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Transnational Images in a Global Frame: Film Festivals and Taiwan Cinema through the Lens of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation examines the geopolitical and cultural dynamics between European and Taiwan cinema. I explore how art house cinema were circulated and received at major European festivals—Berlin, Cannes, and Venice—to question the role that film festivals play in influencing new cinematic styles for local, regional, and global consumption. Before Taiwan New Cinema became world renowned, films from Taiwan, despite sporadic forays into international festivals, had hitherto been prescribed as coming from a non-national nation (Chinese Taipei), or a nation without nationality (Taiwan, Province of China). If Taiwan cinema's success in the film festival circuits is due to its proliferation of aesthetics, vernacular style also leaves traces of global culture, with which they form an increasingly transnational dialogue. How does this reflect and construct the concept of "national cinema"? Which cinematic traditions are being circulated and recognized as legitimate aspects of the national cinema? I argue while the circulation of films at festivals led to legitimizing New Cinema as the representative of Taiwan on the global stage, the festival strategy was also prompted by what the locals need, desire, and want, and it was part of a dialogue between film criticism and the continuing involvement in official film policy. I conclude that international film festivals remain an instrumental role in trigging the debates about national cinema.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

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Introduction | Made in Taiwan? The National in the Transnational

Taiwanese film critic Wen Tian-Xiang once remarked in a round table discussion that "When we talk about Taiwanese film history in the 1980s, we normally think of Taiwan New Cinema as the representative of the time, when in fact New Cinema prevailed in less than 15% of the films produced during this period."[1] Out of this movement, several world-class directors have emerged including Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, and Tsai Ming-liang, and produced series of films that explore social tensions and problems in cinematically compelling ways, blending social realism with modernist innovation. Taiwan New Cinema's canonical status persists, even when the movement lost its coherence after the 1990s. The present Taiwan cinema (2008 and onward) is "new" in a sense that it carries out a subversion against New Cinema's art-house direction, and attempts to produce a new cycle of mostly genre and big budget films appropriate to explore contemporary Taiwan society. Recent popular releases after *Cape No. 7* (2008)[2] includes *Monga* (2010), *Night Market Hero* (2011), *Zone Pro Site* (2013), and *Kano* (2014) and have attracted box office sales from a younger generation on par with Hollywood blockbusters. These film directors came from a variety of experiences and background, and some were prodigy of New Cinema directors. While a number of them tried to follow the paths of the auteur (Midi Z, for example, is the

[1] Wen Tian-Xiang, *Film in Our Time*, ed. Angelika Wang (Taipei: Taipei City Government Department of Cultural Affairs, 2015), 258.

[2] *Cape No. 7* is a film that not only broke the record sales and became the second top-selling film in Taiwan history (only behind *Titanic*, 1997), it is also considered a film that rejuvenated the diminishing film industry and boosted the confidence of domestic filmmaking.

prodigy of Hou Hsiao-hsien and his slow cinema style is akin to Tsai Ming-liang's), others found subsidiaries through crowd-source founding or by starting their own independent movie production company. This revival spawned a new group of filmmakers such as Tso-chi Chang, Wei Te-sheng, Doze Niu, Chung Mong-hong and helped reinstitute today's film production model in Taiwan. And yet as a cycle of national cinema, the newer Taiwan cinema—while producing a progression of films comprising a distinct variety of genres—has not entirely expanded the fame and visibility of the country in the international arena.

There are many factors to the canonicalization of Taiwan New Cinema in film history. Guo-Juin Hong advertently points out in *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* that the most common issue Western film historians have with Taiwan cinema is they assigned too much prestige to New Cinema, to the point it seems there is an apparent lack of history before the discovery.[3] Taiwan cinema is written as part of the Western historiography of global cinema, rarely on its own terms. Hong then proposes the importance of approaching Taiwan cinema as a "nexus of internal and external contentions," yielding a productive revision of Taiwan's national film history under transnational influences.[4] Similarly, rather than seeing New Cinema of the 1980s as a sudden emergence of "new wave" dealing with the identities and problems of Taiwanese life, we should situate them in the global circulation in order to understand them as cultural and political interventions, and as attempts to develop a new type of national cinema. While the New Cinema filmmakers received extended freedom to make films

[3] Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011).
[4] Ibid, 4.

and explore cinematic form and social problems, producing a new type of political cinema distinctively focused on Taiwanese problems and identity, some directors—most notably Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang—produced films for a global market and deployed themes and cinematic techniques influenced by world cinema. For example, Hou's *Le Voyage du Ballon Rouge* (*Flight of the Red Balloon*, 2007) is a Sino-French cinematic tribute to French director Albert Lamorisse's 1956 short film. The Franco-Asian connections in Hou's film allow us to understand the way in which transnational communities are simultaneously local and global, homogenous and heterogeneous. For Tsai Ming-liang, *It's a Dream* (2007) and *Visage* (2009)—commissioned by the Cannes Film Festival and the Louvre respectively—offer two case studies of cinema in the gallery. Rather than being merely a local adaptation of hegemonial European aesthetics, Tsai's films stand in a strong intertextual relationship with European cinema, especially the French New Wave and New German Cinema. Tsai's films also invite us to think about exhibition practices, transnational co-production, and the cult of going to the movies. An investigation of the institutionalized European film festivals and its relation to Taiwan cinema will trace the changing modes of production, exhibition and consumption, from co-option (admitting non-European filmmakers to the club of European auteurs) to reconfiguration (how film festivals influence, reshape and initiate new practices in the global realm).

This dissertation examines the geopolitical and cultural dynamics between cinema in Europe and cinema in Taiwan, and the role film festivals played in influencing, reshaping and initiating new practices of national, transnational, and global cinema. I select films of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang to be the focus of my study because

the establishment of the Taiwan New Cinema movement would not have extended if it were not for the films' success at the festival scene. Despite the first film made in Taiwan that can be traced back to as early as 1901 during the Japanese colonial era (1895–1945), Taiwan cinema was unknown to the rest of the world until the Nantes Three Continents Festival (*Festival des 3 Continents*) shed light on Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Boys From Fengkuei* in 1984, which paved the road for the subsequent success of Taiwan New Cinema at Western European festivals.

While these films received outstanding reputations in the world, the international profile has emerged as a controversial feature of Taiwanese directors. Taiwan New Cinema arose in the early 1980s, when Taiwan's film industry underwent serious challenges from foreign imports, particularly those of Hong Kong action films and Hollywood blockbusters. In an attempt to revitalize the declining movie industry, Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) began an initiative to support a number of fresh, young, thriving directors, including Edward Yang, Hou-Hsiao-hsien, and Chen Kunhou, who began what would be known as the first Taiwan New Wave. Taiwan New Cinema is known for its realistic and sympathetic portrayals of Taiwanese life, departing from previous modes of filmmaking preoccupied with nostalgic romanticizing the image of China. On the one hand, Taiwan New Cinema shared a common formalist concern with its Western counterparts for cinematic modernism. On the other hand, Taiwan New Cinema represents a struggling configuration of the "nation" brought forth by Taiwan's multilayered colonial and postcolonial histories. Especially, as China emerges as a new global economic superpower, Taiwan faces the pressure of the growing controversy over the country's legal status recognized by the international community. A recent dispute at

the Venice Film Festival over the nationality of Tsai Ming-liang's competition entry *Stray Dogs* (2013) reflected how the world downplayed Taiwan: while the film was submitted as a co-production from Taiwan and France, the festival director Alberto Barbera has labeled it as coming from Chinese Taipei, unwilling to recognize Taiwan as a country.[5] This anecdote is just one of the many that raised issues about the politics of film festivals and the challenges to the formation of national cinema.

Taiwan New Cinema has its unique history with film festivals, particularly with the way these films circulated in major European film festivals. If the success in the film festival circuits led New Cinema towards the international stage, vernacular filmmaking also leaves traces of global culture, with which they form an increasingly transnational dialogue. How does this reflect and construct the concept of "national cinema"? Which cinematic traditions are being circulated and recognized as legitimate aspects of the national cinema? How have particular policies and practices been mobilized in the name of national cinemas? Given the complicated relations of cultural imperialism between East and West, it is necessary to question the conditions that led to the production of national cinema and examine shifting representations of cultural identity in the context of globalization.

With these questions in mind, I approach film festivals as both a theoretical framework and an object of study. While the circulation of Taiwan New Cinema at festivals led to legitimizing these films as the representative of Taiwan, the festival strategy was also pressured by domestic context. For example, in 1988, Hou Hsiao-hsien

[5] Nick Vivarelli and Patrick Frater, "Venice Downplays Tsai Ming-liang's 'Stray Dogs' Nationality Squabble," *Variety,* September 5, 2013.

and Edward Yang pleaded the government for more active support in sending out films for the film festival circuit. They claimed it was the perfect timing to start pushing for a more visible international presence because the West happened to be invested in screening Chinese-language films. They didn't want to lose out on this rare opportunity and especially not to the People's Republic of China.[6] Partly out of the government's encouragement, partly out of the filmmakers' consideration for critical acclaim, Taiwan New Cinema gradually established a reputation in the global film community and subsequently raised the visibility of Taiwan. The directors' recognition at the festival scene also impacted their subsequent filmmaking. The feature films Hou and Tsai produced are often developed in an improvised manner, and feature ordinary people occupying a space between documentary and fiction inspired by the lives of his subjects. At the same time, they produced fine art video works that act as a counterpoint and pendant to their feature films. In this dissertation, I also look to the filmmakers' crossover to museum exhibition that were fostered by such opportunity, such as the works commissioned by the Louvre or the Musée d'Orsay. These transnational productions explore the ways in which the plurality of national identity is dealt with on screen as well as with the crossover of the medium. This practice also reflects critically on the idea of national cinema as a complicated paradox, in which it will always go against the underlying principles of nationalism and contradicting the idea of the nation as a unified identity.

The objective of this dissertation is not to stake out the parameters of Taiwan New Cinema as an isolated, heroic period of Taiwan cinema, but rather to integrate New

[6] Hsiao Yeh, *The White Dove* (Taipei: China Times, 1988), 126-131.

Cinema into transnational frameworks in such a way that we can deepen our collective insights about global film and media culture at large. Taiwan New Cinema bears local specificities, but it also entered the global sphere during a time the very concept of the "new wave"—a term which originated in France with the *Cahiers du cinema* promoting a set of French films from the late 1950s and early 1960s— has become a marketing term to promote fresh entries into the international cultural market. In an article on Hou Hsiao-hsien's "Taiwan trilogy" (*A City of Sadness* [1989], *The Puppetmaster* [1993] and *Good Men, Good Women* [1995]), Chris Berry suggests that "a 'national cinema' approach is too invested in territorial nationalism to adequately account for films such as these," and that these films should be considered post-national cinema in Taiwan.[7] This does not mean an end to consider films in a national context, but rather points to redefine the national in the globalization era. The sentiment of the national is grounded in a sense of self-contained experience: the experience of belonging to a community, assuming national identity and tradition are fully formed and fixed in place. Many theorists acknowledge that national cinema is build upon the idea of "imagined communities"[8]—upon its potential to reflect and express notions of national identity, consciousness, and culture. The "national" in national cinema has played an important role in helping to shape a shared culture, identities or memories of a constructed past, but they may also produce new representations of the nation. This concept, however, is always looking inward, reflecting on the self-contained nation, taking borders for granted. Building upon Andrew Higson's theory, national cinema should be understood as corpuses of films that

[7] Chris Berry, "From National Cinema to Cinema and the National: Chinese-Language Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien's 'Taiwan Trilogy'" in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: BFI Publishing, 2006), 148.
[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

are intensely plural. As such, to fully understand the complexities of the national we should situate national cinema in the transnational approach.

Discourses

While my research focuses specifically on Taiwan-based directors, I used their films as a vehicle through which to formulate a conceptual framework for the study of transnational cinema as a whole. Traditionally, film studies has approached film history by dividing up films and industries by their national affiliations. Since the late 1980s, there is an emerging preference in film studies for the term "transnational" over "world" or "global" cinema, although the words are sometimes used interchangeably. The term "world cinema" often position Hollywood as the center while the rest of the world confronts it, and it is particularly problematic. By placing an emphasis on global scope, it overlooks the social, cultural, and political differences that complicate national film industries and film cultures. Transnationalism, on the other hand, describes the flow of people, cultural products, technology and ideologies that exchanges between nations and that ultimately exceed or reconfigure the power of nation-states: in some cases eroding the power and in other instances providing new stabilities and forms of power. Despite myriad attempts that have been made to define and broaden the concept of transnational cinema, several perceptions stand out effectively: as "accented cinema" that deals with migration and diaspora; as engagement with the experience of colonialism and postcolonialism; as cultural objects that physically or virtually move across national borders (especially impacted by digital platforms and distributions). In mapping the terrain of these theoretical debates, I propose additional criteria are required for a film to

be considered transnational today. With a view toward rethinking the concept more productively and critically that avoids falling into the Euro-American-centric approach, we should situate the transnational in the interstices between Hollywood's global dominance and the periphery's attempt to resist it. Transnational cinema, therefore, becomes a tool to question the nature of film production, distribution, and consumption as a national exertion.

Not only does my research contribute to the theoretical debates about the formation of national cinema, but it also engages and challenges the politics of film festivals. Film festivals are generally viewed as a platform to showcase and celebrate cinema that often privileges artistic criteria over national representation. But they are also part of a larger global network that is multifaceted, and the need to articulate contradictions has become more apparent. At first glance, the festival platform provides an opportunity for programmers to convey personal tastes, while trying to start a dialogue with the audiences and foster an awareness of individual works as part of an oeuvre, a historical era, or a conversation with other work. But festival programming is itself an act of film criticism. In an attempt to question the canonization of cinema at film festivals, Janet Staiger argues that the selection process is imbricated in the politics of power—the power of the selector, of the institution, of writing an artistically defined film history.[9] In other words, art is not entirely selection free. When programmer identify and support new films and new directors, they are simultaneously providing the first cut or exclusive viewing, as well as creating new trends and new waves from critics and academics who will later write about the films they watched. This highlights the intertwined relationship

[9] Janet Staiger, "The Politics of Film Canons," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring 1985): 4-23.

between critics, scholars, curators, cinephiles, archivists, distributors, and other film professionals. In looking at the formation of Canadian national cinema through film festivals, Liz Czach comes to terms that "Film festivals provide an important site to help shape and confirm as well as contest the canon."[10] It is apt to say that in this process, aesthetics become politicized.

Understanding the film festival circuit in the transnational context would allow us to situate festival films within a larger pattern of image-culture trafficking as well as question the aesthetics as politics of selection. In part, the international film festival circuit is not so much a neutral site of events but networks of highly differentiated power structures. Cindy Wong sees film festivals as an emergent global institution that "lacks a coherent body of governance or formal codes" yet still "occupies a defining role in global cinema, film industries, human careers, and even cities and nations."[11] While film festivals endorse different cultures and international auteurs, they simultaneously alter films' local meanings and confer new global ones. As such, the idea of films as conveyors of national accomplishments and of cultural identity is a constructed one; it is not autonomous nor collections of films privileging the production site, but it is dependent upon domestic forces and international aesthetic forums such as film festivals.

Chapters Outline

[10] Liz Czach, "Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema," *The Moving Image*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 78.
[11] Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 30.

Situated under these two frameworks, Hou Hsiao-hsien's and Tsai Ming-liang's films serve as provisional examples for transnational production, and allow us to rethink on a transcending level the concept of national cinema.[12] Before Taiwan New Cinema became world renowned, films from Taiwan, despite sporadic forays into international festivals, were often deemed ineligible when it came to participating in national competition at international festivals, largely because of the People's Republic of China's intervention. In 2015, when Hou was set to release his latest film *The Assassin*, the Cannes International Film Festival catalogued the director's nationality as Chinese (People's Republic of China), not Taiwanese or coming from ROC (Republic of China), and sparked several protests and controversy on the media. While films struggled to make their ways into the festival competition as official representative of a country, criticism was polarized at home: some believed that the prestigious status Taiwan New Cinema received as canonic art might not had much do with the cinematic work, but rather with the general interest in Chinese-language films since the 1980s. Others became so fixated on the allegorical interpretation of film narratives that they insisted any reading of the

[12] Many scholars have also identified Ang Lee's films as the quintessential transnational cinema. They noted how Lee's diasporic and globalized background (born in Taiwan, immigrated to the U.S.) influenced and shaped the narrative form and content of his films, particularly *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2004). Christina Klein, for example, argues *Crouching Tiger* is a work of Chinese diaspora in terms of financing and production. Sheldon Lu points out transnational films such as Lee's are targeted primarily to international film festivals and their audiences, and are distributed outside of China. In other words, Ang Lee's films are often seen as national, Oriental, and essentially Chinese by Western audiences but dismissed by the domestic audience as misrepresentations of China. While I recognize the transnational status Ang Lee's films have achieved, my research is steered toward art house cinemas exemplified by Hou's and Tsai's work. See Sheldon H. Lu, "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Bouncing Angeles: Hollywood, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Transnational Cinema," in *Chinese-language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 220-233. Christina Klein, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: A Diasporic Reading," *Cinema Journal* Vol. 43, No. 4 (Summer 2004): 18-42.

films should only be grounded in the geopolitical context. To fall into either side of the criticism is to become reductive, bypassing the global connections and textual complexity that are particular to New Cinema. By situating Taiwan New Cinema in the transnational context, I unpack both the global and local political dynamics.

In Chapter One: "Defining the Transnational in the Age of Globalization," I place my primary concerns on the theoretical debates over the discourse of the transnational with the cultural and economic flows of globalization. I date the historical transnational back to European avant-garde films of the 1920s, and illustrate how avant-garde films have easily crossed national borders well before the Hollywood studio era. Key examples explored here include the work of René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte*, a cinematic interlude for the ballet *Relâche*, 1924, and *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), a collaborative work by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. In examining border crossings of personnel and circulations of cinematic aesthetics, I argue that transnational cinema was conceived in a sense of lack; the lack of funding, personnel, exhibition, and distribution networks. While transnational theory emerged in the 1980s as a response to globalization and post-colonialism, I reconsider the criteria for a film to be transnational today by retroactively re-examine and question the national framing of film history.

In Chapter Two, "Visible Art, Invisible Nations? On the Politics in Film Festivals and the Case of Taiwan New Cinema," I map out the histories, criticism, and the international reputation of Taiwan New Cinema, particularly the dynamic between Taiwan and European film festivals.[13] I pay special attention to the way *A City of Sadness*

[13] I am aware that Hou Hsiao-hsien's and Tsai Ming-liang's films are also active in North American film festivals, the New York International Film Festival (NYFF) for example. But the number of awards and the recognition they received in Western Europe are far

(1989) was received at major film festivals such as Cannes, Venice and Berlin film festivals. Taiwan New Cinema is mediated by both domestic context and international forces: it started out as a political and formalistic rebellion against the government and studio enterprises, was re-inscribed as an anti-colonial national cinema when it entered the festival scene, and ended up transformed as a supplier of art cinema on a global stage. Taiwan New Cinema may be shadowing the European art cinema model, but it didn't always have national interest at heart. As a movement it was sought to articulate a new national identity based on everyday living experiences. Yet caught in the power struggles between government bureaucrats and artistic liberations, New Cinema eventually represents an envisioning of the nation that hopefully could resolve the prevailing historical and political conflicts. A case study of *A City of Sadness* allows us to look at the evaluative criteria that successfully advanced Taiwan New Cinema into the rhetoric of national cinema, new wave, and authorship. Additionally, film festivals as networks presented an opportunity for these films to be seen and repackaged as the quintessential national cinema.

In the following two chapters, I turn to auteur studies. In Chapter Three, "The Many Faces of Tsai Ming-liang: Cinephilia, the French Connection, and Cinema in the Gallery," I examine Tsai Ming-liang's unique filmmaking style that has garnered both cinematic and curatorial acclaim. As one of the most celebrated Second New Wave directors of Taiwan cinema, Tsai's work highlights the cinematic echoing and intertextual citation of European cinema, particularly that of Truffaut's. The intertextuality of French

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more prevalent than in North America. Additionally, I aim to focus on competitive film festivals in this dissertation. Non-competitive ones, such as the NYFF, despite their narrow selections, are beyond the scope of this research.

cinematic tradition in his films can be traced back to *What Time Is It There?* (2001)—a film that Fran Martin characterized as a representation of modernization time lag, haunted by the ghosts of European art films of the past.[14] While Tsai's feature length films have often been lauded at the international film festivals but loathed by domestic audiences, his later films were seen as a return to its pure form as cinematic art. Such is the hallmark status of *Visage* (2009)—commissioned by the Louvre as part of its first film collection. Using *It's a Dream* (2007) and *Visage* as examples in this chapter, I argue Tsai's film and video installation need to be situated in the intersection between the moving images and the alternative viewing experiences, and between the global and regional film cultures taking place at the theater-within-a-gallery site. While Tsai's slow film aesthetics can be traced in relation to his prior theater practice, his installation and film in the gallery are grounded in the belief that cinema needs to be resurrected in the museum. The interrelations between Tsai's video installation and feature films show that they originate from, and are still part of, love for cinema.

In Chapter Four, "Transnational Voyages: Intertextuality and Postcolonial Temporality in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films," I turn to Hou Hsiao-hsien's films after 1998, particularly *Café Lumiere* (2003) and *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007). *Café Lumiere* is a tribute film to director Yasujiro Ozu, invited by Japanese movie studio Shochiku Films. Similarly, *Flight of the Red Balloon* takes its inspiration from French filmmaker Albert Lamorisse's 1956 classic, *Le Ballon Rouge*. Both films offer a version of transnational cinema; specifically, they offer unique opportunities for reflecting on globalization, cross-cultural production and reception, and vernacular modernism. The critical question

[14] Fran Martin, "The European Undead: Tsai Ming-liang's Temporal Dysphoria," *Senses of Cinema*, No. 27 (2003).

is, how was Hou Hsiao-Hsien's cinematic treatment able to transform a national classic into a work that is recognizable and perceivable by both global cinephiles and Taiwanese viewers? I argue that through Hou Hsiao-hsien's cinematic re-articulation for local and international audiences, his transnational filmmaking represents an envisioning of a global culture that highlights new modes of East-West connection and imagined communities. Hou's films provide an opportunity to explore the question of transcultural citation and the question of postcolonial temporality. In other words, transnational cinema intersects with the postcolonial under the influence of globalization. By undertaking a thorough analysis of the film's intertextuality, I demonstrate how Hou's filmmaking fosters an essential transnational viewing experience.

To better understand Taiwan cinema's long-term nature and complexity from a geopolitical viewpoint, Chapter Five "The Geopolitics in Film Festivals" examines how film festivals as an alternative network have offered a nuanced exploration of struggles over national identity and negotiations with local culture in the age of globalization. I look to the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival (1962-) in a regional context, specifically in relation to the Asia-Pacific Film Festival (APFF, 1954-) and the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF, 1977-). These three film festivals are some of the most well-known platforms in the East Asia region, and they characterize the complex colonial and postcolonial relationships among China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. These film festivals were brought forth not only by global demands but also as resistance to the Western paradigm. Additionally, regional film festivals are interwoven with the needs and issues of particular localities—even though each event has a wider resonance within a holistic vision of world cinema, each also has a programming choice and to appeal to

specific audiences, these festivals have had to operate within the local discourse. In looking at the temporal trajectory of these events, I demonstrate how film festivals are visible and nonvisible at the same time. Many annual film festivals, large or small scope, are still largely dependent on state funding, and do not always have a stable and anchored executive committee. Moreover, while some film festivals take on institutional roles (HKIFF was Hong Kong's cinémathèque at one point), they do not always have means to fully archive their own events. In other words, film festivals' existence is recurring but ephemeral; spatial but not static, and relies on preserving the cult of movie going (while competing with the expansive power of digital platforms). As networks, film festivals are not static but evolve over time according to various dynamical rules; as a framework, film festivals are dynamic systems that intersect with other institutions and construct themselves as a public sphere of cinematic knowledge.

In the epilogue, I consider film festivals are now, more than ever, active producers in funding new transnational projects from the underserved parts of the world. In the last two decades or so, major international film festivals such as Cannes, Rotterdam, and Hong Kong have established special funds to support particular filmmaking projects. These funds tend to support a filmmaker's artistic vision over the film's marketability. The existence of these funds also raises questions about the ways in which film festivals shape contemporary art cinema, and how these projects became part of the global film festival establishment. Returning to Tsai Ming-liang's short films, installations, and performance art that are loosely grouped under the *Walker* series (HKIFF, 2012-), my attention is given to the filmmaker's crossover to museum exhibition that were fostered by such opportunity.

While festival films may not have been highly profitable in their home market, films that have gained significant attention in the festival circuit have managed to substantially raise the profile of national cinema both locally and internationally. In the case of Taiwan New Cinema, although it never outperformed domestic commercial releases, nor did it successfully resuscitate the dearth of film activity in the country, it did indeed constitute a representation of Taiwanese culture and nationality, prompted by international perspective.

Chapter One | Defining the Transnational in the Age of Globalization

What is "transnational cinema"?

Within the discipline of film studies, there is an emerging preference for the term *transnational* over *world* or *global* cinema, at least judging by the proliferation of book titles that bear its name: *Transnational Chinese Cinemas* (Sheldon Lu 1997); *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (Ezra and Rowden 2006); *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (Durovicova and Newman 2009). If it is not in the book titles, it is being proclaimed in the subtitles to suggest cross-cultural connections in national and regional cinema studies (Chan 2006; Hunt and Wing-Fai 2008; Barrios 2011; Melendez 2013). Between *world*, *global*, and *transnational*, the words are sometimes used interchangeably to provide an atlas of world cinema. At other times, *transnational* calls for issues relating to the economic, aesthetic, technological, and social—reminding us that cinema is not just an art form, but an industry, as well as an invention of technology, an attraction, and a social institution fraught with political tensions. Especially, transnational is used in the context of looking at issues pertaining to the representation of globalization. The bigger question is, why does *transnational* appear to be the most widely considered term to describe world cinemas today, and what does this term entail exactly?

In its simplest form, *transnational* can be understood as a way to describe cultural and economic dynamics that are rarely contained by national boundaries but cannot be generalized by the term *globalization*. If "world cinema" refers to the films that are made

geographically outside Hollywood, "transnational cinema" refers to films that are not only multinational in terms of financing, production and distribution, but also transcend borders in terms of audience reception. This phenomenon is generated by the flows and exchange of global capital and the vast increase in the circulation of films enabled by worldwide distribution, film festivals, new media technologies and digital platforms, especially impacted by the Internet, and the expansion of global spectators. At first glance, the concept of transnational cinema bears multiple implications: as cultural objects that physically or virtually move across national borders; as engagement with the experience of migration and diaspora. I think it is crucial that we first acknowledge "transnational cinema" is still a working definition, and to work through this definition we need to understand that cinema has been transnational since its inception, circulating films, styles and personnel more or less freely across borders.

Transnational cinema obviously deals with a sense of lack. It often finds a starting point where the producers and the directors were concerned about the limited state funding for national filmmaking. It was not only about the state funds, but also about allotments for the distribution network, for exhibition facilities, and for the international markets. The result was to find joint efforts, where independent projects were supported by foreign co-production partners. The fundamental change in production conditions affected the artistic quality of the new films. In order to attract and secure global finance and capital, filmmakers must explore issues relevant to particular local communities, while utilizing hybrid modes of cinematic styles that also appeal to other communities from different sites and nations. Featuring a diverse cast of international superstars and unknown locals is also one of the approaches when faced with the competition of

Hollywood commercial cinema. As one could expect, following the genuine artistic achievements of the films produced in this context, many earned international praise and acclaim at festivals worldwide. Transnational cinema finds itself to be partially local and partially global, and inherently bring forward the problems of retaining and assessing cinema within a single nationhood. In a world in which national boundaries have become permeable, transnational cinema "transcends the national and presupposes it"; as an increasingly interconnected world-system, it "moves beyond the discourses of 'Third Worldism.'"[15] Arising in the interstices between the local and the global, transnational cinema reflects both the consequences of globalization—inflicted by Hollywood's domination of world film markets, and the counter-hegemonic responses of filmmakers outside the Hollywood system.

To Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, mainstream Hollywood films are quintessentially transnational—given the influence of Europeans on American filmmaking and the number of works of émigré filmmakers. Hollywood has been utilizing international personnel from the era of Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock, and Fritz Lang to the contemporary era, comprised of directors such as Ang Lee, Mira Nair, and Alfonso Cuarón.[16] Arguably, the work of early emigrant directors and talents such as Chaplin, Hitchcock, Lang, Josef von Sternberg, and Marlene Dietrich cannot fully exemplify, nor should they be regarded, as the work of the transnational. At best, it is the work of migrants who find themselves occupying the center of the film industry, producing a growing number of widely-seen "American" films. This is not to exclude

[15] Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, "Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema?" in *Transnational Cinema*, edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.
[16] Ibid., 2.

emigrants from the discourse of transnationalism, but there should be a more exclusive set of criteria that defines "transnational cinema," and it should consider the way films were circulated and received historically. Charlie Chaplin, for example, despite being a British native, will always be known and remembered as one of the greatest directors and performers in the history of American cinema, because of the way his work addresses its American audience. Comedy, as both the theme and the genre of most of Chaplin's films, reflects an epochal entertainment transition from vaudeville to cinema, as well as the national sentiment during the silent-movie era.

With a view toward rethinking the concept more productively and critically, in a way that avoids falling into the Euro-American-centric approach, we should situate the transnational in the interstices between Hollywood's global dominance and the periphery's attempt to resist it. Transnational cinema, therefore, becomes a tool to question the nature of film production, distribution, and consumption as a national exertion. Transnational cinema today should have the following qualities: first, a film with distinct transnational production values (internationally financed and co-produced); second, a film directed by a director with multiple belongings, linked to ethnicity and various trajectories of migration (such as exile, émigrés, refugees, expatriates, diaspora, and guest workers); third, films that deal with issues and representations of the so-called "Second World" and "Third World," in which the struggles over representation and identity are played out; fourth, a film is regionally, if not globally, distributed for wider audiences, in which the film's hybrid styles not only speak to, but create, a new kind of global spectatorship. With this approach, studying transnational cinema would allow

"films to be read and reread as […] sites for intertextual, cross-cultural, and transnational struggles over meanings and identities."[17]

Reframing the Historical Transnational—Situating the Early European Avant-garde

A turn to early European avant-garde films may facilitate dialogue between national and transnational cultures, and provide opportunities for fruitful discussion. European avant-garde film of the 1920s is typically considered in relation to contemporaneous developments in painting; works by Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Luis Buñuel, René Clair, Germaine Dulac, Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann, and others, are often considered to emerge from Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, and Expressionism. Although the breadth and the intensity of early avant-garde transnationality varies from what we are witnessing today (operating on a digitalized, global scale), avant-garde films have easily crossed national borders since the 1910s. Not only were they at the crossroad between art form and technological transformations, avant-garde films were also low-budget, personal, and "amateur" films that circulated outside the movie theatre chains.[18] A transnational approach to these works will show that early avant-garde film emerged out of a broader social movement that worked with

[17] Hamid Naficy, "Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre," *East-West Film Journal* Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 1994): 2.
[18] For more extensive information about the history of experimental film and video, see A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (London: British Film Institute, 2011).

limited resources and political agendas to flourish within a gap between technical competence and aesthetic freedom.

The creation of vibrant and dynamic early European avant-garde films shows that filmmaking and film exhibition were transnational before the Hollywood studio era. Yet, the history of experimental silent films has often been neglected in cinema studies. Part of the reason is that experimental film has typically been written as part of art history (or sometimes ignored by art historians), upon the premise that film is essentially an expressive medium of modernism. Modernism, as Walter Benjamin would suggest, was founded on an understanding of shock and sensation, both for the artist and spectator. The avant-garde is "an instrument of ballistics,"[19] as Benjamin termed it. The work of Dadaists invite the spectator to look and to react, as if it would impact like a bullet. Avant-garde film is also characterized as hard to comprehend; for the most part these films avoid script and dialogue, emphasizing the visual and the aesthetic. The avant-garde is the abstract exploration and realization of pure thought; they aim to explore all possibilities of expression through the lens of a movie camera. Because of their experimentation, cinema is no longer just the chemical, mechanical, optical process, but a multiplicity of discoveries and expansions of the medium, since the first public showings around 1895. By examining border crossings of personnel and circulations of cinematic aesthetics in the production of early avant-garde films, such as *Entr'act*e (1924) and *Un*

[19] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 238.

Chien Andalou (1929),[20] I propose in the first section of this chapter that transnational cinema was conceived in an environment of lack; the lack of funding, personnel, exhibition and distribution networks, which gave rise to an alternative cinema movement. In combatting such obstacles, what followed were the genuine artistic achievements of films produced in this context, works that transgressed the boundaries of nationalism through the subversive power of the avant-garde. And because transnational theory today emerged from a particular moment to deal with issues related to globalization and post-colonialism, I seeks to reconsider the criteria for a film to be transnational by retroactively re-examining and questioning the national framework of film history in the avant-garde context.

It is no coincidence that the first avant-garde movement was Futurism. As an artistic and social movement that originated in Italy in the early 20th century, Futurism emphasized themes associated with concepts of the future. By "future," the Futurists meant that art should rebel against the past (such as classicism and Renaissance painting), and express its admiration for the speed of technology in the industrial world. What the Italian Futurists saw in the potential of cinema, was that "being essentially visual, [cinema] must above all fulfill the evolution of painting, detach itself from reality, from photography…it must become anti-graceful, deforming, impressionistic, synthetic, dynamic, free. ONE MUST FREE THE CINEMA AS AN EXPRESSIVE MEDIUM."[21] While Futurism began as a literary movement, it soon spread through visual arts (cinema,

[20] While these works are both accompanied by music, I will be focusing on the silent images here. I recognize how images can compose motion and serve as a theoretical model for these works.

[21] F.T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, et al, "The Futurist Cinema," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, ed. Scott Mackenzie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014 [1916]), 16.

music, theater, and architecture) under the principles of freedom and revolt, and focused on the motion of time and space. Futurism also played a role in the development of Dada-Surrealism. The Dadaists and the Surrealists took up the concept of irrationality and created dream-like, trance-like, lyrical works that blur the relationship between the objective perception (mechanical reproduction) and the subjective perception (point of view).

In the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), Andre Breton, the founder of the Dada movement, articulated that rationalism should be replaced by imagination and dream. Breton defined surrealism as "Pure psychic automatism by means of which one intends to express, either verbally, or in writing, or in any other manner, the actual functioning of thought. […] free of any aesthetic or moral concern."[22] As cinéphiles, the Surrealist's interests in "pure psychic automatism" led them to believe that cinema, as the material means, has the power to express an otherwise abstract dream. As the Surrealists became increasingly enthusiastic about the prospects of film, film was already a popular medium for the Dadaists (of which Breton had also been a member). Stylistically, the line between Dada and Surrealist work is blurry, since both placed an emphasis on performances, collages, and montages. French Dada artist Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) is considered a crossover between Dada and Surrealism—a whirling animated film with endless spirals that intercuts with words on rotating discs. The words, such as "incest" (incest) or "à coups trop tirés" (much stroking), though fragmented, are French puns that turn the seemly harmless anti-retinal experiments into a work with erotic association. Of course, it is not simply the pleasure of wordplay we take from Duchamp's verbal

[22] Andre Breton, "Manifestoes of Surrealism" (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971), 15.

constructions, but also the meta-mechanics and the perceptual optical movement—intervened by the recording camera and the revolving motor that spins the discs—that make us aware of the mediated condition of our perception in cinema. An important aspect of Dada-Surrealism depends on viewers' reactions. Its whole purpose is to deconstruct, de-familiarize, and undo the conventions of the classical narrative devices that constructed the cinematic viewing experience. Instead of asking what a Dada-Surrealist film *is*, we should ask *when* and *where* did a Dada-Surrealist film take place. In late 1924, French film-maker René Clair staged a film screening during the intermission of an avant-garde ballet, a move that may well be a prime example for understanding how Dada-Surrealist conceptualize the artwork as a cognitive, imaginative, sensorial event—an event that not only distinguished itself within a prevailing tradition, but also informed the aesthetics of Soviet montage later picked up by several Soviet filmmakers to engage in subversive political discourse and activism.

René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte* (1924) is a cinematic interlude for the ballet *Relâche* (choreographed by Francis Picabia), a performance that was already avant-garde and experimental from its conception. *Relâche*, a French word for "cancellation" or "no show today," the ballet itself was a very Dada-esque performance: its intention was to reverse the audiences" expectations in every aspect. Instead of illuminating the ballet stage, lights were projected backward at the audience. The music was raucous and backward-sounding; the entire ballet was structured in reverse and repetitious. Naming the ballet *Relâche* or "no performance today" was profoundly inspired by the Dadaists' desire to deconstruct bourgeois culture. Dada, as an "act of revulsion, of protest, and of criticism," pursues "irrationalism by rejecting whatever seems to constitute the standard,

"rational" practices of art, communication, morality and etiquette."[23] It is not surprising, then, that at the end of act one, the fairly surreal film *Entr'acte* (French for intermission) was screened during the ballet's intermission.

The opening images of *Entr'acte*—originally a cinematic overture to signal the beginning of Picabia's ballet, starts with an animated cannon gliding across the screen, with Picabia and his music composer Erik Satie jumping up and down in slow motion on the roof of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. We see Picabia and Satie having an inaudible conversation, and then the camera lands on an extreme close up of the cannon, firing a paper cannonball forward, directly into our view. Credits and the title card appear, introducing the real beginning of the film. This is when we realize we are not just watching a Dada film; we are also watching the film *as* Dada. The viewer is caught up and assaulted by incoming cannonball, which literally transforms the gliding cannon into "an instrument of ballistics"[24] when the camera reverses its shot on us, aiming at us. As the film unfolds its sequences, it weaves together oddly-angled shots, animated dolls, blurry vision, busy streets, reversed motion, and Marcel Duchamp in a tutu dress dancing like a ballerina. The entire film can be summarized as a series of unusual perspectives juxtaposed with realistic impressions. Following the Surrealists" concern, which is for cinema to express the human psyche and abstract dreams, the whole film resists linear narrative progressions through the use of free association.

Film scholar Noël Carroll has approached *Entr'acte* as playing and experimenting with the formal conventions of narrative cinema, an interpretation that focuses on the

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[23] Noël Carroll, "*Entr'acte*, Paris and Dada," *Millennium Film Journal* Vol. 1., No. 1 (1977): 5.
[24] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 238.

advancement of artistic explorations in the Dada context. George Baker looks at what is in-between the irrational, irresponsible, parodic nature that film scholars have come to characterize as Dada cinema, and argues the attack on aesthetics also builds from the void and a structure of reversal; that is, its annihilation proceeds from within, not just the nihilism of conventions. As Baker elaborates:

> Forms, mediums—even objects and beings—come together in *Relâche* and *Entr'acte*. Connection and relation are surely at stake. But the mediums come together precisely not to unite, to become One, to become newly Total. Rather they split each other apart. They interrupt each other's limits, in order to be rendered, quite precisely, multiple. Forms come together in Picabia's project to break each other open. They consolidate nothing. Instead, they undo each other's medium conventions, disrupting what we might call the Law that each form excludes in order to define its operation. (330)

Other film scholars, not least Malcolm Turvey, have followed more closely the ways in which narrative and aesthetics reveal *Entr'acte*'s modernism and its ability to frame modern life. *Entr'acte*, on the one hand, is constructed on the principles of cinematic realism (or the indexicality of film), and on the other, is the practices of *cinéma pur*, a desire to exploit film as a medium to its elemental foundations of visual and movement. While much literature has been produced on the topic of *Entr'acte* and its alternate symbolic meaning, what seems to be missing is not the reading of the aesthetics itself, but a tapestry of interconnections, exchanges, and comparisons to other avant-garde films of the time.

When we look at Dziga Vertov's *Man with A Movie Camera* (1929), said to be one of the quintessential Soviet montage films, also known as a pioneer documentary film, with an avant-garde eye, the film-making aesthetics of *Man with A Movie Camera* and *Entr'acte* appear quite similar: both used non-fiction material and had an abstract and poetic sense of editing. Both utilized tilted angle, diagonal composition, upside down imagery, split-screens and superimposition. Both played with speed and motion diegetically and non-diegetically, and are highly engaged in the motifs of industrial cityscape and modern life. To start, immediately after the orchestra scene in *Man with A Movie Camera*, images of skyscrapers and newborn babies are presented in diagonal composition, similar to the opening montage of *Entr'acte*. Another sequence worth paying attention to is the editing room/cameraman/tracking shot scene in *Man with A Movie Camera*. Reflexivity is at play here; in this scene, we literally see a man *with* a movie camera, strapped onto a car, track-shooting a group of women on a horse-drawn carriage. Balancing on the edge of the car door, the cameraman tries to capture his subject at a parallel angle. Framed from the cameraman's angle is—what appears to be the *final* product of the tracking shot—a group of women amused by the presence of the film-making crew and the movie camera. As the car/camera crew/horse speeds up, the film comes to an abrupt stop—motion turns into still life, moving-images freeze, photos become individual frames on a film strip—viewers are brought to the editing room to reveal what is behind the scene. In other words, the voyeuristic position of the spectator is eventually interrupted by the process of editing, or the invisible effect of suture. The motif of reflexivity in the film is not too far from the Dadaists' desire to reject, protest, deconstruct, and criticize the "standard" and institutionalized practices of film-making.

What this scene has to share with *Entr'acte* is the use of parallel editing and the tracking shots, seen in the loose funeral carriage and on the rollercoaster ride. Additionally, the motif of spinning car wheels, synchronized to produce circular motions, is not only seen in *Entr'acte*, but is similar to the concept of meta-machinery in Duchamp's film *Anémic Cinéma*, and the recurring spiral in *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927).

Many of the techniques utilized in *Entr'acte*, such as the tilted camera shot, split-screens, sudden intervention of fast and slow motion, and conflicting editing patterns were traditionally seen as emblematic of the Soviet montage. Yet these formal experiments were already widely circulated in Western Europe—before Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (1925) hit Berlin's screens in early 1926. The iconic *Man with A Movie Camera* wasn't released until 1929. In film history, montage is recognized to have originated in the Soviet Union, partially because the Soviet government played a key role in financing and distributing their national cinema, contributing to the montage's unprecedented success. Other justifications can be understood in three ways: first, it appears more manageable to employ "the national" as the framework rather than Europe as a whole. Second, the proliferation of Soviet trade agencies, distributors, and filmmakers travelling with their personal film prints led to the increased visibility and circulation that reached its peak in 1929. Third, the Soviet Union is a ready ambassador for radical culture and artistic activities because the films they produced, although still fairly abstract, were heavily political and often not very psychological, compared to the absurdist mixture of Dada and Surrealist films. If the traces of montage style can be found before Soviet cinema, it shows that early European avant-garde film should not be

confined to specific nations, but should be discussed as an artistic movement and alternative cinema network that requires a larger, continental framework.

Paris may have been Walter Benjamin's capital of the 19th century, but the avant-garde movement was not necessarily centered in Paris. As a movement, the avant-garde challenged not just the conventions of forms and aesthetics, but it also rebelled against traditional channels of distribution. One of the goals of the movement was to do away with everything that came before it. Malte Hagener remarks that "The avant-garde thrived on a future that was ultimately unattainable, and if it could be reached at all, it would have meant the end of the avant-garde since it would have fulfilled its purpose: the avant-garde could never exist for a moment in the present."[25] The nature of avant-garde, as Clement Greenberg would put it, is something you cannot define, but you recognize it as a historical phenomenon.[26] As a phenomenon, the avant-garde emerged in several major modern cities such as Berlin, Paris, Madrid, London, Amsterdam, and Moscow. These modern cities were not only especially cosmopolitan, they were also the sites of artistic activities, and the inspirations of the work. Modern cities are "generative environments of the new arts, focal points of intellectual community, indeed of intellectual conflict and tension."[27] The modern cities were both the results of and contributed to social, political, and economical transformations. Modern cities are the hubs that generated the collaborative, transnational and interconnected nature of the

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[25] Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: the European Avant-garde and the Invention of Film Culture 1919-1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 12.
[26] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, Vol. 6 No. 5 (1939): 34-49.
[27] Malcolm Bradbury, "The Cities of Modernism," *Modernism 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 96.

avant-garde. And this is only the first *rhizomatic*[28] level out of the four that foster the transnational flows of films and people: modern cities, institutions, events, and personal appearances.[29]

Institutions are one of the critical success factors to avant-garde films. Alternative exhibition venues such as ciné-clubs and film societies are "social organisms that provide a framework for viewing and discussing films, for developing theories and for distributing and making films."[30] The seeds for the emergence of film clubs in many European cities in the 1920s were planted by high-brow modernists, cinéphiles, and (often left wing) intellectuals who envisioned film's potential as mass art. The formation and the first French ciné-club can be traced back to the screening in June 1920, co-organized by Louis Delluc, one of the key figures in Parisian intellectual cinema culture of the early 1920s. Inspired by the Parisian film scene, British filmmaker and film critic Ivor Montagu travelled to Paris in 1925 to learn more about how to run a film club. Although there had been antagonism from the British film industry with the idea for an alternative exhibition organization, *Film Society* was established, with the explicit aim of transforming cinema and the rigid structure of commercial film industry.

Filmmakers, along with this intellectual film culture, also travelled to Germany. The situation in Germany, however, was different from that in France or England. In France, for instance, ciné -clubs were essentially motivated by the interest in film

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[28] Rhizome is a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), basically refers to the principle of multiplicity and connection that occurs horizontally; not amenable to any structural model.
[29] Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*.
[30] Ibid., 78.

aesthetics, but not necessarily politics.[31] In Germany, intellectuals, artists and leftists believed that by advocating alternative cinema, they could reform and educate the masses. The French and German discourses are different for two important reasons: first, Germans were highly politicized and had a long, traceable genealogy of this historical background. Second, Germany had a strong homegrown film industry and was the most resistant against American imports among European countries during the time. It is safe to say that Germany's interest in avant-garde cinema emerged out of wider social movements as an attempt to engage in subversive political discourse and activism. One lesson to learn here is that, despite the nationally diverse contexts, the emergence of film societies was not coincidental, and the opposition to American film industry as a cultural domination was to a large extent necessary, as a pretext for the avant-garde to mobilize in a transnational public.

With the avant-garde as movement and network in mind, situating *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) in this conceptualization would allow us to deterritorialize the work as a French surrealist film. Probably the most quintessential Surrealist film, *Un Chien Andalou* is a collaborative work by Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. Because the film was produced in France, with French intertitles and distributed by the French company *Les Grands Films Classiques*, *Un Chien Andalou* is commonly considered as a French film. However, when we look at Buñuel and Dalí, as people who lack a single national affiliation because they were moving back and forth between many different nations, the film can therefore only be understood in a transnational framework. Luis Buñuel was a

[31] Although Jean Vigo brings a more explicitly political view in 1930 with his documentary short, "Toward a Social Cinema (A propos de Nice)," in which he defined film as a point-of-view documentary, French avant-garde was still largely much more interested in film form and aesthetics.

Spanish filmmaker who later exiled himself to Mexico, while Salvador Dalí was a Spanish Catalan Surrealist painter. *Un Chien Andalou* is arguably Surrealist in many ways, but in exploring its irrational, baffling images, it is good to keep in mind that the film is not a mere coincidental collaboration between Buñuel and Dalí, but an intellectual and creative partnership contextualized by the Surrealist movement of the time. Particularly, in the years leading up to the film's inception, Dalí was quite resistant to Surrealism. Buñuel, on the contrary, went as far as to declare that *Un Chien Andalou* would not exist if Surrealism did not exist. Dalí first met Buñuel in 1922, when he was studying at the Real Academia in Madrid (among others, including the Spanish poet and theatre director Federico García Lorca). Seven years later after their first encounter, Dalí collaborated with Buñuel and made *Un Chien Andalou*. Most written accounts indicate Dalí as the writer of the screenplay and Buñuel as the film director, although Dalí later claimed to have contributed to the images as well. It is impossible to know just who was responsible for what images in the film, but as Buñuel recalled:

> We wrote with minds open to the first ideas that came into them and at the same time systematically rejecting everything that arose from our culture and education. They had to be images that would surprise us and that we would both accept without discussion. Nothing else. For example: The woman seizes a racket to defend herself from the man who is about to attack her. And then he looks for something to counterattack with and (now I'm speaking to Dalí) 'What does he see?' 'A flying toad.' 'No good.' 'A bottle of brandy.' 'No good.' 'Well, he sees two ropes.' 'Good, but what's on the end of the ropes?' 'The chap pulls on them and falls because he's dragging something very heavy.' 'Well, it's good he falls

> down.' 'Attached to them are two dried gourds.' 'What else?' 'Two Marist brothers.' 'That's it! Two Marists. And then?' 'A cannon.' 'No good.' 'Let's have a luxury armchair.' 'No, a grand piano.' 'Very good, and on top of the grand piano a donkey—no, two donkeys.' 'Wonderful.' Well, maybe we just drew our irrational representations with no explication…(20)

Based on the intensive exchanges of letters and conversations between Dalí and Buñuel, it shows that they were already conceiving of similar ideas for their film prior to the actual shooting in Paris.

Un Chien Andalou also shows how many of the Surrealists were constantly on the move, moving in and out of Paris. In the 20s and 30s it was Luis Buñuel traveling, between Montparnasse Surrealist meetings, civil war in Spain, and Mexico. Buñuel came to Paris in 1925 and frequented the Café Cyrano where young members of the Surrealist movement met and interacted. During which he served as an assistant director on the French director Jean Epstein, and worked on Epstein's notable adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *La Chute de la maison Usher* (The Fall of the House of Usher, 1928). By 1929, Buñuel felt it was time for him to bring Surrealism to the silver screen; the aim was to bring something new in the art history, in which he believed human subconscious states could only be expressed and realized by the cinema. In April 1929, Dalí had to convince his father to sponsor him so he could travel to Paris to work with Buñuel on their film. Shooting took two weeks, and the film was released later in 1929. Although the film initially had limited showing in Paris, it later became a popular hit, and persisted to become the most famous Surrealism film ever made in film history. The attack against the eye in *Un Chien Andalou* (or known as the razorblade scene), when a hand is seen

slitting across a woman's left eye (in fact a calf's eye), juxtaposed with a thin cloud gliding across the full moon prior to this cut, has become the most iconic and idiosyncratic scene of Surrealism film: it is shocking, it provokes sensation, it hits the spectators like a bullet, and it is abstract, imaginative, surreal. *Un Chien Andalou* was "a title without meaning for a film without meaning,"[32] (the film titled itself as 'The Andalusian dog' when instead, the film had no dog) but by contextualizing the political and art movement that gave rise to the conceptualization and realization of Dalí and Buñuel's film, we understand that the avant-garde cinema is intrinsically transnational in scope.

The Question of National Cinema

If cinema has from its inception been transnational, then what does transnational cinema mean for us in the present? Are we now dealing with a different kind of transnational cinema, or with different degrees of intensity? Although Ezra and Rowden never manage to define what transnational cinema *is* per se, they do agree on rejecting the limitations of national borders, as well as problematizing the singular concept of national identity as a fixed and stable "culturally distinct reality."[33] These critical engagements are of the utmost importance. This brings us back to the question of the need to employ a national framework in cinema studies, particularly in an increasingly globalized context. The effort within film studies to rethink and challenge a national paradigm is not uncommon in the last decade or two, and has produced research in an array of complex

[32] Elliott H. King, *Dali, Surrealism and Cinema* (Herts, UK: Kamera Books, 2007), 27.
[33] Ezra and Rowden, "Introduction," 4.

issues, such as issues of Eurocentrism, racism, and identity politics of post-coloniality and Third-Worldism.[34] Although the significance of national paradigms have been shifted to emphasizing transnational and local spaces, film scholars continue to, for the most part, maintain the prevalent categories of *national cinema* and *Third Cinema*. What is the importance of privileging the production site in order to consider national-cultural specificity? What can we gain from resisting stable constructions of national identity within a broader critique of the development of the transnational? And the kernel question is, does the transnational and the local ultimately depend upon the national?

Broadly speaking, well before the early 1980s, the term "national cinema" has been employed by film scholars to associate films that represent a specific country, of which a national cinema always constructs an imaginary coherence of a nation's culture. The definition of national cinema generally refers to the production of films within a territorial-determined nation-state. The problems involved in drawing this kind of imaginary coherence of nation-states have been pointed out by many scholars since the 1980s, most notably Andrew Higson. In Higson's explanations, the concept of national cinema, although seemingly self-evident, can in fact be complicated by the film industry's infrastructures (the production companies, the distributors and the exhibition circuits), the content of the films, and how the viewers receive the films.[35] He argues that Hollywood blockbusters' dominance in the UK and local audiences' wide acceptance should be included and calculated as part of British film culture. Higson is less concerned with what national cinema is, but rather on how the concept has been appropriated by

[34] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[35] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Autumn 1989): 36-47.

theorists and scholars. In other words, often the concept of national cinema has been focused on prescribing what ought to be the national cinema, than describing the actual activity of national audiences and the conditions of the films they watch. The position film scholars take to identify a national cinema is:

> To identify a national cinema is first of all to specify a coherence and a unity; it is to proclaim a unique identity and a stable set of meanings. The process of identification is thus invariably a hegemonizing, mythologizing process, involving both the production and assignation of a particular set of meanings, and the attempt to contain, or prevent the potential proliferation of other meanings. (Higson 38)

The foundation for an imaginary "coherence and a unity" invariably involves a "mythologizing" process (of national culture), which certainly resonates with Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as *imagined community*, conditioned by the development of print-capitalism and the spread of vernacular language as a new administrative.[36] Cinema, as a new form of "electronic capitalism,"[37] can replace the theory of print-capitalism in this age of information. Internally, national cinema sets up expectations for the general audience by attempting to establish a generic narrative image (following certain narrative conventions, utilizing familiar on-screen stars, expressing cultural sentiments), hence the imaginary coherence of a national culture.

Externally, national cinema (re)constructs its own self-contained identity when it is being compared and contrasted to another national cinema, thereby establishing

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[36] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).
[37] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

varying degrees of differences and otherness. At the same time, "the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilized as a strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance: a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood's international domination."[38] The resistance means that national cinema also tends to take meaning in the context of *art cinema*: as a collection of quality, unique, different, resistant, high-cultural and modernist heritage films of a specific country that stands out from the Hollywood generic conventions. And by Hollywood—a term we often taken granted for what it means, Higson explains:

> By Hollywood, I mean the international institutionalization of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectations, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing, to accommodate, regulate, and reproduce these standards and values. (39)

Higson's understanding of Hollywood as "the international institutionalization of certain standards and values of cinema" is well-argued in a two-fold way: first he moves away from content and textual oriented analysis of defining "Hollywood movies." Secondly, this shows a greater awareness of Hollywood's global implications, if not brought by, then intensified by, the process of global dissemination. Although Higson's discussions mostly deal with the question of British cinema and where it stands in a global context (is British mainstream cinema really that different from "American" mainstream cinema?), one can also certainly apply the same impression to other European and East Asian

[38] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Autumn 1989), 38.

countries, given Hollywood movies' dominant presence on most cinema and television screens.

Taiwan Cinema, for example, has long been facing competitive challenges from Hong Kong and Hollywood films since the 80s. With the decline of Taiwan film industry production after the 90s, film critics have been proclaiming the death of Taiwan Cinema and protesting against the country's film industry, which is now dominated by foreign repertoire. In 2001, a low record of only 10 Taiwan feature films were produced, and none of them earned more than $30,000 US dollars in box office sales. On October 31st, 2001, the Legislative Yuan passed amendments to movie screening regulations, surrendered all the screen quota restrictions, resulting in a sharp decline in Taiwan's domestic film industry and intensifying Hollywood's on-screen quota. Traditional single-screened movie theaters and other smaller local venues gradually went out of business (5 theaters were forced to shut down just in Taipei in the same year) while Warner Village Cinemas (operated by Warner Bros.) continued to build more multiplexes. Hundreds of local venues have closed down since then. Because of the increase of cinema multiplexes, the actual number of screens has actually gone up from 122 to 156 as of 2002.[39] To the exhibitors and distributors, the expansion of the multiplexes (along with shopping malls—which was a fairly new concept to Taiwanese) seemed to promise even more dynamic film-going experiences because the audiences would not need to travel to multiple locations for different screenings; in addition, it would possibly help to boost local film sales. The paradox is that, when a foreign import (particularly Hollywood) experienced vigorous growth in sales and wide exposure, the local film production

[39] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 123.

industry was hanging on by a thread. While local producers, filmmakers and distributors were greatly concerned about the changes, the majority of movie-going audiences were oblivious to Hollywood's global expansion and its repercussions.

Thus is it necessarily to privilege the production site of cinema? I agree with Higson when he urges that the definition of national cinema should not be limited by the place of production, but to approach it from the point of consumption: how these film texts are being circulated, appropriated, and imitated by local filmmakers. In addition, how does the international institutionalization of exhibition, distribution and marketing strategies, implemented by American film industry since the studio era, change and transform other countries' distributing business strategies? It involves a shift in emphasis away from analyzing how film texts articulate national sentiment, to an analysis of how Hollywood (including film industry's infrastructures) have played a key role in the evolution and critical transformation of other national cinemas. Higsons says, "Histories of national cinema can only therefore really be understood as histories of crisis and conflict, of resistance and negotiation."[40] National cinema can be understood as a nation's attempt to confine, and boost a coherent cultural standing. In a political context, national cinema discloses histories of social movements and criticism. But as an entertainment business seeking financial security in the marketplace, they are also driven by the desire to maximize the national film industry's profits. Today, film and nationalism is still a relevant concept to approach and discuss cinema, but for a different reason. Nations and the label of national cinema will not disappear simply because we stop discussing them. It is pragmatic, however, to first be wary of the kind of work that goes into the

[40] Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," 47.

construction of national cinema, and to recognize the limits of the national. It is limiting to suggest a film culture that anchors itself at a fixed cultural specificity, when the world we are living in today is so contaminated by globalized products. To think through film culture in solely national terms is to ignore that cinemas today are much more likely to be either local or transnational than national. The fact that cultural specificity can only exist on the contingency between the local and the global certainly suggests, to quote Higson, the "limiting imagination of national cinema."[41]

Mapping Transnational and Globalization Discourses

While Higson's theory focuses on a national/transnational binary, he overlooks the issue of migration, diaspora, and the question of power imbalances. Higson's primary case studies on Anglophone cinema stand on privilege and power (of political, economic, and ideological). A diasporic or postcolonial approach to transnational cinema can nonetheless challenge the Western construct of nation and national cinema. Indeed, nationalism played a key role in the process of establishing film studies within academia in the 1980s, but the 1990s saw a new emphasis in world cinema. During that time, several film scholars and theorists increasingly shifted their focus from Euro-American cinemas to "minor," "marginal," or "post-colonial" cinemas, pointing out the hybrid[42] culture of these films and noticing the ways film industries of imperial nations affect the industries of their former colonies (Africa, Asia and Latin America). Film studies began

[41] Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (New York: Routledge, 2000), 63-74.
[42] See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

to borrow theories from sociology, economics, political science, and cultural studies. One could speak of a shift of focus, taken directly from and influenced by theories of Anthony Giddens (globalization), Arjun Appadurai (impact of globalization), Stuart Hall (identity and diaspora), Immanuel Wallerstein (world systems theory), while coincides with writings elaborated in post-modern, postcolonial and global/local theories. Writings by Sheldon Lu, Chris Berry, Hamid Naficy, Kenneth Chan, Hsiao-Hung Chang, Ackbar Abbas, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam are only some examples of scholars who entail a shift from national cinema cultures to global and transnational cultures.[43] Despite the fragmented trajectories and diverse positions, one thing seems to be certain: theoretical implications of national cinema are increasingly complicated by the consequences of globalization. Particularly, cinema that presents a cohesive, monolithic portrait of a nation is almost non-existent as films today are increasingly regional (the film is of a particular region) and internationally co-produced. Apart from long histories of pan-Atlantic, Euro-American co-productions (a practice articulated by Toby Miller in *Global Hollywood*), films like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000; Taiwan/China/USA), *Double Vision* (2002; Taiwan/Hong Kong, financed by Columbia Pictures), *What Time Is It There?* (2001; Taiwan/France), *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002; Taiwan/France) are just a few examples that show an increasingly East-West co-produced, if not transnational, cinema.

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[43] See Sheldon Lu, *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997); Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Hsiao-Hung Chang, *Fake Globalization* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2007); Kenneth Chan, *Remade in Hollywood: The Global Chinese Presence in Transnational Cinemas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

We need to ask ourselves: if films are becoming increasingly transnational today, how does it reflect and reshape the concept of "national cinema"? What are some of the significances of utilizing this term rather than calling it "global cinema"? How does the term "transnational cinema" help us to better engage with issues of migration, diaspora, and the histories of colonialism and post-colonialism?

It would be useful to first come to terms with the concept of globalization for the following reason: there is not a single universally accepted meaning of globalization. The concept of globalization cannot be elucidated within a singular scope, nor does it point to a particular time frame. Although theories of globalization and its impact has been defined in innumerable complex and sometimes contradictory ways, several perceptions stand out, such as: as the consequences of modernity (rather than post-modernity); the exchange, flows, and migration of commodities, labor and ideological beliefs across borders; the intensification and expansion of communication and informational technology; time-space compression; integration of regional economics driven by free trade and free market.[44]

Hence, there are two sets of questions to consider. First, does globalization necessarily refer to the universalizing process between capitalism and local culture (subject to cultural imperialism imposed by Western products, values, lifestyles), and how 'global' is this process? To JungBong Choi, globalization does not function evenly

[44] See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); and Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).

on a global scale but should be understood through a mode of translocal and transnational activity that he calls cultural regionalization:

> By "cultural regionalization" I refer to a tendency to construct geocultural spheres of proximity and intimacy beyond the nation-state's boundary with identifiable logics and patterns of cultural production, circulation, and reproduction that are simultaneously autonomous from and interconnected with the forces of cultural globalization. (116)

Rather than terming the global flow of consumer products as regional culture, Choi sees it in the reverse, emphasizing the concept of "cultural regionalization." Cultural regionalization is not a random mash up between distant and local, foreign and familiar, but a consequence of assimilating adjacent cultures that is inseparable from historicity. Such is the case with Korean cinema and televisual dramas—they cannot be free from the memories of Japanese colonization. Choi criticizes that globalization is not as borderless as we think because this implication would eschew historical memories and wounds. Cultural regionalization, as he believes, provides us not with the fractured and fragmented cultural experience but with the interconnectivity of national and regional cultures, in conjuncture with reshaping and rethinking the boundaries of geopolitical space.

If globalization is not as *global* as we think, what is the purpose of situating *transnational* in the discussion of globalization? 'Trans' as noun or prefix denotes across, beyond or moving through spaces. Under the framework of capitalism and cultural dynamics, transnational then focuses on structural border crossings, tracing the flows and multiplicities of culture. Aihwa Ong, in *Flexible Citizenship*, claims that in addition to

suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality alludes to many 'trans' aspects:

> Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *trans*versal, the *trans*actional, the *trans*national, and the *trans*gressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism. (4)

While Ong's primary focus is to develop a flexible notion of citizenship in order to reject the rigid construction of national and ethnic identities, transnationality is also a way of looking at the shifting relations between transnational connections, national regimes and cultural practices. The term is significant in reflecting the logics of what Choi advocates, that instead of looking through the lens of cultural globalization or "glocalization"[45]—lumping variants of local, national, regional and global cultures altogether—we are looking at intraregional and supranational affairs that are transgressive, transnational and transactional while retaining certain separate localities that do not lose their particular characteristics to the overarching hegemony. What Ong means by the "transgressive" aspect means looking at the mobility and flexibility of people in transit. By transnational we not only refer to corporations that do not answer to a national home base but also the fluidity of uncontained, unconstrained cultural flows. By transactional, then, we look at the formulation of political economy as modes of production and circulation of labor that are inseparable from the effects of global economy. Only by weaving the analysis of what

[45] See Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-space and Homogeneity-heterogeneity," *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott M Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).

transnationality alludes to a structural framework can we hope to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex relations between the local and the global. Situating transnationality in cinema studies enables us to better articulate the changing commerce of the film industry (the transnational aspects of financing, production, distribution, and exhibition), and the emergence of hybrid film styles.

Transnationality and Diaspora

Following Aihwa Ong's logic, the conceptual force of the transnational is determined by a number of factors, ranging from the permeability of national borders to the migrants who cross them. From a transnational perspective, nationalism is growing stronger and fading away at the same time, since the transnational arises in the interstices between the local and the global. But the transnational space is not free. One can characterize the space as prefigured by the expansions of international corporations (McDonalds, Starbucks, IBM, Warner Bros. Entertainment to name a few) and global dissemination of Western values and culture. But the space of transnational cinema has much more creative power to transgress boundaries, physically (referring to the material circulation of films and DVDs) and virtually (digital circulation facilitated and intensified by the Internet). Transnational cinema imagines its audience as the cosmopolite—migrants, exiles, guest workers, and other displaced people—whose expectations in cinema go beyond the desire for national narratives that audiences can identify as their own. This allows us to approach transnational films as a genre.

Hamid Naficy proposed the category of "accented cinema," or as he later revised as "independent transnational cinema,"[46] which combines concepts of authorship (exilic filmmakers from Third World countries working in European and American film industries) with generic styles (linked with themes of longing for homeland, memory, loss, and nostalgia). The space in independent transnational cinema is often claustrophobic. It encompasses exiles, émigrés, refugees, and expatriates working on the margins of the First World countries to produce films, often ethnographic, and self-narrativization of exilic and diasporic experiences. Transnational subjects are "at once plural and partial."[47] They are characterized as partial subjects because these filmmakers are capable of producing films that question the absolutes and taken-for-granted values of their home or host societies. They are also plural, because they could produce films that transcend and transform their own individual, cultural affiliations into a hybrid, syncretic, alternative identities. In transnational cinema, the boundaries between self and other, local and foreign, homeland and host-land are constantly blurred, and must be consistently negotiated. Here I would like to suggest films like *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu; 2006), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee; 2000), *The Namesake* (Mira Nair; 2006), *Certified Copy* (Abbas Kiarostami; 2010), and *Last Life in the Universe* (Pen-Ek Ratanaruang; 2003) as provisional examples. Naficy uses the Hungarian film industry to illustrate his point. Contemporary Hungarian cinema is interesting because these films are currently struggling to transform from making political satire to embracing mainstream narratives. Before the country ended the

[46] Naficy, "Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre": 1-30.
[47] Ibid.

Communist rule in the People's Republic of Hungary, political repression inspired a proliferation of satirical cinema that made fun of the regime that financed their production. Now, without it, Hungarian cinema is struggling to find other ways of storytelling that "compete with Hollywood films and appeal to a broad spectrum of audiences—not just to the local elite or festival audiences,"[48] very much in line with Higson's description of national cinema's dilemma (to be, or not to be, art cinema). Naficy also states that, "To be in transnationality is to belong to neither of the two modes of dystopia or utopia."[49] It signals a desire, a tendency, or even romanticizing mobility as a prerequisite to have creative power to produce transnational cinema. In the age of global corporations and the wide exposure to global tourism via media and digital technology, one does not always have to leave home to enter the spaces of transnationality. In many ways, we can say that not only filmmakers, but also modernized people in the world, are already transnational. The power of transnational cinema, then, it is not just about the mobile people that produce these films, but also the way they are received. As aforementioned, transnational cinema deals with the blurriness of boundaries; spatial configuration in these films represent themes of alienation, assimilation, loss, memory, nostalgia and cultural belongings. If transnational filmmakers are "at once plural and partial," transnational cinema is at once transnational and local; and at once ethnicized and cosmopolitan.

My concern with Naficy's proposition, however, is his tendency to suggest loneliness is an inevitable outcome of transnationality, where identifications and

[48] Naficy, "Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre": 1-30.
[49] Ibid.

experience with a homeland is represented as a crisis. I would be weary to characterize the transnational subject—exiles, diasporic people, immigrants, guest workers—as perpetually melancholic, as someone who can only find happiness "at home." We should further investigate the concept of the cosmopolite, who is always on the move, yet everywhere at home, versus the resident, stuck at home, as an immobilized nomad.

Conclusion

We might also ask if the determination to figure out what is "transnational cinema" is entirely necessary. Another approach to transnational cinema is to go beyond an analysis of the cinematic representation of cultural identity, and instead employ it as a theoretical framework. To explicate the transnational as methodology means to see cinema as sites of negotiations, contested with what is normally conceived as national, and what is perceived as the outside forces. In Yiman Wang's "The 'transnational' as methodology: transnationalizing Chinese film studies through the example of *The Love Parade* and its Chinese remakes," Wang is less concerned with what transnational cinema *is* than with how transnational *as a concept* can help us examine and reconsider border politics. Echoing Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar's focus on the transnational "as a larger arena *connecting differences*," but not Yingjin Zhang's reiteration for comparative studies in place of the term transnational (because comparative doesn't yield to anything), Wang aims to give critical considerations of border politics in transnational Chinese cinema: how borders are defined and redefined, and "trans" as a process of characterizing the tension between foreign influences (globalization, modernity) and the

local Self (traditions, conventions).[50] Border thinking is the key here, since the increasing process of transnationalization has often been implied in a rhizomatic way, thinking about border politics emphasizes colonial difference and unveils the imbalance side of modernity brought forth by colonization and globalization. Analyzing the 1957 Hong Kong remake of Lubitsch's *The Love Parade* as an instance of transnational cinema, Wang emphasizes a film's cinematic mode of addressing the audience as primarily what makes a film transnational, rather than the mobility of the filmmakers or the multinational sites of the production.

If the transnational is taken as a larger arena that encompasses concepts such as outsourcing, co-production, global exhibition and crossing borders, transnational cinema becomes the site of ideological contradiction and negotiation. While films today are becoming increasingly multinational, a film does not, according to Wang, "become meaningfully *trans*national until it registers or elicits border cultural politics in its enunciation, modes of address and exhibition."[51] Yet Wang, much like Sheldon Lu and many others who engage Chinese-language cinema in a globalized culture, tend to view the transnational as a free flowing movement that will eventually promise a world without borders to be crossed and bridged. I would like to think that the transnational, along with its mobile flows, exists only when there is a border to be crossed. The other drawback with regional transnationalism advocated by Lu, Wang or Choi is the issue of language, where language becomes a vital force that binds the nation together and by extension the representation of cultural identity. But language is such a complicated issue

[50] Yiman Wang, "The 'Transnational' as Methodology: Transnationalizing Chinese Film Studies through the Example of *The Love Parade* and its Chinese Remakes," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008): 9-21.
[51] Ibid., 19.

itself and is consistently exerting on the politics of difference. I am not suggesting here that we should ignore the issue of language, but instead, consider language as a conceptual category that encompass visuality and the filmic image, where aesthetics define the national just as much as the system of verbal communication. In that sense, if the transnational promises a conceptual mobility because it transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, studying how festival films circulate through international distributions and art house circuits will enable us to survey the actual dimensions of transnationality.

In short, unpacking the concept of transnational cinema demands not just on the tracing of its genealogy and its discursive history, or the unveiling of the concept's development and transformation; it also involves studying the usage of the term; how it is prescribed depending on one's politics, and the self-reflexive dialectics between individual and cultural collectives.

Chapter Two | Visible Art, Invisible Nations? On the Politics in Film Festivals and the Case of Taiwan New Cinema

When the audiences at Cannes anticipated the renowned Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien's latest film *The Assassin* (2015), the Cannes International Film Festival catalogued the director's nationality as Chinese (People's Republic of China), not Taiwanese or coming from the ROC (Republic of China), which is the country's official name.[52] The film is the director's seventh film to compete for the *Palme 'dOr*, the festival's top prize. Based on a popular legend from the Tang Dynasty, *The Assassin* takes place in ancient China and tells the story of a young girl who is kidnapped by a nun and eventually trained to become a skilled assassin. Though this was his first foray into the traditional martial arts genre, Hou first gained notability in the 1980s as a key figure in the Taiwan New Wave Cinema. The indication of his nationality as Chinese would result in the inability to raise the ROC flag at the Film Festival Palace (*Palais des Festivals et des Congrès*), the hosting site for the Cannes Film Festival. Flying national flags is customary for all participating countries; to prohibit them from doing so because of a mislabeled nationality is to disregard their basic rights. In response to this problem, Michel Lu, the representative of Taipei in France[53] (Bureau de Représentation de Taipei

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[52] Melody Lin, "Hou Hsiao-hsien Catalogué Chinois au Festival de Cannes," *Taipei Soir*, May 12, 2015.

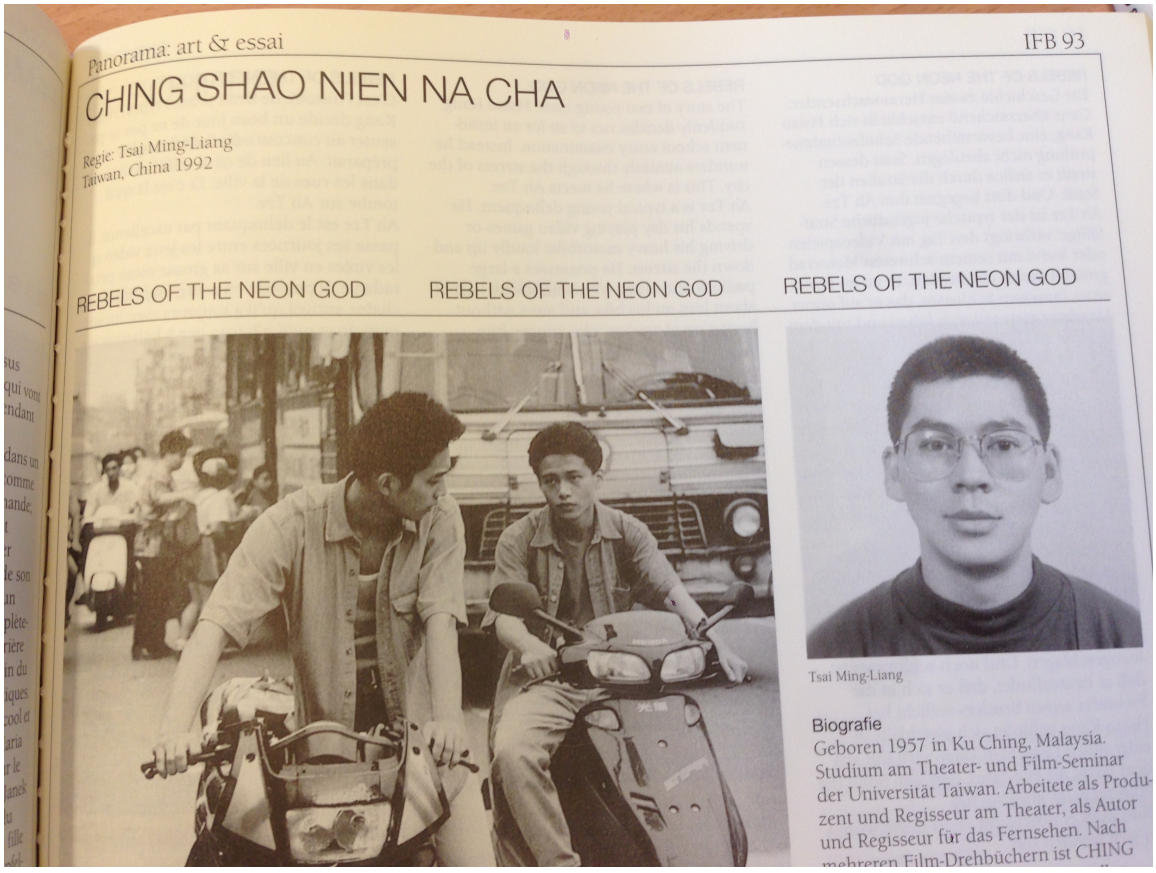
[53] Due to the strained political status, Taiwan could only maintain unofficial diplomatic missions abroad. Instead of having official embassies or consulates to facilitate visa issues and to assist citizens, these offices are usually titled "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office" or "Taipei Representative Office," owing to the One-China policy. Very few countries allow Taiwanese missions to operate under the country's official name, the Republic of China.

en France), sent a letter to the organizers of the event requesting the correction of director Hou's nationality and that the ROC flag should be allowed at the festival site. The festival organizer responded to Taiwan's complaints by rectifying the mistake on its website and in its brochure and allowing the ROC flag to be hung at the Film Market Event.[54]

However, this is not the first time it happened. When another Taiwanese filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang submitted his latest film *Stray Dogs* (2013) to the 70th Venice Film Festival, the festival also labeled it as coming from Chinese Taipei but not from Taiwan or the Republic of China. This controversy has sparked several protests in the Taiwanese media as well as caught the attention of major Western press. *Variety*, for example, described the incident as "a dispute at the Venice Film Festival over the nationality of Tsai Ming-liang's competition entry *Stray Dogs*" and explained how the festival downplayed the nationality error.[55] *Taipei Times* reported how Taiwanese film "suffers snub at festival."[56] According to the festival director Alberto Barbera, the reason that the organizers listed the film under Chinese Taipei is because the Italian government does not recognize Taiwan as a country. Barbera further explained: "We can't either, and have to write, Chinese Taipei." Not to mention, twenty years ago when Tsai's first feature-length film *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992) made its first inroad to the Berlin Film Festival (*Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin*, also called the Berlinale), the brochure labeled the director as coming from "Taiwan, China" (see Fig. 1). So why does such

[54] Shih Hsiu-chuan, "Cannes Corrects Nationality Error for Hou Hsiao-hsien," *Taipei Times*, May 14, 2015.
[55] Nick Vivarelli and Patrick Frater, "Venice Downplays Tsai Ming-liang's 'Stray Dogs' Nationality Squabble," *Variety,* September 5, 2013.
[56] Feng Yi-en, Tsou Nien-tsu, and Stacy Hsu, "Taiwanese Film Suffers Snub at Festival," *Taipei Times*, August 30, 2013.

dispute exist? And what does it mean for the festival organizer to tamper with the filmmaker's nationality?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CHING SHAO NIEN NA CHA

Regie: Tsai Ming-Liang
Taiwan, China 1992

REBELS OF THE NEON GOD REBELS OF THE NEON GOD REBELS OF THE NEON GOD

Tsai Ming-Liang

Biografie
Geboren 1957 in Ku Ching, Malaysia. Studium am Theater- und Film-Seminar der Universität Taiwan. Arbeitete als Produzent und Regisseur am Theater, als Autor und Regisseur für das Fernsehen. Nach

Fig. 1

These anecdotes raise many issues about the politics of film festivals and the challenges to the formation of national cinema. Particularly, the problem of assigning nationality to people or films from Taiwan is still a thorny international relations issue due to the island's historical, economical, and cultural ties with China. Especially as China emerges as a new global economic superpower, Taiwan faces the pressure of the growing controversy over the country's legal status recognized by the international community. In an essay published for the 1993 Taiwan Cinema Retrospective

(Rétrospective du cinéma taiwanais) in Nantes, France, Chen Kuo-fu sought to lay the ground for further questioning of national cinema and their cultural mandate. In the program catalogue, Chen asked: "Is cinema from Taiwan considered Chinese or Taiwanese?"[57] This is a seemingly open question, but it is also a necessary one because Taiwanese identity is still controlled under the Chinese paradigm. While consideration of Taiwan cinema within a national framework would often result in a myriad of geopolitical arguments, cinema from Taiwan, especially New Cinema, does have its unique history with film festivals, particularly with the way these films circulated in major European film festivals. Despite the first film made in Taiwan that can be traced back to as early as 1901 during the Japanese colonial era (1895–1945), Taiwan cinema was unknown to the rest of the world until the Nantes Three Continents Festival (*Festival des 3 Continents*) "discovered" Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Boys From Fengkuei* in 1984, which paved the road for the subsequent success of Taiwan New Cinema at Western European festivals.

[57] "Le Cinéma qui se Produit à Taiwan est-il du « Cinéma Taiwanais » ou du « Cinéma Chinois » ? La Question Semblera Abstraite mais elle est Probablement une Question de fond." Chen Guofu, "Le Cinema de Taiwan: Observations et Propositions," *Festival des 3 Continents* (Nantes, France, 1993).

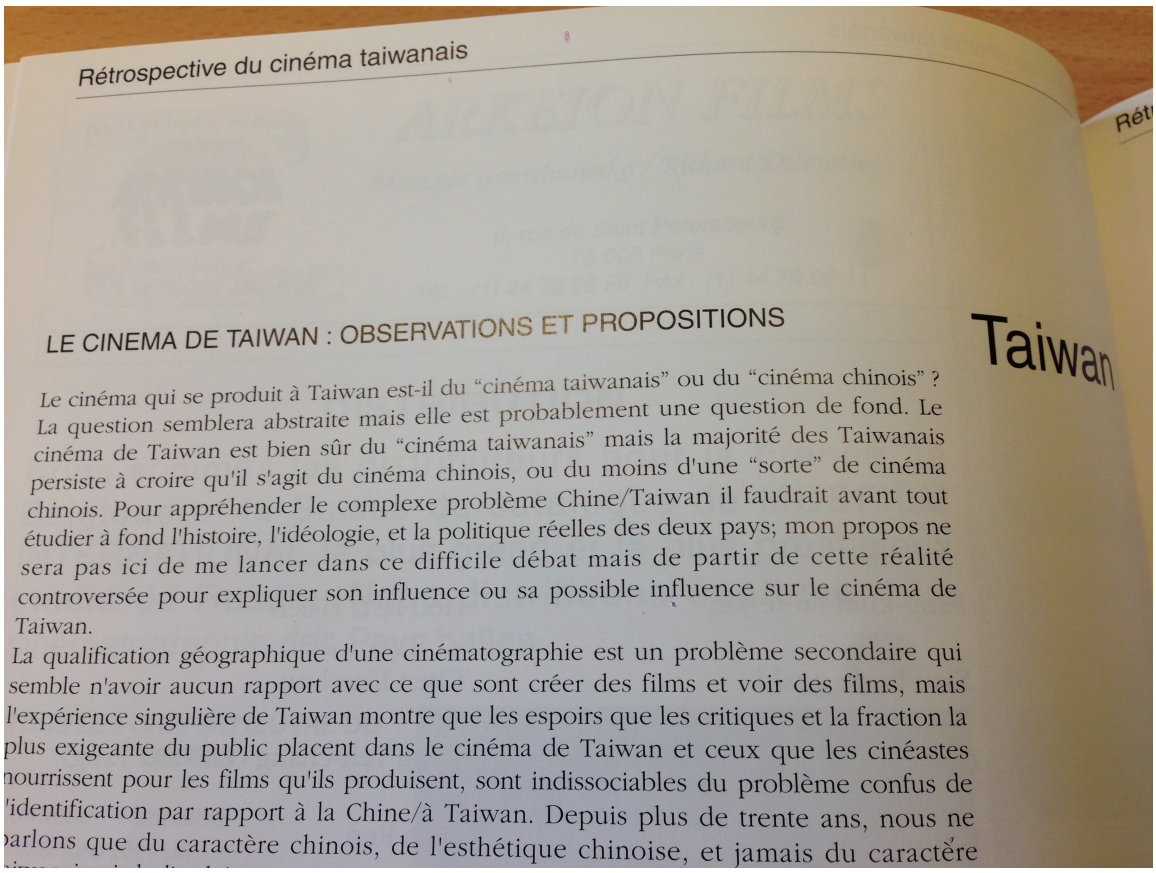

Fig. 2

The discovery of Hou Hsiao-hsien and other fellow Taiwanese auteurs at the festival scene is not just about becoming the representative of Taiwan but also how these festivals became responsible for the emergence of the Taiwan New Wave as national cinema. This chapter asks: what role did international film festivals in the West played in the formation of Taiwan New Cinema as national cinema? And how can our understanding of the colonial and post-colonial power of film festivals affect the domestic perceptions of Taiwan New Cinema after its circulation?

To begin to respond to this, I argue that it is necessary to first re-historicize Taiwan New Cinema as both a political and aesthetic movement. The emergence of New

Cinema arrived at a particular historical, economical, and political moment that the films produced at this time were, on the one hand, a political resistance to the legacy of KMT (the Chinese Nationalist Party) rule, and, on the other, concerned with revolutionizing cinematic conventions that were shared by many global new wave directors since the 1950s. Tado Sato commented that the peculiarity of Taiwan New Cinema was the underlying issue of national identity, and unlike Japan or other neighboring countries, Taiwan's national sovereignty was very much in question and unsettled.[58] In other words, Taiwan New Cinema started out as a political and formalistic rebellion against the government and studio enterprises, was re-inscribed as an anti-colonial national cinema when it entered the festival scene, and ended up transformed as a supplier of art cinema on a global stage. Because of its simultaneous colonial and post-colonial context, Taiwan New Cinema's entry into the global festival scene is hence a strategic and necessary move mediated by both domestic context and international forces.

Taking Hou Hsiao-hsien as a case in point for discussion, I argue in this chapter that the discovery of Hou and his fellow Taiwanese auteurs at film festivals is not just about becoming the representative of Taiwan but also how these festivals became responsible for the emergence of the Taiwan New Cinema as national cinema. To further question the textual, political, and cultural infrastructures and the intertwined relationship between the institutional status of film festivals and the success of film entry, I propose we first acknowledge the paradoxical nature of film festivals. Between the year 1984 and 1985, Hou's films had to compete in Nantes under the name of "Taiwan, China." Yet in

[58] Tado Sato, "Interview," in *Film in Out Time: Taiwan New Cinema on the Road*, edited by Geng-yu Wang (Taipei: Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City Government, 2015), 147-148.

the following year, Hou was able to enter his *Dust in the Wind* (1986) as a legitimate, independent entry, officially in the name of Taiwan. The change of nationality for Hou's films in Nantes suggests that, as Chia-chi Wu argues, "Hou's artistic difference began to outweigh the organizers' political qualms."[59] In other words, film Festivals are taste and reputation markers through their primary function of exhibiting films for art appreciation and discovery of old and new talents, including the periodic reinterpretation of art quality and meaning. By looking at the visible and invisible issues arising from the intersections of nations and film festivals, I wish to question the role film festivals play in the formation of a national cinema.

In the first part of this chapter, I will map out a brief history and criticism of film festivals, and the international reputation of Taiwan New Cinema through the eyes of European film critics such as Tony Rayns, Marco Muller, and Oliver Assayas. I will explore how film festivals as the nodal points of a global network contribute to an overlay to local, national, and art cinema. In the second part, I will look at the practice of programming as an attempt to question the canonization of national cinema at film festivals. Particularly, the early debates between Janet Staiger and Dudley Andrew about film canons laid the basis for further discussions and insights, as later picked up by Liz Czach and Cindy Wong, both looking at different national contexts (Canada and Hong Kong, respectively). In the last part, I will re-historicize Taiwan New Cinema as a movement and re-examine their relations to the flows of the film festival global networks. Special attention will be given to the transformation of Taiwan New Cinema's status and

[59] Chia-chi Wu, "Festivals, Criticism and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema," in *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, popularity and State of the Arts*, edited by Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert Chen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 80.

its domestic reception post-festival circulations. A case study of Hou Hsiao-hsien and his films can help us to think how the evaluative criteria shared by many film festival professionals successfully advanced Taiwan New Cinema into the rhetoric of national cinema, new wave, and authorship. I conclude that film festivals as global networks present an important opportunity for Taiwan New Cinema to be seen and repackaged—in relation to stylistic, artistic, and economic contexts—as the quintessential national cinema.

The Global and the Local in Film Festivals

Film festivals are generally viewed as a platform to showcase and celebrate cinema that often privileges artistic criteria over national representation. But they are also part of a larger global network that is multifaceted, and the need to articulate contradictions has become more apparent. In part, the international film festival circuit is not so much a neutral site of events but networks of highly differentiated power structures. Cindy Wong sees film festivals as an emergent global institution that "lacks a coherent body of governance or formal codes," yet still "occupies a defining role in global cinema, film industries, human careers, and even cities and nations."[60] Understanding the film festival circuit in the global context would allow us to situate festival films within a larger pattern of image-culture trafficking as well as question the aesthetics as politics of selection. While film festivals endorse different cultures and

[60] Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 30.

international auteurs, they simultaneously alter films' local meanings and confer new global ones. As such, the idea of films as conveyors of national accomplishments and of cultural identity is a constructed one; it is not autonomous nor collections of films privileging the production site, but it is dependent upon domestic forces and international aesthetic forums such as film festivals.

Historically, film festivals have been used from their very start—1932 in Venice, 1938 in Cannes, and 1951 in Berlin—for political agendas (fascists versus anti-fascists), and cultural policy launched in the arena of culture wars of an industry dominated by the American film industry, i.e., Hollywood. In more recent decades, governments around the world have used them to stimulate state economic development and to signal their technological competitiveness. In view of this, the festival platforms are never purely local or global; they are transnational in ways that attest to the uniqueness of different cultures and specific filmmakers. Bill Nichols' essay "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism" is often credited as the seminal essay that sparked scholars' interest in studying the film festival circuit. Nichols was optimistic that the potential festivals offer and in many ways promises a deterritorialization of the Western power regime: "The festival circuit allows the local to circulate globally… with a cachet of locally inscribed difference and globally ascribed commonality."[61] While the festival platform encourages global circulation and exchange, Marijke De Valck is more critical of the ways that films circulate within a specific system of institutional assumptions, priorities, and constraints. Instead of assuming that the festival format intervenes against mainstream distribution, Valck argues that film festivals, as an alternative cinema

[61] Bill Nichols, "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," *East-West Film Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1994): 68–85.

network, operate both with and against the politics of film selection.[62] For instance, in the case of the Berlinale (Berlin Film Festival), it was initially founded upon the premise that each nation would select its own film entrees as representatives. It was common for festivals to invite neighboring countries to participate in premieres and competitions. The idea was to showcase national cinemas—particularly German films, former East Germany included—and films were not treated as mass-produced commodities but as national accomplishments and as conveyors of cultural identity. Even though the Berlinale's selection rules were later changed to artistic criteria, "the national" and "art cinema" persisted as the two major strategies with which festivals profiled their programming.

The festival format of the Berlinale predominately remained a showcase and competition between countries until the early 1960s when they revised the selection rules. The context behind the revision was mostly because film critics, particularly the French Nouvelle Vague critics (Godard, Truffaut, Chabrol, Rohmer, and Rivette) criticized the film industry and film festivals in general for not paying enough attention to the medium as art. In particular, with the increasing interest and pressure for film festivals to find newer, independent, and alternative auteurs, the format of the national survey became outdated. Both Ulrich Gregor, former Forum of Young Cinema director (a section of the Berlinale), and Gilles Jacob, previously the president of Cannes Film Festival, agreed that by emphasizing the intrinsic qualities of the films, nationalist biases would no longer be

[62] Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

in the way.[63] Respectively, it should be up to the countries or even individuals to determine how many films they want to submit and the kinds of films they wish to enter into competitions. Films, not countries, should be represented.

In the earlier stages of Taiwan New Cinema, much of the international exposure and festival visibility were influenced by the European film critics, including United Kingdom's Tony Rayns, Italy's Marco Muller, and France's Oliver Assayas. Tony Rayns is a film critic and a frequent contributor to *Sight and Sound* magazine. Rayns is known for introducing Hong Kong cinema to UK prior to the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema and was also the first international critic to term the movement the "new wave in Taiwan," drawing connections to its Hong Kong and other global counterparts.[64] This connection also indicated that this movement was part of a global discourse—a collective action with a counter-hegemonic purpose against conventional narrative cinema. New Wave cinema typically referred to movies made by younger, independent filmmakers with formal innovations and political and cultural connotations—recalling the emergence of French New Wave in the 1950s. Comparably, without Italy's Marco Muller, there is no guarantee that Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989)—the quintessential film of Taiwan New Wave—would have been able to enter the competition at the Venice Film Festival, and it subsequently won the highest prize given at Venice, the Golden Lion for Best Picture. Marco Muller, nicknamed "Marco Polo of Chinese cinema" by Edmond Wong (former director of Taiwan Film Archive), is the longtime observer and translator of Chinese-language films. Muller was enlisted by the esteemed Hong Kong critic Shu

[63] The Museum of Modern Art, *Cannes 45 Years: Festival International du Film* (New York: MoMA, 1992): 11–12.
[64] Tony Rayns, "Chinese Changes," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (1984): 24–29.

Kei, who was at the time overseeing all advertising and publicity campaigns for *A City of Sadness*, to work as the film's Italian translator, facilitating the process of "selling" the film to the Venice Film Festival's international jury. With Muller's help, Taiwan cinema was able to broaden its horizons at the film market with a roster of films and lineups. Referring to Marco Muller as "Marco Polo" serves as a double-edged sword; on the one hand, the cultural significance of Marco Polo stands for a group of discoverers, suggesting that Muller's influence and contributions represent Western film critics' "discovery" of Taiwan cinema. On the other hand, Marco Polo and the West's discovery characterize an unequal relationship between the East and West and between "the center" and the "margins" on the map of global art cinema, thus reinforcing the status of Western critics.

Aside from Tony Rayns and Marco Muller, Olivier Assayas of *Cashiers du Cinema* played an indispensable role in introducing Taiwan New Cinema to French cinephiles. Assayas' influence is instrumental: he was single-handedly responsible for bringing *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1984) to the Nantes Three Continents Festival, paving the way for Taiwan New Cinema's subsequent awards, success, and international recognition. The story went like this: in 1984, Olivier Assayas was on an assignment in Hong Kong. There he met the Taiwanese critic and director Chen Kuo-Fu, who convinced Assayas to detour to Taiwan and check out the new films they made. Assayas was impressed by what he saw, but he was mostly impressed with *In Our Time* (1982) and *The Boys from Fengkuei*. Back in France, he began telling everyone about what he saw in Taiwan. By the end of that year, *Cashiers du Cinema* had an edition that focused on Taiwan cinema, in which Assayas wrote a seven-page article to introduce the New

Cinema and Taiwanese film industry.[65] Ever since then, France has been a huge supporter and a major market for Hou Hsiao-hsien and other Taiwanese directors.[66] This is a significant moment because, back then, no one even knew if New Cinema would ever catch the eyes of people outside of Taiwan. Yet for Chen Kuo-Fu and his New Cinema peers, this moment was not entirely coincidental; rather, it was best described as carefully orchestrated. They knew, in 1984, that Chinese cinema was almost unheard of in the West, and even if it was seen, these films were limited to kung fu movies. Upon given the opportunity to meet a French critic, Chen and Hsiao Yen deliberately pushed the two films for Assayas to see in hopes that Assayas would in return open the door for Taiwan cinema to the French audience. Even though New Cinema was still in its burgeoning state at the time, with Assayas' approval stamp, Taiwan New Cinema was fully linked to the global New Wave movement.

The Western critics' observations impacted the Taiwan film industry. While some local critics appreciated the outsiders' praises of Taiwan cinema, not all of them approved the overseas support and questioned their reports' historical inaccuracies. In return, defenders of the New Cinema argued that the only way for Taiwan cinema to survive was to enter the global market. This impression was strengthened when Hou's *A City of Sadness* brought great victory home. In spite of these criticisms, Western critics introduced Taiwan New Cinema to the worldwide audiences, and it cannot be denied that the success at the festival scene impacted the industry. As Hou Hsiao-hsien says, "I have

[65] Olivier Assayas, "Notre Reporter en République de Chine," *Cashiers du Cinéma* 366 (1984): 57–66.
[66] James Udden, *No Man an Island: The Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 58.

20,000 audiences in Taiwan, whereas I have 200,000 in Paris."[67] Studying the connection between film festivals and national cinema would lift the veil of international film festivals as a neutral assemblage of sites and events as well as suggest how a socially produced space would act as a contact zone to create and work through differentiated power relations. Especially, as Wong observes, "By sheer volume and variety, Cannes, Berlin, and others have continued to claim center stage within the festival world through systematic attention to multiple audiences and professional expertise in situating these festivals within a larger calendar."[68] Because of the high-profile status of Western European and North American film festivals, a look at how these film festival directors and programmers mandate would allow us to better understand how Taiwan was projected onto the geographical imagination of world cinema.

The Politics of Film Selections

As much as Hollywood and European film festivals are interdependent, film festivals do not really control the art canons. In a 2007 interview, former Cannes Film Festival president Gilles Jacob and director Thierry Frémaux explained their logic behind selections:

> Jacob says Cannes has been "a sentinel before its time. It has always resisted pressure, it has always fought against all censorship… It saw the arrival of a

[67] Hou Hsiao-hsien, in an interview discussing *Flowers of Shanghai*, 1999.
[68] Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, 51.

> *cinéma d'auteur* and rode its ascension. Finally, it knew to invite the biggest international stars along with the most unique film-makers."
>
> That mix has made Cannes unique over time. Fremaux, who is charged with putting together the official selection, says: "We mustn't close the door to anyone. The best is when stars are in auteur films such as Nicole Kidman in *Dogville*, Brad Pitt in *Babel* and this year Angelina Jolie in *A Mighty Heart*. It's also good to see Leonardo DiCaprio produce an important documentary like *11th Hour*. Stars protect the auteurs but without the auteurs there wouldn't be a festival." (101)

Without the festival context, foreign and unconventional films have much difficulty penetrating capitalist-controlled distribution and exhibition systems. Robert E. Cargni-Mitchelle, the curator for film programs at International House Philadelphia, offers some insights about film profiling:

> The consensus here is that film programming, at its best, helps start a conversation, putting different films in dialog with each other and fostering an awareness of individual works as part of an oeuvre, a tradition, an historical era, or a nexus of relationships and interconnections—something that is easily lost when shopping among the hordes of films available on video or on-line.[69]

Also:

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[69] Robert Cargni-Mitchelle et al, "Repertory Film Programming: A Web Exclusive Supplement to a Critical Symposium," *Cineaste*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2010).

> Curation is not just positioning materials to contextualize the curator's certain perspective. To be precise, it is akin to teaching in re-creating the steps necessary to bring the general audience to us, rather than expecting them to leap up and come along.
>
> How does facing the past through cinematic representation in fact transform the present reality? It seems that different film genres have different modes of configuring these questions and thus of proposing answers to them. My work seeks to explore the varied representations of the formation of historical consciousness expressed through the art of cinema.[70]

But festival programming is itself an act of film criticism, as film historian Jeffrey Ruoff observes: "Programmer's identification of and support for new trends, new waves, new directors, and new films provide the first cut for critics and academics who will later write the history of cinema."[71] Cameron Bailey, co-director of the Toronto International Film Festival, goes as far to claim that festivals have become "the single most important arbiter of taste in cinema—more important than scholars, or critics, more important even than film schools."[72] Film programming is both about conveying personal tastes and trying to start a dialogue with the audiences. Behind the scenes are a group of (happily) laborious people who are responsible for curating and organizing film programs at festivals, film societies, and other screening venues. Film selections are often political, even the aesthetic criteria, because they are a result of economic repression from

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[70] Robert Cargni-Mitchelle et al, "Repertory Film Programming."
[71] Jeffrey Ruoff, "Programming Film Festivals," *Coming Soon to a Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals* (Scotland: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 10.
[72] Cameron Bailey, "The Festival as Dinner Party," *Schnitt: Das Filmmagzin*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (2009): 41.

alternative filmmaking practices: avant-garde, nonconventional storytelling, banned films, taboo subjects, exploitation films, etc. Film programmers do have access to first pick but do not come with unlimited power; instead, they locate the films, situate them within history and cultures, and reinforce a particular taste from segments of a society, but they do not always necessarily share a uniform value for the same works. The bottom line is that they pride themselves on being part of the film circuit of film critics, scholars, and cinephiles who work tremendously to sustain a vibrant and vital film culture by seeking out the best of world cinema. They play an indispensable role in keeping cinema alive.

One major sentiment that involves keeping cinema alive via the festival platform has to do with the advent of digital technology. Particularly, film screenings are constantly competing with the consumer culture of home cinema and collecting, especially how films have outmoded the notion of celluloid and developed into diverse analog and digital forms. The sentiment is more than the nostalgic feeling of retaining film in its original format; it is about promoting and preserving the traditional modes of exhibition and viewing experiences. It is also about questioning cinema as art or as information. Why do cinephiles insist on seeing the film on screen rather than simply perceiving the visual and sonic materials of movies from a computer or television monitor? James Quandt, a senior programmer at TIFF Cinematheque in Toronto, describes his anxiety with technological advancement by using Tsai Ming-liang's films as an example:

> Two of Tsai Ming-liang's recent films, *Goodbye Dragon Inn* and *It's a Dream*, are requiems for the classic cinema going experience. Tsai has suggested that

> technology and esthetics increasingly exist in inverse proportion, the advance of one diminishing the urgency of the other: "I am not happy about the whole DVD medium, in fact. The quality of film experience is crashing. People are now satisfied just watching a film to find out what the story is. The experience is almost being reduced to a kind of information gathering. What is going on? Who is it? My films are really for the big screen only." But Tsai's films will be seen mostly via the medium he decries, their enigmas rendered all the more mysterious by visual illegibility.[73]

Quandt is not against the digital format but remains a pure defender of celluloid projection, in which he believes there is something about digital projection that takes away the Benjaminian "aura" to cinema. He believes it is best to maintain the high ground of original formats. Quandt also adds that he was very much consumed by "the immersive kind of cinephilia rather than the collector-cultish experience,"[74] a sentiment that critical theorist Slavoj Žižek also shared, whom once said, "Videos and DVDs have ruined movies for me."[75] His reasons? "Instead of seeing the movie, I buy it, and then I have it, so why should I watch it?"[76] While it may seem like defenders of the "grand" screen are essentialists, counterarguments also arise that speak to the issue of accessibility. With the advent of the Internet, digitized formats proliferates cinema and allow more easy access. While the DVD boom and the Internet did not result in a "miracle" of free cultural democracy, they nevertheless provide an online effort of

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[73] Robert Cargni-Mitchelle et al, "Repertory Film Programming."
[74] Ibid.
[75] Rebecca Mead, "The Marx Brother: How a Philosopher from Slovenia became an International Star," *The New Yorker*, May 5, 2003, 38.
[76] Ibid.

cataloguing films from every period and from all over the world, allowing those who are more geographically isolated to tap into world cinema. The other contingency associated with DVDs is the curated version, such as Criterion and Janus Films, which not only offer behind the scenes, extras, and commentary, but the information they include is often educational, thus providing an exclusive intellectual perspective. DVDs also helped to distribute many film restorations undertaken by the studios or film archive institutions, and these new prints certainly helped programmers to curate festivals and retrospectives.

The impact on theatrical exhibition of home video, Internet streaming, pirate downloading, etc. has some consequences, but, overall, they do not loom over the politics of selections. The politics comes from the programmers' considerations and their attitude toward audience expectation, which varies in the way films are selected and which formats to show with regard to different thematic concerns, such as retrospectives, genres, national surveys, restoration features, etc. It also comes from an intertwined relationship between critics, scholars, curators, programmers, archivists, cinephiles, distributors, and anyone who belongs to the community in order to negotiate the cultural values of these films.

Just as there is a politics of selections, there must be politics of canons. One of the earliest debates about the formation of film canons was between Janet Staiger and Dudley Andrew in *Cinema Journal*. Under the premise of film as art, or, film's capacity to visualize and to manipulate subjective emotions as well as transcend time and space, Staiger breaks down the politics of film canons selection into three rationales: exemplary,

classifying, and evaluative selection.[77] The last involved the most politics. Staiger suggests that while one of the most common justifications for establishing canons is based on aesthetic models, art for the sake of art is not entirely "selection" free. Staiger writes,

> If selections seem natural, inherent, universal, or timeless (and thus socially good), it may well be that a number of individuals' interests has been determined by similar hegemonic cultural needs and institutions. […] Thus, selective choices based on criteria supposedly for the good of society end up being canons supportive of the interests of a hegemonic society, not necessarily in the interests of all segments of that culture or other cultures. (10)

She concludes: canons are inevitable, and they involve a politics of power.[78] In which Dudley Andrew responds: "Just as there is a politics of canons, there must be a prior politics of reading. Canons have evolved through the ages, but so has the rhetoric of reading."[79] Of course, Staiger emphasizes that she is not against the existence of canons but rather calls upon academics to push toward a rewriting of the canon. Andrew, on the other hand, is more comfortable with the idea that canons are inevitable. The conundrum is with the "meaning" of the work—film works do not bear autonomous meanings; they carry opportunities for people to put meaning into place. And this is the discourse of rhetoric.

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[77] Janet Staiger, "The Politics of Film Canons," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring, 1985): 4–23.
[78] Ibid., 23.
[79] Dudley Andrew, "Of Canons and Quietism: Dudley Andrew Responds to Janet Staiger's 'The Politics of Film Canons'," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985): 58.

While politics and power are unavoidably part of the formation of canons, it does not mean that all social groups uniformly value the same works. The political results of canons are the ascend of alternative practices, such as avant-garde filmmaking, which is short of incentives or funding resources, or independent films, which have difficulty penetrating mainstream distribution and exhibition systems. Staiger's point becomes apparent: she critiques the power of a certain set of film canons, not because they are fundamentally unfit, but to locate them within a historically hegemonic practice.

In comparing and contrasting the formation of film canons to film festival programming, Liz Czach describes the formation of film canons as frequently involving a series of exclusionary practices:

> The formation of a canon is not an automatic, innate procedure but rather a contested cultural process. The processes of inclusion in and exclusion from film canons share some of the attributes of, without being synonymous with, the selection process of film festivals. Film Festivals provide an important site to help shape and confirm as well as contest the canon. (78)

Indeed, Cindy Wong also outlines the following process:

> In canon formation, the main roles associated with film festivals are to launch new cinemas—individual films, auteurs, traditions, and movements—and to reproduce and add value to these films and their affiliates. The former is managed by selection; the latter process means continued invitation of auteurial [sic] films to festivals and competitions, selection of filmmakers as jurors, and hosting critical panels and retrospectives. Finally, film festivals bring different people

> together to see and talk about these films, allowing them to network with one another and to continue conversations on the films depending on their different capacities. (101-102)

Without the larger film communities, film festivals provide a platform for showcasing their selections without necessarily bringing attention from the press, industry, and the public. The biggest contribution that film festivals bring is the opportunity for all participants, consciously or not, to engage in serious discussions about films in various contexts: film as art, national cinemas, foreign cultures, auteur filmmaking, taboo subjects, etc. Not all selections are completely arbitrary, and not all discussions are undisputed. Film festivals show that, as an institution, they have the ability to choose the "best" film for competition by hosting special themed programs and retrospectives for esteemed auteur filmmakers. But canons still need to be developed over time, along with film scholarship and inclusion in the writings of film histories.

If there is one overriding argument, it is an assertion of the indispensable role played by film festivals and film programming in placing films in context, along with an underlying assumption that contexts matter. Canonical works are not necessarily the product of film festival screenings, but film festivals do have the ability to position themselves as the arbitrators of taste—having the ability to choose films in competition and reproduce taste by hosting repertoire and retrospectives for auteur directors. Correspondingly, national cinema and cultural identity are bound up in film festivals. Once a film enters the film festival as a competitor, such as the Venice Film Festival, the film lends itself to be constructed as a national allegory. Such is the case of Taiwan New Cinema.

The Rise of Taiwan New Cinema

The year 1983 marks the beginning of the New Cinema Movement—a historical moment for the Taiwanese film industry. While the general conception is that Taiwan New Cinema began with *In Our Time* (1982), earlier attempts in exploring new film techniques were already shown in Wang Chu-chin's *The Legends of Six Dynasties* (1979) and *Those Days in the Heaven* (1980) as well as Lin Ching-chieh's *Student Days* (1981). Preliminary to these changes was the establishment of a sustainable economy that forced the previous state-controlled film production system to break down, allowing filmmakers and even legislators to seek beyond state-fund budget or setting up new film policies—on the one hand to breach the outdated film censorship and on the other to allow experimentation in cinematic production to surface. The significance of the films made in this year is not just about the smashing success at the box office or a new direction in stylistic changes, but it demonstrates a complex dynamic between cultural policy, public opinion, taste making, and the changing economics of the film industry. Acknowledging *In Our Time* as a groundbreaking film for the Taiwan New Wave movement had more to do with the fact that it was the first to receive extensive critical and media attention. Together with the establishment of a sustainable economy, this change in the film industry was much anticipated.

In Our Time was indicated as the forerunner of the New Cinema movement because it subsequently propelled the state-run CMPC to invest then unknown directors

and screenwriters such as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Wu Nien-jen. *In Our Time* prefigured a movement devoted to the post-war generation of growing up as well as the local history of Taiwan. The film debuted four directors who would go on to be part of the internationally acclaimed film movement: Edward Yang, Ko I-cheng, Chang Yi, and Tao Te-chen, of which Yang was the most prolific. Other acclaimed professionals of the movement include Chen Kuo-Fu, Mark Lee Pingbing (photographer), Liao Qingsong (editor), Du Duzhi (sound recording engineer/sound effects director), Wan Ren, and Wang Tong. To quote Chia-chi Wu, the historical significance of Taiwan New Cinema

> lies in its dual tendency in inscriptions of the "nation." On the one hand, it attempts to portray the living experiences of the communities that are differentiated by social, historical, cultural/linguistic, and ethnic terms. […] On the other hand, Taiwan New Cinema represents, with its modern visuality, a coming to terms with the heterogeneity and a re-visioning of the nation that hopefully could resolve historical injustice and accommodate differences. (76)

The other significance of Taiwan New Cinema is that, for the first time in history, filmmakers produced works that offer possibilities for serious political discussion. Taiwan New Cinema is in sharp contrast to its predecessor, the "Healthy Realism." The Healthy Realism was a type of melodrama that emphasized the lack of corruptibility in modern Taiwan and focused on the lives of emigrated Chinese Mainlanders instead of local Taiwanese. They are also propaganda films that dominated the years between 1963 to the late 1970s, initiated by CMPC.

Taiwan New Cinema was inspired by several substantial factors. The first was the push and pull from Hong Kong commercial cinema of the late 1970s and 1980s. The 1970s marked a giant setback for Taiwanese cinema. Unlike films of the 1960s such as *Beautiful Duckling* (1965), *Good-Bye, Darling* (1970), and *Home, Sweet Home* (1970), which addressed various social issues, the films of the 1970s retreated into commercialized genre films. Genres such as martial arts and historical musicals produced by Shaw Brothers Studios in Hong Kong were especially popular in Taiwan. Local movie theaters were flooded with films from Hong Kong, and domestic productions were left shattered, thus unable to competitive with this influx. Taiwanese directors were either marginalized or had to copy the commercial styles in order to stay in the business. Along with the invasion of martial arts films produced by Shaw Brothers, state-run Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) was increasingly arbitrary, producing mostly propaganda and educational films. In contrast, films by many of Hong Kong's New Wave directors provided inspiration and new approaches to filmmaking for the frustrated Taiwanese directors striving to stay in business.

The other major force was the stigma of going to see domestic movies. Taiwanese audiences in the late 1970s began to grow tired of the same old formula in kung fu or melodrama films, especially those based on the novels by Qiong Yao, targeting a female audience. Taiwan New Cinema emerged largely to reject this kind of escapism and sought to better represent local culture based on personal stories and grass roots (*Hsiang-T'u*) literature such as Huang Chun-ming's work. Domestic film production also implied poor taste at the time—an impulse to distinguish between high art and low art, thus underscoring high art with a more intellectual status. In an attempt to regain local

audiences, a number of Taiwanese directors turned to their version of social realism, but the films were in fact more of a niche genre of exploitation, which boiled down to a lot of screen violence and soft porn.

In this context, both Huang Chien-yeh and Jan Hung-Tze claimed that the most important contributions of New Cinema remain the exploration of new film language.[80] A retrospective look at the New Cinema produced in 1983 and 1984 would show that these films typically feature the following qualities:

1. The films were usually low budget. And because they were inexpensive to produce, they were most likely to bring in greater profit if proven successful. For example, Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1984) was produced with approximately Taiwan NTD 6,000,000 (1.5 million U.S. dollars) and with a gross profit of NTD 4,700,000 (1.1 million USD); a significant portion of the film's earnings came from foreign venues.
2. Newer film techniques were introduced, such as adopting the standard widescreen ratio and shooting on 35mm instead of the cheaper 16mm format.
3. Films were rich in local and historical materials. Critics also pointed out the resemblances to Italian neorealism. Examples can be found in *The Sandwich Man* (1983), *That Day, On the Beach* (1983), and *Jade Love* (1984).
4. The use of new film language in narrative style such as long shot, flashback, voice-over narration, etc.

[80] Jan Hung-Tze, "The Origins and Future Path of Taiwan New Cinema," in *Taiwan New Cinema*, ed. Chiao (Taipei: China Times, 1988), 25–39; Huang Chien-yeh, "A Retrospective Look at the Taiwanese Cinema of 1983," in *Taiwan New Cinema*, (Taipei: China Times, 1988), 48–60.

5. Films that adopt a more implicit and reserved way of acting, particularly in contrast to the preceding Healthy Realism. For example, the directors tend to use non-professional talents and replace close-up shots of dramatic acting with long shots and long takes.
6. Films paid more attention to the subjects of children, teens, women, nature, and morality. For example: *In Our Time*, *The Boys from Fengkuei*, and *Growing Up* (1983).

The reasons why films such as *In Our Time* and *The Boys from Fengkuei* were considered the pioneers of Taiwan New Cinema can be twofold. For one, the new film language that changed the Taiwan film industry was partially developed because of the constraint of the budget. In the beginning, CMPC was not supportive of the new movement. Prior to *In Our Time*'s success, CMPC was fixated on producing big budget propaganda films such as *The Battle for the Republic of China* (1981), yet the film eventually failed the box office. In 1983, major theaters were still screening conventional mainstream genres; New Cinema accounted for less than 10% of the production. By 1987, emerging New Cinema directors began bringing home many prestigious awards and honorable mentions from international film festivals. The other impact brought by New Cinema of 1983 was the increased link between film critics and film studios. Prior to the institutionalization of film studies across universities, movie reviews published in newspapers played a tremendous role in guiding and shaping public opinions about New Cinema. There was the Theater page of *Commercial Times*, edited by Jan Hung-Tze, as well as the columns of "Peggy Chiao at the Movies" and "Cinema Forum" by critic Edwin Huang from the *United Daily News*; both were championed by a wide readership.

These film review writers moved beyond the past trend of focusing on celebrity gossip and contributed to a string of serious discussions on New Wave films at a time when film studies were not even considered worthy of academic pursuit. This type of non-academic film review reached its peak in the 1983 Golden Horse Awards and led to the establishment of the film criticism culture in Taiwan. Film critics, together with the spread of print media, played a decisive role in mobilizing the New Cinema movement in the 1980s.

Through the help of media circulations of film reviews and the columns' positive readership, critics began reshaping the public to urge CMPC and the government to take notice of the unsupportive film industry. A number of measures taken by the government agencies and semi-government organizations showed their belated interest in becoming more involved in the creation of New Cinema. For example, Taiwan's first Film Library of Motion Picture—established in 1979 by the Government Information Office (GIO)—was primarily set up to collect film archives and significant holdings of film books and journals. After the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema, the library started hosting film screenings and repertoire of which introduced Taiwanese audience to some of its first experience with art house cinema, and helped stimulate the local film culture since its decline in the 1970s. Since then, the government became more involved in the new film culture by sponsoring campus film screenings and reviving the Golden Horse Awards. The government-initiated Golden Horse Awards, inaugurated in 1957, was the most famous and vibrant public event to promote Mandarin film and the film industry in Taiwan. From early on, the Golden Horse Awards had many award categories and a ceremony style that resembled the Oscars. The ceremonial nature of the Golden Horse

Awards was later redesigned with a festival component in the hopes of becoming the center of Chinese and Chinese diaspora cinema. Working with the new GIO representative James Soong, the GHA was redesigned in 1983 under the following premise: to encourage international exposure of the country, to advance the local film industry for global and technological competiveness, and to recognize filmmakers' creativity. Currently, the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival (TGHFF) is the largest film festival in Taiwan. The GHA also launched the Golden Horse Film and TV Film Project Promotion (FTPP) to train new talents and provide funding opportunities for schools and educators.

The year 1983 was essentially an event where industry and government were closely involved. Nevertheless, the developments of Taiwan New Cinema also had to do with the changing consumer culture, mostly the changing landscape of class and taste. According to Huang Chien-yeh, this change had much to do with cheap VHS tape rentals, which at the time cost around 20 to 50 NTD (around US 1 dollar) to rent one.[81] The circulation and popularity of underground films and videotapes forced the film industry to face this serious competition. Because of the highly competitive nature in the business of pirate videotapes, more and more foreign films were imported illegally through the underground channel. Most of the video copy companies had their corresponding contrabandists abroad, recording foreign pictures off TV broadcast and smuggling the copies to Taiwan and other Southeast Asian countries. These illegal video companies had multiple streamlines and also subtitled the foreign language films themselves (although the translations were not very accurate most of the time). These pirate films on videotape

[81] Huang Chien-yeh, *Taiwan New Cinema*.

were popular because they provided foreign pictures that were either not yet available in the country or involved taboo subjects. They also offered the uncensored version as opposed to the official "clean" cut permitted in movie theaters. Most of all, these tapes often showed up weeks before the film premiered. The tapes were also available in stores conveniently located in most neighborhoods. VHS tapes were easy to play, and of course, with a blank tape and a videocassette recorder, it was also possible for anyone to make their own copy of the already illegitimate tape. While the distribution of underground videotapes hurt the movie ticket sales, it didn't deter people from going to the movies. In fact, it only increased their appetite for cinema. For many Taiwanese cinephiles, the underground venue exposed them to European auteurs such as Françis Truffaut and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who were otherwise less accessible to the public. Private screenings took place at coffee shops or university campuses where groups of college students organized special showings and repertory cinema. This videotape intrusion and the developments of film culture via illegitimate channels are not only a national but a transnational phenomenon, affecting countries of origin and transit.

Following the emergence of the New Cinema movement, film directors concentrated their efforts on securing New Cinema's presence at international film festivals. The consensus was that Taiwan New Cinema had to first enter smaller, mid-tier festivals to build a reputation, which was necessary to get into major international film festivals such as Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. As Shih-Lun Chang observes:

> These attempts began with mid-tier film festivals […] partly out of government encouragement (to raise the visibility of the "Republic of China"), but more importantly out of consideration that frequent participation in mid-tier film

> festivals could earn a certain degree of acclaim, upon which New Cinema could gradually establish awareness and a reputation in the global film community and eventually aim for places in the three major European film festivals. (31)

Note the emphasis here is "to raise the visibility of the Republic of China," which was a major concern for local nationalists. The festival strategy was evidently backed up by New Cinema filmmakers when, in 1987, the GIO director Shaw Yu-Ming received an open letter from Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang, calling the government for more active support in local film production as well as for recognition at the film festival circuit. Their plea was urgent, as Hou and Yang claimed: "As China fever sweeps the West, each film festival is turning attention towards films by filmmakers in People's Republic of China. We can't afford to lose out on this rare opportunity."[82] The reasoning was to ultimately gain recognition at the film festivals and further boost potential box office sales. Second, the government could, in return, establish a more positive image by openly supporting the New Cinema directors and their films. At the same time, having an exposure to the world market attracts foreign distributors and investors, yielding more profits and potential transnational investment in production. The significance of this success is twofold: first, Taiwan New Cinema had to operate within the logic of film festivals in order to obtain better recognition and box office promotion that would otherwise doom the domestic reception. Second, given the country's lack of recognition in the international arena, winning awards at major international film festivals meant that these films would be seen as a representative of Taiwan. The representative status is

[82] Hsiao Yeh, *The White Dove* (Taipei: China Times, 1988), 126-131.

further legitimized when the Taiwanese government gave full financial and moral support to the New Cinema movement.

Building the Auteur: Hou Hsaio-hsien

Taiwan New Cinema first entered international film festivals in the mid-1980s and continued to be prolific throughout the 1990s. It started with Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1984) at the Nantes Three Continents Festival. The film walked away with the highest award, the Golden Montgolfiere prize. His next film, *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984), received the same prize from the same festival. Hou's following films also caught major film festivals' attention with *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1985) at the 1986 Berlin International Film Festival, and *Daughter of the Nile* (1987) at Cannes. But it was really *A City of Sadness* (1989) that established Hou's status as a world-renowned art house auteur when the film won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. This recognition prompted Taiwan New Cinema's new visibility in Europe. *A City of Sadness* is a historical film that explores the longtime taboo subject of White Terror and the February 28 massacre in Taiwan, brought by the Kuomintang government (KMT) after its arrival from the mainland China in the late 1940s. The film was also the first to deal with KMT's authoritarianism and civil conflicts in 1945–1949. Through the implicit use of voice over, personal letters, radio announcements, small talk between characters, and even scribbled notes, *A City of Sadness* attempts to recount and generate a public awareness to a part of history that has long been censored by the party-state

government. As such, history and film benefit from the relative abstraction of the alternative cinematic practice.

The February 28, 1947 massacre is etched into the minds of the Taiwanese people like the Holocaust to the Jewish or the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. It happened during the time of turmoil between the end of the Japanese rule (1895 to 1945) and when the Chinese Nationalist troops led by Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan after their defeat with the Communist Chinese. The incident began in Taipei when a woman selling cigarettes was arbitrary detained, which was an event that led to several large-scale public protests against the new authority's repression and corruption. In the following days, Governor Chen Yi kept up with the pretense of negotiating with the leaders of the protest movement but secretly ordered the troops to move in and start shooting people. Most of the civilians who were fatally shot were in fact unarmed. The massive massacre roughly totaled between 18,000 and 28,000 people. Although the exact number cannot be recounted, targeted victims were particularly scholars, lawyers, doctors, students, and leaders of the protest movement. Thousands of others were arrested and imprisoned in the following decades, and many of those remained imprisoned until the early 1980s. Sadly, the event was the beginning of forty years of repressive martial law on the island imposed by Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship. This particular period of time was termed the "White Terror" in Taiwanese history. It ended in 1987 when martial law was lifted and Taiwan was moving toward rapid modernization and democratization. But until now, the event of the February 28 massacre remained a taboo subject on the island. It is still controversial

and debatable among scholars, educators, and the public regarding whether this should be included in the textbooks of compulsory education.[83]

Scholars[84] have typically read *A City of Sadness* as a national allegory, constructing the Taiwanese experience "as a monolithic, unified, abstracted, and seemingly objective national history."[85] The film is about the lives of ordinary people and about how traumatic historical events shake up a society, thus transforming the lives of everyday people. The film depicts the Lin family's experiences during the White Terror and how the brothers, old and young, healthy and disabled, were forced to deal with KMT's oppression. However, by using memory as tropes, the film enables the imagination of the subaltern experiences and resists the complete fusing of individuals into the collective body of national history, yet Western critics' focus on the film's style also worked to establish *A City of Sadness* as a piece of national cinema.

Press reviews in European film magazines often inscribed Hou's films as belonging to a distinctively national cinema that differs from Western models, particularly in style. First, reviews on *A City of Sadness* in *Cahiers du Cinéma*:

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[83] Chen Yi-Jing and Huang I-Ching, "Education in Crisis: Educational Reformers are Concerned with the Politics in Compulsory Education Textbooks," *Liberty Times*, Taipei, February 12, 2014.

[84] See Wenchi Lin, "Return, Fatherland, and Two-two Eight Incident: The History of Taiwan and National Identity in *A City of Sadness*," *Dang-Dai Monthly* 106 (1995): 94-109. Chenya Li, "From Historical Memory to the Imagination of Space: The Disappearance of Urban Images in Hou Hsiao-hsien's City Films," *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly* 317 (1998): 120-135.

[85] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 37.

> Inscribed in Hou Hsiao-hsien's mise-en-scene is a nearly experimental project of reconstruction—the reconstitution, from a few ordinary moments in the lives of his characters, of the epic birth of a nation. (Rauger 18)

> The eye of the spectator is constantly on the alert: each new sequence demands that we learn anew how to look. Redirected, lost or stopped, our gaze tries to make out what lies in front of it, which is, nevertheless, subject to some order. An ancient world, miraculously virgin and disturbing. That's why we have some difficulty in recognizing all the family members. (Morice 40)

From the British reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound*:

> The film never seems anything less than quintessential Hou Xiaoxian: another study of a Chinese family, and a clean refinement of the wide-angle/long-take aesthetic that Hou has been evolving since 1983. (Rayns 117)

> Compared to its predecessors, *The Puppetmaster* makes less demanding viewing—especially after the welter of characters and relationships in *A City of Sadness* that often left the uninstructed Western viewer struggling to keep track.

> Hou's indifference to Western tastes also shows in his inclusion of several long, unbroken extracts from Li's puppet shows. Beautiful, stylized and remote, they

> have all the charm of the half-understood—what's happening is clear enough, but why is tantalizingly opaque—so there's a real sense of culture shock…(Kemp 51)

If reviewers were unable to take historical references into account, they ascribed Hou's formal and narrative devices as part of a universal film language:

> By presenting the lack of understanding between Chinese people, Hou made a film not about the Lin family and its four sons, not about a small port town on the island of Taiwan, not about the nationalist crisis that shook the country between 1945 and 1949, not about a movement of Chinese civilization, but about universal values […] It is not a cultural difference that separates us from the Taiwan of the film, but the artistic desire of the director not to give himself entirely, to retain a degree of mystery—this universal way of interrogating the world. (De Baecque 24)

A preliminary overview of these texts indicates that these reviews functioned as a terrain for suggesting specific modes of watching Hou's films. One consideration that should have been given to these reviewers is the numbers of reviews they produced and the lack of visible circulation in Europe. In spite of the various festivals awards, none of Hou's major films were given a theatrical release in Europe or in the U.S. Hou's films circulated nearly exclusively in film festivals, at film societies, or at art-house cinemas, where they were granted very few shows. Alternatively, the screening of Hou's film could also be part of a thematic or regional repository. With regard to the circumstances, the near absence of screening Hou's films in European and American exhibition circuits made these reviews influential to the public, be it Taiwanese, European, or American. Of

course, other considerations immediately follow: if the reviewers were not writing to help promote the films, what was the purpose of the reviews? A possible explanation is that these reviews speak to a cultured film public where cinephilia is much more of a habit than personal tastes. It is not just about selling Hou's films but also the framework they used to look at Hou's films and the modes of film appreciation. In other words, every piece is issued to address how cinema is articulated, asserted, and redefined, which may or may not meet the viewer's expectations and assumptions that stem from a larger sector of cinematic culture.

A closer look at these reviews also brought a different set of interpretations. Valentina Vitali is quite critical of the European press, especially British and French reviews, and rests on the articulation of formalist concerns, thus hallowing out any sense of historical awareness.[86] She argues that these reviews strongly suggest to the reader-viewer that such historical references are either unnecessarily or optional, thus reducing any sense of historicity to a cluster of universal formal language. Hence, under the film-author framework—a classic film theory that has long been institutionalized by *Cashiers du Cinéma* since the 1950s—these reviews establish Hou Hsiao-Hsien as an auteur to the European spectator, especially to the French cinephiles. In this context, European reviews of Hou's films act as an instrumental way of reading films and generate a discourse on how Hou bears a tangible relation to art house cinemas. The reviews also rendered, inevitably, the cultural division between "art" and "mass" cinema.

[86] Valentina Vitali, "Hou Hsiao-Hsien Reviewed," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2008): 280–289.

Hou Hsiao-hsien is seen to be part of a global "Nouvelle Vague" movement because the reviews read Hou's films based on the New Wave paradigms that have been customarily brought to European cinemas. More precisely, Hou's films act as a site that evokes nostalgia for the French, or more generally, European cinematic culture, which enables them to define the films against mainstream Hollywood. First, witness the manner in which Olivier Assayas describes his enlightenment by Taiwanese filmmakers:

> I often tell other people about my first encounter with Hou Hsiao-hsien: it was in 1984, I also met Edward Yang and his cinematographer, Christopher Doyle there…This encounter evoked in me an unprecedented feeling of becoming a part of a group. Although I cannot stand the concept of "cinema family," at some moments I feel that I am a European cousin of these people. (26)

While Tony Rayns did not initially see Taiwan New Cinema as a movement, he noted in an interview about the predecessors' efforts in trying to create a style more in tune with world cinema:

> I never really thought of it much as a movement in the first place. […] it was a scattered and disperse group. What they really had in common was the desire to do different, they wanted to make a different kind of film, in a different way, different style, more in tune with international cinema. They wanted something that can be shown internationally, and can actually hold its head up internationally; something that was over-standard that could match the best out

> there in the world. At the same time, to be assertively Taiwanese in a way that would force the world to recognize, there was something happening in Taiwan.[87]

And the poetics of modern visuality are also closely connected to the politics of the nation-state, in Chia-chi Wu's words:

> The historiographical significance of Taiwan New Cinema lies in its dual tendency in inscriptions of the "nation." On the one hand, it attempts to portray the living experiences of the communities that are differentiated by social, historical, cultural/linguistic, and ethnic terms. […] On the other hand, Taiwan New Cinema represents, with its modern visuality, a coming to terms with the heterogeneity and a re-visioning of the nation that hopefully could resolve historical injustice and accommodate differences.[88]

The texts presented here all address the idea that the nation-building process in Taiwan New Cinema was based on particular modes of modern visuality and the international high-art voices that inevitably gave rise to its controversy and political contestation. Thus, Taiwan New Cinema's visibility at the festival scene is, on the one hand, reflecting the culture of the masses instead of being a representative of the national culture projected by the state. On the other hand, New Cinema voluntarily contributed to the imaginings of a homogeneous national identity through the Western gaze.

New Cinema Critic: Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao

[87] Tony Rayns, "Interview by Chinlin Hsieh," *Flowers of Taipei* (documentary), 2014.
[88] Wu, "Festivals, Criticism," 76.

For the first time in history, Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers produced works that offered possibilities for serious political discussion. Many of the modern techniques in New Cinema borrowed from, but were not limited to, Italian neorealism: the use of long takes, long shots, real location shooting, and the use of non-professional talents. The local audience, however, initially had a hard time understanding New Wave modernism; these films came out during a time when local economic development and modernization had just begun. At the same time, the domestic defenders of Taiwan New Cinema were composed of a group of cultural critics who were trained in Western literary theories and film criticism. These critics often applied Western aesthetics and its philosophy of film in defense of New Cinema, including Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao (film scholar and critic), Edmond Wong (director of the Taipei Film Archive), Hsiao Yeh (novelist, writer, and producer at CMPC), and Li Yu Hsin (film critic and journalist). These critics evaluated these films through the framework of European auteurs to validate Taiwan New Cinema, referencing auteurs such as Truffaut, Godard, Resnais, and Antonioni, to name a few. It was also the first time in history that these domestic film critics, well-versed in international film history, successfully placed Taiwan cinema on the world map by exercising the very criteria shared by many European film festivals.

Needless to say, one of the significant behind-the-force progenitors of Taiwan's New Cinema movement in the 1980s was, indisputably, Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao. Chiao is an esteemed film scholar, critic, educator, and producer in Taiwan's film industry. Like many Taiwanese scholars of the time, she received her film education in the West. After graduating from a university in Taiwan, Chiao studied in the Department of Radio-

Television-Film's graduate program at the University of Texas at Austin and continued to pursue a Ph.D. degree at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) from 1983 to 1985. Chiao began writing and publishing essays and film reviews in Taiwanese newspapers and magazines in the early 1980s. When *In Our Time* debuted in 1982, Chiao was a huge supporter despite the emerging criticism against the new styles of New Cinema. Hostility toward Taiwan New Cinema did not end in box office sales; it extended into meetings and deliberations at festival screenings and award sessions at the Golden Horse Awards. At one point, the animosity became so bad that a group of film professionals decided to boycott working with directors from the New Wave group. In 1987, Chiao and a number of other film critics published a manifesto criticizing the industry's unsupportive attitude and defended the new style to the public.

Chiao was transformed into a central cultural figure when she published the edited collection of *New Taiwan Cinema* (Taiwan Xindianying) in 1988. This volume included a collection of articles from Taiwan film scholars and professionals that strategically positioned Taiwan New Cinema in a critical paradigm to defend the stylistic innovation. While scholars and cultural critics felt compelled to apply theories from the West, the writings became an important reference on the subject of Taiwan New Cinema. Particularly, by associating Taiwan New Wave to Italian neorealism in defense of its realist impulses, the writings nevertheless construct New Cinema in the concepts of national cinema, global new wave, and auteurism. Chiao was able to fully exercise her influential status when, in 1993, the Taiwanese government was eager to promote national cinema, and it appointed Chiao the chief executive officer of National Film Year, a year-long project aimed to resuscitate Taiwan's dying film industry. The initiative

was organized around retrospective activities of Chinese-language cinema and workshops for filmmakers and film professionals to network and support each other. In addition, she organized seminars and conferences dedicated to the scholarly discussions on Taiwan Cinema and film history. In 1994, Chiao founded the Taiwan Film Center to further present films from Taiwan to the world.

Peggy Chiao also worked extensively as a festival programmer. Working closely with film festivals, she acquainted herself with other international festival writers such as Tony Rayns, Chris Berry (a prominent figure in Chinese-language film academia), Wimal Dissanayake (Hawaii International Film Festival), Sato Tado (Fukuoka International Film Festival), Bérénice Reynaud (French film critic/historian/curator), and Shu Qi (Hong Kong International Film Festival). These festival writers were (and still are) the dominant force behind introducing films from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China to the Western audiences, while taking on different roles of festival programmers, jurors, exhibition curators, translators, and academic scholars.

Chiao played a decisive role in mediating between films and international film festivals. The development of Taiwan New Cinema is viewed as a result of the aggressive efforts by the local film critics, in which the Western art cinema's paradigms were transplanted and used in their critiques. Among many adopted paradigms, the most prominent one used was the auteur theory, which has long been associated with the French New Wave and the film critics who periodically wrote for *Cashiers*. Nevertheless, local film critics were initially critical of the Western paradigms. For example, in Peggy Chiao's words:

> The critical opinion of foreign film critics often results in the skewing of public opinion. Claiming to speak for the West, some people declare that local films are under-appreciated in Taiwan, but that foreigners like them. Thus, [they conclude that] local films must be shown first abroad in Europe before returning to Taiwan on the momentum of their popularity abroad. (1985, 25)

Chiao, however, gradually recognized the importance of "Western opinions" and the importance of being included on the world stage:

> Hou Hsiao-Hsien, the most important figure in Taiwanese cinema, has also been named one of the world's most important directors in many surveys of world film critics. Thanks to his diligence (including his films and commentary), Taiwanese cinema finally rose to enter the realm of "art" cinema in the mid-1980s, claiming a rightful place in world cinema. Not just a director, [Hou] is a conceptual leader and a pioneer in the cinema movement. (2000, 21)

Respectively, Chiao urged local critics to be more critical of the country's own film industry and film culture:

> Shouldn't we take a good look at what we're doing at this time? The Western world—especially all the cultural elite in North America, where practically no Taiwanese films have ever been shown, universally praise the cultural caliber of Taiwanese films. Meanwhile, our industry, along with viewers and certain shortsighted media, bitterly attack Taiwanese cinema, reflexively demonstrating their coarse lack of cultural cultivation and taste. (1999, 28)

With a grasp of the observations made by Chiao, it is fitting to argue that the discourse of Taiwan New Cinema and the film festival approach are mutually reinforcing. In other words, the establishment of New Cinema as an actual film movement wouldn't have extended if it weren't for the films' success at the festival scene. The practices of joining the festival circuits certainly helped expose Taiwanese filmmakers to the international labors of art cinema as well as integrated them into the cultural and political economy of the global art market. There is no denying that the New Cinema was first observed by international critics, credited by local film critics, acknowledged by the government, and then circulated at the festival scene, which led to legitimizing New Cinema as the representative of Taiwan on the global stage. Even until today, the international film community still can't either acknowledge or understand the complexity of the country's two names. On the other hand, domestic film critics were continually critical of the art cinema approach—that the selections were based on the contributions of auteurs, attributed too much to a director's artistic and individual talent, and thus neglected New Cinema's social and film industry contexts. But this concern goes back to the debates about canon formation and taste and that the festival approach offers Taiwan cinema more than just as a type of "Third-World exoticism" for the West. The festival strategy was prompted by what the locals need, desire, and want, and it was part of a dialogue between film criticism and the continuing involvement in official film policy. The fact is that international film festivals remain an instrumental role in trigging the debates about national cinema.

In the 1990s, Peggy Chiao began working as a film producer, and continued to attribute to Taiwan New Cinema's international visibility. Her first role as a producer was

with Hong Kong directors Stanley Kwan and Ann Hui, in which she produced the documentary series *Still Love You After All These Years* (Kwan, 1997) and *As Times Goes By* (Hui, 1997). Chiao has also co-produced an essay film on Hou Hsiao-hsien with Olivier Assayas titled *HHH—Un Portrait de Hou Hsiao-Hsien* (1999). Her contribution reached its peak when she founded Arc Light Films in 1997, a production company that was responsible for many acclaimed international co-productions. The most prominent example would be Tsai Ming-liang's *The Hole* (1998), which was co-produced with French production company Haut et Court and the European channel La Sept-Arte as part of their turn-of-the-millennium project. Arc Light Films' most prolific achievement was bringing filmmakers and talents of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China together, despite the dicey political issues across continents and oceans. One primary example is Wang Xiaoshuai's *Beijing Bicycle* (2001). This film, co-written by Peggy Chiao, went on to win several Silver Bear awards from the 2001 Berlin International Film Festival. In a time when the political relations between Taiwan and China remained difficult, Chiao was eager to build a cross-continents dialogue on cultural and economic cooperation. The goal was to unite local, regional, and transnational film professionals as well as identify the common challenges that they face in the era of globalization. This way, they will acknowledge the importance of exchanging experience and the added value of joint action, thus representing Asian cinema on the global stage. By the late 2000s, Chiao produced many acclaimed Chinese-language films among festival awards, has written and edited more than seventy books and articles, and served as jury member in more than fifty international film festivals. Her contribution and influence to the Taiwanese film industry cannot be underestimated.

The Market and Beyond

In gaining world recognition, film festivals and cinephiles are tied together in the process, and it is hard to retain the ritual of film going and related film culture without either one. It is also an extension of the participatory culture; for some people, a film festival as an event is more important than the films they went to see. It is about occupying the space, meeting new people, engaging in a range of serious discussions and debates, and experiencing the sight and sound of a new film. With a higher profile festival, it is also about the glamor and the celebrities, such as Cannes or Sundance. The power of movie going is transformative: it is informative, intellectual, and often culturally diffusive. Especially, part of the thrill was not having access to everything—as aforementioned in Hou Hsiao-hsien's case, his films were almost never circulated in the mainstream public except in alternative venues. Many film festivals promised a first run of independent and art house cinema; other occasions are the repertory of classics with major restoration. Just last year at Cannes, for example, Taiwan/Hong Kong martial art film *A Touch of Zen* (Xia Nu, 1975) returned to Cannes' screen with major restoration—forty years since its premiere. The restoration is also the first work done as part of the first Taiwan cinema digital restoration project funded by the Taiwan Film Institute. Aside from the premier, see-it-first films, other common festival films include the hard-to-sell type (often art house auteurs), the curated event (repertory film programming), and interactive event (screening followed by Q&A with the director). One common theme is

that these films typically have little or nearly no lifespan outside the festival circuits, thus using a film festival as an alternative distribution venue becomes essential to them.

Filmmakers' connection with the project market also helped the realization of funding the production. Hou Hsiao-hsien, for example, a frequent festival invitee, was involved with the Pusan Production Plan (PPP) as a producer. The PPP was a plan launched by the Busan International Film Festival (held annually in Busan, South Korea, and it was renamed to Asian Project Market in 2011) in 1998 to promote Asian cinema. In its initial run, PPP only accepted film projects originating from Asia. Having a high-profile director like Hou involved in the process—whose films have frequently won major awards at the "A List" festivals—means that the organizers could also take advantage of the presence of film financiers, distributors, and buyers drawn by the names of festival veterans. But Hou was not short on the experience of being a producer. His earliest non-directorial work can be traced back to 1991 when he first produced Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*, a work that transformed Zhang into one of the leading fifth generation Chinese filmmakers. Since then he has worked with many of his cohorts from the Taiwan New Cinema as well as the new urban generation, including Hsu Hsiao-ming, Chen Kuo-Fu, Wu Nien-jen, Hou Ji-ran (*One Day*, 2010), and Chi Po-lin (*Beyond Beauty: Taiwan from Above*, 2013). For the filmmaker, the world of production means learning how to micromanage the demands of management—budgeting, fund-raising, and project development. Being involved in the process also means for the filmmaker to stay connected as well as develop a workable strategy for allocating funds. In spite of the fact that Hou may be an auteur in international film festivals, it remains difficult for independent directors to secure funding for their next project. In 1998, Hou started his

own company, 3H Productions, and took on the roles as both the director and the producer. Notable works include *The Flowers of Shanghai* (1998) and *Café Lumiere* (2004), the latest one being *The Assassin*. In short, Hou Hsiao-hsien's status as an auteur is not only about his films but stems from a combined involvement in the film industry. His films continue to explore the social changes of a country (or between cultures) but stay on the periphery of nation-state history.

To conclude, Taiwan New Cinema is first perceived as canonical "Third World" cinema from the Third World, especially by the Western European film critics, and the discourse tends to center around auteurs like Hou Hsiao-hsien. But Taiwan New Cinema was not entirely constructed by a group of elite European film critics to antagonize mainstream cinema in the power struggle of global culture. Taiwan New Cinema did not take on the institutional status over the next generation of filmmakers and newcomers, although it did take on more of a pedagogical stand. The connection between filmmakers and festivals as producers also complicates the issue. Film festivals are not just about exhibition and distribution; while they do aim to discover new talents or new artistic criteria, festivals involving the process of film production help realize those films that may not otherwise be produced. The fact remains that Taiwan New Cinema never outperformed domestic commercial releases or was competitive enough with Hong Kong and Hollywood productions, nor did it successfully revitalize the dearth of film activity. In other words, the New Wave movement was "too insignificant to help restructure or resuscitate the already collapsing industry."[89] But Taiwan New Cinema and its triumphs at international film festivals did constitute a focal point in historical research and

[89] Wu, "Festivals, Criticism and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema," 85.

academic interest in the cinema of Taiwan. Taiwan New Cinema was a site for Western cultural critics to project an allegorical reading that represents Taiwanese history and nationality, thus pervading subsequent international festival success. In return, Taiwan New Cinema as national cinema is prompted by a transnational perspective and global connectivity.

Chapter Three | Tsai Ming-liang at the Louvre: Cinephilia, the French Connection, and Cinema in the Gallery

Tsai Ming-liang's unique filmmaking has garnered both cinematic and curatorial acclaim. As one of Taiwan cinema's noted art house directors, his work in the last decade has extended from that of feature length to short art films and installation, such as *It's a Dream* (2007), *Erotic Space* (2010), *The Theater in the Boiler Room* (2011), and the *Walker* series (2012-2014).[90] Prior to his crossing over to the art gallery, in his films Tsai highlights the cinematic echoing and intertextual citation of French New Wave and New German Cinema, particularly of François Truffaut and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.[91] The connection between French cinema and Tsai's work can be traced back to *What Time Is It There?* (2001, hereafter *What Time*), a film that is said to be haunted by the ghosts of European art films.[92] In *What Time*, the protagonist Hsiao-kang (Lee Kang-Sheng, Tsai's signature actor) is seen falling asleep in front of a TV playing Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) (see Fig. 1); later, the iconic French New Wave figure Jean-Pierre Léaud—best known for playing Antoine Doinel in Truffaut's series of six films—has a cameo scene at the end of the film. At the festival scene, *What Time* was competing for Palme

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[90] I am referring to *Walker* (2012), *Walking on Water* (2013), and *Journey to the West* (2014). These films feature Lee Kang-Sheng as a monk in a red robe walking unbelievably slowly through the streets of Hong Kong, Tsai's hometown of Kuching, Malaysia, and Marseille, France. I am also aware of Tsai's latest feature film *Stray Dogs* (2013) is quite reflective of this respect—a director gradually making his way into the museum by concentrating on making films for fine art museum, and features Taiwanese artist Kao Jun-Honn's work in the film. However, this is beyond the scope of this article.

[91] Tsai stated time and again his fascination with François Truffaut's films in many interviews. For one, see Erik Bordeleau, Chi-Chun Chang, Shumay Lin, and Beth Tsai, "On the Uses and Misuses of Cinema," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 58 (March 2011).

[92] Fran Martin, "The European Undead: Tsai Ming-liang's Temporal Dysphoria," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 27 (July 2003).

d'Or at Cannes Film Festival, and went on to win twelve awards for best director, best picture, and best cinematography at festivals worldwide.

Fig. 1

Tsai's later films were seen as the ultimate exploration of pure cinematic form, a departure from his early focus on post-colonial Taipei and its social critique.[93] Such is the

[93] I am suggesting a shift of focus but not necessarily mean that there is a void of social critique in his later works, such as *Stray Dogs*. This observation is made in relation to Tsai's trajectory of filmmaking. For instance, in his first film, *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992) and the documentary he made four years later—both reflect an immediate concern about AIDS in Taiwan. Gradually, Tsai's films move toward an elaborate treatment of disintegrated times, spaces, and human relationships, as Wen Tian-Xiang suggested, the films "digging deeply into modern subjectivity almost without any sense of historicity." See Wen Tian-Xiang, *Guangying dingge: Tsai Ming-liang de xinling changyu* (Freeze-

hallmark status of *Visage*, as the Louvre's first collection of the moving image. The all-star cast of *Visage* includes Jean-Pierre Léaud, Fanny Ardant, Jeanne Moreau, and Laetitia Casta, and this film certainly epitomizes the highest form of recognition Tsai received in France. When asked by Henri Loyrette, the Louvre director at the time, "What are you planning to film?" Tsai's initial response was: "I wanted the film to feature Jean-Pierre Léaud and Lee Kang-Sheng, and they will meet on the museum's grounds."[94] Tsai has never shied away from his obsession with Lee as his muse and his admiration for Truffaut's films. For the director, *Visage* not only pays tribute to Truffaut, but also restores the time-gap between Truffaut's death and the aged Léaud. Tsai didn't choose Léaud because he expects him to be a box-office magnet; he chose him because he is eager to show the aging side of him, and of French New Wave (figuratively), in his highly reflexive and referential film.

If *Visage* illustrates a move to bring filmmaking practices and the museum space closer, the importance of approaching Tsai Ming-liang as a transnational auteur is the possibility of a critique of the intricacies between exhibition practices and the question of "*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*" in today's ever-changing, multi-media environments. Additionally, for a film to be commissioned by the Louvre represents film festivals' consequential influence on fostering international cinephilia because of the role they play in helping a film transition from local production to the global art market. Tsai's making of *Visage* is not coincidental nor an occasional exploration with alternative viewing conditions in art galleries and the museum space. Instead, *Visage* should be viewed as a

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frame in Light and Shadow: The Spiritual Site of Tsai Ming-liang) (Taipei: Hengxing, 2002), 9.

[94] Tsai Ming-liang, interview by Peter van der Lugt, International Film Festival at Rotterdam, 2010.

continual exploration of the many themes from Tsai's body of work, particularly his love for the movie theater. Chiang Ling-ching argues Tsai is to date the only film director in Taiwan who has translated his work into installation that were exclusive for art galleries, while continuing to produce feature films for traditional theatrical release.[95] Chiang further posits the reason he stands out from other media artists is because he enters the art gallery as a film auteur, which allows him to transplant his signature slow style—long shots and long takes—to a new exhibition space.[96] Tiago de Luca also points out "it is striking that many filmmakers who have crossed over to art galleries in recent years are often placed under the slow cinema umbrella, and that they often recycle their own cinematic works."[97] Specifically, Luca is claiming how Tsai's slow style—among other filmmakers in this group such as Béla Tarr, Abbas Kiarostami, Lav Diaz, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul—allows a "remarkably smooth transition to the art gallery and the museum as more and more directors associated with the trend make films and installations for these spaces," when "international film festival has been over the past two decades the institutional and culture home of slow cinema."[98]

In this chapter, I propose Tsai Ming-liang's ventures into new exhibition spaces might be more fruitfully understood as a meta-reflection on the triangular relationship between his theater experience, the French cinephilia, and cinema in the gallery. I argue Tsai's film and video installation need to be situated in the intersection between the

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[95] Chiang Ling-ching, "Architecture as the Key to Connect Film Installations and Film Aesthetics: Using Tsai Ming-liang's Works as Example," *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, no. 23 (2012): 55.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Tiago de Luca, "Slow Time, Visible Cinema: Duration, Experience, and Spectatorship," *Cinema Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 35.
[98] Ibid., 24-35.

moving images and the alternative viewing experiences, and between the global and regional film cultures taking place at this specific theater-within-a-gallery site. While Tsai's slow film aesthetics can be traced in relation to his prior theater practice, his installation and film in the gallery are grounded in his belief that cinema needs to be resurrected in the museum. The interrelations between Tsai's video installation and feature films show that they originate from, and are still part of, love for cinema. Susan Sontag has put it accurately: "If cinephilia is dead, then movies are dead too…If cinema can be resurrected, it will only be through the birth of a new kind of cine-love."[99] In other words, as film viewing today becomes more and more dispersed and individualized, Tsai's move to the museum space exemplifies the possibility for the future of cinema: it may loses its exclusivity of the collective experience in the movie theater, yet still privileges a certain architectural set-up of the movie theater.

My intention here is to conduct a broader inquiry into the relationship between Tsai's fascination for cinema and his mourning of the movie-going experience as he moved into the realm of film and video installation. In what follows, I start by tracing the key events that have put Tsai forward to his crossing over to art galleries, and situate them in the transnational context. I explore the ways the French cinephiles advocated his film styles, and helped to situate him in the global art market. Through Roland Barthes' critique of the pre-hypnotic cinematic experience, I proceed to demonstrate how the experimental conditions of *It's a Dream* and *Visage* are Tsai's attempt to enter into dialogue with the gallery space, and the possibilities of alternative exhibition. I argue that these exhibitions are not simply about introducing cinema into the gallery. Rather, it is a

[99] Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *The New York Times* (February 25, 1996).

process of thinking about how an alternative exhibition space can challenge our habitual viewing of cinema.

Journey to the Museum

The 22-minute short *The Skywalk Is Gone* (2002) marks as a prelude to the filmmaker's subsequent explorations between art cinema and the gallery space. *The Skywalk Is Gone* is Tsai's first attempt at short art film, which is also his first French commissioned film. As an epilogue to *What Time*, the film presents two parallel worlds: a young woman wandering around in Taipei, the modern, bustling capital of Taiwan, in search of a skywalk over a busy intersection that she once walked on; at a casting session, a young man is being asked to strip all his clothes off for a role in a pornographic film. The young man's story is actually a prelude to one of the most controversial (and yet most commercially successful) films Tsai has ever shot in his career to date—*The Wayward Cloud* (2005). If *What Time* is concerned about time lag (between France and Taiwan), *The Skywalk Is Gone* is concerned about the diminishing of space. In *The Skywalk Is Gone*, the protagonists are lost in metropolitan Taipei, surrounded by giant buildings, bright LED screens, flashy mirrors and kaleidoscopic window reflections, mindless street people, and traffic noises, reflecting both a desire and anxiety in reaction to fast-paced movement. The short film also stems from a real-life event of a torn-down skywalk—a long-term landmark bridging the iconic Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store and Taipei's grand central station, this skywalk bears significance in its time and place. If the place of the skywalk has entered into cinematic space in *What Time* to

become a place of memory, *The Skywalk Is Gone* filmed the disappearance of landmarks as the city plans to modernize the existing site. This film, like many of Tsai's subsequent films after *The Hole*, received help from foreign funding. Commissioned by Le Fresnoy, a public center for the arts in France that had exhibited many important contemporary art and experimental films, such as Bill Viola, Michael Snow, and others, *The Skywalk Is Gone* advanced Tsai to join the global trend in filmmaking: creating gallery or installation versions of their cinematic works.

Tsai's actual first hands-on experience with and crossover to art installation came around 2007, when the Cannes Film Festival wanted to commemorate its 60th anniversary. Gilles Jacob, the festival president, commissioned a group of 33 well-known international directors to each make a three-minute film about their experiences with the movie theater. Each took the interpretations of this assignment very differently, but most reflect a condition of viewing. Many include a film-within-a film, or question the death of cinema, such as David Cronenberg's *At the Suicide of the Last Jew in the World in the Last Cinema in the World*,[100] while others, like Tsai Ming-liang, invoke the cinema's suture[101] effect, and the filmmaker's own fascination and fetishization of the theater, the auditorium chairs, the floating dust in the cone of light from the projector, and so forth. Shot in an abandoned theater in Kuala Lumpur, *It's a Dream* (2007) draws on Tsai's own childhood memories with grand movie theaters. In this work Lee Kang-Sheng plays the role of Tsai's deceased father; Tsai's mother plays herself, doing nothing other than

[100] Nicholas de Villiers, "We are the World Cinema: Chacun son cinéma, ou, Ce petit coup au coeur quand la lumière s'éteint et que le film commence," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 45 (November 2007).
[101] See Kaja Silverman, "Suture," The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 194-236.

watching the silver screen. This short film also features a family sharing and eating durian fruit, an East Asian tropical delicacy, and a woman sharing pears on a skewer with the man sitting in the row behind her, all in a silent moment of contact, typical of Tsai's oeuvre.

Shortly after *It's a Dream* premiered in Cannes, the film traveled to Italy's Venice Biennale, where Tsai participated in a group exhibition organized by Taipei Fine Arts Museum of Taiwan at the regional pavilion, but not eligible to enter as a participating country because of the "One-China" policy.[102] Curator Hongjohn Lin described the purpose of the group exhibition, titled "Atopia," as "a 'non-place', unconstrained by borders…the mixing and merging of cultures, virtual space shaped by technology, and transnational consumption and production means no single identity can account for contemporary spatial configurations."[103] In describing Tsai's work, Lin wrote somewhat enigmatically:

> Internationally renowned filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang bases his work on alienated existences, underground in place, lost in transition. The bewildering temporal-spatial settings of his films are non-places at best, where sexuality, adultery and incest all become the sole actions that people on the margins of society can take. Long and maddening sequences propel the radical silence of his images, evoking fragmentary realities of pathos. (200)

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[102] Most festival organizers, especially in Germany and Italy, adopted the "One-China" principle and labeled Taiwan's film entry in a consistently confusing and endlessly reinvented manner: China (Taiwan), China (Taipei), Chinese Taipei, and so on, prescribing Taiwan as a non-national nation, or a nation without nationality.
[103] Hongjohn Lin, "ATOPIA," *Think With the Senses Feel With the Mind: Art in the Present Tense* (Venezia: 52 Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte), 200.

What is missing from this description is how Tsai managed to present his work as a non-place, dislocated space, or not-a-place outside the film itself. In the exhibition of *It's a Dream*, rows of red leather theater chairs play a major role. After the removal of the old cinema seats in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the exhibition of them at the Venice Biennale, audiences were able to (re)create their own unique viewing experience in the pavilion. *It's a Dream* also mobilizes Tsai's status as both a filmmaker and an artist. As the short film was later acquired by Taipei Fine Arts Museum as the first film to be part of its permanent collection, Tsai said in an interview with Noah Buchan from *Taipei Times*,

> It's the first time that I sold a video installation to a museum and this is the first time for a Taiwanese museum to buy a film as part of its collection. The Louvre was the first in the world to collect film. These events signal that we are now looking at film as a form of art.[104]

He goes on to say that "gradually, my movies find a home, and that is the museum."[105] For Tsai, there is evidently a move toward gallery space, as an attempt to bridge the gap between artists and filmmakers. In 2011, Tsai turned a boiler room in a former factory in Taipei into an exhibition space for his video work, titled "The Theater in the Boiler Room: Art Installation." In this exhibition, the filmmaker recycled auditorium seats and a large clock (a recurring motif in his films) that were abandoned by the historical Taipei City Hall. There is always an agenda behind Tsai's works, whether they are cinematic or

[104] Tsai Ming-liang, interview by Noah Buchan, *Taipei Times* (Taipei, Taiwan), March 25, 2010.
[105] Ibid.

video art; he admits they are all "a conscious act of rebellion against the way cinema is perceived in today's society."[106]

Tsai Ming-liang came from a background in theater training. Like Truffaut, who was open about his unhappy childhood, Tsai's unique upbringing and closeness with his grandfather stimulated his impressions on people and the surroundings. Tsai is particularly keen and sensitive to enclosed space, later reflected in his stage plays and feature films, where characters in his films express their emotions by reacting to the space, not with other people. The same commitment to space that inspires Tsai's films also propels his work in the video sector. His turn to the gallery does not necessarily mean leaving the studio; rather, it should be seen as a creative move toward expanding the format of cinema. One of his concerns is that historic movie theaters are gradually disappearing and becoming largely forgotten, and he is very much invested in the idea of using cinematic means to preserve time, history, and the artifacts and experiences of movie-going. But the question remains: what are some of the implications of his shift in practice?

The showing of a film in a museum as a feature film, and not as an installation, artist documentary, or experimental film reveals a turning point in the history of cinema. Especially, for films to be commissioned by museums and festivals raises a number of questions: What does it mean for an established filmmaker to change venues and modes of exhibition from the cinema to the museum or the gallery? Does a film have to become fine art to pay its way to the audience? Additionally, what is the role of film festivals in today's globalized world?

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[106] Maria Glovanna Vagenas, "Filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang says his work should be appreciated slowly," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), August 27, 2013.

Addressing the first question, we want to recognize that while film is essentially a visual art,[107] audiences do not usually expect to have to go to a museum or gallery to see films—it has been situated in a theatrical setting since the Nickelodeon era. Cinema since its invention has been placed in the darkened theater, in which audiences are seated according to the fixed spatial arrangement of the screen, chairs, and the projector. Commercial or artistic, mainstream or experimental, film screenings are likely to be equipped with a projector, even for visual artists such as painters, sculptors, and photographers who work outside the film industry. Such is the case with Isa Genzken, the German-born sculptor who made a short film in 1972 called *Two Women in Combat* (Zwei Frauen im Gefecht), who insisted that her film be shown in a standard movie theater, unwilling to compromise by screening her work in the museum space. The origin of moving images employing projection in museums can be traced back to the early 1960s, when artists found 16mm to be a new, dynamic medium to work with. One of the most ground-breaking examples is Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1963): a 16mm film projector runs in front of a blank wall and projects a screen of light; the luminous projection makes a contrast to the whiteness of the adjacent museum walls. About twenty minutes in length, the film that produces the screen is completely blank. No visual images appear on the screen except for the flickering presence, light scratches on the film strip, and tiny specks of dust made visible by the light cone that emanates from the film projector. *Zen for Film* is a film without a musical score, accompanied only by the noise of the reeling sound and the surrounding humdrum of museum activities. What Paik did was run a blank film through the projector, resulting in a minimalist visual

[107] Ricciotto Canudo, the Italian-born film critic who started the *Club des Amis du Septième Art* in 1921, was the first to label cinema as "the Seventh Art."

experimentation that highlights the elements of what constitutes cinema as an apparatus: the projector, the blank screen, and the viewing space. Among Paik, there were other pioneers who experimented with moving images in the gallery space, including Andy Warhol, Jonas Mekas, Valie Export, Martha Rosler, and most recently Stan Douglas and Pierre Huyghe, to name a few. Moving images were certainly embraced by these artists who created new ways of expressions in the contemporary arts, but what remains are the consequences of the expansion. Can one also experience these moving images not as an installation work but something akin to a conventional cinematic experience?

Now that we are perhaps moving into a post-cinematic era, with multiplex replaced by DVDs and online streaming, with celluloid replaced by digital recording, situating a feature length film in an art gallery is not anything unimaginable. Aleksandr Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2001) is one of the most memorable feature length films to be commissioned by a museum. The entire film is uniquely the longest single uninterrupted long take ever produced in the history of cinema. As it was filmed solely within the gates of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the paintings, the rooms, and the Winter Palace all became the subject of the director's cinematic treatment. The one-shot film, at a total length of 90 minutes, with an anonymous narrator (audiences are seeing what he sees), follows a French writer Marquis de Custine and travels through time and across 300 years of Russian history in the Winter Palace, presenting the temporal displacement of the existing. This film is also a transnational production between the Russian museum and German company Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM).

If *Russian Ark* sets up a pioneering example and illustrates a move to bring filmmaking practices and the museum space closer, the importance of thus approaching

Tsai Ming-liang at the Louvre is the possibility of a critique of the intricacies between exhibition practices and film festivals. While Tsai may not be making a groundbreaking move to make films for art galleries, what distinguishes him are the cinematic and theatrical dimensions in Tsai's work.

From the Local Theater to the Global Stage

Tsai Ming-liang's film aesthetics can be traced in relation to his prior theater practice. In fact, there is a mutual borrowing between the two media. Tsai was born in Malaysia of Chinese ethnic background in 1957 and spent his early years in the city of Kuching, Malaysia, before he moved to Taiwan to study film, theater, and performance. After Tsai graduated from college, Tsai spent his early career (1982-1987) exercising his creativity in the experimental theater. Tsai's first stage work was very cinematic: *Instant Noodle* (1982) was about a boy who loves films so much that he spend all of his money on film festival tickets and dreams about cinema at night.[108] On stage, he projected classic movies by re-filming the movies with an 8mm camera. The filmmaker himself also acknowledges the theatrical presence in his films. In an interview with Shelley Kraicer, Tsai says:

> [W]hen I started to make films I found myself pretty much influenced by the stage. It's the long concept of space and time, and the stationary camera. The latter also had something to do with the locations I used. Usually I film in a small

[108] Shelly Kraicer, "Interview with Tsai Ming-liang," from *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Vol. 8 no. 2 (Fall, 2000), 579–588.

> room, and as you know there is very limited space for me to move the camera around. On the other hand, if a character is moving outside in a larger space, the camera of course will follow him. So whether the camera moves or does not move has something to do with the characters. In that sense, I feel a kind of freedom. (583-584)

Tsai's words pinpoint us to his distinct spectatorial positioning in his cinematography, rooted in the legacy of theater. This dimension of performance can also be credited to the concept of "living theater," a style that was later adopted by Tsai to use in his televisual and filmic work. Living theater refers to personal attitude in acting that engages emotions and provokes reactions from the audience. Because this kind of unconventional acting is not grounded in technical competence but personal emotions based on individuals' life experiences, anyone can be an actor playing out his or her own everyday life. At the same time, the actor's bodily movement interacts and reacts to its environment.

Weihong Bao also pointed out how Tsai's films are consistent with his theater practice, for example, *The Hole* continues the thematic and formal aesthetics from his one-man stage play, *A Wardrobe in the Room* (1984).[109] Produced, directed, and acted by Tsai himself alone, this play is about a guy who talked on the phone with his long-distance partner while an invisible man in the wardrobe quietly listened to the phone conversation. Bao identified Yang Kuei-mei's character in *The Hole* talking on the phone to an imagined lover parallels Tsai's one-man theater; meanwhile, the extreme isolation on stage is carried out in Lee Kang-Sheng's solitary existence in the final spotlight scene,

[109] Weihong Bao, "Biomechanics of love: reinventing the avant-garde in Tsai Ming-liang's wayward 'pornographic musical,'" *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2007): 143.

created by the hole.[110] It is worth noting that this kind of acting—non-professional, personal, and monotonous—emblematic of Lee's style, was once "too slow and boring" for Tsai when they first started working together on *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992).[111] Although Tsai's earlier stage works were often unpolished, his minimalist approach set the tone and predicated the potential for making modernist cinema. The way he managed the tension onstage and off-stage affected his future practice in filmmaking. Taking part in the modern theater movement was an integral part of the experience, but his style had yet been fully explored, until he received an opportunity to direct his first feature length drama *All the Corners of the World* (1989) for public television.

Between 1989 and 1991, or the "television era" for Tsai, the director was able to engage in making direct-to-TV films after spending some time writing scripts and teaching theater classes on the side. Tsai's work of this period can be characterized as an intensified social critique, especially when he chose to represent the struggling working class in his work, instead of the burgeoning bourgeoisie at which the mainstream directors were grasping at the time. Tsai's sentiments toward teenagers' emotional distress were also incomparable to those of his peers. In 1991, when Tsai was given an assignment to shoot *Boys*, he met Lee Kang-Sheng at a video game arcade, then only a teenager, for the first time. Tsai immediately wrote a screenplay for Lee and proceed to direct his first feature film, even though he was well aware that Lee had never had any professional training or any acting experience. This is *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), a film about teenagers' rebellion, rivalry, and triangle relationship. The film went on to win a Bronze prize at Tokyo International Film Festival in 1993, and first premiered in

[110] Ibid.
[111] Bordeleau, Chang, Lin, and Tsai.

Europe at the 43rd Berlin International Film Festival, although it entered as a film coming from Taiwan, China.

It is not surprising that Tsai Ming-liang burst onto the film scene with a film whose title alluded to Nicholas Ray's troubled-youth picture *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). Nicholas Ray, being one of the central Hollywood figures in the 1950s, was highly influential to the minds of young French film critics such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, who sought to revolutionize cinematic languages in writings and with the French New Wave movement. And it was their work Tsai took up at film school, along with the likes of Fassbinder and Antonioni; the artistic preoccupations and techniques of these European masters would come to shape in varying degrees of Tsai's own filmmaking. Tsai's fascination with film is something that has haunted him since childhood, which was why even his stage work was always very film-related. Additionally, feature length films allow the director to have more artistic freedom in content and duration rather than worrying about interruptions. *Rebels of the Neon God* can be seen as a continuation of his television practice but without the gritty, unpolished quality of a telemovie. Compared to Tsai's television drama, Tsai abandoned mainstream narrative in pursuit of a more expressive, modernist cinematic language, to better explore time, space, and solitary existence on film. Beneath the minimalist dialogue and avant-garde acting styles, his films shared his convoluted path to a film career: from live-action performance to recording device; from small screen to silver screen; from television director to established film director; from local to international. After he debuted *Rebels of the Neon God*, Tsai entered a new stage as he continued to be consistent with his theatre and television practices.

From television to film, Tsai Ming-liang's focus gradually shifted from social problems to the exploration of the inner world of anguish. In addition to teenagers' quest for social acceptance, he is also concerned about dysfunctional families and solitary existence as consequences of rapid modernization. His next film, *Vive L'Amour* (1994), depicts three characters who not only unknowingly share an apartment in Taipei, but also lust after one another and involve themselves in (sometimes indirectly) sexual affairs. The Berlin Silver Bear winner *The River* (1997) dissects a dysfunctional family where the closeted father incidentally discovers his son is also gay only after they have sex in a public sauna, blindfolded by the darkness of the room. The director's first musical, *The Hole* (1998), is set in an apocalyptic universe: Taiwan has been struck by a mysterious virus which turns its victims into human cockroaches who crawl on the floor scurrying into dark places. Two apartment dwellers refuse to evacuate; a young man and his downstairs neighbor are forced into connection, however desperate, through a gaping hole in the concrete floor that a plumber accidentally left in the young man's apartment. Tsai, a poet of urban loneliness, continues the melancholic (and queer) sentiment in *What Time Is It There?* (2001). *What Time* depicts varying degrees of conflicts between a mother and the son after the father passed away, which almost drives the son to run away. When the mother begin to miss her husband, she reconcile with her son in an uncanny and bizarre way—by lying together with him on the bed, along with a mourning portrait of the deceased father. While the act of incest is deliberately spelled out in *The River*, it is only hinted at in *What Time*. In Tsai's subsequent films *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003) and *The Wayward Cloud* (2004), the family structure is almost non-existent; in *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006), the mother has sex with a homeless rascal who appears to

resemble her son from *What Time*. The motif of sex in this context is used to escape from loneliness, emptiness, and depression which would be unbearable without it.

Without a doubt, Tsai Ming-liang has never favored mainstream narratives and linear progression in his works. He prefers to illustrate detachment and solitariness through fragmented perspectives, many times not from the character's own, perhaps mirrored in the director's own immigrant experience, where he feels "I belong neither to Taiwan nor to Malaysia. In a sense, I can go anywhere I want and fit in, but I never feel that sense of belonging."[112] His signature long takes are the formal representation of interpersonal relationships and the lack of communication in the narrative. The static long takes might have aligned with the trend of Taiwan New Wave Cinema, but the formal aesthetics are obviously different from Hou Hsiao-hsien, to whom Tsai is often compared. While Hou is also championed for his elegant slow rhythm, Tsai's shots are significantly longer and lethargic. Tsai's long takes do not simply *observe*, they move around fluidly, in conjunction with arbitrary cuts to close-ups, creating a dialectical approach to Tsai's personal vision and expression, nurtured in creativity and originality.

What also set Tsai apart from his cohort of Taiwan New Wave directors were his unique persistence, dedication, and willingness to personally promote film releases. Tsai was certainly aware of the general criticism about his work and the lack of distribution networks. He would often show up at local movie theaters to implore his audiences, asking patrons to persuade their friends to come see his film. Or when he was riding his motorcycle on the streets, he would stop and try to sell movie tickets to anyone he ran

[112] Tsai Ming-liang, interview by Andrew Huang, *Taiwan News* (Taipei, Taiwan), February 18, 2005.

into. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis call this a "performative act," which later became a routine in the festival circuit at colleges, where he would break down in a typical "meet the director" session with his frantic speech and sometimes emotional outbursts.[113] What Tsai was mostly concerned with during his impromptu appearances was the under-appreciation of art cinema. Since the 1980s, Taiwan's movie theaters had been dominated either by commercial films or nothing. Tsai is consistently resentful of the Taiwanese government for changing the laws and opening the door for foreign imports, even though the government did fund New Wave Cinema for it to flourish. Taiwan opened up its doors to foreign commercial cinema (mostly Hong Kong action films and Hollywood blockbusters) too quickly, which brought the official decline of Taiwanese film production by the end of the 1980s. In a talk Tsai delivered at National Central University in Taiwan, the filmmaker argued that, although auteur cinema had existed in Taiwan for about 25 years, "The Taiwanese New Wave did not really succeed in creating a large cinephilic audience with a distinguished taste and artistic sense."[114] After the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema in 1980, attention to New Cinema was replaced by an influx of imported blockbusters (such as the James Bond series, *The Godfather*, *Indiana Jones*, and many film adaptations from Chinese-language novelist Jin Yong) that have dominated Taiwan cinema ever since. For Tsai, there is an apparent urge to be fully committed to creating films that challenge mainstream audiences and the spectatorship.

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[113] Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 218.
[114] Erik Bordeleau, Chi-Chun Chang, Shumay Lin, and Beth Tsai, "On the Uses and Misuses of Cinema," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 58 (March 2011).

The French Connection

Tsai's authorial voice also benefits from a long cultivation of the unique French cinephilia tradition. The recent discussions on cinematic slowness provide an opportunity to raise some important but underexplored questions relating to international cinephilia and Tsai Ming-liang's films. I am not suggesting here that, however, slow cinema equates to the French cinephilia. My intention here is to acknowledge this approach in providing more nuanced insights into the intersections of Tsai's filmmaking style, including questions of the slow style, the made-for-festivals films, as well as their imbricated relationship.

Emerging at the moment when technology threatens to obliterate film's materiality, slow cinema is characterized by its minimalism and slow tempo. This cinematic phenomenon is termed "slow" because it often takes *too long* for action to happen, not because of the absence of action. Here contextualized in a culture of slow cinema, Tsai's films are a temporal site to meditate between stillness and movement. As a resistance to what Gilles Deleuze termed "the movement-image,"[115] the viewing process involves "a trope of waiting that may, for some spectators, become a source of boredom."[116] This "boredom" lies in the technical use of static long takes (but not slow motion), identified as a hallmark of the cinema of slowness. What distinguishes Tsai

[115] Taken from Henri Bergson's concept of duration (durée), Deleuze regards film as a particular kind of "thought" or "time" machine that allows thinking (or cinematographic thinking), though not unconsciously, to be made visible and meditated through cinematic images. Basically, Deleuze's conception of cinema is a medium for imagining and imaging the world. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
[116] Song, *Tsai Ming-Liang*, 16.

Ming-liang among the group of slow cinema filmmakers (excluding predecessors such as Andrei Tarkovsky and Chantal Akerman), according to Song Hwee Lim, is the rich relationship between the French cinephilia and a cinema of the auteur that informs Tsai's work. The first issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1951 may have been a key propagator auteurism, which saw the director as the person responsible for a film's aesthetics and mise-en-scene. American film critic Andrew Sarris also advocates the idea that "The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels."[117] Tsai then, is not only an auteur fascinated with the French New Wave, he is also a practical entrepreneur. In Song-yong Sing's view, to be given an opportunity to work with the Louvre and make a film like *Visage* allows Tsai to utilize his auteur status to its fullest extent.[118] For example, Tsai's entrepreneurship can be best exemplified when he decided not to go through traditional venues of distribution (DVDs and theatrical release). Instead, he came up with selling limited edition of *Visage*'s reel print (along with a contract that states exhibit rules and regulations), stored in a hand-crafted cypress wood box, selling each for 1,000,000 NTD (approximately $33,300 USD). This act of selling collector's item at an exorbitant price bespeaks the director's distribution strategy as well as *who* was granting the prestige. Tsai's romantic auteurism, then, contributes to a new thinking of auteur theory.

In Taiwan, Tsai's film aesthetics—the unbearably long take, static camera, minimal dialogue, and incomprehensible story lines—have bewildered the viewers, and received both raves and criticism. Because of the lack of action and slow tempo, his

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[117] Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," *Film Culture* (Winter 1962-3): 1-8.
[118] Song-yong Sing, *Projecting Tsai Ming-liang: Towards Transart Cinema* (Taipei, Wunan, 2014), 143.

works were perceived as "box office poison" by local audiences. What changed the local perception was when Tsai's films began getting recognition at international film festivals in the 1990s, particularly those of Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. Domestic film critics, festival goers, and cinéastes often find themselves compelled to invoke the names of European auteurs as the lens through which to validate Taiwan New Cinema—François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Michaelangelo Antonioni, to name a few.[119] European critics were also quick to claim their approval after Taiwan New Cinema made significant inroads into "A-list" festivals in Europe. The famous *Cahiers du Cinema* critic Olivier Assayas (and now acclaimed filmmaker), even implied that the French New Wave had been resurrected in Taiwan, thereby designating Europe, as the origin of the global new wave phenomenon.[120]

Being associated with *both* the French New Wave and Taiwan New Wave thus integrated Tsai into the vocabulary of critics and scholars who subsequently measured and marked him with other New Wave directors alike. For example, Olivier Nicklaus was probably one of the first to compare Tsai to Truffaut after viewing *Rebels of the Neon God*, about which he commented, "Lee Kang-sheng to Tsai Ming-liang is like who Jean-Pierre Léaud is to François Truffaut."[121] Guillaume Malaurie in *L'Express* referred to Tsai's pessimistic approach and rich metaphors of homosexuality rendered in long

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[119] Here I refer to a group of domestic film critics who carried literary influences and Western theories into defending Taiwan New Cinema, including Peggy Chiao Hsiung-ping (film scholar and critic), Edmond Wong (director of Taipei Film Archive), Hsiao Yeh (novelist, writer, producer at CMPC), and Li Yu Hsin (film critic, journalist).
[120] Olivier Assayas, "Notre Reporter en République de Chine," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 366 (1984): 57-66.
[121] Olivier Nicklaus, "On retrouve les obsessions du cineaste : famille sclérosante, appartement vide et inondé. De film en film, on reconnaît les mêmes acteurs, en particulier [Kang-sheng Lee], qui est à Tsai Ming-liang ce que Jean-Pierre Léaud était à François Truffaut. Une reference," *La Croix* (France), March 25, 1998. My translation.

sequences as "néo-Antonioniesque" (resembling Michelangelo Antonioni).[122] Some compared the performances. In describing the last scene in *Vive L'Amour* (1994), Serge Kaganski wrote: "At the end [of the film], when the girl can no longer refrain from sobbing, reminds me of Jeanne Moreau in *La Nuit* (1961)."[123] To Noel Herpe, certain moments in *Vive L'Amour* reminded him not only of Robert Bresson's films, but also novels by Julien Green (American novelist who wrote primarily in French).[124] French critics also liked to discuss some of the recurring themes and philosophical concerns in Tsai's films, such as *la durée* (the Deleuzian duration), death, nostalgia, loneliness, emptiness, sleep, mediation, and silence. The most frequent and immediate response to Tsai's *c'est long, très long* take is that it works as a stand-in for the director's pessimistic look at the vanishing future of cinema: it is dark, ghostly, painful, and desperate.[125] Without the outreach of festivals and attention to aesthetic qualities and motifs that are articulated and circulated by curators, film reviewers, journalists, and scholars, Tsai's films would not have reached a wider international audience.

Tsai Ming-liang is one of many Taiwanese filmmakers who attained international recognition in recent years. Still, the recognition he received via the international festival circuit surpasses that of his predecessors. It is hard to imagine how Tsai would have

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[122] Guillaume Malaurie, "Tsai Ming-liang autopsie, au fil d'ellipses et de hors-champs signifiants, une jeunesse insoumise et pessimiste. Et égrène solitude, incommunicabilité, (homo)sexualité en de longs plans-séquences riches en métaphores (…) Parcouru de cercles d'attirances, de répulsions et de sentiments dévastés, le style néo-antonioniesque de Tsai Ming-liang s'imposait déjà en 1992 et en imposait. Il s'est depuis, amplement confirmé," *L'Express* (France), March 26, 1998. My translation.

[123] Serge Kaganski, "A la fin, quand la jeune fille ne peut plus sèpêcher de sangloter, telle Jeanne Moreau au bout de *La Nuit*…" *Les Inrockuptibles* (France), April 5, 1995. My translation.

[124] Noel Herpe, "Vive l'amour, l'enfer du même," *Positif* no. 410 (April 1995): 25.

[125] Jacques Morice, "[…] c'est d'un pessimisme glaçant quant à l'avenir du cinéma…obscure et fantomatique," *Télérama* (France), July 21, 2004. My translation.

attained this iconic status without entering the international festival circuit and receiving subsequent endorsements through awards, critical acclaim, and various forms of media exposure. The international visibility of his films ultimately led to the articulation and discussion of themes and visual styles in his films. These stylistic and thematic traits qualified his status as an auteur and set up a collection of anticipating qualities for his next film. In this respect, film festivals provide films with a set of perceived qualities otherwise unavailable outside those networks of exhibition. The favorable festival conditions thus contributed to the evolving and historically unique conceptions of Tsai Ming-liang's films.

Tsai Ming-liang's Movie Theater

So how did Tsai Ming-liang end up at the Louvre? It is said that before the Louvre decided on Tsai, the museum curator went down a list of more than 200 directors before the Louvre made its selection. Tsai also believed that the Louvre wanted to work with him as early as 2004, after *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003) was screened at Venice.[126] Here I suggest the interrelations among the recent set of Tsai's films and video installation presents an intriguing point of entry into the peculiar dimension of Tsai's artistic practice: that of the cinematic apparatus. In their chronological trajectory, the recurring theme that binds Tsai's films together is the movie theater. As has been previously argued, the films of Tsai Ming-liang are haunted by the ghosts of European

[126] Tsai, *Taipei Times*, 13.

films of the past. To Fran Martin, *What Time* is about the ideological divide and modernity gap between East and West, in which the film illustrates Taiwan as the locus of "temporally and geographically distant modernities."[127] With the film's loving attention to the city of Paris, the fascination with French culture, and Truffaut's film *Les quatre cents coups*, Martin interprets the film as "problematizing its own westward trajectory, […] Paris is also figured, precisely, as *the land of the dead*," in the mediation of Shiang Chyi, who stands in a Paris cemetery, gazing at the grave stone figure.[128] Equally, I think a reference to silent cinema and the movie theater in the film marks the consciousness of time lag. In *What Time*, Hsiao-Kang, who sells watches on the streets of Taipei, wanders into an old movie theater, steals a clock from the corridor, and sneaks into the auditorium, where he attempts to reset the clock—as he has been doing, bizarrely, throughout the film. Hsiao-Kang's scheme is sabotaged by a dumpy man who follows him into the theater and snatches the clock from him and lures him into the men's bathroom, only to find the strange man standing naked in an open stall, with the stolen oversized clock covering his crotch area (see Fig. 2). It is humorous, whimsical, camp, and queer, all at the same time. In another scene, Hsiao-Kang is seen drinking a bottle of red wine (a way of bringing himself closer to the French culture) on a rooftop and climbs onto the clock tower, attempting to adjust the clock hands with an extended grip. Hsiao-Kang is seen performing a very Harold Lloyd-esque stunt; by that I mean a post-colonial reference to the famous clock tower scene in *Safety Last!* (1923) when Lloyd grabs the hands of a clock and can barely hang on to the tower. Here, the reference is not merely an

[127] Fran Martin, "The European Undead: Tsai Ming-liang's Temporal Dysphoria," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 27 (July 2003).
[128] Ibid.

intertextual reference to a film from the older silent period but also, through re-imagining and the queering of time, reflects a kind of dialogue between East and West about the modernity gap.

Fig. 2

The intersection of time and space is further explored in Tsai's next feature film, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003, hereafter *Goodbye*), where the film consists shots and long takes of corridors, dark rooms, and bathroom stalls in the later demolished Fu-ho Grand Theater—the same movie theater seen in *What Time*. The opening scenes of *Goodbye*, like the title, literally pay homage to a classic Chinese *wixia* film (martial arts genre): King Hu's *Dragon Inn* (1967). This is done by intercutting and juxtaposing the illuminated screen in front, along with the darkened theater, red auditorium chairs, and a crowd of spectators' heads, producing reflexivity of the conditions of cinematic viewing. One who is certainly an aficionado of Tsai's works would immediately spot a cameo

appearance of Tsai's head among the audiences watching *Dragon Inn* (see Fig. 3). Alternating between the screen and the spectator, the projection of King Hu's film runs through the full length of *Goodbye*, with off-screen characters drifting around the theater like ghosts. By the converging and colliding use of martial arts films from the glory days

of Taiwanese cinema, *Goodbye* is really saying goodbye to the golden age of cinema.

Fig. 3

However, the mere citation of King Hu's film and reflexivity is not enough to unravel the complexities in cinematic expression, or *mise en abyme* in film. As Jean Ma observes,

> This layering of screen times and histories—a golden age of Chinese cinema associated with King Hu's film and its decline as documented by Tsai's capture of the decaying theater on the eve of its closure—imparts a pronounced density and

> resonance to a narrative present tense otherwise nearly devoid of action, drama, or event. (336)

This is not to say that there is an absence of action or events in *Goodbye*, because the entire film is built on the spectator's experience with the cinema-machine. This goes beyond films or the mirroring of films themselves, but also the operations connected with them (the screen, the projection booth, the darkened room) and the space of movie theater that fixated the spectator (rows of auditorium seats). The emphasis I would like to make here is the "layering of screen times and histories" as fractured spatio-temporality, which characterizes the film as the center of the entire process. This spatio-temporality goes beyond the dislocation of the main character—a Japanese tourist who stumbled upon the theater and is at loss with everything that surrounds him—but deals with the intersection of different time periods (1967 and 2003) in a historical theater that no longer exists in the present time. If the reflexive mirroring of the one film in the other conveys an awareness of the slipping away of time, *Goodbye* can be seen as emblematic of Tsai's nostalgia for cinema, as he once said at a public appearance: "You might not feel inspired when you watch the film, but the memory of that viewing experience may haunt you for several days."[129] Indeed, with the entirety of the story of *Goodbye* playing out in a decrepit movie theater, the film is not only echoing the movie screen within but, in a larger sense, storing the memory of the Fu-ho Grand Theater on screen.

If the example of *Goodbye* highlights both the conditions of film projection and the film itself as a text, then the reuse of seats from the Fu-ho Grand Theater in another

[129] Erik Bordeleau, Chi-Chun Chang, Shumay Lin, and Beth Tsai, "On the Uses and Misuses of Cinema," *Senses of Cinemai*, no. 58 (March 2011).

cinema theater on the campus of National Central University demonstrates the traces and extension of "haunted cinema." Tsai himself, although not part of the project of shipping the seats from a demolished theater to a new one, is a strong supporter of the idea. "Nothing in our life should be tossed away easily," Tsai says, when promoting his latest video installation. "Ultimately, I want to put everything back to use."[130] And this is exactly what he did in the exhibition *It's a Dream*. This work featured the extended 22-minute version (apart from Cannes' three-minute short), and the original seats that were tore from the abandoned theater were shipped to Venice as part of the installation. The red leather theaters chairs play a major role than being merely a backdrop "seating": audiences were able to (re)create their own unique viewing experience in the pavilion. Tsai cannot hide his fondness for these seats when he describes them as not just any normal seats, but distinguishable in style; they are reusable and, as the spectator sit on the seats to watch the footage he made, "you are *in* my work," he says to the audience.[131]

[130] Ibid.
[131] Bordeleau, Chang, Lin, and Tsai.

Fig. 4

The viewing experience of *It's a Dream* is a complex one. When Cannes invited Tsai to shoot a three-minute film about the movie theater, he went back to Malaysia for inspiration and found a historic movie theater that seated between 800 and 1000 people, the size of audiences in the 1950s, during the golden age of cinema. Back then, going to the movies was like a ritual; movie theaters were not attached to shopping malls nor were they built as multiplexes; movies were shown on a traditional theater stage. Tsai was sentimental over the gradual loss of theaters and the change of life style it represented. For Tsai, cinema is *always* nostalgic and works as autobiographical meditation. The director also feels that cinema is on the slope of decline, and every year, when he goes to the Cannes Film Festival, he complains that people are more interested in celebrity than

films. This gives him a mission to find a new home for his films, which turns out to be at the museum. As he attempts to present a collective memory of the golden age of cinema through his work, the interrelations among Tsai's films multiply and intensify in degree at the intersections of history, memory, and autobiographical experience.

The peculiarity of this installation is not just about the memory of cinema but the space the seats inhabit. The way the seats are set up has little resemblance to typical theater seating. Instead, the red cloth chairs are placed diagonally, with no rows of chairs lined up parallel to the screen or to others; the seats are intentionally set up to intersect with each other, disrupting the customary sense of viewing (see Fig. 5). As the director declaimed, the audience is participating in his work. When his film is placed in the white gallery space rather than the black movie theater, the viewing experience has been transformed from the darkness of the movie theater Roland Barthes proposed in "Leaving a Movie Theater" to art appreciation in a white cube.[132] Notably, when watching a movie in a theater, one is less compelled to move about or leave in the middle of the screening, contrary to the flexibility the spectator would have in an art gallery because it is situated in a (seemingly) open space. In addition, the constant looping of the film screening removes the exclusive regulated relationship a theater film screening would have with time and space. Art patrons enjoy this non-exclusiveness of the screening in that one could enter, leave, and re-enter the viewing at one's convenience. In this respect, while *Goodbye* proclaims the death (or memory) of cinema, this installation of the theater seats announced the resurrection of cinema. As Andrew V. Uroskie notes, in thinking about the postwar emergence of cinema in the gallery space as expanded cinema, "It is not a

[132] Roland Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

question of simply introducing cinema into the gallery situation. Rather, it was a process of thinking how the temporality and kineticism of the moving image might be divorced from its habitual situation within [the] commercial theatrical project."[133] This is not to say that all work placed in the gallery space is not theatrical, or that any work placed in a movie theater should not be considered art. The point here is the emergence of a new institutional situation for moving images, one divorced from the theatrical viewing of

cinema, an opportunity to re-approach cinema in this alternative situation.

Fig. 5

[133] Andrew V. Uroskie, "The Philosophical Toy as Model: Duchamp, Breer, and the Postwar Emergence of Cinema in the Gallery Space," *Secuencias* Vol. 32 (2011): 34-58.

While the spectatorial experience of *It's a Dream* takes place in a mock theater space, the deliberate disorientation of cinema viewing implies a more precise construction of the spectator as a conscious dreamer. The installation is composed of two elements that cannot be separated: the film on the screen and the chairs taken from a "dead" movie theater. Just like the cinematic apparatus is a totality of what constitutes the viewing situations by ways of (1) the film itself, (2) the way moving images are constructed (cinematic language and techniques), (3) the conditions of film projection, and (4) the conscious as well as unconscious perceptual process of spectatorship.[134] Tsai Ming-liang is deploying the concept of interpellation when he asserts that you, as the spectator, are *in* his work because, by sitting on chairs that are both in the work and outside of it, on screen as an imprint and off screen as actuality, the spectator is in a space watching a space that no longer exists, mutually reinforcing the spectator as always already the subject. When one sits on the chair watching the same chairs on screen, it not only provides a ruptured time-space, but also, because of the particular way chairs are placed, people can spend time observing their neighbors and let other art patrons block or disturb one's view. Without the blackness of the movie theater and the self-regulating courtesy to others to make the spectator's entering a dream state a smoother transition, Tsai purposefully situates the spectator to be fully aware of oneself, of the viewing experience, and of the existence of the neighbors interfering with oneself. While the original spatio-temporality of the Malaysian movie theater has entered into the cinematic space, the spectators actively making use of the *real* space is also a reconstruction and

[134] Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 145.

resurrection of the cinema. "It sounds like a contradiction," Tsai says, "but movies need to leave today's theaters in order to be resurrected."[135]

At Home at the Museum

When the spectator sits on the chair that is "borrowed" from the past, stripped from a foreign theater, and stretched out from the onscreen space, this totality of viewing experience conjures rich possibilities for viewers to explore their own memories of cinema. Similarly, *Visage* is also about leaving the movie theater and engages in a meta-cinematic cruising of memory and nostalgia. *Visage* is Tsai Ming-liang's ninth feature film, and is also not his first transnational production between Taiwan and France. His fourth feature, *The Hole*, was commissioned by French production company Haut et Court and the European channel La Sept-Arte as part of their *fin de millénaire* series *2000 Vu Par* (as a result, the film has two cuts: a 95-minute feature film and a 60-minute television version). Tsai's eighth film, *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*, was financed as part of the New Crowned Hope project, a festival celebrating the 25th anniversary of Mozart's birth, and was loosely based the story on *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute). While Lee Kang-Sheng played both parts as the patient in comma and vagabond, this film is violently torn between joy and revulsion that other memorable *Magic Flute* characters, Queen of the Night or armored men, were nowhere to be seen in the story. If these cross-cultural productions predicated Tsai's working with the Louvre, it is also worth noting

[135] Tsai Ming-liang, *Taipei Times*, 13.

that instead of presenting the glamorous side of the museum, Tsai has his eyes set on the secret chambers, dusty shafts, and grimy underground tunnels. The film centers on a Taiwanese director, Hsiao-Kang, attempting to shoot a film on the Louvre grounds. The film-within-a-film is based on the story of Salome, the stepdaughter of Herod who asked for the beheading of John the Baptist. Like many of Tsai's previous films, *Visage* deals with alienated people wandering around in an empty museum. The film also paints a vague, puzzling, but aesthetically pleasing picture that bears the least sense of narrative of all of Tsai's films.

While Tsai attempts to paint a pretty picture of many faces with cinema, the Louvre is the most important facade the director tries to visualize. Between the massive collections of artworks and maze-like corridors, the film, rich in its art-historian contexts, may be unfathomable to many non-Western onlookers, like Hsiao-Kang in the film. The Louvre is a mysterious and sometimes opaque place, incomprehensible in any sense. Like the characters who wander in this labyrinth, struggling to find an exit, the film also invites its onlooker to shuttle between narrow corridors, prowling in freight elevators, checking out a web of underground tunnels. While the film title literally translates to *face*, we are not really looking at the appearance of things, but exploring the façade of museum buildings that operate like organisms. Interestingly enough, among the vast collections and galleries, Tsai only opted to show the most famous Grand Gallery at the end, where Léaud climbed out of a hole in the Louvre wall below a Leonardo da Vinci painting of John the Baptist. *Visage* only makes sense between what is shown and the gaps between the scenes, trying to break through isolation and parallel worlds. In other words, the film's rich symbolism is rendered in the physical space and the actors reacting

to the surroundings of unseen fears and urges. *Visage* in ways echoes *Goodbye*, which is filled with metaphors of ghosts and the living people. There is one scene with Jeanne Moreau and Fanny Ardant, who appear out of nowhere occupying the famous, luxurious oval dinner table in the room of Napoleon III's apartment, while later the same composition is repeated, chairs empty, as if they simply vanished like ghosts. *Visage* is a very referential film, containing nods to other films and even referential to Tsai's own earlier films—as if trying to recover its past lives. At one point in the story Lee Kang-Sheng is outside with Léaud and a little bird, and Léaud says about the bird: "Titi is a great director." The conversation is followed by exchanges of directors' names: Pasolini, Fellini, Antonioni, Orson Welles, Buster Keaton, Murnau, Truffaut, Carl Theodor Dreyer, Tarkovsky, and Kenji Mizoguchi. In *Visage*'s final segment, ghosts and fantasies manifest for a moment as characters perceive each other: Salome comes to kill Lee in a silent, seductive dance; Ardant comforts Léaud as they look into the mirror and tells him he will be okay; the model shuts off the apartment light as she says to her boyfriend, "Just look at me and you'll love me." As characters begin to reconcile, these three relationships symbolize people reaching for what they can't see or even do.

Whether the characters are real or illusions hardly matters. Unlike Buster Keaton in *Sherlock Jr*. (1924) who he climbs into the movie screen and lingers between different places (courtyard, street road, cliff, jungle, desert, rock, snow) and dives, jumps, falls, dodges, and climbs into the next frame and landscape, *Visage* is literally displaced in terms of the actual screening venues. When the film premiered in Taiwan, the screening took place, unconventionally, at the National Theater Concert Hall in Taipei. Built in 1987, this hall is the most prestigious venue in the capital of Taiwan to host world-class

musical, dance, and theater performances, but never in its history had it shown cinema. To show a film in such an unusual space encourages a different kind of movie-going experience. Let us return to Barthes' mediation on "Leaving the Movie Theater." Barthes argues that the captivating story on screen is produced by the mechanism and architecture of cinema. A successful cinematic event is one in which the spectator is perpetually fixed to the mirror-screen, temporarily gluing the cinephile's gaze to the screen. Barthes describes this situation as pre-hypnotic and prefigured by the darkness of the theater: "Not only is the dark the very substance of reverie; it is also the 'color' of a diffused eroticism…it is in this urban dark that the body's freedom is generated."[136] Most importantly, it is just not the naturalness of darkness, but where our bodies are at: "Whenever I hear the word *cinema*, I can't help thinking *hall*, rather than *film*."[137] Barthes asks us to accept the hypnotic effects of cinema largely because of the darkness of the theater and the architecture of the cinema experience (sound, the space of projection, the mass), making possible bliss of discretion (anonymous, populated, numerous). The fascination of the cinema requires us to divorce our minds from our bodies, in which the spectator is both conscious of and unconscious of the dream state one enters, facilitated by the darkness of the movie theater. So what happens when modernist filmmakers attempt to move beyond the dichotomy of either transfixed by the mirror images or disruption to the mechanisms of projection?

"This is not the most appropriate site to show movies," said Tsai on stage, as he gleefully introduced *Visage* to premiere at the National Theater Concert Hall on September 22, 2009. Tsai continued to remark apologetically to the audience that they

[136] Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," 346.
[137] Ibid.

might notice a few scratchy noises caused by the running film reel (because the projector was not set up in a separate room), or worse—when sound failed to synchronize during projection. Tsai's concerns may be too trivial for anyone growing up watching films with a running projector (instead of the digital projection) or who has hands-on experience with filmmaking, but it is precisely the working of cinematic apparatus that makes most audiences forget their surroundings when watching a movie. Audiences are "stitched"[138] into the diegetic world by a chain of cinematic techniques; in other words, spectators perceive the narrative from images and their symbolic meanings, and these registers do not require exploration of events happening outside the frame. So when a director like Tsai urged his audiences not to pay attention to what was happening in the actual *space* where his film was to premiere, he inadvertently highlighted his audiences' senses to look out for any extra-diegetic incidents or technical mistakes, turning this ordinary viewing experience into an unordinary one. If going to the cinema evokes a site specific, pilgrimatic experience to cinephiles that is akin to going to the art gallery or museum to view the original paintings, *Visage*'s non-traditional exhibition venue highlights the space as the protagonist, and in such concept the space configuration is the main drive to the viewers' sensory experience of image operations. In short, this exhibition practice decenters the aura of the movie theaters.

Conclusion

[138] Silverman, "Suture," 194–236.

Situating moving images in art galleries, museums, or music hall shows how Tsai Ming-liang crosses the boundaries between cinema and theater. These exhibition represent not just Tsai's move to recycle abandoned objects and places; he is also criticizing the modern lifestyle of fast speeds, overconsumption and waste in which objects, along with the memories of using them, were simply disregarded. In *What Time,* the movie theater is only part of the larger intersecting dislocation of time and space (Paris and Taipei, the traveler and the local merchant), and this temporal relationship of simultaneity is extended with *Goodbye* as it returns to an abolished movie theater. *It's a Dream* displaces patrons and spectators alike in between the darkened theater and the white gallery. While the original spatio-temporality of the cinematic apparatus is preserved in Tsai's feature length films, *It's a Dream* and *Visage* represent a spatial practice that marks the transition from movie theaters to new exhibition sites—a move to prompt audiences to rethink the meaning of cinema. In the long run, what Tsai Ming-liang is doing is not just about embracing new ways of resurrecting the cinema, but about an alternative home to cinema (as opposed to the digital platform). Given the transnational nature of content and production, Tsai's films offer a critique of the intricacies between exhibition practices and how audiences consume plural understanding of cultural flow and the moving image.

Chapter Four | Transnational Voyages: Intertextuality and Postcolonial Temporality in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films

Transnational cinema offers unique opportunities for reflecting on globalization, cross-cultural production and reception, and the theme of East meets West. Hou Hsiao-hsien's two recent cinematic tributes—to French director in *Flight of the Red Balloon* (Le Voyage du Ballon Rouge, 2007), and to Japanese auteur Yasujiro Ozu in *Café Lumiere*—offer two versions of cross-cultural and intertextual reference. *Café Lumiere* (2003) is a transnational homage invited by Shochiku studios commemorating the centenary of Yasujiro Ozu's birth. *Café Lumiere* reveals the transitory of time: a contemporary Tokyo that quintessentially parallels the post-war Tokyo in the 1950s, but differs in sentiments and a modernized look at women's roles and family-centered lives. Hou's other film, *Flight of the Red Balloon*, is the Taiwanese director's first French-language picture, and also his first film made outside of Asia. Both *Café Lumiere* and *Flight of the Red Balloon* are more than a Taiwanese director paying homages to world cinema auteurs. Nicholas de Villiers has suggested that *Flight of the Red Balloon* goes beyond "the 'influence' of European cinema masterpieces and the reverence implied by the word 'homage'." [139] Like Tsai Ming-liang's *What Time Is It There?* (2001), *Flight of the Red Balloon* incorporates a story of a Chinese woman in Paris, and the dialogic relations between Taiwan and France (or Taipei and Paris). In *Café Lumiere*, Hou presents a warm sentiment that

[139] Nicholas de Villiers, "Chinese Cheers: Hou Hsiao-hsien and Transnational Homage," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 58 (March 2011).

Taiwanese share a modern temporality with Japan, underlining cultural resonances and the attractiveness of Japanese culture to Asian audiences.

Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien is one of the most discussed filmmakers in Asian cinema today. The main reason for the extensive attention is on his aesthetics that has made an incredible mark on world cinema. Many have tried to fit Hou into existing categories and paradigms of art cinema, and sought for ready-made explanations for the origins of his aesthetics. A common, generalized cultural explanations is the "Chineseness" in Hou's work, however this runs the risk of misrepresenting the specificity and histories of Taiwan that gave rise to Hou's unique career. Another common critical lens is to speak of influences, that film scholars often argue how Hou's style resembles, echoes, or recalls that of a certain auteur of world cinema. Especially formalist scholarship on Hou often placed emphasis on identifying the resemblances and affinities between Hou and Ozu.[140] Such approaches are not without merit, as long as attention is also paid to differences. But Hou claims he never saw Ozu's film until after he had made *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1985), by which time the often conspicuous comparisons between him and the Japanese master were already proliferated. Moreover, aside from Godard's *Breathless* (1960) and Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973)—which were more catalysts to help him break from existing practices in Taiwan than models to be followed—Hou has cited a limited number of influences. As James Udden has argued, Hou's style emerged from the particular strands of condition in Taiwan: a confluence of government policies, a youthful and collective rejection of the standard commercial filmmaking of the time, and Hou's own way of improvising and almost non-scripting of

[140] See writings from Godfrey Cheshire, I-fen Wu, Tony McKibbin, Ian Johnston, for example.

the performance. Hou's films nevertheless "stand well on their own and do not need to be somehow 'justified' with reference to influences or international standards."[141]

Consequently, neither *Flight of the Red Balloon* nor *Café Lumiere* can be simply contextualized in the cultural conditions from which Hou arose. The question remains: what makes these two films unique and stand out from Hou's body of work? I argue Hou offers us one notable example among contemporary East Asian filmmakers that mark the shift from their concern with the national to that with the transnational community. Hou's film practice remains that he neither developed his work in isolation nor entirely from external influences, but evidenced in the transnational encounters. Encounters and trancultural exchanges such as funding schemes, festival platform, and art house distribution has allowed Hou's cinematic practice to expand outside of the national sentiments, and in search for a new peripheral subject.

In this chapter, I argue that through Hou Hsiao-hsien's cinematic re-articulation for local and international audiences, his transnational filmmaking represents an envisioning of a global culture that highlights new modes of East-West connection and imagined communities. Hou's transnational filmmaking since the 2000s thus provides an opportunity to explore the question of transcultural citation and the question of postcolonial temporality. In other words, transnational cinema intersects with the postcolonial under the influence of globalization. The films are transnational in terms of the context of production, circulation and reception, as well as their textual elements. It is rich in intertextuality that broadens our understanding of the intricate relations among

[141] James Udden, "Taiwanese popular cinema and the strange apprenticeship of Hou Hsiao-hsien," in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.1 (2003): 121.

cinemas, nations, and cross-border flows. Both films' in-text and meta-textual citations of European new wave and Japanese post-war cinema mediate on the influences of global art cinema history, and an ambivalence toward modernization that has long been regarded as a Western project. By unpacking the film's modification and exchange of iconography, I attest to see how Hou was able to transform a national classic into a work that is recognizable and perceivable by foreign and domestic viewers. Particularly, as Japan stood as the center of Asia—in terms of how Japanese popular culture and its products and exported, circulated, and received within Asian[142] —Hou's films show the global diffusion shared by transnational filmmaking is not just producing homogeneous East-West communities. Rather, it is intensifying cultural regionalization across the world. In the case of *Café Lumiere*, it represents an emergent regionalized culture of East Asia.

Hou Hsiao-hsien's Transnational Voyages

To illustrate the potential of Hou Hsiao-hsien's films for opening up ways to imagine transnational communities, we should begin by interrogating the period of his transnational filmmaking, focusing on how the aesthetics and transcultural reception are crucial to such an imagination. The year 1995 marked a transition for Hou from making so-called "national" cinema to international co-production, beginning with the film *Good Men, Good Women* (1995), a film that attempts to locate the historical trauma in post-war

[142] Such as technologies (VCRs, karaoke machines, the Walkman); cartoons and animation; and computer and video games like Nintendo Wii's Super Mario.

China and Taiwan. In this film, the co-production experience with Japan allowed Hou to redirect his attention from local historiography to a transnational look at Taiwanese history that is characterized by the inevitable cultural geometry between Taiwan, Japan, and China. *Good Men, Good Women* focused on a turbulent part of Taiwan's history—colonized by Japan for fifty years before World War II, then took over by the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, hereafter the KMT government) with violet repression. This thematic thread is a continuation of Hou's most acclaimed and critical films, *A City of Sadness* (1989) and *The Puppetmaster* (1993). Together, these three films are known as Hou's trilogy of the unspoken history of Taiwan. In a series of elusiveness and exhausting long takes, Hou's trilogy depicts the history of Taiwan through different individual stories and perspectives in their lives and times. In Dai Jinhua's observation, "Hou's Taiwan trilogy violates political taboos and shows a rift in history and emotion."[143] Deployed in the same way as *A City of Sadness*, *Good Men, Good Women* does not chronicle historical events in a straightforward manner. Rather, the film juxtaposes the present by expressing the past through personal emotions and memories, aided by a set of long shots and long takes. These reminiscences, characters, and formal structures are symbolic of the difference between China (People's Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China). On the one hand, *Good Men, Good Women* sporadically suggests the characters' resistance against KMT rule and the subtle criticism on the subsequent White Terror (1949-1987).[144] On the other, the leftist resistance against the Japanese rule is almost non-existent in the narrative. This part of the Taiwanese history,

[143] Dai Jinhua, "Hou Hsiao-Hsien's films: pursuing and escaping history," trans. Zhang Jingyuan, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2008), 248.
[144] In Taiwanese history, the White Terror was the suppression of political rebels following the February 28 (228) Incident.

of which patriotic young people joined the resistance against the Japanese government in late 1930s and early 1940s, is implicitly presented in the film-within-a-film as a historical drama. In blending history with fiction, both past and present are continuously juxtaposed; *Good Men, Good Women* tells Taiwan's history from an opaque distance. It is a work that undertakes unveiling the complex colonial history of Taiwan.

Hou Hsiao-hsien's next international co-production was *Café Lumiere,* dedicated to the memory of Yasujiro Ozu, a turning point in his transnational filmmaking, also his first film outside Chinese-speaking countries. The film follows a pregnant freelance writer, Yoko, and her daily, un-choreographed routine of riding the trains, visiting friends, and going to coffee shops in Tokyo. Occasionally she would run into her rail-fan friend, Hajime, who is working on a sound project on recording train noise. The fact that Shochiku studios—the home base for most of Ozu's films in his entire career[145]—was willing to solicit a Taiwanese director to pay homage, says something about Hou's cross-cultural influences and the translational ability in his approach to cinema. When the film came out in 2003, international film critics focused their analysis comparing Ozu's films, and were eager to know if Hou could outshine Ozu, one of Japan and world cinema's illuminators of all time. Concerned with such disadvantage, film critic A. O. Scott asked in his review that "is it possible to make movies in Ozu's manner?" In answering his own question, Scott concluded that *Café Lumiere* is "a chance to witness one major filmmaker paying tribute to another in the form of a rigorously minor film," because as it stands in

[145] Ozu made a total of fifty-three films in his career, and all but three for the Shochiku studio.

relation to Ozu's films, in particular *Tokyo Story* (1953), "a faint, diminished echo."[146] But the film is not a simple formalist echo of *Tokyo Story*, nor is it just about the story of a single mother going through a break-up; it is a film that functions as a terrain for the negotiation of cultures deemed suitable for a transnational audience.

Critical writings on comparing Ozu and Hou often concentrate on the formal and thematic qualities that are shared between the two directors. Shigehiko Hasumi sees *Café Lumiere* as a tribute to Ozu with "none of the bustle of government and business in the downtown areas, none of the city's skyscrapers, and none of the neon signs of the entertainment districts."[147] In looking at the film that experiences the contestation and intensity of local flows vis-a-vis cosmopolite of Japan's capital, Chris Fujiwara writes, "Hou shows Tokyo as a place to live, drink coffee, eat food, and be with other people" by adopting his distinctive long shot and long take to capture the verisimilitude of every day life.[148] The distinctive long shot and long take is a stylistic consistency that has long been Hou Hsiao-hsien's trademark. Interestingly, it wasn't entirely Hou's decision to arbitrate formal qualities so close to Ozu's. During filming, Shochiku studios laid down many ground rules and restrictions, one of which was to only shoot the film in Japan. Others involved maintaining Ozu's editing style, and the use of Ozu's signature shots and

[146] A. O. Scott, "Like Trains, Crossing but Never Touching," from *The New York Times* (October 16, 2004).
[147] Shigehiko Hasumi, "*Café Lumiere*," in *Rouge* no. 6 (2005).
[148] Chris Fujiwara, "Places and Other Fictions: Film Culture in Tokyo," in *Film Quarterly* Vol. 61, No. 4 (2008): 47.

compositions—such is the "tatami shot" in which the fixed, unmoving camera is placed at a low angle, contrary to the Hollywood conventions of eye-level shot.[149]

Before *Café Lumiere*'s initial release in Japan, Hou worried that the film would be poorly received by the local audience for failing to present the sprit of Ozu, but the common reaction from Japanese audiences were that they felt the film was actually "more Japanese than the work done by Japanese themselves," and "they seldom saw any Japanese director, virtually none, who made a film like this."[150] Many recognized *Café Lumiere*'s thematic reference to Ozu's films, such as the central conceit of women and marriages in *Tokyo Story* and *Late Autumn* (1960). In Hou's modern update, however, the film distinctively concerns a pregnant young woman who determines to raise her child out of wedlock. In exploring similar themes through various perspectives and in a cross-cultural context, Hou provides a cinematic meditation about the lives of Japanese people from a detached point of view, not necessarily from a deep understanding of Japanese culture. Recognizing the language and cultural barrier as a shortcoming, Hou accepted his distance from the culture and worked with it. Shochiku studios' trust with a Taiwanese director—provided with the director's poetic expression in cinema—re-affirms Hou's translational ability to bring a cross-cultural influence of Taiwan and Japan into the film.

Cinematic (Re)Mapping of City Life in *Café Lumiere*

[149] Eye-level shot is often done by placing a camera on shoulder-height, and it is considered to be a subjective shot because this technique is often utilized to imply a character's point of view.
[150] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, interviewed by Harold Manning, in *Metro Lumiere: Hou Hsiao-Hsien a la rencontre de Yasujiro Ozu*. Northern Line Films (Paris), 2004. DVD.

Café Lumiere begins when Yoko, a Japanese freelance writer, has just returned from yet another visit to Taiwan, only this time she finds out that she is pregnant. She nonchalantly informs her parents and close friend Hajime that not only she is pregnant with her Taiwanese boyfriend's child, she is also determined to have this child alone. Although her parents try to express their concern, they ultimately accept and respect her decision. On the surface, the storyline of *Café Lumiere* appears to be simply telling the story of Yoko's; however, many times the film relies on the cinematography as a secondary character. Putting on a privileged observational feel for the viewers, the camera diligently follows Yoko's daily routine of riding the trains and casual run-ins with Hajime, an antique bookstore owner and a rail-fan who spends his leisure time recording train sound. Here, trains function as the primary means of travel for Yoko as she traverses Japan's modern city via its extensive tram-train public transport network to conduct her work and to keep in touch with her friend and family. Through the fluidity of camera shots and the moving trains, the film allows a spectator's mind to stroll around the languid pace of Tokyo streets and trains in the absence of any spectacular, exciting events.

The original film title in Chinese means—as explained by Hou Hsiao-hsien—"A time to rest your mind, to adjust your pace, for the long journey ahead of you."[151] In other words, the study of everyday life becomes a rubric for the observation and documentation of urban space in Tokyo. Hou also noted that he does not think that Yasujiro Ozu was

[151] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, interviewed by Harold Manning, in *Metro Lumiere: Hou Hsiao-Hsien a la rencontre de Yasujiro Ozu*. Northern Line Films (Paris), 2004. DVD.

trying to create an ideal pre-war lifestyle that he was nostalgic for, but rather that Ozu was trying to objectively observe and document the changing times and the transformation of social values in post-War Japan. What Hou was implying was that among all the film directors working in post-war Japan, Ozu established a formidable reputation for crafting realist films that "simultaneously captured the temporality of everyday life and a society that was being transformed by a new world order."[152] The new world order refers to a time when the idea of "vernacular modernities" began to surface—that it became widely recognized that other parts of the world were developing their own versions of modernity—against the assumption of a homogenous modernity under the Western paradigm. For that reason, *Café Lumiere* is not only just a tribute film, but Hou's cinematic rendering of contemporary lives in dialogue with the epoch of Ozu; a contemporary Tokyo in conversation with a postwar Tokyo in 1950s. Like Ozu, Hou is particularly fascinated with trains: in many scenes trains are shown arriving and leaving the station; the sound of the train whistle; rail tracks and other occurrences, as Hou attempts to capture what Japanese call "the savor of life" through cinema. Additionally, the omnipresent train shots allude to a kind of languid pace, a subliminal faithfulness to Japanese society that, like photographs, freeze the occurrence of action in an instant.

First, *Café Lumiere* bears a partial resemblance to Ozu's other feature, *Late Spring* (1949). Consistent to Ozu's style and thematic importance, *Late Spring* is a family drama that depicts the issues of a generation gap in a distant, detached way. Following the same thematic thread, Hou Hsiao-hsien situated *Café Lumiere*'s protagonist Yoko in

[152] Shu-Yeng Chung, "Framing Modern Japanese Domestic Interiors through Cinematic Mapping," *the Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities Conference Proceedings* (2012): 585.

the same framework but with few alterations. For example, rather than devising the daughter's character to get married, as would happen in most of Ozu's films, pregnant Yoko is determined not to wed but to raise her child alone that, in its cultural context, shows a rebellious but determined to be a modern, independent woman. The other approach to form a dialogue with Ozu's work is through the metaphor of mirror. Hou himself commented on this comparison: "It's like placing a mirror in front of [Ozu's film]."[153] This is not to say that Hou was egocentric, because he quickly added that "My observations and insight into the human condition were very objective, but I can't compare with Ozu."[154] To compare cinema to mirror, or filmmaking as a way of mirroring indicates that cinematic images can be analogous to the mirror because of its photographic quality to the real world and its ability to supply a realistic sense of the imaginary. Hou's instinct to describe his film as mirror is encouraging because it correlates with the complexity of *mise en abyme*, a term that is used to describe how the mirror was often used to represent modes of reflection in literary texts. When Hou says "It's like placing a mirror in front," we can look at *Café Lumiere* as the imaginary space for image reproduction, a reflection of another work and the cinematic representation of projecting one's imagination.

The metaphor of mirror shows how Hou honors the master while remaining true to his own vision. Plentiful shots of commuter rail trains in *Café Lumiere* is not only reminiscent to Ozu's *Tokyo Story* or *Late Spring*, the title itself a reference to pioneers of cinema—the Lumiere brothers—and their seminal film of a train entering a station: *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895), a 50-second actuality film that entered

[153] Hou, interviewed by Harold Manning, 2004.
[154] Ibid.

film history as an icon of the medium's origins. The naming is not a coincidence; it is a deliberate reference and emphasis on the transversal aspect of trains moving across the world. The film literally opens with train cars moving across the screen right after the title card that explains Ozu's centenary. This sets up the tone and introduces the prominent character aside from Yoko and Hajime—trains. We follow Yoko transporting between stations, catching glimpses of train doors opening and closing, and looking out the windows from a moving train through point-of-view shot. Other shot compositions included trains moving diagonally in opposite directions and characters obscured by fleeting trains in front of them (see Fig.1&2). Above all, one scene that significantly stands out is a long crane-shot of trains, high on the viaduct, and the camera tilts down slowly. An almost unnoticeable Hajime stands on the platform in the bottom right corner, making him look like a miniature figure (see Fig.3). This, along with the aforementioned shots and compositions—views that are blocked by pedestrians, cars and moving trains—are consistent with Hou's preferred use of long shots and immobile camera to achieve a distant observational feel. In the words of Ian Johnston:

> Hou's cinema is one of distance. The viewer is held back, slightly disengaged from what is happening on the screen, by both an often oblique narrative and the extremely long takes Hou is inclined to use. The shots are not only long, but they often lack any fixed center—the narrative focus is always uncertain, as the characters may leave the frame or the camera may shift one way or another to explore new elements.[155]

[155] Ian Johnston, "Train to Somewhere: Hou Hsiao-hsien Pays Sweet Homage to Ozu in *Café Lumiere*," in *Bright Lights Film Journal* (April 30, 2005).

While critics praised these formal strategies as "magnificent filmmaking,"[156] Hou himself repeatedly explained his use of long shot aesthetic has much to do with economic principle in the shooting conditions. Hou explains:

> The timing of my sequence shots has to do, also, with shooting conditions. I always prefer shooting on location or in interiors that have not been especially set up for the film. Complex camera movements in these conditions are not possible. […] I like to establish a certain distance from the action so as to position myself on the ground of generalities, that is to say, to adopt a point of view that enables a broader understanding of the action and its weight without following it in all its details. (Mazabrard and Strauss, 27-28)

The result allows the camera to capture the natural movement of people, who are most likely to be themselves when they are kept at a distance.

[156] Ibid.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

While there are many parallels with Ozu's cinema, Hou only discovered Ozu in the late eighties, after his fourth feature *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983). This is the film that demonstrated a major change in his filmmaking practice, marked predominantly by medium/long-shot and long take aesthetics. Hou's stylistic trademark has prompted its critical success in *City of Sadness* (1989), and reached its apogee in *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998). One way to characterize Hou's style is in the way he depicts history by moving away from history: he likes to portray the memories of grand historical moments and human dramas, at the same time he tries to avoid depicting official events directly. *Flowers of Shanghai* for example, is a film about China set in late Qing and was scheduled to film in Shanghai, China. But while trying to reach China the film shows the *absence* of China's culture. Partly it was because of difficulties to gain permission to shoot on locations in China, the film was finished indoors in Taiwan. In return, the

shooting conditions contributed to the assumptions of Hou's consistent style, and a deliberate approach to a distant history.

In a similar vein, the train sequences in *Café Lumiere* suggest Hou's commitment to experiential verisimilitude. Rather than devising the camera to follow Yoko with conventional tracking shots, the camera is in motion itself like a fellow commuter, suggesting the characters' spontaneous travel routes and to bring a more organic approach to the way the lens documenting these journeys. The backstory to filming on location is also an interesting one: originally the Tokyo Metropolitan Bureau of Transportation rejected the film crew's apply to shoot in trains in stations, leaving Hou and his crew to scrape their shooting schedule. The reason given from the Bureau was because they fear the elaborate camera set up and blocking might interrupt daily commuters. Determined not to limit the quality of images, Hou decided to bypass the bureaucratic restrictions and adopt a guerrilla-style of filming at train stations, namely, use hand-held cameras and shroud the equipment if they see officers in sight. By eschewing city permissions and the absence of detailed shooting planning and schedule, the degree of reality portrayed onscreen can, while built on shorter takes, be meaningfully glimpsed as the unrehearsed moments of the characters reacting to the city's rhythm of life.

What I am suggesting here is that the camera also becomes a secondary plot and character, unfolding on screen. Evoking Charles Baudelaire's *Le Peintre*, the camera as a stand-in for the spectator is the flâneur here. Questions of film language and economic principle reflect this difference between Hou and Ozu. Aside from the prominent feature of Ozu's "tatami shot"—a lowered positioning of the camera typically on a tatami mat—

Ozu consistently violated the 180 degree line in his shot/reverse shot in order to opted for a series of "still shots" that open a film and bridge the narrative at various points.[157] Apart from these formal aesthetics, Ozu's portrayals of everyday family life are fused with a warm, humanistic and sympathetic tone. In contrasts, as Johnston points out earlier, Hou's cinema is distant, far off, and somewhat detached. If we return to Hajime's scene, this time Hou presents the indicative style of the film with even more uncertainty: why is Hajime pushed into the frame's corner? Why does the camera tilt and pan in a way that creates a structural layer in composition? Does it leave the viewers to appreciate what is often left indiscernible? An idyllic utopian view of the world? Or perhaps above all, an emphasis on the intersecting lines of passing trains?

A number of shots that present intersection of train tracks and moving trains in a way correspond to a similar composition in *Tokyo-Ga* (1985), directed by Wim Wenders, a major figure in New German Cinema. In this documentary that is ostensibly about paying homage to Yasujiro Ozu, Wenders was in Tokyo because he wished to retrace Ozu's steps in order to learn more about Ozu's filmmaking. The film, presented like a personal essay, ranges from Wenders interviewing Ozu's regular cinematographer, Yuharu Atsuta, and one of Ozu's favorite actors, Chishu Ryu, to scenes of Japanese pinball machine Pachinko and food replicas in restaurant windows. But most importantly, both *Café Lumiere* and *Tokyo-Ga* include crane shots that show angles and intersecting lines of trains. In addition, two films share scenes of reflections of trains; on bridges and between buildings; in train cars and on window display. Again, this is should not be

[157] I owe this observation to Ian Johnston in his article, "Train to Somewhere: Hou Hsiao-hsien Pays Sweet Homage to Ozu in *Café Lumiere*," from *Bright Lights Film Journal* (April 30, 2005).

treated lightly as a mere coincidence. Simply because both films were shot in Tokyo with the same lines of commuter trains does not necessarily mean that they share the same compositional result from the same art inspiration. My point here is not to suggest whether or not Hou references Wender's *Tokyo-Ga* in Hajime's scene, because even if he was, he was not trying to create a replica of the images. Rather, my emphasis here is the recognition that arises out of the visual impression from *Tokyo-Ga* potentially predominates and re-shapes the same visual expression of *Café Lumiere*. As visual expression intersects between a German documentary and a Taiwanese art house cinema, and the title informs the intersection between national and global film history, the film reformulates its cinematic features to a transnational reception.

Toward a Postcolonial History

While there are some parallels with Ozu's films, there is considerable distance between *Café Lumiere* and *Tokyo Story*, just as there are real differences between the filmmaking of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Yasujiro Ozu. The major difference lies in a strong awareness of postcolonial history running through the film that separates Hou's cinema from that of an imitation of styles. On the narrative level, *Café Lumiere* presents an obvious case for traversing the boundaries of nation, culture, and temporality. In the film, one of the primary threads is Yoko's research on an actual historical and public figure, Jian Wenye. He was a composer who was born in the 1930s in Taiwan, established his fame in Japan, and died in Beijing, China. Because most of his music creation took place

in Japan, he was quickly forgotten by his home country and buried in vast historical documents. Dai Jinhua considers the formalist comparison to Ozu less pertinent than the recognition of *Café Lumiere* as a film that is really about "a young woman roaming in metropolitan cities searching for historical traces."[158] In other words, the film serves as a national allegory that is encapsulated in the hinterland of history and reality, a film that occupies the real and also the discursive space in contemporary Taiwan. While much of the international critics tend to hollow out a sense of historicity and reduce the formalist long-take to a universal cinematic language consumed by art house cinephiles,[159] the legacy of Japanese colonialism remains critical in the current Taiwanese political discourse and serves as a marker in differentiating contemporary Taiwanese identity from mainland Chinese identity. Addressing the film as a national allegory, *Café Lumiere* complicated its transnational nature by the representation of a history between Japan and Taiwan. Namely, Hou Hsiao-hsien employs Ozu's form and style as part of the narrative device to link the turbulent history of Taiwan, Japan and China together. Yoko, who retraces Jian's footsteps to find out where he spent his days in search for biographical material and historical records, represents a woman who attempts to trace the colonial relationship between Taiwan and imperialist Japan. This narrative motif epitomizes the link between Japan and Taiwan, which are separate geographically but not culturally or sentimentally. When Yoko tries to locate a second-hand bookstore or coffee shops that Jian Wenye used to visit, she is attempting to recover a forgotten history by re-mapping

[158] Dai Jinhua, "Hou Hsiao-Hsien's films: pursuing and escaping history," translated by Zhang Jingyuan, in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2008), 249.
[159] See Valentina Vitali's discussion on press reviews of Hou Hsiao-hsien's films in a range of European magazines in "Hou Hsiao-Hsien reviewed," in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2008): 280-289.

the city in its bygone memories; an attempt that represents two cultures coexisting in the same time and space. In the end, the only traces that Yoko can find exist in the past, deeply sunk in historical time. Her failed attempt symbolizes her incapability to arrive at an understanding of the history. Even though Yoko struggles to recover the history, the film transcends the entangled history and regional conflicts into a reflexive one.

The most reflexive moment occurs when Yoko is given the opportunity to meet up with Jian's Japanese wife and gaze at the actual photo album of Jian Wenye. In this scene, the camera slowly pans sideways, shifting focus between Yoko and the wife, while the two exchange conversation on Jian's photos. The photos itself are first barricaded by drink glasses, but are reveled once the camera cuts to a close-up of Yoko flipping through the pages. The face of the mysterious figure that has been central to Yoko's research is now revealed, along with Jian's wife, in cameo appearance as well as in the photo album. This diegetic interruption—when Yoko literally gazes at the photos of an actual figure—represents a gaze of the colonizer looking at the imperial subject. But the meaning is also twofold. In the colonial history of Taiwan, Japan is more than a colonial ruler. Between 1915-1937, *Doka* (assimilation) movement was launched. The rhetoric of *doka* is different from Western colonial rule of imperialization because the policy means Taiwan was to be governed the same way as the home islands, and Taiwanese would be assimilated into normal Japanese society. During this time, major reforms were carried out, including administrative reforms, expansion of the public education system, and legalization of Japanese-Taiwanese intermarriage. Japan's transition of Taiwan, from its colonial projects to imperial subjects, interrogated and reformed Taiwanese consciousness and the politics of identity. Additionally, it brings to light the doubleness

and the in-betweenness of national and cultural identity. Such is the rhetoric of the "ambivalence of mimicry," developed in postcolonial theories by Homi Bhabha. Leo T. S. Ching explains Bhabha's concept of the "mimic man" as a representation of the colonized who, by virtue of his observation and his attempt to "mimic" the colonizer's culture and identity, transforms the observer to become the observed and "partial" representation that displaces the whole notion of identity its essence.[160] In other words, the observer returns the colonizer's gaze, and the desire for mimicry becomes a cultural resistance. Within this articulation of colonial (mis)representation, colonial power is displaced, if not altogether reversed.

In returning to the photo album scene in *Café Lumiere*, Yoko's gaze is more than that of the colonizer. By cognizing mimicry as a possible act of subversion, Ching's elaboration on Bhabha's mimic man theory allows us to interpret Yoko's attempt to trace the trails left by Jian as an ambivalent act of mimicry—a possible act of subversion that moves beyond the binary between the colonizer and the colonized. This reflexive moment in film on the one hand is a subtle interruption to diegesis; on the other it works as a subversive power of mimicry, creating a third space that enables other positions to emerge. Through the third space, the film shows a rift in history and reflects a troubled identity. If Yoko's part shows an ambivalence toward postcolonial temporality, an uncertainty that she was not able to participate in the historic time, it reveals a deeper symptom of a tangled relationship between Japan, China (imposed by KMT government), and Taiwan. I am referring to the Japanese colonial legacy, KMT's imposed "Chinese" history and culture, and the formation of Taiwanese consciousness. This ambivalence is a

[160] Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 133-135.

result of the lack of decolonization from Japan, a process that would allow Taiwan to address and confront their colonial relationship with Japanese rule, if it were not for a radical anti-Japanese sentiment exerted by KMT government.

The problem in Taiwan's postcolonial temporality is that for Taiwanese people, it is more than an issue of which colonial state to identify. Rather, it is an on-going process of dealing with historical trauma that the country has never recovered from. On the one hand, the majority believes they are descendants from Han Chinese that, inevitably, shares the 5,000-year history with mainland China, regardless whether it was the KMT establishment or the present Communist China. On the other, Japanese colonial legacy provides cultural resonances that Taiwanese do not necessarily find in Chinese culture. Tensions between the mainlanders and native Taiwanese have risen since the Republic of China's officials have set foot in Taiwan. *The Economist* witnessed the turmoil and published an article on July 23rd, 1949 that told the Formosans' (Taiwan is known historically as Formosa) side of the story:

> The first days of the new era, however, brought disillusionment. As a Formosan put it in reproach to an American officer: "You only dropped the atom bomb on the Japanese; you have dropped a Chinese army on us." General Chen Yi, appointed the first Governor of liberated Formosa, and his officers regarded Formosa as a rich spoil of war which was to compensate this fortunate company for all the losses and hardships of the war years. The Formosans were supposed to be so grateful for being freed from Japanese rule and restored to the bosom of the Chinese nation that they should be ready to place all their worldly goods at the disposal of the warrior heroes from the mainland. They were subjected to an orgy

> of plunder and extortion, combined with and incompetence and disorder of administration such as in the bad old days of Japanese imperialist tyranny they had never imagined. In their innocence they had supposed that they, themselves, as the people of Formosa, would now have the benefit of the various Japanese state and private concerns which had made Formosa a source of so much profit to Japan. But every lucrative business or job was snapped up by the newcomers, while at the same time the productivity of estates and industrial plants declined owing to mismanagement and looting.[161]

Hou Hsiao-hsien himself certainly recognizes the dilemma—the physical and psychological distance between China and Taiwan that largely informs his filmic creation:

> To me, China is the origin of Taiwan culture. But I do not mean contemporary mainland China, that concrete entity separated politically from Taiwan. When I was young, I was educated in classical Chinese, reading classical masterpieces and classical poetry. Later I liked reading classical martial art novels and classical drama. These Chinese classics have formed the background of my life and the basis for all of my creative works. But classical China is entirely different from contemporary mainland China. (2)

Like his film, Hou is ambivalent toward the ambiguity of Chineseness; between Taiwan's lived experience and the consciousness of cultural China (or imagined China). The fact that Hou omits features of "Chinese" history in *Café Lumiere* is an effect not just of the

[161] "The Chinese in Formosa," *The Economist* (London), July 23, 1949.

spatial distance between China and Taiwan, but also of the psychological distance. Indeed, the film uses long shots and immobile camera to display Yoko and Hajime in the corners of the frame, often on a railway platform or on a bridge, to make an impression that they are—literally and metaphorically—marginalized. In contrast to the very little space the main characters have taken up in the frame, such as the scene with Hajime, almost unnoticeable, standing on a platform beneath crisscrossing trains on high ground, what remains is a succession of tableaux vividly realized in cinematic terms. The film shows the absence of emotions, sealed off from all other worlds. Just like in *Flowers of Shanghai* depicts historic China through the absence of authentic China's culture, what Hou is doing in *Café Lumiere* is re-imagining and re-enforcing a kind of Japan-Taiwan colonial relationship that was originally suppressed under KMT rule.

Le parfait flâneur in *Flight of the Red Balloon*

Another case study would be *Flight of the Red Balloon*, a film that transcends the boundary between East and West. The film is explicitly an outsider's film, founded through Hou's distinctive lens of perspectives and dislocation. The 2007 release of *Flight of the Red Balloon* would have been surprising enough without the additional fact that the film, inspired by a classic French movie made fifty years ago, was the work of a Taiwanese filmmaker who has never filmed outside Asia nor speak a word of French. Invited by the Musée d'Orsay to participate in a series of films to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment, Hou pays tribute to Albert Lamorisse's short film and

children's classic, *The Red Balloon* (Le Ballon Rouge, 1956). Originally the invitation was for four world-renowned directors to each shoot a segment of their vision of film, at least in part, inside the museum. Among the directors the Musée d'Orsay selected were: Olivier Assayas of France, Jim Jarmusch of the United States, Raoul Ruiz of Chile, and Hou Hsiao-Hsien of Taiwan. This collaborated venture was supposed to launch at the end of 2006, eventually only Hou's *Flight of the Red Balloon* was completed, a film that opened the 60th Cannes Festival.

Critics often refer to the film as a remake: J. Hoberman describes *Flight of the Red Balloon* as a work that was commissioned to remake by the Musée d'Orsay; Leo Goldsmith calls it a "pseudo-remake" while Steve Persall dismiss it as a dull, "snoozer" remake.[162] The French press also considers the film part remake and part homage because Hou is "an admirer of the [Lamorisse] film," who "considers [*The Red Balloon*] to be extremely realistic, and particularly representative of his time" that shows his realities of childhood.[163] But is it simply a film remade by a foreign director? Especially when the filmmaker borrows Lamorisse's iconography as the starting point for a movie—a boy, a balloon, a Parisian cityscape—without the post-war context.

Although *Flight of the Red Balloon* is inspired by Lamorisse's film, Hou Hsiao-hsien's reiteration is nothing like the original, except for a big red balloon and a young boy wandering through the gray streets of Paris. Consistent with the director's auteur

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[162] J. Hoberman, "Flight of the Red Balloon Soars," from the *Village Voice* (April 1, 2008). Leo Goldsmith, "Best of the Decade #8: *Flight of the Red Balloon*," from *Reverse Shot* (December 23, 2009). Steve Persall, "The Red Balloon remake: Good, but a snoozer," from *Tampa Bay Times* (July 16, 2008).

[163] Unknown author, "Hou Hsiao-hsien est depuis toujours un admirateur de ce film, qu'il considère comme extrèmement réaliste, et particulièrement représentatif de son époque," *AlloCiné* (January 30, 2008).

style and languid long takes, the film has an unusual slow rhythm; viewers have to patiently wait around for a seemly uneventful story. The film begins with a young French boy, Simon, who finds a mysterious red balloon near an electric pole on the street in Paris. After Simon unleashes the balloon, it begins to follow the boy around the city as if the balloon has a life of its own, acting like a sidekick to the lonely young boy. Simon's mother, Suzanne, works as a professional puppeteer. When Suzanne is at work, Simon spends most of his time with his nanny, Song, a Chinese student who came to Paris to study filmmaking. From time to time, we see Suzanne navigating personal troubles outside her busy work life, problems such as her irresponsible downstairs tenant or her relationship with Simon's estranged father. Apart from the film's dysfunctional lives in a claustrophobic apartment, a puppeteer master from Taiwan comes to visit Suzanne's theater company. Fascinated by this opportunity, Suzanne asks Song to be an interpreter during his stay. Like many of Hou's previous films, *Flight of the Red Balloon* has a nonchalant approach to life: no exciting or dramatic events ever seem to happen; yet every mundane detail contribute to a story we can all relate to. The film ends without a closure. Instead, a red balloon drifts into the sky; a play on the opposition between the freedom of a floating balloon in the sky and a young kid confined in tight city spaces—designated to reflect the ambience of modern city.

By virtue of the textual elements in *Flight of the Red Balloon*, the film is best described as *nostalgic* of the red balloon (literally and figuratively) than a remake, and completely transcends the tenets and habits of the milieu in a multi-cultural context. Lifted from Paris's historical baggage, the film suggests a radical interrogation of the globalized era, manifested through an awkward cultural clash between Chinese and

French culture. Indeed, a link between Chineseness and Frenchness shows that the film that is already transnational in many respects. Je Cheol Park writes:

> […] transnational cultural exchanges between China and France appear in the film in a variety of ways: that a Chinese woman works in a French family, that a French woman translates Chinese puppet shows, that a Chinese woman filmmaker makes a remake of a French film (that reflexively refers to Hou's situation), and so forth. (104)

Never mind Park's inflation of Taiwanese and Chinese culture into one "China," what Park is referring here is the dynamics between Suzanne and her *au pair* Song Fang (which, by the way, is the actress' actual name). In taking care of Simon, Song is making her own version of the 1956 *The Red Balloon*, featuring Simon. More cultural exchanges were drawn from the live of Suzanne working as a puppeteer, a subject that Hou explored in his 1993's docudrama *The Puppetmaster* (1993)—an ostensibly self-conscious meditation on his earlier work. Like *Flight of the Red Balloon*, the story of *The Puppetmaster* concerns artists who work with puppets and whose lives feed on theatrical artifice. And like *The Puppetmaster*, Juliette Binoche's character Suzanne lives in the world of her puppets, and is eager to learn more about Chinese puppetry. Incorporating Chinese puppetry also alternately pose a question of who is the outsider here: is this a film about seeing Parisian life through the eyes of a Taiwanese director, or it is about re-visiting and rendering Chinese theatricality through a middle-aged Parisian woman?

Critics in France generally responded positively to *Flight of the Red Balloon* and were surprised by how a foreign director was able to capture everyday Parisian lives in a

non-conventional way. Jean-Luc Douin from *Le Monde* considers the use of iconic landmarks and cityscape, such as the Bastille District, the narrow alleyways, the bourgeois bohemian, and the raised metro line, as an intentional look at the familiar in unfamiliar ways: "It is a tourist vision, but we must recognize that it also reflects modification of these symbolic images, in a way that shares the same observation from many contemporary French filmmakers."[164] Vincent Julé, a journalist with *Écran Large*, also remarks that:

> I have never seen a film which captures the life of Paris so well, but above all the life of Parisians. It's not cliché, it's not a postcard, no, for me who lives in Paris, it's truly Paris—beautiful, grey, everything—and it's a foreign director who arrives at this.[165]

Clearly, reviewers are astonished at how the everyday life in Paris is captured in Hou's film. Through modification and exchange of iconography, Hou's filmmaking style transforms and translates cross-cultural experiences. In Taiwan, reviews are often more focused on the puppet theater rehearsing scenes and how this occasionally reminds viewers of the majestic *The Puppetmaster*.[166] The significant cultural reference is evidently shown in two major scenes: when Suzanne rehearsals Chinese puppetry in French; and when a Taiwanese puppeteer is invited to Paris to perform and act as a consultant. The scenes are off-handedly self-reflexive, and when juxtaposed with

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[164] Jean-Luc Douin, "Le Voyage du ballon rouge: Juliette Binoche fait voltiger le court métrage d'Albert Lamorisse," *Le Monde* (January 29, 2008).
[165] *Culture 8*, "Le Voyage du Ballon Rouge," interview with Simon Iteanu, Juliette Binoche, and Vincent Julé (2008), translated by Nicholas de Villiers.
[166] Charlie Lin, "Report on the 45th New York Film Festival," in *Funscreen*, no. 129 (2013).

Binoche's eccentric vocalizations for the puppet theater, this mirrors her character's chaotic domestic life. To the critics and local audiences who are familiar with Hou's oeuvre, *The Puppetmaster* marks the starting point to assess Hou's films with a thematic link between the individual and the backstory, and between personal memories and national history. Such are the fax machine in *Good Men, Good Women* (1995) and the children's picture book in *Café Lumiere*. Aside from the recognition of *The Puppetmaster* as emblematic of Taiwanese culture, the film's ending French song "Tchin Tchin" (sang by Camille) is in fact a remastered version of "The Forgotten Time," a hit folk song by the famous Taiwanese singer Tsai Chin (see Fig. 4).[167] Wenchi Lin points out that such cover, along with the intertextual reference to Hou's own film and the inclusion of Song, the Chinese film student, is the director's way of introducing and projecting a Taiwanese/Chinese perspective in the seemly "French" film.[168]

Fig. 4

[167] Wenchi Lin, "Missing All the Good Times—Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Flight of the Red Balloon*," in *Funscreen*, no. 161 (2008).
[168] Ibid.

Significantly, Hou Hsiao-hsien offers us one notable example among contemporary East Asian filmmakers that mark the shift from their concern with the national to that with the transnational community. On various occasions, Hou admitted in interviews that initially he felt intimidated by the project, for he doesn't visit France that often (except for occasional visits to Cannes for the film festival), and that he had very little knowledge of Paris.[169] In describing the shooting experience of *Café Lumiere*, Hou said:

> It is very difficult to cross national borders and shoot the film of a different culture. How many successful films have you seen? There are very few. The reason is very simple. For example, when we look at Asian-themed films made by foreign companies, it's not accurate. When we watch their films about Chinese people, it's not accurate. It's a very big challenge, because they don't know about the Chinese way of life, daily rituals, etc. But I feel this is interesting. It's a challenge.[170]

Shooting in Paris was obviously different and more difficult from Tokyo. Hou was relatively more at home and had much more confidence working in Japan with Japanese actors, partly because of the closeness between Taiwan and Japan, culturally and linguistically. Nevertheless, were it not for his experience in Japan, Hou would not have taken another film project overseas. To shoot a film in France for the French audience presented many challenges for Hou, for the most part there was the issue of the European language; another would be the cultural distance. With the Musée d'Orsay commission

[169] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, interviewed by Wen Tien-Hsian, *Funscreen*, no. 159 (May 29, 2008).
[170] Hou, interviewed by Harold Manning, 2004.

project, Hou did not have the luxury to fall back on culture familiarity, and in return he could only picture the lives in the city of Paris as a distant outsider. Despite his concerns for the potential challenges of linguistic and cultural differences, Hou accepted the invitation, and began looking for inspirations for the screenplay, and discovered Lamorisse's film through a fellow outsider. One of his early inspirations came from *Paris to the Moon*, a book by *The New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik, about an American family living in the French capital and his observations on the cultural differences between Europeans and Americans. In this book, Gopnik mentioned that before moved to Paris, his first impression came from the book adaptation of Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon*, and that to him, Paris was "neither a cozy nor a charming landscape."[171] In keeping with Gopnik's depiction, *Flight of the Red Balloon* shows a laid-back and yet claustrophobic Paris, avoiding any unnecessarily dreamy and hackneyed effects that have been overworked in mainstream cinema. *Paris to the Moon* introduced Lamorisse's film to Hou, and through both Lamorisse's and Gopnik's eyes, Hou's sketched a vision of Paris that is not blinded by the clichés that have long been cultivated by Hollywood classic movies.

Another filmmaking inspiration came from the museum itself. *Flight of the Red Balloon* is not only a reinterpretation of French culture, but it also intersects with a variety of self-reflective work ranging from an internal remake of *Le Ballon* to a visit to the Musée d'Orsay to see an Impressionism painting "Le Ballon." During Hou's trip to the Parisian museum, the director recalled that the museum was very generous when it came to touring their vast collections. At one point, the museum curator demonstrated to

[171] Adam Gopnik, *Paris to the Moon* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2000), 5.

Hou and his crew how to properly hang or take down paintings in art galleries. Hou was completely fascinated by the exhibition space: the rooftop, the attic, the transformation from a railway station to a contemporary museum, and the gigantic gold clock in the hallway…but nothing stood out as much as the Swiss painter Félix Vallotton's 1899 painting *Le ballon* (The Ball). This oil painting, with pastel color palettes and a bird's-eye view of a park, features a child with a yellow hat and white summer blouse, running across the broad stretch of ground contrasted with mixed shades of the trees, chasing a dot-like red ball (see Fig. 5). As it happens, Hou did not discover the painting by himself. Since the Musée d'Orsay required that participating directors (then including Assayas and others) shoot at least one scene on the museum grounds, Hou handled the task without hesitation and asked the museum "if they had any Impressionist paintings with red objects, preferably balloons."[172] The painting is the centerpiece in the last scene of the film: a group of schoolchildren gather around it, a teacher discusses the painting, when one of the children exclaims the little boy in the painting is "Looking for something…a red balloon!" This scene is reflexive both on the narrative and technical level; a doubling of a boy chasing a red balloon that echoes *mise en abyme*—the mirror effects of image-within-an-image. The term, first coined by French author Andre Gide, popularized by Lucien Dallenbach in the field of literary criticism in the late 1970s. As Dallenbach would have put it, *mise en abyme* is the artistic definition akin to placing a mirror and its reflection in a painting. By exploiting its reflective properties, the use of mirror is to compensate for the limits of spectator's vision and to show viewers what usually lies beyond it. If this internal reflection is to be applied to film studies, *mise en abyme* does

[172] Dennis Lim, "Another Red Balloon Alights in Paris," from *The New York Times* (March 30, 2008).

not only express "film within a film," but also the "film being made within the film" and the "narrative of the film within the film," and not to reduce either aspects to one simplistic view of duplication alone. Given these threefold recognitions, the term is best described as, in Dallenbach's words, the manifestation of "any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative by simple, repeated or 'specious' (or paradoxical) duplication."[173]

Fig. 5

[173] Lucien Dallenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, translated by Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 36.

Fig. 6

Thirty years later, the term *mise en abyme* resurfaced in the writings of Taiwanese film critics. The original Chinese translation of *mise en abyme* means "layers in film," but Isabelle Wu translated it to the "complexities"[174] in cinematic expression to give it a full-bodied expression—an attempt to avoid the simplistic view of repeated duplication. Adapting the newer translation, Wenchi Lin agrees Wu's translation is much more suitable, that moves away from its original heritage in literary studies in which limits the idea of image mirror effect to *nouveau roman*, a type of 1950s French novel that diverged from classical literary genres. Lin further suggests that when applied to film studies in conjunction with the notion of intertextuality, *mise en abyme* enables spectators to recognize and consider the relationship between a visual text and another, assuming the meaning of the visual is not transparent unless mediated in a larger, comparable framework. In *Flight of the Red Balloon*, the protection glass on the painting literally echoes *mise en abyme*. In utilizing these visual features, images are often reflected in

[174] Isabelle Wu, *In the Age of Cinematic Thinking* (Taipei: Bookman, 2007). In Chinese.

mirrors or windows, creating doubles of people or objects. In *Le ballon* scene, the painting glass reflects images of passerby art patrons that appear to be superimposed on Vallotton's painting (see Fig. 6). This recognition is in accordance with the characteristics of the fictional *mise en abyme*: "A combination of the usual properties of iteration and of second-degree utterances, namely the capacity to give the work a strong structure, to underpin its meaning, to provide a kind of internal dialogue and a means whereby the work can interpret itself."[175] When asked about the Vallotton's painting scene, Hou explained in the most pragmatic terms:

> When I decided I wanted to use Vallotton's *Le ballon* in my picture, I was told that this painting was already wrapped up, ready to be shipped to Japan for an exhibition in Tokyo, because the Japanese loved this painting. After several negotiations, the museum took the painting out to hang it temporarily just for my film shoot. The framing protection had to stay, so the glass reflection was inevitable. People often asked me why I like to use glass and reflection in my films, my answer is that it was simply a result of trying to overcome technical difficulties in a situation like this.[176]

The result is rather artistic and picturesque, with glare and reflection coming from the picture framing glass, rendering a poetic overlay of the museum surroundings. What appears to be *normal* reflection stem partly from a desire to overcome technical difficulties in the space becomes an extension to Hou's becalmed visual style. This visual style is simultaneously deliberate and fictional—a unique cinematic experience that

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[175] Dallenbach, 55.
[176] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, interviewed by Wen Tien-Hsian, *Funscreen*, no. 159 (May 29, 2008). My translation.

communicate a sense of otherness. In this way, what appears to be an accidental result of spectral techniques potentially allows us to be more aware of film as a process and not merely a finished product encompassing a narrative for viewers to decode.

The motif of the red balloon aside, *Flight of the Red Balloon* presents many degrees and other types of cinematic revisions and references of films and performing arts. To start, a blond Juliette Binoche, not in her usual dark brunette self, plays a professional puppeteer. Binoche's vibrant presence and her character's melodramatic temper provided a contrast to the film's melancholic undertones, especially puzzled the audience when she performs Chinese puppetry in French. Manohla Dargis describes Binoche, playing a professional puppeteer, "seems most at peace only when she's giving grave, gravelly voice to one of her creations."[177] What Binoche is able to bring to the silver screen is not only her ability to challenge herself, in acting and imposing as a wooden puppet so to speak, but also the depth of her voice, a natural effect that is at the heart of ventriloquism, producing different scales and intensity for the puppet show. Binoche only started training in puppetry for this film, and typical of Hou's directing style, the filmmaker opted for realistic performance rather than the product of rigid rehearsals. What audiences see in the end, snippets of Binoche operating and performing the Chinese puppetry, was captured when Binoche was really rehearsing at the puppet theater. The incorporation of Chinese puppetry also highlights another level of intertextuality. The puppet show Hou designed for Binoche to perform is based on *The Dragon King's Daughter*,[178] a Chinese mythological folk tale about a character who tries

[177] Hou Hsiao-Hsien, interviewed by Wen Tien-Hsian.
[178] The story goes like this: Chang Yu was a poor young man who lived on the seashore. One day, he met a young lady, the third daughter of the sea dragon king, and they fell in

to boil the ocean to retrieve his beloved. What appears to be a magical and otherworldly Chinese mythological tale symbolizes quixotic self-determination, and speaks to the interior psyche of Binoche's character, who is struggling between her chaotic work life and personal life, between fugitive moments and isolated moods. Dubbing the Chinese puppet show in French in return invokes the idea that multiple postcolonial modernities could coexist.

The Filmmaker as flâneur

Aside from the alienated feeling that comes from the characters, the sense of estrangement is amplified by the world we see through the lens of Song Fang. In *Flight of the Red Balloon*, Song is seen videotaping Parisian street art as part of her film project—to make a film about red balloons. The making of Song's film-within-the-film and her interest in red balloons is not just a narrative device; it provides viewers another *mise en abyme* and reflexive glimpse into the already convoluted world. To speak of reflexivity in film—the awareness of film as a process and not merely as a finished product—allows us to imagine the film as a representation of a kind of transnational community characterized by homogeny and otherness. Reflexivity is the inversion of narrative schema that allows audiences to reroute their comprehension skills to the visual senses. It forces viewers to utilize their sensory, automatic, and unassociated memory approaches

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love. Chang Yu boldly asked the king under-the-sea for his permission to marry his daughter, but the king refused. Unwilling to give up, Chang Yu asked a fairy for help, and the fairy gave him a caldron and a magic gold coin. Chang Yu began scooping seawater into the caldron, threw in the gold coin, lit up a fire, and the salt water begin to boil and gradually diminished. Chang Yu's obstinacy finally convinced the dragon king to give in and to accept Chang Yu as his son-in-law.

to events, as opposed to narrative interpretation, which enables viewers to acquire knowledge based on how the information is presented, organized by a spectator's expectations, and infers subject matters independently from the initial appearance of the data.[179] Reflexivity schema highlights that the cognitive process in an almost untraceable, without constant interruptions way, which may include internal awareness of how the shots and sequences are constructed via camera angles, lighting, editing, etc. Conversely, ascribing extra-diegetic spectacles as conformity to formalist language overlooks these moments of interruption, that of not just the diegesis itself but also of the disruption of continuity. To this point, reflexivity has several complicated layers. The separation between actor's temporal and spatial relationship with the audience already prescribed the differences between onscreen and off-screen action. In short, distinguishing between perceiving reflexivity from the narrative level and cinematic language will allow us to closely examine how a spectator makes separate use of judgments about time, space, and interruptions, as well as how a spectator may integrate these judgments to produce an overall narrative rendition of the experience. When Song videotapes Simon and the balloon, or when she stops for a red-balloon graffiti on the streets, she appears to be scouting locations for the *actual* film outside her diegetic world, and real audiences are watching *in sync* with the filmmaking process. The act was never an improvisation; it was premeditated and pre-recorded. It also fuses different viewpoints: are real audiences to perceive *Flight of the Red Balloon* from the lens of Song's video camera, or through Hou Hsiao-Hsien's rendering of a film student's outsider perspective? Song's character is more complicated than a simple stand-in, because she is neither the subjective rendition

[179] Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 37.

of Hou's embodiment nor the objective, mechanical eye. Instead, the imagery she captured presents a Paris cityscape that is an ironic play of the familiar and the strange, moments that transcend the diegetic and non-diegetic world, allowing us to imagine a kind of transnational community that is simultaneously local and global, homogenous and heterogeneous.

In sum, in mobilizing a multifaceted portrayal of life, Hou's filmmaking provides a refreshing perspective that enables spectators to imagine transnational communities to come. Throughout this chapter, I have illustrated that *Flight of the Red Balloon* and *Café Lumiere* are rich in intertextuality; from Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon*, *The Puppetmaster*'s shadow, Ozu's cinema, to the uses of long shot, long take, and their reflexive moments. As I suggested, the aesthetics of Hou Hsiao-hsien's films epitomize such exploration and imagination, in their contexts of production, circulation and reception. Hou's style of filmmaking also reveals the transnational imagining and re-mapping of borders and nations, a condition by which people and ideas can cross national boundaries and are not identified with a single place or origin. These films partially escape from its respective textual spaces and intervene on a cross-cultural level, with an ontological time-space for viewers to negotiate between similarity and differences. By undertaking a thorough analysis of the films' intertextuality, the relationship between the film and the reflexive layers reveals the cinematic re-visiting and re-imagining of cultures, fostering an essential transnational viewing experience. As signs of institutional and aesthetic changes, the cinematic imaginings would stage and inhabit the possibility to consider how films highlight new modes of connection and imagination across the world.

Chapter Five | The Geopolitics in Film Festivals

While the New Wave Movement in 1980s Taiwan led to the emergence of a new, vital cinema with unique thematic, aesthetic, and production values, it is limiting to proclaim that New Cinema now is still identified with Taiwan as an emblematic movement, if not quite dominant. It was believed that these directors had far more control over their films and used filmmaking to fulfill their personal vision and identifiable aesthetic styles. This also became the basis for the validation of their work, a sense that anybody's judgment of a film is based on the international reputation of the director and the film becomes secondary to speak of. The cultural and status consecration these auteurs received in Taiwan might not have had much to do with their cinematic work, but rather with their accumulated respect, as Darrell Davis observed:

> A filmmaker like Hou Hsiao-hsien is respected and feted at home because of who he is, not because people watch his films. That Hou's movies have not drawn audiences since *A City of Sadness* does not diminish his stature; and it is a peculiarity of Taiwan cinema that it enjoys such exceptions and cultural anomalies. (149)

A most recent example would be Hou's success at 2015's Golden Horse film awards that somewhat reflects this ambivalence. With *The Assassin* (2015) winning five awards, including the two most coveted prizes—the Best Feature and Best Director Awards—Hou's success was not only seen as building on his earlier triumph at Cannes in the same year, but also as *The Assassin* shortlisted by the Oscars. If Davis's observation is

prophetic, then Hou's achievement, which organizers described as uncompromised and outstanding, is very much expected. Film critics had praised the strong nominees but predicted Hou as the most likely winner. Kelly Yang, a Taipei-based film critic, remarked that "I'm not saying the other films are not good—they are all good, but not good enough to take on *The Assassin*."[180] From a counter perspective, those who loathed New Cinema and attacked New Cinema's uncommercial bent argued that its festival-based art house qualities and weak box-office sales made them unwilling to support it. In their minds, Taiwanese cinema should be, first, commercial and easily marketable; and second, confined to local pop culture and national sentiments, and neither New Cinema nor modernist aesthetics express this sentiment.

Although the international reputation of Taiwan New Cinema as mostly "art house" has undercut domestic box offices sales and probably hurt the prospects of subsequent film projects, New Cinema benefited from its modernist aesthetics at the festival scene. Without external factors such as its international exposure and uptake in awards, prizes, and networking opportunities at film festivals, New Cinema could not have achieved its high profile today and we could not have witnessed the unprecedented success of Hou Hsiao-hsien or Tsai Ming-liang at the Golden Horse awards. Yet, this also meant that New Cinema had to take up new challenges to attract capital and compete in the marketplace beyond Taiwan, as its natural audience was in festivals, museums, and retrospectives outside commercial venues. Thus, film festivals not only introduced but defended the auteur, for a filmmaker like Hou Hsiao-hsien. The Toronto International Film Festival went as far as to declare Hou as the "best director in the world," putting

[180] Kelly Yang, "After Cannes Glory, Taiwan's Hou Targets Golden Horse with *The Assassin*," *AFP*, November 21, 2015.

him on the world map with other filmmakers who are strongly associated with auteurism: Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Pedro Almodovar, Todd Solondz, and a handful of others.[181] In addition to the rise of young auteur directors, the festival platform also provided film professional specialization, subsidy incentives, visibility for films, juries and prizes, and extensive media coverage. But the question remains: why did Taiwan New Cinema suddenly receive success and international exposure when industry had in fact been operating for decades? This also raises the question of the different factors involved in facilitating such a significant development that dominated so much local controversy and criticism, even when the New Cinema movement had lost its coherence around the 1990s.

The unprecedented international exposure of Taiwan New Cinema at the festival platform had much to do with the timing. Just as the West "discovered" Japanese cinema in the 1950s, the French New Wave in the 1960s, and Brazilian and other Latin American cinemas in the 1970s, the 1980s was a turning point for both the East and West. In the 1980s, the West was largely interested in Chinese-language films, which coincided with East Asia's economic boom. According to Richard Pena, the former program director of the Film Society of Lincoln Center:

> One could argue that Chinese cinema very much dominated the entire field of the 1980s, with retrospectives of older films, dedicated issues produced by leading film magazines, and of course the remarkable new films and filmmakers that began to emerge from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China (the Fifth Generation). (79)

[181] David Overbey, interview by Peggy Chiao, *China Times Express*, September 8, 1989.

The Western taste for different national cinemas is also illustrated by the existence of film festivals, as festivals have contributed to shifts in film taste. This means that in film festivals, national cinemas were considered representative of different cultures, separated by virtue of their diverse traditions of making and meaning, and of distinct articulation and interpretation. For that reason, Western Europe and North America's interest in Chinese-language cinema had much to do with the global new waves of filmmaking—a wave of change that significantly raised the profile of East Asian cinema. During this time, the number of feature-length Taiwanese films winning awards and prizes at "A-list" international film festivals had increased sharply. The number of awards won by these films demonstrated a significant rise in the history of Taiwanese cinema. On the other hand, the festival platform remains an auteurist institution. The selection process, as Pena described, is quite arbitrary: "the smaller number of films makes our selection . . . more like a statement, a vision of world cinema, rather than a panorama or a catalogue."[182] The films that made it into the selection reflected both a modernist and elitist statement.

A brief history of film festivals around the world would allow us to better understand how Taiwan was projected onto the geographical imagination of world cinema. In particular, our understanding of today's film festivals and contemporary international film festival circuit is still tied to the histories of the first wave of European film festivals. By sheer volume and variety, Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and other Western European film festivals have continued to dominate the center stage of the festival world. In other words, European film festivals have continued to dominate the center through

[182] Richard Pena, "Setting the Course: Directors and Directions at the New York Film Festival, 1963-2010," in *Coming Soon to a Festival near You: Programming Film Festivals*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (St. Andrews: St Andrews Film Books), 83.

institutional, global, and individual attention to multiple audiences and professional expertise. Cindy Wong argues that

> Western European festivals claim hierarchical distinction so that their prizes and even screenings bring global prestige, making these festivals the ultimate cinematic taste makers. This also suggests that films from other countries can only be recognized if they manage recognition from these European festivals, reinstating colonial relations of power and taste that are uneasily read by filmmakers and diplomats. (60-61)

These film festivals continue to claim a certain hierarchical status, in that screenings and winning prizes at their platforms bring tremendous global prestige. At the same time, film festivals and Western capital have helped the rapid growth of global film industries, and these industries are both embedded in and transformed by a complex web of multi-network connections. Following A-list film festivals' hierarchical status and their prestige, film festivals help to create a global audience and form a hegemonic film festival culture. However, it also means that for other countries, especially third-world countries, to be recognized by and gain global exposure from these European festivals, they are simultaneously resituating the colonial relations and cinematic taste making between the East and West and the global North-South divide. On the one hand, film festivals from the Global South and developing countries have had to rely on European film festivals to campaign and gain publicity on films from their countries, reinforcing the claims about diverse cultures and nations. On the other hand, the proliferation of smaller festivals around the world from the 1960s onward reflects the needs for as well as the limitations of regional film festivals.

For the sake of this chapter, I will look to the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival (1962-) in a regional context, specifically in relation to the Asia-Pacific Film Festival (APFF, 1954-) and the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF, 1977-), to understand Taiwan cinema's long-term nature and complexity from a geopolitical viewpoint. These three film festivals are some of the most well-known platforms in the East Asia region, and they characterize the complex colonial and postcolonial relationships among China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. These film festivals were also brought forth not only by global demands but also as resistance to the Western paradigm. In situating Taiwan cinema's global and regional positions, I aim to pay attention to the changing role of regional film festivals and networks. In thinking about festivals as networks, I look at how film festivals mediate between the local and the global, the individual and the collective, and habit versus causality. When these imagined networks coincide with the nation–state, they transform what is meant by national cinema. Regional film festivals are interwoven with the needs and issues of particular localities—even though each event has a wider resonance within a holistic vision of world cinema, each also has a programming choice and to appeal to specific audiences, these festivals have had to operate within the local discourse. In looking at the temporal trajectory of these events, I demonstrate how film festivals are visible and nonvisible at the same time; their existence is ephemeral but recurring and spatial but not static, and relies on habitual repetitions as imagined connections. As networks, film festivals are not static but evolve over time according to various dynamical rules; as a framework, film festivals are dynamic systems that intersect with other institutions and construct themselves as a public sphere of cinematic knowledge.

Venice, Cannes, and Berlin

The very first known film festival was organized in Monaco on New Year's Day, 1898, as a celebration of film, which was then a new medium. Other cities soon followed: Moscow, Locarno, and Karlovy Vary. However, *La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico*, also known as the Venice Film Festival, was the first one to be organized on a regular basis. Founded by Italy's Fascist government, the Venice Film Festival was established in 1932 as part of the Arts Biennale (until 1935), when the Italian Fascists saw film as a powerful artistic vehicle for the promotion of national history and the nation-state. In particular, Mussolini himself believed that the film festival would be a powerful instrument with which to craft and construct national identity. By 1936, the Venice Film Festival had become a biannual celebration of the cinemas of fascism. The Fascist government not only saw film as a propaganda tool but also established various state-sponsored organizations to oversee all operations for producing, distributing, and exhibiting cinema. This includes the first Italian documentary consortium *L'Unione Cinematografica Educative* (LUCE) in 1926; film schools and cine-clubs such as the *Cine-GUF-Gioventu Universitaria fascista* in 1933, and cinema journals initiated between 1936 and 1937 to help promote national cinema.[183] As a result, although the government funding secured the exhibition its official character and

[183] Wong, *Film Festivals*, 38.

financial stability, the Venice Biennale lost its former autonomy to the Fascist regime and its politics.

Le Festival de Cannes in France was both a national and artistic response to the Fascist Venice.[184] The first festival in Cannes was originally scheduled to take place in September 1939; however, Hitler invaded Poland and France on September 1, and the whole festival was cancelled because of the outbreak of World War II. The actual festival took place after the war in 1946, from September 20 to October 6, ten years after the Cinémathèque Française was established to endorse French cinema. The French originally wanted to start the Festival of the Free World (or the Olympics of Cinema), and was hoping that its organization would be competitive enough to replace Venice, or at least that the Venice Biennale would no longer monopolize film trafficking in Europe. Politically, if Venice was fascist, in the context of post-Depression and post-WWII sentiments, Cannes clearly made an anti-Fascist statement by giving the Grand Prize of that year to the Italian neorealist film *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, Citta Aperta*, Roberto Rossellini 1946). In the end, given that the Free World project failed and the consensus in Europe was that each festival should avoid scheduling conflicts with one another, Cannes was moved from September to May. Since 1946, the invitation-only festival has been held annually.

The post-WWII period offered Europe and North America a sudden festival boom. After World War I, Central Europe had to face the Great Depression. Germany and Italy, especially, had been the major film producing countries prior to WWI, and faced serious competition with the influx of Hollywood films. Film festivals became an

[184] Ibid., 39.

alternative and desperate measure to compete with American cinema to reclaim local production and reception. Subsequently, more and more countries followed the example of Venice and Cannes, and founded their own festivals. Examples include cities like Locarno (1946), Edinburgh (1946), Brussels (1947), and Berlin (1951). In North America, film festivals did not happen until San Francisco took the plunge in 1957, followed by New York (1963) and Toronto (1967), with the latter originally known as the "Festival of Festivals." The Toronto International Film Festival was renamed in 1994, and had grown to become a vital distributing machine, with its high-profile attendance of celebrities and market activity as well as hundreds of films screened in each setting.

The post-war film festival boom was, to say the least, geopolitical, such as the Berlin Film Festival. The international film festival in Berlin was founded as a reaction to the crisis in the German film industry, and as a result of American involvement in post-war Germany's cultural affairs. Germany had a significant film industry during the interwar era, with its popular films finding success in the domestic market and its art films (including the Expressionist films) successful abroad. The German film industry developed significant industrial infrastructure and remained dominant during the war. However, with the Nazis' defeat and the end of the war, political currents brought the downfall of German cinema; the industry dwindled, and the country split politically into East and West: the Federal Republic of Germany or FRG (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic or GDR (East Germany).

Germans therefore saw the Berlin Film Festival as a welcome opportunity to rejuvenate their once-powerful film industry. It was founded based on the proposition to, first, revise the former capital's economic status and, second, for Berlin to ascend as an

important European cultural center. As Sabine Hake writes, the strategy to start a film festival was "to protect its domestic interests against the growing influx of American films and to contribute to the development of a European alternative to the feared American cultural hegemony."[185] The proposition also included extending the distribution and exhibition networks. Yet, there was still American involvement: Oscar Martay, an American officer, had not only initiated the Berlin Film Festival, but also done so with a specific political agenda: to use the event as an antagonistic instrument in the Cold War.[186] The Berlinale opened on June 6, 1951, and the opening film was Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). The choice of West Berlin as the location for the festival was, after all, intentional. Berlin had become an important symbol of West Germany's democratic regeneration, and the Americans expect to offer Berlin as a proof of Western economic and cultural success to communist countries. The city was not only set on the borders with East Germany, but it was also on the borders with the Soviet sector, and the West Germans were hoping to make the festival a practical and attractive place for East Berliners to visit. Every decision that went into this festival was under heavy political considerations, from the locations of cinema theaters in the border area to ticket prices and to scheduling. All of the decisions involved were deliberately chosen for the festival to "promote the Western world and Western values in the East,"[187] or in Thomas Elsaesser's words, as a "deliberate showcase for Hollywood glamour and Western show

[185] Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2002), 30.
[186] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 52.
[187] Ibid.

business."[188] In addition, all of these measures were to "prove to be symptomatic of the geopolitical influence on the festival until its eventual reorganization" in 1963, two years after the Berlin Wall was erected on August 13, 1961.[189] The Berlinale may have been inaugurated as a form of propaganda under American military occupation and was considered a topography in which to showcase Western cultures and values; nevertheless, the Berlinale would not have been established without the US's involvement.

Conversely, one of the reactions to the Berlinale was the creation of the Leipzig International Film Festival—the first independent film festival in the GDR. Founded in 1955 under the name "1st All-German Leipzig Festival of Cultural and Documentary Films," the initiative actually came from a West German film critic named Ludwig Thome who, after discussing films with the East German Filmmakers Club, decided to propose establishing a festival both as a counterpart to the Mannheim Culture and Documentary Filmweek, and as a platform for productions from the GDR. Following the harsh media criticism of the political influence over the festival's organization; however, the government canceled the festivals between 1957 and 1959. In 1960, the festival returned under a new name: the International Leipzig Documentary and Short Film Week. In 1964, after Wolfgang Harkenthal replaced the former director, Walter Kernicke, his leadership of the organization increased the politicization of the festival. For example, in 1965, the twentieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Harkenthal organized a retrospective titled "Films against Fascism." The theme of the 1966 festival was the Vietnam War. Until 1989, the film festival continued to feature

[188] Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 84.
[189] Valck, *Film Festivals*, 52.

controversial films, such as banned films that criticized the GDR government and films that focused on the conflicts on censorship and freedom. Following the German reunification in 1989, attendance figures dropped drastically due to fear of the political changes. The early 1990s were characterized by extremely low attendance and empty cinemas, with a low record of only 5,500 attending in 1993. However, the number of attendees started to recover with a new festival director taking over in 1994 and the introduction of the animation component and competition the year after. The impact of Leipzig's introduction was that Berlin used to be West Germany's hippest city, but the once-scruffy capital had long since succumbed to gentrification. With Leipzig attracting more and more creative professionals, it became a major stage for politically committed documentary films, especially from third-world and socialist countries, and showcased GDR documentary films—at least, before the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification.

A global expansion had emerged by the 1960s. The 1960s was clearly a decade of global change; this epoch had already been consolidated with a network and domino effects of major events, from the Vietnam War to the student movement and protests in Paris, and from the assassination of JFK and Malcolm X to that of Martin Luther King Jr. These political protests led to a wave of movement and changes, and even affected the festival scenes. In response to the May '68 movement, Cannes decided to eliminate its outdated ideological constraints and strategies of representing world cinema. The festival was temporarily closed on May 19, 1968, due to a series of screening controversies. Among the flood of protestors during this event were young filmmakers—including Truffaut and Godard—who later redefined French cinema. While it is easy to

characterize the 1960s as a marker of global change, the 1970s was a decade for the rise of local film festivals in second- and third-world countries as a global phenomenon. For instance, the first Cairo International Film Festival was established in 1976, followed by the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 1977 and the Havana Film Festival in Cuba in 1979. By the 1990s, in light of the introduction of neoliberal economic policy, liberalization, and the privatization of organizations and systems, the rise of film festivals in the global market expedited the swift transnationalization of the film industry. These new festivals and program coordinators faced a new challenge of trying to balance between commercial films and art cinema, between a nation–state-funded operation and curatorial independence. In the midst of consecutive economic recessions and counter-hegemonic movements in several countries over the years, the transnationalization of the film industries, especially in production and exhibition, brought about an increasing role for film festivals.

Additionally, the dynamic global film culture demonstrates how national identities are being negotiated via programmers, filmmakers, audiences, and the like. Political conflicts, for instance, were quite visible between Taiwan and Hong Kong for almost a decade, pressured by the PRC government. Between 1983 and 1987, no Taiwanese films were allowed to shown in the Hong Kong International Film Festival. A Taiwan New Cinema film was originally scheduled to be shown during this period but was later rescinded by the Hong Kong government. It was not until 1987 when Edward Yang's *The Terrorizer* was finally allowed to be shown in Hong Kong, as the opening film of that year's festival. Film festival programmers in Hong Kong saw themselves as the mediator between the two "Chinas," and considered the HKIFF as an opportunity not

only to conciliate both sides of the Strait but also to create a platform for Chinese cinemas and a network for Chinese diasporic film professionals. Since then, Taiwanese films and filmmakers have been prominent contributors at the HKIFF, along with those of Chinese diasporas from Southeast Asia such as Malaysian Chinese.

In order to address how these East Asian film festivals, while unique, must negotiate their roles within regional and global networks, I now briefly sketch each festival's histories and unique film cultures, their influential postwar status, and how they were perceived as cultural institutions. To bring the regional structure into focus, I then turn to the history of the Golden Horse Awards—how it was initiated and to what extent it interacts with state policies—and address how its significance can be mapped onto the efforts of sustaining a political and national agenda.

The Asia-Pacific Film Festival

The Asia-Pacific Film Festival (APFF) was the region's first international organization, yet it has long been overlooked and forgotten, and has attracted less attention from its competitors—international film festivals in Busan, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and others. While attention has largely been given to the Busan International Film Festival since the 1980s, the APFF was, for at least two decades, one of the most important annual film events in Asia during the Cold War era. Just as the Berlin Film Festival was a political reaction to East Germany and the Soviet regime, supported by the United States and Western powers, the APFF was set up as a response to the culture of

the Cold War and the political structure of competition and showcasing. It was first established in 1953 as the Southeast Asian Film Festival; at one point, it was renamed to the Asian Film Festival, and it was later changed to what is known today as the Asia-Pacific Film Festival. Sangjoon Lee argues the APFF was very much a political film festival because it was a regionally constructed entity that was closely tied to the cultural policies of post-war U.S. hegemony.[190] In particular, the APFF has been hosted in Taiwan at least nine times, representing its alliance with "the more liberal China" against the relatively less liberal communist PRC. In other words, the APFF was seen as a cultural frontier against Chinese communism and colonialism, stretching from Taiwan and Hong Kong to the then newly independent country of the Philippines, and from Indonesia to Malaysia (a country that was trying to break free from the control of its massive Chinese diaspora). It was a suitable time to build an Asian cultural frontier: prior to the APFF, Japan mostly sent its masterpieces to the film festivals in Western Europe and rarely participated in film festivals in Southeast Asia. As years went by, the festival's political ideology went from a U.S.-led state apparatus to the exploitation of markets and capital during the 1960s, and ultimately led to a golden age of regional motion picture studios.

From the outset, the APFF was designed to be a non-national-bound film festival. The APFF was initiated in 1953 by its parent organization, the Federation of Motion Picture Producers in Asia-Pacific (FPA), under the direction of Masaichi Nagata, president of Daiei Studio in Japan. The FPA, naturally, was formed and executed by a joint effort of film executives from Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

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[190] Sangjoon Lee, "It's 'Oscar' Time in Asia! The Rise and Demise of the Asia-Pacific Film Festival, 1954-1972," in *Coming Soon to a Festival near You: Programming Film Festivals*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (St. Andrews: St Andrews Film Books), 174.

From its inception, the APFF adopted a nomadic system: first, the FPA committee chose a member country to host each year's festival. That is, the festival was not hosted in a single city or country. Second, no member country was allowed to accommodate the festival in two consecutive years. Third, award-winning films were distributed and released with the festival label, arguably to boost sales outside the films' home turf. This strategy was useful in expanding and penetrating new exhibition territories. The APFF began with a sensational event—the screening of Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), a Daiei Studio product that won a grand prize at the 1951 Venice International Film Festival. *Rashomon* recounts a story over unresolved questions about a woman who has been murdered. The audience observes multiple characters recounting their tales directly to the camera but with numerous contradictory variations in each character's perspective. Put simply, the narrative is built from disjunctive flashbacks and fast-forwards of the time before and after the murder. The gravity of *Rashomon* winning the grand prize of Venice Film Festival called to attention the West's surprise "discovery" of Japan, a country whose film production had been largely ignored by the Western world for many years. *Rashomon* had strong competition against the best of American, French, Italian and other cinemas from the capitals of the world. A year later, *Rashomon* won the award for Best Foreign Language Film at that year's Oscars, with Japan being the first Asian country to ever win such prize.

To say *Rashomon*'s triumph excited all of Asia was not an overstatement; at the same time, this honor brought ramifications. *Rashomon*'s success stunned film executives, directors, and critics across the region of East Asia, and inflected self-criticism on each nation's film-industry policies. Hyeon-chan Ho, a renowned film critic

in South Korea, claimed that South Korean cinema should have gone to Venice and win prizes as Japan did, and even suggested that in order to increase the chances of getting recognized and winning awards, it should consider putting forth self-Orientalized "Asian" themes that would appeal to Western audiences.[191] In line with Ho's proposal for South Korean cinema, Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers Studio aimed to expand its limited market—Hong Kong and Malaysia—and sell films to the outside world. Run Run Shaw, one of the founding brothers of the Studio, recognized the weight of European film festivals and how the fame and prestige brought forth by a winning film could singlehandedly change an industry. As for Japan, the main task was to maintain its industry's supremacy and dominance in the region, especially for Daiei Studio (after the unexpected success of *Rashomon*), in the kind of new, fierce competition that post-war Japanese films studios had to face after a long hiatus. Thus, the establishment of the Federation of Motion Picture Producers in Asia-Pacific was in fact a collective aspiration of the Asia region and a means of creating a transnational Asian film market and cultural events. The initial objectives of the FPA included promoting motion pictures in the countries or territories of Southeast Asia to expand and secure the market in Southeast Asian countries, thereby "contributing to the development of friendly relations among the participating nations."[192] Interestingly, neither South Korea nor Taiwan was included in the inaugural meeting. The then-named Southeast Asia Film Festival was held in Tokyo in 1954. South Korea eventually joined the FPA in 1956 and completely revamped the organization.

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[191] Hyeon-chan Ho, "Korean Cinema on the Road to the Venice," *Silver Screen* (August 1965), 65.
[192] *Report on the Third Annual Film Festival of Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong, 1956), 7.

South Korea's participation in the FPA was, in fact, supported by The Asia Foundation (TAF)—a non-profit organization subsumed under the state of California. TAF's mission statement includes a commitment to expand opportunities and to encourage Asia's continued development as a dynamic, thriving region of the world. The fact that TAF is financially backed by the US government subjects the organization to American cultural politics, and can be seen as an extension of the American political rivalry against the Soviet Union. In the immediate post-war period, TAF supported many Asian film festivals and personnel who were associated with the events. Kuo-sin Chang, for instance, was a Hong Kong delegate who founded the Asia Press with financial backing from the United States by way of TAF. Just like the U.S. involvement in the Berlin Film Festival, the U.S. government's connection to the FPA was never disclosed or transparent; as a result, the FPA and its annual festival were caught in the cultural battle between two post-war titans—the United States and the Soviet Union—and between capitalism and communism. The APFF thereby became a political front that inexplicitly placed its political and ideological messages in the spotlight. South Korea's involvement also highlighted the APFF's effort to remain free of politics, although this objective was not without contradiction. The APFF preferred films that only came from non-communist countries, so when Indonesia proposed to include North Korea and the PRC in a meeting, the motion was rejected by other member countries, particularly those with a strong anti-communist consensus—Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. The delegates from such countries proclaimed that the aim and purpose of the APFF was to "protect 'free Asia' from the invasion of the communist force throughout the cinema."[193] Another

[193] Lee, "'Oscar' Time in Asia," 179.

example of APFF's anti-communist sentiments was in 1966, when a pro-socialist Japanese director, Satsuo Yamamoto, won the Best Director award for that year. The South Korean government investigated the festival's selection committee for violation of an anti-communist law (the country was still under a military regime at the time). Not only did the government intervene, but they also told the committee that they should have rejected the film completely and deported the communist director. This shows how the APFF, despite its endeavor, is not free of politics, and this incident "clearly shows how the region's politics and ideological beliefs influenced regional film culture, even in the international cultural arena."[194]

However, even with such conspicuous state intrusion, not every country saw the APFF as a political and ideological exertion. Shaw Brothers Studio from Hong Kong had been the least politically engaged member country during the 1960s, and had used the APFF as an opportunity to promote its annual releases and the company's reputation in the region. Between 1954 and 1969, Shaw Brothers established close ties with Japan's major studios—Toho, Shochiku, Daiei, Toei, Shin Toho, and Nikkatsu—and gradually replaced them as the leading studio in Asia. The films produced by Shaw Brothers and their overseas studios, such as the Shaw Malaya studio, basically dominated the festival. By 1959, the festival invited films from eight member countries—Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia—and of all the films submitted, three were Shaw Brothers films (including co-production). In the same year, the Shaw Brothers musical drama *The Kingdom and the Beauty* (*Jiang shan mei ren*, 1959) walked away with thirteen awards, including Best Picture and Best Director.

[194] Ibid.

The film was also Singapore's entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 32nd Academy Awards, even though Singapore had minimal input in the film's production. The next year, Shaw Brothers walked away with another winning film at the APFF: *Back Door* (*Hou men*, 1960), which was directed by Han-hsiang Li, the same director who directed *The Kingdom and the Beauty*.

On the economic level, Shaw Brothers utilized the APFF and festival awards to boost its status and, in return, encouraged the circulation of films. Since award-winning films were typically released and distributed with the festival's label, having the APFF's "Best Picture" stamp guaranteed box office sales, especially in the Southeast Asian market. The APFF's influence also included rapid transformation of the regional film industry. With Japan and Hong Kong both being leaders in Asian cinema, they built profound relationships with East Asia and modernized the film industry and system, particularly for the underdeveloped countries. For instance, the 1962 APFF was a turning point for most of its regional participants, especially for South Korea. It was the country's first turn to host the APFF, which was also the first international cultural event in the newly established country (1948–). Prior to that year, the Park government had initiated a five-year plan for the new nation's economic development, which included all political, economic, and cultural sectors, including the film industry. Around the same time, Shaw Brothers relocated its film distribution company from Singapore to Hong Kong and built a new studio at Clearwater Bay, which officially opened in 1961 as Movietown. The Movietown was the largest and best-equipped studio in Chinese filmmaking as well then the largest privately owned studio in the world. Some of Shaw Brothers' most notable films were made in this period, especially in the grand epic historical and musical genres.

By 1962, Shaw Brothers began to co-produce films with Taiwan's Central Motion Picture Corporation, Japan's Daiei and Toho studios, and South Korea's Shin Films.

Shaw Brothers' dominance of the festival shaped and changed the nature of the festival's economic activity. As mentioned, the APFF set out to protect its member countries from communism—a sentiment that met with the global rising nationalism in the 1950s. This political instability—the ideology of building a nation and the fear of communism—resulted in foreign policies that made it difficult for Asian film entrepreneurs to purchase or borrow modern filming equipment from the United States. In Indonesia, most film studios were owned by Chinese immigrants, even though Chinese producers' pioneering works in the field of film can be characterized primarily by their commercial purpose. After Indonesia gained independence from Japanese occupation in 1945, the government began implementing a new tradition in Indonesian film, which took on the historiography of war and revolution. By the late 1950s, however, Indonesia closed its studios in 1957, due to their persistent conflict with the government. By the early 1970s, the APFF faced a time of transition. Daiei, the most powerful and influential motion picture studio in Asia during the 1950s, went bankrupt in 1971. This event led to Japan withdrawing from the FPA. Around this time, the APFF also faced serious competition from newcomers: festivals in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea. Especially after Hong Kong's notable success, which showcased not only Asian cinema but world cinema premieres for the region, the APFF failed to continue establishing itself as the leading figure, and its status rapidly faded after Busan's entrance in 1996. As it was partially rooted in Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific Film Festival, in Lee's words,

"maintained a flexible identity—reacting, contradicting, negotiating, and transforming in accordance with regional politics."[195]

The Hong Kong International Film Festival

The APFF was the region's first international organization, but the Hong Kong International Film Festival is the oldest continuous film festival in East Asia, even though it came much later in history. Currently one of the largest international film festivals (it typically has over 200 screenings and shows films from over 50 countries), it has a tremendously huge program that hosted almost a third of the world's film premieres in Hong Kong. In addition, the HKIFF has helped to place many Chinese-language films, particularly those of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and PRC, on the global stage. With the rise of the Hong Kong New Wave in the late 1970s and the rise of the Chinese fifth-generation films in the 1980s, the HKIFF has been a window for showcasing new Chinese cinema ever since.

Unlike the APFF, which was initiated as a non-national festival in the Southeast Asian region, the HKIFF started out as a governmental affair but later turned into an independent, non-profit entity. The HKIFF is shaped by the changing politics and contexts that make it neither a national festival (because Hong Kong is still not a nation) nor a distinctively post-colonial venture. The HKIFF was initially set out to be a localized festival catering to Hong Kong residents. Yet, after the handover in 1997 and the gradual

[195] Lee, "'Oscar' Time in Asia," 185.

integration of Hong Kong cinematic practice into mainland China, the Chinese government began interfering with the selection process. At the same time, the festival was cultivated by a group of critics, scholars, and college students with a strong outward curiosity of the world and a desire to find their voices and identities through European art cinema and cinephile culture. In its endeavors, the festival was forced to become more responsive and inclusive to Chinese identities. In return, the festival provided an anti-colonial opportunity for Hongkongers to explore an identity that is distinctive from their British colonizers and from the mainland Chinese. In 2004, the festival was turned over to the private sector, and the organization was renamed as the HKIFF Society while continuing to receive state funds. As a privately run organization, it became dependent on corporate sponsors such as Cathay Pacific, whose mission is to transform the festival into a cultural event that focuses on promoting the city and its international visibility. In short, the HKIFF is best characterized, just like its city's colonial history, as a festival in transition.

With respect to the city's colonial history and geographical position, Hong Kong's advantage has been to become the new gateway to China while maintaining its former British connection (the British Empire claimed Hong Kong as its crown colony between 1841 and 1997). Hong Kong is very much a "borrowed place in borrowed time," as Richard Hughes vividly describes a snapshot of Hong Kong: "A borrowed place living on borrowed time, Hong Kong is an impudent capitalist survival on China's communist derriere, an anachronistic mixture of British colonialism and the Chinese way of life, a jumble of millionaires' mansions and horrible slums, a teeming mass of hard-working

humans, a well-ordered autocracy."[196] The HKIFF is very much situated in this dual cultural context—between the East and the West, English and Chinese, colonial and post-colonial. More specifically, a distinct local film culture emerged from this intersection of different cultures and languages, and played a central role in establishing the festival. In 1952, the British Council organized a film club named the Sino-British Club in the hopes of promoting better film appreciation and elevating the artistic and cultural life of the British expatriates. While the films were mostly limited to British and Hollywood films, the institute nevertheless made these films more accessible in the city. In 1961, former members of this British film club started their own called Studio One, which was later merged into the Film Society of Hong Kong. In 1974, the Urban Council in Hong Kong founded the Phoenix Film Club, a makeshift club that rented a kindergarten space in Yaumati (on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong) during the weekends to screen art films in 16 mm print. Other film institutions were also erected around the same time—the Art Center in 1977, Film Biweekly (Dianying shuang zhoukan) in 1978, and the Film Cultural Center in 1978 (which only lasted for 10 years)—offering alternative exposure to commercial Hong Kong cinema. Many of these organizations frequently rented the City Hall as a screening space, thus infusing cultural events into the governmental public sphere. In addition to the institutionalized practices, universities also offered film seminars to students and film buffs. Given this extensive exposure, the students developed a habit of reading *Sight and Sound* and *Cahiers du Cinema*, picking up the latest European art cinema, and falling in love with Italian neorealism and the French new wave. They utilized what they had learned from European art cinema as a lens

[196] Richard Hughes, *Borrowed Place—Borrowed Time: Hong Kong and Its Many Faces* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1968), 9.

through which to look at Hong Kong cinema, setting themselves apart from the previous generation of film critics, who relied on plot analyses and moral significance. These university graduates adapted global film theories to look at film forms and auteurs, and frequently published their writings in *Chinese Student Weekly* (*Zhongguo Xuesheng Choubao*) and *Film Biweekly*. These students also ran the College Cine Club from 1967 to 1971, screening world cinema such as Ingmar Bergman's films and organizing meet-the-directors sessions and post-screening discussions. These film scholars later served on the HKIFF's advisory board, shaping the minds of the next generation of filmmakers, critics, and audiences.

The HKIFF thus emerged from this intersection of cinephilia and colonial history. The first event was organized by the Urban Council and Studio One, with help from City Hall and critics from *Film Biweekly*. The idea first came from Paul Yeung, the manager at City Hall. In 1975, he was in England pursuing an advanced degree in arts administration, during which he attended the London International Film Festival. When he returned two years later, he immediately proposed organizing a film festival in Hong Kong. As a government-funded initiative, the Urban Council had a narrow concept of what this event should be: screening mostly European and art cinema, and not necessarily local Hong Kong films. Cindy Wong noted that the government was not interested in working with the local film industries at the time or bringing cultural awareness to the local audience.[197] Ada Loke also remarked that the HKIFF, in its first run, was "not in the position to solicit either new works of well-known directors or first features of new talents. It could only enlist the support of various embassies to secure films that had

[197] Wong, *Film Festivals*, 204.

appeared on the international film circuit *in the past few years*" (emphasis added).[198] The result was a temporal gap between what was showing currently and what was actually screening at the HKIFF. The time lag was not just in relation to the West; the 1977 festival also included *Human Imperfections* (1974), a film made by Lino Brock—one of the most influential and significant Filipino filmmakers—three years after the film was debuted. Other examples in Asian cinema included King Hu's *A Touch of Zen* (1969) and short films by Allen Fong, all screened elsewhere prior to the inauguration of the HKIFF. The entire first festival was executed for around a frugal budget of HK$100,000, which is approximately $13,000 in US dollars.

Although the festival initially relied on government funding, the government provided very little incentives to push the festival for an international presence: most of the programmers were contracted, and the organizers were unable to network with other international festivals due to the restraints of the budget. This led to the evolution of the HKIFF taking on multiple roles and functions, such as a makeshift public sphere for cinematic knowledge. It was only in 1982 that a small fund was set aside to subsidize programmers to attend other festivals such as Cannes and Toronto to scout new films and promote the presence of the HKIFF. The HKIFF also served as a cinémathèque until 2004, after its corporatization. The festival programmers knew from early on that it would be impossible to continue to cater Hong Kong and Chinese-language films to the increasingly larger audiences without an archive. Inspired by the Cinémathèque Français, Roger Garcia—also a manager at City Hall—consulted film professionals about the

[198] Kwok Ching Ling and Emily Lo, "Interview with Paul Yeung, the Birth of HKIFF," in *20th Anniversary of the Hong Kong International Film Festival* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1996), 33.

possibility of establishing a film archive. By 1993, the Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) was established and housed temporarily in Tsim Sha Tsui. In 2001, it was moved to a more permanent location in east Hong Kong Island. Currently two separate entities, the HKIFF and HKFA still work together on the festival, especially on the retrospectives for Hong Kong or Chinese cinemas. The HKIFF is also a site of the transnational public sphere where local and regional cultures intersect, allowing film professionals, critics, cinephiles, and scholars to come together. These people have included Ulrich Gregor, David Bordwell, Tony Rayns, Marco Muller, and Olivier Assayas. In an interview about being on a special *Cahiers du cinema* assignment on Hong Kong cinema, Assayas recalls:

> In 1984 we went to Hong Kong and made the special issue on Hong Kong cinema. It was the first issue dealing with this cinema—not only its present, but also its roots. . . . It was the first serious Western work on popular Cantonese cinema and it was like discovering a new continent. We had no notion of who were the directors, what were the films, what were the classics . . . it was like discovering something completely new, which is very rare in cinema.[199]

In addition to reports on the films that the critics saw at the festival—such as Rayns's writing in *Sight and Sound* and Assayas's in *Cahiers*, there were also personal connections: David Bordwell notes that he would not have been able to learn so much about Hong Kong cinema if not for his old friend Tony Rayns, who regularly sent him catalogues of the Hong Kong International Film Festival. In the long run, the HKIFF was successful in nurturing the local film culture, and introduced Hong Kong and Chinese-language cinemas to the Western audience.

[199] Olivier Assayas, interview by Jeff Reichert, *Reverse Shot*, no. 21, 2007.

In the last decade or so, the HKIFF faced strong competition from neighboring cities and countries, such as Shanghai, Tokyo, and Busan, while Hong Kong itself is in a constantly changing global position. As a British crown colony, Hong Kong benefited from the non-interventionist policy of the Hong Kong British government in the late 1960s, which enabled the city itself to develop and transform as a port city and a bridge between China and the Western world. As Ruby Cheung has described, Hong Kong "has gradually consolidated its indispensable position as a global city transcending the national and geopolitical confines of its hinterland."[200] On the other hand, Hong Kong has always been historically marginalized by China. To the Chinese, Hong Kong was considered a place without distinct culture: "while everyone is Chinese . . . it has no Chinese flavor, it lacks a Chinese soul."[201] To the British colonial government, Hong Kong was a place for resistance to the late Qing's decaying bureaucratic empire. After the end of British rule and the return to the PRC in 1997, the Chinese mainlanders developed a fascination with Hong Kong's globalized modernity and commodity consumption. As China is experiencing unprecedented economic growth, the PRC government sees Hong Kong as a space that is Westernized but still sufficiently local, capitalist but malleable by communist ideology—which is attractive enough to the pan-Chinese market. Films made in Hong Kong are classified as "Chinese" under the PRC's regulations, and the city—now a special administrative region of China—has become the means of funneling co-production money into the mainland. Hong Kong film industries,

[200] Ruby Cheung, *New Hong Kong Cinema* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 7.
[201] Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2003), 67.

however, had to manage a Chinese bureaucracy in co-productions and censorship, as well as compete with an increasingly advanced mainland industry.

The HKIFF is pertinent to the discussions of Taiwan cinema because Hong Kong stands in a complex colonial and post-colonial relationship with Taiwan and the PRC. The PRC's political agenda—that of imperial bureaucracy, communism, and strong opposition to the KMT's rule in Taiwan—often extends beyond the state to political struggles on a ground level. For instance, the HKIFF's programmers had to constantly negotiate the political dispute between the PRC and Taiwan. As a result, no Taiwanese films were shown in HKIFF between 1983 and 1987 to avoid controversy. Taiwan cinema was not allowed to be shown until 1987, when Edward Yang's *The Terrorizer* (1986) was selected as the opening film for the 11th HKIFF. Prior to that, the programmers already organized a screening of Taiwan New Cinema when the movement first started in the early 1980s, but the screening never took place because the Urban Council refused to rent out the space to the festival, as a passive-aggressive way to instate their political view. The Urban Council's intervention and the self-censorship came from Hong Kong's administration, rather than from the PRC government, which is only one example of the geopolitical tensions. It is under such political, economic, and cultural dynamics that the HKIFF is situated in a special place in relation to China, Taiwan, and the West, including the United Kingdom and the United States. Being neither communist China nor nationalist Taiwan, the festival city has been an essential portal to the world for China to link to the Chinese diaspora, and for the West to discover Asian culture.

As mentioned, the HKIFF was born towards the end of the British colonial empire, and because of the changing political and economic landscapes at the time, the

festival became an opportunity for Hong Kong residents to seek their voice and understand their hybrid identities—especially their many different Chinese identities and not one. Central to this paradigm is that Chineseness is not a fixed category, whether it is racial, cultural, or geographical, and they are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated. In other words, the one Chinese identity that many thought the Hong Kong residents would identify with after returning to mainland is problematic, culturally essentialist, and overly ethnically deterministic.

The Golden Horse Awards and Film Festival

The Golden Horse Awards and Film Festival started as the oldest film award ceremony in Chinese-language cinema. It dates back over 50 years and is held annually in Taipei, Taiwan. Dina Iordanova once posed the question: Are industry-staged public relations events like the Asia Pacific Film Festival and the Taipei Golden Horse Awards and Film Festival actually festivals?[202] Her answer was no, they should not be regarded as festivals, given that industry considerations often take precedence over a selection based on artistic criteria.[203] I argue on a deeper level the Golden Horse Awards (GHA) complicated the definition of awards and film festivals. While a clear distinction should be made between industry-based promotion and an aesthetic-based program, the GHA's ambiguous relationships with the government funding strategies and the scandals

[202] Dina Iordanova, "Notes on Film Festivals vs. Industry Events," *DinaView* (blog), September 30, 2010.
[203] Ibid.

involved in the selection process create a particular type of geopolitical festival in its own right.

At its inception, the GHA was set up as an award event to promote Mandarin film and the film industry in Taiwan. The government-initiated GHA was launched in 1957 by a group of studios and media organizations. It was a one-time operation, and the awards coincided with the peak of Taiwanese-dialect films in the late 1950s. In 1962, under a combination of financial incentives and institutional controls from the Government Information Office (GIO), the GHA was resumed and became an annual event. In the early years, no institution outside the official establishment was involved in giving film awards. Additionally, because films were mostly produced by the state-owned studio Central Motion Pictures Corporation (CMPC), the local film industry was discouraged from developing its own autonomy and challenging authority on cultural and ideological matters. In fact, the local film industry was too divided and preoccupied with survival to be concerned with its independence. As a result, the government, and not the industry, took the lead in promoting films that were congruous with political and ideological agendas through giving awards. The awards and prizes require all entries to be locally produced and filmed, invoking a certain degree of protectionism and provincialism. If the films were produced outside of Taiwan, they needed be vetted by Taiwanese embassies and consulates. Today, as long as half of the film is in the Chinese language, it is eligible. "Chinese language" is defined in rather loose terms to include any local dialect aside from Mandarin, such as Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Hakka. The broad definition of Chinese language has given the awards credibility in the Chinese film community over the years. In short, this film festival, which started out as film awards with a latent

political agenda, has transcended geopolitical boundaries and formed an imagined community of the Chinese diaspora.

However, this transcendence of the Chinese community was not there from the start. In contrast to today's minimal requirements, films in the original competition had to be in Mandarin, with a strong emphasis on the social function of films. Common film themes were anti-Communism, promoting government policies, and glorifying political achievements. Anything outside of this representation faced strong pushback from conservative groups. In 1983, the Taiwan New Wave film *The Sandwich Man* faced a chain of censorship and scandals that involved the GHA. First, *The Sandwich Man* was almost disqualified from entering the awards because almost half of the film was not in Mandarin but in a local Taiwanese dialect. Second, a number of undisclosed film reviewers and jury members considered a segment of the film, "The Tastes of Apple," lower class, distasteful, and untruthful to Taiwan's nationalistic image, and they wrote an anonymous letter unanimously to the authorities asking to ban this film. Under high pressure, the CMPC edited the segment out before screening the film, without the consent of the directors or the distributor. The scandal was, however, exposed by journalist Shiqi Yang, who was also a long-time avid moviegoer, in *United Daily* with a sensational headline: "The Son Almost Lost His Doll."[204] After Yang's exposé, a wave of strong protests in the media occurred, eventually leaving the film intact and uncut. This controversy was also known in Chinese as the "apple peeling" incident. This incident raised some serious questions about jury's impartiality. For example, *The Sandwich Man* opened the door to the Taiwan New Wave debates: critics were split into two camps, and

[204] Shiqi Yang, "The Son Almost Lost His Doll," *United Daily* (*Lianhobao*), August 15, 1983.

the GHA judges, while trying to maintain their political stance, chose not to vote for any of the films that were associated with the New Wave movement, including Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1985) and *Dust in the Wind* (1986). Only commercially successful and politically right-wing films were recognized at the awards, such as Lee Hsing's *Heroic Pioneers* (*Tangshan guo Taiwan*; 1986). Political controversy was also extended to the talents competing in performance, such as for Best Actor and Actress. In 1989, Gaowa Siqin, daughter of a Han Chinese father and a Mongolian mother, was disqualified from competing for Best Actress for her performance in Stanley Kwan's *Full Moon in New York* (1989) because of her Swiss citizenship.

The transformation from awards ceremony to festival programming was prompted by the political tension between PRC and Taiwan as well as Taiwan New Cinema winning awards at various international film festivals in the mid-1980s. The definition of "Chinese" always had political contention at heart when the awards originally banned all PRC films: any film financed or filmed entirely in China would not be allowed to take part in the GHA. Subsequently, forbidding PRC national films from participating led the government of China to believe that the GHA must have carried considerable weight in the film community, simply because the awards were unattainable. Of course, no system would be left unchallenged. Unlike film awards in the PRC, which have always been administered by the party/state government, the Taiwanese government handed over the awards' administrative powers to a private organization in 1983. After this privatization, the GHA went through several major policy reforms; behind the recommended reforms was a group of New Wave directors who were eager to change the dying local film

industry. While Hong Kong productions have always been included as domestic films and have dominated the GHA, by 1991, PRC films registered as Hong Kong productions were allowed to enter the competition. In the next year, a limited number of films directed by PRC directors were allowed to compete due to pressure by the Mainland Affairs Council in support of Taiwan's unification with China. By 1996, the geopolitical restriction was completely lifted. A festival component was then introduced to the ceremonial nature of the Golden Horse Awards, in the hopes of transforming the GHA into the center of Chinese and Chinese diaspora cinema. Working with the new GIO representative James Soong, the GHA operated under the premise of encouraging the international exposure of the country, advancing the local film industry for global and technological competiveness, and recognizing filmmakers' creativity. The official name of the GHA was changed to the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival (TGHFF), and it is currently the most important film event in Taiwan. The GHA also launched the Film Project Promotion and Film Academy to train new talents and to provide funding opportunities for schools and educators.

While the GHA remained a competition, the film festival component was introduced as a non-competitive showcase to promote cinema from around the world. The Golden Horse Award competition was initially modeled after Hollywood's Academy Awards regarding its live television broadcast and award categories. The selection process, however, was more akin to the Cannes Film Festival or the Berlinale. The GHA uses a small team of judges who are chosen for their achievements in art and culture but are not necessarily film professionals. The jury committee members, currently 17 in number, change every year. This means that the jury is only able to judge the

performance based on the works that have been nominated, and not necessarily a substantial body of work constituting the lifetime work of the talent. Like the Oscars, the GHA has technical categories such as "Best Sound" and "Best Editing," but these categories are judged by film critics instead of film unions or guild members.

A new system was implemented in 2006. The GHA now operates through a two-tier judging process: first, the film industry's unions and professionals can nominate candidates for the industrial and technical categories. After a list of nominees has been made, the jury committee evaluates the films and the talents to make its final decisions. However, the new system is not without drawbacks: film professionals once criticized Maggie Cheung's performance in *In the Mood for Love* (2000) for "looking like a window curtain" and called the depiction of homosexuals in *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) a bad influence on the younger generation.[205] Nonetheless, the reforms were adopted with an aim of following a global standard to increase the internationalization of the awards. Over time, the GHA has been converted from promoting political and ideological agendas to showcasing Chinese-language films in a regional context. The positive side is that competition from around the world can broaden the perspectives of filmmakers, film professionals, and audiences. The downside is that Taiwan cinema became marginalized, and it is hard for local films to stay in the running for awards in the face of competition from other nations.

The GHA shows that the government plays a role as both a patron and a partner, but this role is particularly reflected in the GIO *fudaojin* subsidy policy. Stipulated in

[205] Looloo Lu, "The Golden Horse Awaits, but Where Is Taiwanese film?" *Taipei Times*, trans. Phil Newell, November 18, 2007.

view of New Cinema's success at international film festivals, particularly *A City of Sadness*'s participation at Venice in 1989, the *fudaojin* subsidy has had a direct effect on the local film industry. Despite meager resources, state funds were made available to screenplays and film projects that fulfilled specific criteria. The criteria, awards, and requirement guidelines have been changed every two or three years. In 1992, a cash reward was offered called the "Incentives for Domestic Films and Professionals' Participation in International Film Festivals," a state distribution of capital funds that rewards winners at international film festivals. It operates like this: the GIO first selects the films for nomination from a list of films that have participated in major international film festivals, namely Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. A selection committee made up of seven to nine film critics and professionals then evaluate the list and decide the winners. They can also recommend films that were initially not on the list, i.e., had participated in the second-tier festivals. In reality, the cash rewards have often been pegged to the prestige of the film festival or to high-profile filmmakers with good track records—they were the ones who have had constant access to the funds.

In the beginning, the *fudaojin* fund could subsidize the film project's entire budget, including scriptwriting and pre/postproduction. Most Taiwan New Cinema directors were funded by this subsidy. For example, without the *fudaojin*, Tsai Ming-liang probably would not have been able to make *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), which subsequently embarked on an avant-garde trend of Taiwan New Cinema, even though he had been working in the theaters and writing television scripts long before his debut film. Hou Hsiao-hsian (*The Puppetmaster*, 1993; *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, 1996) and Edward Yang (*A Brighter Summer Day*, 1991) were two other New Cinema directors who

continued to make films about the locals and were supported by the *fudaojin*. Ang Lee, part of the second-wave generation of Taiwan New Cinema, was recruited to carry on New Cinema into the 1990s. After seven years in the United States, Ang Lee used his American training to leverage prize-winning scripts into independent films and hits. His first film, *Pushing Hands* (1992), made its debut with the *fudaojin* grant, and the same can be said about his subsequent films *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994) as part of the "father-son trilogy." Chu Yen-ping, a Taiwanese film director, went as far as to declare that without the GIO *fudaojin*, there would not be an Ang Lee in our decade. Yet, despite Ang Lee being successfully recognized by the Taiwanese government, the Taipei-set *Eat Drink Man Woman*, which was internationally successful, received criticism at home for its "old-fashioned, patriarchal focus that seemed archaic and eroticized."[206]

The *fudaojin* subsidy was meant to combat shrinking domestic output, but the plan backfired after harsh criticism by the local community that government capital was being misspent on funding art cinema, instead of focusing on commercial films that could potentially resuscitate the almost non-existent film industry. Part of the criticism was the subsidy initially being given to encourage the production of art cinema and independent films, but it also had to do with the inconsistent criteria and the hands-off guidance for producers, directors, and related film professionals. In other words, no specific regulations were placed on earlier *fudaojin* recipients. Several filmmakers were accused of embezzlement and misuse of the subsidy. A parody film was even made to mock this dilemma: "Doze" Chen-Zer Niu's *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?!* (2007) is a satire

[206] Davis, "Second Coming," 142.

about how his fellow filmmakers scammed and cheated the government to win grants, cash rewards, and *fudaojin* subsidies.

The GIO has constantly revised its subsidy policy throughout the years. In the beginning, the GIO did not set aside different categories for film genres or the size of the budget. This discrepancy was later rectified by complicating the reviewing process of applications, and the GIO launched the New Directors Program to fund independent and up-and-coming filmmakers. A review in 2004 once again changed the assessment criteria, and funding priorities were given to script development, short films and documentaries, and cash awards for directors who topped the box office grossing of the year. For example, Wei Te-Sheng was a recipient to such award after the successful commercial release of his first feature-length motion picture, *Cape No. 7* (2008). The film depicts Taiwan's colonial past by the Japanese, a subject that has been long suppressed in major local blockbusters. The film's success at the box office took the public by surprise because first, the film was filled with actors with very limited experience and non-professional talents. Even without a strong promotional campaign, *Cape No. 7* had gone viral over the internet, and become so popular in Taiwan that the film became the second highest grossing film in the country's box office history, only after *Titanic* (1997). The film is also currently the highest grossing Taiwanese domestic film, grossing over five billion TWD since its release. Consequently, Wei was able to receive a 20% cash rewards under the new *fudaojin* rules to apply to his next film project, *Seediq Bale* (2011), a film that was estimated around four billion TWD to produce. Cash rewards also does not interfere with the eligibility to apply for other subsidies; in other words, on top of the

rewards Wei received from his previous film, he was able to apply for other category in the *fudaojin* fund at the same time.

In 2005, after Yen-ping Chu was appointed the chairman for the Fudaojin Foundation and the director for the Taipei Film Trade Association, he revised the subsidy policy and raised the bar for evaluation standards. For example, the *fudaojin* funds no longer subsidize the entire film project but only up to half the budget, along with various tax allowances. Since many local filmmakers have been turning to South Korean visual effects firms for help, GIO hoped that by subsidizing these projects the government can retain local film professionals and to build its own globally competitive animators and effects companies. The maximized subsidy amount for recipients in this category is TWD $20,000,000 (approx. USD $600,000), and the minimum for investment is at least TWD $30,000,000. In other words, the investment they received for this type of film project should be at least double the amount of *fudaojin* fund they received. For General Projects, the maximum is about half of the fund from the first category (TWD $10,200,000), and the grant New Directors cannot exceed TWD $8,200,000. The subsidy also attracted some foreign investors, such as Wong Kar Wai's Hong Kong-based production and distribution company Jet Tone Films, whose Taipei branch has operated since 2005.

While critics and commentators are sympathetic toward art house filmmakers, many believe that the GIO's former tactics were not always in the best interest of Taiwan's film industry. For example, commercial film directors like Wu Dun and Chu Yen-ping saw the earlier *fudaojin* policy as an obstacle to Taiwan's film industry. In terms of *fudaojin*'s high internal divergence, it cannot escape the consequences of the government being a co-production partner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, film festivals as an alternative network have offered a nuanced exploration of struggles over nationalist politics and negotiations with local cultures in the age of globalization. The three regional film festivals—the APFF, HKIFF, and GHA—created a regional structure that relies on local filmmakers, audiences, judges, funding, marketing, distribution, and the like, giving shape to an emergent pan-Asian community. While festival films may not have been highly profitable in their home market, films that have gained significant attention in the festival circuit have managed to substantially raise the profile of Taiwan's national cinema both locally and internationally. The film festival circuit also provides an incentive for governments to offer cash prizes to push local film production for festival competition, offered on the ground that not only would a festival award give films low-cost distribution, but a high-profile record can also attract money from international resources. The survival of Taiwan New Cinema as a supplier of global art cinema—despite coming from the nearly non-existent commercial film industry in Taiwan—illustrates the absorption of transnationalism into domestic cultural practice. In addition to the emphasis of the new aesthetics or film form, the intellectual movement of Taiwan New Cinema also looked to a more sociological and political emphasis. The New Cinema directors were eager to pass, rescind, or revise governmental legislation that would impact their filmmaking and

production. In other words, film festivals and the government are interdependent and mutually reinforcing in promoting and negotiating national identity.

As mentioned from the outset, these festivals operated at arm's length from the government, catering to state policy and patronage, and articulated their aspirations to become the central locus of pan-Asian cinema. Consequently, these festivals suffered from oppressive official oversight and discouraged the local industries' creative output. Now, after the institutional restructuring and geographical reach of key cultural metropolises, such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou—each with a robust ensemble of media enterprises and distinctive regional cultures—film festivals seem likely to become contenders for soft power. In other words, film festivals are not merely exhibition platforms and commodity markets; they are a geopolitical system with multiple poles, with the emphasis of maintaining a cultural homogeneity of local identity. In return, the regional film festivals in East Asia build manifold sites of cultural exchange that need not to be legitimized by Euro-American festivals in which Asian cinemas operate as the rule, not the exception.

Epilogue | Film Festivals as Producers

A man wearing a Buddhist monk's robe with his shaved head is seen leaving the building in the slowest possible way. His slow steps are in contrast to the open door behind, keeping the world in its regular pace. Audiences are redirected to the motion out the door: a cyclist, a bus, a man in a purple jacket.... This is the first scene in *Walker* (2012), a 25-minute short film directed by Tsai Ming-liang. The two-minute shot lasts long enough for our vision and mind to wander into the background, to the point one can no longer tell whether the monk is really moving or just stands there the whole time.

Walker is the first installment of a larger project by the Taiwan-based, Malayan director, which includes other short films such as *Walking on Water* (2013) and *Journey to the West* (2014). These films feature Lee Kang-Sheng walking unbelievably slowly through the streets of Hong Kong, Tsai's hometown in Malaysia, and Marseille, France. After an entire career comprised of films that pay attention to duration and the underlining passage of time, *Walker* is almost entirely constituted of repetition, making it more of a performance documentary than a linear experience of narrative. At the same time, before the film begins, audiences sit through the opening credits and view what has become almost trivial: multiple logos listing various film funds and sponsorship in which the filmmaker received to develop, produce, and distribute his film. In this case, *Walker* is commissioned by the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (HKIFFS) and Youku, a Hong Kong television channel. Released on Youku's website, *Walker* is a segment to the collection "Beautiful 2012: Four Masters' Micromovie produced by

Youku," (美好 2012　優酷出品大師微電影) and had already over more than 4 million viewers.

To those who are familiar with the style of Tsai Ming-liang, this type of collaboration to make a festival funded film is nothing new. His first "festival film" came around 2007, when the Cannes Film Festival wanted to commemorate its 60th anniversary, commissioned a group of 33 well-known international directors to each make a three-minute film. Tsai presented *It's a Dream*, which draws on his own childhood memories with grand movie theaters. Prior to Cannes, Tsai had two invited work from festivals: a 1997 stage play invited by Danny Yung, director of the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and in 2004, a Chiang Kai-Shek installation piece commissioned by the Kinmen Fort Arts Festival. But neither work was moving images. For a director like Tsai, projects that are associated with festivals funds have become indispensible stamps of approval, especially if the director is a prior grant recipient of major festival funds and who might want to continue the same venue of funding.

Scholars have previously brought attention to "the festival film," particularly how festival funding tends to support a filmmaker's artistic vision over the film's marketability.[207] Here, I want to trace filmmakers' crossover to alternative exhibition that were also fostered by such opportunity, using a case study like Tsai Ming-liang. In what follows, I will briefly sketch the function of festival funding and assess what makes a

[207] See Tamara L. Falicov, "The 'festival film': Film festival funds as cultural intermediaries," *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist, 209-229. London: Routledge, 2016. Dorota Ostrowska, "International Film Festivals as Producers of World Cinema," *Cinema & Cie*, vol. X, no. 14-15 (Spring-Fall 2010): 145-150. Miriam Ross, "The film festival as producer: Latin American films and Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund," *Screen* 52, no. 2 (2011): 261-267.

project like *Walker* contributes new meaning to the label "festival film." The existence of these funds raises questions about the ways in which film festivals shape contemporary art cinema at large, and how these projects became part of the global film festival establishment. While I focus on one specific auteur here, my intention is to conduct a broader inquiry into the relationship between the effect of financing and productions on these projects. Does a kind of transnationalism infuse the works' form, style, and content? My aim here is to present that Tsai Ming-liang's shift in practice (from the movie theater to the art gallery) is not isolated or impervious to international influences.

Film festivals are now more than ever acting as "broker"[208] between international producers and seasoned directors, and between new directors and film festival curators. Drawing on James Clifford's take on routes and Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT), I consider these film productions enabled by the festival funds as routes and networks. If routes help us visualize particular passages of cinematic circulation, networks allow us to highlight the intersectional points between institutions and films, and help us understand how films move through various channels and spaces of distribution and exhibition. The routes and networks demonstrate that film festivals are more than exhibition platforms and commodity markets; they are a system with multiple poles, creating and operating the flows of cultural hybridism.

In listing their selection criteria, the Hong Kong – Asia Film Financing Forum, or HAF, emphasizes their preferences are films that "display a high market potential for Asian and/or international market," and "exhibit both artistic and commercial qualities." HAF is the financing platform of the Hong Kong International Film Festival since 2000.

[208] Falicov, "The 'festival film': Film festival funds as cultural intermediaries," 210.

It came out as part of an initiative to push the festival for an international presence (since the government funding provided little incentives for programmers to network). These funds tend to be distributed to filmmakers who are the next generation of international filmmakers. The initiative was also to bring Asian filmmakers with upcoming film projects to Hong Kong for co-production ventures with financiers, producers, bankers, distributors and buyers. HAF also collaborated with a range of film festivals throughout the world: ACE (France), Busan (South Korea), Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival, Taipei Golden Horse, and festivals in Moscow, Rome and Shanghai. Each year HAF selects around 25-30 projects among 1,000 submissions and from at least 35 countries and regions. In the beginning the funds mostly went to East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, with projects from Hong Kong received the most funding. This number, however, was reduced significantly in 2007, when filmmakers from PRC preceded Hong Kong. From 2007 and onward the change was also about expanding the range of countries represented: from predominantly Asian countries to Australia, and to Israel, Lebanon, and others. The number of transnational projects also improved, but not as drastically as in 2010 when there were 11 co-production projects among 25 selections. Often times the co-productions were regional collaborations (Hong Kong/China/Macao or Singapore/Malaysia); others reflect a larger globalized, cross-cultural production and reception. Chinese director Sheng Zhimin's *Cosplay* as such is a film adapted from a novel by the great Italian absurdist writer Luigi Pirandello, produced by Artlinefilms in France.

HAF also supports projects at any stage of production; in other words, submissions are competing with each other at different stages of production. In 2012,

HAF partnered with Fox Networks Group and introduced the HAF/FOX Project Award that aims to encourage the development of Chinese-language cinema to secure the presence of the representation of Chinese community.

For HAF to help fund films that conform to its organizational goal means they can use the subsequent box office success or festival awards as a way to increase the festival's profile. For example, HAF makes sure to mention a long list of notable past participants and awards recipients; among them are predominantly art-house veterans such as Tsai Ming-liang, Jia Jiangke, Park Chan-wook, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. These funding bodies also help shape the distinctive look of the festival. While the funds were given to a variety of genres, Tamara L. Falicov asserts that the narrative of the films produced by festivals in general are still "of the 'art house' variety, which we might define as a film with particular aesthetic and narrative conventions for an educated audience and from a higher socioeconomic class stratum."[209] Rick Altman take a more general stand and classify festival films as "defined by their exhibition rather than by their textual characteristics."[210] Julian Stringer then argues that these films are not only "exhibited *at* festivals," they are oftentimes "produced *for* festivals."[211] In thinking about the role film festivals play in terms of producing taste, Marijke de Valck adds that festival films are "not only predominantly produced for the festival circuit, but also partially by (and with the cultural approval of) the festival circuit." One should also acknowledge that as far as commissioning and producing the work of selected filmmakers go, festival organizations do not directly intervene but may have an effect on the stylistic choices

[209] Falicov, "The 'festival film,'" 213.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.

filmmakers make. This goes along with Stringer's comment that an examination of the phenomenon "reveals much about the production of cultural hierarchies of taste on an institutional and international scale."[212]

Walker, in this context, has a unique stand as it is neither a product through the funding competition (it was directly commissioned) nor was it screened exclusively at film festivals (it was premiered at Youku website on April 12, 2012, about a month earlier than its Cannes release). The emphasis of the bodily movement in *Walker* is typical of the director's attempt to subvert an increasingly globalized commercial film industry, particularly in the East Asia region, as Tsai has said many times during interviews.[213] Tsai considers "film as art" currently a concept at risk, especially in face of the mainstream audiences who expect to be entertained with movie stars and spectacular effects. *Walker* can also be seen as a starting point to think through the relationship between film exhibition and space, especially when it involves the digital platform.

Walker also differs from the director's previous body of work. First of all, the film is shot based on the location of the film festival, and the same for the rest of the compilation. Second, while *Visage* (2009) still relies on a variety of narrative schemes, *Walker* is almost entirely constituted of repetition of the same procedure. Third, *Walker* not only challenges the viewing experience of time and space both on screen and off screen, between movie theater and digital platform, it also prompts Tsai to continue and expand this example of extreme slow aesthetic. At the invitation of Kunsten festival des arts and Galeries Cinema in Brussels, Tsai returned to theater performance in 2014.

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[212] Falicov, "The 'festival film,'" 213.
[213] Tsai Ming-liang, *Catalogue of Stray Dogs at the Museum: Tsai Ming Liang Solo Exhibition* (Taipei: Museum of National Taipei University of Education, 2016), 16.

Entitled The Monk from Tang Dynasty, this live performance is an extension of Lee Kang-shen's slow walk, staged in the abandoned space of Cinema Marivaux.

His last feature film *Stray Dogs* (2013) is also reflective of this respect—a director gradually making his way into the museum by concentrating on making films for fine art museum. After *Stray Dogs*, Tsai brought this film to the Museum of National Taipei University of Education (MoNTUE) and created an interactive, solo exhibition. "*Stray Dogs* at the Museum" is more complicated than simply screening the film at the museum. During the ten-week period of the exhibition, *Stray Dogs*, along with his subsequent work *Afternoon* (2015), were projected on the white wall and screened seven times a day. Aside from turning the museum into a movie theater, patrons were encouraged to sit on the floor, sleep, eat, and even spend the night at the museum grounds on specific dates. Actual tree branches that were blown off by a typhoon not long ago also became part of the exhibition. Tsai's conceptual work moves beyond the simple border crossing between fine art and media; between the white cube and the darkened theater.

If the objective of these festival co-production and financing is to facilitate the creation of new works by filmmakers from local regions or new talents that would, in turn, help raise the event's profile and consolidate cultural hierarchies of taste, then this support also signifies the mutual dependency film festivals have with filmmakers. In other words, the type of short films and exhibitions Tsai is making now operates on aesthetics and styles that channel globally interconnected systems. Filmmakers needed the festival platform to brand their style, to reassure their authorial presence, and to inject them into the global film industry. Likewise, film festivals needed to cultivate new ways

to ensure their continual supply of fresh materials: preferably films that are exclusive to them or have some type of niche market value. While an inherent imbalanced power dynamics might be prevalent between funders and those seeking financial help, Tsai Ming-liang's work shows that festival funds, as an added resource, provide unique opportunities for directors and producers alike to create projects that are less likely to be manifested elsewhere.

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