population density 9753 people per square kilometre[1], which is higher than most metropolises in Asia, including such megacities as Tokyo and Shanghai. This basic data suggests a general image of urban life, which is crowded, polluted, busy, full of indifferent commuters and sprawling high-rise buildings. Surprisingly, this general urban imagery seldom appears in Taiwan's city films. This chapter aims to show how the transformation of the representation of the city reveals abundant cultural details that not only reflect the changes to the film industry but also the changes in Taiwan's identity formation. As already demonstrated in chapter 1, the history of Taiwan cinema has been carved with so many layers of culture, language, customs, foreign influences and the transformation of the market of Chinese cinema that it is hybrid in every context in

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[1] For the latest information about Taipei's population, see Taipei City Government, *Taipei Yearbook 2011*, 1 August, 2012, http://tcgwww.taipei.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=29374161&ctNode=54071&mp=100095. Accessed 23 March, 2013.

which it is situated. No essentialist concept can fit precisely into any kind of film production in Taiwan. In this chapter, I will examine the hybrid essence of Taiwan cinema further by tracing its tangled relationship with the process of modernization, which is most evidently shown through city films made for diverse needs and at various crucial historical moments.

In current scholarship, researchers have identified some characteristics of city film that I plan to re-examine. Architecture scholar, Lee Ching-chin, notes that local films usually apply very few aerial shots and tend to exclude significant landmarks in the representation of Taipei, and these peculiar choices of shot and location may be explained by two reasons: first, Taipei lacks representative buildings and spaces with which most people can identify, and secondly, filmmakers lack a deep-rooted affection for the city. Based on these two presuppositions, Lee concludes that it is a "predicament" that filmmakers have failed to represent Taipei with architectural landmarks nor to construct a unique cityscape.[2] Duan argues that the concept of 'home' has dominated the transformation of Taipei's cinematic representation, and as Taiwan cinema from the 1950s to the 1990s has shown, Taipei transformed itself from a temporary home in contrast to China (for mainlanders) or the countryside (for local Taiwanese), to an empty shell where home meant nothing but loneliness.[3] Lin further develops the argument and theorizes the transformation of city film in Taiwan as a shift from the rural-urban dichotomy to the complete take-over of transnational globalism. In Lin's view, 1990s Taiwan cinema represents the city as a postmodern labyrinth where characters have no opportunities to shape their subjectivity nor any options for an alternative life outside of the global system.[4] All these arguments point

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[2] Lee Ching-chih, 'The Construct and Transformation of Taipei City Image in Chinese Films', in *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema*, p. 27.
[3] Duan, 'Sisyphus', pp. 64-77.
[4] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 86.

in the same direction: the failure of local filmmakers to represent Taipei in a visually iconic manner is due to the fact that the rapidly urbanizing city pollutes the souls of its residents and blocks their exit from the whirl of anxiety, alienation, confusion and fleeting excitement. Based on the analyses of these scholars, while seeking to amend the over-generalized remarks on modern urban life, this chapter aims to take a step further by scrutinizing the dynamic relationship between urban development and film history, and will argue that 'the city' has enriched Taiwan cinema's capacity to pose critical questions about identity formation within the Taiwanese context and to construct a dialogue with the constantly revised definition of nationhood.

2.1 The city as propaganda under Japanese and Nationalist rule

To fully explore the representation of the city in Taiwan's film history, it is necessary to trace further back to the Japanese colonial period, during when the concept of a modern city emerged for the first time in Taiwan. At the time of the first public screening of films by the Lumière brothers on 28 December 1895, the Qing Dynasty, which had held sovereignty over Taiwan since 1683, had just signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki to cede Taiwan to Japan after the First Sino-Japanese War. As Lee Tien-daw notes, the Japanese government had previously acknowledged cinema's power to consolidate politics, the economy and culture during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, and in the same year a series of screenings to promote Japanese culture began in Taiwan, where the propagandistic function of cinema was systematically carried out through both the private and public sectors.[5] Throughout the colonial occupation, local production was severely repressed, while documentaries made for the purposes

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[5] Lee, *Taiwanese Cinema, Society and History*, p. 41.

of supporting Japanese Imperialism took shape. Taipei was used to demonstrate the Japanese government's major achievement in modernizing the island, and it became a symbol to distinguish the Japanese influence from the previous Chinese regime. The affinity between cinema and the city in Taiwan not only started with strong political implications, but was also rooted in a mind-set aimed at ruling out the Han-Chinese cultural influence.

In order to probe into how cinema and the city constructed a dynamic relationship, first it is necessary to comprehend how the concept of a modern city was shaped in Taiwan. It was during the rule of the Qing Dynasty that Taipei was confirmed as the administrative centre of Taiwan. The official validation happened when the status of Taipei was changed to 'Taipei Prefecture' in 1875, and this was the first time that Taipei was regarded as the political centre of the island. From 1886 to 1894, Taipei served as the provincial capital of Taiwan Province, and the Taipei City Wall was completed to symbolize the city's identity as the island's prime location.[6] The wall displayed a strong character of Chinese regal architecture, symbolizing the imperial power. After 1885, Governor Liu Ming-chuan officially began the process of modernization in Taipei by establishing railways to connect the major business areas in Taipei. The railroad connecting the port city Keelung and the administrative centre Taipei, which was completed in 1891, was the earliest railroad in China. Since then, Taipei has played a unique role in the conflicts between tradition and modernization in both Chinese and Taiwanese contexts. Before Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895, it had become the most modernized province in China's territory, despite the fact that the Qing Dynasty had neglected the island from the 17th century to the mid-19th century.

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[6] Taipei Archive Committee, *Record of Taipei City, Vol. I* (Taipei: Taipei Archive Committee, 1970), p. 47.

As architecture scholar Shih-wei Lo notes, the establishment of the Taipei City Wall is symbolic in terms of identity formation because it was built jointly by the government and local merchants, with a mutual understanding of how the wall marked Taipei's multiple identities. These identities included the central power it held over other areas in Taiwan, a new administrative status which showed its attachment to the Qing Dynasty, and "the rising cosmopolitan development resulting from trade with westerners".[7] Therefore, the wall addresses three major aspects of the foundation of Taipei's urban history: the relationship between Taipei and the rest of the island, between Taipei and mainland China, and between Taipei and the emerging global capitalism. The wall is not only a milestone in terms of the city's urban planning, but it also serves as a concrete metaphor, marking the city as an intersection of diverse cultural, political and economic forces that will continue to linger and intertwine. The symbolic Taipei Wall was demolished in 1904, and only the North Gate was preserved as a transportation node. The wall itself was replaced by a boulevard, which officially began the large-scale architectural reform. Because of their strong ambition to turn Taipei into the economic and military hub of the Asia-Pacific region, the Japanese government experimented with Western urbanism in their first colony, Taiwan, in order to achieve their ultimate goal of establishing the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. The Japanese government's ambition to establish Taiwan as their new base for colonizing other parts of Southeast Asia was most evident in the architectural style adopted on the island. The most common styles were Western, including Classical and Baroque, blended with Japanese aesthetics. The Governor-General's Office Building, designed by Uheiji Nagano and completed in 1919 (now the Presidential Office Building), is a good example of how

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[7] Shih-wei Lo, 'A Palimpsest of "Faits Urbains" in Taipei', in *Journal of Architectural Education* 52.2 (November 1998): p. 68.

Japanese architects blended Renaissance, Baroque and neo-Classical features into one building. With a 130 metre-wide façade and a 60-metre tower, this building was the tallest architectural structure in Taipei during Japanese rule. Facing east, the direction of the rising sun that symbolizes Japanese spirit, this building shows how the Japanese government integrated nationalism with Western architectural styles. As the pace of modernization accelerated and the definition of progress changed in terms of architectural design, those buildings designed in the late 1930s displayed a strong tendency towards modernism. For example, the Taipei City Hall during Japanese rule (which was renamed Taipei Zhongshan Hall after Taiwan's retrocession to the Nationalist government) was designed by Ide Kaoru and was completed in 1936. The four-story steel structure applied eclecticism and integrated modernist aesthetics with classical patterns. Today, most governmental institutions built during Japanese rule retain their original functions as administrative and educational institutions.

Figure 2.1 (Left) A festive nocturnal scene opens the episode 'The Modern Taipei'.
Figure 2.2 (Middle) The scene of the Taiwan Governor's Monopoly Bureau.
Figure 2.3 (Right) A wipe transition is used to move on to the next sequence and to create a sense of order.

Although the architectural landmarks built during Japanese rule remain as one of the most significant features of Taipei's city image, no films made after World War II captured as many images of them as the earliest documentary of Taipei, *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, which was shot in the 1930s. In this film, Taipei plays a crucial role in manifesting the colonizer's achievements in modernizing Taiwan. When the narrator states how Taiwan was transformed from its "primitive state during the Qing

Dynasty" to the "New Taiwan created by the Japanese government and people", a large number of street scenes of Taipei are shown as proof. In a chapter titled 'The Modern Taipei', a nocturnal scene with floating signs using neon lights functions as a prelude (*Figure 2.1*). Then, rigid formalism dominates the remainder of the film to reveal ten landmarks in Taipei (*Figure 2.2*), including the State Office of Taipei, the Taiwan Army Headquarters, the Taiwan Governor's Monopoly Bureau, the Central Research Centre, Taipei Hospital and the Taiwan Power Company. Each of the buildings is shown with a long shot of its front elevation which is followed by panning shots to reveal more details of the building and its location, while the previous scene is usually replaced with a wipe transition (*Figure 2.3*), which creates a systematic style for the whole chapter. In terms of sound design, the whole chapter is accompanied by a choir singing lyrics in a celebratory mode, such as "Taipei, Taipei, our Taipei […] the bright, ideal high-rise tower". The systematic usage of camerawork and editing techniques responds strongly to Lo's argument about Taipei's main functions for the Japanese government: the first was "to display the supremacy of the colonial power", and the second was to demonstrate "a model for further expansion".[8] Together with the government's Westernized architectural designs, the documentary, which is conducted with extreme formalism, shows how Taipei was framed with new imagery and a new identity that looked outwards instead of inwards. Taipei represented a new identity where both its original content had been emptied out, similar to the demolished Taipei Wall, and its structure was also stretched to uncertainty and heterogeneity.

The implication of propaganda was transformed into a different style but remained influential in the representation of the city. After Japan's surrender in 1945, the

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[8] Ibid., p. 69.

intense Nationalist-Communist Civil War on the mainland drove the Nationalist-led Republic of China to Taiwan in 1949. Defeated by the PRC, the Nationalist government regarded Taipei as a temporary military base for retrieving its lost land, rather than as a home for family settlement and industrial development. Not only did the population in the capital suddenly grow significantly following the retreat of 2 million mainlanders to Taiwan with the government, but the roads and streets in Taipei were also converted from Japanese to Chinese names based on the Nationalist government's version of China. For example, 'Bei-ping' was the old name used for 'Beijing' during the Nationalist rule on the mainland, but it became 'Bei-ping East Road' and 'Bei-ping West Road' on the map of Taipei. Almost all of the provinces and their capitals were transformed into street names according to their location on the mainland; for example, Chong-ching, the capital of the southwest province Si Chuan, became 'Chong-ching South Road' and 'Chong-ching North Road' in the southwest region of Taipei City. Traditional Chinese values and the names of national figures, such as the president Chiang Kai-shek, were also interwoven into the new map. Chiang Kai-shek's other name 'Zhong-zheng', which literally means 'central and square' and refers to the values of honesty and justice, is now the most pervasive road name in Taiwan.

Due to the government's focus on national defence, the investment put into infrastructure projects for urban planning before the early 1960s was modest, despite the fact that Taipei city was in ruins after World War II. The most prominent establishment at that time was two rows of bamboo sheds along Chung-hua Road, functioning as a temporary settlement area to accommodate new immigrants from China. Partitions did not exist in these squatter settlements, and the thresholds separating different families were adjustable. The boundaries between private and

Figure 2.4 The opening scene of *Our Neighbor* shows the impoverished community in early-1950s Taipei.

Figure 2.5 An interior scene of the squatter settlement of *Our Neighbor.*

public spaces were blurred. As Lee notes, these "informal elements" constructed Taipei's main city image at that time and thus presented a sense of temporariness.[9] Without its own architectural system to symbolize Chinese identity, the Nationalist government, as the defeated colonial government, reinvented Taipei with a new imagery and identity that looked outwards instead of inwards. As Liao Gene-fon describes, films focusing on this period, which were made much later in the 1960s, were very different from the reality.[10] Shot in the mid-1960s, Lee Hsing's 1964 black-and-white film, *Our Neighbor*, vividly depicts the humble living conditions of these squatter settlements in the early 1950s (*Figures 2.4-5*). *Our Neighbor* shows how traditional values which were promoted by the Nationalist government became the only source of comfort when material life was found to be unsatisfying. The film tells the story of an orphaned girl, Hsiao-chu, whose Taiwanese mother died of a serious illness. Living in the squatter settlement with many Chinese immigrants, the girl is soon cared for by one of her neighbours, San-tai. He treats the girl as his own daughter and works hard to improve their lives in this impoverished community. The community is represented as a large family, where everyone addresses each other as family members. The film concludes with one of the characters giving an explicit message to certify this film's propagandist tendency: "the day of returning to

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[9] Lee, 'The Construct and Transformation of Taipei', p. 24.

[10] Liao Gene-fon, 'The Definition towards Healthy Realism Cinema', in *Film Appreciation Journal* 12.6 (November/December 1994): p. 43.

mainland China is close!". *Our Neighbor* may look completely different from *Southward Expansion to Taiwan*, but in fact they are similar to each other in terms of how they represent Taipei as a city looking at an imaginary identity which it has yet to acquire.

As Taiwan's economy stabilized due to the US aid, the government started to take action on urban renewal, beginning with the demolition of these temporary shelters on Chung-hua Road in 1957. Since the government tried to prepare the city as an adequate military base, air-raid shelters, fire lanes and evacuation routes were built between 1949 and 1963. Extensions of major roads including Chung-shan North Road, Nanjing East Road and Roosevelt Road were all completed during this period of time. Therefore, it is clear that the urban development was deeply rooted in the Nationalist government's military needs. This was the case even when Chung Hwa Bazaar, the first shopping mall in Taipei was completed in 1961 replacing the squatter settlement that had occupied the city centre since 1949. The bazaar was conceived with a strong sense of nationalism and its eight blocks were named after the eight important spirits in Chinese tradition respectively, namely: loyalty, filial piety, humaneness, love, trustworthiness, righteousness, harmony, and peace. These eight characters were chosen by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the national father of the Republic of China, as a modernized version of Chinese virtues. Chung Hwa Bazaar is only one of the examples of how Chinese nationalism was applied to reshape the cityscape. Buildings like these show how the urban imagery of Taipei became even more hybrid during the first decade of Nationalist rule, due to the dense mixture of Japanese colonial architecture, Chinese ideology and Westernized infrastructure aimed at military preparedness.

Our Neighbor is monumental not only because it was the first Mandarin Taipei film and the first to focus on the co-existence of mainlanders and Taiwanese, but also because its optimistic Chinese nationalism inspired Gong Hong, the new manager of the CMPC from 1963, to conceive the term 'Healthy Realism'.[11] It is worth noting that according to the domestic box office records in 1963, *Our Neighbor* was the only film focusing on post-1949 Taiwan which appeared among the top ten films. The Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong produced seven other films, all of which were costume dramas based on either historical or fictional stories.[12] After *Our Neighbor*, Healthy Realism soon emerged as the most appealing form of modern story. In 1964, Lee Hsing again became the only director presenting a non-historical film in the list of the top ten box-office hits with *Oyster Girl*, a film glorifying the rural landscape, the advance of agricultural technology, and local governmental institutions. However, although Taipei had evidently recovered from the damage of the war by the early 1960s, the Healthy Realist aesthetics inspired by *Our Neighbor* were first rooted in Taiwan's picturesque countryside. In order to only present the 'healthy' side of Taiwan under Nationalist rule, subject matter that evolved around the underdeveloped urban life made way for village life.

Although the CMPC's Healthy Realism turned away from the dilapidated housing conditions and the poverty-stricken cityscapes of Taipei, private companies producing both Mandarin and Taiwanese-dialect films returned to the squatter settlement when approaching modern material. *The Winter* (1969, dir. Lee Han-hsiang, Grand Motion Picture Corporation) is another classic Mandarin film depicting life in a squatter settlement in 1950s Taipei. Originally from China and

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[11] Huang Ren, 'The Emergence and Influence of Taiwan Healthy Realism Cinema', in *Film Appreciation Journal* 12.6 (November/December 1994): pp. 27, 29.

[12] Ibid., p. 29. When Huang Ren presented his observations of Healthy Realism's achievements, he compared the domestic box-office records and pointed out how Healthy Realism stood out among the historical dramas made by Hong Kong film companies.

achieving fame by directing costume drama films for the Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong, Lee Han-hsiang came to Taiwan in 1963 and remained until 1983. Similar to *Our Neighbor*, *The Winter* also emphasizes how mainlanders work earnestly and steadily to survive in Taipei. The protagonist, Liao Wu, immigrates to Taiwan with his boss, but after the latter further emigrates to the USA, he makes a living by running a stall selling steamed buns (*mantou*, a traditional Chinese bread) in the squatter settlement. After the community is demolished, he continues his business as a mobile noodle stall vendor. The plot revolves around Liao Wu and a girl, Ah Jin, who is also a resident of the community, and how their love is mutually supportive in a time of scarcity. Although *The Winter* is more melodramatic than propagandist, its particular stress on mainlanders' lives in Taipei and their virtuous personalities still suggests that the film does not represent the city realistically, while on the other hand, it situates specific characters in specific spaces in order to interweave a narrative for the purposes of specific identity politics.

The rural-urban tension in most 1960s Taiwanese-dialect films provides valuable comparisons with *Our Neighbor* and *The Winter*. Compared to the positive portrayal of urban life and virtuous humanity in the squatter settlement found in Mandarin films, the Taiwanese-dialect film *The Backstreet Life* (1966, dir. Hsin Chi) presents an alternative version, which is more critical and not dubbed in perfectly-pronounced Mandarin. *The Backstreet Life* is one of the first Taiwanese-dialect films that freed itself from the monotonous reliance on Taiwanese Singing Opera (see chapter 1). Departing from the blatantly colourful style of Taiwanese Singing Opera and similar to the plotline of *Our Neighbor*, *The Backstreet Life* emphasizes the friendship between several characters in the same squatter settlement, only with a more cynical tone. For example, the villains are named after members of the parliament at that

time, and the film censorship system also becomes the director's subject of mockery. The film also captures the protest against demolishing old communities in Wanhua District, the oldest commercial area in Taipei, and therefore became the earliest local production to pay attention to the problem of urban gentrification. *The Backstreet Life* reveals the potential of the urban theme in exploring local culture in a more multidimensional way, and situates the urban experience as an agency to question the authoritarian state.

Other Taiwanese-dialect films were based on a black-and-white rural-urban dichotomy. *Early Train from Taipei* (1964, dir. Liang Zhe-fu) is a film which tells the story of the journey to Taipei of a country girl, Hsiu-lan. In order to pay off the debts left behind by her deceased father, she becomes a nightclub dancer and ends up being raped by her boss. She then accidently kills her boss and is sent to jail. Her lover in the countryside is also severely hurt and is blinded during the process of rescuing her. The stark comparison between the countryside and the city is registered in this girl's destiny and in the loss of her virginity, and as Hsiu-lan laments, "If I had never come to the city, we perhaps would still live happily in the countryside". Another Taiwanese-dialect classic, *Kang-ting's Tour of Taipei* (1969, dir. Wu Fei-jian), also suggests that Taipei as a dangerous place, although ultimately the poor young man from the countryside, Kang-ting, finds his biological father who is a rich businessman who both secures Kang-ting's future and helps to cure his girlfriend's blindness. In Lin's view, none of these Taiwanese-dialect films depict economic activities realistically, and even though Kang-ting's story ends happily, "it reveals another Taipei that refuses to be concealed by the narrative", which is "the Taipei that puts Kang-ting in a completely lost situation the first day he arrived at Taipei and the Taipei that may very likely force him to remain at the bottom of the social

hierarchy of the city".[13] Lin's argument may be valid if we only look at the diegetic elements of these melodramatic, and sometimes even over exaggerated Taiwanese-dialect films. However, these seemingly black-and-white films are looked at through a wider scope, the non-propagandist city films actually reveal major clues for comprehending the hybridity of Taiwanese identity and Taiwan cinema. Firstly, instead of suggesting that villains will always be punished or will simply change into a better person in most 'healthy' propagandist films, Taiwanese-dialect films tend to suggest that the co-existence of both the dark and the light sides of urban life is only natural and inevitable. Secondly, these Taiwanese-dialect films feature a unique choice of music and therefore present an audio-visual style characterized with cultural specificities. Both of the soundtracks for *Early Train from Taipei* and *Kang-ting's Tour of Taipei* feature a mixture of Taiwanese-dialect folk music, Western pop music, Japanese songs from the colonial period, and Mandarin songs from Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s. Taiwanese-dialect films during the 1960s broke the single-faceted presence of Taipei in Mandarin film and explored the more diverse aspects of urban life, thereby preserving valuable comparisons with the ideological representation of Taipei.

2.2 From the rural village to the rural city: Healthy Realism

Although in the first few years of the 1960s, CMPC only released Healthy Realism films set in rural landscapes, it is worth noting that their first 35mm project was actually a twenty-minute black-and-white city film, *Morning in Taipei* (1964), directed by Bai Jin-rui, the first local director trained in Italy. In this lyrical city film, Taipei is represented as an prosperous city with organized street signs (*Figure 2.6*)

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[13] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 86.

Figure 2.6 Street scenes in *Morning in Taipei.*
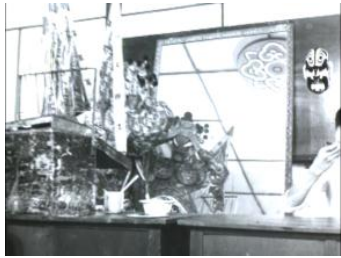*Figure 2.7* The Presidential Office at dawn.

Figure 2.8 Actors of Peking Opera.
Figure 2.9 An empty scene of a large tree.

and landmarks such as the Presidential Office (*Figure 2.7*). Daily activities, including people doing morning exercises in urban parks and housewives leaving their houses to do the daily shopping in traditional markets, are juxtaposed with other cultural activities, such as actors of Peking Opera practicing (*Figure 2.8*). Although this film has been considered as the Taiwanese version of *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, dir. Dziga Vertov) and it captures the city vividly with its diverse activities, many scenes which Bai had originally planned to include in the film were not approved by the CMPC.[14] Ultimately, the scenes retained in the final cut were heavily centred on middle-class life, and many scenes (like the highly organized parade performance) were applied to emphasize the sense of order and discipline. The celebratory mode of morning activities in Taipei was a result of the CMPC's insistence on Healthy Realism, however, even though the final result looks 'healthy' enough, the project was still abandoned by the CMPC before the soundtrack was

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[14] Shen points out the abattoir scene, which has been considered as too brutal and was cut from the final version, is one of "the items noted in the shooting script that fail to appear in the film" due to the CMPC's disapproval. See Shen Shiao-ying, '*A Morning in Taipei*: Bai Jingrui's Frustrated Debut', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 4.1 (March 2010): p. 53.

added. It was not until 2008 that the original footage was rediscovered and became available in DVD format. Despite the fact that *Morning in Taipei* inherited the direction of policy films, it did establish a new aesthetic for the cinematic Taipei and enabled the city to become a protagonist. For example, *Morning in Taipei* includes a myriad of empty scenes, which seem to be irrelevant to the morning activities of the city (*Figure 2.9*). These scenes are usually inserted between different urban sequences and only appear for a very brief moment. The preference to represent Taipei with scenic charm would become a visual strategy applied to later urban films.

The period of propaganda would not cease until the end of the 1970s, although it faced another major transformation in late 1960s since the city itself underwent more radical changes. The changes have to be traced back to US aid, which began in 1951 and helped the Nationalist government to go beyond the stage of survival and invest more in infrastructure. Although the government retained its focus on national defence, its policies on the economy began to turn from import-substitution to export-promotion. Since the labour force was transformed by the nine-year compulsory education programme which began in 1968, the island's society gradually changed from agricultural to industrial. GNP per capita had grown rapidly and doubled in real value every 10 to 12 years from 1952 to 1985.[15] In response to the growth of the urban economy, Taipei was elevated to the status of a special municipality and expanded to a larger administrative division with six suburban areas being incorporated into Taipei city in 1967. These six areas were Jingmei, Muzha (Jingmei and Muzha were later combined into one district 'Wenshan'), Nankang, Neihu, Shilin and Beitou. This incorporation is crucial for contemporary

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[15] Steve Chan and Cal Clark, *Flexibility, Foresight, and Fortune in Taiwan's Development: Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 34.

Taipei, since the districts contribute some of the most representative traits of Taipei's city image. For example, Beitou and Wenshan Districts contribute to the urban imagery of Taipei with their natural landscapes, while Nankang and Neihu construct a high-tech image for Taipei by developing their technology industries. The re-configuration of the topography of Taipei in 1967 also implied a shift in national policy. Instead of regarding Taipei as a temporary military base where the entire infrastructure was aimed at meeting the needs of national defence, the Nationalist government turned to regard Taipei as the real capital of China. Since the late 1960s, a series of classical Chinese buildings began to appear in Taipei, such as the National Palace Museum completed in 1965, and Chung Shan Hall completed in 1966. This was the first time in Taiwan's modern history that the traditional Chinese style re-emerged in the city to remind Taiwanese people of their distant cultural roots.

In terms of filmmaking, this significant shift was accompanied with the CMPC's growing interest in making urban-oriented films. These new propagandist films are more complex than films focusing on 1950s Taiwan, such as *Our Neighbor* and *The Winter*. From 1968, Bai directed three urban films in succession: *Lonely Seventeen* (1968, CMPC), *The Bride and I* (1968, CMPC) and *Accidental Trio* (1969, Da Zhong Film Company) before he made the most representative Healthy Realist urban film, *Home Sweet Home* (1970, CMPC), the first film that officially defined Taipei as a national capital. The three films released before *Home Sweet Home* enabled Bai to revise the definition of Healthy Realism by transferring the focus from the rural to the urban, and in doing so, urban themes helped Bai to radically transform Taiwan cinema through his innovative and refreshing representation of the city.[16]

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[16] Shen Shiao-ying, 'Stylistic Innovations and the Emergence of the Urban in Taiwan Cinema: A Study of Bai Jing-rui's Early Films', in *Tamkang Review* 37.4 (2007): pp. 25-51.

The revision was first and foremost ideological. *Lonely Seventeen* focuses on a high-school girl's melancholia in the urban environment. At the end of the film, the girl recovers from her depression and participates in a trip sponsored by the 'China Youth Corps' (CYC), a KMT-affiliated organization that organised a series of educational activities to promote patriotism. The Chinese name of this organization, '*Jiu Kuo Tuan*', literally means 'a group for saving the nation'. Although the concluding remarks served a nationalist ideology, this film revealed the complexity of urban space in constructing national identity.

The extreme friction between the couple in *The Bride and I* and the fact that the husband is meeting his ex-girlfriend in *Accidental Trio* cannot be simplified as a comedic interlude before the happy ending. In these urban comedies, characters experience more difficulties in discovering their true selves than the comparatively carefree and uncomplicated village people in both *Oyster Girl* and *Beautiful Duckling*. At this stage, the representation of the city in Taiwan cinema gradually addressed the importance of the differences between individuals, while subtly revealing Bai's intention to challenge a perfectly unified and singular definition of Chinese identity.

Bai's fourth feature film, *Home Sweet Home*, is the most representative propaganda film in Taiwan's entire film history which is based on urban life, and it also sets a turning point in terms of the representation of the city. Released only one year before the Nationalist government lost its membership at the United Nations in 1971, the three-line story reflects the intense anxiety about foreign affairs by opening the film with a group of young professionals returning to Taipei from the USA on an aeroplane (*Figure 2.10*). Most such professionals used to go abroad to study and then would stay in the USA for their career. In order to demonstrate Taipei's localizing

Figure 2.10 The opening scene of *Home Sweet Home* applies a split-screen technique to introduce multiple characters.
Figure 2.11 The picturesque farm is the main setting for the first part of *Home Sweet Home*.
Figure 2.12 The Westernized apartment in the second part of *Home Sweet Home*.

characteristics and to create a stark comparison with the United States, Taipei is represented as countryside rather than as a modern city. The Chinese title of *Home Sweet Home* is *Jia zai Taibei*, which literally means 'home is in Taipei'. However, the word 'Taipei' in this film does not refer to the city itself, but suggests that the legitimate Chinese government is in Taipei/Taiwan. Ironically, there are very few images of Taipei in this film.

The irony of representing the rapidly developing Taipei as a country-like place is most evident in the first episode of this three-line story, which focuses on a couple living in New York. The husband brings his newly wedded American-Chinese wife to visit his parents who run a modernized farm. Throughout their story, Taipei only appears in the opening scene where the couple are welcomed by their family at Songshan Taipei Airport, and this couple never leave the farm during their stay in Taiwan (*Figure 2.11*). The second story shows a businesswoman returning home with a large fortune she has made in the USA. In Taipei, she moves into a luxurious apartment with her lover, which he has bought with her money (*Figure 2.12*). However, their relationship falls apart soon after she returns, but she still decides to stay and work in an orphanage in Taipei. Similar to the first plotline, the real Taipei rarely appears throughout the story, and most scenes take place in the apartment with

its chic interior design. The orphanage where she chooses to stay and work is also a country-like place and it presents no traces of modernization.

Figure 2.13 The old house in the third part of *Home Sweet Home.*
Figure 2.14 The modern apartment block under construction in the third part of *Home Sweet Home.*
Figure 2.15 The scene taken place in Chung Shan Hall.

The third plotline is the longest and the only one that depicts a wider spectrum of urban space in Taipei. However, the representation of urban space still conforms to a strict binary structure of the urban and the rural, the West and the East, and the traditional and the modern. The plotline focuses on the relationship between a water conservancy engineer, who has remained in the USA for ten years without ever returning home, and his loyal wife who takes care of his father, brother and their son by selling pickled vegetables in a traditional market, living in an old house that will soon be demolished (*Figure 2.13*). At the end of the story, he relocates his family to a modern apartment and returns to Taipei to contribute his expertise in water engineering. The visually dramatic contrast between their old house, which faces the inevitable fate of demolishment, and the modern neighbourhood composed of a myriad of high-rise buildings (*Figure 2.14*), demonstrates how the Healthy Realist aesthetics divide the representation of the city into a binary structure that constantly contradicts itself. Furthermore, the most recognizable landmark in Taipei in this film is Chung Shan Hall in Yangmingshan (the mountain area of Taipei), which appears briefly in the second episode (*Figure 2.15*). The building, which was completed in 1966, was designed by architect, Xiu Ze-lan (1925-), the first female architect in Taiwan who was trained in the department of architecture at the National Central

University in China. Xiu was also famous for designing the first large-scale urban community, 'Garden City', on the hillside of Taipei. Distinguished from her goal of transforming urban living in Taipei by her ambitions 'Garden City' project, Chung Shan Hall is hidden in the mountains not open to the public. In other words, the only recognizable landmark in *Home Sweet Home* is something alien and far away from common people's lives, and when it comes to the depiction of everyday life in Taipei, the film ironically represents the city as countryside in order to set a stark contrast with the characters' urban experience in the USA. Even when the modern apartment is brought into the narrative, it cannot establish the definition of home without the foundations already built by other impoverished urban spaces, such as the orphanage and the old community.

Nevertheless, *Home Sweet Home* still denotes a major shift in the representation of the city because of its inner conflicts shown between the context and the style. As Shen Shiao-ying argues, "*Home Sweet Home* formulates a Taipei that embodies the ideals of a nation and registers Taipei as the emerging pan-Chinese modern city".[17] However, Shen also notes that it is Bai's "eagerness for the modern" that characterizes the film, not the propagandistic messages.[18] Lin also argues that although this film represents Taipei more like countryside than a metropolis, Bai's modernist style still gives this film a unique urban appearance.[19] James Wicks analyses this aesthetic level further by arguing that Bai's split-screen strategy questions "the state's supposedly solid and stable position" by presenting these images as "disconnected and unmoored creation manipulated by the authority" to

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[17] Ibid., pp. 41, 43.
[18] Shen, 'Stylistic Innovations', p. 39.
[19] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 87.

remind the audience that this film is "a construction and is subject to scrutiny".[20] The most evident example is the opening sequence, in which not only the characters are displayed by a split-screen technique and individually exist in various images, but also a large number of images have no direct connection with the plot, although they are all related to Chinese culture, including the masks of Peking Opera, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Chinese Dragon and Lion Celebration Dance, and so on. Bai's innovative film aesthetics affirm that the potential of city film is based both on the content and on the style. Bai expresses his observations about the contrast between the countryside and city in a more subtle style in *Goodbye Darling* (1971, dir. Bai Jing-rui, Wan Sheng Film Company), a film which explores the sorrows of poor families in southern Taiwan and the busy life of its major cities. The film forsakes the purely optimistic tone of Healthy Realism films and realistically captures an idler's sorrowful life, ranging from him having to depend on women to support him through to the point where he loses his life in a dangerous job. From the aborted project *Morning in Taipei* to *Goodbye Darling*, Bai's directorial works suggest that propaganda film in the 1970s, especially those using the city as the main backdrop, are no longer purely propagandistic and it is now evident that they merit further analysis.

The most significant clue to the need to further scrutinize Healthy Realism films made in the 1970s is to compare them with the latest urban development. Throughout the 1970s, the representation of the city did not receive any profound exploration despite the fact that Taiwan transformed into an industrial society in the mid-1970s and finally established a complete set of symbolic architecture. Films such as *The Marriage* (1974, dir. Lee Hsing, Di Yi Film Company), *Girlfriends* (1975, dir. Bai

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[20] James Wicks, 'Projecting a State that Does Not Exist: Bai Jingrui's *Jia zai Taibei/Home Sweet Home'*, in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 4.1 (2010): pp. 19, 21.

Jing-rui, Di Yi Film Company) and *Story of a Small Town* (1979, dir. Lee Hsing, Da Zhong Film company) all emphasize the importance of returning to the idealized countryside and contributing to the local community. In all of these films, the city is again absent, while the countryside is represented as an orthodox construction of national identity, where everyone should work hard in order to be included. The hidden message pervading these films responds to President Chiang Ching-kuo's slogan of "Establishing the Root from Beneath (*Xiang xia zha gen*)", by which he encouraged young people to contribute their expertise to the countryside. During his tenure as president (1978-1988), Chiang handed over more power to the local Taiwanese and reshaped the mainlander-dominated central government. Chiang also carried out the Ten Major Construction Projects inaugurated in 1974 and promoted a balanced developmental policy rather than focusing only on the capital. As a result, the National Highway, the electrification of the Western Line railway, Chiang Kai-shek International Airport, Taichung Port, the China Shipbuilding Corporation (CSBC) Shipyard, the China Steel Factory, and other major construction works were completed all over Taiwan. Although *The Marriage*, *Girlfriends* and *Story of a Small Town* do not directly depict the process or the real impact of these construction projects, they reflect the belief in progress at the time. However, the fact that the city is absent in these films is peculiar if this is considered against the flourishing classical Chinese buildings in Taipei, such as the new terminal at Songshan Taipei Airport (1971), Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (1972), the Grand Hotel (1973), Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (1976), and the National Theatre and Concert Hall (1978), all of which were completed in the 1970s. All of these iconic works were designed by mainlander architects who had been trained in China or in the West. For example, Wang Da-hong, who was born in Beijing and who trained as a professional architect

both at Cambridge and Harvard, designed the new terminal for Songshan Taipei Airport and the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, which is located in the city centre as a cultural venue and urban park. Even though the training he received in the West was mainly based around the Modernist style, the design of Songshan Taipei Airport and Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall are both characterized by features from Tang-dynasty architecture. Yang Cho-Cheng, who was originally from Shanghai and who trained at Sun Yat-sen University in China, designed the Grand Hotel for Chiang Kai-shek to accommodate foreign ambassadors. The 87-metre high Grand Hotel was the tallest building in Taipei between 1973 and 1981, and remains the tallest Chinese classical building in the world. Yang was also responsible for the design of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and the National Theatre and Concert Hall.

However, the conflicts between Chinese nationalism and Western influence emerged here. The 1970s was the time when Taiwan underwent rapid urbanization, enjoyed respectable economic growth, but faced most challenges on the international stage. All these factors brought about the establishment of a series of classical Chinese buildings in an era when Western influence flooded in with the rapid urbanization. In order to manifest Taiwan's status as the legitimate guardian of Chinese culture, the Nationalist government relied on Chinese tradition to declare their interpretation of progress, order and modernization. Ironically, these landmarks were rarely part of the Healthy Realism films of the 1970s. Not only did Healthy Realism films skip urban settings and return to the countryside once again, but genre films including romance and martial arts stories also encouraged filmmakers to deviate from the real city and to focus on constructing a fantasy world. Although Lee Hsing's *Good Morning, Taipei* (1979) opens with an aerial shot of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, the plotline does not build any connection between the characters

and this landmark. Throughout the 1970s, the city in Taiwan cinema was only an abstract sign without substantial links with the real cityscape. On the one hand, the peculiar avoidance of the latest urban development in Taipei may have been an indirect acknowledgment of the distance between the classical Chinese architecture and social reality, while on the other hand, it may reflect a deeply-rooted stereotype that a well-established city symbolizes vanity, over-competitive concepts of values, and dishonesty rather than a united national identity. However, it is precisely this contradictory attitude towards the city that helped Taiwan cinema to approach its critical position in the next stage of film history.

2.3 The city of everyday life: post-1980s Taiwan Cinema

The multiplicity and cultural specificity of city film from the 1980s onwards will be explored in greater detail through case studies in the second part of this thesis, but here I will still sketch out the basic contour. From the early 1980s, international chain restaurants began to flourish and the government's romanticized version of a traditional Chinese city faced severe challenges from global capitalism. After McDonald's came to Taiwan and opened its first branch in Taipei in January of 1984, other Western restaurants soon followed. KFC came to Taiwan in 1984 while Burger King arrived in 1991. Another important symbol of the newly developed consumer society is the 24-hour convenience store, which completely transformed the life style in the city. Since the first 7-11 appeared in 1979 and the subsequent large scale of the expansion of convenience stores in the late 1980s, the density of convenience stores in Taiwan has become the highest in the whole world (one store

per 2,500 residents), and this has constructed a unique urban image.[21] All changes mentioned above envisioned the establishment of a real consumer society. A large number of department stores began to appear between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, and the opening of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store next to Taipei Railway Station in 1993 was a symbol of the maturity of Taiwan's consumer society. With a height of 244 meters, this building became an important milestone symbolizing Taipei's transformation into a consumer society.

The cityscape of Taipei underwent even greater changes when the Xinyi District was developed as the new commercial, administrative, residential and cultural centre. As the seat of Taipei City Government, Taipei 101, Taipei World Trade Centre and a systematically planned area of shopping malls and entertainment venues, the Xinyi District was transformed from being land for military use between the Japanese colonial period and the 1980s, to the most cosmopolitan area of Taipei. The developmental project of Xinyi District was initiated in 1977 by Lin Yang-kang, the mayor of Taipei at that time, who proposed to apply the concept of a sub-city centre to Xinyi District.[22] The Xinyi District was then developed under the 'Taipei Secondary City Centre Plan – Xinyi District Plan' announced in 1980 and it became the first area in Taiwan to employ urban design review procedures, which allowed it to become the only systematically planned zone for the financial and entertainment industries in Taipei. The plan was executed by dividing the area into multiple squares for the convenience of urban planning, where some buildings were named by the code of the square in which they were located, such as Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store A11 (completed in 1997) and Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department

[21] *Taipei Times*, July 10, 2009, 'Convenience Store Density Highest in Taiwan: Report', http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/biz/archives/2009/07/10/2003448311. Accessed 21 March, 2013.
[22] Zeng Xu-zheng, *The Formation of Urban Consciousness and the Urban Process of Taipei City after the Second World War* (PhD thesis. National Taiwan University, 1994), p. 52.

Store A8 (completed in 2001). In the same area, the Warner Vieshow Cinema Village, the first cinema multiplex in Taiwan was established in 1997.

More importantly, the social atmosphere was changed radically following the lifting of martial law and the establishment of the first major opposition party 'the Democratic Progressive Party' (DPP) in 1987. The changes in domestic politics began to reveal the problematic side of the government's use of Chinese tradition. On the one hand, the need to reconstruct Taiwanese identity outside the singular definition provided by the authoritarian state encouraged people to examine their own experience of growing up on the island, and applied an autobiographical approach to interweave Taiwan's modern history, as was the case for most filmmakers of Taiwan New Cinema. On the other hand, the forced gentrification, such as the controversial project of Da An Forest Park that resulted in the eradication of an entire old community in the early 1990s, also prompted people to re-imagine how the city may have been defined and would possibly have influenced identity formation. The demolishing of old communities, mainly veterans' villages, should also be discussed in relation to the construction of the Taipei Rapid Transit System (or commonly known as the MRT, mass rapid transit) which commenced in 1988. Since the construction work lasted for eight years and the metro system was finally open to the public in 1996, the inner-city traffic and living conditions were severely affected.

The collision between various forces, including Chinese and Taiwanese identities and tradition and modernization, were transformed into a strong source of inspiration for Taiwan New Cinema, which not only made critical comments on urban development and reflected collective memories of the anxiety felt in a rapidly urbanizing society, but it also reveals how cinema can produce a representation of

the city which is both provocative and profound enough to respond to the transformation of Taiwanese identity. The film that officially launched Taiwan New Cinema was *In Our Time*, a four-part film depicting the development of Taiwanese society between the 1950s and the 1980s. This film not only provides a retrospective view on the transformation of modern Taiwan, but it also demonstrates how the representation of the city can address the issues of identity. The fourth episode, *Say Your Name*, which was directed by Chang Yi and represents 1980s' Taipei, tells the story of a couple moving into a new apartment in order to be closer to the wife's new office. However, on her first day of work, she forgets to bring her ID and is refused entry to her office. This seemingly intense situation is later turned into a comedy when she rushes home and finds her husband, who accidently locks himself out, then fails to climb into their apartment through the balcony, and falls to the ground. In isolation, this episode seems to address the universal experience of living in a large city, however, if it is considered against the previous three episodes of *In Our Time*, it is evident that the transformation of identity formation in Taiwan is closely tied to urbanization.

Taiwan New Cinema's concern for social change also led it to make a more immediate response to the transforming cityscape. *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (1983, dir. Yu Kan-ping, Cinema City Enterprises) is a musical film focusing on the demolition of a veterans' village in the city centre of Taipei. The story reveals the background of a popular singer, Ah-mei. As an orphan, she was found and kept by an old soldier living in a veterans' village in central Taipei. Influenced by her foster father, Ah-mei develops a deep interest in music and becomes a singer. However, she starts to live a different kind of life and maintains a distance from her father and friends in the impoverished community. Ultimately, her father dies of a heart attack,

triggered by the stress of the community being demolished. Ah-mei hurries to his bedside, only to find that it is too late to say goodbye. The film captures the brutal demolition of a veterans' village Jianhua Xincun in the Xinyi District. Under the implementation of the 'Taipei Secondary City Centre Plan – Xinyi District Plan', this area faced radical urban renewal that provoked intensive protests from the residents, who were mostly on a low income.

Myth of a City (1985, dir. Yu Kan-ping, Fai Tan Film Company) continues Yu's critical approach and reveals some shocking aspects of the cityscape, such as the refuse hill in the Neihu District. The story focuses on a school bus driver, who decides to take the children to the beach instead of going to school, and who runs away from the habitual routine of the city. As Lee notes, this film examines the discourse of 'escaping Taipei and returning to nature' on the one hand, while on the other presenting a large-scale aerial shot of the cityscape for the first time in Taiwan's film history.[23] The juxtaposition of a truthful depiction of the city and a desire to return to the countryside is further explored and more intricately situated in *Super Citizen* (1985, dir. Wan Ren), the only film from the 1980s that captures a wide range of landmarks in Taipei, such as Taipei Railway Station, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, the Grand Hotel, and the shopping areas in both Ximending and the East District. These landmarks are shown as a montage sequence to outline the narrative. Taipei is depicted as a dark whirl, drawing everyone into a miserable end. Although Taipei is represented as a place full of corruption and disappointment, the protagonist, who is originally from southern Taiwan, still decides to stay and look for hope in this chaotic city.

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[23] Lee, 'The Construct and Transformation of Taipei', p. 22.

These films have formed the basic foundation for scholars' theorizing on 1980s'

Taipei films. In Lin's view, *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* depends on the

opposition between modernity and tradition to create melodramatic tension, which

commercializes the social problems triggered by the process of modernization.

Therefore, Lin argues that the major subject with which the film is trying to have a

dialogue is that of the inevitable changes brought to a Third World city by

transnational capitalism. Braester considers this film as the first one to "critically

document the changes in Taipei's cityscape".[24] However, he also regards this film as

a "powerful urban parable" that captures "Taipei's particular economy of space and

focuses on specific locations to reveal them as sites of erasure of memory and

destruction of identity", along with other major city films made by Wan Ren,

Edward Yang and Tsai Ming-liang.[25] Arguments like these are also evidently applied

to 1990s' films, such as *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992, dir. Tsai Ming-liang),

Treasure Island (1993, dir. Chen Guo-fu), *Vive L'Amour* (1994, dir. Tsai Ming-

liang), *The Red Lotus Society* (1994, dir. Stan Lai), *Super Citizen Ko* (1995, dir. Wan

Ren), *Connection by Fate* (1998, dir. Wan Ren) and *The Personals* (1998, dir. Chen

Guo-fu). Wang notes that the representation of Taipei is "implicit and blurred" in

these films, and that Taipei is depicted as a site smothered by industrial civilization,

which has no link with either the past or the countryside.[26] Duan's more radical

argument considers films like *Treasure Island, Vive L'Amour* and *The Red Lotus*

Society to be "cut off from the reality" because characters in these films are like

homeless orphans, drifting in the city without definite goals.[27] Braester also

interprets the representation of the city in these films as "a city on the verge of

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[24] Braester, 'Angel Sanctuaries', pp. 187-223.
[25] Braester, 'Tales of a Porous City', p. 169.
[26] Wang, 'Taipei in Transformation', pp. 56-58.
[27] Duan, 'Sisyphus', p. 69.

mental and physical breakdown" where "collective memory is destroyed".[28] The above arguments can be summed up in Lin's words:

> The city is what the films are about. The characters seem to exist solely for the purpose of embodying Taipei. They are now characters with no history; their personal experience no longer bears any social significance, no matter how heart-felt it is to them. Living in a city that cares nothing else but the economic growth, the only meaning of their existence is making sure that the transnational capitalism keeps rolling.[29]

However, if the characters in these films are completely cut off from history, memory and reality and care only about "making sure that the transnational capitalism keeps rolling" as Lin argues, we would not see so many films focusing on the trivial daily activities of individual characters and the most intimate details of their life. On the contrary, we should see films showing how Taiwanese people working over hours and how the representation of the city should display the most generic urban imagery, such as an excessive amount of images of busy offices, chaotic traffic and densely packed department stores, in order to stress the ubiquitous force of global capitalism. Nonetheless, as transnational globalism grows stronger and stronger in Taipei, filmmakers tend to represent the city more and more from a micro perspective paying closer attention to the meaning of urban life for individual characters, rather than for the whole economic system. At this stage, Taiwan cinema surpasses the binary structure of realism (location-shot)/expressionism (studio-shot), as Nowell-Smith has proposed as a means to define city film.[30] To read location-shot

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[28] Braester, 'Tales of a Porous City', p. 157.
[29] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 89.
[30] Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', p. 101.

film, such as *Vive L'Amour,* only as a realistic representation of Taipei would be to misinterpret the director's real intention, which is to capture how Taiwanese youth unveil their inclination to establish connections with both themselves and other people, in spite of serving global capitalism.

The shared characteristics of the representation of the city mentioned above have not faded away after the Xinyi Distrcit was further established as the representative of Taipei's cosmopolitan image after the year 2000. Following the "Xinyi District International Financial Centre Re-zoning Plan" in 1995, major buildings of international business, such as the Chinese Petroleum Company Head Office (2001), the Taipei 101 Tower (2003) and the President International Tower (2004) appeared to renew Taipei's city image. The establishment of these buildings, especially Taipei 101, was a concrete action to elevate the status of Taipei City from a municipality in northern Taiwan to an international financial zone. In 2005, the 'Xinyi District Skywalk System', which connects different parts of this area including the MRT Bannan Line to the Taipei City Hall Station, was announced. This plan aimed to establish a wider shopping area and business centre, with the ongoing project of the establishment of the Taipei Dome and the Taipei World Trade Centre (TWTC) Exhibition Hall. The 'Xinyi District Skywalk System' was designed by Shu Chang Architect & Associates and won the 4th Taipei Urban Landscape Award. However, scholars have criticized this project for focusing entirely on the economic spectacle while neglecting other aspects of urban life, such as civil services and public facilities.[31]

In terms of filmmaking, to date no films have captured this architectural landmark in the Xinyi District, even though it has certainly had a great impact on urbanites'

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[31] Zeng, *The Formation of Urban Consciousness*, p. 60.

daily lives. Although some contemporary city films which received support from the Taipei City Government were made to promote tourism in Taipei, such as *Taipei Exchanges* (2010, dir. Hsiao Ya-chuan, Atom Cinema) and *Au Revoir Taipei* (2010, dir. Arvin Chen, Atom Cinema), the latest development in the Xinyi District was still absent in these films. Instead, Taipei 101 is only represented as an insignificant background feature in a fictional television show in *Au Revoir Taipei*, and the whole plot of *Taipei Exchanges* focuses only on a specific community where Taipei 101 is not even in view. The recent development of contemporary Taiwan cinema confirms that Taipei has transformed completely from a propaganda tool into a city of everyday life.

This latest phenomenon between cinema and the city helps deliver the final remark. By looking back at the transformation of the city in Taiwan cinema, it is noticeable that it has established a shared characteristic, which is the deliberate avoidance of the latest urban developments and iconic landmarks in the city, whether they are in a Japanese, Chinese or Western style. This argument is nothing new, since Lee has already addressed this distinctive feature of Taiwan cinema and defined it as a filmmakers' "predicament". [32] In the next four chapters detailing the case studies, I want to stress that the lack of representative city images should be considered as a means of situating identity in the urban context rather than as a predicament. Since the characteristics of Taiwanese culture have never been paid closer attention in terms of urban development, and since Taipei has been covered mostly with Japanese, Chinese and Western-style architectural landmarks that construct the fundamental part of everyday experience while maintaining a distance from the construction of Taiwanese identity, filmmakers such as Hou Hsiao-hsien,

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[32] Lee, 'The Construct and Transformation of Taipei', p. 27.

Edward Yang and Tsai Ming-liang's long-term emphasis on the hybrid essence of Taiwanese culture provides an elaborate re-configuration of the confused and contradictory relationship between cinema and the city.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on revealing the inner contradiction imbedded in the affinity between filmmaking and urban development, and how this contradiction reflects the need to forge a local identity which is different from the one symbolized by urban landmarks. For example, Taipei films made in the 1960s tended to look back at the squatter settlements of 1950s' Taipei after the city had significantly recovered from the war and the majority of squatter settlements had already been demolished or replaced by shopping malls. The contradictory attitude towards the city is more evident in the 1970s' Healthy Realism film, *Home Sweet Home*. Despite the fact that Taipei is finally represented as the symbol of national identity by being regarded as the national capital for the first time in the film history of Taiwan, the city is transformed into a country-like location in order to create a stark comparison with the advanced modern society in the USA, from which this film tries to lure away young Taiwanese people. Films made in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s share a common characteristic in overlooking urban landmarks and focusing on revealing deeper connections between the urban network and individuals.

Current literature on Taipei film has mostly regarded this inconsistency between the cinematic representation of the city and urban development as either a predicament of directorial creativity or as a sign of Taiwan's obedience to global capitalism. However, by looking outside the most representative project of

urbanization for inspiration, Taiwanese filmmakers are negotiating with urban spaces to articulate a site for constructing an identity discourse that does not rely on a homogenized definition of identity. Through their emphasis on the differences between individual lives that cannot be registered in iconic landmarks, Taiwan cinema from the 1980s onwards reflects a strong tendency of manifesting the insistent heterogeneity of that collectivity.

Chapter 3
Beyond the Isolated City:
Hou Hsiao-hsien's Alternative Version of National History

This chapter is the first of three to examine how the urban themes discussed previously provide crucial visual motifs and the discursive context for the key figures of Taiwan New Cinema. The reason for beginning with the case studies from Hou Hsiao-hsien is because of his prominence in Taiwan's film industry, which is most famously exemplified in publisher and film producer Zhan Hong Zhi's comment, "the top three directors in Taiwan are Hou Hsiao-hsien, Hou Hsiao-hsien and Hou Hsiao-hsien".[1] Hou also provides one of the best examples to illustrate how the hybridity of Taiwanese society can shape a strong sense of local consciousness. He moved to Taiwan from the mainland with his family at the age of two in 1948. Growing up in Fengshan, Kaohsiung, a southern town where the majority of residents were native Taiwanese, he mastered the Taiwanese dialect, Mandarin and Hakka (the regional dialect used by his parents, who were from Mei Country, Guangdong) when he was a child. The memory of growing up among people with diverse ethnicities in rural Taiwan has influenced his earliest experiments of Taiwan New Cinema, but his longing for the outside world also prompted him to leave Fengshan and head to Taipei as soon as he finished his military service.[2] After graduating from the Department of Motion Pictures at the National Taiwan Arts Academy, he joined the film industry in 1972, working in various jobs for various film companies as an apprentice. Before he finally had the chance to direct his first feature film in 1980, he had accumulated a rich level of experience in commercial

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[1] Quoted in Hsiao Yeh, *Jump, Taiwan Cinema!* (Taipei: Rye Field, 2011), p. 18.
[2] Michael Berry, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien with Chu Tien-wen: Words and Images', in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 258.

filmmaking. The combination of his life experiences has enabled him to be regarded as a standard with which to evaluate Taiwan cinema,[3] and it is unsurprising that Yeh and Davis have even constructed a historical framework for the whole of Taiwan's film history based on Hou's career, which they divided into three parts: "the commercial past (1975-1982), the New Cinema (1983-1988) and the international auteur (1989 to the present)".[4] Hou's oeuvre is also discussed as part of a wider concern for Taiwanese history, and as Bordwell proposed when conducting a detailed analysis of Hou's staging style, "taken as a whole, Hou's films follow Taiwan through the twentieth century", even though his cinema is "cinema of mundane detail, of almost finicky attention to small-scale matter".[5]

More importantly, urban themes have been practiced consistently by Hou and they appear to have a clear pattern of evolution which can be divided into four stages. In his first three feature films, *Lovable You* (1980, Ju Xing Film Company), *Cheerful Wind* (1981, Jin Shiji) and *Green, Green Grass of Home* (1982, Dong Da Film Company), which were made under various commercial film companies and advertised as urban comedies, the plots are all based on a conspicuous rural-urban dichotomy which shows the protagonists as urban dwellers who escape from the city and who encounter romance in the countryside. At this stage, although his representations of the city obey a rigid binary structure, these films are still unique because they do not follow the genre rules of romance film at that time, which restrict the settings to living rooms, restaurants and coffee shops, but rather they move to outdoor scenes and explore a wide array of urban locations, such as parks,

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[3] Wen Tien‑hsiang, translated by Gan Sheuohui, 'Hou Hsiao‑hsien: a Standard for Evaluating Taiwan's Cinema', in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9.2 (2008): pp. 211-38.
[4] Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*: *A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 136.
[5] David Bordwell, 'Hou, or Constraints', in *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 188-89.

zoos and night markets.[6] In the second stage, Hou focuses on Taiwan's transition from an agricultural society to an industrialized one in a series of CMPC-funded films, including *The Sandwich Man* (1982), *Boys from Fengkuei* (1983), *Summer at Grandpa's* (1984), *A Time to Live, a Time to Die* (1985), and *Dust in the Wind* (1986). These films accentuate Taiwan's hybridity by drawing the process of modernization into the dialogue between identity and everyday experiences. This systematic enquiry into Taiwan's transformation also resulted in his first Taipei film, *Daughter of the Nile* (1987, Fu Film). However, this earliest attempt to depict urban Taipei was not successful because Hou made too many compromises, such as using a pop singer who was too old to play the protagonist simply because the main investor was the owner of the pop singer's record company. The third stage is his renowned 'Taiwan Trilogy' series, which is comprised of *A City of Sadness* (1989, Era International), *The Puppetmaster* (1993, Era International) and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995, 3H Films). At this stage, the concept of the city became more abstract and symbolic; for example, the 'city' in *A City of Sadness* does not refer to modern Taipei or any specific city, but to Taiwan as a whole. Hou even deliberately sets the story far away from Taipei, the location where the 228 Incident erupted, and expanded into a large-scale opposition to the KMT government, but set in the hills outside Taipei. However, it is also from this stage that he integrates Taiwan's past into Taiwan's urban present in *Good Men, Good Women*, a film representing Taipei as a necessary node with which to make sense of Taiwanese history. This turn also brings significant changes to his film aesthetics and reveals the fourth stage of his oeuvre that is centred on contemporary Taiwan. From *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (1996, 3H Films/Shochiku) and *Millennium Mambo* (2001, 3H Films) to *Three*

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[6] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 141.

Times (2005, 3H Films), Hou consistently explores different ways of constructing a rhythm of daily life in Taiwan. In this final stage, Taipei is the main site for him to identify with the different factors that shape this island's ambivalent status, to confirm the necessity of regarding this island in its own right.[7]

To fully explore the value of Hou's representations of the city, first it is necessary to return to current scholarship on Hou's achievements in terms of the link between Taiwanese identity and filmmaking. Hou has been considered as the main example with which to demonstrate how Taiwan New Cinema applies an auto/biographical approach to revealing the experience of growing up in Taiwan, and for responding to Taiwanese identity's postcolonial, inclusive characteristics that celebrate differences, critical voices.[8] Berry applies Hou's films as an important angle from which to question the united definition of Chineseness, and he argues that Hou's stylistic choices have to be regarded as a tactic with which to approach the collective Taiwanese experience by integrating the hybrid forms of languages and everyday experience.[9] Yip shares this theoretical route and argues that Hou "opens history up to include multiple voices, multiple narratives, and multiple forces that coexist and are in constant contention".[10] Yeh and Davis attribute Hou's achievement in shaping the critical identity of Taiwan New Cinema to his concern for the fact that "Taiwan's

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[7] It is necessary to note here that Hou's oeuvre is not completely based on Taiwan, but the exceptions are indeed rare. The first one is *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998, 3H Films/Shochiku), a film representing brothel life in late 19th century China, and the other two are *Café Lumière* (2003, Shochiku) and *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007, 3H Films), which take place in Tokyo and Paris respectively but still present Taiwan as an important motif in telling the story.

[8] Many scholars have explored Taiwan New Cinema's approach of writing personal experiences into national history through focusing on Hou's films. See Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, pp. 69-130; Berry, 'If China Can Say No', pp. 129-50; Berry, 'Re-writing Cinema', pp. 140-53; Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, pp. 133-76. Major essays that only focus on Hou's *A City of Sadness* include Robert Chi, 'Getting It On Film: Representing and Understanding History in *A City of Sadness*', in *Tamkang Review* 29.4 (Summer 1999): pp. 47-84; Chao Ling, '*A City of Sadness*: Historical Narrative and Modern Understanding of History', in *Asian Social Science* 4.12 (2009): pp. 19-26; Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley, 'Cinema, Historiography and Identities in Taiwan Cinema: Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *A City of Sadness*', in *Asian Cinema Journal* 22.2 (Fall/Winter 2011): pp. 196-213.

[9] Berry, 'If China Can Say No', pp. 129-50.

[10] Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 67.

modern history begins with identity confusion".[11] These scholars all suggest that Hou, rather than following an essentialist mode of identity formation, is clearly aware of the need to deconstruct the rigid link between nation (Taiwan) and state (the Nationalist government and its Chinese historiography), in order to construct a new image of Taiwan through ordinary people's everyday lives, which are filled with differences in dialects, languages, ethnicities and personal experiences.

This strand of argument also prompted scholars to look more closely at Hou's formal systems that manifest heterogeneity of the Taiwanese collectivity. Yeh applies Bordwell's concept of the poetics of cinema and argues that four major factors characterize Hou's unconventional way of storytelling: mise-en-scène that focuses on the comparison between the bright, open landscape and a rigid domestic atmosphere; framing that accentuates the existence of the off-screen space and the multiple possibilities to observe the composition; camera movement that appears to be static but with slight adjustments; and the long takes that make spectators wait, observe and make sense of what they have just witnessed.[12] Udden expands his observation of Hou's long-take aesthetics into a book-length project to explore how Taiwan provides a unique environment in which to nurture Hou's film aesthetics.[13] These formal analyses all emphasize Hou's creativity in dealing with the opportunities and constraints provided by the local film industry and, therefore, they need to be examined closely in the Taiwanese context.

In the extensive research on Hou, his urban-oriented films have been overlooked and even excluded from the efforts to theorize Taiwan New Cinema's importance in reshaping national identity. Despite the fact that the urban occupies no less

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[11] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 174.
[12] Yeh, 'Poetics and Politics of Hou', in *Chinese-Language Film*, pp. 175-77.
[13] James Udden, *No Man an Island: the Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

importance than the rural in his entire oeuvre, 'the city' in Hou's works sits awkwardly in current scholarship. Although Bordwell has suggested that the seemingly neat contrast between Hou, the spokesman of working-class life in rural Taiwan, and Edward Yang, the representative of the urban professional class in Taipei, is "like most neat contrasts, too good to be true",[14] his analysis of Hou's cinematic staging has avoided the urban images and conspicuously favoured films with historical subjects and rural settings, such as *A City of Sadness* and *The Puppetmaster*. Even though Bordwell does pay attention to Hou's earliest urban comedies, he positions Hou's contemporary urban cinema (*Goodbye South, Goodbye*, *Millennium Mambo*) as "an old refuge" to which Hou escapes after making his audacious stylistic experimentation for *Flowers of Shanghai*. This "old refuge", in Bordwell's opinion, reveals Hou's perplexity about his next step.[15] Berry, Yeh, Davis, Chi and Rawnsley's aforementioned efforts in theorizing Hou's contribution to identity formation also focused mainly on *A City of Sadness*. Udden's book-length project on Hou discusses the urban cinema made in the 1990s and 2000s within a very limited length, and the analysis of each film concluded with remarks such as "this is Hou at his most uncertain".[16] To take a step further, Li Jerome Chenya theorized the contrast between the rural and the urban in most of Hou's New Cinema works as a cinematic means of emphasizing a sense of loss in the city, where the representation can no longer approach life experience like rural society.[17]

There are several reasons which can help to decipher this imbalance of interest in Hou's films. First of all, Hou has always acknowledged that filming the countryside

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[14] Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light*, p. 222.
[15] Ibid., p. 234.
[16] This is Udden's concluding remark on *Millennium Mambo*. As for *Three Times*, he concludes the analysis by stating that it is a film showing "how difficult it is for Hou to ever return to an earlier stage of his career". See Udden, *No Man an Island*, pp. 172, 176.
[17] Li Jerome Chenya, 'From Historical Memory to Spatial Imagination: the Loss of City Images in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 27.5 (October 1998): pp. 120-35.

comes more naturally to him than filming the city,[18] and his scriptwriter partner, Chu Tien-wen, also criticizes his ability to depict modern life and argues that historical distances help Hou to achieve better works.[19] Secondly, Hou's conspicuous use of landscape shots has attracted scholars to specifically present in-depth analyses on them. Ping-hui Liao describes how the function of the empty scenes in *A City of Sadness* is to make the landscape a witness of the island's trauma, and Harrison has shared this same view.[20] Also focusing on empty scenes in the same film, Rawnsley argues that the shots of silent landscapes show that "Hou Hsiao-Hsien's active gaze on Taiwanese countryside evokes a strong sense of place", which illuminates Hou's concern for the local history.[21] The above arguments can be concluded by Robert Chi's comment on how the "authenticity of landscape, language, plot and characters" helps to shape an effective formal system through which to explore Taiwan's complexity in *A City of Sadness*.[22] Nick Browne takes a step further and argues that the most significant subtext in Hou's films is the natural history of Taiwan, which represents "the larger pattern of life", instead of the "incidental and temporary effects and consequences" brought by politics.[23] In Browne's conception, the natural landscape has received such supremacy of status that it reflects a philosophy where social changes are only a fleeting phenomenon. Nonetheless, the reliance on the rural landscape to theorize on Hou's re-writing of Taiwanese history is questioned by alternative views. Li Jerome Chenya argues that Hou avoids the traces of

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[18] Lee Ellickson, 'Preparing to Live in the Present: an Interview with Hou Hsiao-hsien', in *Cineaste* 27.4 (Fall 2002): p. 15.
[19] Berry, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien with Chu Tien-wen', p. 259.
[20] Ping-hui Liao, 'Rewriting Taiwanese National History: The February 28 Incident as Spectacle', in *Public Culture* 5.2 (1993): p. 294; Mark Harrison, 'Cinema and National Memory', in *CSD Bulletin* Winter (2004-2005): pp. 12-14.
[21] Rawnsley, 'Cinema, Historiography and Identities in Taiwan Cinema', pp. 209-10.
[22] Robert Chi, 'Taiwan in Mainland Chinese Cinema', in *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 71.
[23] Nick Browne, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Puppetmaster*: The Poetics of Landscape', in Chris Berry, and Lu Feii (eds.), *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 79, 87.

modernization and focuses on constructing a pre-modern image in most of his 1980s'

films, representing the rural Taiwan as an ideal, warm and bright place that may

represent social reality only falsely.[24]

To further examine the city's value in Hou's response to Taiwanese identity, this

chapter will follow Yip's more balanced perspective that rejects any essentialist

framework of national identity and regards the rural-urban dialectic as a non-binary

structure. Yip posits a view which is different from the previous two strands, arguing

that Hou's avoidance of "excessive sentimentality and idealization of the village"[25]

shows that he does not idealize rural images as some people have mistakenly

thought, and that his representations of the city form an important angle from which

to strengthen his observation of Taiwan as a hybrid space.[26] Yip's argument has,

however, stopped at Hou's Taiwan Trilogy series. Overall, the approach of focusing

on only a few films has been a general tendency in existing studies of Hou. This

chapter seeks to amend this omission by focusing on three films that present distinct

representations of Taipei set in various eras – *Dust in the Wind*, *Goodbye South,*

Goodbye and *Three Times* – in order to examine how Hou approaches a Taiwanese

self by his persistent observation of Taiwan's volatile transformation as registered in

the urban context.

3.1 Between the rural and the urban: *Dust in the Wind* (1986)

Dust in the Wind marks a unique turning point in Hou's career not only because it

was Hou's last collaboration with the CMPC and therefore symbolises the end of the

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[24] Li Jerome Chenya, 'Historical Space/Spatial History: the Construction of Memory and
Geographical Space in *A Time to Live, a Time to Die*', in *Passionate Detachment*, p. 133.
[25] Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, pp. 196-97.
[26] Ibid., p. 231.

institutional support of Taiwan New Cinema, but also because it was the first local production to be labelled as a Taiwan film instead of using the ambiguous name of 'Taiwan/China' when entering international film festivals.[27] Being the first film regarded as a Taiwan-only film on the international film circuit, *Dust in the Wind* is undoubtedly the best starting point from which to scrutinize how Hou's representation of the city helps to shape his understanding of Taiwanese culture and identity. This film also denotes Hou's aesthetic turn to a more static and minimalistic style. From *Boys from Fengkuei* to *The Puppetmaster*, Hou reduced the number of shots from 308 to 100, and the duration of each shot increased from 20 seconds to 85 seconds. During the transformation process, *Dust in the Wind* applied the longest average shot length (33 seconds) among his CMPC-funded works.

This film was released one year before the lifting of martial law in 1987, but it presents the enclosed society of the early 1970s from a retrospective viewpoint. The story traces a young couple, Wan and Huen, from their teenage days in the mining town, Shifen, in a mountain area near Taipei, to their later life in Taipei. After Wan leaves for his compulsory military service in Kinmen, an island only two kilometres away from Xiamen on mainland China, he and Huen write to each other so often that the latter eventually marries the postman, whom she sees all the time because of the large amount of letters she receives. At the end of the film, Wan seems to recover from the heart-breaking experience of losing his love, and appears to embrace and enjoy the beautiful scenery of his hometown.

Two visual motifs help to construct the overall design of the film. The first one is the stylistic patterns centred on the train and its related apparatus, such as the tracks, the signals, and the platforms. The second one is cinema and the spatial experiences

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[27] Wu Chia-chi, 'Festivals, Criticism and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema', in *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 80.

related to cinema-going, such as a modern film theatre and an open-space screening. Images of the train characterize Hou's poetic depiction of the mountainous scenery. The opening sequence of the film is a series of tunnel shots taken from the train, which enters and exits numerous tunnels and creates a visual rhythm switching steadily between brightness and darkness (*Figure 3.1*). Then Hou applies two static long shots of the signal and the platform as a form of visual punctuation, to temporarily conclude the smooth flow of tunnel images and to tie them to a more serene mode of rural images (*Figures 3.2-3*). After displaying the static, portrait-like images of the signal and the platform, the film cuts to focus on the carriage in which the protagonists are found (*Figure 3.4*). Hou places the young couple at the forefront of the image and deliberately erases other passengers' physical features by adjusting the camera to a specific angle whereby it can only capture fragmented views of their bodies. The condensed focus placed on the characters and their environment continues after they leave the train, walk along the line, and cross the village to reach home (*Figure 3.5*). The opening sequence, as other scholars have commented on the landscape shots in *A City of Sadness*, exudes a sense of place that aims at revealing the Taiwanese experience.

Figures 3.1-3.3 Images related to trains construct a poetic atmosphere for the rural landscape.
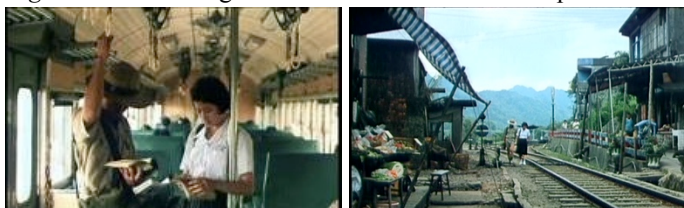
Figures 3.4-3.5 As a crucial visual motif, the train introduces the protagonists and their hometown.

As Kuan-hsing Chen argues, Taiwan New Cinema is 'new' in terms of its "reclaiming of the 'real' home space from which to construct a popular memory of people's lives on the island".[28] Hou's films set in the 1950s or 1960s (*Summer at Grandpa's* and *A Time to Live, a Time to Die*) have mostly evolved around an attempt to replace the imaginary homeland promoted by the Nationalist government by the real home space experienced by Taiwanese people in Taiwan, not anywhere else. *Dust in the Wind*, however, is set in 1970s' Taiwan when the tension between Taiwan's past and present became much stronger than was the case in the relatively enclosed and peaceful 1950s and 1960s. A series of failures on the international stage prompted a wave of rethinking national identity and resulted in the birth of cultural movements like the Hsiang-tu Literature Movement, which established the foundation for Taiwan New Cinema's self-exploration. Besides, the process of industrialization that allowed Taiwan to gradually reach its economic peak as trade deficits turned into trade surpluses (exports exceeding imports) also encouraged new ways of defining the island nation. As a film set in such an unsettled period of Taiwan's modern history, the poetic, serene sense of place does not rest on providing a simplistic and idealized version of rural home, but rather it serves as a reference point for examining the changes that followed.

The opening sequence, by providing such a complete mapping of the protagonists' route home, also asserts Hou's attention to reclaiming a real home space and relies on an awareness of the whole environment that nurtures one's experience of growing up, rather than being limited to the spatial articulation of domestic space. The route home also introduces another visual motif: the cinema itself. Hou inserts a sequence showing a man setting up a canvas screen next to the

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[28] Kuan-hsing Chen, 'Taiwan New Cinema, or a Global Nativism?', in Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (eds.), *Theorising National Cinema* (London: BFI, 2006), pp. 139-40.

railroad (*Figure 3.6*). On the one hand, the blank screen refers to the insufficient infrastructure in this area, where people still rely on temporary cinemas like this to provide entertainment; on the other hand, its abrupt appearance while Wan and Huen are on the way home suggests that there is an emptiness or blankness waiting to be filled in this peaceful and poetic locale.

Figure 3.6 The blank screen abruptly appears in the rural landscape.
Figure 3.7 The screening of Lee Hsing's *Beautiful Duckling* in the mining town.

Another sequence about cinema in the rural setting deepens the question raised by the blank screen and strengthens the visual tension between the on- and off-screen worlds. In the sequence showing Wan and Huen returning from Taipei where they have been to visit their families, the villagers gather in an open space to watch *Beautiful Duckling,* the most important work of Healthy Realism (*Figure 3.7*). However, a power cut disrupts the screening and darkens the whole frame. Haden Guest argues that this sequence serves as "an object of critique", which "swiftly undercut[s] its bucolic fantasy by showing it to be both an outmoded and now totally inappropriate representation of the island nation", and the scene of electricity failure specifically addresses the contrast between the happy peasants in *Beautiful Duckling* and the miners in *Dust in the Wind* who are unsatisfied with their life.[29] Guest's argument is helpful in a re-examination of this film's construction of Taiwanese identity. The impoverished life of the mining village is constantly represented through the cramped framing of the domestic space, which puts Wan's father, a

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[29] Haden Guest, 'Reflections on the Screen: Hou Hsian-hsien's *Dust In the Wind* and the Rhythms of the Taiwan New Cinema', in *Island on the Edge*, p. 31.

miner who was injured and who has to stay at home, in a narrow corridor. In contrast to the framing of the domestic space, the screen playing *Beautiful Duckling* is represented as a complete and uninterrupted composition (no human figures, trees or other trivial things blocking the screen), displaying the full scope of the cinematic image. As Hong precisely describes, films of Healthy Realism are focused on "imagining an agricultural paradise where nature and culture harmoniously coexist", and "a Taiwan that has lived a rural lifestyle of unchanging tradition and diligent labor",[30] so the long shots of the idyllic rural landscape in *Beautiful Duckling*, conducted in a composition carefully borrows the bamboo trees in the foreground to constitute an arched structure for framing the rural lifestyle, actually insert a very different version of Taiwan to contrast with the new one experienced by the villagers. This idealized version of the rural Taiwan in *Beautiful Duckling*, according to Berry and Farquhar, is an ideological unification of "Confucian ethics" and the "spirit of capitalism" practiced by the Nationalist government to secure its legitimate status as a governor of the island.[31] By juxtaposing these two versions of Taiwan through both on- and off-screen realities, Hou not only underscores the insufficiency of representing Taiwan by carefully staged rural images, but also the definition of the KMT version of Chinese identity inscribed in the rural lifestyle of *Beautiful Duckling*. Both the scenes of the blank screen and the showing of a Healthy Realism classic suggest a self-reflexive attitude towards rethinking the sense of place evoked by a series of train-related images in the opening sequence. These two scenes break the harmonious continuity of space and time suggested by the poetic articulation of the mountainous scenery, open an alternative dimension from which to interpret the landscape, and raise questions about how Taiwan has changed from this overly

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[30] Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 77.
[31] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 98.

idealized and homogenized definition of nationhood. By drawing a symbolic example of how the rural landscape was used to forge a unified definition of nationhood, *Dust in the Wind* shows that the rural setting is no longer the final answer to the Taiwanese experience, but rather that it is only the beginning of an enquiry that will be continued by urban experience.

Figure 3.8 The signal in Taipei Railway Station.
Figure 3.9 The protagonist is shown against an out-of-focus background instead of a deep-focus one.

Hou articulates a neatly contrasting set of formal systems to represent the differences between the countryside and the city. In contrast to the static long shot of the signal standing against the mountainous landscape, the close-up shots of the signal and a giant clock at Taipei Railway Station evoke a sense of industrial modernity (*Figure 3.8*). In contrast to the deep-focus shot of Wan and Huen walking along the railway line, which depicts them as small figures in a natural landscape, the out-of-focus shot of Huen waiting on the platform focuses only on her facial expression and blurs the look of the city (*Figure 3.9*). In contrast to the slow and poetic rhythm applied to the rural scenes, the city is represented with faster editing and more fragmented scenes that sporadically locate in various settings without showing the spatial relationship between them. Similar to the visual motif of the train, the representation of the cinema recurs later with conspicuous differences. The first place visited by Huen in Taipei is the backstage area of a theatre where Wan's friend works as a painter of film billboards. In contrast to the lyrical landscape where the blank screen appeared, the backstage is cluttered and unkempt. In contrast to the

screening of *Beautiful Duckling*, Wan and Huen also watch a film in this theatre. However, unlike the villagers' apparent excitement and absorption when watching *Beautiful Duckling*, Wan and Huen seem indifferent to the blazing sword fights featured in *The Ammunition Hunters* (1971, dir. Ding Shan-xi, CMPC). The binary representational structure of the rural-urban dialectic has led Li to argue that Hou not only reveals his personal anxiety about the city,[32] but that he also situates the city and the countryside as two strictly separated entities that deny the possibility of interconnection.[33] On the other hand, there are also scholars like Yip who are arguing that Hou's films do not present a binary opposition.[34] In order to unravel the conflicts between these polarized views that are both built on the very fact of Hou's contrasting representations of countryside and the city, it is crucial to look beyond the obvious and move closer to Hou's representation of the city.

It is important to note that Hou's depiction of rural life is not that is is carefree and easy; on the contrary, it is full of anxieties about basic survival. As a miner, Wan's father was seriously injured during an accident and he constantly had to protest against low wages. As a result, the domestic space, in which the father stays most of the time, is represented as cramped, dismal and morbid, unlike the bright natural landscape outside the house. However, the sense of confinement in an impoverished rural home is reconciled and transferred to the sewing factory where Huen works, a standard small-sized company of the kind that contributed to Taiwan's economic miracle in the 1970s. Hou applies reverse and over-the-shoulder shots to depict Wan's visits to this prison-like place (*Figure 3.10*), so both of their faces are placed individually alongside the back of the other, which leads to a desolate and isolating effect. Nevertheless, in the scene where Wan watches Huen

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[32] Li, 'Historical Space/Spatial History', pp. 130-32.
[33] Li, 'From Historical Memory to Spatial Imagination', p. 125.
[34] Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 67.

Figures 3.10-3.11 The representation of the sewing factory changes as the film progresses.

altering the size of a shirt for him, the over-the-shoulder shot is replaced by a point-of-view perspective, which implies Wan's absorbed gaze upon his lover (*Figure 3.11*). As Tu Weiming argues, the rising of Taiwanese consciousness is shaped by deconstructing the master narrative of economic development in Taiwan, which celebrates the Nationalist government's contribution to Taiwan's rapid economic growth, and turns to acknowledge common people's efforts which were "initiated from below".[35] By revealing trivial details of everyday life like this, this film actively participates in the trend of deconstructing this state-centric narrative. This explains why the representation of the city in *Dust in the Wind* does not reveal any advanced infrastructure or any of the classical Chinese buildings that were sprouting up between the late 1960s and the 1970s, but rather it focuses entirely on the cluttered backstage area of the theatre, the sewing factory, and the print shop where Wan works hard, representing them all in medium shots in order to present more details of the space. The representation of the city suggests that these humble spaces are the locations that are closest to the core of the nation's structural transition. As Bordwell observes, Hou achieves Taiwan New Cinema's function of "opening up an authoritarian culture" by making "a cinema of mundane detail" and through the "examination of the rhythms of everyday life".[36] The part of urban life in *Dust in the Wind* is not as Li argues, providing images of loss in order to further romanticize the

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[35] Tu Weiming, 'Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Taiwan', in *The China Quarterly* 148 (December 1996): p. 1126.
[36] Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light*, pp. 188-90.

idyllic rural landscape and lifestyle;[37] conversely, the city helps to draw the inner reality of village life and completes Hou's cinema of mundane detail.

The tendency to deconstruct the grand narrative of Taiwan's economic miracle is even more evident in the only scene showing an urban landmark in this film: the Chung Hwa Bazaar, which was built in 1961 as the city's first organized shopping centre which reached its commercial peak in the 1970s. As a film depicting Taiwanese society in the early 1970s but shot in mid-1980s, it seems reasonable to avoid shooting street scenes to assure that the cityscape of 1980s' Taipei would not undermine the film's credibility as a story set in the 1970s. However, Hou deliberately presents the Chung Hwa Bazaar as it was in the mid-1980s: dilapidated and tired (*Figure 3.12*).
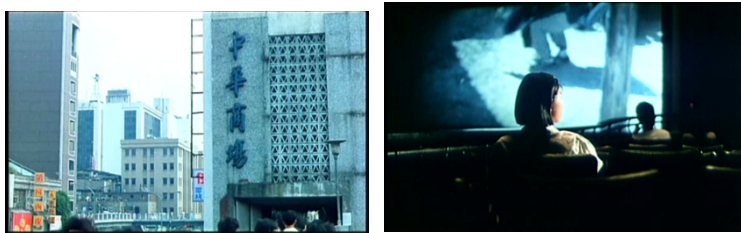

Figure 3.12 The only landmark of Taipei shown in *Dust in the Wind* is Chung Hwa Bazaar.
Figure 3.13 The screening of *The Ammunition Hunter.*

Chung Hwa Bazaar, which was composed of eight blocks named respectively after the eight Chinese virtues constituted by Dr Sun Yat-sen, was a clear example of how the Nationalist government forged a Confucian-oriented identity into urban spaces (see chapter 2 for further details on the symbolic meaning of this building). By applying the peculiar framing of this shot, which separates the shopping mall and the other side of the street into two opposing halves, Hou implies that shaping Taipei with the KMT's version of Chinese nationalism may be an outmoded method that no longer fits the new image of Taiwan.

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[37] Li, 'From Historical Memory to Spatial Imagination', pp. 128-30.

This point can be further illustrated by the reference to cinema again. Similar to *Beautiful Duckling*'s prominent status in the Nationalist government's construction of national imagery, *The Ammunition Hunter* (the film shown in the urban theatre), is a unique martial arts film produced specifically in Taiwan's political context of the 1970s. Unlike most of the martial arts films made by commercial studios at that time, *The Ammunition Hunter* was the CMPC's first attempt to combine propagandist and martial arts films. Instead of setting the film in ancient China like most escapist martial arts films, the story is set in 20th century China and is specifically focused on the period of the KMT's Northern Expedition (1926-1928), a military campaign aiming to unify China and end the Warlord Era. This expedition established the KMT's leadership in China before being defeated by the Communist Party of China (CPC) during the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950). To recall the KMT's glorious past as a political tactic with which to consolidate its one-party authoritarian state in Taiwan, the film represents martial artists as supporters of the KMT. However, the young protagonists in *Dust in the Wind* do not appear to embrace this latest narrative tactic of combing the Nationalist ideology with a martial arts story. Moreover, the screening of *The Ammunition Hunter* is not represented as a full cinematic image, as is the case with *Beautiful Duckling*, but more as an irrelevant backdrop (*Figure 3.13*). This change in compositional design suggests that the gap between Taiwan's urban experience and the fictional story about martial artists supporting the KMT in China is even wider than the gap between the idealized rural life in *Beautiful Duckling* and the mining town where Wan and Huen live.

As Rawnsley argues, these scenes of screens "offer a subtle and interesting contrast to Wan and Huen's reality",[38] as Hou gradually posits a critical attitude

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[38] Rawnsley, 'Observational Realism in Taiwan New Cinema', p. 102.

towards the Chinese identity constructed in the KMT's propagandist films through these culturally-specific references. By juxtaposing three CMPC projects – *Beautiful Duckling* that shows the 1960s' version of Taiwan under Nationalist rule, *The Ammunition Hunter* that revisits the KMT's glorious past to strengthen Chinese nationalism after it was no longer considered as the legitimate China on the international stage in the early 1970s, and the realistic, down-to-earth depiction of Taiwan's economic change in *Dust in the Wind* – Hou presents a unique way to re-construct Taiwanese identity by accentuating the differences between the Taiwanese experience and the Nationalist ideology. However, this retrospective gaze at the transformation of national cinema only make sense when it is seen in relation to Hou's extensive attention to the trivial details of everyday life in both the rural and the urban settings. Although the film concludes in the picturesque countryside, Hou has manifested the necessity of situating the city that reveals a wider array of everyday experiences than the plot in the rural village, and suggests that the meaning of home has now expanded from a sentimental affection towards the homeland to the places where people choose to settle down. The route between the rural and the urban does not refer to a straightforward binarism; on the contrary, it is a necessary route by which to examine the layered transformation of Taiwan and the clues of Taiwanese consciousness embedded in an awareness of Taiwan as the real home.

3.2 Constructing the rhythm of Taiwan: *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (1996)

As the film that "overthrew his tendency to film the 'past'",[39] *Goodbye South, Goodbye* reveals an even stronger urge to redefine Taiwanese identity through the

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[39] Wen, 'Hou Hsiao‑hsien', p. 227.

rural-urban dialectic than *Dust in the Wind*, since the process of urbanization had drastically changed the appearances of both the countryside and the city in 1990s' Taiwan. To fully understand Hou's attitude towards filming contemporary Taiwan, it is necessary to return briefly to *Good Men, Good Women,* the film released only one year earlier and the only one to integrate modern Taipei into the Taiwan Trilogy, as the latter has been regarded as "an enlarged version of the contemporary portion" of the former film and should really be considered as a sequel.[40]

Good Men, Good Women divides the plot into three overlapping segments comprising only 57 shots, with an average shot length of 108 seconds. The first segments show the protagonist, Liang Ching, through sporadic episodes in her apartment, restaurants and pubs, and a badminton court that looks like it is in a giant tunnel, which accentuates the greyish tones picked by Hou to depict modern Taipei (*Figure 3.14*). The second segment explores her past, coming back to haunt her through faxes of her old diary from an anonymous sender who has stolen the diary and who never reveals his/her true identity. The third segment is a film-within-the-film based on the real story of Zhong Hao-dong and his wife, Chiang Bi-yu, who travelled to mainland China to volunteer to fight against the Japanese but who were treated as spies during World War II, and later became victims of the 'White Terror' under Nationalist rule.
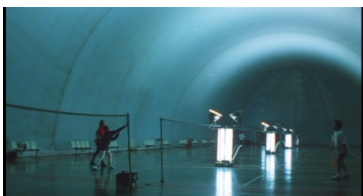

Figure 3.14 The badminton court is represented in a cold tone in *Good Men, Good Women*.
Figure 3.15 The black-and-white scene of traditional architecture in Guangdong, China.

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[40] Wen, 'Hou Hsiao‑hsien', p. 228; Kwok-kan Tam and Wimal Dissanayake, *New Chinese Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 56.

Throughout the film, Liang, who is an actress now, constantly mentions her preparations and rehearsals for playing the part of Chiang in a film, which is also titled *Good Men, Good Women*. At the end of the film it is revealed that the shooting of this film-within-the-film has only just begun, so the sequences of her acting as Chiang may come from Liang's own imagination. Although Liang's third-person narration of Zhong and Chiang's story is conducted in a linear manner, this film-within-the-film is constantly interrupted by sequences of dress rehearsals, which break the completeness of the linear continuity of the fictional re-enactment of history. The intricate structure is also strengthened by the look of the film. For Liang's urban present, Hou applies a greyish tone, which contrasts with the saturated colour applied to represent her past. The colour scheme of the film-within-the-film is also divided into the filmic content and the rehearsal sequences, which are respectively in a black-and-white documentary style and in less-stunning colours compared to sequences of Liang's past. Liang's present, past and the film-within-the-film also overlap through her voice-over narration. In one sequence, the film cuts from Liang's memory of her past to a black-and-white static shot, showing a group of traditional houses in Guangdong, China, where Chiang stayed with her husband (*Figure 3.15*). Although the film is supposed to switch from Liang's past to the film-within-the-film about Chiang, the soundtrack jumps to Liang's narration about her present.

There are two main strands to the interpretation of this film's complex style. Wu Chia-chi and Yip both propose that it should be read as a postmodern text capable of questioning the official version of history and exploring the hybridity of Taiwanese identity, emphasizing the active function of "historical imagination" for Taiwanese

to creatively craft and re-negotiate their own identity.[41] Scholars like Lin, who focus more on the urban context, argue that Liang's grim present-day circumstances reveal how Taipei is cut off from history.[42] Lin also argues that the complex formal system is a case in point to prove Hou's "awareness of the impossibility to represent history".[43] I do not aim to argue that Hou has no doubts about the reliability of cinematic representation, however, as *Dust in the Wind* has demonstrated, he tends to suggest a self-reflexive attitude through film history, and what this attitude activates is an eagerness to build the possible angles from which to untangle Taiwan's identity confusion, which would never be firmly achieved by a classic mode of narrative that relies on unity and intensified continuity. *Good Men, Good Women* refuses to linger on the past, but implies that it is necessary to regard Taiwan's urban present as an important gateway through which to acknowledge, unfold and engage with the complexity of history, even though the process may be painful. Without the present, the past is only a staged play. Through systematically situating Taiwan's urban present with the historical transformation of Taiwanese identity (from resisting the Japanese to resisting the KMT, and then to the undefined status quo), Hou suggests that Taiwan's urban present is crucial for sustaining its postcolonial identity because of its irreplaceable position with which to revisit the past and open a discursive space for critical voices. The urban environment becomes the dominant site of integrating history into identity formation for the first time in Hou's career.

This turning point in Hou's oeuvre not only brings thematic change, but also brings a stylistic modification. Although *Good Men, Good Women* continued the long-take aesthetics that he had been developing since the early 1980s, the percentage of shots with camera movement rises from less than 30% in most of his

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[41] Wu, 'The Detached Shadows', p. 316; Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, pp. 121-30.
[42] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 84.
[43] Lin, 'History, Space and Home', p. 105.

films up until 1993 to 72% in *Good Men, Good Women*, and this change continues in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* with the number hitting 80%.[44] The average shot lengths of these two films are also very similar: 108 seconds (*GMGW*) and 105 seconds (*GSG*). However, unlike *Good Men, Good Women*'s evident link with Taiwan's history and identity formation, which leads scholars like Udden to argue that the change of camera movement is not based on pure formal considerations but rather is related to questions of both aesthetic and national identity,[45] *Goodbye South, Goodbye* has deployed a more ambiguous route that requires extra information in order to decode its cultural specificities.

The story centres on a gangster, Jack Kao, who is usually accompanied by his acolyte, Flathead, and his girlfriend, Pretzel. While Kao is planning to take Flathead and Pretzel to start a new business in Shanghai, his girlfriend Ying also plans to take her child to the USA and to work for her sister, who owns a profitable business in real estate for the Chinese community. Despite their plan to leave Taiwan, the plot takes the audience from Taipei, where Kao runs a small restaurant and where he goes in and out of a pool hall to discuss business with other gangsters, to the mountain town of Pingxi and the southern town of Chiayi, where Kao is persuaded to participate in a get-rich-quick scheme involving a deal between the government and local farmers. The process and result of the scheme remains obscure, but it seems that Kao fails to get his share. Meanwhile, Flathead decides to retrieve his share of the profits made by his relatives by selling some family-owned land, but which only pushes them into deeper trouble. The film ends after Kao, Pretzel and Flathead drive all night and stop in the middle of nowhere, without providing any clear clue about what happens in the car.

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[44] For the detailed research on Hou's long-take aesthetics, see Udden, *No Man an Island*, p. 180.
[45] James Udden, 'This Time He Moves! The Deeper Significance of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Radical Break in *Good Men, Good Women*', in *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 191.

From the thematic point of view, these characters' journeys between places may be easily interpreted as "tiresome and meaningless flows";[46] however, there is something more than that if we take a closer look. As Guest notes, a rhythmic structure began to play a crucial role in Hou's film aesthetics since *Dust in the Wind* and it creates some sort of "cryptic sociology" in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* and *Millennium Mambo*.[47] In what follows, I will focus on three motifs: music, interior scenes and driving scenes to further examine the rhythmic structure Hou tries to build underneath its seemingly destructive plot. It is through Hou's carefully designed formal system and its interplay with Taiwan's economic terrain in the 1990s that this film exudes powerful local colours in order to prevent itself being dismissed as a general text of urban malaise.

Hou's aesthetic turn in *Good Men, Good Women* and *Goodbye South, Goodbye* can reveal interesting questions about the realist aesthetic with which Hou has always been associated. Both Bordwell and Udden argue that the static long shot is Hou's main authorial trademark, an aesthetic choice closely linked to the realist tradition theorized by Bazin, and mastered by Hou so well that Bordwell regards Hou as the major force behind the pervasive 'Asian minimalism'.[48] Nonetheless, Bordwell acknowledges the complexity of Hou's style, noticing that by 1987 Hou has moved from naturalistic realism to "a virtuoso of ensemble staging".[49] The highly intricate staging developed since his 1980's works and identified by Bordwell as Hou's foundation of the poetics of cinema, is certainly an aesthetic choice to reflect the distinctive heterogeneity of Taiwanese society. As Hou gradually shifts his concern for representing Taiwan's past to making an immediate response to

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[46] Li, 'From Historical Memory to Spatial Imagination', p. 131.
[47] Guest, 'Reflections on the Screen', p. 37.
[48] Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light*, pp. 230-32.
[49] Ibid., p. 213.

Taiwan's present, more motifs and recurrent audio-visual strategies emerge to sustain his concern for the meaning of being Taiwanese and the rhythms of everyday life. In *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, the emergence of these newly developed motifs and structure is closely linked to urban experience and the latest trends in urban culture. The use of contemporary popular music, which is rooted in urban youth culture, is first and foremost the key element of the film's rhythmic structure. In the opening sequence, a mixture of train noises and electronic music emerges before any image is shown. After the film title emerges from complete darkness, a dolly shot taken from a moving train is introduced as the opening sequence (*Figure 3.16*). The train appears to be passing though a mountainous area, which closely resembles the mining town in *Dust in the Wind*. In fact, Shifen and Pingxi, the two towns that appear in the opening sequences of *Dust in the Wind* and *Goodbye South, Goodbye* respectively, are indeed on the same train route and share a similar natural landscape. This similar natural landscape, depicted by the similar techniques of tunnel and dolly shots are, however, rendered into a different rhythmic structure due to the conspicuous differences in the choice of soundtracks.

Figure 3.16 The opening sequence is accompanied by Taiwanese-dialect electronic music.
Figure 3.17 There are many scenes of eating in *Goodbye South, Goodbye*.

In the case of *Dust in the Wind*, the opening sequence is only characterized by environmental sounds and it appears to be peaceful and serene. The musician, Chen Ming-chang (1956-), who was in charge of composing original songs for *Dust in the Wind*, respects the minimalistic manner of deploying the soundscape. As a musician who constantly advocates a strong sense of Taiwaneseness through his creative

combination of local folksongs, traditional instruments and Taiwanese dialects, the songs he wrote for *Dust in the Wind* are all Taiwanese-dialect songs conducted in simple chords on the acoustic guitar and piano.

Conversely, the opening sequence of *Goodbye South, Goodbye* is characterized by noisy electronic pop music, which was composed by Lin Jiong (1964-), another musician who advocates Taiwanese identity through music. The images may centre on the rural, but the music averts from the idyllic landscape to evoke an urban ambience that characterizes the film. Lin's music and persona was an icon of Taipei culture in the 1990s, as the tremendous success of his first Taiwanese-dialect rock music album, *Marching Forward* (1990), presented a refreshing image of Taipei by applying elements of rock and electronic music to enrich the style of Taiwanese-dialect music. Unlike Chen, who composed all the songs by himself for the soundtrack, Lin combined his own works with four other musicians/rock bands, including Summer Lei, Sissy Chao (Zhao Yi-hao), Loh Tsui Kweh Commune and Peter and the Wolf. These musicians are all famous in Taiwan for their devotion to creating music with local distinctiveness by combining diverse music genres with local folksong tradition and their personal observations of contemporary Taiwan. Loh Tsui Kweh Commune, the most famous among Lin's choices, is also known for participating in pro-independence political movements and promoting Taiwan's Taike Culture. To put it simply, Taike Culture celebrates anything Taiwanese, from the vulgar side (Taiwanese swear words) to the cultural side (popular music, film, television programmes centred on native Taiwanese and pronounced in Taiwanese-dialect), and it is also constantly linked to a rebellious spirit. Because of its original connection with underworld culture, the name used to be a derogatory term, used to refer to gangsters and uneducated people only. Since the mid-1990s the lower-class

image has been gradually developed as a trend to strategically establish a distinct Taiwanese identity by contrasting with the sophisticated image of Chineseness promoted by the Nationalist government. Therefore, Taike Culture does not worship noble heroes or saints, but celebrates everything about humble and even vulgar characters (in Taiwan, another term 'grassroots characters' (*caogen renwu*) is also deployed to describe these common people) who may achieve nothing in their lives but who construct evident traces of Taiwan's local colour.

In this regard, *Goodbye South, Goodbye* is itself a strong response to the emerging Taike Culture and it is definitely a pioneer in the realm of filmmaking.[50] Before Hou, films that focused on gangster life have mostly centred on sex, violence, and melodramatic effects, instead of paying any substantial attention on their daily lives as Hou does. The Taiwanese characteristics Hou searches for in these characters are not a lucid resistance to the Chinese tradition, but a condensed focus on a wide array of things that may define this group of people, from concrete details of their flowery shirts (in Taiwan, only gangsters wore this kind of Hawiian Shirt and later they became a fashionable symbol of Taike Culture) to the abstract, obscure rhythms of daily life. For example, after the train takes the characters to the rural town, Pingxi, Hou spends a great deal of time focusing on the way they swear, gamble, eat and get into brawls.

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[50] Recently there has been a continuous trend of addressing Taike Culture through commercial filmmaking. *Monga* (2010, dir. Doze Niu, Greenday Films) and *David Loman* (2013, dir. Qiu Li-kuan, Polyface Entertainment Media Group) both aim at accentuating the spirit of Taike Cutlure through focusing on gangster culture in 1980s Taiwan, while another one, *Forever Love* (2013, dir. Aozaru Shiao, Kitamura Toyoharu, Pomi Film) reconstructs the history of the Taiwanese-dialect film industry in the 1960s. It is necessary to note that these recent films focus more on telling the story from a native Taiwanese perspective to build a more essentialist mode of nationhood, and the approach is more melodramatic or exaggerative than realistic in terms of art direction, acting and film techniques. Auteurs like Hou and Yang focus more on the multidimensional ways of constructing the Taiwanese experience and try to maintain a distance from their subject matter. Therefore, these two strands approach the definition of Taiwaneseness very differently and have to be discussed separately.

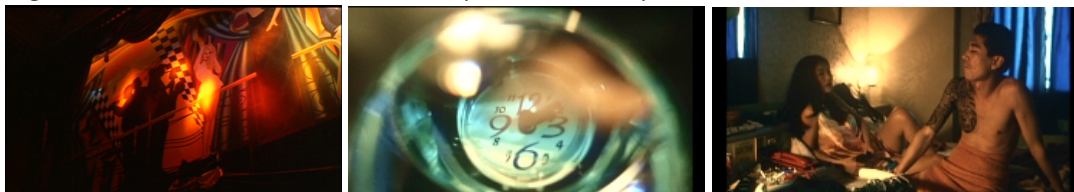*Figures 3.18-3.19* Interior scenes in *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*

Figure 3.20 The first scene in Taipei takes place at a nightclub.
Figure 3.21 A close-up shot of a glass ball in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* refers to the twisted, obscure sense of time.
Figure 3.22 The bedroom scene.

Interior scenes are crucial for settling the rhythmic structure of this film. Hou says this film is meant to "preserve the quotidian space of Taiwan",[51] therefore he makes use of substantial sequences to depict interior spaces to interweave a basic imagery of these characters' daily lives, including domestic space, hotel rooms, karaoke bars, restaurants and pool halls. From private to public spaces, Hou applies a strategy of using as little natural light as possible and adopts atmospheric light effects that create a mode similar to chiaroscuro. The highly similar patterns of mise-en-scène, framing, lighting, the depth of the scene and camera movement in a wide array of interior scenes set both in the city and also in rural towns forms a strong sense of visual rhythm, and also implies Hou's personal way of responding to Taiwan's economic change. Interior scenes, in which these characters constantly immerse themselves in ideas of get-rich-quick schemes provided by the changes in the economic conditions, function as a specific visual structure for framing a daily rhythm of lower-class native Taiwanese who struggle in post-martial law Taiwan's newly-shaped capitalist system.

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[51] Quoted in Yeh, 'Poetics and Politics of Hou', p. 177.

Take the first sequence set in Taipei as an example. The first urban scene is set in a dimly-lit nightclub where Pretzel sings a song called *Night Life in Shanghai* (Ye Shang Hai), which was performed originally by Shanghai singer, Zhou Xuan, in *An All-consuming Love* (1947, dir. He Zhaozhang, Hua-hsing Film Company) (*Figure 3.20*). The gloomy city of Taipei appears to be saturated in a bizarre, exotic and nostalgic ambience and reveals the key word that bothered Taiwanese in the 1990s: Shanghai. Completing the nightclub scene within one long take, Hou applies variable focal points and a drifting camera to mobilize the frame and smoothly cuts the film to the next scene, which is introduced by a close-up shot of a wristwatch shown behind a glass ball (*Figure 3.21*). After lingering on the purely formal effects delivered by the convergence of the glittering light and the distorted shapes of the numbers on the watch, which has no direct connection with the plot, the camera steps back and shows a cramped domestic space, in which Kao and Ying are having a conversation about Kao's dream of opening a nightclub or restaurant in Shanghai (*Figure 3.22*). Like all the other interior scenes in this film, it is always difficult to detect the real time of day or night in the interior scenes since they are always dimly lit and immersed in smoke, music and conversations centred on doing business either in China or the USA.

    Hou's use of mobile and explorative camerawork for these interior sequences has been described as a way to underscore a sense of aimlessness and uncertainty,[52] but again there is a culturally specific way of looking at this aimlessness. The Chinese title of this film literally means 'south country goodbye, south country', which indicates Taiwan's past identity as the 'southern part of the country' of both China and Japan. On the one hand, the title may refer to how globalization has forced

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[52] Tam and Dissanayake, *New Chinese Cinema*, p. 57.

Taiwanese people to 'move West' (either to China or the USA) and say goodbye to Taiwan in order to find better chances in business; on the other hand, it may also refer to the possibility of waving farewell to Taiwan's identity as a 'south country' and seeking an independent one, even in an era when the distance between China and Taiwan has drawn closer than ever before due to the flow of business capital.

A statistical survey into Taiwanese identity may help clarify this point. According to the 'Taiwanese/Chinese Identification Trend Distribution in Taiwan', as carried out by the Election Study Centre at National Chengchi University, the number of people in Taiwan who identify themselves as 'only Taiwanese' rose dramatically between 1996 and 1997. [53] In other words, a growing sense of Taiwanese consciousness emerged in parallel with the 'Shanghai fever' of the 1990s.[54] This phenomenon may be explored from the perspective of how the increasingly frequent contact with China prompted Taiwanese to acknowledge their differences with the Chinese under PRC rule, and the results of Lee Teng-hui's policy of Taiwanization in the 1990s (see chapter 1). Therefore, if the 1990s' Taiwan can really be pinned down by a specific rhythm that highlights local distinctiveness, it should not only be about the quotidian texture Hou successfully compiles throughout the film, but also about a new way of representing the twofold situation of getting closer to China after fifty years of division with an increasingly Taiwanized identity.

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[53] Election Study Centre, National Chengchi University, 'Taiwanese/Chinese Identification Trend Distribution', http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/english/modules/tinyd2/content/TaiwanChineseID.htm. Accessed 14 February, 2013. According to this research, which has been regarded as highly reliable and widely adopted in current scholarship on Taiwanese identities, the number of people in Taiwan who identify themselves as 'only Taiwanese' rose from 24% in 1996 to 34% in 1997. The percentage has continued to grow rather steadily since then, and reached 54% in 2012.

[54] The law to encourage Taiwanese to invest in the mainland was implemented in 1988 for the first time by the PRC government. Since then, the amount of investment from Taiwan rose rapidly to NT$4 billion by 1990 and within three years it surpassed NT$ 10 billion. Thereafter, a large number of Taiwanese have moved to Shanghai to work, and companies have also relocated their factories to China. The number of Taiwanese in Shanghai grew significantly as time went by and today there are more than 700,000 Taiwanese and 5,000 Taiwanese firms located in this metropolis. Leaving Taiwan to find work in Shanghai has become the norm for the new generation of Taiwanese, and this has had a significant impact on identity politics. See Wang Horng-luen, 'How Are Taiwanese Shanghaied?', in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 17.2 (2009): pp. 321-46.

Hou seeks this new rhythm of Taiwanese society in his representation of the city. On the one hand, he visually represents the city as a generic one, lacking local specificities and historical traces; on the other hand, all the sequences taking place on the streets of Taipei, are accompanied by music with locally specific contexts. Just as Lin Jiong's electronic music gives the rural landscape in the opening sequence a unique sense of urban ambience, so the other Taiwanese-dialect songs accompanying the driving scenes in the city give the urban life a sense of vigorous vitality which is more commonly linked with rural Taiwan. As Hou explains, these on-the-road sequences symbolize "a longing for the world outside" which not only "holds true for the individual but for Taiwan as well",[55] and they reveal Hou's attempt to capture Taiwan's obscure, ambivalent status quo at a time when both local colour and global forces thrived simultaneously to interweave a new image of Taiwaneseness. Although these sequences were described as an "overly simplified spectacle" of urban life in 1990s' Taiwan,[56] they have occupied a unique position to further examine Hou's aesthetic turn, which is accelerated by his shifting concern for the present. Compared to his earlier films focusing on the tension between the rural and the urban in 1980s' Taiwan, *Goodbye South, Goodbye* suggests a more eager attitude to examine the interconnectedness between the rural and the urban, and in order to achieve this goal, Hou replaces the distinctive formal systems respectively applied to rural towns and Taipei with a more ambivalent representational mode, adding urban elements to the rural and vice versa.

More importantly, all of the driving scenes – the most direct and powerful metaphor of 'in-betweenness' – are represented in highly stylistic sequences that enrich the overall design of the film. They are represented either as static shots

[55] Berry, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien with Chu Tien-wen', pp. 257-58.
[56] Li, 'From Historical Memory to Spatial Imagination', p. 130

Figures 3.23-3.24 Driving scenes are the only sequences revealing the cityscape of Taipei in *Goodbye South, Goodbye*.

focusing on the windscreen of the car (*Figure 3.23*), or as a protagonist's point-of-view shot that captures whatever scenery comes in view (*Figure 3.24*). Both types of driving scene are composed with relatively long takes, serving as a pivotal interim and audio-visual punctuations for the characters' journeys between Taipei and other rural towns on Taiwan. The most peculiar driving scene sequence in this film is statured in the colour green, which suggests Kao's point-of-view perspective created by the green sunglasses he wears (*Figure 3.24*). This 90-second long take seems to respond to Paul Virilio's well-known assertion that "what goes on in the windshield is cinema" as it regards everything on the road as charged with cinematic allure.[57] The sequence is accompanied with a peculiar piece of music, which combines Taiwanese folk tunes in a minor key and the recording of an amateur signing in a karaoke bar with background noises. Belonging to the golden period of Taiwanese-dialect popular music (1950s-1960s), this type of minor-key Taiwanese tune remains popular in karaoke bars as a strong symbol of Taiwanese culture. The ambiguous editing of this sequence (it is not clear whether this music is diegetic or non-diegetic sound) creates a layered sense of space and time, drawing the ordinary cityscape into Hou's overall design of this audio-visual rhythm designated for highlighting the unique rhythm of Taiwan. If Hou's success in constructing an idiosyncratic rhythm for Taiwan remains debatable, what we can be sure about with *Goodbye South,*

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[57] Paul Virilio, 'The Third Window', in Cynthia Schneider and Brian Wallis (eds.), *Global Television* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 188.

Goodbye is that it posits a rhythmic structure which may strategically transform Taiwan's predicaments in the era of globalization into a functional and necessary departure for exploring and developing local distinctiveness.

The blurring of the boundary between the rural and the urban in this film provides a particularly interesting angle from which to observe the effects of globalization on the most mundane but intricate details in Taiwanese culture. Shaped by the choice of local music, the similarities between interior spaces conducted with explorative camerawork, and the on-the-road sequences accompanied with rhythms which belong respectively to Taiwan's rural past and urban present, the overlapping of temporality and spatiality in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* draws a distance from the realist tradition, while maintaining a strong impetus to examine the rhythmic structure of everyday life. Hou's intention is realistic and biographical, but his strategies have been influenced by Taiwan's rapid absorption into the world system. Under the force of globalization, the distinction between the rural and the urban seems less relevant than their shared characteristics that may be proven to be evident in Taiwanese people's general life experience.

3.3 Connecting the city and Taiwan's history: *Three Times* (2005)

If *Goodbye South, Goodbye* only points out the necessity of contemplating the effects of globalization on Taiwanese identity, showing that both rural and urban experiences are now equally important in shaping a characteristic rhythm of Taiwan, then *Three Times*, Hou's latest film set partially in Taipei, suggests that the global colours of urban culture are more and more crucial for the younger generation to acknowledge their identity formation.

Some major changes in Hou's career since the 2000s are all reflected in his conception of *Three Times*. Firstly, he actively participated in promoting local film culture by founding the Taiwanese Film and Culture Association, an organization providing film classes for young people and which led to the establishment of the Cineplex 'Taipei Spot Film House' in 2002. This independent cinema presents films that are not screened in major commercial theatres, which later go on to tour other cities, such as Hsinchu and Kaohsiung. The experience of actively shaping the local film culture inspired him to contemplate his career and consider necessary changes. As he explained in an interview:

> You have to have impact on the young generation. This calls for adjustment, adjusting your current position and finding a proper place to talk to them. [...] I can always make some very individualistic films. But the problem is that the impact is weaker.[58]

Secondly, in 2004 he joined the newly-founded political organization 'Coalition for Equal Opportunity' to protest against the overemphasis on the differences between ethnicities to construct Taiwanese identity. This experience prompted him to again delve into the question of Taiwanese history and identity, with the aim of stressing that the differences between mainlanders and native Taiwanese should no longer be regarded as the main signifier of identity, and that the construction of Taiwanese identity should be based on a deeper understanding of Taiwan's history. He also addresses Taiwan New Cinema as an important resource for filmmakers to explore local distinctiveness:

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[58] Kuan‑hsing Chen, Ti Wei, translated by Ken‑fang Lee, 'Political Participation in 2004: an Interview with Hou Hsiao‑hsien', in *Inter‑Asia Cultural Studies* 9.2 (2008): pp. 238, 325, 327.

The process of modernization in mainland China is too short and too fast. Many hardware facilities have been built right away but the software set-up has not been established or cultivated. It is not ready yet. So, that is where we stand in the Chinese-language world. Regarding cinema, no matter if you want to move toward the mainstream or the alternative trend, the legacy and the strengths that the 'New Cinema' left us should be what we cherish and further develop.[59]

Three Times responds to Hou's dual emphases on the need to renew his film aesthetics and to maintain the tradition of Taiwan New cinema. As Yeh and Davis point out, the use of autobiographical and biographical elements is a prominent tactic for New Cinema directors, especially Hou, to reject the conventional genres and to shape a new identity that manifests self-disclosure.[60] The narrative structure of *Three Times* revisits the autobiographical/biographical strategy on which he used to rely, and concludes Hou's long-term concern for rethinking Taiwan's history through cinema. The film is a three-part story that is set respectively in various historical moments, including 'A time for love', set in 1966, 'A time for freedom', set in 1911 and 'A time for youth', set in 2005. The first segment, based on Hou's personal memory, has the strongest autobiographical elements, reminiscent of his 1980s works, and as Udden notes, "nearly every thematic element can be traced to his feature-length works between 1983 and 1986".[61] The second is fictional, but reveals a major part of Taiwanese consciousness that has not yet been fully explored. The third is based entirely on the real life experience of a Taiwanese girl, Ouyang Jing (GinOy), who attracted Hou's attention by her multiple talents in photography, composing, singing, acting, writing, as well as her complex physical conditions

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[59] Ibid., p. 332.
[60] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 147.
[61] Udden, *No Man an Island*, p. 175.

caused by her premature birth and her bisexuality, and is, therefore, highly biographical.

According to Hou, the purpose of the three-part structure and the autobiographical/biographical elements in *Three Times* is to tell stories that are different from the official versions of Taiwanese history provided by the government and politicians, and to create an alternative version of a nation that exists in people's shared experience and mutual understanding of Taiwan's ambivalent status. As he notes, "the three stories are related to Taiwan's political background. But I didn't want to show politics in my stories … I expressed through emotions",[62] so it is clear that *Three Times* was made with Hou's conscious awareness of Taiwan's political changes, only it is represented through an indirect approach that he and other New Cinema directors have utilised and sustained since the 1980s.

The first chapter, 'A time for love', is set in Kaohsiung and is highly reminiscent of Hou's 1980s' films, which look back at the past, often with a nostalgic sentimentality. 1966 is not simply a random year in the 1960s, but the year when Mao Zedong inaugurated the Cultural Revolution, the major turning point in modern Chinese history which resulted in a deepening of the division between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Taiwanese people at that time were living in an enclosed world and knew nothing about the Cultural Revolution. 'A time for love' thus aims to reveal this enclosed life when Taiwanese culture was shaped by Western influence brought by the American military stationed in Taiwan during the Cold War era, instead of by its closer neighbour China. The second chapter, 'A time for freedom', focuses on Taipei's brothel life in 1911, the year when the revolutionists in mainland finally overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the Republic of China. Although

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[62] Quotation from the supplementary material (an interview with Hou Hsiao-hsien) on the DVD of *Three Times* (3H Productions and Paradise Films, 2005).

Taiwan was under Japanese rule, Taiwanese intellectuals met secretly in brothels to discuss their plans for supporting the revolution. This chapter relies entirely on intertitles to show the conversations and this creates a visual tension between the literal meaning of the conversation and the hidden, unstated emotions between the two lovers, one of whom is an intellectual and the other is the prostitute he sees regularly in the brothel. In doing so, Hou reminds us that the origins of Taiwanese consciousness were once linked closely to most native Taiwanese's Han Chinese roots, which prompted the Taiwanese intellectuals of the early 20th century to support the revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynast. The acknowledgement of this Han Chinese identity suggests that Taiwanese identity's resistance to the KMT rhetoric of Chineseness should not be regarded as a simple matter of resisting an outsider regime, but rather as the result of complex historical consequences, such as the 228 Incident represented in Hou's *A City of Sadness*.

Compared to the first two segments that are defined by specific historical events (the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and the Chinese Revolution of 1911), the third segment 'A time for youth' may be easily dismissed as another urban tale focusing on the aimlessness of young people. Set in 2005 Taipei, the story is about a love triangle between a bi-sexual singer, Jing (which is based on Ouyang Jing), who lives with her girlfriend but at the same time maintains a sexual relationship with a man named Zhen, who also has a girlfriend. This complicated relationship undoubtedly addresses the young generation's sense of uncertainty, and the singer's complex background also strengthens the idea of the difficulty in defining identity. Yet as a part of a bigger project contemplating Taiwan's transformation, I propose to focus on two aspects in order to understand the Taiwanese context in this segment: the first is the characters' restless attempts to define themselves through multiple means, and

the second is Hou's conspicuous formalistic change in terms of the representation of the city.
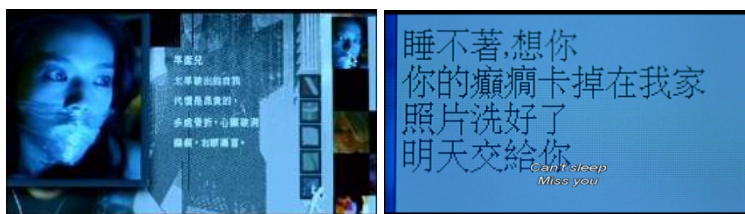

Figure 3.25 A close-up shot of Jing's personal website, exhibiting her creativity and impulse of self-disclosure in diverse ways.
Figure 3.26 Zhen's text message to Jing.

Hou's active participation in politics and the local film culture both prompted him to rethink his film aesthetics, and this film reflects a significant change in terms of his long-take aesthetics. With an average shot length of 32 seconds (which is still much longer than most feature films), *Three Times* is the most quickly edited work he has made since the late 1980s. This change has to be attributed to his attention to the characters' multiple means of communicating and expressing themselves through digital devices. Close-up shots are applied to accentuate the protagonists' faces and the screens of mobile phones and computers, as a representational mode of delineating the lives of the post-1980 generation, who "have too many choices, too much information, and thus find it difficult to define themselves" according to Hou's observation (*Figures 3.25-26*).[63] On the one hand, these images of technological devices emphasize the universality of the digital age, in which everyone across the globe enjoys the same convenience of expressing themselves online and communicating with people beyond national boundaries; on the other hand, these close-up shots perform a major function, which is to address the biographical elements of this story and the locally specific context of internet culture. The inspiration for this segment, as mentioned earlier, is a local girl Ouyang Jing, who is

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[63] Ibid.

famous in Taiwan as a strong spokesman for vigorous creativity of the post-1980 generation. The specific context behind her fame is Internet culture, through which she attracted support because of the words, pictures and music she posted online. This kind of Internet culture is highly localized, since in Taiwan there are many platforms featuring blogs that are only used by Taiwanese (one of which Ouyang chose).[64] Therefore, although these screen shots may address the universality of digital culture, they are also presented to emphasize this specific character's link with Taiwan's Internet culture. In doing so, Hou asserts Taiwan New Cinema's biographical elements with different formal qualities.

Figures 3.27-3.28 A long-take sequence depicts the characters passing across a bridge.

In contrast to the close-up shots are the street scenes conducted in medium and long shots that resemble Hou's earlier style of representing the rural landscape. Despite its much shorter average shot length, the film begins and concludes with two similar long takes on the same bridge, which respectively exceed 60 seconds and 80 seconds. The long take shows Jing on Zhen's motorbike, passing across a bridge connecting central Taipei and San-chung District (the bridge is Zhongxiao Bridge above Tamsui River, a major bridge in Taipei that local people can easily recognize), the chaotic suburb where Zhen lives. Both sequences are presented as tracking shots, following Zhen and Jing's motorbike on the bridge*,* but each one drifts away to reveal the general cityscape before returning to focus on the characters once more (*Figure 3.27*). Then the camera drifts away again, showing them as small figures in a

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[64] These local platforms include www.wretch.cc/blog, mypaper.pchome.com.tw, blog.roodo.com, and www.pixnet.com. Ouyang is still very active in Taiwan and her latest blog is http://ginoyblog.pixnet.net/blog.

long shot (*Figure 3.28*). The drifting camera suggests that these characters are not the only protagonists and that the city is also a crucial character, only "it is not a fictional one".[65] These seemingly ordinary shots of the cityscape denote a vital change in Hou's poetics of cinema if we review the representations of the city from *Dust in the Wind* to the much more recent work, *Millennium Mambo*. In *Dust in the Wind*, the city is represented through a series of images in contrast to the formal system applied to the rural landscape. Exterior scenes are either avoided or are represented with a lack of depth. In *Good Men, Good Women* and *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, the city is displayed through a series of interior scenes. Although the cityscape is included in the latter, it is not conducted entirely in a realistic manner. *Millennium Mambo* only represents the city through interior scenes, and all of the urban spaces (from homes to nightclubs) are represented with an excessive amount of fluorescent colours.[66] In Hou's increasingly compelling attempt to construct a cinematic rhythm to define contemporary Taiwan, the city has gradually developed a stylistic look that may respond to the characteristics of Taiwanese society but divergent from its original, realistic appearance. Conversely, in the segment set in 2005 Taipei, Hou represents the city with a quasi-documentary approach that makes it look very much like the way it really is. The documentary feel suggested by the framing and camerawork is also evident in the choice of colour. Without continuing the warm, and slightly fuzzy hue in the other two segments of *Three Times*, the street

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[65] Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', p. 104.
[66] *Millennium Mambo* was planned initially as a long-term project, composed of ten segments to be shot from 2001 to 2011. Hou even pictured how *Millennium Mambo* would be expanded into a long-term new media project combing digital filmmaking and online viewing, to establish a cinematic archive of 21st century Taipei and a production model that may be applied to other East Asian metropolises like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo. The intriguing concept was abandoned; instead, the film is presented as the memory of the life of a young woman – Vicky – in 2001, as narrated by her in 2011. See Ellickson, 'Preparing to Live in the Present', p. 18; Berry, 'Hou Hsiao-hsien with Chu Tien-wena', p. 264.

scenes are given a much more neutral colour tone, which may suggest a more objective attitude towards the urban environment.

Figures 3.29-3.31 In *Three Times*, Hou focuses on the marginal areas that look rather chaotic.

Although the plot focuses on the most fashionable kind of young people, such as singers, photographers, and glamorous girls in nightclubs, it does not linger on interior scenes like most of his other films set in Taipei, and neither does it depict any street scenes of the chic areas of central Taipei. Instead, it reveals a large number of street scenes showing the marginal areas of Taipei, such as San-chung District and the Wu Fen Pu area, which provide cheaper housing but are less organized than central Taipei (*Figures 3.29-31*). These areas are rather chaotic, with commercial and residential areas mixed together and night markets occupying the streets. However, this is the real Taipei that the majority of ordinary people experience and endure every day. This fact may explain why the sequences always focus on the neighbourhood first before the camera enters Jing and Zhen's apartments. In doing so, Hou implies that no matter how chaotic, Taipei has become a real home space with which many people associate themselves, and this is why Taipei looks more real in an era of intensified digitalization than it has done in any of the other Hou films. This strategy for addressing the connection between exterior and interior scenes implies an interesting visual contrast: instead of immersing the film only in close-up shots of the young people's diverse ways of claiming a sense of self, Hou presents realistic documentary evidence of Taipei's cityscape in this particular project of

rewriting an alternative version of national history. The city is clearly not cut off from the history; instead, it manifests its significance with its sheer existence.

By juxtaposing the realistic depiction of street scenes with close-up shots of diverse screens, *Three Times* suggests that the task of visualizing Taiwan's history can no longer be completed solely by the representational ability of camerawork and the cinematic frame. Edward Yang certainly realized this earlier than Hou, as the next chapter will reveal, but Hou does make use of this global trend of digitalization to renew his realist aesthetics once more, not by turning away from it, but by exploring its capacity through an observational realism that aims at nothing but showing the true colours of the city. As a result, the contrast between these very different types of images addresses both the global and the local elements, and their interconnectedness in Hou's understanding of Taiwan's present. As Bordwell indicates, Hou's stylistic development is a process of "maintaining the tradition of complex staging by adapting it to new technologies".[67] It is precisely Hou's everlasting concern for Taiwan's urban present that pushes him forward on the road of stylistic development, suggesting necessary formalistic adjustments to new technologies that may respond to Taiwan's transformation more efficiently and realistically. In the case of the last episode in *Three Times*, Hou's use of long takes and on-location shoots that look more spontaneous than carefully crafted and staged, responds to the prominent status of the 'Taiwanese' cityscape in the life experience of contemporary Taiwanese citizens.

Overall, *Three Times* continues Hou's attempt to integrate Taipei into his historical writing of Taiwan in *Good Men, Good Women*, and unequivocally continues his unfinished work to define a new rhythm of contemporary Taiwan in

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[67] Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light*, p. 237.

Goodbye South, Goodbye and *Millennium Mambo*. As Hou notes, "[my] films are supposed to help mould a Taiwanese identity" and for Taiwanese filmmakers that means needing to "come to terms with the Taiwanese past and how we see Taiwan as a separate place, with a separate identity from China".[68] Although his attitude towards Taiwan's present is not always clearly defined, as he admits that shooting the contemporary has always been more challenging to him, the city still enriches his long-term goal of exploring the meaning of being Taiwanese at various historical moments, and eventually leads his films to approach a sense of belonging defined by residency on the island, instead of by the origins of ethnicities.

The last, but not the least thing to address is that Hou's concern for Taiwan's present must be traced back to his appeal for a new Taiwanese identity that surpasses the differences between mainlander and native Taiwanese. It has been argued that the conventional way to categorize ethnic groups in Taiwan is increasingly insignificant, according to the new generation of Taiwanese, especially the post-1980s' generation.[69] As Le Pesant argues, the main reason behind it is the difference in the experience of growing up – for the post-reform generation, they have grown up under Taiwan's process of democratization and Taiwanization, not a dictatorship based on the myth of striking back at the mainland.[70] It does not mean that ethnicity in Taiwan is completely insignificant, but the differences between the four major groups (aborigines, Hoklo, Hakka and mainlanders) that make up the main population of Taiwan are no longer valid as an identity-signifier. Rather than deciding which one can stand for the authentic version of Taiwanese identity, a new joint mode of Taiwanese identity has emerged by combining these four groups. By

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[68] Ellickson, 'Preparing to Live in the Present', p. 16.
[69] Huang Chi, 'Dimensions of Taiwanese/Chinese Identity and National Identity in Taiwan: a Latent Class Analysis', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40.1-2 (2005): pp. 51-70.
[70] Tanguy Le Pesant, 'Generational Change and Ethnicity among 1980s-born Taiwanese', in *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40 (2011): p. 137.

adapting the real story of a girl whose extreme diversity may symbolize Taiwan's hybridity, Hou acknowledges the importance of Taiwanese citizenship and the multiculturalism brought by globalization concurrently.

Conclusion

Despite being seriously overlooked, the city plays a more important role in Hou's career as an auteur than existing scholarship has identified. Instead of standing in opposition to the rural lifestyle, the city has been gradually developed as an indispensible component in his contemplation of Taiwanese history and identity politics, and has been substantially integrated into his construction of an alternative version of national history. Representations of the city also systematically shape the formal qualities of his films and reveal his evolving conception about the meaning of being Taiwanese in different times. Nonetheless, Hou does express a tendency to represent the city as incapable of revealing the richness of Taiwanese culture entirely on its own, and therefore it must be juxtaposed with a larger historiographical interpretation of Taiwan. This tendency certifies his unique approach to representing the city rather than lessening the significance of the city during his career, but it may indeed explain why he has never created city films wholeheartedly devoted to Taipei in the same way as Edward Yang and Tsai Ming-liang.

Chapter 4
Envisioning the Future of Taiwan:
the Taiwanese context in Edward Yang's City of Visual Technologies

Being the only Taiwanese director whose films are entirely about Taipei, Edward Yang's most well-known quotation is: "the more films I made, the closer I am to Taipei".[1] Yang's close connection with Taipei has been regarded as equivalent to James Joyce with Dublin, Johannes Vermeer with Amsterdam and Woody Allen with New York, which are all classic examples of how a city can determine an author/artist/auteur's style, and also how the creative works articulated by their individualistic visions can contribute to the characteristics of local culture in return.[2] It may be precisely because of this conspicuous resemblance to foreign artworks that also focus on specific cities that scholars tend to regard Yang's films as Western, cosmopolitan and bourgeois.[3] Yeh and Davis also note that Taipei in Yang's films is "interchangeable with any other global city".[4] Nonetheless, Yang's cosmopolitan characteristic actually possesses a specific Taiwanese context which has to be traced back to his experience of growing up in post-1949 Taiwan, living in the USA for a decade and returning to Taiwan when the pan-Chinese ideology faced severe challenges in the 1980s, rather than to a general interest in Eurocentric modernity. Yang's Taipei films provide the best examples of how Taiwanese may nurture and sustain a unique global character that yearns for the construction of a dialogue with the local.

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[1] Quoted in Chang Jinn-bei, 'The More I Film, the Closer I am to Taipei: Edward Yang on His New Film *Yi Yi*', in *Look Monthly Magazine* 62 (2001): pp. 82-85.
[2] John Anderson, *Edward Yang* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 2
[3] About more arguments regarding to Yang's Western style, see Hong, *Taiwan* Cinema, p. 127.
[4] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 92.

Yang's interest in the city has developed since his childhood. Moving to Taiwan from the mainland at the age of two in 1949, Yang lived in Taipei until he went to Chiao Tung University in Hsinchu to study engineering in 1965. His formative period in Taipei led him to experience three major sources of inspiration for his filmmaking: the American Billboard pop chart, Japanese comic books and Mandarin films from Hong Kong.[5] Since his adolescence also overlapped with the golden period of the Nationalist government's foreign affairs, one advantage brought by the government's diplomatic relationships with most European countries was the easy access to the European New Wave cinema of the 1960s. Inspired by a wide range of visual stimulants, Yang retained a strong interest in two major visual forms; the first is comic books, which he created throughout his adolescence and influenced his habit of drawing storyboards; the second is architecture, which would later converge with cinema in his Taipei films. Although he later moved to America in 1970 to pursue postgraduate studies in computer science and worked as a computer engineer in Seattle for seven years, he eventually gave up this stable job and changed his career direction at the age of thirty after watching Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972). Inspired by Herzog's self-funded and self-taught approach, Yang made up his mind to make films that were different from the commercial genres. It was not until 1980 that he returned to Taiwan and finally had his first opportunity, writing the script for an independent film, *The Winter of 1905* (1981, dir. Yu Wei-yan), in which he also played a role. In 1981, Yang directed an episode called *Duckweed* for the television drama *Eleven Women*, and then contributed to the CMPC's first work of Taiwan New Cinema, *In Our Time* in 1982, before he made a series of city films including *That Day on the Beach* (1983, CMPC), *Taipei Story*

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[5] Michael Berry, 'Edward Yang: Luckily Unlucky', in *Speaking in Images*, p. 285.

(1985, Golden Harvest) and *The Terrorizer* (1986, CMPC) in the 1980s, and *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991, Yang & His Gang Filmmakers), *A Confucian Confusion* (1994, Atom Films) and *Mahjong* (1996, Atom Films) in the 1990s. He then won the Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival for *Yi Yi* (2000, Atom Films), which was also his last feature film before he died in 2007.

Because of his interest in foreign culture and his personal experience of living in the USA, Yang's films are the best examples of Taiwan cinema for demonstrating the intertwined and tangled relationship between the local and the global in the context of Taiwan. Like Hou Hsiao-hsien, Yang's approach aims at reflecting the shifting-process of Taiwanese culture through nuanced details of everyday life and reflects how Taiwan New Cinema refuses the formulaic commercial rules and propagandist ideology. The major difference between Hou and Yang is that Hou's representations of the city is more historical and tends to imbue Taipei with a retrospective quality. Yang's approach is, however, based on the same concern for Taiwanese society but it develops a completely different appearance due to Yang's focus on the present. Yang's city film focuses more on how cinema, as a creative form and as a method of visualization, enriches our understanding of Taiwanese society and therefore reflects a new Taiwanese identity distinguishable from the Chinese identity established by the Nationalist government. As Amae and Damm note, for Taiwanese people the ongoing process of re-thinking their local identity can be summed up as "a culture force that challenges Chinese values",[6] and the fact that Yang became the first director in Taiwan to cast away all of the burdens of Chinese aesthetics (or those characteristics that can be easily categorized as Chineseness, such as the rural landscapes in some of Hou's works) should tell us more about

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[6] Amae and Damm, 'Whither Taiwanization?', p. 14.

Taipei's universality as a Third World city being incorporated into the world system, as argued famously by Jameson's essay 'Remapping Taipei',[7] in which he fully explored the "generally late-capitalist urbanization".[8] Jameson further elaborates his conception of the Third-World in the case of Taiwan:

> I won't belabor at any great length the interesting theoretical issue of whether Taiwan is to be counted as a Third-World country: if you think the label means Southern-Tier poverty, then it is clearly inappropriate, if not worse; but if it merely affirms something as structural and descriptive as the non-adherence to what is left of the socialist bloc, coupled with the constitutive distance from one of the three great capital centres of the 'new world order' (Japan, Europe, the USA), then it may be less misleading.[9]

The distance from the 'new world order' and the residues of the old one, would then transform into Jameson's main argument about how *The Terrorizers* combines themes of modernity, such as art versus life, the novel and reality, and mimesis and irony, with postmodernist segmentation that refuses to follow the modernist tendency of providing "identifiable subjectivities and points of view".[10] He then expresses his admiration for Yang's ability to arrange for "these two powerful interpretive temptations – the modern and the postmodern, subjectivity and textuality", and "to neutralize each other, to hold each other in one long suspension in such a way that the film can exploit and draw on the benefits of both".[11] These observations have ruled out, or at least put aside the influences of local specificities in terms of cultural,

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[7] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', pp. 114-57.
[8] Ibid., p. 117.
[9] Ibid., p. 120.
[10] Ibid., p. 151.
[11] Ibid.

historical and political backgrounds, and have focused mainly on the film's capacity to amalgamate and re-interpret diverse narrative paradigms in Western literature. As Yeh and Davis observe, "Jameson signals his esteem for Edward Yang's film by putting him in elite European company".[12]

However, as the chapters of historical background and the previous chapter on Hou have suggested, there are more intricate local contexts imbedded in urban themes, which may be dismissed by the highly intertwined relationship between modernity and postmodernity in Third-World countries on which Jameson elaborates in 'Remapping Taipei'. Some scholars have suggested the need to re-examine Jameson's argument. Although Yeh and Davis share Jameson's starting point of urban simultaneity, analysing the city as a location of unexpected connections and encounters and arguing that *The Terroizers* should be regarded as "a film of nested genres" that draw various walks of life together, they also suspect that Yang's representation of Taipei "occupies a completely different order from that of Jameson's world system".[13] Hong also suspects that Jameson's analysis of *The Terrorizers* is to ensure that his own theory of late-capitalism remains intact, and that he may risk "ignoring significant points that might illuminate the specific context of Taiwan".[14] Yet these scholars do not fully explore Yang's cultural specificities. Yeh and Davis only point out their suspicions and suggest further research should adopt a more straightforward method of approach, rather than applying the "magisterial critical procedure that minimizes, if not overrides, the primary material conditions of an artist's work"[15]. Hong analyses the same film with a goal of revealing "this

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[12] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 127.
[13] Ibid., p. 129.
[14] Hong, *Taiwan* Cinema, p. 128.
[15] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 129.

particular 'putative Taiwanese identity' in the making",[16] but he constructs his argument from the perspective of "the spatial disconnect and isolation beneath the glitter of the urban splendor"[17] and concludes that the film is mainly about its characters' "simultaneous spatial displacement",[18] which clearly speaks little about the specific context of Taiwan but more about the universal phenomenon of urbanity.

This chapter does not deny the connection between Yang's films and Western literature/cinema, as observed by Jameson, nor the resemblance between the Taipei represented by Yang and other global cities, as argued by Jameson, Yeh and Davis. However, as the aspect of Yang's universality has been so well analysed that it has started to hinder other aspects that may better explain Yang's complexity and richness from being properly discussed, this chapter aims to bring in other possibilities of understanding the multiple forces shaping the city in his works. Among the other scholars who have attempted to challenge Jameson's argument, Taiwan-based scholar Lee Hsiu-chuan, who considers Yang's films as his authorial statement in nurturing a new mode of cultural production, provides a more interesting angle to be further explored. Lee argues that Jameson's theoretical framework simplifies the tension between the local and the global by regarding Yang's Westernized formal system as a complete departure from the Taiwanese context; however, depicting Taipei as a globalizing city does not equate to giving up its local distinctiveness or addressing only those universal problems brought by urbanization.[19] This argument can be linked to Braester's observation of Yang's "camera-yielding characters" in both *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi*, whom he regards as part of Yang's unique approach of reconstructing "an alternative, hopeful image of

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[16] Hong, *Taiwan* Cinema, p. 128
[17] Ibid., p. 131.
[18] Ibid., p. 136
[19] Lee, 'Who Knows What S/he Wants?', p. 41.

Taipei";[20] however, it is unfortunate that Braester did not offer further analysis but rather chose to leave this argument as an open ending to his essay.

By acknowledging the extensive but disparate efforts in existing scholarship, I propose to focus on how photography is represented as a crucial agency in Yang's poetics of representing Taipei, through which he highlights the power of seeing and envisioning the specific context of Taiwan. Drawing attention to other media is one of the aspects that Jameson suggested but did not fully explore. Jameson insightfully affirms that Yang "endows each of them with a specific power not ordinarily thought to be consistent with cinema as such"[21], even though he tends to see photography, one of the most important media in *The Terrorizers*, as a means of killing time.[22] How this specific power of photography emerges to provide "an alternative, hopeful image of Taipei"[23] will be one of the focuses of this chapter. Photography, functioning as a major motif by which to claim a visual character of Taipei, helps us to further understand the subtext of the formal qualities in Yang's films. As a director who has been described as "a fan of comic books who relies on striking imagery, staccato cutting, and a minimum of dialogue",[24] and as "a calculating and painstaking perfectionist",[25] looking more closely at how he puts his films together is key to understanding his uniqueness as a director who has devoted his entire career to representing the same city. As Shih Shu-mei suggests, the ways we construct and represent identities are now increasingly visual, and these identities have begun to

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[20] Braester, 'Tales of a Porous City', pp. 168-69.
[21] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 140.
[22] Ibid., p. 151.
[23] Braester, 'Tales of a Porous City', pp. 168-69.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 91.

possess "visual character",[26] and Yang's films provide good examples of how identities can be constructed through an emphasis on the visual.

This chapter focuses on *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi* in order to argue that the major reason for making these two films specific to Taiwan is Yang's ability to imagine and envision Taiwanese society, instead of anywhere else. Rather than following Jameson's argument to discuss Yang's films as a powerful symbol of the general situation of Third-World nations and cinema, this chapter argues that Yang, despite his background of living abroad and being an internationally acclaimed auteur, still paid a great deal of attention to cultural specificities and the question of Taiwanese identity. Through the camera-yielding characters in these two films and his emphasis on visual technologies in the urban context, Yang suggests that there is no absolutely correct way to represent Taiwanese experience and identity. It is also necessary to note that this approach does not only address clues of the local particularities in Yang's films, but also to acknowledge the fact that the increase in local awareness is constructed partially through the help of globalization in post-martial law Taiwan. As Wang Horng-luen argues, Taiwan is one of those rare nations where "the global and the national need not be two dichotomous, conflicting categories",[27] and Taiwan's increasing contacts with both the Western world and China prompts local people's desire for a new identification different from the Chinese. Yang's films have to be discussed through an understanding of this peculiar context in which the local and the global are intertwined as a foundation for reshaping nationhood.

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[26] Shih Shu-mei, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 16.

[27] Horng-luen Wang, 'Rethinking the Global and the National: Reflections on National Imaginations in Taiwan', in *Theory, Culture & Society* 17.4 (2000): pp. 93-117.

4.1 The transformative power of photography: *The Terrorizers* **(1986)**

Released in the same year as the establishment of the major opposition party DPP and one year before martial law was lifted, *The Terrorizer*s was directly inspired by a story about a Eurasian girl which Yang had read in 1985 in Chen Ying-zhen's *The Mortal World Magazine* (*Ren-jian Magazine*), an intellectual publication that promoted the creative freedom of local writers before the lifting of martial law.[28] The girl's life story, which involves the US aid (her absent father was one of the American soldiers stationed in Taiwan), the predicament of a single native-Taiwanese mother and the problem of minorities in a Han-dominant Taiwan, inspired Yang to tackle this transitional period of time.

The Terrorizers starts with a gunfight between gangsters and the police, which attracts the interest of a young photographer, Xiao-qiang, who approaches the crime scene. While at the scene, he takes a large number of pictures of a Eurasian girl named Shu-an, even though he only witnesses her escaping from the gangsters' apartment for few seconds. Later Xiao-qiang rents the apartment, formerly occupied by the gangsters, as a dark room to develop the photographs of Shu-an. After leaving the gangster group, Shu-an begins to make prank phone calls, which causes the writer Zhou Yu-fen to leave her husband Li Li-chung, a hospital lab technician who is eagerly awaiting a promotion. Zhou moves in with her old lover, for whom she now works, and transforms the experience of receiving mysterious calls about her husband's affairs into a prize-winning short story, bringing her plaudits and attention from the mass media. Meanwhile, Xiao-qiang reads the story and thinks he is the only one who knows what really happened because of his brief encounter with Shu-

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[28] During its short life from 1985 to 1989, this magazine was dedicated solely to reporting stories of marginalized groups in Taiwan, which helped Taiwanese people gain an insight about the hybridity of Taiwanese identity.

an in the apartment. He calls the organizer of the literature prize and manages to locate Li, telling him about Shu-an's prank calls. Li tries to convince Zhou to come home with him, thinking the only reason she had left was the story made up by Shu-an; however, Zhou declares her resolute decision to seek a divorce. The film presents two endings; the first one shows how Li shoots everyone who frustrates him: the director of his department, Zhou's lover and Shu-an, whereas the second version shows Li simply killing himself, while Zhou is seen waking from a nightmare and feeling nauseous, a symptom which may also refer to the pregnancy for which she has been longing.

In order to surpass the generalized interpretation of the representation of Taipei in this film as "a city as dystopia",[29] and "a world devoid of any passion, compassion, or even hatred",[30] where "all the characters are potential terrorizers",[31] this chapter not only aims to reveal the importance of photography in this film, but also how this visual agency is interwoven with the specific political and cultural contexts of Taiwan. I will explore how photography is situated in relation to the specific context of Taiwan's politics and cultural production, which are imbedded in the spatial articulations respectively applied to two unconventional female characters: the Eurasian girl, Shu-an, and the writer, Zhou Yu-fen.

As Jameson points out, *The Terrorizers* is characterized by "the insistent relationship it establishes between the individual space and the city as a whole",[32] and the opening sequence is a collage of private and public urban spaces that jointly advocate the urban character of this film. The plot begins from the time before sunrise when the silhouette of the city emerges (*Figure 4.1*). A police car hurrying

[29] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinemas* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 244-45.
[30] Lu, *Confronting Modernity*, p. 132.
[31] Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 134.
[32] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 153.

from the other end of the street sounding its high-pitched siren is the visual motif of mobility, which would later be responsible for bridging various internal and external locations and displaying the topography of the city (for example, it appears in the aerial shots inserted between various interior scenes to provide a glimpse of the neighbourhood). The film lingers on the daybreak scene for 12 seconds with a static shot before showing the film title, and then cutting the film to an interior scene, where a close-up shot of a film poster for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966, dir. Mike Nichols) (*Figure 4.2*) is located. The first visual motif is therefore purely visual, two-dimensional, and suggestive of the Western influence on young people's cultural taste. Then the camera scans the room carefully from the bed to the balcony (*Figure 4.3*), and also reveals the photographer Xiao-qiang's equipment by switching between several static shots. Xiao-qiang's girlfriend is shown reading a book, published by Hongfen, a famous local publisher (a Taiwanese equivalent to Penguin) easily recognized by its standardised cover design.
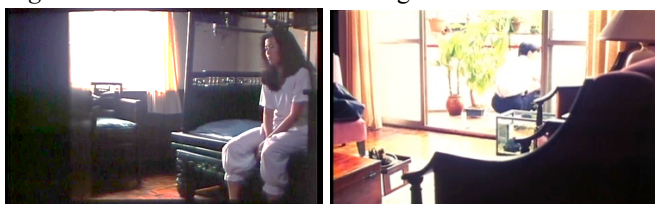

Figure 4.1 The opening scene of *The Terrorizers*.
Figure 4.2 The first interior scene in *The Terrorizers* is close-up shot of a poster.
Figure 4.3 The photographer's apartment.
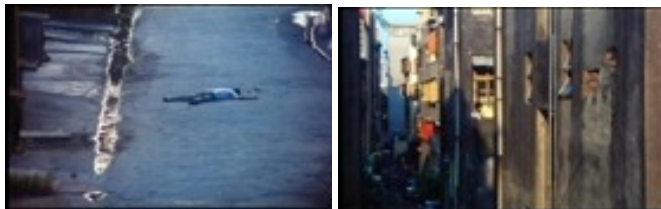
Figures 4.4-4.5 A series of static long shots reveal the area surrounding a crime scene.

Figures 4.6-4.7 A panning sequence reveals the widening gap between Zhou Yu-fen and Li Li-chung.

Xiao-qiang's desire for images then triggers the highly segmented sequence. After hearing the police car's high-pitched siren, he grabs his cameras and rushes to the crime scene. The next sequence begins with a long shot of someone lying on the ground with the faint rippling sound of water on the soundtrack (*Figure 4.4*), and then it abruptly jumps to another long shot, revealing the general view of the neighbourhood around the crime scene. In this seemingly ordinary yet peculiar scene, a blurred figure is doing laundry on a distant balcony, while loud gunshots are heard on the soundtrack (*Figure 4.5*). Then the sequence jumps again to the apartment of the married couple, Li Li-chung and Zhou Yu-fen, by another set of panning shots, starting from the bedroom, where the wife sits on the edge of a huge Chinese antique-style bed *(Figure 4.6)*, then to the living room where the husband is doing his morning exercises on the balcony *(Figure 4.7)*. Next, the film cuts back to the crime scene, where a series of conflicts between the police and the gangsters take place. The intricate editing of the whole opening sequence not only paves the way for the multiple plotlines, but it also reveals how the formalistic tendency is registered in each domestic space and how it efficiently addresses the relationship between the inhabitants.

Although, as Jameson notes, all of the apartments shown in the opening sequence are part of "a superimposed set of boxed dwelling spaces",[33] the architectural scene in this film is more complex than that which Jameson observes. The opening sequence also shows how Yang invests in visual details to delineate the physicality of the Taipei cityscape in the late 1980s. One of the most peculiar scenes is a close-up shot of a corner with dripping water and the reflection of sunlight on the ground appears when Xiao-qiang is looking for opportunities to take pictures of the crime

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[33] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 154.

scene (*Figures 4.8*). Another case in point is a medium shot of a door close to where Xiao-qiang is standing (*Figures 4.9*). These static shots are more like photographs inserted in cinematic sequences, and the formative qualities of these scenes contribute to the filmic reality by revealing the most ordinary side of the cityscape, which are images that people would ignore in daily life but are also the major components to construct a sense of surrounding.

Figures 4.8-4.9 Yang pays attention to irrelevant details of the urban environment.

Despite the fact that Yeh and Davis share Jameson's approach of analysing *The Terrorizers* from its multiple plotlines, they also emphasize how Yang's distinct usage of realism should be regarded as a result of Taiwan's political specificity, rather than its generality as a Third-World city. In Yeh and Davis's opinion, although we can easily link Yang's concern for the depth of focus and long takes with other masters of realist aesthetics like Dreyer, Ozu and Angelopoulos, it is also worth noting other factors, such as "the marginality Taiwan itself in the world system, the refusal of official recognition as a nation among world bodies, and the pathos of attempts at self-assertion in the face of global indifference, derision, and outright hostility".[34] To further explore their observation of the distinctive forms of realism registered in Yang's acute response to Taiwan's political situation, we can turn to Yang's detailed attention to architectural details that respectively reveal each character's thematic function. The first example which needs further analysis is Shu-an, the girl who becomes the main subject matter of Xiao-qiang and Zhou's creative

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[34] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 101.

works. Shu-an's home is an evident example of how Yang's extensive usage of architectural elements, especially the sharp lines of doorframes, windows, railings and stairs aims to accentuate the tense social atmosphere before martial law was lifted in 1987. Her home is shown as a place full of locks and bars, which have been placed by her mother to punish her for her rebellious behaviour (*Figure 4.10*). The main part of the apartment is represented as an enclosed box divided by multiple architectural lines, yet the dark colour scheme reduces the deep-focus effect (*Figure 4.11*); even when the space is filled with natural light, the camera constantly pans across to the prison-like barred window to evoke a sense of confinement (*Figure 4.12*). Such window bars are designed to prevent burglary, and the fact that they are so widespread reflects the Taiwanese people's lack of confidence in their urban environment.

Figures 4.10-4.12 Shu-an's home is represented with a strong sense of confinement.

The problem caused such conspicuous damage to the image of Taipei that Lin Yang-kang, Minister of the Interior between 1981 and 1984, declared his ambition to rid the city of all window bars. However, the situation only grew worse after his four-year tenure, and iron barred windows continue to be a specific characteristic of the cityscape of Taipei. This specific context of Taipei's cityscape is amalgamated with Shu-an's personal history. Her mother, who reveals that the girl's father left her and never came back, constantly recalls her absent lover who was one of the many American soldiers stationed in Taiwan between 1951 and 1965 due to the US aid being provided at that time. The mother's nostalgia about her memory of that time in

her life is also embodied in some concrete symbols of American culture, such as the famous Billboard hit, 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes', recorded by The Platters in 1958, which she plays on an old record player. The dimly lit apartment haunted by the American song accentuates not only the past of the girl, which she does not even really know, but also the tense political triangle which exists between the USA, PRC and ROC governments. Both 'pasts' have become shadows from which the girl and modern Taiwan desire to break free. However, neither of their destinations is clear, and the definition of the identities of the girl and Taiwan are still waiting to be reconstructed.

Figures 4.13-4.14 Long shots of Shu-an evoke a sense of surveillance.

Although Yang prefers medium shots over long shots, many scenes of Shu-an wandering in the city are filmed as long shots with a telephoto lens, which evoke a feeling of survellienace. Moreover, these are usually presented as high-angle shots, and the sequences always slowly pan across the scene until Shu-an is at the centre of the compostion (*Figures 4.13-14*). The compositional principles inscribed in these scenes further highlight the sense of uncertainty and unsettlment suggested by the spatial articulation of her home. In doing this, Yang posits a visual approach with which to contemplate Shu-an's hybrid background, a specific result of the Nationalist government's peculiar nation-building process based on the US aid provided throughout the Cold War era. Yang's stylistic choice for Shu-an's sequences responds to the unique political constriants of the pre-martial law Taiwan, where

rapid changes were emerging, and the characters like Shu-an would soon be positioned at the centre of questions regarding to the meaning of being Taiwanese.

The examples I have presented so far may respond to Jameson's argument, which is that in this film all the women's spaces are "essentially spaces of confinement"[35], through which Hong regards this film as obeying gender norms whereby women have little power to fully control their fate.[36] This is where Lee's argument comes in useful to challenge Jameson's inescapable verdict on this film. As Lee notes, Yang's films are less about the predicament brought by the past, but more about the new possibilities generated by resisting, challenging and deconstructing the past. Instead of interpreting the spatial articulation as a way to criticize urban alienation, Lee suggests seeing how Yang represents Taipei as a city generating creative responses to globalization.[37] Therefore, the identity of the real terrorizer is not as important as Yang's ability to reconstruct reality in a new light, and that is why the writer and the photographer – the two creative characters in this film – are crucial.

To further explore this aspect, it is necessary to note that similar to Shu-an's thematic function of responding to Taiwan's political past, Zhou also resonates with another context specific to Taiwan, namely the development of local literature, which is closely linked to the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema. Most of the scriptwriters that have contributed to Taiwan New Cinema, including Chu Tien-wen, Hou's long-term scriptwriter and the co-scriptwriter of *The Terrorizers*, Hsiao Yeh, have won The *China Times* Literary Award (*Shibao wenxuejiang*),[38] the same award

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[35] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 152.
[36] Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 130.
[37] Lee, 'Who Knows What S/he Wants?', pp. 40-45.
[38] The *China Times* is a major newspaper in Taiwan that keeps 'China' in its title, although it is based in Taipei. Despite its pro-KMT ideology, its literary supplement (*fukan*), the department that hosts the annual literary prize, is politically neutral. Another similar award is The *United Daily* Literary Award, established in 1976. Wu Nien-jen, the scriptwriter of *Dust in the Wind* and the actor who plays NJ in *Yi Yi*, won this award for three consecutive years before he joined the CMPC in 1980 to contribute to the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema.

Zhou tries to enter and which she eventually wins, and Yeh even later become the jury himself in the 2000s. Established in 1978 and still regarded as a crucial indicator of the development of Taiwan literature today, The *China Times* Literary Awards have been the major platform for local writers to obtain visibility. Unlike Jameson's criticism that the award is "a vehicle of narcissism and self-pity" and only exists "for the shabby pride of commercialized prizes",[39] local literature awards like The *China Times* Literary Awards have continued to nurture talent for both the local literature and film industry and have been crucial in local cultural production without becoming overly commercialized.


Figure 4.15 Zhou's study is always represented as a dimly lit space.
Figure 4.16 The home divided into two halves.
Figure 4.17 The compositional principle in Zhou and Li's home constantly evokes a sense of oppression.

Spatial articulations applied to Zhou's sequences thus respond to her transformation as a creative character, who frees herself from the past with a changing perspective. When Zhou is seen in her study, although the space looks cramped and dimly lit (*Figures 4.15*), it is always represented as a complete space without being divided into two halves as is the case in other scenes that represent her in the living room (*Figures 4.16*). The couple are usually not in the same frame, and even when they are, their figures are situated in a space sharply divided by doorframes and the contours of pieces of furniture pieces (*Figures 4.17*). In a panning sequence, the camera is situated outside her study and borrows the wall between the study and the living room again to accentuate the layered composition.

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[39] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', pp. 142-43.
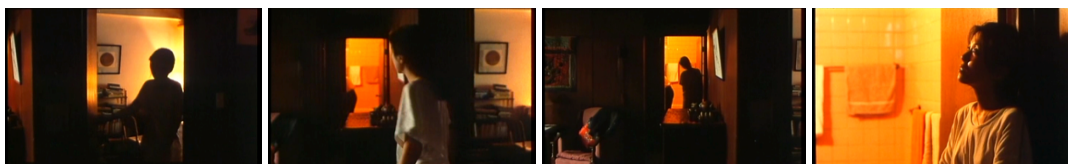
Figures 4.18-4.21 A sequence pans between the divided domestic spaces and is characterized by the stark contrast between darkness and brightness.

Figures 4.22-4.23 The bright, well-lit urban spaces.

The camera first pans right to reveal part of Zhou's study, depicting her walking through the doorway (*Figure 4.18*), and then the camera adjusts its position to follow her walking past the wall (*Figure 4.19*), then approaching the bathroom where her husband is seen (*Figure 4.20*), and it finally stops on a close-up of her face when she tells Li about her plan to look for a job again (*Figure 4.21*). The highly contrasting combination of the darkness and the orange light in the bathroom evokes a sense of constraint, but also suggests a strengthening of Zhou's will to make some changes. Jameson analyses this sequence as a major example in 'Remapping Taipei', only to argue that the husband's compulsive hand washing emphasises the character's insecurity.[40] However, the symbolic function of this sequence is no less important for Zhou, the wife who is finding a route to break free from her spatial confinement, than it is for the husband, whom Jameson considers as the symbol of Taiwan's frustration as a Third-World country unable to really join the First World.[41] Jameson's argument is based mainly on a male-dominated perspective, as he chooses a frustrated man to represent the 'national allegory' over a woman embracing changes, by neglecting the significant role played by Zhou in this domestic scene (throughout his analysis, Jameson fails to address how the wife also approaches the

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[40] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', pp. 135, 153.
[41] Ibid., p. 145.

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bathroom and starts a conversation with Li). Yang's perspective of the national allegory of Taiwan may be very different from Jameson's preferred choice of the frustrated man, as this chapter will continue to explore.

In contrast to the spatial articulation of her domestic space, the other places she visits, such as the modern office run by her ex-lover and his apartment (*Figures 4.22-23*), are all represented as bright, spacious and well-lit spaces. Overall, Zhou successfully transforms the negatives (i.e. the threat from the prank call and her loveless marriage) into materials for her short story, then succeeds in re-asserting her identity as a writer. The transformation, which is triggered by her desire to write, is registered in the stark contrast between home and the spaces outside the home. As a character who symbolizes the specific context of Taiwan's cultural production,[42] her transformation is emphasized in such a visually characteristic way that it resonates with the plot concerning the photographer, Xiao-qiang, another creative character responded to remotely by Zhou's character. It is a common misunderstanding that Yang represents these two creative characters merely as privileged middle-class people who killed time by indulging themselves in literature or photography,[43] and Yeh and Davis even describe these two characters as "the most empty" in the whole film.[44] Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, Zhou's strong connection with the local literature scene and Taiwan New Cinema should not be underestimated as a subplot of universal urban experience. It is not only highly locally specific, but also specific to Taiwan New Cinema itself. The juxtaposition of reality and fiction in *The Terrorizers* should also be regarded as Yang's distinct way of contemplating the

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[42] Other clues include: her first book was published by the famous local publisher Hongfen, and when she eventually wins the prize, from a close-up shot of her biography on the newspaper, we are informed that she graduated from the University of Taiwan, which nurtured most writers of the post-war generation, including Wang Wen-hsing, Pai Hsien-yung and Chu Tien-hsin, to name only a few.
[43] Jameson, 'Remapping Taipei', p. 141; Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 97.
[44] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 97.

present and providing a cinematic means of confronting all the locally specific problems that have troubled Taiwan while constantly reshaping its definition of national identity. It is through these two characters that Yang implies that creativity takes a significant part in dealing with the questions of identity.

Yang's highly visualized strategy, which is the key for Yang in responding to the Taiwanese experience through specific historical circumstances (such as the US aid and its impact on identity formation) and the local cultural scene, is also the key for him in imagining a hopeful image of Taipei, despite all of the frustrations and chaotic events depicted in *The Terrorizers*.

To illustrate my point better, it is important to analyse several scenes involving the most symbolic architectural object in this film: the enormous spaceship-like gas tank standing in the middle of Taipei. This gas tank with the three characters, 'Dai Taibei' (literally meaning 'Big Taipei', which is the name of a gas company), printed on it, was the property of the KMT-owned Taipei Gas Company and it occupied the same location on Guang-fu North road from 1964, until it was finally relocated to Neihu District in 1999. Throughout Taipei's process of urbanization, it caused much controversy and protests, because residents of that area were afraid of accidents caused by gas leaks. This gas tank is such an important visual motif that Yan Hong-ya, who was Yang's assistant at that time, once declared that "*The Terrorizers* would not exist without the scenes of the gas tank".[45] Although the gas tank has unsurprisingly been considered as nothing more than a striking emblem of the dangers lurking in everyday urban life,[46] it also surpasses a plain metaphor of danger

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[45] Shen Yi, 'Edward Yang: an Observer who Always Stays in the Distance' (an interview with Yan Hong-ya), *Dong Fang Daily*, 29 June, 2012. http://epaper.dfdaily.com/dfzb/html/2012-06/29/content_641511.htm. Accessed 1 August, 2012.

[46] Huang Jian-ye, *Research on the Cinema of Edward Yang* (Taipei: Yuanliu, 1995), p. 137.

because of the formative tendency evoked by the unique status of photography in this film.

Figure 4.24 The gas tank standing in central Taipei.
Figure 4.25 The photographer walks besides the gas tank.

Figure 4.26 An enlarged photograph of Shu-an.
Figure 4.27 The gas tank immersed in a warm glow of the setting sun.

The gas tank comes into sight for the first time in the opening sequence when the police car speeds through the city (*Figure 4.24*). At this very early stage of the film, it is only an alien object in a common cityscape, having no relevance to the plot. However, the gas tank soon appears again to reveal more stories about Xiao-qiang's desire for images. After he has an argument with his girlfriend and goes out to wander in the city, he walks with his camera in hand, and is shown as a small figure walking past the gas tank in a high-angle long shot (*Figure 4.25*). Then he goes back to the crime scene and rents the apartment, in which Shu-an and the gangsters used to live. He transforms the apartment into his dark room and develops an enlarged photo-collage of the close-up shot of Shu-an, which is a powerful portrait and which should be read within the specific context of Taiwan that she has revealed as a character (*Figure 4.26*). After an aimless cruise in the city, Shu-an also comes to the apartment, for which she still has the key. Seeing the close-up shot of her own face hanging on the wall, she faints. After she wakes up, the photographer tears off part of the black paper he had pasted on the window and shows her the cityscape, where the

gas tank stands peacefully in the warm glow of the setting sun (*Figure 4.27*). The composition of this shot is almost identical to the one that appears in the opening sequence, suggesting that Xiao-qiang symbolizes the 'eyes behind the camera' throughout the whole film. Then the scene cuts back to the room and shows Xiao-qiang revealing his love for Shu-an. It is also precisely in this room that Xiao-qiang mentions the reason behind his action for capturing images of Shu-an for the first time. He mentions that while he completed his medical examination in preparation for commencing his compulsory military service, the doctor tells him that he has superb eyesight, which may enable him to become an excellent marksman in the military. Knowing this fact about himself, Xiao-qiang sets out to make the best use of this physical advantage, not by firing bullets, but by taking photographic snapshots. The major photograph taken by Xiao-qiang, the portrait of Shu-an, is composed of multiple images. By presenting these segments of prints with a medium shot that reveals the complete composition of the photograph, Yang also reveals his belief in cinema's power to contemplate the diverse factors that are shaping Taiwan's transformative society and its people, with an iconic image that acknowledges the potential of multiplicity.

These three scenes of the gas tank neatly map Xiao-qiang's journey, showing the process from taking the first pictures of Shu-an to their subsequent meeting. The gas tank, no matter how alien and dystopian it looks, becomes a totem for all the important moments in his pursuit of images. As a film meant to reflect the life story of the Eurasian girl Yang read in *The Mortal World Magazine*, *The Terrorizers* explores a unique and neglected group in Taiwanese society by visualizing the girl's face as a symbol of the new generation of Taiwanese, whose identities may be ambiguous and unsettling, but still full of possibilities. It is no coincidence that both

Zhou and Xiao-qiang's best works in this film are centred on Shu-an, the Eurasian girl whose path of life intersects accidently with theirs in the city and which is the origin of Yang's conception of this story. For a nation which was only going to rid itself of its politically dominant cultural production after martial law was lifted in 1987, *The Terrorizers*, a film released one year earlier, provides a useful example through which to observe how the local context may emerge through strategically inscribing Taiwan's political and cultural specificities by stressing the transformative power of photography.

4.2 Visualizing Taiwan in an era of globalization: *Yi Yi* (2000)

Compared to the Taiwan of the 1980s featured in *The Terrorizers*, the Taiwan of the 2000s in *Yi Yi* appears to be even more closely linked to the forces of globalization. As a film which also based its formalistic tendency on a 'camera-yielding character' like *The Terrorizers*, *Yi Yi* explores the traces of globalization in Taiwanese identity more vigorously by looking into the transnational business of computer gaming, Taiwanese people's high mobility and the deepening effects on people of visual technologies. Furthermore, *Yi Yi* itself is a result of transnational collaboration. Funded by a Japanese company '1+2 Seisaku Iinkal', *Yi Yi* is part of a joint venture 'Y2K Project' between Edward Yang from Taiwan, Shunji Iwai from Japan and Stanley Kwan from Hong Kong. Shunji and Yang met first and initiated this project together in 1997, aiming to capture the unique cultural flows of East Asia. Although their respective results, including *Yi Yi*, *All About Lily Zhou-Zhou* (2001, dir. Iwai Shunji, Rockwell Eyes) and *The Island Tales* (1999, Stanley Kwan, Kwan's Creation Workshop) have rarely been discussed together, they share an innovative attitude in

filmmaking.[47] As part of the transnational project, *Yi Yi* was meant to sketch the uniqueness of Taiwan against the bigger backdrop of East Asia.

Yi Yi begins the narrative from the central character NJ, who appears to be a common middle-class husband and father. He accidently bumps into his former girlfriend, Sherry, who now lives in the USA and travels between Asia and American frequently, in the restaurant where his brother-in-law, A-Di, is having his wedding to a young girl Xiao-Yan. In the middle of the wedding, NJ's mother-in-law feels ill and falls into a coma after she goes home to rest. Her coma activates diverse reactions from various characters, but the earliest and strongest comes from NJ's wife, Min-min, who starts to wonder about the meaning of her life and who leaves the family to stay temporarily in a temple. NJ immerses himself in a new project of developing a computer game and has a business trip to Japan to meet the game designer Ota, where he also has a secret meeting with Sherry. NJ's daughter, Ting-ting, now has more freedom to hang out with their new neighbour, Lili, and later falls in love with Lili's ex-boyfriend, Fatty. However, Fatty leaves her and goes back to date Lili. NJ's son, Yang-yang, develops his passion for photography and aims to take pictures of things that people neglect or cannot see, such as mosquitos flying in the air or the rear of people's heads. The story ends with the funeral of the NJ's mother-in-law, who stays in coma throughout most of the film and eventually dies. At the funeral, Yang-yang reads a letter to his grandmother, stating his aim to encourage other people see what they neglect in their daily lives.

Before going further to analyse how *Yi Yi* represents Taipei in such a visually eloquent style that it deserves to be regarded as one of the most emblematic city

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[47] *All About Lily Zhou-Zhou* exquisitely combines Internet culture with the unique visual qualities achieved by DV camera. *The Island Tales* possesses a strong surrealistic and allegorical atmosphere with complex camera movement and a hybrid use of languages. All these films explore the specificities of local culture, but also suggest the connectivity between these East Asian regions.

films in history, it is necessary to address the Taiwanese context of globalization from the thematic point of view. Written in the same year as *Yi Yi*'s release, Wang's essay 'Rethinking the Global and the National: Reflections on National Imaginations in Taiwan' thoroughly explores how Taiwan provides a specific example to prove that globalization does not necessarily "imply the decline of nations and/or nation-states".[48] On the one hand, manifesting global colour is a strategy by which to distinguish Taiwanese identity from the Chinese identity that is firmly rooted in the ethnic-cultural link, as the link has deconstructed since the 1980s by an emerging Taiwanese identity which is hybrid, internationalized, inclusive of Chinese, Japanese, American and even Spanish and Dutch cultures.[49] On the other hand, as a nation lacking formal diplomatic ties, to integrate global colour into identity formation is a strategic approach with which to resist Taiwan's fate of being isolated on the international stage. Besides the cultural and political aspects, participation in global capitalism also helps to shape the global colour of Taiwanese identity, and as Wang notes, economic success has gained Taiwan international visibility and strengthened the national imagery.[50]

The Taiwanese context of globalization mentioned above forms the backbone of *Yi Yi*'s cosmopolitan look. This context is first and foremost tied to global capitalism, as NJ's company is a medium-sized computer company exploring new business opportunities in computer gaming. This major plotline realistically reflects the industrial structure of Taiwan at the turn of the 21st century and the flourishing IT industry in Taiwan. This context is also culturally specific, as NJ is played by Wu Nien-jen, a scriptwriter-director who had been an important force of Taiwan New Cinema and who then turned to television and produced the critically renowned and

[48] Wang, 'Rethinking the Global and the National', p. 112.
[49] Lin Heng-zhe, *Carving the Dream of Taiwanese Culture* (Taipei: Avantgarde, 1989), pp. 39-41.
[50] Wang, 'Rethinking the Global and the National', p. 103.

popular programme, *Nien-jen's Affection for Taiwan*, which brought him fame as the spokesman of local culture (see chapter 1). This Taiwanese context is also ethno-culturally specific. NJ's marriage with Min-min reflects the most common mode of inter-marriage in Taiwan: native Taiwanese and second generation mainlanders. Min-min's mainlander mother is represented as a symbol of the Old China (she still wears the traditional *qipao*) that Taiwanese people have to confront on a daily basis even in an era of globalization. Throughout the film we never hear Min-min's mother speaking because she is in a coma, but the impact of her absence on the whole family is a forceful metaphor for the interlaced relationship between Taiwanese society and Chinese tradition. On the one hand, the Chinese identity forged by the Nationalist government is gradually being replaced by a separate Taiwanese identity that celebrates internationalization more than Chinese tradition, but on the other hand, the influence of Chinese culture appears to be deeply rooted in daily life. The contrast between A-Di's dogged superstitious belief in the lunar calendar and his extremely Westernized apartment is a clear example. The lunar calendar, also known as 'the peasants' calendar', is an ancient Chinese calendar originally developed to help peasants to work more efficiently by indicating the changes in the weather. Today, its major function for Taiwanese people is to check when it is 'a good day' for specific activities, such as getting married and moving house. Conversely, contemporary Chinese no longer rely on it to decide the date of important events. As a typical Taiwanese, A-Di chooses 'the best day' of the whole year according to the lunar calendar and he is convinced that no bad things will happen. Finally, the specific context of Taiwan's globalization is also stressed through the affinity between Taiwan and its ex-colonizer, Japan. The scenes showing NJ travelling with Sherry in Japan and Ting-ting's first date with Fatty in various locations around

Taipei are presented as a neatly organized set of parallel sequences, and by cutting back and forth between the two, Yang suggests two things: first of all, the small towns of Japan resemble Taipei's past, as Taipei was characterized by residuals of its colonial past when NJ and Sherry were young, therefore travelling to Japan together is like revisiting the old Taipei that lingers in their memory; on the other hand, Yang also suggests that the highly frequent transnational flow of the East Asian region still needs to be placed with local experiences in order to generate meaning, and in the case of Taiwan, the national history is still a crucial part in people's identity formation that has not yet been replaced by globalization.

Rather than responding to Jameson's verdict that Yang's Taipei represents the general condition of late-capitalist urbanization, all these details reveal how Taiwan as a nation constructs a dialogue with globalization and retains the specific context of Taiwan in an era of globalization. These thematic details also pave the way for Yang's meticulously articulated formal system and an intensified interest in visual technologies. These details are blended with Yang's self-reflexive approach of representing the image-saturated phenomenon happening on a global scale, and they shape a means of reimagining the local identity that surpasses what the nation is/was, and approaches its future possibilities. In existing scholarship, technology in Yang's films has mainly been rendered into negative interpretations. Chiao Hsiung-ping regards media in *The Terrorizers* as a way for characters to "create illusions and imprison themselves".[51] Wu Pei-tsyr presents the most detailed formal analysis of *Yi Yi* in current scholarship and argues how Yang's appropriation of media surpasses the ordinary level of narrative and enters into the philosophical state. However, she still shares Chiao's argument and regards media as a "powerful illusion" in Yang's

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[51] Chiao Hsiung-ping, '*The Terrorizer*: Dissection and Assemblage of the Myth of Cinema', in Huang Jian-ye (ed.), *Edward Yang: the Contribution of Taiwan to World Film History* (Taipei: Yue Sheng Publisher, 2007), p.95.

films.[52] Ivy I-chu Chang follows Jameson's concept of Third World texts and argues that media in Yang's films represents a way to spread lies and construct surveillance.[53] Feng Pin-chia criticizes the way Yang treats technology and humanity as a stark dichotomy, and argues that technology becomes a means for Yang to misplace his nostalgia for Japanese colonization, since the only Japanese character seems to be the only one who knows how to make use of the power of technology and create meaningful product in *Yi Yi*. [54]

Scholars' scepticism of technology is also extended to their view of the city and globalization, and in one example Li Chi-she criticizes Yang's false belief in an ideal cosmopolitan city by claiming that Yang overly deifies the cinematic vision.[55] I oppose this 'technological equals purely global/Western' ideology in existing scholarship, not only because globalization has been integrated extensively into Taiwanese identity, while technology has been a defining element of Taiwan's economy as *Yi Yi* reflects realistically, but also because this ideology is still operated under an assumption that for a film to be 'Taiwanese', it must have a certain look. Nonetheless, Yang's films have never been about following any established look. This explains why he prefers to make city films, as he once stated:

> People usually feel that modern society is full of urban alienation; however, I realize this is only because people compare urban life with agricultural society. The truth is, the city can be developed into a better place with even more intimate human relationships. Cities are really interesting, and that's why I continuously make films about urban life.[56]

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[52] Wu Pei-tsyr, '*Yi Yi*: Gaze at the Fading Image of the Back', in *Edward Yang*, pp. 191-92.
[53] Ivy I-chu Chang, 'The Falsifying Force of Forgers', pp. 15-37.
[54] Feng Pin-chia, 'National/Family Romance in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi*', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 33.3 (2004): pp. 63-79.
[55] Li Chi-she, 'The Representation of Global Space', pp. 88-89.
[56] Edward Yang, 'Interview about *Yi Yi*', quoted in Feng, 'National / Family Romance in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi*', p. 69.

Instead of regarding the city as deconstructive and dystopian, he sees the possibilities in it. In what follows, I will explore how Yang's emphasis on photography and other visual technologies posits a unique way of showing Taiwanese people as "framed by the particular strangeness and complexity of life on their island" as Anderson points out,[57] and envisioning not only Taiwan's present, but also the future of Taiwanese identity as a postcolonial one that embraces new interpretations of nationhood.

Figure 4.28 Yi Yi begins with a group photograph of the large family.
Figure 4.29 Photography is placed as a crucial motif in *Yi Yi*.

The visual motif of photography is first used to introduce the large family, which Yang applies to demonstrate the various generations in Taiwan. In the opening sequence, through a long shot Yang depicts them walking towards the camera and standing for a group photograph (*Figure 4.28*). The formalistic tendency (in this case, the formal convention of composing a group photograph) of the photographic approach activates the plot, and will continue to question and interact with the filmic reality. It is also applied to construct a self-reflexive mode to challenge the cinematic norms. In one scene, Ting-ting is telling NJ that the grandmother is not feeling well and needs to go home. The father, who is helping A-Di to arrange the wedding and does not have so much time to take care of each member of the family, looks stressed and places a framed photograph of the new couple upside down on a display easel (*Figure 4.29*). In doing so, a close-up shot is integrated into this ostensibly ordinary medium shot and creates a visual drama without moving the camera. Through

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[57] Anderson, *Edward Yang*, p. 4.

Yang's deliberate insertion of photographic images like this, he not only prompts the audience to raise questions about how a film should be made, but also invites them to reimagine the ordinary cityscape.

The opening sequence taking place in and around the Grand Hotel is the first and last time that Yang incorporates such a 'Chinese' architectural symbol in his representation of Taipei. The Grand Hotel is one of the classical Chinese buildings completed in the 1970s (see chapter 2). As mentioned in chapter 2, throughout Taiwan's film history, filmmakers have tended to avoid integrating urban landmarks into city films. Before Taiwan New Cinema emerged in the 1980s and focused on presenting the real life experiences of Taiwanese people, propagandist films like *Home Sweet Home* did present a few landmarks throughout its representation of Taipei, but they were only deployed as a symbol of the Nationalist government's achievements in the process of modernization. Conversely, directors of Taiwan New Cinema tend to choose a recognizable landmark when it can be used to analyse the conventional mode of identity formation, especially with regard to the KMT version of Chineseness. In the case of *Yi Yi*, the Grand Hotel's splendid architectural design combining Chinese classical style and modernism was chosen as the perfect starting point with which to describe the story's contemplation of Taiwan as a unique site interweaving local consciousness, Chinese tradition and global capitalism. It is precisely in this place, the ultimate symbol of the KMT's efforts to modernise Chinese tradition as part of a strategy to consolidate their regime in Taiwan, that Yang-yang receives a camera as a present and begins his journey to look for images both at home and in the big city. The pictures he takes are rarely shown, and most of them are blurred images of unrecognizable corners or the back of people's heads. However, Yang-yang's interest in creating images of things which are usually unseen

or neglected is the hidden theme of the whole film, constantly reminding us that Yang's major goal is to transform this city into a platform of creative thinking with results that maintain a unique tie to the Taiwanese context, just as the plot of *Yi Yi* has demonstrated.

Figure 4.30 The CCTV image is another crucial motif.
Figure 4.31 A long shot showing Ting-ting passing along the corridor.

Figures 4.32-4.33 A point-of-view shot suggests Ting-ting's continuous spying on her neighbour.

Yang-yang's interest in photography also serves as a critical departure for examining the image-saturated phenomenon of the turn of the 21st century, since it is juxtaposed with one of the most visually powerful forms of media in the city: the CCTV. The first sequence of the CCTV images appears when Ting-ting takes the grandmother home from the wedding. When they arrive at the entrance of their building, the film suddenly cuts from a long shot of them walking into the building to the surveillance television screen (*Figure 4.30*). Then the sense of surveillance is prolonged in the following scenes, which depict Ting-ting taking out the rubbish from their apartment. The complete sequence is first captured by a static long shot, showing her walking through the corridor (*Figure 4.31*), passing the porter's room in which other surveillance televisions are located, and seeing her neighbour, Lili, meeting a boy in the car park (*Figure 4.32*). The sequence concludes by another static long shot, which shows Ting-ting's view from the balcony of their apartment (*Figure 4.33*). From there, she secretly observes Lili and her boyfriend, who have

moved from the car park to the space under the bridge outside the building. The visual characteristics of the CCTV images (which are more blurred, flickering and always set within a certain distance) may not be borrowed completely by other long shots in this sequence; however, the concept of the CCTV does integrate these various scenes into a visually coherent sequence and creates a sense of pervasive surveillance.

However, the function of CCTV images may not settle on a black-and-white value judgment. In another sequence of CCTV images taking place at Yang-yang's school – Long-an Elementary School – the criticism is not of the technology itself. This sequence first shows that Yang-yang skips classes to collect his photographs from a photography shop (*Figure 4.34*). In the following scene, Yang-yang is shown in different frames on surveillance television, which depict him running back to school through continuous images transmitted from the CCTV (*Figure 4.35*). The camera lingers on a surveillance television that is capable of showing images from four cameras at the same time.

Figure 4.34 Yang-yang in a photography shop.
Figure 4.35 CCTV images showing Yang-yang running through the campus.

Figure 4.36 A static long shot is applied to conclude the CCTV sequence.
Figure 4.37 The teacher makes fun of Yang-yang's pictures.

Then the film cuts to a long shot to depict Yang-yang being chased by his classmates (*Figure 4.36*), before the scene cuts to the teacher's office, where Yang-yang is questioned about his motivation for leaving the campus. The teacher then

makes fun of his photographs, sarcastically calling them avant-garde art (*Figure 4.37*). The sequence beginning with Yang-yang's passionate gaze at his film and ending with the teacher's cold sarcasm, suggests that the CCTV is not the thing which is imposing any judgement on Yang-yang's passion for photography, but rather it is the teacher and the rigid educational system in Taiwan. Here the formalistic tendency brought by visual technology, which is now reinforced by the CCTV images, comes into play as a signifier for Yang-yang's identity as a creative soul who resists the conventional way of seeing the city and actively looks for his own voice through image-making.

Besides the CCTV images, more sources of visual technologies are applied to strengthen Yang's formalistic tendency, and together they respond to Yang's vision of Taipei as a site of creativity and possibility. When Xiao-Yan is examined by ultrasound, the black-and-white ultrasonic images occupy the whole frame. However, the soundtrack leads the viewer to another place, in which the Japanese game designer, Ota, is giving his presentation, in which he expresses how his ideal for a computer game is to create a living entity in which people can invest their affections. Ota believes this ideal will allow his investors to surpass their competitors and to take control of the limitless future of computer games. This sequence should be considered as a critical response to another scene, in which the news about Fatty killing Lili's teacher applies images of a video game as a supplement to explain the crime. It clearly resonates with the previous sequence where Ota states that video games should not be limited to killing and fighting. These sequences show that what Yang criticizes is not technology itself, but its misuse and misinterpretation.

All of the examples mentioned above help Yang to shape a specific representational mode of Taipei, which is held together by his elaborate design of

architectural images. Throughout the film, Yang constantly represents the surface of buildings like a screen, incorporating reflections and the real cityscape into a highly articulated visual structure providing a dramatic effect of depth. These visually powerful images are usually applied to denote some turning point in the characters' lives, implying that they have realized more of themselves and are thinking about making a change.

Figure 4.38 The window of NJ and Min-min's bedroom displays a characteristic city image.
Figure 4.39 Interior and exterior views merge into one on the window of Min-min's office, transforming the window into a screen-like presence.

In *Figure 4.38*, the windowpane of NJ and Min-min's bedroom is shown from the inside and the outside respectively. The view from inside shows the dark cityscape embellished with flickering lights and the neighbour's window, which reveals a fierce argument between Lili's mother and her lover. The view from outside shows NJ sitting on a chair, facing his wife who is weeping because of her empty life. In another scene adopting a similar composition, the blank soundtrack contrasts with the rich layers of reflections on the window, where the interior scene of a spacious and empty office is mixed with the nocturnal cityscape (*Figure 4.39*). Both scenes create a complex layered image, in which the private and the public, the light and the darkness, the sharp architectural lines and the distorted forms of distant lights are naturally intermingled. These iconic images of the city, which can be defined as the most 'urban' imagery of the whole film, resonate with previous sequences of diverse visual technologies. They are photographic, as Yang always applies a static long shot to reveal these intricate compositions and relies on the instantaneous clash between

formalistic and realistic tendencies, which photography requires. They also deliver a sense of surveillance like the CCTV sequences, since neither of them depicts point-of-view perspectives of the characters; furthermore, they are transformed into a screen, receiving information from diverse sources.

Figure 4.40 The office building in Tokyo.
Figure 4.41 The static front shot of a restaurant in Atami, Japan.
Figure 4.42 The traditional Japanese-style room is depicted as a space without depth.

The intricate compositional principle that Yang applies to shape the most iconic images of Taipei in *Yi Yi* may seem only to stress Taipei's universality, and the screen-like architectural images may be applied to depict almost any other metropolis in the world. However, it is crucial to take a closer look at how Yang compares Taipei with another metropolis in this film: Tokyo. When the plot cuts to NJ's trip to Japan, and presents a series of urban images of Tokyo and Atami, another Japanese town visited by NJ and Sherry, the intricate compositional principle he applies in *Figures 4.38-39* is replaced by a formalistic tendency to flatten the architectural space. The opening sequence in Japan is captured by a series of images shot from a moving car, revealing a myriad of office buildings glowing in the darkness (*Figure 4.40*). In this sequence, the distance and angle between buildings and the camera is always changing, an approach or technique that he has never applied to his representation of Taipei. In various examples during NJ's trip, the architectural images are never presented in a highly intricate composition with an intensified effect of depth, blending reflections and the view of both interior and exterior spaces. Buildings in Japan are represented in a straightforward way,

although the film is still full of pictorial tension according to Yang's preference, but this is less complex than the method he adopts for his Taipei images (*Figure 4.41*). Some are even presented as a completely flat dimension, with a lack of depth, as in the scene of NJ drinking alone in a Japanese-style room (*Figure 4.42*). These examples demonstrate that although Yang is concerned for the context of globalization in Taiwan, it does not mean that he attempts to represent Taipei in the same way that he depicts other cities. For him, Taipei can still stand out with its unique visual qualities through his own particular cinematic apparatus.

Overall, both the thematic and aesthetic representations of Taipei in *Yi Yi* reflect Yang's ideal of cinema as a creative form advancing with time and not limited to particular media specificities. As Noël Carroll argues in *Theorizing the Moving Image,* "film history will be seen as part of a larger continuous history that will not be restricted to things made only in film, but will apply to video, TV, computer-generated imagery",[58] while Yang himself also makes a similar argument in an article he wrote in 1994, in which he states that digital technology of visualization will eventually prompt a new mode of cinema that not only allows films to be produced in any kind of format, narrative form and visual style, but will also transform current systems of film distribution and eventually, shape a new film culture.[59] His optimistic attitude towards technology is different from most scholars' pessimistic interpretation of the use of technology in his films, as mentioned earlier. In the latest volume on city film of the East Asian region, Tweedie and Braester note that the representation of the city in East Asia is particularly tied to the drastic transformation of visual culture during the past few decades, especially since the new

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[58] Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xiii.
[59] Edward Yang, 'A New Way of Writing', in Jean-Michel Frodon, Yang Haidi and Feng Shounong (trans.), *Le Cinéma d'Edward Yang* (Chengdu: Commercial Press, 2012), pp. 170-74.

types of screens, such as those on mobile phones and computers are beginning to expand the possibilities of urban imagery and integrate media and urban environments as a new mode of filmmaking.[60] This new mode of filmmaking observed by Tweedie and Braester in 2010 has already been fully practiced in *Yi Yi*, a film released ten years earlier, and this link can also be traced back to *The Terrorizers*. In this regard, Yang represents the Taiwanese experience as a unique angle of research into the affinity between new media and filmmaking, a future direction upon which film studies will have to embark.

To further explore the Taiwanese context inscribed in visual technologies in *Yi Yi*, we have to delve into the impact of technological advancement and globalization on Taiwanese society. The background of *Yi Yi* is Taipei at the turn of the 21st century, a specific turning point in history when computer technology and Internet gaming was about to take off at full speed in Taiwan.[61] As a former computer engineer who had participated in the pioneering research into the computerization of written Chinese (which was not widely adopted until the early 1990s due to its non-phonetic characteristics), Yang seeks a more original way to reflect the global phenomenon of computer technology in the Taiwanese context.[62] He chooses a comparatively traditional medium – photography, to reflect on the diverse strategies of visual articulations in this film. Through the stimulus of photography, an extensive and

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[60] James Tweedie and Yomi Braester, 'The City's Edge, Introduction', in *Cinema at the City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), p. 11.
[61] In the late 1990s, only around 20% of the residents of urban areas owned at least one computer per household, but the number soon climbed to 50% for the first time in 2000, and continued to increase, reaching 63% in 2002. As for the percentage of Internet users, it also grew significantly at the turn of the century. In 1999, the percentage of households in urban areas with an Internet service was 24.5, but the number soared to 40% in 2000, and reached 52% in 2002. See National Statistics, ROC (Taiwan), 'Report on Computer and Internet Use at Home in Taiwan', 25 May, 2004. http://www.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=5355&ctNode=1831&mp=4. Accessed 27 October, 2012.
[62] Yang devoted himself to this research when he studied for his Master's degree in computer engineering at the University of Florida (c. 1974). He extended his concept of digitalized written Chinese to filmmaking, and that is why he called this article 'a new way of writing'. See Yang, 'A New Way of Writing', p. 170.

critical enquiry into the relationship between visual technologies and the city is built to envision the future and its possibilities, rather than the past and its conventions. Therefore, NJ reviews his past by meeting his ex-girlfriend in Japan, but eventually returns to Taipei to embrace the future with his wife; A-Di experiences ups and downs in business but still feels blessed by his belief in the lunar calendar; and Yang-yang, the representative figure of the new generation of Taiwanese as well as an alter ego of Yang himself, declares his goal to make people see more of the normally unseen, which refers to the possible sources of creativity hidden beneath the social realities (like the diverse contexts of Taiwan revealed through the plot, from the economic to the cultural). It is worth noting that unlike the photographer in *The Terrorizers*, who creates an ionic image of the Eurasian girl that symbolizes both the limitations and possibilities of Taiwanese identity, Yang-yang does not create any works of similar quality. Nonetheless, his most representative 'work' may be the letter he reads at his grandmother's funeral, in which he declares his passion for helping people to see what they cannot see. This difference may not be merely thematic, but may also refer to Yang's evolving concept of visuality. In the era of globalization, it is more and more difficult to present a single iconic image to reflect and define the present, and as Ackbar Abbas argues "the city can no longer be represented through a coherent image or a set of images, but only presented or projected through the affective responses of its inhabitants".[63] This is why Yang needed to expand the cinematic vision and embrace the diverse sources of the images in *Yi Yi*, in order to reflect the multiple forces shaping Taiwanese society at the turn of the 21st century.

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[63] Ackbar Abbas, 'Affective Space in Hong Kong Chinese Cinema', in *Cinema at the City's Edge*, p. 25.

Yang further expanded his intensified interest in the manifold sources of images in the urban environment into a multimedia website, 'Miluku' (which is no longer active), after Yang established a company called Armor Entertainment Technology in 2002. Besides the multimedia website, Yang also planned an animation feature, *Chasing the Wind*, with Jackie Chen before he died in 2007. Miluku provided short animations based on a family storyline set in Taipei, a structure that resembles and may have originated from *Yi Yi*. As Lev Manovich argues, new media presents an open-ended, paradigmatic structure that allows users to navigate and search for meanings, instead of following the traditional linear cause-and-effect sequence.[64] The fact that Yang eventually sought animation to combine his interest in cinema and digital technology proves that his use of visual technologies in *Yi Yi* was more about envisioning the city as creatively as possible, rather than criticizing how technology forges illusions, spreads lies and is opposed to humanity. I am not asserting that Yang avoids depicting the negative side of technology; on the contrary, he is fully aware of this and reflects it honestly in his films. However, through the passion of specific characters in showing more aspects of Taipei, *Yi Yi* explores city film as a unique discourse open for new possibilities. This ideal vision of cinema as a creative form also reflects Yang's observation of contemporary Taiwan, a place requiring creative diversities to generate meaningful and creative response to local distinctiveness, since Taiwan is still a place where people constantly re-examine and seek new ways of constructing and enriching local identities. In this regard, *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi* both represent Taipei as a hybrid space to continuously nurture Taiwanese identity.

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[64] Lev Manovich, 'Database as Symbolic Form', in *Convergence* 5.2 (1999): pp. 80-99.

Conclusion

Reyner Banham wrote a well-known line in his classic study of Los Angeles, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, when he asserted that: "I learned to drive to read Los Angeles in the original".[65] Anne Friedberg also notes that LA is a city that can only be understood through "its requisite automotive mobility".[66] LA's strong connection to automotive mobility is, as Baudrillard argues, because this is a city "invented with the screen in mind",[67] and therefore, as Virilio proclaims, it provides a cityscape that is visually rich enough so that "what goes on in the windshield is cinema".[68] For Taipei, a city which was not "invented with the screen in mind", Yang presents another kind of strategy to read the city "in the original", which is to construct new ways of seeing the city through his creative characters' journey of taking pictures in the city. Through specific characters' passion for looking for fresh images of Taipei, Yang transforms the somehow banal and unspecific cityscape into a platform of self-exploration and self-disclosure. This attitude is even more evident when a recognizable landmark is included in the representation of the city, such as the huge gas tank in *The Terrorizers* and the Grand Hotel in *Yi Yi* – they are both represented as sites of creative interpretation, spaces open for unorthodox definitions and departure for these camera-yielding characters to seek alternative images of the city. By resisting the convention of local film productions, namely the formulaic commercial genres and propagandist films, Yang envisions 'the local' not only through what Taiwan has had, but also through its

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[65] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Penguin, 1971), p. 23.
[66] Anne Friedberg, 'Urban Mobility and Cinematic Visuality: the Screens of Los Angeles - Endless Cinema or Private Telematics', in *Journal of Visual Culture* 1.2 (August 2002): p. 183.
[67] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, translated by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), p. 55.
[68] Virilio, 'The Third Window', p. 188.

potential for nurturing creativity. As Tu argues "the question of where Taiwan is going is intertwined with complex issues of what it has been, what it is now, what it ought to be and what it can really become".[69] Yang's focus, strictly defined, is about what Taiwan can really become. As a nation still constantly shaping the definition of local identity and welcoming the new possibilities of it being enriched and revised, how to read the specific context of Taiwan in Taiwan cinema lies in the way that directors reveal cultural specificities on the one hand, and how they emphasize the relationship of the production of creativity with the local environment on the other. Yang achieves both, and that is his contribution to Taiwanese identity by claiming a characteristic visual character for the city.

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[69] Tu, 'Cultural Identity', p. 1116.

Chapter 5
Rewriting Chineseness: Taipei as Site for Resisting Cultural Stereotypes in Tsai Ming-liang's Films

As a Chinese Malaysian who moved to Taiwan in the late 1970s, Tsai Ming-liang's uniqueness in Taiwan cinema is, first and foremost, tied to the question of identity, both culturally and politically. Being regarded as the most important figure of the second wave of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1990s, Tsai made his first four feature films under the CMPC's institutional support, received a number of government subsidies, and represented Taiwan through participation in international film festivals. Tsai's unique status as a 'director from Taiwan' has remained an exceptional case in research into both national and transnational cinema. As Song Hwee Lim notes, the fact that the Chinese Malaysian director James Lee was called 'Malaysia's Tsai Ming-liang' indicates that Tsai's career in Taiwan has obscured his Malaysian Chinese background with a Taiwanese identity mixed with "Tsai's own intra-Asian trajectory".[1] Lim questions whether it is possible that Tsai will one day be recognized as 'Malaysia's Tsai Ming-liang' as well as 'Taiwan's Tsai Ming-liang'. But at least for now, Tsai seems to insist on his decision to remain in Taiwan due to the creative freedom and institutional support from which he may not be able to benefit in any other Sinophone (Chinese-speaking) communities.[2] Tsai has stated that "I have lived in Taiwan for over twenty years. Sometimes I still feel that it is a

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[1] Song Hwee Lim, 'Transnational Trajectories in Contemporary East Asian Cinemas', in Vivian P.Y. Lee (ed.), *East Asian Cinemas: Regional Flows and Global Transformations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 26.

[2] Here I adopt a broad sense of Sinophone communities, which refers to the diverse types of Chinese-speaking communities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Singapore, and communities of the Chinese diaspora in other countries. Sinophone studies concern the common roots of Chinese culture shared by the enormous number of Chinese speakers across the globe. See Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*, pp. 23-29.

strange place to me. But when I leave Taiwan I miss it very much",[3] but although his affection for Taiwan remains complex, since the beginning of his career he has always been categorized as a Taiwanese director from Malaysia, rather than as a Chinese or Malaysian. Yet the way he explores identity politics is distinguished from that of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang, whose representations of the city centre on the multiple forces that shape contemporary Taiwanese culture, such as the residue of Japanese colonization, the KMT rule, the US aid, globalization, and so on, as well as their consciousness to regard Taiwan on its own right. Tsai, on the other hand, situates Taipei specifically on a the map of Chinese culture and addresses this island's distinctiveness by rewriting cultural stereotypes that are based on Confucian doctrines and are pervasive not only in Taiwan under KMT rule, but also in most Sinophone communities, from the PRC to Chinese Americans. By transforming the materiality of Taipei into a site of rewriting Chineseness, Tsai interprets the Taiwanese experience in a different light.

Pointing out how the Taiwanese experience has made a strong impact on Tsai's film aesthetics will be helpful for gaining a further understanding of his uniqueness. First, unlike Hou and Yang who grew up in post-1949 Taiwan and who experienced the long-term martial law period, Tsai moved to Taiwan in 1977 at the age of 20 to study at the Chinese Cultural University. The reason why Tsai's father happily agreed to Tsai's decision to move to Taiwan was also related to its political situation, since he thought that a nation under martial law would be ideal for disciplining his son.[4] Between 1978 and 1980, the first two years after Tsai's arrival, the number of

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[3] The interview was conducted in 2006. As of 2013, Tsai has lived in Taiwan for 35 years, much longer than the time he spent in Malaysia. See Shujen Wang and Chris Fujiwara, '"My Films Reflect My Living Situation": an Interview with Tsai Ming-liang on Film Spaces, Audiences, and Distribution', in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 14.1 (Spring 2006): p. 224.
[4] Jared Rapfogel, 'Taiwan's Poet of Solitude: an Interview with Tsai Ming-liang', in *Cineaste* 29.4 (Fall 2004): p. 28.

countries with which Taiwan retained formal diplomatic ties dropped drastically to 22 after the USA ended diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established official relations with the PRC. The number would later climb slightly to 30 in the 1990s, but most of these are small countries in Africa and Latin America.[5] As Tsai states, the biggest influence on his filmmaking from Taiwan was not its impressive economic development but the nation's highly precarious political situation, which brought extreme changes to Taiwanese society from the late 1970s to the lifting of martial law in 1987.[6]

Taiwan also brought another drastic change for Tsai, since he started to spend most of his time at the Taipei Film Archive watching all the auteur films from Europe, which he did not have the opportunity to watch in Kuching (his hometown in Malaysia), a place "where very little has changed"[7] and where only Hollywood cinema and popular Chinese films from Hong Kong or Taiwan were screened. Tsai first transformed the impact brought by Taiwan's cultural diversity and complex political changes into the theatre. Between 1981 and 1984, Tsai was one of the core members of 'Xiaowu Theatre', an ardent contributor to Taiwan's resurgent trend for the 'Little Theatre Movement' and 'environmental theatre', producing four plays including *Instant Bean Sauce Noodles* (1982), *A Sealed Door in the Dark* (1983), *A Wardrobe in the Room* (1984), and *Apartment Romance* (1984), and the element of enclosed spaces in these plays would become the 'prototype' of his cinematic representation of Taipei.[8] After his experience in theatre, Tsai worked as a screenwriter for television and also directed nine made-for-television films between

[5] Wang, 'Rethinking the Global and the National', p. 106.
[6] Danièle Rivière and Tsai Ming-liang, 'Scouting', in Jean-Pierre Rehm, Olivier Joyard and Danièle Rivière (eds.), *Tsai Ming-liang* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1999), p. 83.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Weihong Bao, 'Biomechanics of Love: Reinventing the Avant-garde in Tsai Ming-liang's Wayward 'Pornographic Musical'', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1.2 (2007): p. 145.

1989 and 1991. However, he renounced the melodramatic effects demanded by television and returned to environmental theatre's minimalist aesthetics of the enclosed space, minimal dialogue and physical humour, which would later establish the trademarks of his Taipei films. Tsai's first four works, including *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), *Vive L'Amour* (1994), *The River* (1997) and *The Hole* (1998) were all funded by the CMPC and all represented Taiwan in international film festivals despite their controversial content, including homosexuality and teenage crime. Since 2001, Tsai's films have been released under his own company name and they have been funded either by government subsidies, French film companies or by himself, and this new series of works has broadened his exploration of Taipei through a richer cultural landscape. In *What Time Is It There?* (2001, Arena Films and Homegreen Films), he pays homage to his favourite director, François Truffaut, and includes the actor Jean-Pierre Léaud from *The 400 Blows* (1959), in order to reflect cinephile culture in Taiwan. In his self-funded film, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003, Homegreen Films), he pays homage to King Hu's sword-fighting classic, *Dragon Gate Inn* (1967, Union Film Company), which was the first box-office hit for a martial arts film made in Taiwan. His later films, *The Wayward Cloud* (2005, Arena Films and Homegreen Films) and *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006, CNC, Homegreen Films), both apply the allegorical symbol of disasters, such as a drought and a dust storm, which are severe enough to engulf the whole city. Tsai's renowned status as an auteur also brought him out of Taiwan and Asia; for example, Tsai's most recent film, *Visage* (2009), was commissioned by the Louvre Museum for its first collection of film.[9]

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[9] In recent years, he began to experiment with more interdisciplinary projects, creating film installations (e.g. *It is a Dream* represented Taiwan at the 2007 Venice Biennale), site-specific installation art (e.g. *Moonlight on the River* exhibited at Xue Xue Institute, Taipei, 2011), and also directed a new play, *Only You*, in 2011.

All the films mentioned above possess intertextuality with each other due to Tsai's perpetual focus on similar themes, motifs, actors (his long-term collaborator, Lee Kang-sheng, plays Hsiao-kang or a unnamed man in all of his feature films, and another actor, Miao Tien, appears in most of his films as Hsiao-kang's father), actresses (Lu Yi-ching always plays Hsiao-kang's mother, and another two actresses, Yang Kuei-mei and Chen Shiang-Chyi, also make regular appearances), and another protagonist, the city of Taipei. To scrutinize Tsai's representation of Taipei within this rich and cross-disciplinary oeuvre, and how it has helped Tsai to shape his unique approach to identity politics, first it is necessary to revisit some established strands in existing scholarship. As Yeh and Davis note, "most writings on Tsai recycle ideas relating to the modernity syndrome", ranging from urban alienation to the collapse of family values.[10] Thematic analyses based on criticism of urbanization has prompted scholars like Lin to regard Tsai's representation of Taipei as evidence of modern people's loss of their local identity, and how the people of Taipei's position is "not unlike Taipei's insignificant position as a Third World city in the global economy".[11] This strand has continued, as it is still possible to see similar arguments in most recent books on Taiwan cinema. According to Hong, "the breakdown of spatial meaning" [12] in Tsai's Taipei films characterizes the disappearance of Taiwan cinema as a national cinema (according to Hong, he defines this phenomenon as "the impossible Now"[13]). In short, these scholars regard Tsai's emphasis on urban alienation, to various degrees, as the loss of personal/national/local identities.

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[10] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 219.
[11] Lin, 'The Representation of Taipei', p. 89.
[12] Ibid., p. 160.
[13] Ibid.

My approach is based on another strand that takes a closer look at Tsai's formal qualities. First of all, Tsai's film aesthetics can be regarded as a continuum of Hou and Yang's realist aesthetics, which are characterized by the long shot, the long take, the static camera, meticulous framing, the refusal of a clear closure and so on, all the elements that require an attentive reading from the audience. As Rawnsley argues, Tsai continues Taiwan New Cinema's tradition of observational realism and explores this aesthetic principle as "closely linked to Taiwan's cultural, social and political context".[14] Corrado Neri also notes that the way Hou, Yang and Tsai visually represent the "emotions left unsaid" situate them in the same cultural framework.[15] There are also scholars who take a step further to explore how Tsai renews the realist aesthetics rather than only continuing the style of Taiwan New Cinema. In this regard, Tsai's evident trait of black humour is highlighted and explored, and as Brian Hu points out, Tsai applies exaggerated usage of Hou's lengthy shots and Yang's fragmentation of urban space, and transforms the tradition of Taiwan New Cinema in a playful way.[16] Chris Wood also argues how Tsai's realism departs from Bazin's concept of deep focus, creating light-hearted playfulness.[17] Berry defines *Vive L'Amour* as a "hyperbolic realist text" that operates realism in such a vigorous way that it stresses performativity while sticking to realist conventions.[18] Also focusing on Tsai's excessive attention to realistic effects, Tiago de Luca posits the concept of 'sensory realism', arguing that Tsai's highly self-reflexive realist style expands the aesthetics of everydayness by reinforcing both the physicality of the space and the

[14] Rawnsley, 'Observational Realism in New Taiwan Cinema', pp. 96, 101.
[15] Corrado Neri, 'Tsai Ming-liang and the Lost Emotions of the Flesh', in *Positions* 16.2 (2008): pp. 402-3.
[16] Brian Hu, 'Goodbye City, Goodbye Cinema: Nostalgia in Tsai Ming-liang's *The Skywalk is Gone*', in *Sense of Cinema* 29 (Dec 02, 2003), http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/skywalk_is_gone/. Accessed 20 September, 2012.
[17] Chris Wood, 'Realism, Intertextuality and Humour in Tsai Ming-liang's *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1.2 (May 2007): pp. 105-16.
[18] Chris Berry, 'Where is the Love? Hyperbolic Realism and Indulgence in *Vive L'Amour*', in *Island on the Edge*, p. 91.

corporeality of the body; in so doing, Tsai creates a sensory presentation that

highlights trivial particularities to address the uniqueness of an individual. Seeing it

in a cultural and political framework, de Luca argues that Tsai replaces the 'docile

bodies' suggested by Michel Foucault with non-normative ones that challenge social

disciplines and display a creative attitude to embrace changes.[19] Inspired by these

scholars' insightful arguments, this chapter will continue this strand to explore the

unique tie between Tsai's strategies for renewing the realist aesthetics and their

potential in creatively confronting the social norms.

   To specifically address the importance of Taipei and Taiwan in Tsai's films, I will

also apply the third strand in existing scholarship: the culturally specific perspective

demonstrated by Yeh and Davis, who posit the concept of 'camp' in order to read the

localized contexts that may fail to attract the attention of non-Taiwanese critics. By

'camp' they mean the earthy qualities in the cultural tastes of Taiwan's working

class, which envelop Tsai's representation of the city with a "distinctly shabby,

working-class aura",[20] and "aestheticizing the local working class" by transforming

the usual quotidian familiarity into something extraordinary.[21] In this chapter, I will

expand this approach from Tsai's obsession with the cultural tastes of working-class

Taiwanese, to Tsai's concentrated focus on specific spaces/areas in most of his

Taipei films. The focus will be directed at three of Tsai's Taipei films: *Vive

L'Amour*, a film that represents Taipei mainly through an empty apartment and a

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[19] Tiago de Luca, 'Sensory Everyday: Space, Materiality and the Body in the Films of Tsai Ming-liang', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 5.2 (2011): pp. 181-91; Tiago de Luca, 'Realism of the Senses: A Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema', in Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, and Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 184, 203.
[20] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 224.
[21] Yeh and Davis conduct an in-depth analysis of Tsai's oeuvre, arguing that Tsai's emphasis on the everyday aesthetics of Taiwan's working-class life can be aptly exemplified by his characters' shared tastes in clothing (e.g. the women's preference for retro dresses), the household décor (e.g. the calligraphy hanging in most of the domestic spaces), folk rituals, and even the most common electric appliance - the Ta-tung rice cooker. See Yeh and Davis, 'Camping Out with Tsai Ming-liang', in *Taiwan Film Directors*, pp. 217-48.

ruin-like park; *The Hole*, a film that is set solely in a deteriorating council flat; and

Goodbye, Dragon Inn, a film which shows the screening of an old martial arts film in

a theatre which is about to close down. In these films, these chosen sites are all

transformed into an enclosed stage and stop functioning like they should in everyday

life. By choosing various urban spaces, which are usually generalized as symbols of

human disconnection because of their status quo, historical backgrounds and

uncertain destines, Tsai challenges the ordinary view by applying a renewed mode of

the realist aesthetics that are based on his understanding both of theatre and film

aesthetics. This mode of realism helps him to display the cityscape as a powerful

location for rewriting the conventional definitions of family, sexuality and national

identity in Chinese culture, which have been deeply rooted in Sinophone

communities across the globe. His focus on specific urban space is a creative strategy

for him to establish the transformation of urban people's disconnection from each

other to embracing the possibilities of connection, and from the breakdown of spatial

meaning to its reconstruction. In so doing, he singles out Taiwan's uniqueness by

appropriating the historical context inscribed in the specific sites on which he has

chosen to focus, and responds to the inventive side of postcolonial Taiwanese

identity.

5.1 Questioning the family norm: *Vive L'Amour* (1994)

Tsai Ming-liang represents a new trend of thinking about Taiwanese identity in the

local film industry during the 1990s, after the relaxed state control of the post-martial

law government was reflected in the KMT-led film studio, CMPC. From 1991 to

1996, CMPC switched from its long-term course of Chinese nationalism and adopted

an auteurist direction, with the aim of promoting the second wave of Taiwan New Cinema on the international film festival circuit. The CMPC's tactic was no longer tied to political ideology of Chinese nationalism and it became open to any possibilities for promoting the visibility of Taiwan on the international stage. Since Hou and Yang had respectively set up their own film companies and were no longer in collaboration with the CMPC, the filmmakers supported by this KMT-led company were all new talent, including among them Tsai and Ang Lee, who are the most important.

Therefore, when Tsai was supported by the CMPC in making his directorial debut, *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), not only was Taiwanese society already on its way to establishing a truly democratic society, but the institutional support from the CMPC was also much more substantial than that of the New Cinema period in the 1980s. *Rebels of the Neon God* soon achieved the new goal of the CMPC by winning the Prize of the City of Torino for Best Film at the Torino International Festival of Young Cinema, garnering attention for the resurgence of Taiwan New Cinema. Two years later with *Vive L'Amour*, Tsai became the second director from Taiwan to win the prestigious Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival (the first was Hou for his film *A City of Sadness* in 1989) and this meant that Taiwan became the second East Asian country to garner two Golden Lion Awards (the first one to achieve so was Japan). Compared to the performance of other East Asian countries, including the PRC, Tsai clearly accomplished the CMPC's policy to reshape a viable Taiwanese identity through supporting auteur film.[22]

With its refined auteurist characteristics, *Vive L'Amour* tells a story responding to the real estate boom in the early 1990s and the controversy surrounding the

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[22] During the 1990s, Zhang Yimou won the first two Golden Lion awards for China in 1992 and 1999, with *The Story of Qiu Ju* and *Not One Less*. South Korea's victory came much later with Kim Ki-duk's 2012 work, *Pietà*.

construction of the Da An Forest Park, and as Tsai himself always emphasizes, this film is specifically about Taipei.[23] The film is set mainly in a luxurious empty apartment that a realtor, Mei-mei, is trying to sell, but which she also uses as her private hotel for a one-night stand. Hsiao-kang, a salesman of columbarium (spaces for storing cinerary urns) steals a key for the apartment after it has been accidently left behind in the door by Mei-mei, where he attempts to commit suicide. However, the plan is disrupted, since he has to hide from Mei-mei and Ah-jung, who come to the apartment to have a one-night stand. Ah-jung, a street peddler who sells the clothes he brings back from his overseas trips, also steals a spare key from Mei-mei and begins to make use of one of the bedrooms. Unlike Ah-jung, who only regards the place as a temporary shelter, Hsiao-kang creates a homely atmosphere by doing all kinds of housework, such as cooking, laundry, and he even prepares a hotpot meal for Ah-jung. One night, Mei-mei and Ah-jung have sex again but neither of them notices that Hsiao-kang is hiding underneath their bed masturbating. The next morning, Mei-mei leaves the room to take a walk in the Da An Forest Park, while Hsiao-kang secretly kisses Ah-jung, who is still asleep. The film ends with a close-up shot of Mei-mei on a park bench crying for six minutes, which for the first and last time in the film shows the audience her fragile side.

As Tsai notes, he films a city as if it is a character with its own life.[24] This perspective corresponds to what Nowell-Smith thinks about Antonioni, which is that the vital characteristic this director shares with Neo-Realism is that the locations he chooses and shoots "are there before they signify", rather than merely being "bearers

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[23] Tsai specifies that the aim of making *Vive L'Amour* was to tell a story about Taipei and the "general condition of love" in this big city. See Chiao Hsiung-ping, 'An Interview with Tsai Ming-liang', in *New New Wave of Taiwan Cinema 90'* (Taipei: Rye Field, 2002), p. 78.
[24] Ibid., p.103.

of signification".[25] The only recognizable urban landmark – the Da An Forest Park – and its pre-filmic reality is thus inscribed in Tsai's portrait of Taipei. The park was opened in the same year *Vive L'Amour* was released and stands in this film as a stark contrast to the empty apartment. Both spaces refer to the shifting definition of home in post-martial law Taiwan, and the complex history behind the Da An Forest contributes to even more dramatic tension. It was only possible to establish Taipei's first central urban park on this twenty-six-hectare piece of land by forcing out the residents of Jianhua Xincun, a veterans' village which had occupied the space since 1949. Although the land was named Park Number 7 in the Japanese government's unfinished city plan because of its perfect nodal location amid various residential, governmental and commercial areas, the large number of mainlanders brought with the KMT's arrival changed its destiny. In 1985, the Taipei government began to re-consider following the plan of Park Number 7, and eventually in 1992, more than 1300 houses in Jianhua Xincun were demolished and residents were forced to move. Huang Da-zhou, the mayor who inaugurated the project, claimed that green spaces are essential for a healthy mode of urban life. However, what the government failed to address was the housing problem, since the real estate price became considerably higher after the completion of the park (which was one of the major reasons for the government to build the park: i.e. to raise the price of real estate in central Taipei) while a large group of underprivileged people suddenly lost their homes after a forty-year period of peaceful settlement. In other words, the government, who used to forcefully promote Chinese nationalism through emphasizing family values, now became one of the major reasons why traditional values collapsed.

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[25] Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', p. 107.

1994 was also the year when Chen Shui-bian was elected as the mayor of Taipei, and this marked a major step for the long-term opposition party, the DPP, which would later replace the KMT in government between 2000 and 2008. Da An Forest Park is not only a common urban park representing the need for a more balanced urban life, but it also stands as the most pictorialized symbol of the political transition from the KMT to the DPP. However, another major contradiction emerges here. It was Chen who pushed for the project of Da An Forest Park to continue since the park was not completely finished when it was opened to the public in March 1994. Chen's decision meant that he supported the KMT government's unfinished business in forcing out the mainlander residents from their familiar neighbourhood. The conflict between the KMT and DPP, which used to be equal to the opposition between mainlanders and native Taiwanese, was thus blurred, and the distance between the government and the public grew larger.

If the approach of thematic analysis is applied, it is easy to generalize this unfinished, wasteland-like Da An Forest Park that bears such a complex history of urban gentrification as the spatial embodiment of human disconnection. What this chapter is going to explore is, on the contrary, how Tsai blends his background in environmental theatre with the cinematic apparatus, and how he actively shapes a poetics of the cinematic city that can break this lingering status of disconnection, both in terms of the psychological and the spatial. The Da An Forest Park becomes a strong metaphor with which he both questions the family norms of the Chinese patriarchal structure and rewrites the recognised conventions through positing new ways of imagining and experiencing home.

To fully illustrate this point, first it is necessary to observe how the concept of theatre is operated in the spatial articulation of *Vive L'Amour*. The minimal design of

the narrative, which centres on only three characters, less than one hundred lines of dialogue, no music, and the fact that this film does not originate from any specific character but from an apartment building,[26] all confirms that Tsai's cinematic conceptualization of Taipei is rooted in his experience in theatre. Tsai himself has acknowledged theatre as his prime influence in filmmaking,[27] and he also specifically identifies *A Wardrobe in the Room* as the major source of inspiration when writing the script for *Vive L'Amour*.[28] Scholars have established substantial observations on the influence of theatre performance on Tsai's film aesthetics, analysing how he applies the humorous elements of 'absurd theatre' and how he deconstructs bodies and spaces into an "unreliable register of symptoms of urban living",[29] or how his experience in 'environmental theatre', which is characterized by black-box theatre space, non-verbal communication, physical humour and the diffused boundary between the performers and the audience, had a major impact on his filmmaking.[30] However, so far most scholars' efforts have been put on physical performance rather than spatiality. In what follows, I will further explore how Tsai engages the concept of "creatively imagined spaces" in environmental theatre into his cinematic representation of Taipei.[31]

First of all, the empty, waiting-to-be-sold apartment is itself an enclosed stage on which Tsai inscribes his concept of the city. The outlook and precise location of the apartment are never revealed, and even the entrance of this particular apartment is only shown once when Hsiao-kang emerges from the out-of-focus background to

[26] Michael Berry, 'Tsai Ming-liang: Trapped in the Past', in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, p. 377.
[27] Shelly Kraicer, 'Interview With Tsai Ming-liang', in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8.2 (2000): pp. 579-88.
[28] Chiao, 'An Interview with Tsai Ming-liang', p. 79.
[29] Ivy I-chu Chang, 'Imagining Queer Bodies: The Erotic Site/Sight of Tsai Ming-Liang's Films', in *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 30.10 (March 2002): pp. 75-98.
[30] Bao, 'Biomechanics of Love', p. 141.
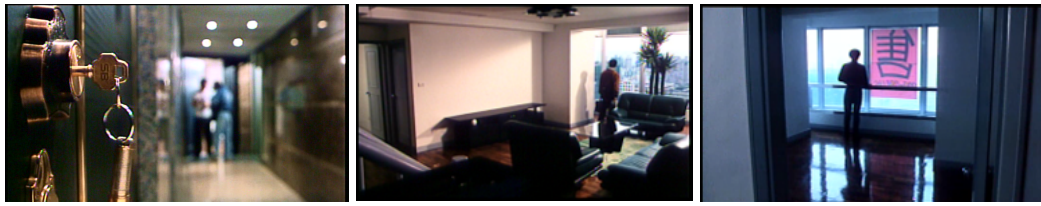[31] Ibid., p. 145.

Figure 5.1 A close-up shot of the key to the apartment.
Figures 5.2-5.3 The panoramic view of the city is blocked.

grab the key dangling in the door (*Figure 5.1*). Characters appear in this place as if they are actors walking directly from the back to the front of the stage. Tsai also avoids representing a general and integral cityscape, or the "theoretical simulacrum" defined by Michel de Certeau,[32] while the invisibility of the urban landscape surrounding this apartment makes the place look even more like a sealed stage. In the scenes where Hsiao-kang and Ah-jung stand in front of the window, Tsai deliberately destroys the panoramic view of the cityscape by placing conspicuous obstacles in the composition, either by a large plant (*Figure 5.2*) or a 'for sale' sign (*Figure 5.3*). By rejecting the "theoretical simulacrum" with these specific compositional principles, Tsai has already implied that the connection between the characters and the city can only be obtained through closer interactions rather than through a general glimpse of the city.

Unlike Hou and Yang, who both prefer a more documentary feel when appropriating street scenes and representing them as authentically as possible, Tsai's concept of realistic effects is highly theatrical, as he not only prefers to show the city the way he sees it,[33] but he also tends to block off the street to stop people from passing by when shooting outdoors, in order to turn on-location shoots into theatre plays, while the city itself becomes a makeshift stage. In all of the street scenes, the camera maintains a fixed distance from the characters but always places them at the

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[32] Michel de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', in Simon During (ed.), *The Culture Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 128.
[33] Rivière and Tsai, 'Scouting', pp. 111-13.

centre of the frame, observing them as if they are acting on an enclosed stage. One of Mei-mei's sequences is the best case in point. As a real estate realtor, she appears to be extremely mobile, putting up advertisements everywhere in the city and hurrying between various houses to meet potential clients, rather than being fixed to a specific domestic space like a traditional mother/wife. She is independent, hardworking, and sexually liberated. These characteristics are evidently shown by Tsai's deliberate deconstruction of a potential voyeuristic vision, the "visual pleasure" suggested by Laura Mulvey.[34] In one scene, Mei-mei stops by a hole in the middle of a metal-sheet wall, which is a common material used for construction sites in Taiwan. Tsai keeps the camera fixed at a distance, showing Mei-mei climb through the hole as if she is being engulfed by an unknown power on the other side of the wall (*Figure 5.4*). It transpires that Mei-mei has spotted a rock behind the wall which she picks up and uses to stabilize a poster that she puts on top of her car (*Figure 5.5*).

Figures 5.4-5.5 The peculiar medium shot of Mei-mei creates no pleasure of voyeurism, but an observational realism that vividly captures the fragments of daily routines.

By setting the scene in an extremely ordinary street incapable of evoking any erotic fantasy, and by applying a static camera that refuses to approach the subject of voyeurism, Tsai transforms Mei-mei's daily routines into important symbol of a renewed Taiwanese identity, which is partially achieved by women's freedom to choose their jobs, characters and sex lives in this increasingly democratic society. As Hsiu-chuang Deppmann argues, Tsai creates women characters who are not "desirable third-world Others", and in doing so, he embodies a "true-to-itself creative

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[34] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): pp. 6-18.

freedom". [35] Throughout the film, Mei-mei is the only character constantly encountering construction sites (like the one surrounded by a metal-sheet wall in *Figure 5.4*). As a clear metaphor of the transitional period of Taipei's urban development, these construction sites provide a unique architectural approach for visualizing the image of women, either by deconstructing the pleasure of voyeurism or by emphasizing Mei-mei's ability to survive in Taipei's state of flux, representing her as a character constantly framed by the in-between conditions of these incomplete urban landscapes. The cinematic representation of Taipei shows that Mei-mei is not restricted to the Chinese family norm. For her, the definition of home needs to be reconstructed.

Tsai also transforms this sense of an enclosed stage from empty street scenes to shops and marketplaces, which are supposed to be highly animated and packed with passers-by. Some of Hsiao-kang's sequences provide good examples. Hsiao-kang is the only character that seems to explore the empty apartment with an interest in building a domestic home-like life in it, and he is also the only character that is displayed repeatedly with the imagery of the vibrant consumer culture of Taipei. He wanders between convenience stores, traditional markets and westernized supermarkets, and the journey of his shopping behaviour always responds to a different stage of his emotions. In what follows, I will show how Hsiao-kang's actions as a consumer are designed with specific methods of performance and compositional arrangement, which also address the influence of theatre.

At the beginning of the film, Hsiao-kang goes to a convenience store to buy a bottle of water. The scene ends with a high-angle shot of Hsiao-kang looking at himself in the mirror and parting his hair (*Figure 5.6*). All the other customers are

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[35] Hsiu-chuang Deppman, 'Cinema of Disillusionment: Chen Guofu, Cai Mingliang, and Taiwan's Second New Wave', in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 17.2 (2009): pp. 437, 441.

Figure 5.6 Hsiao-kang looks himself in a security mirror.
Figure 5.7 Hsiao-kang's suicide plan is represented as a layered image.

blocked out of the frame, and the colourful products behind Hsiao-kang form a diagonal composition that strengthens Hsiao-kang's attentive attitude to his own image in the mirror. By borrowing the security mirror in the shop, Tsai transforms an ordinary scene of shopping into a self-aware performance. After the sequence in the convenience store, Hsiao-kang returns to the apartment and attempts to carry out his suicide plan. Again, Tsai applies the mirror image to strengthen the sense of theatricality, and by positioning the camera outside the window, he situates the audience in the position of voyeur and creates a layered composition of Hsiao-kang's lonely figure in the bright bedroom, framed by the mirror image and window frames (*Figure 5.7*).

Figures 5.8-5.9 Hsiao-kang's interaction with a watermelon.

However, the dramatic effects enforced by the voyeur's perspective gradually transforms, and the distance between the camera and Hsiao-kang grows increasingly shorter as the film progresses. In a night market scene, Tsai deliberately blocks people off and only allows the film extras to walk in the background, while strengthening the sense of theatricality through Hsiao-kang's stylistic performance. (*Figure 5.8*) Lee Kang-sheng, the actor who plays Hsiao-kang, is famous for moving

at a slow pace, which is normal for him. However, this slow pace becomes the best strategy with which to mark his unique characteristic in the late-capitalist society where most people are chasing economic growth. Similar to the self-aware gesture of parting his hair in the security mirror at the convenience store, his performance of caressing the watermelon at the corner of the market is also eccentric enough to distinguish him from the crowd. This sequence leads to another scene where Hsiao-kang stays in the apartment, kissing the watermelon and using it as a bowling ball (*Figure 5.9*). This time, the sequence is no longer shot from outside the window, but it draws closer to observe Hsiao-kang's boredom, loneliness and yearning for intimacy in this sealed stage.

Figures 5.10 The scene set in a supermarket is represented in a highly realistic manner.
Figure 5.11 As the film progresses, the camera draws closer to observe Hsiao-kang and Ah-jung's relationship.

Hsiao-kang's search for companionship in the city leads to another sequence, which begins by showing him paying a cashier in a supermarket (*Figure 5.10*). The composition and mise-en-scène are more realistic, unlike the staged effects in the previous scenes at the convenience store and the fruit market. The film then jumps to a dinner scene, where Hsiao-kang and Ah-jung share a meal together in the apartment (*Figure 5.11*). This time, the camera comes even closer to both men as if the camera is placed immediately behind Ah-jung. By gradually modifying the deployment of camera work, these three sequences demonstrate a noticeable progression in terms of the relationship between the characters and the urban environment, representing the city as a place full of possibilities to help people

approach their true selves in an unexpected way. More importantly, although Tsai implies Hsiao-kang's homosexual attraction to Ah-jung, he has never fallen into the norm of representing homosexuality, i.e. the melodramatic effects achieved by revealing an unacceptable relationship, the homophobia of the public, the extensive focus on aestheticizing male bodies. As scholars have noted, Tsai tends to "structure[s] gay practices ambivalently" [36] and to "problematize the act of representation itself"[37], in order to surpass an essentialist mode of homosexuality and to "gesture ambiguously at a space of possibility".[38] Tsai's unconventional approach to addressing homosexuality has also prompted scholars to argue that this is where the unique tie between Tsai and Taiwan lies. Berry, Chang and Martin all see Tsai's films as a localized response to the emergence of Taiwanese queer culture,[39] "where non-traditional forms of love and intimacy might be more fully elaborated".[40] The aforementioned sequences confirm these arguments forcefully, as the representation of the city shapes Hsiao-kang's journey of self-exploration and his unique method of establishing a sense of home. Therefore, Hsiao-kang's interaction with urban spaces, which has evolved with Tsai's gradual change from representing the city as a sealed stage to a more documentary feel in the dinner scene, suggests that Tsai's observation of the city is not fixed on the human disconnection, but rather it is the other way round.

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[36] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 220.

[37] Lim, *Celluloid Comrades*, p. 150.

[38] Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film, and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 179.

[39] Berry points out two directions of the academic response to Tsai's films: the first one is to place it "in a lineage of films about the urban alienation", and the other one is to place it "more firmly in local culture", especially "the emergence of local lesbian/gay/queer culture" in the 1990s. See Berry, 'Where is the Love? ', p. 179 n3. Chang Kai-man also indicates that the scene of Hsiao-kang trapped underneath the bed while Mei-mei and Ah-jung are having sex implies the invisibility, marginalization and suppression of homosexuality in Taiwanese society. See Chang Kai-man, 'Drifting Bodies and Flooded Spaces: Visualizing the Invisibility of Heteronormativity in Tsai Ming-liang's *The River*', in *Post Script* 28.1 (2008): pp. 45-62.

[40] Fran Martin, '*Vive L'Amour*: Eloquent Emptiness', in Chris Berry (ed.), *Chinese Films in Focus, 25 New Takes* (London: BFI, 2003), p. 233.

Figure 5.12 The Da An Forest Park was still under construction when Tsai filmed *Vive L'Amour*.
Figure 5.13 The film ends by a static long-take of Mei-mei sobbing alone.

Figures 5.14-5.15 Hsiao-kang's gaze and the sudden kiss.

Therefore, when the film finally arrives at its most symbolic setting – the Da An Forest Park – it has systematically shown how the city can effectively convey the characters' inner transformation. Unlike other street scenes in this film, which are usually represented with a static camera and medium shots that block the off-screen spaces, the sequence of the park begins with a tracking shot, following Mei-mei around the park, who has left the apartment early and walks to the park after sleeping with Ah-jung for the second time (*Figure 5.12*). The tracking shot no longer fixes on Mei-mei as if she is the only character on the stage, but rather it constantly pans to reveal the environment of the whole park, including some high-rise buildings standing in the background, people walking through the park, and busy traffic around the park. The city is now full of additional noises, debris, chippings, gravel and irrelevant passers-by. After showing all of the urban 'extras' that Tsai has studiously sought to ignore throughout the film, the film ends with a close-up shot of Mei-mei sobbing on a bench, not far from an old man reading his newspaper (*Figure 5.13*). By revealing the environmental details of this park throughout the sequence, before inserting the long-take of her alone on the bench, sobbing, this sequence does not only reveal a woman's intense emotions, but also deploys this cinematic representation of psychological intensity to highlight the materiality of this liminal

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space, while it further constructs the relationship between the environment and the character as a rich interplay, illuminating each character's current situation. The six-minute close-up shot of Mei-mei's face makes this ruin-like park memorable, and vice versa.

To thoroughly break the enclosed stage and strengthen the power of the cinematic apparatus, the film temporarily cuts to the apartment before concluding the story with Mei-mei alone in the park, sobbing. After hiding underneath the bed all night, Hsiao-kang climbs on the bed where Ah-jung is still asleep. The sequence begins with a medium high-angle shot to reveal the distance between them, and then changes to a horizontal angle to start dissolving the distance (*Figure 5.14*). Later the film cuts back to a high-angle shot (*Figure 5.15*), but this time it is a close-up shot, placing them on the same surface like a framed photograph. The smooth switch between angles, distances and compositions suggests that the apartment's spatial status as a sealed stage has been penetrated by the forceful cinematic apparatus. As Chiao notes, the scenes featuring Hsiao Kang's sudden kiss of Ah-jung and Mei-mei sobbing are moments of revelation, when these characters finally see their true colours, and these specific moments give Taipei people "a complete face".[41] From a sealed stage represented mainly by observational medium-shots, to these close-up shots facilitated by a flexible deployment of mise-en-scène, Tsai skilfully reduces the dialogue to less than one hundred lines but he still manages to speak these characters' minds.

In existing scholarship, many academics share the view that Tsai creates a unique aesthetics of everydayness based on emphasizing the sheer existence of the most ordinary.[42] Here I want to point out specifically that 'the ordinary' in Tsai's films

[41] Chiao, 'An Interview with Tsai Ming-liang', p. 83.
[42] de Luca, 'Sensory Everyday', pp. 157-79; Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, pp. 217-48.

should also include the generalized interpretation of certain urban spaces as visual metonyms of urban alienation. Tsai's representation of the city transforms this ordinary view, suggesting that there are multiple ways of constructing a sense of belonging in this city. In Mei-mei's case, the long-take close-up shot of her sobbing is not only marking her personal milestone as a woman who finally feels the urge to face her true self and the desire for love, but also a specific moment that puts the history of this location into a cinematic archive. Fully aware of the location's history,[43] Tsai applies the long take and a documentary feel to address the sheer existence of this park, in order to actively incorporate its in-between situation into the plot, which relentlessly questions the family norm through specific ways of positioning characters in the urban environment. By choosing a location full of rich references to Taiwan's ambivalent status, Tsai's resistance to any essentialist mode of identity formation is visually intensified. *Vive L'Amour* represents Taipei as a site for addressing Taiwan's uniqueness by showing it as a place full of possibilities and freedom in exploring the concept of the self, free from the social norms of the traditional Chinese kinship system. Hence, the city in these characters' journeys is more than a plain background.

5.2 Points of connection: *The Hole* (1998)

Tsai's approach of transforming locations into a site-specific theatre is developed to create an extreme scenario in his fourth feature film and his first transnational project, *The Hole*, a joint production between the CMPC, the French film company,

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[43] Tsai is fully aware of the location's history, as he used to work as a log keeper on Yu Kan-ping's *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*, the first Taiwan cinema production documenting the transformation of Jianhua Xincun and the brutal demolition carried out by the municipal government from 1985. See Braester, 'Angel Sanctuaries', p. 208.

Haut et Court, and the French television channel, ARTE, for a project called '2000 Seen By …'.[44] This project invited directors from Brazil, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain, the USA, Mali and Taiwan to tell a story about what the year 2000 might be like. *The Hole* transforms Taiwan's undefined status through a mysterious virus called 'Taiwan Fever'.

The storyline reveals Taipei under the grip of a viral epidemic just before the turn of the millennium, but the plot focuses on only two protagonists, a nameless woman living downstairs and man living upstairs in the same block. As the film progresses, they are drawn closer together because of the hole left in the floor between their apartments by a plumber, after an attempt to fix a water leak. The reality of the film is constantly interrupted by musical numbers, which always appear abruptly but which resonate with the plot at the moment they appear. In the musical intervals, the woman downstairs dances and lip-syncs five old popular songs, including 'Calypso', 'Tiger Lady', 'I Want Your Love', 'Achoo Cha Cha' and 'I Don't Care Who You Are'. Composed by Yao Min and performed by Grace Chang in Hong Kong films from the 1950s and 1960s, these songs were popular not only in Hong Kong but also in Taiwan and other Chinese communities across Southeast Asia, including Tsai's hometown of Kuching in Malaysia. The harsh reality of the quarantine zone and the colourful fantasy of the musical world collide at the end of the film, when the woman is lifted up through the fist-sized hole to dance with the man.

Similar to his choice of the Da An Forest Park, the only location in *The Hole* is not an ordinary building in terms of Taipei's urban history. The Xining Building is located in the Wanhua District, an area of the West End of Taipei that was the

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[44] Other films in '2000 Seen By...' are *The Book of Life* (1998, dir. Hal Hartley), *The First Night of My Life* (1998, dir. Miguel Albaladejo), *Life On Earth* (1998, dir. Abderrahmane Sissako), *Midnight* (1998, dir. Daniela Thomas and Walter Salles), *The Sanguinaires* (1998, dir. Laurent Cantet), *Tama And Juli* (1997, dir. Ildiko Enyedi), *The Wall* (1998, dir. Alain Berliner).

commercial centre of the city during the Qing Dynasty and during the Japanese Occupation Period, but which gradually declined and was eventually surpassed by the prosperous development on the East End of Taipei. The Xining Building was completed in 1982, and was the first and largest block of council flats in Taipei at that time. In other words, it was the first large-scale model of Western urban housing in Taipei, therefore symbolizing the Nationalist government's eagerness to catch up with the trend of modernist architecture after completing a series of classical Chinese-style buildings from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. Its ground floor is Xining Market, which symbolized a new type of urban living, mixing the residential and commercial sectors. However, like many other failures of modernist buildings in both the USA and Europe, this building became one of the most notorious residential blocks as a result of its bad reputation for many cases of people committing suicide by jumping from its 16th-storey roof. Besides its height which attracted the high number of suicide cases, the location itself is also full of references to aging and death. Not far from the Xining Building is Ximending, the centre of youth culture reborn due to the completion of the metro system in 1996. Contrary to the youthful vitality of Ximending, most residents of the Xining Building were disabled people and retired veterans (those who came to Taiwan with the KMT, having no families in Taiwan and many of whom remained unmarried), who could only afford the cheap rent for a decaying location such as the Xining Building. The stark comparison adds a sense of alienation to the Xining Building, and its own architectural design makes the problem even worse. Writer Gu Yu-ling describes that the architectural design of Xining Building is "full of dangers and a strong sense of separation".[45] The most notorious part of the design of this building is its narrow corridors, which are less

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[45] Gu Yu-ling, *Our Stories: Moving and Laboring* (Taipei: Ink, 2008), pp. 213-14.

than 2 metres wide and which function as the only means of access to each flat after coming out of the elevator. However, the main problem is that at the end of each corridor, there are only two flats. Consequently, if people were to take the wrong corridor they would not realize until they see the numbers of the flats and would then have to pass back along the corridor to find the correct route. Since each corridor looks exactly the same, it is easy for people – especially the elderly – to become lost in this architectural maze. The Xining Building is similar to the Da An Forest Park, not only because both locations reveal the Nationalist government's neglect of the mainlander soldiers that retreated to Taiwan with them in 1949, but also because both projects reveal the conflicts between modernization and Chinese traditions, the two things that the Nationalist government applied in order to consolidate the Chinese identity of Taiwan.

The strong presence of this specific building is, therefore, the crucial subtext hidden in this allegory of millennial Taiwan that constructs "new ways of being in Taiwan's emergent, post-industrial, culturally hybrid society" as Martin notes.[46] Tsai's interest in this symbolic building is once again interwoven with the dissolving boundaries between the theatre and the cinema. The whole film can be regarded as a process for the audience to witness how the cinematic techniques transform this particular building into a theatre in both realistic and musical realms. To create the sense of an enclosed stage, Tsai never shows the exact entrance or the exit of this huge building, but rather he focuses only on partial and fragmentary views. This choice is not only an aesthetic one, but also a political one. Tsai not only deliberately transforms the ghostly existence of the Xining Building, a failed project that did not deliver its promise in bettering residents' urban living and which was neglected by

[46] Fran Martin, 'Wild Women and Mechanical Men: A Review of *The Hole*', in *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* Issue 4 (September 2000), http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue4/holereview.html. Accessed 20 September, 2012.

Figure 5.16 A static shot of the man sleeping on the seat is the opening sequence of *The Hole*.
Figure 5.17 The woman concentrates on watching TV news about 'Taiwan Fever'.

Figures 5.18-5.19 The man tries to squeeze his leg through the hole.

the government, into an isolated quarantine zone, given up by the authorities, but he also suggests that the government is like the passers-by that he tends to keep away from his set.

In the opening sequence, the first three minutes are simply a black screen accompanied by the background voice of a TV news reporter, suggesting that the larger urban context, along with the bureaucratic system situated beyond the TV frame, is both unseen and concealed. The soundtrack reveals that the content of the TV news is interviews with inhabitants from the quarantine zone complaining about the government's inability to control the virus, coupled with their policy of asking residents to move out. The black screen is then followed by a medium long-take shot of a man lying on a seat, looking as still as a corpse (*Figure 5.16*). His deathly posture creates a contrast with the angry and sonorous voices from the TV news. The woman downstairs also displays another type of stillness by staring at the TV and sitting amid piles of toilet paper (*Figure 5.17*). Both of them are like the building: a spatial embodiment of human disconnection. However, the situation will change drastically after the building's status quo is revised by the hole on the floor between them.

As the film evolves with the changes brought by the hole, Tsai transfers his attention to daily activities with a sense of humour, breaking the apparent stiffness of both of the characters' daily routines. A case in point is the man trying to squeeze through the hole by adopting different positions, which creates a keen sense of physical humour (*Figure 5.18*). Tsai even offers a sectional view of the apartments, cutting back and forth between these two spaces to show the results of the man's 'experiment' (*Figure 5.19*). Therefore, before the musical numbers appear to modify the atmosphere of this decaying building, the tension between the two characters has slowly increased through their wordless interactions triggered by the hole.

However, Tsai does not stop at merely reflecting the strong sense of disconnection embedded in the Xining Building's developmental history, location and architectural design. The specific materiality of the Xining Building is manifested to a greater degree, since all the important architectural characteristics of this space are borrowed as important devices with which to activate the musical intervals. In the musical sequences, a clear increase in camera movement and choice of locations (more parts of the building are revealed through the five musical numbers) confirms Tsai's attempt to transform the sense of disconnection embedded in the Xining Building. The first musical sequence borrows the most startling spatial trademark of the Xining Building, which is its narrow corridors, to emphasize the woman's fatigue from having to carry a large amount of toilet paper with her (*Figure 5.20*). As soon as she arrives home, the film cuts to a close-up shot of the hole with peeling paint around it (*Figure 5.21*), and then it suddenly changes to a musical part beginning with a static medium shot, in which the woman turns her back to the camera, posing in the elevator decorated with neon lights (*Figure 5.22*).
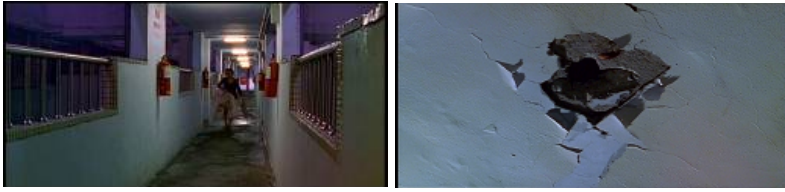
Figure 5.20 The narrow corridors of the Xining Building are a crucial architectural motif in *The Hole*.
Figure 5.21 A close-up shot of the hole activates the first musical number.

Figure 5.22 A long shot reveals the woman transforming into a glamorous dancer.
Figure 5.23 The woman's headdress and the neon lights in the elevator transform the greyish colour scheme of the film.
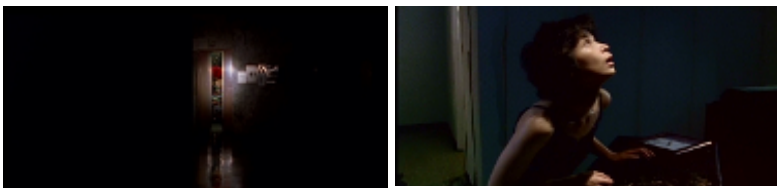
Figures 5.24-5.25 The spotlight effects on the elevator and on the woman's face.

Dancing in a glamorous dress and red feathers for her headdress, she soon draws the camera to focus on her face (*Figure 5.23*). At the end of this musical number, the camera pulls away to create a visually dramatic long shot, characterized with a spotlight lingering on the closing elevator door (*Figure 5.24*). Then the darkening sequence cuts to the following scene, which shows the elevator opening again revealing the man inside. After he staggers along the narrow corridor and arrives home, he peeps through the hole and discovers that the woman downstairs is also gazing at the hole. The film then cuts from the man's apartment to the woman's apartment, showing the beam of light coming through the hole creating a spotlight effect on her face, reminiscent of the earlier musical number she had performed (*Figure 5.25*).

From above description it is noticeable that the confinement of domestic spaces is now transferred to highly flexible editing that accentuates the potential connection between these two strangers. The similar locations (elevator and corridor) and the

visual techniques (the spotlight effects) forcefully address the connectivity between reality and fantasy, which allows Tsai to represent the building as a site of possibilities, where the materiality of space and light can activate the imagination and make the relationship between these two characters evolve around the same, rather than being confined to their own predicaments.

These musical numbers also actively evolve with the filmic reality and provide interesting performances to challenge cultural stereotypes. A case in point is the third musical number, which is also the first one co-performed by the man and the woman. It appears after a sequence in which the man and the woman gaze at each other from their balconies, when the other one is not looking at himself/herself (in this sequence, both of them step out of their domestic spaces and stand outside). The dramatic effects between seeing and being seen are delivered through the vantage points created by the architectural structure (*Figures 5.26-27*). The musical sequence then shows the woman chasing the man around, declaring her love through singing the song 'I Want Your Love' (*Figures 5.28-29*). The unconventional relationship, which shows the woman actively pursuing the man, rather than the other way round, becomes the major force through which to enliven the stagnating situation of the quarantine zone and to bring in more flexible camera work.

Figures 5.26-5.27 The man and the woman take turns to look at each other.

Figures 5.28-5.29 The co-performance of the man and the woman continues Tsai's challenge to sexual norms.

Here Tsai presents two layers of 'rewriting' his references to Chinese pop music. On the first layer, the woman's performance of lip-syncing to these five songs performed by Grace Chang is clearly a homage, celebrating the new image of Chinese women represented by Chang. As Kai-man Chang argues, the woman downstairs is empowered by this new image of woman that emerged in 1960s' Hong Kong, where women, like Chang in most of her films, started to discard the sexual norms of Chinese women, joined the workforce, and no longer needed to depend on men.[47] However, instead of copying Chang's gracious, elegant, innocent and even noble temperament in all of her performances, Tsai's version is more seductive, sensual, unlike the "impeccable image of modern Chinese femininity" presented by Chang, as Yeh and Davis argue.[48] These two layers of rewriting the conventional definition of Chinese women enrich Tsai's representation of this single building, and transform its usual status as a symbol of aging, death, and the government's neglect of impoverished people living on the margins of society. As usual, Tsai does not seek an essentialist definition, i.e. modern women must be independent; rather, *The Hole* swings between these two layers of rewriting, and leaves the definition open.

The situation of disconnection that Tsai sets out to examine comes both from this single building's history and from a wider context of urban development from which Taiwan cannot escape. As Richard Sennet argues, the experience of speed allows people to pass quickly through places, while the physical condition of travelling would eventually disconnect them from the space. This disconnection makes new modes of modern life possible, for example by sealing people in certain planned communities and reducing contacts in real life.[49] However, Sennet also argues that

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[47] Kai-man Chang, 'Gender Hierarchy and Environmental Crisis in Tsai Ming-Liang's *The Hole*', in *Film Criticism* 33.1 (Fall 2008): pp. 34-35.
[48] Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, pp. 234-35.
[49] Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971), pp. 18-19.

Figure 5.30 The man crying next to the hole.
Figure 5.31 The film ends with the final musical number.

the new type of city, a city based on the condition of disconnection, is actually restricting the essence of urban life, which is to function as a meeting place for people and to increase the number of "contact points".[50] In *The Hole*, the epidemic zone is direct evidence of a modern city's fear of losing itself to disorder. Ironically, Tsai's challenge to this over-reliance on disconnection to maintain order is through sick bodies, the same bodies that used to symbolize only the disconnection from society. The ending of the film will help to better illustrate this point. Before the man offers the worsening woman a glass of water through the hole, he had been trying to make the hole bigger but ended up sat beside it crying (*Figure 5.30*). Instead of continuing to focus on the man and the hole, the film cuts to the apartment downstairs and reveals by a low-angle shot how the woman receives the glass of water before being lifted upstairs. Then the film cuts to a horizontal shot, where the man and the women are dancing to Grace Chang's 'I Don't Care Who You Are' in the centre of the frame (*Figure 5.31*). The woman's dream-like transformation in this final scene is key to understanding the allegorical meaning of *The Hole*. It is useful to quote Deleuze's concept about the cinematic body here, as he notes:

> It is no longer a matter of following and trailing the everyday body, but of making it pass through a ceremony, of introducing it into a glass cage or a crystal, of imposing a carnival or a masquerade on it which makes it into a grotesque body, but also brings out

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[50] Ibid., pp. 53-58.

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of it a gracious and glorious body, until at last the disappearance of the visible body is achieved.[51]

In Deleuze's view, this "gracious and glorious body", which has been transformed from a grotesque body, is the key element with which to shape cinema into a new mode of embodiment for the audience through specific cinematic apparatus, such as close-up shots and the magnified sounds of the body.[52] Tsai presents these unique moments when bodies surpass their daily routines and demonstrate the grace and glory of physical existence, and that is when his representation of the city shines with a layer of luminosity and optimism, and therefore dismantles the symbols of ageing and death inscribed in the Xining Building. By focusing on a building symbolic enough to represent the problem of Taiwan's modernization, Tsai makes use of this part of urban history on which to base his reinvention of realist aesthetics, and by framing rich references to Chinese songs that were once popular in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other Chinese diaspora communities. With the building standing at the intersection of Taipei's past (the location used to be the most important commercial area in the Wanhua District) and present (its awkward proximity to the main area of youth culture, Ximending), Tsai suggests how Taiwan, a nation to some degree very much resembling the in-between status of the Xining Building, can become a unique starting point from which to re-imagine and examine the meaning of Chineseness.

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[51] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: the Time Image* (London: Athlone, 1989), p. 183.
[52] Ibid., pp. 256-57.

5.3 Uncertain destinies: *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* **(2003)**

Tsai's intention to represent Taipei and Taiwan as a unique site for rewriting conventions rooted in Chinese culture is most evidently achieved in his last film based wholly in Taipei: *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is the only film that Tsai funded completely with his own money, and therefore his most personal work in some way. It is also worth noting that Taiwan's film industry was at its lowest points in both 2001 and 2003, when it accounted for only 0.2% and 0.3% of the annual box office takings respectively. However, Tsai's films *What Time Is It There?* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* both became some of the best-selling local productions at these bleakest moments of the local film industry.

This film advocates Tsai's auteurist impetus so thoroughly that it is described as an example of "pure cinema" that makes use of the rich effects of spatiality in a shabby theatre to symbolize the complex flows of emotions and desires.[53] The film begins with a rainy evening at the entrance of the Fu Ho theatre, which is closing down after a final screening. The progress of the film then overlaps with the screening of this film-within-film, King Hu's martial arts classic *Dragon Gate Inn,* which also has a plot revolving around only one location throughout, just like Tsai's deployment of the Fu Ho Theatre. During the screening, the lame ticket woman walks all the way from the ticket booth to the projection room, only wanting to take a cake to the projectionist. Since she wears a leg brace, the numerous long takes of her walking are even longer than usual long takes. She fails to reach out to the man, but the ending reveals a sense of hope for their relationship, as the projectionist rushes outside into the rain to look for her. There are also some other characters in the

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[53] Wen Tien-hsiang, *Taiwan Cinema 1992-2011* (Taipei: Bookman, 2012), pp. 180-81.

theatre: the lead actors from *Dragon Gate Inn*, who come to watch their own film (play by the real actors from *Dragon Gate Inn*, Miao Tien and Shih Chun); a Japanese gay man who is looking for company; a ghost-like man who appears on the back stage; and a woman who comes alone and eats watermelon seeds during the film.

It is not surprising that this run-down theatre, with its bizarrely circuitous corridors and passages, has been considered as a symbol of human disconnection. Yet the Fu Ho Theatre was not a random choice. Located in the working-class neighbourhood of Yonghe, a suburban district of Taipei, the theatre appears in *What Time is it There?*, and was also the theatre used for its premiere. After premiering *What Time is it There?*, Tsai rented the theatre for six months to shoot *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, only because he learnt that the theatre was closing down. The degeneration of old urban theatres is explained by their inability to compete with the new multiplex cinemas, such as the Warner Vieshow Cinema Village in the Xinyi District. Therefore, by focusing on a single theatre in this film, Tsai represents the changes to Taipei's cityscape from the perspective of film exhibition. Living in Yonghe for almost all of his time in Taiwan, Tsai has a strong sentiment for the changes to this area, especially changes to the old theatres. On 26th April, 2003, more than one thousand residents of Yonghe and film lovers who supported Tsai went to this theatre, volunteering to act as extras in the opening scene, in which the theatre is packed with audience members.[54] The event became the last memorable thing about the theatre, and through filmmaking, Tsai turned a site that may have simply faded away into a site of remembrance. This very event shows how this film engaged with local culture in a creative and unique way, even before it was completed.

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[54] Cao Yu-ling, 'Tsai Ming-liang's Charm Attracted more than Thousands of People', *Liberty Times*, April 27, 2003. http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2003/new/apr/27/today-show4.htm. Accessed 26 February, 2013.

The context specific to Taiwan is also revealed by another location in this film, namely King Hu's *Dragon Gate Inn*, the film-within-the-film being shown at the Fu Ho Theatre. To date, scholars have only noticed Tsai's localized critique of general martial arts film without further acknowledging the uniqueness of *Dragon Gate Inn*.[55] However, this filmic text is not simply a general martial arts film, but a unique one in terms of Taiwanese identity. It not only represents Taiwan's first venture into the competitive market of transnational martial arts films, but also implements a complex dialogue between Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Chinese diaspora communities across the globe, while the timing of its release is also specific to Taiwan's modern history. Released in 1967, this film not only encountered the emerging economic prosperity of Taiwan, coinciding with Taipei's newly obtained status as a direct-controlled municipality and the expansion of its metropolitan territory, but it was also shot concurrently when the Cultural Revolution was initiated in 1966. The tangled relationship and the widening gap between China and Taiwan, Taipei's rapid growth as a city, and the increasing global appeal of martial arts film as a specific genre rooted deeply in Chinese culture, are all interwoven into the uniqueness of *Dragon Gate Inn*, which was Hu's first work after he moved from Hong Kong to Taiwan (see chapter 1). The most remarkable trait of this film is its refusal to follow the generic convention of worshiping a superior hero, by focusing on the collaboration between three humble martial artists against an evil eunuch (the story is set in the Ming Dynasty, a period of Chinese history that was heavily influenced by the political intervention of eunuchs), whose skill is better than any

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[55] Yeh and Davis regard King Hu's *Dragon Gate Inn* as a typical martial arts film "whose popularity depends on its obvious homophobia", see Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 237; Chan sees it as a symbol of "an essentialist formula" of Chinese cultural practices, see Kenneth Chan, '*Goodbye, Dragon Inn*: Tsai Ming-liang's Political Aesthetics of Nostalgia, Place, and Lingering', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1.2 (2007): p. 92; D.C. O'Neil also emphasize how *Dragon Gate Inn* obeys traditional Confucian doctrines and gender stereotypes, see Dan. C. O'Neil, 'Cinematic Cruising: *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* and the Strangely Moving Bodies of Taiwanese Cinema', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 5.1 (March 2008): pp. 131-33.

single one of them. Besides, the opposition of these anonymous martial artists to the eunuch is not to remove him from power, but simply to rescue the children of a dead general, who had been the eunuch's major rival, from their likely destiny of being eradicated by the cruel eunuch. Moreover, this film introduces a new type of female martial artist who dresses up like a man and does not provide sexualized visual pleasure.[56] Through this film made in Taiwan, Hu completely overthrew the conventions of martial arts film that he had followed loyally in *Come Drink With Me* (1965, Shaw Brothers), the final film he made for the most profitable film company, the Shaw Brothers, in Hong Kong at that time. This bold challenge was rewarded with abundant results. *Dragon Gate Inn* was screened in Taipei for two months and ranked number one in annual box office receipts in Taiwan for 1967. It also broke Chinese cinema's box office records in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, and encouraged the number of martial arts films produced in Taiwan to grow from 21 in 1967 to 41 in 1969.[57] Although the development of martial arts film in Taiwan was still less successful than in Hong Kong, film historians agreed that *Dragon Gate Inn* turned a new page for martial arts film.[58] Therefore, this film should not be generalized as a symbol of the essentialist mode of identity formation in martial arts film, but a unique work conducted in the Taiwanese context. This Taiwanese context is on the one hand, tightly linked to the political tension between China and Taiwan in the 1960s, while on the other hand, it is also related to Taiwan's economic and social changes, as people began to see beyond the grand narrative of Chineseness constructed by the Nationalist government, and to believe that the collaboration between common people is the key to Taiwan's future development. Although the

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[56] Lin Wen-chi, *Allegory and National Identity in Chinese Cinema* (Taipei: Taipei Film Archive, 2010), pp. 16-18.
[57] Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economy, and Aesthetics*, p. 137.
[58] Ibid.

political ideology inscribed in *Dragon Gate Inn* may not be as radical as Lin argues, strongly referring to Taiwan's opposition to communist China,[59] it does respond to Taiwan's unique status in Sinophone communities and its ability to present alternative types of martial arts films, which are capable of breaking conventions and creating new norms. Hence, the aim of Tsai's appropriation of *Dragon Gate Inn* is not merely to challenge the conventions of the pan-Chinese ideology in general martial art films, but it is also a gesture paying homage to this distinct martial arts film and its localized context.

The historical background of *Dragon Gate Inn* is crucial in order to illustrate the deeper meanings of Tsai's dual emphasis on a made-in-Taiwan martial arts film and an old theatre in Taipei. In this film, Tsai refines his unique combination of theatre and film aesthetics to a greater extent, showing how the filmic text can be an alternative stage while the film theatre becomes a site for pure formalistic experiments. The first line "this theatre is haunted" appears after the film has been running for 50 minutes, and in fact there are fewer than ten lines throughout the film (not including the dialogue from the soundtrack of *Dragon Gate Inn*). All the sequences are composed of a minimum amount of static shots, which means there is almost zero camera movement except for some slight adjustments to the filming angles. Some static shots look so motionless, like the one revealing the empty auditorium after the screening is over, that these sequences are described as part of

Figures 5.32-5.34 The physicality of various spaces in the theatre is heightened with static long takes.

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[59] Lin, *Allegory and National Identity,* pp. 23-24.

Figure 5.35 The opening sequences of *Dragon Gate Inn* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* are the same.
Figure 5.36 The full auditorium.
Figure 5.37 Tsai and film critic Lee You-xin sitting next to each other in the auditorium.

Tsai's urge to concentrate on "the sheer materiality of interior spaces",[60] and the "raw visuality".[61] However, besides the excessive attention to the presence of space and time, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* also forcefully concludes his Taipei films with strong references to Taiwanese culture, and these references are usually represented as exceptional cases, distinguishing themselves from the other parts of the film with unique visual qualities. In what follows, I will explore some of these examples.

The film begins with a black screen accompanied with the soundtrack of *Dragon Gate Inn*, which provides the basic background of this martial arts story set in the Ming Dynasty and based on the Emperor's first eunuch consolidating his power through brutal killing. Tsai not only borrows the soundtrack of *Dragon Gate Inn*, but also cuts the film from the black screen to the real opening sequence of the *Dragon Gate Inn*. Therefore, the opening sequences of *Dragon Gate Inn* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* are identical (*Figure 5.35*). Then the camera pulls back to show the whole auditorium, now packed with spectators (*Figure 5.36*), and then to several static shots taken from different angles in the auditorium. The final shot to conclude this sequence is a medium long-take shot, focusing for more 40 seconds on two specific members of the audience (*Figure 5.37*). These two people that are given specific attention are Tsai himself and a famous local film critic, Lee You-xin, who has long been a loyal supporter of Tsai's auteurist works and who also appeared in

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[60] de Luca, 'Sensory Everyday', p. 163.
[61] Chan, '*Goodbye, Dragon Inn*', p. 101.

What Time Is It There? as an extra. Among all the shots taken in the auditorium, this is the only one conducted by a medium long-take shot with a horizontal composition, which emphasizes the specificity of these two people in the frame. Lee has a strong personal presence because of his unique style of writing and his exaggerated hairstyle that most fans of art cinema in Taiwan can recognize. The co-presence of Tsai and Lee marks how this film's auteurist tendency comes from both Tsai himself, and also from the cinephile culture specific to Taiwan.

Besides the highly localized reference to Taiwan's cinephile culture, this film also continues his previous achievements in rewriting the image of Chinese women. The emphasis put on the lame ticket woman, who walks around the theatre throughout the screening, is a case in point. In most of the scenes, she is positioned either at the vanishing point of various long corridors or at the bottom of a staircase, and long takes are always applied to depict her walking slowly. In one exceptional scene, she opens a door on the corridor and enters the backstage area. The camera first stops on the open door which she has just entered, and represents her slow movement through the noises of the heavy footsteps caused by her leg brace (*Figure 5.38*). Then the film cuts to her coming out through a door adjacent to the big screen, on which an intense sword fight is taking place (*Figure 5.39*).
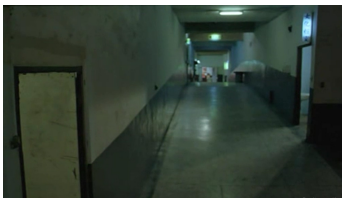

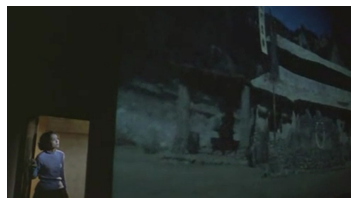*Figure 5.38* The empty scene of the open door.
Figure 5.39 The open door and the big screen stand in contrast to each other.
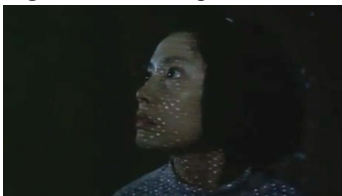

Figure 5.40 The face illuminated by the cinematic light.
Figure 5.41 The female martial artist in *Dragon Gate Inn*.

She leaves the door open, but steps back to the rear side of the screen, gazing at the swift movement of a female martial artist being displayed on the screen. The ticket woman's look of concentration is first covered with light filtered through the cinematic image (*Figure 5.40*), and then juxtaposed with a swift edit, cutting between her and a series of close-up shots of the female martial artist in *Dragon Gate Inn* (*Figure 5.41*). The extremely fast editing between the ticket woman and the film-within-the-film repeats five times before the whole sequence is extended into another two longer sequences of the sword fight, which also temporarily cuts to the ticket women's face. The stark contrast between the female martial artist and the physical disability of the lame ticket woman reduced by the close-up shots. By focusing on both women's facial expressions, Tsai skilfully borrows the image of the unconventional female martial artist to cinematically transform the ticket woman, representing the cinematic image as a light beam from the past that is still capable of illuminating the present.

As in the way he rewrites the image of Chinese women in *The Hole*, here he not only borrows the image of an unconventional female martial artist, but he also rewrites her images by juxtaposing them with another women with a disability. The double layers of rewriting suggest that the 'connection' Tsai tries to build in his films is both a connection between the characters, and a connection between the cultures that are operated within the various frameworks. Neither of these women symbolizes any essentialist definition of Chinese women, nor do they provide an aestheticizing image of a Third-World Other for Western spectators. Conversely, the juxtaposition of these two women's images suggests that they possess a different type of beauty from that associated with the typical characteristics of Chinese women on screen, such as being gentle, delicate and motherly, and with an aestheticizing image of

Otherness. The desexualized female martial artist and the disabled ticket woman do not correspond to the cultural stereotype of Chinese femininity. They illuminate each other with their imperfections, and this is exactly how Tsai rewrites conventions and highlights individualities.

Figures 5.42-5.43 The encounter of two men in the corridor.

Another exception is one of the rare high-angle shots in this film, where the camera is situated at the top of a wall, looking down on a narrow corridor hidden in an unspecified area of the theatre. The whole sequence is a static long take lasting for four minutes, beginning with the Japanese man walking from the edge of the frame, towards another man standing at the end of the corridor (*Figures 5.42-43*). The man speaks the first line of the whole film, "the theatre is haunted", and the Japanese man replies "I am Japanese", with both men speaking in Mandarin. Then the other man walks out of the frame and says "goodbye" in Japanese, to which the Japanese man responds in the same way. The dialogue seems to make no sense, however it has a strong cultural reference specific to Taiwan and its tangled relationship with Chinese modern history, since the Japanese were called the 'Japanese ghost' (*Riben guizi*) by the Chinese after the First Sino-Japanese War. The war led to the Japanese government's colonization of Taiwan, a place then covered with the residue of Japanese culture, which caused strong contradictory feelings about the Nationalist government when they retreated to Taiwan, facing the buildings left/haunted by the 'Japanese ghost' (even today, all of the buildings of the major governmental institutions in Taiwan were built by the Japanese). By applying a high-angle shot to a

cramped corridor and creating an unusual tension, this sequence addresses how there are multi-layered social-historical contexts behind the questions of Chineseness registered in the gesture of appropriating a martial arts film. By comparing the metaphor of the Japanese ghost with homosexuality (the Japanese man comes to the theatre for gay cruising), Tsai inserts a double-layered rewriting of the intersection of the Chinese patriarchal structure (in which gay men are neglected as ghosts) and Taiwan's history of Japanese occupation.

Figure 5.44 The projectionist stops to use a fortune-teller machine.
Figure 5.45 The ticket woman appears from the edge of the frame.
Figure 5.46 The final scene reveals the city in the pouring rain.

The final sequence addresses Taipei as a site in which to combine the aforementioned elements specific to Taiwan, and presents the only exterior scene of the whole film. After closing the doors of the theatre, the projectionist stops in front of a fortune-teller machine next to the ticket booth (*Figure 5.44*). This kind of machine is a common feature of Taiwan's superstitious society, and they can be found located in a wide array of venues ranging from temples to film theatres and theme parks. After he inserts the coin and receives a 'fortune poem', he discovers a rice cooker left behind by the ticket woman. The film then cuts to him hurrying from the theatre and leaving on his scooter, possibly trying to find the woman to take the cooker to her; however, she appears from the edge of the frame, watching him driving away in the pouring rain (*Figure 5.45*). They miss each other again, but it does not mean they will not see each other in the near future. By appropriating the fortune-teller machine, an evident symbol of the highly superstitious Taiwanese

society and part of the 'camp' aesthetics of the working class, this sequence reinforces Tsai's interest in the undefined status of specific buildings, locations, and human relationships. To him, the gesture of dismantling human disconnection does not necessarily need to be carried out by a conventional happy ending. Nonetheless, it does not mean Tsai's films are only about nostalgia lingering on these liminal spaces, but also about how they can be transformed through the power of cinema. As Tsai himself noted, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is more about "a possibility of life changing for the better" than mourning over the bygone past.[62]

After this final interlude, the camera is relocated to the outside of the theatre for the first time, revealing the neighbourhood soaked in pouring rain with a static long-take lasting for 75 seconds. The woman walks away from the theatre and the camera remains still (*Figure 5.46*), even after she walks out of the frame, while the soundtrack lingers on Yao Lee's old Chinese song 'Liu Lien', which literally means 'to recall with nostalgia' and which had been popular in the 1960s. It is worth noting that the sign outside the theatre states that it is only 'temporarily closed', an undefined status that has pervaded all of Tsai's films and also Taiwan's social atmosphere. With the woman walking out of the frame, Tsai concludes his representation of Taipei in a peculiar way: by showing the city as a world existing in the off-screen space, instead of in his real film. Tsai, whose representation of Taipei is so distinct that John Orr chooses to associate Taipei with Tsai when proposing the idea that specific directors are usually associated with specific cities,[63] has indeed represented Taipei in a special way that is based both on specific historical, political and social contexts of this island and on his originality. With a unique mode of realism that actually avoids most realistic sides of urban life and choose to focus on a

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[62] Rapfogel, 'Taiwan's Poet of Solitude', p. 29.
[63] John Orr, *The Art and Politics of Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 138.

run-down theatre and the people living on the margins of society, Tsai confirms his strong interest in breaking down the predicament of an in-between situation, not only for the building, but also for the characters and the city in general. This concluding scene of a city in the pouring rain also suggests that Tsai, after all these years of persisting with the value of auteurism and resisting the commercial mode of filmmaking, posits a possibility of imagining the uncertain destiny of a city with a locally made film that is unique to both of the histories of Taiwan and Chinese-language cinema in general. Ultimately, he uses this static shot, which waits until the ticket woman walks out of the frame, to declare that the city is not an enclosed stage under his full control, but is a place that nurtures possible connection, even though the destiny is uncertain.

Conclusion

Tsai's films represent Taiwanese society from the most down-to-earth approach – by capturing humble bodies and neglected architecture as something worth documenting. More importantly, he regards the predicaments brought by these suffering bodies and ugly urban spaces as a creative challenge, which will lead him to seek ways of turning characters' disconnection from each other or the wider social context into opportunities for making connections. Tsai's contribution to contemporary Taiwanese identity is first and foremost building on his refusal to blindly accept Chinese traditions. However, it does not mean that Tsai intends to create a definition of Taiwanese identity without the context of Chinese culture; on the contrary, he acknowledges the importance of Chinese culture more readily than Hou and Yang by paying homage both to old popular songs and to martial arts films.

Tsai's highly individual style reminds us of the peculiar position of Taiwan, especially in the last decade when the co-production of martial arts costume dramas became a global trend. Tsai confirms Taiwan cinema's potential for critically examining the pan-Chinese ideology, and thus provides an alternative angle from which to examine the singular and coherent tradition of Chinese culture that exist only on an imagined level, rather than in everyday situations.

Chapter 6
The Re-affirmation of Taiwanese Characteristics
in Contemporary Taiwan Cinema

In the previous three chapters, I have explored how the city helps the featured directors to shape their own poignant observations about Taiwanese society that make their representations of the city specific to the Taiwanese context, rather than reflecting only the general experiences of urbanization across the world. In this final chapter, I will further explore how the city continues to be developed as a site for claiming local distinctiveness in post-2008 Taiwan cinema after the structure of the local film industry was conspicuously changed. The change has to be traced back to the turn of the 21st century, when local cinema took only 0.4% of the domestic box office in 1999 and 0.1% in 2001.[1] In order to deal with this predicament, the young generation of filmmakers began to blend elements of commercial cinema into the solid tradition of art cinema in Taiwan, and gradually developed their own approach to address local particularities, rather than following the auteurist route.[2] The chapter will first return to the early 2000s to discuss Taiwan cinema's transformation from a pan-Asian route to the resurgence of Taiwanese consciousness introduced by a series of films released since the mid-2000s. To fully acknowledge contemporary Taiwan cinema's strategic and creative construction of urban images, I will then explore the recent changes in terms of the relationship between Taiwan cinema and the city, to show how filmmakers from the 1980s to the present day have incorporated urban spaces into their films' overall designs in such creative and diverse ways that they

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[1] Taiwan Cinema Website, 'Collections of Box Office Earnings of First-Run Theaters in Taipei (1999-2011)', Jan 16, 2012, http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_50896_144. Accessed 14 September, 2012.
[2] However, their link with the legacy of Taiwan New Cinema is still strong, since most of these young filmmakers were either trained during the Taiwan New Cinema period as assistant directors/cinematographers or had collaboration with Hou, Yang, Tsai in these auteurs' later projects.

have gradually approached "a sense of being at home in the city", to borrow Iain Chambers's words.[3]

6.1 Taiwan cinema at the crossroad of globalization and localization

To understand the recent trend of the re-affirming of Taiwanese characteristics through cinema, it is necessary to explore some crucial changes in national identity in the 2000s. This decade was the era when the DPP, the major opposition party and the sole supporter of Taiwan's independence, obtained the right to establish a pro-Taiwan state narrative following the the loosening of the Nationalist government's patriotic education in the late 1990s, after Chen Shui-bian won the 2000 presidential election. The KMT's attempt to rejuvenate an ideal version of China was replaced by the DPP government's full-scale endeavour of Taiwanization. Politically, the DPP formulated four major components to address Taiwanese nationalism: "the idea of the son of Taiwan", "the femininity of Taiwan", "the conflict between Taiwan and China", and "the value of democracy".[4] Their cultural policy is based on three principles: "the economic value of cultural industries", "the theorization of Taiwanese subjectivity", and "branding Taiwan as a cultural product".[5] All the strategies and components in the DPP's construction of a national narrative were aimed at one thing: to reconstruct a new version of Taiwanese history, Taiwanese identity and Taiwanese nationalism without radically pursuing Taiwan's independence in legal terms (i.e. the proposal of returning to the United Nations as

[3] Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 112.
[4] Yin C. Chuang, 'Divorcing China: The Swing from the Patrilineal Genealogy of China to the Matrilineal Genealogy of Taiwan in Taiwan's National Imagination', in *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40.1 (2011): p. 161.
[5] Chang Bi-yu, 'From Taiwanisation to De-Sinicization Culture Construction in Taiwan since the 1990s', in *China Perspectives* 56 (2004): p. 24.

Taiwan which was not posited by Chen's DPP government until 2007, after which it was immediately rejected due to the UN's 'One China' policy). Without being able to declare Taiwan as a nation on an international stage, the process of shifting Taiwanese identity from pan-Chinese to Taiwanese was still constructed jointly by state narrative, public narrative (popular culture) and individual narrative (an individual's everyday practice of democracy and consumption) for the first time in Taiwan's history.[6]

These rhetoric strategies may correlate with each other only in an abstract and interpretive sense, instead of being grounded in the concrete differences that support Taiwan's cultural distinctiveness (i.e. a now very different version of Mandarin from the version used in China); however, the value of such differences is that they denote a milestone in the construction of Taiwanese identity: for more than a century, Taiwanese identity has always been about resisting the narrative of its respective regimes and it has been deeply rooted in everyday practices rather than institutional efforts. Although Taiwan New Cinema was inaugurated under the KMT-led CMPC, its initial purpose was still to resist the KMT narrative rather than obeying the Nationalist ideology. This ideological conflict allows films from Taiwan New Cinema to become valuable archive of Taiwan's transitional period from the last few years of the martial law period to the post-martial law era, a unique time when state control was relaxed and a more complex relationship between the people and the government was forged to prompt new ways of interpreting the experience of living in Taiwan. Therefore, when the DPP obtained the right to construct an official version of Taiwanese identity, they also changed the meaning of claiming Taiwaneseness in cultural creations, including cinema. For films that continue to

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[6] Chuang, 'Divorcing China', pp. 160-61.

explore local particularities through thematic motifs and stylistic patterns, what they do now is no longer about resisting the official version of identity imposed by the government, but rather it is about confirming the rich complexities of the hybrid essence of Taiwanese identity. Moreover, it is also about acknowledging Taiwan's ambiguous status on the international stage and about working towards a narrative space that can tolerate the co-existence of Taiwan's ambiguity and distinctiveness.

The increasingly frequent contact between China and Taiwan has also prompted people from the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to discover the differences between their varied ways of using Mandarin, their concept of values and their identity formation. The main difference distinguishing Taiwanese from Chinese is no longer the difference between Taiwan and the old China, as framed by the ideal values of Chineseness, but the difference between Taiwan and the new China, two places that share their ancestral roots and Han Chinese culture but which have developed their own distinctive versions of nationhood. For Taiwan, it has been achieved by acknowledging the hybrid elements that revamped the Han Chinese culture brought by immigrants since the 17th century; for China, it has been achieved through the new set of Chinese nationalism under PRC rule.

The shifting relationship between Taiwan and China has further pushed the question of filmmaking, since cinema is not only a medium of artistic expression, but also a capital-centred product. Instead of following the DPP's route for addressing Taiwanese nationalism, the increasingly frequent contacts between Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and other East Asian regions has brought another way of thinking about local distinctiveness, which is to think of it regionally instead of nationally through diverse modes of co-production or local production that may attract both regional and global audiences. Davis and Yeh define this transnational phenomenon as the

new localism, which prompt filmmakers to produce "narrative styles specific to the national, regional and local" and to combine it with a Hollywood mode of marketing strategies and script development, by which they are able to raise their films' chances of being accepted by a wider global audience, such as in the case of Stephen Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* (2001).[7] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto takes a step further and considers trans-Asian cinema as a "transformative, reflexive practice in which the production of films and critical discourses are firmly intertwined", which produces films that fit either "the false universality of Hollywood as a transnational standard" or "the particularity of identity embraced by multiculturalism and transnational capitalism".[8] This highly complex situation has impacted upon Taiwan cinema, a national cinema standing on the brink and looking for possibilities to revive itself. Therefore, rather than making an immediate response to the changes initiated by a new pro-Taiwan state narrative, Taiwan cinema in the early 2000s looked outward to find more flexible strategies for re-building the local film industry.

The transnational mode was then practiced mainly in two directions in pre-2008 Taiwan cinema. The first direction was to repackage the paradigm of genre film with Taiwanese stars and settings, starting with the most cost-effective genre of romance and located all of the films in Taipei. Examples include *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002, dir. Yee Chih- yen, Arc Light) and *Formula 17* (2004, dir. Chen Yin-Jung, Three Dots), which blend the influence of fashionable Japanese drama with a more hybrid visual style catering for young people who had grown up watching music videos, fast-paced commercials and television programmes. Both films avoid the realist aesthetic favoured by Hou, Yang, and Tsai and instead represent the city as colourful

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[7] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2008), p. 38.

[8] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, 'National/International/Transnational: The Concept of Trans-Asian Cinema and the Cultural Politics of Film Criticism', in *Theorising National Cinema*, p. 260.

and full of visual delights. In the case of *Blue Gate Crossing*, a romanticized image of the city is achieved by replacing deep-focus shots by telephoto shots that result in the blurring of unpleasant backdrops, directing spectators' attention to the characters and achieving an intensified level of continuity. *Blue Gate Crossing* is part of the Taiwanese production company Arc Light's 'Three Cities' project',[9] which involves a collaboration with the French Pyramide Productions as part of a transnational series.[10] Arc Light is led by the famous film critic and producer, Chiao Hsiung-ping, a long-term supporter of Taiwan New Cinema. It is, therefore, a company aiming to produce Chinese-language films for Euro-American art-house audiences, a route at which Taiwan New Cinema also excelled. However, unlike Hou, Yang and Tsai's films, which are now considered as counter-examples to the more light-hearted route of 'Three Cities',[11] *Blue Gate Crossing* represents Taipei as a generic East Asian city "visually constructed for the maximum degree of extra-local translatability", as Martin notes.[12] Director Yee also admits the reason he chooses to use a telephoto lens to capture the cityscape is to "blur the undesired colours and shapes".[13] On the

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[9] The other two films are *Beijing Bicycle* (2001, Wang Xiaoshuai) and *Betelnut Beauty* (2001, dir. Lin Cheng-sheng).

[10] Fran Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', in *Cinema Taiwan*, pp. 138, 144n29. According to the introduction of the company, "Arc Light Films aims to unite talents of Taiwan, China and Hong Kong with a creative vision that spans across continents and oceans". The online introduction of Arc Light can also be found on its website, http://arclightfilmseng.blogspot.co.uk. Accessed 23 September, 2012.

[11] Martin argues that *Blue Gate Crossing* removes "any identifiable vestiges of the geographic and architectural particularity of Taipei City" and is therefore, "in sharp contrast to the close attention to the material and affective experience of (post)modern Taipei City in the urban films of Edward Yang or Tsai Ming-liang". See Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', p. 140; Davis also posits a similar argument focusing on the difference between *Blue Gate Crossing* and Taiwan New Cinema, as he argues that Yee's film "celebrates life in the city, instead of subjecting it to critique", "unlike Edward Yang or Hou Hsiao-hsien", see Darrell William Davis, 'Trendy in Taiwan: Problems of Popularity in the Island's Cinema', in *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 150. The interesting fact is that it was not until Taipei was represented with de-specification of locality in a film like *Blue Gate Crossing*, that scholars began to notice and emphasize how much 'Taiwaneseness' was placed in Hou, Yang and Tsai's urban cinema. In other words, the new trend of Taipei films, which may seem to respond to Braester's argument of "the impossible task of Taipei", is contributing a great deal to rethinking and rediscovering the local colour of the Taipei films made before them, which is not identified fully in existing scholarship.

[12] Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', p. 140.

[13] Mike Walsh, 'An Interview with Yee Chih-yen: Directing with an Open Heart', in *Metro* 135 (Winter, 2003). Cited in Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', p. 140.

other hand, Martin also points out how the local audience have analysed the production on various websites relating to this film, arguing that by hearing a familiar language and seeing a familiar cityscape of Taipei all contribute towards their affection for the work.[14] *Formula 17*, a flamboyant gay comedy taking place mainly in nightclubs, bars and other westernized locations in Taipei, also applies the same strategy. As Davis concludes, these films apply an ambiguous marketing strategy, which makes them "look and sound like foreign films, but still be Taiwanese".[15] This twofold strategy for representing the city became a crucial tactic in the early 2000s.

The second direction, which was to adopt the Hollywood mode of marketing strategies, narrative paradigms and special effects in order to create specific genres that were less common in Taiwan (such as horror and thriller films), is also visually characterized by a de-localized Taipei. Examples include *Double Vision* (2002, dir. Chen Guo-fu), which was financed and produced by Sony Pictures-Columbia-Asia, and *Silk* (2006, dir. Su Chao-bin), which was funded by the local company, CMC Entertainment Corporation. *Double Vision* dilutes local colours so completely that there is no mention of it being a Taiwanese film throughout the English-dubbed trailer.[16] None of the main actors are Taiwanese, although Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Ka-fai does play a Taiwanese police officer who is assisted by an FBI agent (played by the American actor David Morse) to investigate a series of bizarre murders. *Double Vision* was shot entirely in Taipei, using a variety of locations from government institutions and commercial buildings on both the West and East sides of

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[14] Martin looked into both the official and unofficial fan websites of *Blue Gate Crossing* and discovered that the domestic audience expressed a tendency to identify with the locations in the film and enjoyed the pleasure of watching a film based in places that they can recognize. See Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', p. 140.

[15] Davis, 'Trendy in Taiwan', p. 154.

[16] Robert Ru-shou Chen, "'This isn't Real!" Spatialized Narration and (In)visible Special Effects in "Double Vision"', in *Cinema Taiwan,* pp. 108, 111.

the city.[17] However, the city's Taiwanese characteristics were reduced to the minimum level. As production designer Tim Yip (who won an Academy Award for his work on *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*) mentioned, on the one hand he applied the characteristics of the impression of Taipei, but he also ensured that any excessive local colour was trimmed off in order to strengthen the film's international appeal.[18] As a result, *Double Vision* wanders between Taiwanese film/non-Taiwanese film and Taipei/non-Taipei locational references, and presents an even more blurred locality than both *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Formula 17*. Scholars have praised *Double Vision* as "a trial that hit the mark" and "opened up exciting new prospects for the lethargic Taiwan cinema"[19] with it taking NT$80 million at the domestic box office; however, what they forgot to address is that *Double Vision* failed to break-even at the domestic box office after its production costs of NT$200 million, especially when this film struggled to gain widespread theatrical releases outside Southeast Asia.[20] Scholars may dismiss the problem of cost-effectiveness in the case of *Double Vision*, but they have noticed the danger of being over-reliant on a de-localized project like this by pointing out these projects are like migrating birds,

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[17] The locations include Taipei Zhongzhen Police Office, National Taiwan University Hospital, Nankang Software Industrial Park, Church of Aletheia University, the Chinatrust Commercial Bank Building on Dunhua North Road, and The Gallery Hotel in Wanhua District, which was demolished afterwards.

[18] Huang Ting, *The Double Vision Research Handbook* (Taipei: Kadokawa-Taiwan, 2002), p. 42.

[19] Chen, 'This isn't Real!', p. 108.

[20] *Double Vision*'s highest production cost in Taiwan's film history was later beaten by *Silk,* which also focuses on a series of investigations led by a foreigner—this time by the famous Japanese actor, Yôsuke Eguchi, already know to Taiwanese audiences through fashionable Japanese drama. The budget was more than NT$200 million, which meant that it replaced *Double Vision* as the most costly local production. However, these two high-budget films did not perform as the companies had expected at the domestic box office. *Double Vision* grossed less than half of its budget, and *Silk* grossed less than 1/10 of its budget. The failure suggests that the strategy of copying 'Hollywood experience' did not work as well as the producers had hoped for. The record for the highest budget has now been taken by Wei Te-sheng's epic film *Seediq Bale* (2011), a story based on the conflict between Taiwanese aboriginal people and the Japanese government in 1930. The budget of this film was NT$700 million, and it grossed more than NT$810 million. At present, local productions accentuating local colour are more popular than local productions with a global look.

and only those films with Taiwanese characteristics can truly attract the sustainable popular attention of local audiences.[21]

This need to make stories that can really relate to local audiences was answered by another direction of Taiwan cinema emerging in the mid-2000s, which re-emphasized the importance of rural life and nature to re-affirm the rural roots of Taiwanese identity. These films direct people's attention away from the capital and revisit anonymous towns that have been neglected by the mainstream media. The earliest examples are not feature films, but low-budget humanist documentaries, including *Let it Be* (2004, dir. Yan Lan-quan and Zhuang Yi-zeng) and *Life* (2004, dir. Wu Yi-Feng), which were both successful at the box office.[22] *Let it Be* focuses on old peasants and their passion for the land, while *Life* documents people's will to survive after the horrific 921 Earthquake destroyed countless families in 1999. These documentaries have also influenced another route of feature filmmaking, which takes the beautiful landscape of Taiwan as the departure point for its plots and as its strategy for targeting Taiwanese audiences. En Chen, who was the cinematographer for Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness*, claims that his directorial debut, *Island Etude* (2006, Zoom Hunt International Productions Company Ltd.), is a "commemorative album" which he made for 23 million Taiwanese people living on the island, and is a souvenir for everyone to remember what Taiwan looked like in 2006.[23] The 100-minute-long film allows the audience to follow the protagonist's round-Taiwan trip by bicycle, visiting all types of coastal landscape. Chen Zheng-dao, who combined the style of fashionable drama and the picturesque landscape of

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[21] Davis and Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 63.

[22] *Let it Be* grossed NT$5 million, *Life* grossed over NT$10 million. However, it is worth noting that the production cost of a documentary is hard to estimate. Since these filmmakers dedicate their life to ensure that their issues will be heard, there is no boundary between work and life for them, and they usually fund themselves to complete their works.

[23] Chen De-ling and Chen Hong-yin, 'Affection for an Island: an Interview with *Island Etude*'s Director En Chen', in Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.), *The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers* (Taipei: Shulin, 2010), p. 25.

Hualien in *Eternal Summer* (2006, Three Dots), a story of teenage love taking place on the eastern coast of Taiwan, also claims that his films are all made for the Taiwanese audience.[24] Whether documentary or feature film, filmmakers who apply this route all consciously address the characteristics of Taiwanese culture and landscape, local idioms and references, and more importantly, their passion for making films for the local audience.

This route achieved its climax when Wei Te-Sheng's directorial debut, *Cape No.7* (2008, ARS Film Production), took NT$530 million at the domestic box office (9.5% of the total annual box office earnings in 2008). Together with other films made at around the same time, such as *Winds of September* (2008, dir. Lin Shu-yu, Film Mall), *Orz Boyz* (2008, dir. Yang Ya-che, One Production Film) and *Parking* (2008, dir. Chung Mong-hong, Cream Film Production), which were all directorial debuts that received government subsidies in 2006 and were released in 2008,[25] *Cape No.7* led the vigorous wave of 'Taiwan Post-New Cinema', a term officially coined by the 2008 'Auteurism and Popularity: Taiwan Post-New Cinema' International Symposium held by the Institution of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at Academia Sinica in Taipei. The works of Taiwan Post-New Cinema share a tendency of transforming historical trauma or social problems with light-hearted interpretations, such as *Cape No.7*'s appropriation of Japanese colonial history.[26] This transformation does not mean that contemporary Taiwan cinema will try to remove the historical burden of Taiwan New Cinema; on the contrary, these young

[24] You Ting-jing, 'The Predicament and Exit of Teenage Romance: an Interview with *Eternal Summer*'s Director Chen Zheng-dao', in *The Voice of Taiwan Cinema*, p. 38.

[25] Since 2003, directors who are making their first film have been allowed to apply for the film subsidy for the first time following the establishment of the subsidy in 1990. In 2006, *Winds of September*, *Orz Boyz*, *Parking* and *Cape No.7* all received subsidies of NT$5 million. Another important film, *Monga*, also received the subsidy in 2006, but it was released much later in 2010. *Monga* grossed over NT$250 million and was the best selling local film in 2010, continuing the '*Cape No.7* phenomenon' with its highly localized outlook and plot, which focuses on the area of 'Monga' in Wanhua District, Taipei.

[26] Sing, 'The Telepathy in Downgrading History', pp. 137-56.

filmmakers are attempting to continue their predecessors' observation of Taiwanese society with alternative strategies in order to construct narratives that are more suitable for the post-2000 Taiwan, where national identity is no longer concerned with resisting the official version of Taiwanese history, but about fully embracing the hybridity of the Taiwanese culture that is now officially interwoven into the state narrative. In this regard, although these recent films' resistance to Hollywood's cultural hegemony is no longer through a highly concentrated auteurist route, and is now blended with more techniques of commercial cinema that are grounded in continuity editing, the link between the auteurs of Taiwan New Cinema and the new generation of filmmakers is still being consolidated by their shared concern for Taiwan.

While recent scholarship has given substantial attention to the roots-seeking ideology of *Cape No.7*,[27] which is expressed through the rural side of Taiwan, in the second part of this chapter, I will explore some recent examples in order to point out how the city has continued to be a pivotal motif, background and character in itself, constructing audio-visual and thematic features for Taiwan cinema.

6.2 Taipei in post-2008 cinema

In Tweedie and Braester's research on city film and media technology, they suggested that in recent years the transnational urban experience of East Asian cities

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[27] Major essays on *Cape No.7* include Chialan Sharon Wang, 'Memories of the Future: Remaking Taiwanese-ness in *Cape No.7*', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 6.2 (July 2012): pp. 135-51; Lee Pei-ling, 'Between Imagination and Reality: a Narrative Analysis of *Cape No.7*', in *China Media Research* 6.2 (2010): pp. 47-55; Peng Hsiao-yen, '*Cape No.7*: Accidental Success? A Review of the Taiwan New Cinema', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp. 124-36; Chan Min-hsu, 'The Making of Grass-roots Taiwan's Imagination in *Cape No.7*', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp. 170-84; Beryl Tzuhsiu Chiu, 'Spatial Localism, Historical Nationalism, or Social Transnationalism? A Cultural Analysis of *Cape No.7*', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp. 185-95.

has encouraged bold experiments in constructing cinematic images of the city.[28] They single out the importance of research on cinema and the city in this particular region, as they propose to observe the transformations of representations of the city in an era of digitalization and transnational co-production:

> Taken together, the new urban films from East Asia provide a closely observed and precisely catalogued record of urban experience during this transitional moment. Throughout the twentieth century, extravagant and tantalizing representations of the city circulated around the region and world, projecting spectral images of urbanity far beyond the more proximate verges of the city; but new screen and dissemination technologies have increased the speed and extended the reach of those images, establishing virtual links between the city and its outside.[29]

For Taiwan cinema, a contested national cinema that has gradually recovered from its bleakest moments in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the rigorous dialogue between cinema and the city has also been especially evident in terms of diverse experiments in the representation of the city. In the case of Taiwan cinema, the more important thing is that these audio-visual experiments are also bound with Taiwan cinema's dual emphasis on local particularities and foreign influences, and a pervasive eagerness among directors to reconnect urban experiences and Taiwanese identity. More importantly, this goal of reshaping a valid interpretation of Taiwanese identity through focusing on urban Taiwan is aimed at communicating with the local audience rather than promoting Taiwan on the international stage. Rather than being represented as two conflicting forces that blur the question of identity, the local and

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[28] Tweedie and Braester, 'Introduction: The City's Edge', *At City's Edge*, p. 2.
[29] Ibid.

the global in the post-2008 cinema are more evidently regarded as equally significant in terms of the construction of Taiwaneseness.

To further explore the relationship between Taiwan cinema and the city in recent years, *Orz Boyz* provides a good starting point, as it encompasses some major aspects in terms of both production and representation. The first feature of these films is the strong connection with the local television industry. Originally conceived for Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS)'s 'Life Story' (its Chinese title '*Rensheng juzhan*' literally means 'an film exhibition of life'), an ongoing project inaugurated in 1999 to showcase made-for-television-films made by young talent and which has already generated 202 films,[30] *Orz Boyz* became the first feature film of Yang Ya-che (1971-) after making eight works for the huge archive of 'Life Story' between 2002 and 2012. This example shows how the connection between the local television and film industry are closely linked and have become a major factor behind the new wave of Taiwan cinema. Like Yang Ya-che, many directors practiced the skills of filmmaking in the realm of television-making before finding opportunities to turn their more ambitious projects into feature films. Since many television dramas are set in Taipei, with a clear aim to attract a young audience longing for a city life, these directors feel most comfortable when continuing to explore the urban themes at which they excelled through their television-making.

Orz Boyz also reflects how post-new cinema inherits and renews the realist aesthetics of Taiwan New Cinema. The diverse audio-visual strategies of *Orz Boyz* are first and foremost tied to the tradition of Taiwan New Cinema, which advocates the irreplaceable importance of everyday spaces, daily details and the realist aesthetics registered therein; however, as the previous case studies have shown, Hou,

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[30] For the complete history of 'Life Story', see PTS's official website, http://web.pts.org.tw/php/mealc/life/. Accessed 23 September, 2012.

Yang and Tsai all developed distinctive forms of realism, and the correlation between a realist tendency and the urge to document Taiwanese everyday life does not settle on a singular mode. Thus, *Orz Boyz* also joins its predecessors' journeys of transformation by expanding the aesthetics of everydayness by focusing on children's view of the daily environment.
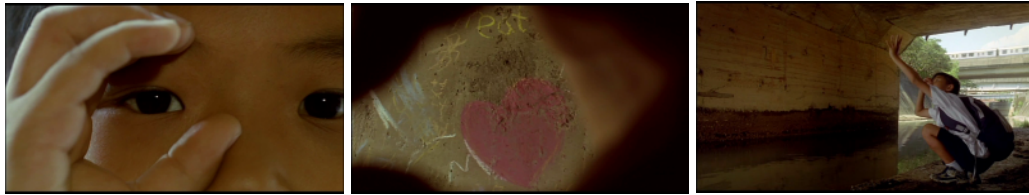

Figure 6.1 A close-up shot of the boy's gesture of circling his vision.
Figure 6.2 A point-of-view shot reveals the encircled vision.
Figure 6.3 A medium shot reveals the location of the boy, with a carriage of Taipei Metro passing by in the background.

The film tells the story of the friendship between two little boys 'Liar No.1' and 'Liar No.2', who live in central Taipei and who have been named as such by their teachers because of their mischievous behaviour in school. No.1 lives with his father, who suffers from mental illness and relies completely on his child for the daily chores, while No.2 lives with his grandmother because his parents are too busy to take care of him. Their incomplete families force them to seek outside comforts, including their friendship and teasing other classmates by making up stories about ghosts and Martians. As Yang states, he believes that making films from a local perspective is the only way to prevent local filmmakers from being submerged under the wave of globalization, this film is thus grounded in his observation of local particularities.[31] Set in various areas of Taipei, the film presents diverse strategies for blending these children's imagination and the cityscape. The opening sequence is a case in point. It begins by shifting between a close-up shot of No.2's eyes and his

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[31] 'An Interview with Yang Ya-che', The Official Website of *Orz Boyz*, 5 August, 2008, http://www.wretch.cc/blog/orzboyz/249758. Accessed 23 September, 2012.

point-of-view shot, revealing some chalk graffiti on a wall (*Figures 6.1-2*). After a few rounds of cutting back and forth between the close-up shots of the boy and the encircled image of the graffiti, the film cuts to a medium shot, revealing the boy trying to circle the scenery in front of him with his fingers, while the graffiti is shown to be drawn on a wall under a small bridge (*Figure 6.3*). The medium shot also reveals the location to be Taipei, as it shows an MRT train in the background. The location could not be less ordinary, but a simple gesture can transform this ordinary corner.


Figures 6.4-6.5 The animation sequences are aimed at delivering local colour.

Orz Boyz also experiments with other formalistic possibilities brought by new technologies to further examine the hybridity of Taiwanese culture. For example, the animation sequence based on Oscar Wilde's *Happy Prince* is transformed into its Taiwanese incarnation and set amid the Taiwanese cityscape (*Figures 6.4-5*). The director and the animator Fish Wang work hard to recreate the Taiwanese-style cityscape, which is highly recognizable for Taiwanese audiences, although foreigners may not necessarily understand that it looks like Taiwan.[32] Another example is a sequence combining animation with black-and-white cinematography to present a Taiwanese version of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, in which *The Maiden's Prayer*, a 19th-century piece of piano music played by the garbage truck, is the magical tune that drives away the rats. *The Maiden's Prayer* is famous in Taiwan for being used as the 'theme song' while waste collection vehicles are driven through the city,

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[32] Yang Hao-jun, 'Farewell to the Lonely Childhood: an Interview with *Orz Boyz*'s Director Yang Ya-che', in *The Voice of Taiwan Cinema,* pp. 111-12.

collecting garbage along its way. Since the trucks only stay in each collection point for a short period of time, and dropping rubbish on the ground is illegal in Taiwan, it is common to see people chasing the trucks in the city – a scene which is also transformed into a comedic detail in this short film. The specificities of local culture are also accentuated by No.1's narration, in which he deliberately speaks Mandarin with a heavy regional accent (spoken by mainlanders who moved to Taiwan around 1949 but who previously only spoke their own dialects) and mixes it with English. In this sequence, the most famous landmark of Taipei – Taipei 101 – appears in the background as a vague architectural form (*Figure 6.6*).
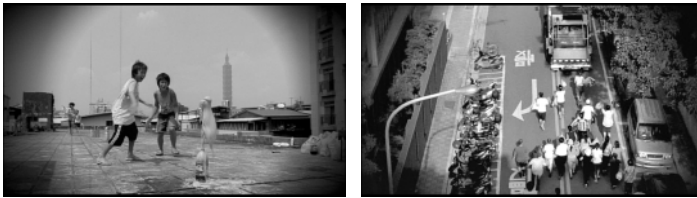
Figures 6.6-6.7 A localized version of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin.*

Figure 6.8 The boys perform in front of a metro station.
Figure 6.9 A point-of-view shot taken in a waterslide.

Orz Boyz also re-affirms the director's emphasis on 'the local perspective' and deliberately emphasizes Taiwan in a frank way, as myriads of recent films do. In the sequence where the boys are trying to save money by looking for empty bottles in the street (in exchange for the recycling fee) and performing as street artists in front of a metro station, the film cuts back and forth between their journey in the city (*Figure 6.8*), point-of-view shots in a waterslide (*Figure 6.9*), and animation images of the theme park that they dream of visiting. In this sequence where imagination is accentuated to its extreme, the boys use a cardboard box on which 'Made In Taiwan

(MIT)' is printed as their makeshift stage when performing in the street. I regard this as Yang Ya-che's outspoken announcement of this film's strong Taiwanese identity. Like many other films that were released around the same time, the traces of Taiwanese characteristics are no longer hidden underneath the overall design of the films, but are transformed into conspicuous elements that respond to the newly shaped Taiwan-centred narrative.

Orz Boyz's fresh representation of Taipei should not be considered as an individual, fortuitous and random case, but as part of a collective endeavour in exploring Taiwanese culture through the interplay between the local and the global taking place most rigorously in the city. *Parking*, another film that received a film subsidy in 2006 and was released in 2008, is also a directorial debut that examines social reality through focusing on a specific part of Taipei. Director Chung Meng-hong constructs the film from a common problem that many Taipei people will have encountered: the difficulty of finding a parking space, or having found one, being blocked in by some other car. This absurd situation forces the protagonist to go into an old building closest to the street, trying to find out whose car is blocking his way. During his journey, he meets different people with very different stories, which symbolize the diversity of Taiwanese society. At the end of this, he discovers a way of forming an ideal family with his wife as a result of a surprising encounter he has in the building.

Another director, Chang Tso-chi, who was Hou Hsiao-hsien's assistant director on *A City of Sadness*, has consciously explored Taiwanese culture and those people on the margins of society. As a second-generation mainlander, Chang does not speak any Taiwanese dialects but he always makes sure that he depicts Taiwan's hybridity through the use of language. His most recent film *When Love Comes* (2010) made

him the third Taiwanese director to win the prestigious National Culture and Arts Award in 2011.[33] In this film, which is set in some marginal districts of Taipei, Chang tells a coming-of-age story in which a young girl learns to deal with her problems with her family and her pregnancy through focusing on various urban spaces in which she spends time, while also representing her journeys to rural towns. The journeys between rural Taiwan and Taipei are not designed to suggest a loss of local identity in the city, but on the contrary, the city is represented as a location to which the girl has no trouble returning and embracing. However, this film was his first to focus on urban Taipei. Since his first film, *Ah-chung* (1996), his focus has been placed on the lower class, multi-ethnic groups of Taiwanese people living in Northern Taiwan, but not in the metropolitan area. *Darkness and Lights* (1999) focuses on a family of blind massagers in Keelung, a port city close to Taipei. *The Best of Times* (2002) depicts a young gangster's journey between Taipei and Yilan. *Soul of a Demon* (2008) was shot in the seaside town, Nanfangao in Yilan County, and was also based on the local history there. In these films, Taipei is an obscure subject through which his characters only pass without staying in for long. In *Darkness and Lights*, the local consciousness is even constructed by resisting the imagery of Taipei, when the character compliments an overpass in Keelung saying "this is the most beautiful overpass in Keelung. Taipei does not have something like this". Therefore, Chang's shift from the rural areas in Northern Taiwan, such as Keelung and Yilan, to a family running a restaurant in urban Taipei in *When Love Comes*, was not only monumental in his own oeuvre, but also in Taiwan cinema as a whole. As a director who always looks beyond Taipei to seek Taiwanese characteristics, *When Love Comes* denotes his changing attitude in regarding Taipei

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[33] Hou Hsiao-hsien won this award in 1995, and another director, Wang Tung, won it in 1997.

as a real home and as an important part of Taiwanese culture, instead of as an isolated component serving only the global economic system.

The continuous exploration of Taiwanese characteristics also helps to establish another trend, which is the local government's active engagement in city film as a genre. Films like *Taipei Exchanges* (2010) and *Au Revoir Taipei* (2010) are packaged as city films and promoted by the Taipei City Government, aiming to capture the charm of Taipei and to establish a new urban aesthetics to attract tourists. Unlike the blurred locality deliberately placed in *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Double Vision*, these city films aim to manifest Taipei's own character with an acknowledgement of its hybrid, multicultural and global colours. In *Taipei Exchanges*, the main protagonists are two sisters who open a European-style café in a quaint neighbourhood in Taipei; at the end of the film, the elder sister exchanges some of her shares in the shop for 36 flight tickets. Similarly, *Au Revoir Taipei* focuses on the night before the protagonist Hsiao-kai leaves Taipei to visit his girlfriend in Paris. Although both films present characters yearning to leave Taipei to see the world, the symbolic meaning of Taipei grows stronger and stronger due to the directors' attempts to renew the imagery of Taipei by focusing on the most popular areas, such as the Min Sheng Community (*Taipei Exchanges*), Shi-Da night market (*Au Revoir Taipei*) and the 24-hour Eslite Bookshop (*Au Revoir Taipei*). For the character from *Taipei Exchanges*, Taipei is inscribed in her identity, accompanying her for the forthcoming world-trip. For the character from *Au Revoir Taipei*, the adventure in the city makes him realize that he can have what he wants without going abroad; ultimately, he does not say 'Au Revoir' to Taipei. Taipei becomes a home in which people can stay to dream and to imagine, and it remains as a place to which they can return.

Conclusion

Although Taiwan cinema turned temporarily to a strategy of using blurred localities in films such as *Blue Gate Crossing*, *Formula 17* and *Double Vision*, in which Taipei is expected to look as global as possible, the recent changes in the local film industry have once again shaped the city as a site for re-affirming Taiwanese characteristics. From the 1980s to the present, what filmmakers have continuously shared when it comes to representations of the city is a belief in everyday experience rather than a cinematic imagination provided by grand architectural proposals and urban planning, or the modern spectacle. These shared characteristics are particularly important in the Taiwanese context because as previous chapters have pointed out, the main point of Taiwan New Cinema is to seek a closer observation of Taiwan as a real and only home, instead of following an imaginary image of home as constructed by the Nationalist government since 1949. The resurgence of Taiwanese consciousness in urban-oriented films like *Orz Boyz* shows that Taiwan cinema has gradually constructed a sense of being at home in the city, and this trend has grown even stronger since the Nationalist government's pro-China state narrative was replaced by the pro-Taiwan stance of the DPP. This phenomenon suggests that the rural landscape can represent the nativist sentiment that constructs a significant part of Taiwanese identity, but also that the city can help to shape a more realistic side of Taiwanese identity focusing both on the local and on the interplay between the local and the global.

Conclusion

Summary/Recap

In this thesis I have explored films to question existing scholarship that seeks to eliminate 'the city' from the discussion of late twentieth century and contemporary Taiwanese identity. These city films reflect that Taiwanese identity is, on the one hand, a postcolonial one that stresses the importance of – and indeed is nourished by – challenging conventions, and on the other hand that it is also an inventive one based not only on strategic interpretation of Taiwan's undefined status as a nation-state, but also on research into the island's history to seek unrevealed roots of Taiwanese consciousness that can nurture new interpretations.

This thesis has sought to demonstrate how the poetics of cinema, through the cinematic representation of the city, may help these films to respond to the increasingly hybrid, multicultural and global Taiwanese identity. This meant reclaiming many of these films from the dominant strands of interpretation, which often reduced them to being manifestations of a set of global thematic, stylistic and theoretical tropes on 'the city', rather than as the highly localized 'texts' that surely they are. These films demonstrated that the city may reveal as much about Taiwanese identity as the more essentialist ones that focus on rural life. Building on the work of film scholars like Chris Berry, June Yip and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, I attempted to show that Taiwan New Cinema rejects the monolithic, essentialist and conventional formulation of nationhood and confirms the hybridity of Taiwanese society, and this argument overlaps with existing scholarship on Taiwanese identity and confirms

cinema's crucial status in terms of identity formation. However, most scholars have paid attention to films set in rural areas or focusing on historical subjects, like *A City of Sadness*, when investigating the importance of Taiwan New Cinema. To address this oversight I provided close readings of Hou, Yang, Tsai's representations of the city to unveil the different ways in which the urban imagery in these auteurs' films respond to Taiwan's distinctiveness. They reveal that everyday spaces can more convincingly represent and help examine the meaning of home, where everyday life is enacted. Therefore, despite these directors' concerns for diverse subject matters and styles, they share a concern to resist a grand visualization of modern spectacle and to construct a new route to define the national by focussing on the least iconic elements.

As auteurs who composed their films as art and deviated from the formulaic mode of commercial and propagandist films made before the 1980s, Hou, Tsai and Yang rejected two things: first, the Nationalist ideology that used to dominate the local film industry, since it was highly institutionalized and supervised by the state; second, the Hollywood mode of filmmaking, which are absorbed by the films made under the Nationalist ideology. Therefore, when Taiwan New Cinema emerged and claimed an alternative route of filmmaking, this auteurist impulse actually addressed Taiwanese identity in two ways: firstly, it sought to re-examine the Chinese culture that Taiwanese people had grown accustomed to; secondly, it sought to address Taiwan's distinctiveness by providing creative works that focused entirely on local social changes.

An important clue to distinguish their representations of the city from the universal one is how these directors approach, examine and question the unified pan-Chinese identity promoted by the Nationalist government. However, the way they

question it through representations of the city is not by simply rejecting it in an arbitrary manner, but by pointing out the diverse forces shaping Taiwanese society. For example, the tendency of choosing specific urban architecture to enrich the film's critical depth is obvious in Yang's choice of locations in *The Terrorizers* and *Yi Yi*. In contrast to the ordinary street scenes and domestic spaces that he usually pays more attention to, in these films he chooses a major building as an important visual motif to help unfold or trigger his characters' journeys of seeking images with their own cameras, and both buildings are symbolic of different aspects of Nationalist rule. More importantly, these characters can be regarded as the embodiment of Yang's identity as an auteur, a hidden subtext constantly strengthened by his unique framing of the urban environment. Yang's Taipei films suggest that there is no absolutely correct way of representing the city and possibly the nation, and no matter how plain the city may look, it can be a useful departure for the young generation of Taiwanese to invent their identities.

However, it is necessary to note that although all the Taipei films examined in this thesis resist the sense of Chineseness fabricated by the Nationalist government, it is not the only version of Chineseness that Taiwanese identity deals with. As time goes by, Taiwanese identity becomes not only about resistance to the old China of the Nationalist government, but also about seeking ways of distinguishing Taiwan from the PRC, the new China. The strategy on the one hand depends on the narrative that represents Taiwan as an independent place with its own conflicts, predicaments and historical experiences, as Hou's *Dust in the Wind*, *Goodbye, South, Goodbye* and *Three Times* demonstrate, or the Taiwanese context of globalization in Yang's films, in which the multiple forces that are specific to Taiwan's history, such as the US aid and Japanese colonization, are interwoven into his highly articulated urban imagery.

On the other hand the strategy can also be highly aesthetic as is Tsai's Taipei films, which seem to critically examine a wider pan-Chinese culture by representing Taipei as a place for creating alternative texts of Chineseness. In the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the city's potential of drawing all kinds of people into a single location allows Tsai to interweave Taiwan's past of Japanese colonization and pan-Chinese culture with the undefined present, and thus responds to Taiwan's hybrid culture in a creative way. The buildings and urban spaces in *Vive L'Amour*, *The Hole* and *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* not only say something specific about Taiwan's urban development, such as the hidden context behind the Da An Forest Park, Xining Building, and Fu Ho Theatre, but Tsai also applies their in-between situation to reflect Taiwan's status as a nation-in-suspension, and transforms these uncertainties into a major source of creativity. This 'reflection' does not mean that he deliberately proposes a political view when representing the city, forcing people to take a look at Taiwan's predicament as a nation-state; on the contrary, he transforms this political fact into an allegorical approach for capturing Taipei's internal diversity, which is embodied mainly in his challenges to cultural stereotypes that used to dominate the Confucian-oriented Chinese identity. The most evident case in point is how Hsiao-kang's journey in the city in *Vive L'Amour* reflects his pursuit of personal identity, and how the woman's transformation between filmic reality and musical numbers in *The Hole* is linked to a wider socio-historical context, even if it is such a destructive one that Tsai ironically defines it as 'Taiwan Fever'. Although Tsai's concern for a self-centred interpretation of the city was defined as a turn from the "Historical I" to the "Private I", his response to changes in Taiwanese society also suggests that this "Private I" is only made possible by the transformed Taiwan after the lifting of

martial law in 1987.[1]

Besides revealing the references to contexts that are specific to Taiwan and which have been neglected in existing scholarship, the formal analyses in this thesis also reveal how these cultural specificities are highlighted by the auteurs' meticulous attention to the poetics of cinema – namely, the way that the films are put together to present certain craft traditions, or the 'artistry' of filmmaking, as Bordwell suggests.[2] Hou, Yang and Tsai respectively present a unique poetics of representing the city. For Hou, the visual qualities of the city depend on its relationship with the other parts of Taiwan, and Taiwanese history in general; for Yang, stylistic patterns are decided upon by the way in which multiple ways of seeing brought by visual technologies may reshape urban imagery. As for Tsai, he heightens the existence of urban spaces through blending theatre and film aesthetics, forcefully exhibiting the materiality of space while summoning its unique history. Their poetics of cinema allow them to respond to Taiwanese identity in diverse ways, as well as deepening their own artistry as auteurs who reject the idea of following either commercial or propagandist conventions. It is also necessary to note that, although I have been trying to present the traces of local colour and details in these urban-oriented films, I do not want to over-stress the point and claim that they care *only* about the local and neglect the global. On the contrary, this cinema's value as an exploration of identity formation lies in its facility in addressing cosmopolitan issues and transcultural flows. The key point is that their films all negotiate between the local and global to capture Taipei in a way that departs completely from normative techniques of representing the city (e.g. establishing shot, aerial shot of the general cityscape, street shots packed with

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[1] Lim indicates that the identity shown in Tsai's oeuvre is "Private I" instead of "Historical I", and this departure from the past of Taiwan signifies his rupture with Taiwan New Cinema. See Lim, *Celluloid Comrades,* p. 128.

[2] Bordwell, 'Transcultural spaces', p. 142.

busy traffic). Through these very different films, the city participates in the ongoing process of reshaping national identity, and these techniques have been inherited by very recent films like *Orz Boyz*, as explored in the final chapter.

By examining representations of the city – Taipei in particular – from the 1980s to the present, it is clear that for these key Taiwanese directors 'the city' is not merely a site for registering 'global' trends and themes such as urban malaise and alienation, as claimed by a great deal of scholarship into urban cinema. On the contrary, Taipei plays as much of a role in exploring 'Taiwaneseness' as the more nativist images generated by portrayals of the ostensibly unspoilt countryside; and indeed, it is perhaps a more real and relevant notion of fluctuating Taiwanese identity that emerges from these city films.

Other media and future research

Stepping away from cinema at last, the city's potential for shaping local consciousness has more recently been explored in other media. Since the late 1990s, the visual imagery of Taipei has been constructed and consumed through a continuous collaboration between the government and the public, usually through open-call competitions ranging from literature to filmmaking. The first was the Poetry Award for Public Transportation, through which the Taipei City Government gathers award-winning poems and exhibits them on the buses and the metro. The award was founded in 1995 and has been held annually since that time, but was later incorporated into the Taipei Literature Festival, which was founded in 1998. After fourteen years of open-call, the Taipei Literature Festival Award has accumulated a large amount of writings specifically about Taipei, both by professional and amateur

writers. The Taipei Poetry Festival was founded later in 2000 and is also held annually. Throughout the 2000s, reimagining Taipei through diverse creative forms has gradually become an essential part of urban life, encouraging a culture of exploring the city as a source of artistic inspiration and self-awareness.

It is worth noting that all of these activities and competitions are targeted at local people instead of international tourists. The Taipei Literature Festival does not even have an English version webpage, despite the fact that it is the largest annual cultural event held by the Taipei City Government. The aim of these cultural activities is thus predominantly about reinforcing the link between the city and local residents through presenting the city as an agency for people to creatively interpret and imagine everyday life. But the Taipei Film commission, established by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Taipei City Government in 2007, opened these initiatives to an international stage. The commission is an organization specializing in providing subsidy and technical support to attract both Taiwanese and international filmmakers to shoot in Taipei. The project is thus mixed with a localized tendency to advocate Taiwanese characteristics and an institutionalized effort aimed at cultural tourism advertising through city marketing.
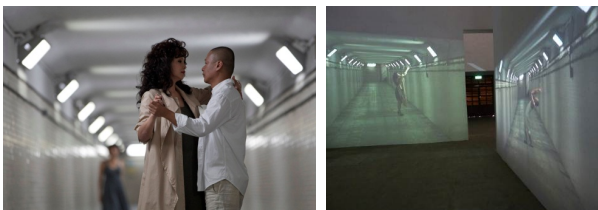
Figures 1-2 The film projection of Tsai Ming-liang's *The Theatre in the Boiler Room.*

Figures 3-4 The Japanese colonial architecture of the boiler room in Songshan Tobacco Factory.

I would suggest that a possible future direction for research into the representation of the city should look beyond cinema and engage with other moving image media, such as high-definition digital video, computer animation, mapping technology and documentary. In doing so, we might further speculate on how the city has gradually opened up itself as a resourceful site for Taiwanese people to explore local identity and experience. Tsai Ming-liang's recent works of film installation provide exceptional examples of this. His first film installation piece, *It is a Dream* (2007), was an incarnation of *Goodbye Dragon Inn*, and represented Taiwan's national pavilion in the 2007 Venice Biennale. In 2010, Tsai participated in the 2010 Taiwan Biennale at the National Museum of Fine Arts with another film installation piece entitled *Erotic Space* (2010), which represented a crucial interior setting in *The River*. His next film installation *The Theatre in the Boiler Room* (2011), responded to *The Hole*'s last scene. This piece was a highlight of the 2011 Taipei World Design Expo, which was the biggest international event of art and design ever held in Taiwan. These three installation works not only challenge the tradition of film spectatorship by removing the limitation of fixed seats and the single screen but also deliver Tsai's aesthetic ideal, which is "to feel the cinema".[3] *The Theatre in the Boiler Room* is possibly the most powerful example of how Tsai has managed to integrate Taipei's history into the aesthetic elements of his work. It is a multi-channel film installation with four huge walls as screens to project sequences of Yang Kuei-mei and Lee Kang-sheng dancing together or alone at various points in time. Sometimes they dance together on the same screen, but sometimes they dance alone on different screens simultaneously (*Figures 1-2*). All the sequences are shot in an anonymous underground passage in Taipei. The film was installed in the boiler room

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[3] Wang and Fujiwara, 'My Films Reflect My Living Situation', p. 220.

of Songshan Tobacco Factory, itself an important historical site in central Taipei. The boiler room was completed in 1937, providing a space to prepare coals for cooking and hot water for the employees' working day. Therefore the building is designed with a high ceiling, a large number of windows occupying the upper part of the wall for ventilation, and a 36-meter high chimney. The combination of the large wooded structure and the use of bricks gives this building a strong aura of Japanese colonial architecture (*Figure 3*).

The image playing in loop on several white walls is accompanied with an old Chinese popular song, 'Re-encounter' of Yao Lee, a famous singer from 1940s Shanghai. Rows of seats from a cinema in another historical building, Zhongshan Hall (which used to be Taipei City Hall during the Japanese colonial period and was completed only one year before the boiler room), are incorporated in the installation to create an alternative movie theatre. Tsai also transformed the exterior of the building into a theatre, with signs and posters hanging on its front (*Figure 4*). Through the various references to local architectural history and topography, urban space and popular culture, this film installation displays an alternative vision of Taipei film, and deepens its already rich and complex references to local culture.

A handful of other works are worth mentioning here to indicate the diversity of local urban imagery in recent moving image media. The first pertains to documentary and experimental cinema. Huang Ming-chuan explores how changes in the aesthetic tastes of ordinary Taiwanese has transformed the cityscape of Taiwan in his documentary episode *A City in Revolution* (*Chengshi kongjian qi geming*) (*Figure 5*), which belongs to a bigger project entitled *Transformation of Landscape* (*Dijing fengyun*, 2004). In this film essay, he explores the stylistic changes of certain architectural details, such as the patterns on the tiles and the shape of the bricks, and

how these material details reflect the social changes in Taiwan. *Taipei 4 Way* (2006, dir. Jay Shih, Lu Hsian-Fu, Wang Chun-Hsiung, Wu Chun-Hui, Flash Forward Entertainment) is an anthology film composed of four segments, directed respectively by experts of animation, installation and performance art, documentary, and experimental cinema (*Figure 6*). These four artists/filmmakers apply diverse perspectives, ranging from the point of view of vehicles travelling across numerous bridges in and out of Taipei, the images captured by surveillance cameras on Zhongxiao East Road (the busiest road in central Taipei), visual symbols in the cityscape, and interview footage of residents of Taipei talking about foreign cities. In so doing, they try to explore how the urban experience shapes personal and collective memory.

Figure 5 Huang Ming-chuan, *A City in Revolution*, 2004.
Figure 6 Jay Shih, Lu Hsian-Fu, Wang Chun-Hsiung, Wu Chun-Hui, *Taipei 4 Way*, 2006.

Figures 7-8 Tsui Kuang-yu, *Invisible City: Taiparis, York*, 2008, Video Art, 05'03".

Figure 9 Lee Wen-cheng, *The Unknown Life Series: Street Life,* 2008, Computer Animation.
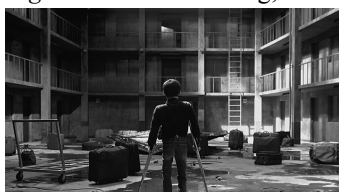

Figure 10 Chen Chieh-jen*, Happiness Building I*, 2012, 3-channel HD video installation. Photograph: Chen You-wei

Visual artists have also been energized to contemplate the cityscape anew with a view to exploring the cultural specificities of Taiwan and Taipei. Tsui Kuang-yu's *The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life* (2003) and *Invisible City: Taiparis, York* (2008) provide insightful critiques on the urban environment through video art, proposing to examine the Taipei cityscape through the way city dwellers use and make sense of everyday surroundings. In both works, the dramatic effects that the artist finds in ordinary cityscape in Taiwan demonstrates how Taiwan's hybrid urban space has become a genuine source of inspiration. In *Taiparis, York*, the artist first shows himself posing like a tourist in front of famous urban landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty. Then the camera zooms out to reveal that these symbolic architectural spectacles are actually located in Taiwan (*Figures 7-8*). Lee Wen-cheng's 2D animation works *The Unknown Life Series* (2008), *The Blossom Series* (2010) and *Seeing Invisible Ocean* (2010) adopt the techniques of collage to digitally assemble many common elements in the Taiwanese cityscape and create a portrait for contemporary Taiwan (*Figure 9*). Chen Chieh-jen's 82-minute three-channel film installation *Happiness Building* (2012) focuses on unemployed Taiwanese people born in the 1980s and the soon-to-be-demolished building they live in, which is located in a marginal and rundown area in Taipei, to critique socio-economic problems in Taiwan (*Figure 10*).

Clearly inspired by the intense focus on locale and everyday experience that was pioneered by the Taiwan New Cinema, and which clearly is very far from the *generic* urban cinema it is often described as being, these new forays into other media and art forms are highly suggestive of possible future areas for exploring the complex ways in which Taiwanese people continue to try to represent themselves to themselves, and to the wider world.

Chapter Three
1986 *Dust in the Wind* (*Lianlian fengchen*)
Director: Hou Hsiao-hsien
Production Company: Central Motion Picture Corporation
Producer: Xu Xin-zhi
Writer: Wu Nien-jen, Chu Tien-wen
Art Director: Liu Zhen-xiang
Cinematographer: Mark Lee Ping-bin
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Music: Chen Ming-zhang
Principle Cast: Xin Shu-fen, Wang Jing-wen, Li Tian-lu

1995 *Good Men, Good Women* (*Haonan haonu*)
Director: Hou Hsiao-hsien
Production Company: 3H Films, Shochiku
Producer: Yang Teng-kuei, Kazuyoshi Okuyama
Writer: Chu Tien-wen, based on a novel by Chiang Bi-yu and Lan Bo-chow
Art Director: Huang Wen-ying
Cinematographer: Chen Huai-en
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Music: Chen Hwai-en, Jiang Hsiao-wen
Principle Cast: Jack Kao, Lim Giong, Annie Shizuka Inoh, Hsi Hsiang

1996 *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (*Nanguo zaijian, nanguo*)
Director: Hou Hsiao-hsien
Production Company: 3H Films, Shochiku
Producer: Yang Teng-kuei
Writer: Jack Kao, Chu Tien-wen
Art Director: Huang Wen-ying
Cinematographer: Mark Lee Ping-bin, Chen Huai-en
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Music: Lim Giong
Principle Cast: Jack Kao, Lim Giong, Annie Shizuka Inoh, Hsi Hsiang, Hsu Kuei-ying

2001 *Millennium Mambo* (*Qianxi manbo*)

Director: Hou Hsiao-hsien
Production Company: 3H Films, Orly Films, Paradise Films
Producer: Chu Tien-wen, Gilles Ciment, Eric Heumann, Huang Wen-Ying
Writer: Chu Tien-wen
Art Director: Huang Wen-ying, James David Goldmark
Cinematographer: Mark Lee Ping-bin
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Music: Lim Giong, Yoshihiro Hanno
Principle Cast: Shu Qi, Jack Kao, Duan Chun-hao

2005 *Three Times* (*Zui hao de shiguang*)

Director: Hou Hsiao-hsien
Production Company: 3H Films, Orly Films, Paradise Films
Producer: Chang Hua-fu
Writer: Chu Tien-wen, Hou Hsiao-hsien
Art Director: Huang Wen-ying
Cinematographer: Mark Lee Ping-bin
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Principle Cast: Shu Qi, Chang Chen

Chapter Four
1986 *The Terrorizers* (*Kongbu fenzi*)

Director: Edward Yang
Production Company: Central Motion Picture Corporation
Producer: Xu Guo-liang
Writer: Edward Yang, Hsiao Yeh
Art Director: Lai Ming-tang
Cinematographer: Zhang Zhan
Editor: Liao Qing-song
Music: Weng Xiao-liang
Principle Cast: Cora Miao, Lee Li-chun, Gu Bao-ming, Jin Shi-jye

2000 *Yi Yi*

Director: Edward Yang
Production Company: Atom Films, Nemuru Otoko Seisaku Iinkai
Producer: Yu Wei-yen, Shinya Kawai
Writer: Edward Yang
Art Director: Wang Zheng-kai

Cinematographer: Yang Wei-han
Editor: Chen Bo-wen
Music: Peng Kai-Li
Principle Cast: Wu Nien-jen, Elaine Jin, Issei Ogata, Kelly Lee, Jonathan Chang, Chen Hsi-sheng

Chapter Five
1994 *Vive L'Amour* (*Aiqing wansui*)
Director: Tsai Ming-liang
Production Company: Central Motion Picture Corporation
Producer: Hsu Li-kong
Writer: Tsai Ming-liang
Art Director: Lee Pao-ling
Cinematographer: Liao Pen-jung
Editor: Sung Shin-cheng
Principle Cast: Yang Kuei-mei, Chen Chao-jung, Lee Kang-sheng

1998 *The Hole* (*Dong*)
Director: Tsai Ming-liang
Production Company: Central Motion Picture Corporation
Producer: Peggy Chiao, Carole Scotta, Caroline Benjo
Writer: Tsai Ming-liang, Yang Bi-ying
Art Director: Lee Pao-ling
Cinematographer: Liao Pen-jung
Editor: Hsiao Ju-kuan
Choreography: Joy Lo
Principle Cast: Yang Kuei-mei, Lee Kang-sheng, Miao Tien

2003 *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (*Bu San*)
Director: Tsai Ming-liang
Production Company: Homegreen Films
Producer: Chu Ai-Lun, Liang Hung-chih, Vincent Wang
Writer: Tsai Ming-liang
Art Director: Chang Sheng-nan
Cinematographer: Liao Pen-jung
Editor: Chen Sheng-chang
Principle Cast: Lee Kang-sheng, Chen Shiang-chyi, Kiyonobu Mitamura, Shih Chun, Miao Tien

Chapter Six
2008 *Orz Boyz* (*Jiong nanhai*)
Director: Yang Ya-che
Production Company: One Production Film
Producer: Lee Lieh, Ma Tien-tsung
Writer: Yang Ya-che
Art Director: Won Kuei-bang
Animation: Wang Deng-yu (Fish Wang)
Cinematographer: Chou Yi-wen
Editor: Lei Cheng-ching
Music: Huang Yun-ling
Principle Cast: Hsu Chi-wen, Lee Kuan-yi, Ma Chih-hsiang

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