THE CRYSTAL OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The Ethics of Witness in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the aesthetic and ethical ways in which history and daily life are filmically represented and witnessed in Taiwanese director, Hou Hsiao-hsien's movies. From the era of the Japanese Occupation to the White Horror and then to the lifting of martial law, I show how Hou Hsiao-hsien uses visual media to evoke the rhythms of daily life through the emotional memory of the characters and communities he explores. In particular, I focus on the ways in which he seeks to reflect the strong dilemmas of identity and the traumatic emotions about the witness to history. To this end, this dissertation interrogates the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien to ask: "What means are available to a film director to both explore, and incorporate, historical events and observations into a film?", "How does the camera work in the telling of such historical events?" "What is the role of film in illuminating the grounds of truth - telling at any moment the contemporary ethics of particular histories?" "How does film represent historical trauma and the personal memories that go with that trauma?"

To answer these questions, with respect to the work of the film-maker, Hou Hsia-hsien, I present some of the formal practices that he uses, in the way he questions and represents history and daily life, in his films, in order to demonstrate both historical responsibility, in general, and a reliable 'ethics of witness' in particular. I argue that in better understanding Hou's films we need to move beyond an analysis which is dominated by a critical theory which prioritises simply imaginative vision, to a theoretical understanding of film which seeks to question how individual experience in feature films is related to history and collective memory. I argue that Hou's films go beyond an imagination which uses history and memory as a backdrop, to being powerful interventions, deconstructing the power and authority of the "voice-over" of "official" history. As such, Hou's films do not simply record past memories, they become part of the overall "ethics of witness" of history here and now. And they do so through Hou's very distinctive development of a filmic poetics of time, space,

memory and the ordinary in order to enable the rethinking and re-presenting of history within popular culture.

Key Words: Everyday Life, Representation, Memory, Time, Space, Trauma, History, Ethics of Witness, Poetics.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the Everyday

Everything we see, could be otherwise;

Everything we can describe at all, could be also otherwise.

—Wittgenstein *The Tractatus* (2014)

A Personal Memory

Ewa Mazierska once said, historical books mostly reflect their author's own histories (21). In this regard my dissertation is similar yet different. It takes my own memories about growing up in a small town in eastern China, first as a child, then as a teenager, and finally as young adult, as one of its springboards. As an ordinary person, I tend to perceive myself as someone without a history of country. At school, my history teachers did not show me the connections between the past and the present - the past was sealed off from current problems. In the historical textbooks that I encountered during my school years, I could not read about historical landscapes other than the officially endorsed ones. We accepted the dominant discourse as normative instead of exploring other possible "lines of flight". At home, my family's past was neither celebrated nor suppressed, but it never dawned upon me that there were meaningful gaps needing to be investigated. The past in my family was simply ignored: we always lived in the present. This happened despite the fact that a major part of my family's unspoken past came in the form of my maternal grandfather who returned to our hometown from Taiwan, after many years away. That was in the 1990s. Martial law was lifted in Taiwan and relatives began to visit each other across the Straits of Taiwan. I was then only 10 years old. I was witness to a bittersweet reunion, and had no idea about politics and history. The reunion was not grand or dramatic, as

one might imagine, because 40 years of separation had diluted the strength of the memories. Significantly, it did not appear to change the "present". My maternal grandfather who had, since leaving China, raised a new family in Taiwan, died soon after returning to Taiwan. Nonetheless his visit was considered an "event" in the small town where I lived; though for me, it was just a very thin memory. In everyday life, my family rarely talked about Taiwan and our relatives residing there, nor about the wars and separations. Those things seemed to us to have happened hundreds of years ago, where the logic of time became disconnected from the present moment. Moreover, the historical trauma of separation was deemed by my family a matter of disgrace: we were like rejected out-casts, and the shame of this forced them to make a conscious effort to forget this aspect of the family history; so they refused to talk about it.

In addition to my maternal grandfather, my other, and more dominant, contact with Taiwan came in the form of movies like Wang Tung's *Banana Paradise* (1989) and Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989) and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995). What I saw in these Taiwanese films went far beyond their artistic value. They opened the curtain of history, giving me a glimpse of that "missing history" which had been banished from my imagination, formal discussions at school and especially also in my family. The representation of historical memories in these films were rich in detail. Separated by time and space, the daily atmosphere conveyed in them provided a new familial link that connected "us" (these in mainland China) and "them" (those in Taiwan). These connections were outside the official textbooks of history. They made me think about my maternal grandfather, wondering if such films contained clues to his life in Taiwan.

The thirty years from 1980 to 2010 were a short time, relative to China's history, but every Chinese person experienced great changes during this period. The 1990s, in particular, were a watershed decade in mainland China. I had been living in a small town in eastern China where the people were conservative and the living was lifeless. The changes had little immediate impact on me at first. From primary school to high school, my classmates constantly disappeared from the classroom - they would

suddenly drop out and leave the town. No one asked why. Then they would come back during Spring Festival every year, generally sporting some new urban fashions. People in our small town knew very little about what they did after leaving, except that they had temporarily managed to escape from a hopeless life in a small town and make money in the city. But no one knew of their real, everyday, life in the city. They were, of course, the migrant workers. They helped spur China's new economic developments, but official history would not record them. Their fate was like that of the Taiwanese people depicted in Hou Hsiao-hsien's rural movies, particularly those set in the period between the 1960s and 1980s. On reflection in later years, the everyday life situations of ordinary people, whether in pre-1980 Taiwan or post-1990 mainland China, appeared to me to be intriguingly similar.

Everyday Life vs. History

This dissertation, then, is largely motivated by my desire to understand, and to overcome, the "thinness" of my own past in relation to the "thick history" of official historiography that has long trivialized, as lacking significance and historical meaning, the everyday life experiences of ordinary people. In this regard, Hou Hsiao-hsien's films offer a crucial entry point for me, both personally, and with respect to the critical analysis and understanding of film in general, particularly as it impacts on the representation of the everyday. Hou's films have been awarded top prizes from prestigious international festivals such as the Venice Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Hawaii International Film Festival and the Nantes Three Continents Festival. Six of his films to date have been nominated for the Palme d'Or (best film award) at the Cannes Film Festival. Hou was voted "Director of the Decade" for the 1990s in a poll of American and international critics put together by *The Village Voice* (1990) and *Film Comment* (1990).

But international prizes aside, Hou's films tend to challenge official historiography, and to explore and reflect upon the trivial of the everyday. In Chinese(-language) cinema, I personally find Hou's works systematic, sincere, and above all, truthful in their depiction of historical situations and memories that in both large and small ways, make me feel connected to "missing" narratives about the past:

the "unhistorical" in Chinese history. Intellectually, and from a critical analytic and theoretical perspective drawn from contemporary, mostly postmodernist theory, this dissertation is about exploring that personal reading of Hou's films using it as a motivational springboard, not simply to write a dissertation on history and cinema, but also to explore a critical, theoretical and analytic entrance into the relations of film and self; history and memory; the orthodox and heterodox; the official and the everyday: which taken together I called 'the ethics of witness'.

To explore that ethics of witness I take a combined film and cultural studies approach to Hou's cinema that integrates philosophy and semiotics. I focus on time-images and spatial frames, and study trauma and memory in relation to history and its telling and representation. I am committed to developing a model of film-related cultural studies which touches base with the philosophy and ethics of memory, witness and images. My specific aim is not to explore "questions of film ontology" such as "what are Hou Hsiao-hsien's movies?" or "what is film?", but to situate the films in the broader context of Western (post)modernist theories. Yet, inevitably, I am confronted with critical questions about their suitability as theoretical frameworks for locating Hou's corpus which, after all, has strong Chinese characteristics in terms of aesthetics and composition. This realization comes with an awareness that discourses about the films can be constructed differently, by those interested in different issues, having different experiences, and using different sources. Although this dissertation studies Hou's cinema, it is not about cinema *per se*. Here I take a cue from Deleuze who says:

> A theory of cinema is not "about" cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices, the practices of concepts in general having no privilege over others, any more than one object has over others. (*Cinema2* 280)

To that end, I focus on the representations of history and everyday life, what following Randall (2007) I call in this dissertation, 'dailiness', and its mutual relationships in Hou's films. I am not exclusively focused on history or solely on

dailiness. The everyday life is a major feature in Hou's films, so I take it as one of the major links that connects my core ideas in this dissertation about history and memory. In each chapter, I almost always relate the functions and meanings of the daily scenes in Hou's films, to not only on what has happened in the diegesis, how and why the whats happen, but also how it is remembered by on-screen people or how it is re-imagined on screen. I am particularly interested in the way that the remembering of different versions of the past are emplaced in cultural histories that emphasize individual, everyday, experiences. This history-memory approach rests on a distinction between personal time and collective time, as proposed by Bakhtin. It accedes to Matuszewski's view that the historical film should concern itself with events which are of importance to large groups of people, the everyday people, and therefore not simply to the elite groups that constitutes the ruling class (17)

Collectively Hou's films cover almost all the important events in modern Taiwanese history - the colonial period, the KMT reign, ethnic conflict, the White Terror, and urbanization. My dissertation mainly focuses on how Hou's cinema represents and reflects these past. Inevitably I give some pasts and presents privileged treatment, especially when they concur with my personal experience about rural living or knowledge about urbanized transformation of spaces. But to prevent my own subjectivity from completely taking over, I draw extensively on the works of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Rancière, Hamid Naficy, Fredric Jameson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, and many of their followers who believe the postmodernist maxim, as I do, that "the form is the content". I argue that for Hou, the form is as important as the content, but only if we also take into account the *daily* as a form which penetrates subjects and forms deep hypertexts. Behind the creation of such forms, I examine the ways in which Hou as director resists the absolutist discourse of history.

In a similarly anti-absolutist way, I do not want to interpret Hou's movies by a single theory of Western film studies, but to create an approach to interdisciplinary research around the concepts of daily life, representation and historical trauma in order to focus on how these films represent history and political trauma through both

the daily shape of life and personal memories, and the consequent historical responsibility and ethics that go along with that.

My intention, then, is not want to make this dissertation a model of typical, conventional film studies, but to offer an interdisciplinary study that incorporates image-philosophy, media-philosophy and film studies. I want to argue that Hou makes a kind of anti-dramatic film in order to represent history through representation of the 'daily'. This representation is a "becoming" of history, in order to give the audience a kind of real historical aura that explores history as implied and haunting in our everyday life.

Structure and an Ethics of Representation

There are four main chapters, and a final chapter as epilogue. They build on each other in order to uncover the overlap and difference between daily life, history and representation in the films of Hou Hsiao-hsien. The first chapter introduces Hou's works, in general, and some of the ways in which it has been received. The second chapter focuses on the philosophical significance of time and space using techniques of camerawork (long shot, long take, flashback and empty space for exemplification) to argue that Hou's representation of time includes a critique of official discourse that challenges the power of manipulating time in dominant ideologies.

The third chapter, from the perspective of space studies, explores the holistic process of urbanization and spatial change by investigating the early rural movies *All the Youthful Days* (1983), *Dust in the Wind* (1987), *A Summer At Grandpa's* (1984), and the later city-movies *Millennium Mambo* (2001), *Three Times* (2005) and *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (1994). I trace the practices of space appropriation in these films to argue that such a layout of space hides a unique historicity, and which, in turn, produces a geo-historical scenotope.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the enactment of memory and the representation of historical trauma in Hou's Taiwan trilogy, namely, *A City of Sadness* (1989), *The Puppetmaster* (1993), and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995). These features hinge on complex and highly experimental text manipulation - the film within the film (*Good Men, Good Women*), semi-documentary (*The Puppetmaster*) and the reflexive (*A City*

of Sadness). I explore the complex relation between memory, trauma and history, in which daily life functions as "creative" memory, and the way in which the films represent "everyday political memory". In addition to the trilogy, my discussion also includes *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985) in order to highlight how autobiographical trauma influences and shapes Hou's unique way of historical representation - using prose narrative, personal experience and daily details. I further argue that these films open up the possibility of history - where history is balanced with a deceptively simple presentation, and the multiple temporalities at play in watching Hou's films are able to remind viewers of the historical whirlpool swirling around some of the most ordinary moments of daily life.

In the fifth concluding chapter, I bring the arguments of these four chapters together to further explore the relationship between history and film representation and to argue that Hou's representational approaches deeply overlap and match with the continuously transforming intertextual identity of island-nation, and the Taiwanese islanders own changing identity and how these approaches create an ethical value of historical trauma for the viewer. I am particularly interested in emphasizing the everyday moments in history construction, which as Jacques Rancière thinks, "that history is this mode of shared experience where all experiences are equivalent and where the signs of any one experience are capable of expressing all the others" (178). In this way, I will seek to offer an abstract reflection about time and history in the visual world where the moment is history.

Finally I emphasize Hou's remarkable breakthroughs in film as constituting challenges to represented forms of official history and national identity in Taiwan. Hou's forms can be bridged to Michael Bernstein's concept of sideshadowing. As a formal logic, sideshadowing enables us to conclude that in Hou's films the past is filled with contingencies, marginalia, and imaginings, and that these are integral to any image of an event. It is the form that makes Hou's history an alternative "voice-over" to the "official" history, which speaks *at* us, by deconstructing that power and authority, thereby, through his films, beyond the hierarchies of violence and suffering, allowing us to consider a more nuanced notion of everyday lives lived as part of those

histories. From this perspective, the appeal to the sense of commons is sufficient to identify an approach of representation as a historical contingent, poetically experience history. This is why I can think this connection with reference to poetics in my chapters. That is to say, Hou's films create rhythms rather than stories. It is in the contrast between the alternating rhythms created by the kinetic energy of the unseeable outside swirl at run and the slow movements of the quiet daily world placed in the unremarkable, crumbling environment of rural Taiwan and urbanization in late-twentieth-century is most profoundly articulated. These rhythms emerge as the central element of the films, give viewers a strange, detached quality.

My work in this dissertation, then, throws up a challenge for understanding the ways in which a filmmaker uses the medium of film in an attempt to find a new ethics of witness to history though represented image and speech that both acknowledges the risks of representing histories and confronting the trans-historical violence of their impact on notions of past and present, and similarly, poses a challenge for the ways we can theoretically and analytically discuss these issues. Hou's films, I argue, create an alternative ethics surrounding the use of memory and individual experience that insists that our understanding of the past, each time it returns, continues to deepen and become more complex. It is an ethics that insists that history cannot be disconnected from the experience of daily life and personal memory. Hou draws out the dynamics of post-modern historiography, allowing viewers to go beyond the limits of representation and the old confines of official historiography. Hou's films, I further argue, act like a crystal of daily life, where shifting points of reference, like the shifting points of light through a crystal, allows us to see if a different understanding of daily life as the approach of historical representation - is possible. I will try to clarify the particularity of everyday film as a problem for history representation in general, and in particular with reference to Hou's films and Taiwan. What follows in this dissertation explores all of these issues, but to begin with, in the next chapter, I turn to Hou Hsiao-hsien's films and ways of reading them.

CHAPTER 1

Hou Hsiao-Hsien: Films and Readings

I think film should be made like this: minimalist and simple;

something, everyone can understand, but which has profound meaning.

- Hou Hsiao-hsien *Master Class* (2009).

1.1 Films

Hou Hsiao-Hsien was born in Mei County, Guangdong province (China) in 1947. He and his family fled the Chinese Civil War to Taiwan in the following year. Hou is a *waishengren*[1] and his family is Hakka, the peripatetic Chinese minority who were often persecuted by the Han majority in Taiwan before 1895. Hou, whose father died when he was young, grew up in southern Taiwan where, without a father, he wandered outside more than was the norm for children of the time. These self-guided wanderings, at a young age, brought him into contact with many of the realities of everyday life, especially the underground gangs, which proved to be definitive influences on his films.

During the 1970s Hou was slowly working his way up in the Taiwanese film industry, though showing little evidence of taking any political sides along the way. There was no indication during that time that he would take on the roles and issues and controversies he would eventually become embroiled in. In 1973, Hou started as a continuity person, but soon became an assistant director, and finally a screenwriter, first writing three works with his closest associate during the 1970s, the director Lai Cheng-ying. In Taiwan, directors rarely did the actual directing; it was the assistant

[1] Literally meaning "outside-province people": people who come from outside the Taiwan province. Commonly translated as "mainlander", this is a common term for the two million people who came to Taiwan as part of the KMT exodus at the end of the Chinese civil war, as well as their descendants.

directors who actually faced the day-to-day problems on the set, and they were in charge of keeping film stock use to a bare minimum. Hou is listed as the assistant director for at least eleven films in the 1970s, and that experience drove home for him the limitations of current filmmaking practices. All of these limiting practices - functional editing, functional lighting, compositional gimmicks, minimal shooting ratios, start and stop performance and so on - Hou would one day reject, arguing that these stifled creativity and the freedom of art, although for years Hou would bear some responsibility for perpetuating these practices (it was his livelihood after all). Yet as strange as it may seem, his experience with these practices would have a profound and lasting impact on him even after he would no longer rely on them in his work. He would learn many things from this largely negative experience, but two invaluable lessons stand out: the importance of lighting and the importance of performance, two areas today that form the cornerstones of his own aesthetic (see Udden 45).

Hou and others of what is now known as the New Cinema in the 1980s, when the Economic Miracle in Taiwan began to take effect, started to explore what this all meant for the people actually living on the island. 1983 was a turning point for Hou, when *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983) (also known as *All the Youthful Days*) won the "Best Film Award" in the Festival of the Three Continents. This is Hou's beginning in the making of new films, as he said - after *The Boys from Fengkuei*, "I re-think film and consider it is another language" (8). Since then, he abandoned the pattern of early commercial films, and began a kind of move which was personally-oriented, using the narrative of daily life as the main language for his work.

Hou's process of new cinema can be divided into two stages occurring before and after "*A City of Sadness*" (1989). There are five films before 1989 - *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983), *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984), *A Time to Live, A Time to Die (*1985), *Dust in the Wind* (1986) and *Daughter of the Nile* (1987) While the stories are different, they have an internal consistency all about the growing experiences and memories of youth, as well as the collision between rural and urban life. These growing experiences of Hou's adolescent heroes in these films reflect the same sort of

pain that adolescents feel in their developing perceptions about the world: its often evil nature and their identity concerns about themselves. This perception accompanies a loss of innocence, in Hou's characters, which leads to changes in the heroes' personality and behavior, and their adaptive integration with the adult world. In addition, all five films are redolent of both the screenwriters' and director's own lives. *Dust in the Wind* is about screenwriter Wu Nian-chen's own formative experiences; *A Summer at Grandpa's* is screenwriter Chu Tien-wen's childhood living in the countryside. *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* is Hou Hsiao-hsien's own childhood experience growing up in southern Taiwan, particularly his traumatic memories of family: the death of his father, mother and grandmother and their nostalgia for homeland - the family originally wanted to just live in Taiwan for a few years, but the last generation died with deep regrets at not returning to mainland China. The film contains many details of the times (sometimes clear, sometimes not) such as the political climate of Taiwan in the 1960s-1970s, the relations of the tense confrontation across the Taiwan Strait, and the difficult life in mainland China, all of which must have influenced the teenager Hou's own daily experience, self-inscribing his movies with an over-riding atmosphere of nostalgia and melancholy. *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* stands witness to the fact that Hou and his family were directly affected by post-war politics. Inevitable, perhaps, given that the political was all-pervasive in post-war Taiwan, always lurking in the background of daily life.

The same is true of some other of Hou's films, at least those which make some political references for example - *A City of Sadness* (1998) and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995). All of these movies (with the exception of *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*) involve the dual structure of the country and the city, but not as absolute opposites. Hou both delivers reflexive nostalgia of quiet country life and the anxiety and confusion of urban living. This living hinges on the ordinary life of individuals and the representation of urban space. From a historical perspective, these films touch on the early processes of urbanization in Taiwan in the 1960s-1970s. During this period the Taiwanese experienced a social transition from agriculture to industry, when the speedy development of the economy made Taipei, Kaohsiung into a

metropolis, which then became a fashionable place for young people (see for example films like *Dust in the Wind* and *The Boys from Fengkuei*). Young people left their rural hometowns to the growing urbanized cities but in doing so often suffered frustrations and disillusionment, as they became lost in the hard and busy living needed to survive there. Experiencing such hardships their loss shifted their gaze back to the rural environment they had left behind, and as such their nostalgia for what they now felt they had lost created a new spiritual home. But they were not able to simply go back. They were not able to stop the changes of which they were now an irrevocable part. This sense of loss is (unconsciously perhaps) captured by Hou in these films, as he represents, in the setting of his own era, the developing history of urbanization.

Hou translates this development of urbanization in strikingly 1980s cinematic terms which capture, and perhaps even embody, the elusive, slippery contours of that collective experience of change, loss and nostalgia. There are no fixed certainties or identities born from the rhetoric, political and otherwise, of the 1980s, when Hou rose to such prominence. Instead, he focuses exclusively on Taiwan's experience from the late 1950s onwards, since he experienced this firsthand. The roots of that experience, however, go back centuries. As James Udden has said, "Hou's later career belies a Wittgenstein-like art of historical selection and omission: instead of focusing on the standard historical claims made on Taiwan, Hou's historical films focus mostly on those eras that most complicate these claims" (14).

A City of Sadness (1989) can be seen as yet another breakthrough and a watershed in Hou's creative output. In the political atmosphere of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan in 1987, Hou's camera turned towards a representation of "history - traumatic memories" from the perspective of "present - growing experience". During this period, Hou's Taiwan trilogy represents the history of a hundred years in Taiwan - from the era of the Japanese Occupation to the Civil War and the later Cold War. *A City of Sadness* for example is about the history of the "2-28 Incident". On 28 February 1947, the newly arrived KMT army clashed with local Taiwanese residents triggering a series of protests, strikes, and riots. Estimates of the number of people killed and injured range from ten to thirty thousand. The event has had long lived

consequences. Symbolically it is seen as the beginning of the KMT's authoritarian rule, as well as a marker of ethnic conflict (Chen Kuan-Hsing 287). Based on this background, the film portrays a family caught in the conflicts between the local Taiwanese and the newly arrived Chinese Nationalist government after World War II, reflecting the tragic fate and political trauma of ordinary people in the replacements of different regimes. It was groundbreaking in its very presentation of such a politically taboo subject as the 2-28 Incident and the ensuing White Terror (for further discussion, see chapter 4). It received major critical and commercial success, and received the Golden Lion award at the 1989 Venice Film Festival, making it the first Taiwanese film to win the top prize at this prestigious international film festival.

The Puppetmaster (1993) represents puppet artist Li Tianlu's tough life in the Japanese colonial period in the form of a semi-documentary. The film touches on the entire colonial history in Taiwan (1895-1945). In 1895, the Qing dynasty lost a war with the Japanese over Korea; the Chinese government signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki and ceded Taiwan and Pescadores to Japan "in perpetuity". Compared with similar films, this movie does not simplify the relationship between colonizer and colonized, but structures the film as a life history of individuals by concentrating both on Li's survival tactics under Japanese colonial rule and on the complex emotions between Li and the colonizers, with the form of a semi-documentary increasing both the texture and force of the historical events.

Good Men, Good Women (1995) represents a traumatic history of the present and past, focusing in particular on memory and mourning. The film is adapted from Ram Bo-chau's novel *Sapporo Carriage Song* which narrates the experience of White Terror victims Zhong Hao-dong and his wife Jiang Bi-yu. This film, about the private life of a contemporary actress, covers a long span of time involving the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945), KMT's White Terror in the 1950s, and Jiang Bi-yu's death in the 1990s. It is the last movie in Hou's Taiwan trilogy.

In this trilogy, Hou pursues the developing theme of "personal and historical" creating a dimension of history where the personal chronicle and national history melt into one. These three movies follow the same filmic syntax to represent history in new

ways in Taiwanese film. Hou stressed that he films “human beings”, which means he was not trying to construct an official history or to restore historical details, but to focus on the plight of the individual in political history. His film work was not to appropriate the orthodox notion of history in standard historiographies of a nation but to approach history in all its often heterodoxal realities. Therefore, his role as director is, as Edithe Wyschogrod called it, as a “heterological historian” (1998, 38).

In the late 1990s, Hou’s films became more heterogeneous in both theme and style, where the only constant (in his body of work to this time) is that he still took everyday life as the principal language for his lens and aesthetic pursuits. Hou has more than once mentioned that it is difficult for him to shoot a movie about the present moment because it is too close to his own life, and as such it is less easy to represent accurately. But *Goodbye South*, *Goodbye* (1996) very closely connects the life of Taiwan in the 1990s with the disappearing of the Southern secular space and the repressed living of urban marginalized groups, gang struggle, violent law enforcement and land encroachment. As Shen Xiao-yin has said, Hou Hsiao-hsien caught the contemporary rhythm of Taiwan with *Goodbye South*, *Goodbye*, with its diverse camera movements, bold color, powerful music and consistent acting tone (*Art Studies*, No.11 (2012):49-84). The film continues the dual structure of Hou’s early pattern of urban-rural, but his attitude to the rural has changed. He is no longer gazing at the country lovingly, but at the disintegration of the rural system, where increasingly in Hou’s hands the landscape turns into a nostalgic symbol. The film especially explores the semiotics of the reproduction of urban space, opening a hallucinatory space even more fully explored in Hou’s later urban works.

After *Goodbye South*, *Goodbye*, Hou’s camera turned into the Shanghai brothels of the 1900s. *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998) represents the life of an established Shanghai brothel in the late Qing Dynasty. Often using extreme long takes of seemingly uneventful daily details, Hou represents the panoramic everyday life history of the brothel. Although the film continues his usual realistic style, the images and frame are much richer than in earlier films. In effect, he creates the texture of an oil-painting, where natural light is no longer Hou’s main pursuit. He focuses on the

perspective of an oil-painting to make an enclosed space transparent and uses orbit photography to follow character movement, thereby creating a quite different view. From this it is possible to see that Hou's artistic pursuit and aesthetic selection have undergone some conceptual changes, closing a period of his film work which used lavish artificial light, and creating a newer lens language increasingly influenced by the monitor style which arose in the 1990s.

Goodbye South, Goodbye can be seen as a transitional work in Hou's films - after this movie, Hou's city films - *Millennium Mambo* (2001) and *A Time for Youth* in *Three Times* (2005), demonstrate the alienation and confusion in urban life and continue the breakthroughs of the technology he is increasingly adopting in his work. Especially in *Millennium Mambo*, the film manipulates time and space in ways which make use of such postmodern features as "bullet time", slow motion, and quick jump-cuts, at the same time that locations appear as labels on the image to create a new-style claim to reality. These enabled the film to win the Technical Grand Prize in the 2001 Cannes Film Festival. *Three Times* is not an urban movie in the strict sense - it features three stories of love set in 1911, 1966 and 2005 using the same actors, Shu Qi and Chang Chen. Maintaining the isolation of people and space, "A Time for Youth" in *Three Times* represents the control and deformation of space by the fast and the furious. In this way, people completely lose contact of space, as well as normal communication.

This alienation between people in urban life even extended to the two tribute films - *Café Lumière* (it is also called *Cafe Time*) (2003) and *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007). Hou directed the Japanese film *Café Lumière* for the Shochiku studio as an homage to Yasujirō Ozu; the film premiered at a festival commemorating the centenary of Ozu's birth. It deals with themes reminiscent of Ozu - tensions between parents and daughters' marriages and between tradition and modernity - in Hou's typically indirect manner. In August 2006, Hou embarked on his first Western project. Filmed and financed entirely in France, *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007) is the story of a French family as seen through the eyes of a Chinese student. The film is the first part in a series of films sponsored by the Musee d'Orsay and stars Juliette Binoche. In

these two movies Hou keeps the style of the long take and the aesthetics of everyday life that he has used so often, even though they are both 'foreign language' movies (Japanese and French respectively) and in 'foreign' locations.

It is clear, then, that Hou has his own philosophical and aesthetic perspective benefiting, as he himself says, from Shen Congwen's *Autobiography* and Taoism which help him to find a philosophical view of alienation. In his own words: "I think we cannot go into things in the way we usually do regarding our own subjectivity, so I wanted to arrive at that kind of effect in Shen Congwen's alienated perspective which overlooks life and death, but which also contains the greatest tolerance and deep compassion" (Hou 8). This sort of perspective is filmically realized by Hou by his many crane shots and long shots in films, which enable him to interweave the elliptical storytelling and the style of extreme long takes with minimal camera movement, but to also choreograph actors and space within the frame. The long take is arguably the most definitive feature of Hou's aesthetic. This is not, however, something he would have just learned from his early commercial days; rather, it is something he developed over time. Hou also uses extensive improvisation to arrive at the final shape of his scenes with the low-key, naturalistic acting of his performers. His compositions are decentered, and links between shots do not adhere to an obvious temporal or causal narrative logic. Without abandoning his famous austerity, his imagery has developed a sensual beauty during the 1990s, partly under the influence of his collaboration with cinematographer Mark Lee Ping-Bin. Hou's consistent screenwriting collaborator since the mid-1980s has been the renowned author Chu Tien-Wen, a collaboration that began with the screenplay for Chen Kunhou's 1983 film, *Growing Up*. He has also cast revered puppeteer Li Tian-lu as an actor in several of his movies, most notably *The Puppetmaster* (1993), which is based on Li's life.[2]

1.2 Readings

Yueh-yu Yeh has pointed out that there seems to be two main ways for interpreting

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[2] See James N. Udden's *No Man an Island: the Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009; Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Master Class*. Ed. Zhuo Bo-tang. Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2009.

Hou's films in academic film studies: one is to interpret them from the perspective of Western film theory, and the other is to investigate them based on Eastern philosophy and Chinese culture. A simple observation, perhaps, but one that reflects the difficulties facing critics from both the Western and Chinese perspectives, namely that Hou's movies are extremely original and personal, and as such, are not easily categorized or fitted into existing theoretical frames. As such, most academic film critics have tended to simply skim the surface of Hou's films and their consequences, and opportunities, for reading from the cinematic aesthetics to the larger picture of postmodern historiography. Many simply focus on Hou's obvious characters of local culture and style of camerawork.

Godfrey Cheshire, for example, explains Hou's turning away from plot and character, and focusing more on objects and setting, as a return to a long-standing, older tradition in Chinese art and culture (56-62). Jean-Michael Frodon claims that Hou is proof that there is no Chinese montage, that here lies a cinematic model which calls into question the systems of Griffith and Eisenstein, instead basing itself on an alternative world view that treats oppositions (i.e. space/time, realty/representation) in an entirely different fashion (22-25). James Udden's, *No Man an Island: the Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien* says that "scholars from mainland China have tried to accentuate how Chinese Hou supposedly is" (1), and argues that these studies contain potential political tendencies. But such scholars, in the main, are accustomed to study film by the methods of literary studies. So, for example, Ni Zhen emphasizes Confucian culture and homeland feelings in Hou, saying: 'Hou Hsiao-hsien's systematic and highly stylized cinematic prose expresses very incisively and vividly the ethical spirit of Confucian culture and emotional attachment to one's native land and is typical of the Orient (75). Li Tuo focuses on the way montage is different from Hollywood in *A City of Sadness*. He sets out to demonstrate that Hou's *A City of Sadness* is difficult for people to understand because of its "non-logical editing", making the film stand apart from hegemonic Hollywood/western narrative norms (805-14). Meng Hung-feng is more literary, and directly appropriates the "*Yi Jing*" (意境 *frame of mind*) of Chinese classical literature to define the atmosphere of Hou's films. He explains

Hou's long-take/static-camera/distanced-framing style in terms of the Chinese aesthetic concept of "*yi ying*"(*Yi Jing*) whereby people, objects and setting are blended together in a continuous space, thereby preserving the mood and feeling of a scene in a poetic fashion (48-49).

In contrast, scholars from Taiwan tend to be diverse in their readings. For example, Lin Wen-chi tried to define the poetic charm in Hou's films by the concept of "*miwei*" (*subtle complexity*). It is debatable how effective one concept to cover the feature of all movies can be, but at least this suggests "some sequences have multiple meanings" (105). Chang Hsiao-hung examines *Flowers of Shanghai* from the perspective of cultural studies, and she thinks that a clothing aesthetics hides what she metaphorically calls 'time pleats' in a China that is full of an inner drive for Western fashions similar to its fascination for foreign artillery and guns at the end of 19 century. In other words, for Chang, the films of Hou can be read in the same sort of way as the changing intricacies of fine lace over time can reveal changing cultural historicities (52), while Zhang Ling interprets narration and sounds-scape in *The Puppetmaster* from Michel Chion's theory of filmic sound (26). Li Zhen-ya (Jerome Li) focuses, from the perspective of feminist studies, on the relationship between the modernization process and the evolution of female space in "A Time for Freedom" in *Three Times*. He thinks that the affair in this film is actually an allegorical narrative of history (168).

1.3 Re-Reading

These ways of reading Hou's films in such diverse ways raise very interesting issues, especially in the creation, as I do here, of a proposal for ways of re-reading. For example, Jacques Pimpaneau says Hou faces the age-old problem of every Chinese filmmaker: using a medium that is based on Western realism when the dramatic traditions in China are pretty much the opposite of realism. Pimpaneau also says Hou is not the first to grapple with this issue, but few have expressed a Chinese cultural view of the world so deeply in film as he has (65-68). If that is true, and I believe it is, then what that means, is that for any effective reading of Hou's films, new ways of reading are needed. For example, a traditional way of thinking about

transitional historical narratives tends to emphasize the empirical quality of what still exists, such as artifacts and documents, in order to objectify and thus give authority to the interpretive - narrativized - account of the event by the historian or filmmaker. But Jeffrey Skoller thinks that "the objectification of narrative accounts can also be seen as a formal structure that serves to hide the very material elements of the constructed nature of historical knowledge" (xv). In other words there seems to be a bipolar theoretical frame here; a sort of either/or option for analysis. But I will argue in this dissertation that this framework is insufficient to make effective readings of Hou's films because he works to undermine the very borders between past and present by using a range of cinematic strategies in order to consider elements of the past that are unseen, unspeakable, and which defy representations.

At the same time, his films often foreground the constructed nature of narrative forms and the materiality of the film medium, both being integral parts of the meaning-making process such as *Good Man, Good Women* and *A City of Sadness*. These films release sensuous and aesthetic shocks of awareness as the past comes to have meaning for the present by speaking to its concerns. It is in this sense that aesthetic experience becomes generative of new potentials for how to think the past - not as an overarching narrative of something at a distance, nor as something concealing hidden meanings, but as part of the experience of an 'always existing in present'. So Hou, in Skoller's words, creates "the possibility for viewers to actively produce links between past and present, between what can be seen or only evoked and what can be explained or only signaled" (xix). In this way, their formal and aesthetic aspects are foregrounded to become the generative element that releases history as a force acting on the present. This is different from a conventional historiography in which the formal element is often understood to be the very aspects of a text that limits access to an "objective truth" in the recounting of an event.

Although Hou's films do use traditional visual elements and techniques of the historical such as documents, artifacts, testimonies, and re-creations to represent the past in their most visible and material forms, they also work to make us aware of the huge blank between the past and the present. Such obvious blanks supplement the

actual image with a surplus of meanings that deepen and give poetic dimension to history. The absentees (dead people, perpetrators), which are often sensed but remain unapprehendable, are nevertheless part of the energy of the image and exert themselves as a force on the present. The force creates an awareness of other temporalities in which linear chronologies are called into question in favor of other temporal structures such as simultaneity and virtuality.

These postmodern historiographic issues lie at the heart of Hou's films and also in my concerns in this dissertation, questioning as they do historical events that by their nature defy representability but also at the same time demand representation and hence play an important part in the ways we understand the past. This is a paradox in contemporary theory and praxis. And it is a paradox needing to be recognized in any effective reading of Hou's films. I want to argue here that the most ordinary approach to thinking and representing historiographic temporality in cinema comes out of aesthetically based cinematic practices rather than those that are sociologically bound - the social documentary and social realist dramatic films - which often replicate older conventional narrative forms of historiography. At the same time, these films change in social formation and hence the ways in which the nature of events can become historicized.

But, as I hope to show, Hou's films create other kinds of temporal relationship between past and present, allowing new possibilities for narrating the past that go beyond theatrical re-creation; and thus allowing for new ways of reading. Such cinematic approaches also have their theoretical counterparts, and throughout this dissertation I use such theories to elucidate my readings of the films and of the praxis involved in creating those readings. In keeping with the idea of bringing past and present into dialogue with each other, I bring together two major ideas from the twentieth century. One is an approach to historical trauma and the other is an approach to cinema: Gilles Deleuze's taxonomy of the "time image".

In cinematic terms, temporal relationships can be productively understood within the Deleuzian description of the "time-image". In *Cinema2: the Time-image* Deleuze gives a new language with which to write about cinematic time, but he has not

produced a theory of film signification. Rather, through close observation of temporal formations in cinema, "he has produced a philosophical context and a taxonomy of the different constructions of cinematic movement and time, and the ways cinema evokes and creates images of the shifting structures of thought in an evolving society" (see Skoller xix). Deleuze argues against the notion of the film image as merely a simulated sign for something that exists in the world. Like Hou's films discussed in this dissertation, and following Deleuze's thought, I move away from discourses about the ways films represent the world and towards the way film images create worlds. This powerful idea of film images creating worlds not simply representing already existing worlds connects well with Hayden White's idea which says that history becomes as much a discourse of what is not articulated as history as what is. That is to say, history becomes a discursive construction connecting the past to the present through the process of narrative formalization, which is a multilayered discourse concerning modes of representation. As Skoller said, the act of narrativization itself can be seen to dissolve the distinction between realistic and imaginary discourses that produce similar meanings (xxii). This is also what Roland Barthes calls a "reality effect": in 'objective' history, the 'real' is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent" (*The Discourse of History* 139). Here Barthes, in the language of semiology, distinguishes between the meaning that is created by the language used and the event being referred to. This shows how the function of narrative does not represent the real but rather constitutes a spectacle of language that stands in as an authority for the real. History, then, "is no longer simply the narrativizing of events but is also a metanarrative in which the act of creating the narrative is indissolubly intertwined with the knowledge that is constituted through it" (Skoller xxii).

These ideas challenge the "increasing impossibility of the representation of historical events" from Theodor Adorno's prediction[3] through the desire to confront

[3] Adorno's prediction than the "coming extinction of art is prefigured in the increasing impossibility of representation historical events". See *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, p.143.

the limits of representability, by reintroducing the signifying practices of representation, thus creating some new dimensions on the aesthetic, ethical, and political. The potential for reading, and re-reading beyond traditional paradigms is, then, both exciting and tantalizing. For example, Hou's experimental approaches - the film within the film, semi-documentary, the personal dairy to enclose the past in order to speculate on what occurred are all largely concerned with the present opening onto the past. The developing relation between the present and past becomes a daily form rather than a re-created spectacle. I explore these issues in more detail in the following chapter, with specific reference to the philosophical significance of time and space in order to argue that Hou's representation of time includes a critique that challenges the power of manipulating time in the dominant ideologies of official discourse.

CHAPTER 2

A Poetics of Time: the Representation of Daily Life

Going down that street ten thousand times in a lifetime...or perhaps

never at all...

—Daniel Elsenberg, *Cooperation of Parts* (1990)

2.1 Daily Life and Time

Maurice Blanchot writes that "the everyday is a category, a utopia and an idea, without which one would not know how to get at either the hidden present or the discoverable future of manifest being" (239). Blanchot's view highlights the everyday as the unmarked unhistorical aspects in dominant narratives of history. He asserts, "far from being that which is taken for granted, it [the everyday] becomes that which should not, indeed must not, be taken for granted" (Randall 10). Henri Lefebvre similarly sees the everyday as an arena to be addressed on its own terms, while Micheal de Certeau, in his conceptualization of the everyday, has formulated two important concepts, namely "strategies" and "tactics, that evade categorization and analysis in traditional academic methodologies (Sheringhan 187-99). This relates to the earlier work of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin which says that in intervening in the matrix which conventionally relegates the everyday to the realm of the trivial, unremarkable, repetitive and impotent, the value-judgments implicit in those associations need corresponding investigation. I do so here with respect to the films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien, most particularly in the light of Ben Highmore's connection of Simmel and Benjamin with Lefebvre and de Certeau by seeing in them all a simple, paradigmatic refusal "to see the realm of the everyday as unproblematic" (18).

My work upholds this refusal. Where I use the term 'everyday life' I intend it to mean a project revisiting the concept of the everyday in filmic representations, rather

than in the sense of a criticism or rejection of the everyday. To that end I will show that the term "everyday" in Hou's films is most commonly represented through a range of daily activities - cooking, washing, eating, walking, and so on, but will also examine the efficacy of a fuller description of the everyday which would entail paying attention to the daily actions which make up life as a whole. This includes the "different form of attention" that Highmore has pointed to and elaborated on, saying that "perhaps...the everyday is the name that cultural theory might give to a form of attention that attempts to animate the heterogeneity of social life, the name for an activity of finding meaning in an impossible diversity (163, 175). Bryony Randall echoes Highmore's view saying:

> The particular incommensurability of the everyday is [here] neatly hinted at; it both needs a particular form of attention in order to become manifest, and is itself a particular form of attention. There can be no rigorous distinction between these two ways of understanding the relationship between attention and the everyday. (11-12)

In *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Henri Lefebvre asks what specifies the everyday and as a result rescues it from being so general as to be without significance. Moretti, cited in Randall, agrees with Lefebvre and thinks that there are no limits as to what can be incorporated by everyday life - everyday life is by definition, he says, inclusive rather than exclusive (33).

This is an important move, and one which is central to my work here. Simply to say that Hou, for example, is interested in the everyday in his films, does not get us very far. But exploring how he turns that interest into creative work, not simply for entertainment, but as insightful and uncompromising political, social, cultural and historical commentary, adds, I hope, significantly to a better understanding of both his films and the bigger picture of understanding his representation of personal time - my particular focus in this chapter.

Dailiness and Daily Time

Daily life and repetition - which is one way of describing duration involving both these elements - are a principal concern in Hou's works. Film cannot "banish" time,

and nor does it want to, generally speaking, but neither can it banish the form we like to think of as spatial. This would seem to pose a problem, and one I explore in this chapter, for Bergson's privileging of the genre.[4] I am interested in examining the extent to which Hou attempts to render the complexity of internal duration, and technical experimentation in his films to draw attention to the ultimate effect of time in film. I am further interested in exploring the potential such films may have for enabling viewers to observe the interaction between time and space and what might be called 'real life' as constructed through images on a screen. What sort of ways does Hou, as director, bring us back into our own presence? Is it through the temporality of the return, the rhythmic, the repeat, that this glimpse of our complex subjectivity is made possible?

I would argue that Hou's films evoke a challenge to those orthodox hierarchies which attempt to define history and erase individual memory. Hou, I further argue, does this by emphasizing the temporal extensity and indeed intensity in everyday life by making it significant in these films in ways which draw attention to the value of personal time and meaning in the ongoing, ordinary, experience of everyday life. How, for example, is the ordinariness of "every moment", what I refer to in this dissertation as Randall's 'dailiness'[5], representational as metaphors of time?

I am particularly interested in questioning what might be at stake in a discussion of such dailiness, and the ways in which Hou engages with this in his films. I do this not simply as a means of explicating Hou's own work, but most particularly to extrapolate from Hou's films a larger, more discursive, understanding of the concept of personal time and the everyday in the philosophy and ethics of film-representation and reception. Carol Greenhouse in her study of the politics of time says: "I view time

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[4] Bergson argues that novelists have a privileged role, because they try to show us the "infinite permeation" (133) that resists the homogenization of duration. Personally, I think that film functions more to resist homogenization of time than does fiction.

[5] I use the term "dailiness" in Randall's sense as a way of opening onto the variety of possible temporalities which emerge in the literature of the early twentieth century, and which are revealed by the structural features as well as the explicit content of the texts addressed. In this regard, there are two important general features relevant to daily time in these texts, firstly, repetition, and secondly, the spatialisation of time (see *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* 20-21). I borrow it in my dissertation, because I think Hou creates the same temporal meaning by the way of film.

as being primarily 'about' accountability, legitimacy and criteria of social relevance" (82). Seen in this way, time is not a neutral category, nor then would be the ways in which we are able to portray, experience, use, or enjoy time. I ask, in particular then, to what extent do films, and especially Hou's films, picking up on Gillian Beer's words, engage with the various ways of attending to the ongoing rhythm of dailiness, and further, in what ways do they offer a director like Hou the means to record change in how it feels to be alive (7), at a period when, as I believe it is in the Taiwan of Hou's films, "the question of living is crucial" (Bell 10).

I further ask, if time is primarily "about" accountability, legitimacy and criteria of social relevance, particularly in the everyday, then what is at stake in the exploration of temporality?

As a consequence of such questioning, I explore the way in which Hou's movies, in one way or another, grapple with a dominant ideology that knows the power of manipulating time; an ideology that can make individuals who are "isolated, separated, and *inhabit time* as disempowered" (Grary 3). I look at the way in which Hou not only attempts to articulate a renewed empowered relationship to time, to "restore time as the supreme gift (life time)" (Lefebvre 202), within his own socio-cultural context, but also at how he "continues to present a challenge to us in our understanding of the way in which we value, recognize and experience our own life time" (Randall 192). To what extent is his construction of time in this way subject to the norms of film-making? I suggest that in his association of words, space, gestures and objects, he creates an intertwined system that constitutes a reality of everyday situations on screen which is itself a reality of individual life time, rather than a simple narrative presentation of official time. I am interested in exploring the creative boundaries involved here, in presenting life-time on a screen, where people's words and gestures tend to the timeless.

Modernism and Internal Temporality

From the early to mid-twentieth century on, the development of time and its projection in memory became one of the key questions of critical study and reflection. This trend was present in philosophies that questioned the grand-narrative structure of

thinking and the illusion of realism propagated, in particular, by the nineteenth-century novel (Quintana 90). In *Matter and Memory* Henri Bergson formulated a thesis of time and of the relationships that we can establish with it from our own present. Among other ideas, Bergson proposed that the past coexists with the present. The past is conserved in memory as the past, but it is not stored in chronological form: time splits in each instant into the present and the past; a present that passes and a past that remains (Bergson 161-314). Time forces us to know the present and allows us to know the past, which is significantly represented in Proust's works, for example. Gaetan Picon thinks that Proust's narration does not correspond to the actual history of Marcel Proust, but rather to his disordered experience; the sum of his encounters with the world. Time appears as something external. Life is past, experience is something finished, but words have a future, and the work can build upon a retrospective movement based in an attitude of contemplation and resurrection of the past, beginning from the idea that the flows of life only advance from the ebb (qtd. in Quintana 90).

The works of Bergson and Proust have greatly informed the construction of the concept of modernity in cinematographic theory. In a study of that modernity and cinema Mary Ann Doane reminds us that the technologies of reproduction that appeared at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries - contemporary with Bergson and Proust - were crucial in the conceptualization of time and its representation (4). In parallel fashion, Leo Charney uses the term "drift" to explain how modern cinematography could reformulate itself through "the activity that battled empty presence by appropriating it, maneuvering within and around it" (9). Proust interrogated his own consciousness so as to fill the void of the present and thus create a way of representing time. In modern cinema, the layers of the visible world, captured as empty instants from the present, serve to investigate this invisible realm called the past (Quintana 90).

Bergson's thought is the starting point for Gilles Deleuze's taxonomy of cinematic forms, which he divided into the movement-image, considered as that vectorized image that perceives a conflict and puts itself into movement to resolve it,

and the time-image, arising in post-World War II film and considered as an image that perceives the conflict but locates that conflict in its interior. This image corresponds to a cinema of seeing, not a cinema of action: "a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent" (Deleuze 2), the first being an image of cinema in which time is converted into the essential matter that determines the narrative structure of the work through games of superimposition or temporal reflections.[6]

In Deleuze's map, where the discussion did involve Asian film it mainly focussed on Japanese directors, for example, Ozu Yasujiro. However, I show that Hou's works could fit perfectly among the group of filmmakers that Deleuze defines as working with points of the present and layers of the past. Deleuze believes that in this model of cinema, "the present begins to float, struck with uncertainty, dispersed in the characters' comings and goings or already absorbed by the past" (116). Hou uses an uncertain present as his starting point, and his images emerge from a time in which the weightless load of subjective isolation still persisted. The past is established by personal narration and memories in which the specific scenes present the past and also reveal fiction and the medium of the past. Sound gives the film an imaginary space like the literary, in which the content conveyed by sounds is often dislocated with visual images. Whether in pure recollected films or juxtaposed films of past and present, almost static images depict materials constituting their life: the space becomes the time, things become emotion and feeling and memory become actions and images. The past does not have to accept the test of reality, and it overcomes obstacles from the imitation of reality. The experience of time in movies comes both from the whole formal creation of history and from the clear sense of time of the single shot. The former is a representation that lets viewers watch history intently, the latter lets the audience face time itself: duration penetrates the lens and releases the inner sensible world (e.g. idle period). Sometimes the camera follows the flow of time and turns the visible object into a blurred world rather than a world of unalloyed

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[6] The theoretical backgrounds of this part of my work reference the following works: Angel Quintana's *A Poetic of Splitting: Memory and Identity in La Prima Angelica* (2008); Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1910); Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (2002); Leo Charney's *Empty Moments: Cinema, Modernity, and Drift* (1998); Deleuze's *Cinema2: the Time-Image* (1989).

reflection (e.g. fluid long takes). In such a concentrated world, time internalizes the personal unique experience.

Individual memory does not accede to the past through flashbacks in most of Hou's films, or through the revelation of hidden temporality, but rather through the bifurcation and combination of memory, which turns the present into the past as a juxtaposition of reality and fiction. The two types of times function with alternations, because time within the individual has modifications. It is a time that, as an internal present, has been bifurcated from the present to the past by memory.

The bifurcated time and split characters in Hou's works can connect with another division in Deleuze's time-image: the idea of the crystal image. Deleuze defines the crystal image from the premise that actual time is a changing present that constantly modifies itself when a new present replaces it. This instability of the present has consequences in the realm of the image in that it constantly establishes a tension between the present - the actual image - and its contemporary past - the virtual image. Time, therefore, when it transforms itself into an image, is something that "splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past that is preserved" (Deleuze 82). This mirroring idea of time based in splitting departs from the idea that film establishes an opposition between the object and the subjective. "The present captured by cinema presents itself as objective, but within this objective world it inscribes the subjective world of the character, displaced through memory toward the past" (Quintana 92). The process of bifurcation utilized in films could inscribe itself within the logic of the crystal image. However, there is an important difference in that Hou's bifurcated time is constructed in the daily life of the present. He does not film the present as symbolic, but rather as reality. Hou establishes, through daily life, the realm in which the secret traces of the life routine remain waiting for the story to draw them to the surface. With this movement between past and present, the director establishes a tension between a Deleuzian geology of history and personal experience. The individual experience portrays the relationship that the different characters maintain with the past from within their closed world of the eternal present.

In his more extensive treatise on memory, Paul Ricoeur demonstrates that the

critical moment in the entire phenomenology of memory resides in the act of asking oneself if a memory can become a kind of image, and then in discovering what image may emerge from this memory (59). Ricoeur recognizes, inspired by Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, that in the act of memory, the pure memory passes to the image memory (53-60). In Hou's films, an individual's memory journey, for example, appears to establish a path from memories as diffuse acts to memories as representational images. "At the base of this path lies the importance that different acts or ways of seeing the world gain within the general fabric of the film" (D'Lugo 122). The audience transforms their gaze from the present to the past, from the real to the imaginary. Upon doing this, the director recognizes how the act of vision contains something dangerous within itself, since it ends up reflecting the barriers that pertain to the constitution of identity. In the midst of this process, bifurcated time is inherent in the bifurcated identity. To give shape to the past and to reconcile the blurry and diffuse layers of memory, Hou establishes a relationship between objects and memories. The relationship is founded in the reminiscence expressed through the everyday life of a present that transports viewers to the past and helps them configure that diffuse image. Films thus create the whole of personal time which is included in daily routine.

Emphasizing "a specific weight of time operating inside characters and excavating them from within" (Deleuze 23), there is an absence of traditional plot in Hou's insistence on affect and memory inscribed in non-chronological time rather than kinetic regime. His cinema is the cinema of the time-image where "the character has become a kind of viewer...that records rather than reacts" (*ibid* 3). Furthermore, the characters' relation to history and memory is above all a relationship to time. The cinematic duration, especially the long takes and long shots, as the central formal element of the film's visual style, allows viewers to engage their own thoughts in relation to what is seen and heard. But while the signal remains staunchly materialist, Hou produces both a representation of the state of being in the film's fictional characters and a concrete real-time experience for the viewer. These films evoke, rather than represent the daily rhythms and emotional conditions of the film's central

character and community.

2.2 The Loop of Duration: Chronotope and Repetition

In a sense, Hou is a filmic artist of time, which is reflected in his constantly changing labyrinth of time and narrative features. The cinematic characters (long takes or the depth) in Hou's works have often been pointed out from scholars of Hou Hsiao-hsien film studies, but there is also a "novelistic" element. What has not been sufficiently analyzed, however, is the relation between the two, i.e. their original fusion by which I mean that Hou recreates a complete cinematographic specificity. The novelistic elements, the narrative action, usually appear in the memory. "The memory in fact… is story behavior" (Deleuze 51). Deleuze suggests that "memory is voice, which speaks, talks to itself, or whispers, and recounts what happened" (*ibid* 51). I discuss this in more detail later on, but for now I want to emphasize that Hou's overall style is dispersed in various elements in his films and that these elements are integrated in his worldview of time. In other words, the concept of time comes first in his film language.

In his *Master Class*, Hou said that it is difficult for him to make a movie with a background of the present moment or one that is closely linked to his era (39). In this way his important movies always represent the past. His expression of the past is always attached to memories and is shown by the narrative action. It is this narrative behavior that structures the most important feature of Hou's representation of time, especially personal time, which is his taking the present to trace the past by the form of narration, where the image stays in the present moment, and everyday behavior serves as the medium of memory as the gesture of narrative. Even if the past is juxtaposed with the present by images, even ones that do not endorse and confirm each other, it remains parallel and autonomous.

In narrative action, characters act and move in the present moment, but also hide and immerse themselves in the past in the hidden structure of time. This also leads to the temporality of film no longer following movement but perception. As such, time no longer has causality. In Deleuze's words, "it is this reversal which means that time is no longer the measure of movement but movement is the perspective of time: it

constitutes a whole cinema of time, with a new conception and new form of montage" (22). The major representation of time in Hou's work takes the form of repeated everyday scenes and long continuous takes, which constitute a complete sequence signifying duration, giving verbal narration an echoed time and space. And when there is no normal flashback to interrupt such lengthy recounting, then films unfold on past sheets by an in/visible memory. The traditional means of montage becomes unimportant; dispersion of time matches the dispersion of story and is represented by the everyday/present way.

Memories unfolding in the long take of personal narration, in Hou's films, make time stagnate in sheets of the present, while the latent time of the past exists in characters' recollections and the audience's own constructions. The depth of focus reinforces this sense of time because it complements itself with long takes, such as Hou's often repeated scenes of the fluid long take when time is opening to the space and becoming a chronotope. As I show further on this chronotope is symptomatic of Hou's deep thinking about time, namely, that memory can never evoke and report the past, as the past, for Hou, can only be subjective narration. Memory in his films thus communicates two components: the emergence of novel memories in the narration and the dramatic present in the dialogue. The novel memory is represented by different forms of voice-over in concert with the disjointed, juxtaposition, bifurcation, and compression. The dramatic present in Hou's movies is a presentation of complete daily life, in which memories are melted into individuals' ordinary actions.

Hou's characters 'hide' themselves in the daily not because of their domination by psychological memory, but by them walking along a long memory track into direct time where the present duration or recollected images, though not generally flashbacks, show the related past of the narration. In Hou's movies, it is no longer important what the past looks like, but rather getting the past out of the recollection itself. For this, Bergson suggested that "the optical (and sound) image in attentive recognition does not extend into movement, but enters into relation with a recollection-image that it calls up" (qtd. in Deleuze 45-46). This means these characters, caught in certain visual (Bergson's optical) and auditory situations, find

themselves condemned to wander about or go off on a trip. Hence these characters tend to live in the gap between movements and rest.

For example, in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* each person with their own past and memory lives in the present. This is a pure recollection-film taking Hou's own growing experience as a prototype, which represents his family living in the1950s -1970s. The whole film is constructed in Ah-hsiao's (Hou Hsiao-hsien teenager) memory, and in narrative form, so we can see time itself and how time can be emphasized and perceived. The voice-over of the middle aged narrator highlights that time in the film is unfolding on the past sheets, but the film does not show it by flashback, but instead, by the recollected image. This kind of film, then, I would argue, constructs an overwhelmingly personal time, which is seamless and occupies the whole screen time. The cracks of linear time are found within the daily details and cannot be pulled out separately. It is a crystal of daily life, in which characters' activities are wrapped in their own time. Everyday life is the form of memory which constitutes a texture and density like crystal.

In such a crystal, linear time is rarely to be seen; the audience can only indirectly feel the tension and pressures of an era from outside the screen. Whether inside or outside of the screen, history for Hou is not scenery, but a tonality which blends with an everyday life which is often cut from the back of the crystal by the perspective of a plane as in a rising or setting sun, or as a shadow surrounding the edge of the crystal to accelerate the process of darkness. Such films appear then to be representations of the simplest form of time, because the memory only involves the individual. When official time must be shown, there is a voice-over which seems to act like a radio broadcast. This is very important in Hou's works, because it refers to another space and time existing outside of daily life. Such a voice-over not only resolves the control fetishism of image, but also reminds viewers of the restrictions of image representation.

Andre Gaudreault notes that fixed everyday scenes constitute a type of phenomenon of duration, since their temporality is readable as a function of both external and internal determinants (qtd. in Doane 161). They can suggest that

spectators may feel the time in movies not as described but as experienced. There are other internal signals of simultaneity drawn from such a narrative imaginary: the dissolve, which links the panoramas to the re-enacted scenes; the opposition between inside and outside, which situates the prime lens as establishing shots, and the succession of shots. Hou's films exploit both "technology's relation to time (that of recording) and the technology's ability to construct a time that has the imaginary coherence of 'real time', everyday time" (*ibid* 161).

The ordinary, the everyday, and pragmatic knowledge of time is, of necessity, discontinuous and has what Bergson refers to as a cinematographic quality. For Bergson it is crucial to move beyond that cinematographic impulse and to grasp the true nature of duration and movement. But Bergson's adamant rejection of the cinema as an adequate representation of time poses problems for Deleuze, whose treatment of the cinema including movement and time engages with Bergson's guiding framework for his discussion (Doane 174). Classical cinema, according to Deleuze, maintains the subordination of time to movement, but modernist cinema demonstrates that it is capable of producing an image of pure time liberated from movement.

On the surface, Hou's film are dissociated from the context of world cinema, but they belong to modernity as movies in their construction of time and techniques of reproduction. As a canonical paradigm of daily film - in particular one that addresses questions of temporality and memory - they take as their foundational events the ineffable moment in everyday routine, i.e. everyday scenes and ordinary moments which constitute a unified style, where family life is not the only theme in the movies, but also include other themes such as memory, history, and political violence. I propose that in such films everyday life is both a form of other topics and an autonomous text with independent value and significance. For instance, in *The Puppetmaster* and *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, the time of personal trifles becomes the main meaningful time in order to push the operation of plot. In these films, the audience's sense of time contains double experiences: causal time and linear history are marginal and ambiguous, but personal time replaces historical time to make the internal rhythm of films keep in step with life and nature. Many kinds of

usual behavior such as dining, chatting, marriage and birth become important “things” instead of the movement of plots. These things give Hou’s movies a kind of special temporariness which has been divided from abstract time.

But do these “daily moments” show an affinity for a particular orbit of life? Krakauer gives a philosophical depth for “this kind of moment” and emphasizes the “overall significance” saying that:

> in feature films these small units are elements of plots free to range over all orbits imaginable. They may try to reconstruct the past, indulge in fantasies, champion a belief, or picture an individual conflict, a strange adventure, and what not. Consider any element of such a story film. No doubt it is intended to advance the story to which it belongs, but it also affects us strongly, or even primarily, as just a fragmentary moment of visible reality, surrounded, as it were, by a fringe of indeterminate visible meanings. And in this capacity the moment disengages itself from the conflict, the belief, the adventure, toward which the whole of the story converges. (303)

Accordingly this then opens up a dimension much wider than that of the plots which they sustain. Such a dimension extends, so to speak, beneath the superstructure of specific story contents; it is made up of moments within everybody’s reach, moments as common as birth and death, or a smile, or “the ripple of leaves stirred by the wind” (Jameson *The Geopolotical Aesthetic*). In this regard, Erich Auerbach considers that a moment concerns:

> in a very personal way the individuals who live in it, but it also (and for that very reason) concerns the elementary things which men in general have in common. It is precisely the random moment which is comparatively independent of the controversial and unstable orders over which men fight and despair; it passes unaffected by them, as daily life. (552)

Even though Auerbach’s observation bears on the modern novel, it holds no less true of film. But today, films can also explore the spirit and abstract senses, and moreover,

as with my focus here, in Hou's movies, daily life precisely undertakes this function. Auerbach's casual reference to "daily life" suggests that it is the small random moments which concern things common to you and me and the rest of mankind which can indeed be said to constitute the dimension of everyday life; the matrix of all other modes of reality. In Krakauer's words:

> It is a very substantial dimension... Products of habit and microscopic interaction, they form a resilient texture which changes slowly and survives wars, epidemics, earthquakes, and revolutions. Films tend to explore this texture of everyday life whose composition varies according to place, people, and time. (Krakauer 304)

For Hou, in an ordinary or everyday situation, these personal moments - fragmented and scattered time - constitute a unique daily sequence and bring significance and clarity to the visual. In fact, these most mundane and everyday scenes release a silent energy, where, I would argue, Hou's purpose is not to show the everyday ordinariness through such everyday scenes, like chatting, walking and doing housework, but through them to show the effect and echoes of history and political events, and thereby demonstrating the existence of those events, but not giving an explanation for, or a judgment about, them. Hou's films merge quiet time and open space to create a unique chronotope, instead of a proof for an event, where the story is captured through the emotions of image.

Bakhtin and the Chronotope of Daily Life

Bakhtin coined the term chronotope - literally "space-time" - to refer to the constellation of distinctive temporal and spatial features of specific genres which function to evoke the existence of a life-world independent of the text and its representations. In *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*, Bakhtin suggests that time and space in the novel are intrinsically connected since the chronotope "materializes time in space". The chronotope mediates between two orders of experience and discourse, the historical and artistic, providing fictional environments where historically specific constellations of power are made visible. Through the idea of the chronotope Bakhtin shows how concrete spatio-temporal

structures in literature - the temporal otherworldly forest of romance, the "nowhere" of fictional utopias, the roads and inns of the picaresque novel - limit narrative possibility, shape characterization and mold a discursive image of life and the world. These concrete spatio-temporal structures in the novel are corollational with the real historical world but not equatable with it because they are always mediated by art. The represented world, for Bakhtin, however realistic and truthful, can never be chronotopically identical with the real world it represents.[7]

Although Bakhtin does not refer to cinema, this formulation of choronotope seems ideally suited to it as a medium where "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole." Bakhtin's description of the novel as the place where "time thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and where "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84) seems in some ways even more appropriate to film than to literature, for whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual, lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is quite literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time, quite apart from the fictive time-space constructed by specific films (Stam 38). I want to deploy the notion of the chronotope to historicize the discussion of space, time and style in cinema, and I think it is particularly relevant to my discussion of daily time in the films of Hou Hsiao-hsien, as it is important, I would argue, to find a way of attending to the expression of time through spatial tropes without effacing one aspect in favor of the other.

In 'The Folkloric Bases of the Rabelaisian Chronotope' Bakhtin offers a clear bifurcated route between personal time and historical time. He reveals that time is unified and unmediated in the pre-agricultural age, when the time of personal, everyday family occasions had already been individualized and separated out from the time of the collective historical life of the social whole - a time when there emerged one scale for measuring the events of history. Although in the abstract, time remained

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[7] See M. M. Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), pp. 84-258; Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis' *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics* (1992), pp.217-218.

unified, when it was appropriated for the making of plots, it bifurcated (208). These personal motifs could be incorporated into historical plots only partially, and even then only in a completely sublimated, symbolic form (209). According to Bakhtin, when time is divided like this, "parallel to these individual life-sequences-above them, but outside of them - there is a time-sequence that is historical, serving as the channel for the life of the nation, the state, mankind" (217). But the historical time-sequence is not fused with the individual life-sequence, measured by different standards of value, because other kinds of events take place in it, it has no interior aspect, no point of view for perceiving it from the inside out (217). In this sense, I want to argue that Hou has been able to overcome this duality, as in Bakhtin's definition for the modern historical novel: "attempts have been made to find a historical aspect of private life, and also to represent history in its "domestic light" (217). As such, Hou's films present the attempt to reproduce the adjacent relationship, based on the unity of time, with personal lives as the bas-relief in social life, and the daily chores just as important as other events. The scenery, for example, in Hou's films is not a stationary background, but rather it lives and participates in a unified life-world. It is part of the holistic that makes a film gain practical significance, because it contains all the real content which can be perceived by people.

Whether in his historical or rural films, Hou always draws attention to the radically disrupted experience of non-linear time. In the Taiwan trilogy, for example, the traumatic effects of the disruption of daily life on the individual is the central theme, as the effects of history reverberate through the work of all the images. The "chasm of time" constituting the "time passes" section of *Good Men, Good Women* which can be seen as an attempt to negotiate the traumatic and inexpressible nature of the war[8] and the White Terror in Taiwan, and explicitly represents it as both a disruption of present time and a kind of return to the past. *A City of Sadness* revolves around vicissitudes of family made absent by the political changes in Taiwan, as if the

[8] This refers to the Second Sino-Japanese War, which was a military conflict fought primarily between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan from 1937 to 1945. It followed the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 - 95.

death of a family member retrospectively renders the “return to China” and the “new life” simply as a phantasm, void and intangible. *The Puppetmaster* is also as a personal history of the colonial period where Hou addresses the war (the Second Sino-Japanese War) and political spectacles, through the prism of changes in folk performance signaling the oncoming menace of the war, within the folk performer’s life.

The allure of these movies is that we cannot find the real end in them, just as in life itself, we see only its process. It is not temporal ends which are of concern to Hou. In these films, even though the context of story is structured in the macro history, political trauma and changing times, the time occupying the screen is precisely the meaningless routine in daily life, designed, I would argue, to evoke considerations about the meaning of personal time and the relationship between personal time and historical time. Time, in these movies, flows simultaneously in two different veins - past and present, alternately concealing and revealing each other. Hou engages filmically in various ways with a history that “urged” the individual toward the collective presenting the past and history paradoxically as absentees whose presence is more strongly felt than those of other, actual, current realities.

This critically significant engagement with time in this way by Hou foregrounds the ineluctable relationship between the possible and the understandable. In Hou’s representation of daily life, family, diet and death, which constitute an autonomous series of personal life and personal fate, family life and diet are overwhelming scenes of representation which are positioned between neutrality and sublimation. Death, for example, is neutral, and is not given significance through additional metaphors or externalities (belief, ideology or renascence) but is realized through its memory, trauma and oblivion. Hou’s Taiwan trilogy reveals the internal aspects of time, that is, the particularity in the generality and abstract; the individual uniqueness in historical events. The organic time of family life doesn’t just contrast directly with history, but importantly, is intertwined with everyday sequences, biographical series, and specific histories, which gather together to form a bifurcated history encapsulating a specific visible personal life.

This is one of the important chronotopes in Hou's work - the historical chronotope. Although time is shown concretely as transparent personal time, it connects and involves external time going beyond the represented content. For Hou's films, the meaning itself is not just given from the time and the space, but from the way he positions audiences, through such chronotopes, to perceive meanings beyond received positions and historical surfaces.

Bakhtin believes the chronotope mainly plays a role of organizing plot in the novel, and so plays a formative role, but for film it affects both the aesthetic form and the philosophical worldview. So, for example, Hou's first New Cinema movie, *All the Youthful Days*, takes the life of youths in a fishing village as a subject, where objects and milieux take on an autonomous, material reality which give them an important value in themselves. For this, viewers and protagonists "invest the settings and the objects with their gaze, so that they see and hear the things and the people, in order for action or passion to be born, erupting in a pre-existing daily life" (Deleuze 4). Hou depicts precisely such perceived time, in which the situation is not extended directly into action, as primarily visual and auditory invested by the senses. Even though family time and ordinary space predominantly occupy the screen, these films are not idyllic, and even deconstruct the supposed idyll. This is unadulterated daily space, where the environment and actions within a particular film are not shown as indicative of specific historical moments, but as sequences of everyday situations signifying, and engaging, with those moments. Whether this is the fishing village in *All the Youthful Days*, the mining area in *Dust in the Wind* or the countryside in *A Summer at Grandpa's*, the situation of fishermen and miners - hopeless lives, wandering and parting - are shown by Hou to elicit meanings which are more about the struggle between humanity and society, without showing specific historical instances of that struggle, in order to allow him as director to explore both the perspective of human identities and the nature and perception of time. In this sense, daily life constitutes the flow of scenes, where Hou constructs reality through a landscape of daily situations.

This, then, is another important chronotope in Hou's works - the rural chronotope

of the seemingly quiet and beautiful. Such a chronotope is the locus for cyclical everyday time. Here there are no events only "doings" that constantly repeat themselves (Bakhtin 247). In this type of time people eat, drink, sleep, die, have children, involve themselves in petty disputes, sit in their houses or in the shade, play cards, gossip. This is commonplace cyclical everyday time. The marks of this time are simple, crude, material, fused with the everyday details of specific locales, with the quaint little houses and rooms of small towns, with the sleepy streets, the dust and flies, the train stations, billiard halls and so on. "Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still. Here there are no 'meetings', no 'partings'. It is viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space" (*ibid* 248). Indeed, as Bryony Randall says "the term 'day' here proliferates in Bakhtin's own prose, 'a day is just a day... Day after day', and so on, emphasizing the commonplace association of dailiness with inactivity and banality" (79).

In such a chronotope then, Hou seems to take the everyday in the way Bakhtin suggests as "a contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and events" (Bakhtin 248). It is the nature of this 'energy' in Hou's work that interests me, particularly in the way, for example in the context of this particular discussion of certain of his films, that there is a charged urban world outside the unpowered rural one pushing it towards disintegration. The 'energy' Bakhtin talks about is therefore driving ideas and commentary from Hou about a present which is not necessarily as Arcadian looking as the landscape and rural scenes he is showing on screen. This is as true of his historical trilogy as it is of the films mentioned here.

But whether in historical or rural movies, everyday meals, housework, birth and death cover the entire screen time, and make the story into a daily circle of ordinary life. Abstract historical time is not directly displayed on the screen, but it exists and functions in the shadow of this circle. Abstract time and personal time will cross each other at some point of time, but Hou does not take the longitudinal historical perspective, but rather the lateral perspective of the individual. Thus, the historical events become blind-spots on the chain of the personal life. The everyday and the dailiness can be defined in Hou's films in a normative sense, as the banal, the tedious,

and the unremarkable. The “everyday” is the unmarked and the ordinary, but most importantly in Hou’s work it is a form of reality outside of which, paradoxically perhaps, the ‘real’ real is to be found.

In general, it is rare that daily life is represented completely in historical films or political films. Even if some films do this, like Italian neo-realism, “daily life is as a contrast with “the moment of decision”, “the disparity”, which introduce an inexplicable break of emotion into daily banality” (Deleuze 14). Hou’s daily life in his films is formed by an invisible contrast between the present and history, that is, he takes personal memory and life as an eternal circle to reflect and be reflexive of abstract time, which, in turn, creates a whole internal temporality where the rhythm of film keeps in step with everyday life. It is therefore the elliptical loop sequence of private routines which make a different narrative mode and a different structure of memory as a very distinctive film style in his work.

Repetition as the Cycle of Time

Hou highlights throughout his work the repetition of time which contains within it spatial repetition - of the daily and annual cycle - along with a development from birth to growth to death. Thus in his many works such *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, *All the Youthful Days*, *A Summer at Grandpa’s* and *Dust in the Wind*, there is a repetition of time with images of young boys swimming in the sea in spring; in the summer they go fishing in the same water and in autumn the rain falls on that water; but there is no representation of winter because Taiwan has a subtropical climate. The same sort of repetition and change of space is given to the fields, the farmhouse, and the path leading to the city. This repetitive structure shows the inevitability of time passing, but also the changing nature of the island.

The repetition of ordinary landscapes matches the repetition of the ordinary life scenes such as the many dining scenes which often appear in Hou’s films. These scenes not only imply a kind of endless life but also signify specific family practices. In most Asian cultures, dining is a ritual which marks presence and survival, also absence and loss. In Hou’s films, scenes of eating are a typical symbol of the circle of life and death, especially in the Taiwan trilogy. These repeated scenes of eating

embody Randall's view: "not only that repetition is by no means an unmarked temporal structure, but that the repetitive sameness-and-difference temporal structure of dailiness itself inflects the way in which meaning is created, the way in which value is assigned" (22).

J. Hillis Miller's discussion of two kinds of repetition in his important study *Fiction and Repetition* (1985) illuminates the subtlety of the structure of repetition. Citing Deleuze, Miller explores the manifestation of, and relationship between, what he calls "grounded" and "ungrounded" repetition. In the first, "only that which resembles itself differs" - in this world as icon where art functions as Platonic mimesis; repetition is "grounded in a solid archetypal model which is untouched by the effects of repetition" (6). In the second, "only differences resemble one another" - in this world as phantasm, as simulacrum, everything is intrinsically different, and similarity only arises out of this background of difference. In his discussion of the kind of repetition found in fiction, Miller shows how "each form of repetition inevitably calls up the other as its shadow companion" (16). Miller's view refers to literary texts but I use it here for Hou's movies as they all enact this imbrication of each repetition with the other within the general paradigm of daily time.

A different way of formulating this difference is to observe that in all the cycles Hou presents an overriding scene of "dailiness". As Leslie Devereux says, everyday life is that which is eroded in public spectacle (66). Dailiness in Hou's films inhabits the realm of the private, the "idiosyncratic, disordered, unaccountable, un-replicable" (*ibid*), as distinct from the public spectacle grounded in the "ritual, oratory, the ceremonial" (*ibid*), which are always produced with an audience in mind. Unlike the universal, public, and performative rituals that structure most films, Hou's films are focused on the specific, private, even intimate moments of the daily. In emphasizing this daily private time over a more accumulative public time, Hou is escaping the older, more traditional connotations of peasant culture. More importantly, he is separating his subjects from a universalized image of orthodox readings of such peasant cultures and situating them as specific and individualised. Equally important in his films is that Hou's concentration on dailiness at certain points actually

challenges official chronology, by his describing a variety of different temporalities, not least where he exploits the imbrication of different kinds of repetition. For example, the creative using of the film within the film and oral narrative in Taiwan trilogy. In short, here I want to emphasize and represent that the two important general features relevant to time - the spatialization of time and repetition - are not mutually isolated and autonomous in Hou's works, but are unified in his development of a framework of personal time.

Hou has said that "time is the basis of real life" (9) which, for him in the practice of his work, means that the construction of everyday life and truth depends on the time rhythm he creates in his films where time melts into everyday details, saying that "one leaves the drama to get into life, but one leaves it imperceptibly, on the thread of the stream, that is time" (Hou 18).

I would argue, then, that the idea of personal moment is central to the development of Hou's aesthetic of the ordinary. "The moment" is crucially bound up with the question of what might constitute the present experience of the private individual, their "private time". Hou's "moment" attempts both to identify the present moment and to locate it in a subtle and constantly progressing chronological sequence. He invests the present moment with greater potential to cut across chronological boundaries (e.g.bifurcation, compression and crystallization). In his engagements with the daily in his films, he addresses the contemporary problem of the past, and in various ways attempts to allow the past to flow into or influence the present, by an immersion in the immediacy of the everyday. While this does not eclipse the potential for seeing the everyday as bound up with larger structures of public life, I would suggest that it may reveal a more profound understanding of the ways in which both individual subjectivity and local communities are constructed and operate; an understanding not just fleetingly glimpsed in the moment of pure present, but sustained through the ongoing patterns of the daily to trace the past.

2.3 The Long Take, Expansion and Recollection

Randall suggests that the everyday will describe content, or more specifically the mode of attention to content, and daily time will describe temporality, or temporal

structure. As such there will be constant dialogue between these aspects, as there always is between "form" and "content" (2). As such, Hou's movies directly or indirectly show, especially through his use of long takes, how time inhabits, moves and acts on space, where time can be memories, nostalgia, a lingering old dream where time follows people's everyday lives: people walking to work and returning from it; children going to school and coming back; repetitive housework; the slow life of small towns; trains going through stations and so on This is the time of routine, granting a constant and stable existence in the present moment to what has already become a thing of the past.

Sergei Eisenstein thinks that the temporal stretching of long takes is a means of controlling perception. Audiences are positioned to expect that the long duration of the take contains more rich meaning and content. The difference in Hou's work from this particular view is that his long take is not restricted to just lyrical scenes, as in the work of many other directors, but is internalized into the film's everyday content. He seeks to transfer to the audience a near-real sense of time, and long takes are one way of building a psychological sense of time. The most prominent example is the scene of the father's death in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, which lasts over two minutes while the sister is looking for a candle to light. This is almost equivalent to the length of real time so that the screen time creates a suspension of real time for the audience. The scene circulates around death, striving to capture the moment of death, opening up unexpected spaces for the unpredictable, the spontaneous, by appearing to reject the very idea - or at least the generally accepted idea - of the meaning of death.

It is striking that these everyday episodes in Hou's movies concerning the cinematic representation of time emerge so starkly in films depicting emotional experiences. For instance, Ah-hsiao's time of childhood in front of the temple, in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* when he plays with his junior partners, walks in the shadows and stands on the street to buy a fried snack and eats it carefully. In a scene like this, Hou presents, through the image of the child, a child saturated with the time of childhood memory rather than simply occupying the space of the present. It is akin to Deleuze's view about time in *Citizen Kane*: "The hero acts, walks and moves; but it

is the past that he plunges himself into and moves in: time is no longer subordinated to movement, but movement to time" (Deleuze 106). Therefore, although characters act in the present in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, in fact all their actions enact the past.

Similarly, in *A Summer at Grandpa's*, the little hero, Dong-dong climbs on the tree and sees a large yellow paddy field in the distance while wind and birdsong play around him. Here the beautiful landscape shows not only space but also time - a sense of the time of childhood redolent, perhaps, of the director's own memory? Pastoral time like this, and its slow passing, can only be experienced by children because a child's sense of time is different from an adult's, that is, more elastic, more flexible, less subject to the rational world of the clock. The combination of children and memory both suggest that cinema has also shifted from the "secret garden" of pastoral innocence to a view of the rural which is mindscape and sociospace as well as an actual identifiable location. In the scene of the paddy field, Dong feels that the passage of time is stretched slowly in space. The time fills the air like wind going through the field, adding to the thickness of space taking emotions into it. This episode constitutes a time interlude in the movie and slows down and elongates the time. In fact, Hou's films are composed of numerous interludes like this which upset the linear order of time and make causality disappear, where time itself can be seen as a materialized or operating as a described object.

Bergson thinks that "duration is subjective, and constitutes our internal life" (98). As such, I argue that the daily trivia and casual instances in Hou's films stretch the feeling of time by long takes and force time to multiply and proliferate. In *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* memory is a continuum of time that will always be stored when every sheet of the past has its own process of divergence and fragmentation. In sequence shots of *A Summer at Grandpa's*, for example, time is treated as a child's psychological experience, a rambling summer time, which can be subjectively extended, zoomed in on and materially represented.

Flowers of Shanghai: **a Transparent Crystal**

Flowers of Shanghai takes everyday life of the Shanghai brothel in the 1900s as

its subject of representation. The film adapted from a literary work, is stripped of some of the dramatic conflicts and plots in the original novel, which is made into an everyday scroll - like painting. This movie is distinctive in Hou's works for some technological breakthroughs. For example, long takes are used extensively and create a unique chronotope in the film making the brothel depicted in this film a closed and transparent time crystal. The movie excludes symbols of social time and locations, but constitutes a time circulation of thing-in-itself by daily feasts and chats which overwhelmingly occupy the entire time on screen. In the narrative, this de-dramatic method makes the original utopian feature of the brothel vanish, so that it is no longer a space of making legends and romance, but an everyday life space. This is a presentation of the ordinary life of a brothel that is almost equivalent to married life between prostitutes and customers. Time is diluted into loose daily moments and united by the framing of the specific space of the brothel, alienating outside-society and 'real' life. But Hou shows that the reality in the brothel is real life, capitalising on his usual approach of concentrating on everyday life in order to unfold the life of a professional brothel.

Hou breaks through the restriction of time and space to create a kind of special chronotope of brothel; a time crystal of everyday life in which there are no fictionalized sexual adventures or love myths. The time is just a homely time but reflecting the closed space of the brothel. To this end, showing prolonged daily time constructs a unity of cinematic time which is circular, complete and closed, where characters are mobile points in a continuum of time and space. The camera follows these mobile points by tracking shots to show the characters' spatial state and who must be made into moving points of space such as the opening scene with Shen Xiao-hong. This is also the time state of characters who, because this crystal does not have cracks, cannot get out from the brothel to return to the outside world; they must make themselves fit the crystal. The movement speeds up the tracking shots across scenes and multiplies medium shots and extends the dissolving into the black like the tones of an oil painting.


2.1 A long take in the first appearance of Shen Xiao-hong. 2.2 The camera follows the figure's movement. 2.3 A figure's movement.

The first scene of film starts with the first appearance of Shen Xiao-hong (figs.2.1-2.3), she is one of the popular prostitutes, whose story constitutes a main driving force in the movie. This scene is just one shot, but the length is seven minutes while the camera follows the character's movement and makes these movements themselves the reason for the shot. Time becomes the duration of actions. Viewers thus have an ultimate experience of time as it is unfolded for us as a unity rather than a series of "moments".

One shot makes one sequence - a time continuum - but is discontinuous in terms of the entire plot because the time region is constituted by a continuum constantly fragmented into a time corner of the whole film, and later each moves into a unity. Finally, the whole movie will aggregate into a big time region - slow past. Its expansion always occurs as an internal crystal, where it makes all objects crystallized, and formed into symbols of time. It is like a perfect crystal, which retains daily life, condenses daily life and enacts drama as life.


2.4 A dining scene in the prelude. 2.5 The rotating shot. 2.6 The medium shot.

There are only 40 scenes in the movie, and the average length of each scene is 2.5 minutes. The dinner scenes almost equate to real time, especially at the beginning of the film (figs.2.4-2.6), with an eight minute scene of dinner without any direct dramatic action. Audiences can only work out any background information of the

story itself from the everyday chatting which presents the characters' personalities and possible plots as well as the potential storyline. The camera shoots the scene around the table in order to indirectly present every character's mood and hidden plots. Such scenes of eating appear four times in the movie, functioning as a running center of the time and the principal means of opening up the plot process.

Mary Ann Doane explores the relation between long takes like this and time, arguing that the long take is more often than not resorted to as a means to "gaze at an autonomous, unfolding scene whose duration is a function of duration and potential waywardness of events themselves. Its length situates it as an invitation to chance and unpredictability, an invitation that is abruptly canceled by the cut." (108). For keeping the unpredictability of duration, in this film Hou uses the fade to replace the straight cut. The means of fade-in/out displays the rotation of the crystal to show implication and ambiguity of past images. This nostalgic montage makes the rhythm of the image return to an older era when everything is slow, lingering and unpredictable. As David Bordwell has said, "Hou exploits long takes to go beyond de-dramatization and takes a kind of half-truth feeling for audience. His films are melodramas but refined ones..." (*Figures Traced in Light* 125). According to Bordwell, Hou goes beyond the way of de-dramatization and tries to create a kind of density of everyday images. What Bordwell calls "half-truth" is mainly caused by Hou's scenes of the everyday. In *Flowers of Shanghai*, for example, there is no reference system of social time, so that the duration of the everyday inside the brothel is effectively the only means of reshaping the atmosphere and life of the brothel.

In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Bordwell suggests that a scene has three possible durational relationships - equality, expansion, contraction (80-82). The first sort of time involves an audience catching something from the screen; the second sort is the time when a viewer scans the scene and, guided by the director's work, holds onto an image and/or emotional response and the last when the audience becomes emotionally involved especially if the director changes the length of the scene. Accordingly, the last sort of time is an emotional time held by perception, and the others are rational time. But the perceptual time will not continue forever. If a director holds onto a scene,

makes it still and stops it, it will be resurrected from the almost still condition and be regenerated. It is called “transformation from usual to unusual” (1987) by Eisenstein. Bordwell’s understanding for the process of audiences’ consciousness is the same as Eisenstein’s belief in the duration of symbolic scenes starting from a regeneration of interest. The most profound sort of time in scenes, the last type, mythological time, is the time of deep connection and the time of revealing subconscious to come. Mythological time does not depend on its length but its content. When the absolute time of scenes gets long but lacks content, long takes will become boring and likely to lead to audience distraction. The most effective use of long takes, especially in Hou’s work, is not for their time length, as such, but for the rich connotation of meaning elicited by their duration.

Virtuality: Past Temporalities

Hou chooses to probe local political history and contemporary ambience by long takes, but he is reluctant to lay out time by conventional flashbacks and artificial montage. He makes the camera always focus on the present, so that the past goes into the individual memory by the form of the present. This results in time that is extended and, as in the example of the dinner scene described above, expanded into a single shot. So, for example, in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, where the span of time is more than ten years from Ah-hsiao’s childhood to his teenage years, we are not presented with a single line of time but rather with diverse bifurcations of time in an extended sheet of the past. While this movie is generally acknowledged to be Hou’s own recollection of childhood and his family life, his own memory also converges with other people’s memories such as the mother’s, grandmother’s and sister’s in the film. This turns the movie into a crystal of memories which both absorbs the narrator’s own past, and divides it into numerous individual cycles of time. Bifurcated time is not achieved by Hou from flashbacks, but from recollected images where characters are reflected by past memories and the past of such memories.

The title of *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* signifies that dead time sleeps in the memory and living time is what is presented on the screen. As time is a subjective sense, the past is not easily captured by the camera and has to be presented by

objective forms such as re-created realities and the representation of specific, generally already-known, details. So in this film, Hou first presents viewers with the emotion, and then the time itself. This is, as Deleuze has said in another context, signals that "the actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective: it was initially the effect, that which we experience in time; then time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affector and affected, 'the affection of self by self' as definition of time" (83). For Hou, the past does not display key points of personal life in dramatic time but as part of the sentiment of personal life.

There are many scenes in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* that show what the virtual image does when a present and actual image loses momentum, where these two images form a circuit running after each other with each reflected in the other. For example, in the long take of the chatting between the mother and the sister before the sister's wedding the content of the discussion is just family trivia: the mother's love for father, married life and a dead daughter. But the length of this scene is five minutes, and while it refers to several decades of the past, there are no flashbacks of that past shown on the screen. There is only the pitter-patter of rain and Ah-hsiao's singing to balance the excessive silence of the image as well as to create the flow and sentiment of recollection (fig.2.7-2.8).

2.7 The mother tells the sister the family's past.

2.8 Ah-Hsiao is singing facing the rain.

2.9 The sister is reading out the father's autobiography.

These images do not extend the narrative as such, but maintain the present moment in a near-stationary way to construct a whole circle of time. In this sequence, the audience is invited into the narrative and the imagination of the past beyond just a straightforward recollection of the mother's trauma and suffering in family history. Deleuze talks about images like this by suggesting that they "would be less a function of reality than a function of remembering, of temporalization: not exactly a

recollection but 'an invitation to recollect...'" (109). Here, the mother's memory is never described in the film so that the past seems to be an untraceable time outside of the film. The primary lens is a means which works with the long take to force the mother to recall her past and lead the audience into the abyss of time.

Throughout the shot, one can see the film is all sideshadowing.[9] It is the process of the filmmaker trying to construct workable narratives for representing his and his parents' experience. But he doesn't stop there. Rather than creating the illusion of coherence by employing narrative devices that produce an ordered and rational comprehensibility of information and events leading to specific conclusion, Hou creates multiple, undefined pasts through layers of everyday images, sounds, voices, and narration. The relationship between the meanings generated and the truth of those meanings is constantly being placed in focus by expanded duration, offering the audience a space to construct and think out the narrative logic. This is a space that the filmmaker Trinh T.Minh-ha has referred to as the space between truth and meaning using the term the "interval". Yet what is put forward as truth is often nothing more than one of many possible meanings. And what persists between the meaning of something and its truth is the interval, a break without which meaning would be fixed and truth concealed (Documentary 77).

A similar narrative also appears in the scene of the sister reading out the father's autobiography after the parents have died (fig.2.9). This scene restates the father's past, and invites the audience into a contemplation and understanding of the past. It contains double time traces: one is the father's living time (represented); another is the father's expectation and nostalgia (not represented). Here the long take is a means

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[9] This notion is from literary theorist Michael Bernstein, who asserts that the sideshadow in historical narrative is designed to illuminate other aspects of that history which existed simultaneously as part of the main trajectory of an event, showing the density in the dynamics of that history. Sideshadowing strategies take into account the reality of counter-narratives that exist within historical events and can open such narratives to multiple contingencies that surround an event. It suggests that although things turned out one way, they could also have turned out some other way, expanding the complexity and nuance of events. Corresponding to the sideshadow is the foreshadow and backshadow. Foreshadowing is the built-in evidence of an inevitable conclusion to the story being read. Foreshadowing creates a reading of an event that gives an impression that all events have causal relations to one another by "naturalizing" what is described through the seamless elision of one narrative event into another. Backshadowing takes place when prior knowledge of a situation's outcome is shared by both the reader or viewer and the author. In this construct, all actions and events move inexorably to a result that is already known. See Bernstein's *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*. Berkeley: University of California press (1994), pp3-4; 40-41.

of rethinking and prompting the audience to experience that time becomes the past from the present in the representation of time. Crucially, as Randall has said, "it is the matching of the qualities of 'warmth and intimacy and immediacy' in remembered states with those of the present that make them recognisable as mine" (50). She further explains that "the present is of course the temporality of the everyday; everyday life is now. But there is more to everyday temporality than just its present-ness, not least because there is more to present-ness than the simple 'now'" (50). From this, I consider that everyday temporality in Hou's films is multiple, proliferated and diverse based on the recollection-image. Even though the everyday crystal is not time itself, we see time in the crystal. And "we see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, chronos and not chronos" (Deleuze 81).

What can then be seen is how the present passes through the double movement of the everyday crystal, which replaces one scene by another while going through the future and preserving all the past, then dropping time into an obscure depth. This involves the independence of scenes: personal time is enlarged and attains inner and independent meaning to construct uncounted bifurcations of time, but it does not belong to the plot. In terms of the whole movie, the recollection-image does not deliver the past to us, but only represents the former present that the past "was". "The recollection-image is an image which is actualized or in process of being made actual, which does not form with the actual and present image a circuit of indiscernibility" (Deleuze 54). In a movie without any flashbacks, the recollection-image belongs to a deeper time-image. The past returns to the "present" as a process of memory flowing into the "everyday", but this process will become blurred and uncertain with the trivialization and fragmentation of daily life. Those time-regions that have not been represented in Hou's films, for example, include the hometown region, political region, traumatic region and love region, which dwell in characters' memories, and expand and disappear in their daily actions. Hou's skill and originality is in his using the long take depicting everyday life to explore each time-region, but also leaving them outside the screen. The fragmentation and ambiguity of the time experience of individuals are imaged to the "blank" in film, waiting for an audience to fill and

construct that blank.

While the use of static shots of long duration is a strategy that has been used by many avant-garde filmmakers[10] as a way to produce a contemplative experience of an image in real time, Hou uses such durational images to a different effect. Avant-garde filmmakers are often less concerned with using the present as a way to evoke the past than they are in heightening the experience of the image in the present through the real-time duration of the shot as it is being projected. In contrast, Hou uses shots of long duration to produce an image that opens onto multiple temporal moments of the past and present simultaneously, giving rise to virtualities that can occur in the interplay between such moments in the mind of the viewer.

For example, *Millennium Mambo* (2001) is an alternative film of recollection-images, which was originally a happening of present-ness, but the movie assumes a future point of time 2010 to turn the "present" 2000 into the past, so that the happening becomes the recollection-image. The assumption of time not only creates an overall alienated sense, but also makes the film have some dreamy features as if the present is untrue. This creates a time-panorama, an unstable whole composed of erratic memories and the fleeting image of general past. The snow landscape in Yubari should be appeared at the end but was cut in the middle, which increases the dreamy sense of time, and constructs a random fork of time which seems to suggest that time has a deeper freedom. The whole movie is constructed on the novel (narrative) memory of voice-over, where the tension of narration still comes from the past - obtained between the evidentiary drive to make this lost time available for the present and the image's unsettling resistance to the revivifying effects of remembrance. This bridges Bergson's view that it is not by its own efforts that the recollection-image retains the mark of the past, that is, of "virtuality", which it represents and embodies, and which distinguishes it from other type of images. He says:

> No doubt a recollection, as it becomes actual, tends to live in an image,

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[10] See Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*. Minnesota: the University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 86. Where he refers to avant garde filmmakers like Chantal Akerman (News from Home,1976 D'Est,1993), Peter Hutton (The New York Portrait Series, 1978-90, Lodz Symphony 1991-93), James Benning (11×14, 1976), and Michael Snow (La Region Centrale, 1971).

> but the converse is not true, and the image pure and simple will not be referred to the past unless, indeed, it was in the past that I sought it, thus following the continuous progress which brought it from darkness into light. (270-280)

Hou's cinema is not a case of psychological memory which is made up of recollection-images as the flashback can conventionally represent it, and is also not a case of a succession of the present passing according to chronological time. His cinema attempts to evoke and produce an actual present, which either precedes the formation of recollection-image or is the exploration of the past from the recollection-image which will later arise. When all the sheets of time and regions coexist in a contracted actual present, this constructs a typical means of time compression.

Cafe Jikou (2003)[11] is a case in point of such time compression. The movie pays a tribute to Ozu, but it seems not to be directly related to Ozu or his films. It is a film about time experience and nostalgia, in which all the scenes have occurred in the present moment: the moment of pure routine. Dinners and marrying-off daughters are Ozu's themes, but Hou sets up a trap of time around these themes to lead the audience into doubting time and traces of the past. However, the situations are scattered, everyday and present. There is no flashback or recollection-image to take us to the past, and we tend to be aware of the existence of the past as just a mood, an atmosphere and as a secret being fermented. The secret of time continuously diverges from the narration, flows into the present and daily life, and is eventually covered by the everyday details. The past could not be represented, and all the present (the everyday) can do is to lure the audience into the imagination and anxiety of the past. Hou does not clear the memory but suggests the limitation of memory representation

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[11] In order to commemorate the late Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu's 100th birthday, Japan's Shochiku Company invited Hou Hsiao-hsien to make this film in 2003. It is Hou's first foreign film and the first shot in a foreign language. The story is very scattered, about the freelance writer Yoko and used bookstore owner Hajime. They are good friends, who spend a lot of time in a cafe. Yoko's parents divorced very early, she is brought up by her uncle in Hokkaido countryside, but she has a very good relationship with her father and stepmother. In 2003, Yoko comes back to Japan from Taiwan, and told her parents she was pregnant, the child's father in Taiwan. Yoko's parents worry about her future, as an unwed mother. The film does not narrate a causal story full of dramatic tension, even though it contains many dramatic elements and conflicts: the unwed heroine, the feeling between Hajime and Yoko, and Yoko's family relationships, representing some scattered moments of life, with no beginning and no end in the movie.

in a basic crisis of the time, as well as time irreversibly slipping by the actions of fate.

The overwhelming image is of heroine Youko's daily life such as eating, walking, reading and visiting her parents and friends - time is included in these casual trifles. I suggest that this is a movie about the secrets of the time. For example, Youko imagines her mother in fairy tales and dreams of her lost mother in her childhood, seeking the reason for her mother abandoning her children and looking for a musician's materials of 50 years ago. Hou presents a circle of time around the "now" where the past and its secrets are neither arranged into a dramatic causality nor constructed into a turning point of fate. For the character, the secrets of time are not for questioning and revealing, but for consideration and reservation until they become a part of the present. The film does not explain the details of Youko's premarital pregnancy or her motivation for finding the musician's materials - the only thing that Hou offers the viewer is to be able to see her "present" linking the past and the future. This is a kind of ongoing image, where time circles and stretches in infinite daily duration, with the unfolding of daily behavior and rhythm, through which an audience could be lost in the "present" image because they do not know where it is flowing to and from, and how it connects to potential intentions. The film does not give any answers for present confusions, because causality is not its main focus. The ongoing image like life itself is unknown for the future and cannot return to the past. It retains past time-regions and makes them become sedimentary layers of images, in which time is compressed into an eternal "now" and goes into our own real experience. Tracing the past is not important or urgent, because it has been broken, disintegrated and dismantled in the individual experience. In fact, this way of representing time is close to the essence of life - there is no straight line, and no cycle of end to end. So, *Cafe Jikou* is not about "Youko's everything", but a part, some fragments of life, and a period of life. Unrepresented secrets of time give the images a kind of authenticity, a weight of the past without which individual actions or behaviors would remain conventional.

In Youko's story, the past can be replaced by narration and assumption, but cannot eliminate the bifurcation of time, which leaves unexplained secrets. On the

representation of daily life, Japanese director Ozu was committed to expressing the breaks and re-harmony of daily life, but Hou presents the impermanence of life and the secrets of impalpable time. In this film, Hou innovatively uses the cinematic element of duration instead of literary elements of emplotment to show the intimate details of the daily lives encountered in the film's characters. He has also pared down plot elements to the barest minimum in order to reveal other elements within the film as complex components in the production of the film's meanings. For example, the film reduces spoken dialogue between the characters to a minimum as a way of propelling the narrative forward showing the characters in detailed visualizations of their daily activities and their physical relationship to the world around them.

The typical method of portraying individual time is to always select details according to the present and look for things which promote identity construction out of a linear narrative and discourse. In daily time, the past does not extend forward along a straight line, but diffuses in time and space. Films capture the diffusion of time by forms of extension, circulation and bifurcation. Doane thinks that the cinema presents itself as an indexical record of time, "it allied itself with the event and the unfolding of events as aleatory, stochastic, contingent. It was capable of trapping events in all their unpredictability and pure factualness" (165). According to Doane, as a unit of time, in order to go over its limit such as frame and reels, the film has to take itself not as a simple happening, but a significant happening that nevertheless remains tinged by the contingent and the unassimilable. In this light Hou, presents some underlying possibilities between personal time and historical time such as happening, tension, alienation and blending.

2.4 Bifurcation, Compression and Crystallization

Deleuze thinks that "the sequence shot is clearly a sheet of the past, with its nebulae and shining points which will feed the recollection-image and determine what it retains from a former present" (Deleuze 111). But long takes are not the only way to manipulate time, because montage persists in its own right under three other aspects:

> the relation between the sequence shots or sheets of past and the short shots of passing presents; the relation of the sheets between themselves,

> each with the others (as Burch remarked, the longer a shot is, the more important it is to know where and how to end it); the relation of the sheets to the contracted actual present which evokes them. (*ibid*)

Accordingly, the relation of the actual image to recollection-images can be seen in the flashback. This is a closed circuit which goes from the present to the past, then leads us back to the present so "the flashback is a conventional, extrinsic device: it is generally indicated by a dissolve-link, and the images that it introduces are often superimposed or meshed" (Deleuze 48).

For example, in one of the few of Hou's films with flashbacks, *All the Youthful Days* includes some flashbacks in both the traditional and external form. These flashbacks repeatedly trace the hero's traumatic memories and psychological secrets, with the time his father was hit by a baseball forming the core of the flashbacks, and the core of the hero's memory. This constructs the hero's psychological causality and an explanation of the development of his destiny, perhaps. These flashbacks often occur during the hero's meditation or in his sad moments, where time bifurcates in an almost stagnant atmosphere. There is no voiceover, no interior monologue taking us into the core of emotion. Instead the flashbacks quietly display a force of time which can transcend memory. Any contemplation of flashbacks in this movie, then, should not only focus on the single flashback itself, but the moments connected to them, these moments and flashbacks together constituting the circular whole. Therefore, flashbacks in this movie also indicate an obvious causality, a linear narrative beyond fate, which tries to put the past into the hero's present and the influence of fate. But this effect is vague in the film and does not explicitly mention the hero's rebellion and repression coming from the father's absence, instead only focusing on the hero's remembrance and his yearning for the father. All flashbacks in the film are from the hero's perspective, his personal and closed memory, which constructs time's bifurcation of a single line. The hero, Ah-qing, is a bifurcated person, whose pain comes from his feelings and memories for his father. In this group of teenagers in

Fengkui[12], he is the only fully realized character, while we get to know very little about the other adolescents. In general, I would argue that in Hou's work there is no character who develops in a linear way. Except Ah-qing. But there are still some mysteries, for example when he exiled himself and began an idle life and how his father's disability affects him. Flashbacks only offer a possible interpretation of those mysteries.

Imaginative Flashbacks in *A City of Sadness*

In *All the Youthful Days* one person has many flashback-shots, but in *A City of Sadness*, one flashback can belong to several people or not belong to someone in particular. In this film the flashback is no longer about explanation but about unexplained secrets. Here time no longer forms a closed circle to connect the past and present but constantly bifurcates, in which not only a few cycles can be bifurcated, but also each cycle itself can be bifurcated. The film includes two flashbacks. The first happens in the farewell scene of Shizuko (Japanese girl) and Kuan-mei, where at the end of the Japanese colonial period, Shizuko has to leave Taiwan. This sequence starts with Shizuko going to the hospital and giving presents to Kuan-mei (fig. 2.10). Then the flashback begins: Shizuko plays the piano and sings for students in the classroom while Kuan-rong listens beside her (fig.2.11); Shizuko is doing Japanese-style flower arranging (fig.2.12); Kuan-rong is grinding the ink, Shizuko's brother is writing calligraphy (fig.2.13); There is then a Japanese cursive insertion with a Japanese male voiceover (fig.2.14). Then, time transforms from past to present. On the screen emerge Kuan-mei, Kuan-rong and Wen-qing who are looking at Shizuko's gifts, Kuan-rong talks to Kuan-mei about the meaning of the scroll which is Japanese for 'spirit of died for beauty' (fig.2.15). The screen fades out, then fades in Kuan-mei who translates this Japanese script to Wen-qing (fig.2.16), a voiceover accompanies her interpretation. The last shot cuts to a Chinese insertion which translates the Japanese calligraphy (fig. 2.17), and the sequence shots finish.

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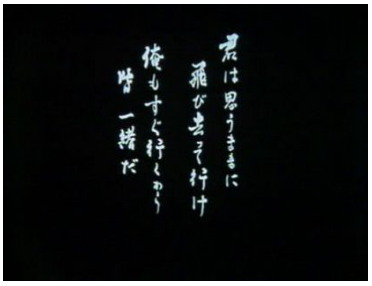
[12] It is a fishing village located in western Taiwan's Penghu Islands.

2.10 The farewell scene of Shizuko and Kuan-mei.

2.11 Shizuko plays the piano and sings in a flashback.

2.12 Shizuko arranges flowers in a flashback.

2.13 Kuan-rong and Shizuko's brother in a flashback.



2.14 A Japanese insert with a male voice-over.

2.15 The camera cuts to a scene of three people looking at the presents.

2.16 Kuan-mei translates the Japanese script to Wen-qing.

2.17 A Chinese insertion translating the Japanese in the last shot of this flashback sequence.

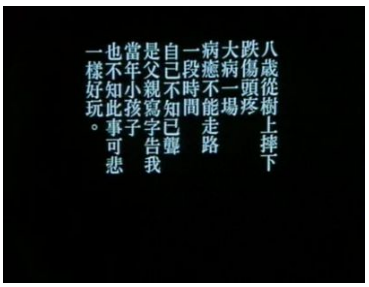
Hou uses straight cutting to deal with the flashbacks not using a traditional means like a distorted frame. The initial viewpoint appears to be Shizuko's but then because the voice-over is a Japanese male at the end of the flashback, it could well be Kuan-rong's because Shizuko does not appear. But later, the flashback seems to come from Kuan-mei who is telling the whole story to Wen-qing. The disjunctures of time situate the flashback into excursive time and space, where time is bifurcated but also compressed. The bifurcation is past-oriented, and the compression looks to the future. If taking the farewell scene in the hospital as "the present", then the sequence is actually a coexisting sheet of time of the past, the present and the future. This is a circle of time, but this cycle is not a complete and closed circle from present to past and again back to present, but from present to the past and to the future, which is open, ambiguous, and uncertain. Jean Ma thinks that:

> The elliptical progression of this series of shots discloses a shared consciousness, a floating and heterogeneous subjectivity. By dis-articulating the link between the flashback and individual character perspective, Hou captures the sense of a plural subject of memory emerging across time, collectively authored by an exchange of stories and objects. (33)

Extending Ma's idea to the perspective of history representation, *A City of Sadness* represents the subject of political history, but it is a multiple history involving the tension of personal memories and collective memory where the memory signified by the flashback not only belongs to the characters, but also to the director and the audience. The sequence displays a particular explicitness regarding the flashback's potential as a device for represented memory, which goes beyond the parameters of an individual character's subjectivity. In this chain of overlapping remembrances, it is difficult to discern where one memory ends and another begins. It echoes Deleuze's opinion that the "flashback finds its justification at each point where time forks. The multiplicity of circuits thus finds a new meaning" (49).

The second extended flashback appears in the sequence when Wen-qing is talking about his traumatic experience of childhood to Kuan-mei (figs.2.18-2.20), but here the flashbacks presented to us are scenes of rural community theater where an actress flourishes her sleeves and sings a traditional opera (figs.2.21-2.22), then the camera cuts to a boy imitating the actress's performance (fig.2.23).

2.18 Wen-qing recalls his childhood.



2.19 A Chinese insertion represents his recollection.

2.20 Wen-qing describes his memory by gestures.

2.21 An actress is performing in recollection-image.

2.22 A scene of a folk performance in recollection-image.

2.23 Childish Wen-qing is imitating the actress's actions in flashbacks.

The sequence links several moments in time to represent the formation of a chain of memories between two characters. The multiple disjunctures introduced by this flashback not only dislocate the viewer's sense of time-space relations, but also disclose a series of interactions to another. The flashback not only constructs plural subjects of memory, but also blurs the boundary of flashback and imagination. It is not superimposed and meshed, to use Deleuze's term, but is more like the imagination. And this imagination can be seen as both Wen-qing's and Kuan-mei's. In the logic of plot, it is still a bifurcation of time. This bifurcation does not match the narrative to represent the crucial, traumatic moment in personal memories, but enacts it as a separate fork, a duration and an episode. Again, in Deleuze's sense, imagination is not memory, and in this flashback of rural community drama, the memory turns into a cultural imagination of collection and folklore. As a result, the treatment of time on the micro-shot implies a link between individual memory and collective memory, as well as signaling how the film constructs the narrative and testimony for collective trauma by individual memory.

Wen-qing is a typical forking character who reconstructs a moment in history through a multiplicity of perspectives and reveals this reconstruction as ridden by lacunae, gaps and limitations. In particular, the relationship between Wen-qing and photography constitutes a rich meditation of image technology's framing of time, presence and absence, memory and amnesia. Whether through the insertion of the photography as a mise-en-scene object, or the restaging of the activity of picture-making, or the freezing of the mobile image into an inanimate still, photography conveys an elusive time embedded in the memories of characters and inflected by the theme of loss. He is a transparent forking man, whose trauma is also a symbol of

ethnic trauma.

The only certainty Hou provides is that these flashbacks, which are lyrical, floating sequences, are accompanied by the flow of emotions. They refuse to be aligned, or to reconstitute a destiny, but "constantly split up any state of equilibrium, and each time impose a new 'meander', a new break in causality, which itself forks from the previous one, in a collection of non-linear relations" (Deleuze 49). In this way, Hou's characters rarely develop in a linear way. For example, the Japanese girl, Shizuko's attachment for Taiwan and love for Kuan-rong do not belong to the same evolutionary process in the film's main line but constitute a separate cycle. They imply a relationship between colonizer and colony. Another example is Wen-qing's fate, which is not shown in the linear progression, but instead is covered by irrelevant memories. In the evolution of personal destiny, the forking point is always imperceptible, people are unaware of the causality of fate.

Synchronicity: Crystallization and Bifurcation

Each movie in the Taiwan trilogy has a backdrop of collective memory - the 2-28 Incident in *A City of Sadness*, life during the Japanese colonial period in *The Puppetmaster*, and the trauma of White Terror in *Good Men, Good Women* - but they are constructed in an entirely personal, everyday way. This presentation of memory provides a new feature, that is, different past layers no longer make a closed story with the same characters and same time, but different characters and different times constitute a connected point between personal memory and collective memory, which is a special form of time compression.

In general, the compression of time is a typical method of dealing with long spans of time, especially for recollected movies. There are three methods of time-compression: the first is making the time of each scene shorter than normal duration; the second is offering more information in one scene beyond the audience's receptivity; the last is combining the past and the present. Hou takes the last method, but he does not only show the audience a past, but releases and reverses the subordinated relation between daily life and history, and thereby makes history digested in daily time. Therefore, Hou's timing compression has three characteristics:

fusion, bifurcation and crystallization.

I argue here that the crystal image is a unique approach to compress time by bifurcation, which makes time divide in countless forks and then merges them into a transparent sphere. In the crystal, history is not the setting or a background, it is cut from the side of the daily, like ubiquitous sunshine to reflect into the crystal, but it cannot be gathered and materialized. In other words, the director is no longer committed to reproducing and constructing a linear history. Instead, he tries to hold the diaspora of the past and transfer it to the audience through various filmic methods. This works well for the historical representation of repressed and controversial identity, because it has the potential to create a life history of individuals.

In *Good Men, Good Women* and *The Puppetmaster*, for example, a process of recollection-image is made, replacing flashbacks, so that bifurcated time gives a direct connection to the past instead of through flashbacks and historical spectacles. Here the memory "is story behaviour. It is the voice, which speaks, talks to itself or whispers, and recounts what has happened" (Deleuze 51). This approach to memory representation gives time an essential significance through time crystallization. Compared with flashbacks, this force of time is more powerful because it directly develops a world memory of time, and retrieves things from the past out of memories. "The film within the film", for example in *Good Men, Good Women* constructs a more complex form of time where "the film within the film does not signal an end of history, and is no more self-sufficient than is the flashback or the dream: it is just a method of working, which must be justified from elsewhere. In fact, it is a mode of the crystal-image" (76-77). This means that if this mode is used, then it has to be grounded on considerations capable of giving it a higher justification, otherwise, it is simply a perspective of secondary importance. As a form of time compression, if the film within the film always has the core of "conspiracy" or "plot" like Deleuze says, then for Hou, it is just a conspiracy of time. Taking the female as the subject of witness and memory, the film within the film is like a film being formed constructing a binary world between the present and past, and offering a space for female monologue.

Good Men, *Good Women* takes two different memories unified into one person. These two memories occur in different space and time, like two incommensurable time zones. The past continuously lures the "present" in a sublimated process from the present memory to an artificial world, where memory becomes a world being formed, constantly changing. Time here is divided into three: crystallized time, the present, and the present past. The actress Liang-jing is thus a forking person who not only forks to her own past, but also to Jiang Bu-yu's past. Her own lost love and lover constitute the first bifurcation, and the enactment of Jiang Bu-yu's past, constitute the second bifurcation. She experiences her own emotional trauma, while experiencing historical trauma in the enactment of Jiang Bi-yu's past. It is this double trauma that makes the past and the present, personal and historical commensurable. Finally, as Liang-jing steps out of the drama-as-fiction and reverts to life, she completes the transformation in time experience. The time in the crystal is refracted into two movements, one is facing past, being mourned forever, while the other is facing the present. "The film within the film" in this film is a potential image, which reflects the present and past, perception and memory. Liang-jing's enactment is a process of her listening and viewing her bifurcation and working through it like a medium, allowing time to inflow and outflow. The historical sense is created by reference to reality and potential, present and past, and all bifurcations of time are inside the bifurcation of Liang-jing's identity. The film within the film, then, is a typical mirror-image which reflects past time, but transcends the flashback and constitutes a bifurcated time in the present, which take Liang-jing and the audience directly into the past. The film contains Liang-jing's own past, but her memories are represented through sequences of inset recollection-images, not through a series of flashbacks. The film is a turning crystal, with two sides if we relate it to the invisible past - Liang-jing's past and Jiang Bu-yu's past, with four sides if we relate it to visible present including Liang-jing's life as an actress, and Jiang Bu-yu's life in the enactment. Memory here, as Jean Ma puts, "figures as a ground of identification and a nexus of history and fantasy, of reality and imagination" (25). According to Jean Ma, reality and imagination coexist and are crystallized into a circle, which brings the audience from here to there, from

now to then. The film within the film occupies an area of black and white and continuously inserts in a rotating color crystal and evokes the questions: what is the history, and what is the memory.

In essence, they are all similar - the film within the film, theater plays in film, the fiction in semi-documentary and a show - because they all reflect time and life by a mirror-image. The difference is that the film within the film "is the film which takes itself as its object in the process of its making or of its setbacks in being made" (Deleuze 76), but the theater play and fiction in movies often construct a complete crystal which reflects reality. The most important of these realities in Hou's films is time, not simply as a representational element, pretending to move into the past through theatrical means, but as a material element signified by the duration spent with an image; time spent thinking and listening. These are actually physical processes. The film uses its duration to generate its own present/presence, and ours. The film becomes a space for contemplation. The viewer is not hauled into the screen as if it were a time capsule and taken into a new time zone. Rather, there is the screen/film, and there is the viewer. The new time zone from the film within the film allows the viewer to experience himself or herself in relation to the images and words, and even (or especially) to experience the silences and ruptures of meaning, where one is able to contemplate the sense of loss and the implications of what the political terror might mean, and the limits of what can be understood. The director attempts to engage with past events, with the possibility of constructing female identity in relation to what remains unknowable.

So, for example, the semi-documentary *The Puppetmaster* essentially includes three crystallized times - folk theater plays, recollection-image[13] and the real oral scene.[14] The film explores the depth of coexistence rather than the depth of memory,

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[13] Bergson said that is was not by its own efforts that the recollection-image retained the mark of the past, that is, of 'virtuality" which it represents and embodies, and which distinguishes it from other types of images (see Deuleuze *Cinema 2* 54). Also Deleuze thinks the recollection-image does not deliver the past to us, but only represents the former present that the past "was". The recollection-image is an image that is actualized or in process of being made actual, which does not form with the actual, present image a circuit of indiscernibility (ibid 54). In this movie, for the enactment of the past, the director did not use causal flashbacks, but an actual image which belongs to a deeper time-image.

[14] The film is about Taiwan puppet master Li Tian-lu's living in the Japanese colonial period (1909-1945).His own

where old Li and young Li, the real and the imagined, the past and the present, are synchronic. Two characters play the same person in a film consisting of a magical world, in which the enactment of memory is outside the narrator's consciousness, but inside the time, and thus is floating and disjointed. Li Tian-lu himself is a forking character who talks about his life as a realistic image, and as the object of enactment. These two images form a double mirror-image and reflect each other.

If the enactment is a bifurcation of time juxtaposing Li's oral narration, then the long sequence of the theater play is a bifurcation of the bifurcation, because they occupy autonomous periods, which is Li's story being mirrored on the stage. Deleuze thinks that "a theatrical spectacle (or a circus, etc.), being filmed, itself plays the role of a virtual image which would serve to extend the actual images during a sequence by succeeding them for a time, during a sequence" (83). The situation is quite different in this movie: the theater play is not the subject of representation, but coexists with enacted recollection-images and crystallizes into a circle that constitutes the same "scene" of recollection, where the character is real and plays a role of reality. But this reality is not "pure past" or "pure recollection" found in the pure potential, because the oral narrative constantly breaks down its authenticity, suggesting the distance between the present and the past and the artificiality of enactment. The scenes of the theater play, then, are not restricted to providing a sequence but become the cinematographic unity which replaces the shot or alternatively constitute a sequence shot existing in the crystal. Therefore, the scenes of the theater play reveal a division of time at a deeper level, which makes all the presents pass and extend to the past encapsulated in theater. The theater sequence has a separate cycle of time, which is both the symbol of time of its plot and the symbol of evolution of the actual image, which makes the time extended and compressed. What Hou achieves in this movie, therefore, is the multi-flowing of time from the absolute present to the virtual past and then mirrored past, juxtaposed in one film.

The Puppetmaster aims to create a new memory-image independent of flashback

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oral narrative occupies one third of the movie. This is an innovation in art: Hou let Li Tian-lu narrate his life by facing the camera, and then let the actors act it all again.

and virtual image where memory becomes an act of performance, and is constantly forming and re-forming. It is the unstable relations of these processes of formation and re-formation that link the real and the fictional, where the enactment presents the process of memory being made and imaged. They cannot be seen as “pure memories” because imagination is not recollection. This can be well explained by the dislocation between the oral narration and enactment, in which the enacted image often floats and escapes the narrative framework. For example, Li narrates that he had an extramarital affair, deeply loving a prostitute and saving her life. But the enactment omits those specific plots and only presents their daily details such as eating, walking and saying farewell when the wind blows her dress. The same scene appears at the end of the film, where Li talks about witnessing misunderstanding and conflict between Japanese soldiers and local people, and the people dismantling corroded fighter planes in order to pay for the troupe that performed to celebrate the end of World War II. But the montage cuts to a group of people breaking the plane in the wilderness without any bloodshed or violence (fig.2.26). This is Hou’s usual de-dramatic mode, suggesting here a relationship between memory and representation constituting a depth of time which can be extended to history rather than exactly matching the words being spoken on screen.

2.24 A scene of folk opera in *The Puppetmaster*.

2.25 Old Li Tian-lu in *The Puppetmaster.*

2.26 People break up fighter planes in the last scene

Old Li Tian-lu is a fixed point of the present, and compared with this, all the past sheets coexist: childhood, youth, adulthood and old age, in which the montage forms the relationship between various sheets of time with the present recalling them. If the montage still plays an important role in this movie, then its meaning has changed: it is not a link of signals through complete shots, but makes up the coexisting order and the non-timing relationship in direct time-images, which connects various time

sequences and displays the surfaces in the memory-image. The past appears in the "now" by an independent, alienated and artificial form, which is active, radioactive and incredible. Here we still meet some questions: what is the meaning of such a structure of time? How does it place historical or collective memory into this?

In Deleuze's core concept, "the crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal. We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time. Cronos and not Chronos" (81), and "what we see in the crystal is time itself, the gushing forth of time. Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual" (82-83). Thinking about freedom and openness of time in film, it is also as Deleuze said:

> there is never a completed crystal; each crystal is infinite by right, in the process of being made, and is made with a seed which incorporates the environment and force it to crystallize. The question is no longer that of knowing what comes out of the crystal and how, but, on the contrary, how to get into it. For each entrance is itself a crystalline seed, a component element. (88)

Accordingly, Hou lets the geography, history and daily life into his crystal, sometimes such an entrance can be double or multiple. For example, Li's appearance is both the testimony of history and personal memories in *The Puppetmaster*; Liang-jing going into acting is both her mourning for the past and looking for the fate of women in *Good Men, Good Women*. Kuan-mei's diary is both the path of going into political trauma and a recording of family history in *A City of Sadness* (see section 4.3). In these crystals, space, open location and nature construct the depth of field, and a single crystal of unlimited growth.

2.5 Idle Period, Dailiness and Aesthetics

Hou draws attention not only to the problem of the status of the subject in the everyday - what corresponds to the "Who?" of the everyday? - but also to the question of temporality: "Nothing happens; this is the everyday" (Randall 189). But what is the meaning of this stationary movement? And why in this "nothing happens" is there at the same time the affirmation that something essential would be allowed to go on? In

Randall's sense, the "stationary movement" is central to daily time, in the constant counterbalancing of transience and endurance, sameness and difference, foreground and background, endlessness and endings (189). These features include some non-positioned relationships, i.e. the direct presentment of time. Here we no longer face the indirect time-images from movement, but the direct time-images producing movement. We no longer face the orderly time which can be disrupted by potential irregular movement, but face the "irregular" movement from disorderly long time. For this space, "empty" and "disjointed" are not the most appropriate adjectives because space is always full, and the time is also full. Deleuze thinks that:

> an empty space, without characters (or in which the characters themselves show the void) has a fullness in which there is nothing missing. Disconnected, unlinked fragments of space are the object of a specific relinkage over the gap: the absence of match is only the appearance of a linking-up which can take place in an infinite number of ways. (245)

In this sense, when the images cease to be linked together "naturally", viewers need a strong power of memory and imagination to read the potential movement of an image, bringing together the "coalescence" of the perceived with the remembered, the imagined, the known. "This is the stratigraphic condition, the reversal of the image, the corresponding act of perception which constantly connects the empty into full, right side into its reverse" (Deleuze 245). Here I want to emphasize the features in Hou's empty scenes which do not disconnect the overall space and even the characters' activity, where vibrant still life constructs a foundation of the visual image and a reading of stratigraphy. In Deleuze's words: "to read is to relink instead of link; it is to turn, and turn round, instead of to follow on the right side: a new analytic of the image" (*ibid* 245). History obtained an emotional aesthetic value that is constantly being re-segmented. The most typical scene is in *A City of Sadness*: a group of intellectuals talk about the fate of the country at a restaurant, they open the window and sing exile songs with the voiceover, then the camera cuts to an empty lens of a grey bay shrouded by fog. The connecting shot is both the emotional retention of the previous scene and, as a disjointed lens suggests, a repression and melancholy of

something else. Natural ambience extends the aesthetic power of images, and uncovers each hidden layer in historical memory and political events. This is a moment with a sense of history, which summons the past and the present, tragedy and daily life. The singing in the voice-over is an intermediary that goes through all visual images, and these images construct many cross-sections of time in accordance with the variable order of stratigraphy in the years 1931, 1937, 1945. This is Hou's comparative structure of the sound and visual images, the sound rises, time sneaks into the past, space is sunk into the stillness and pause, but is not nothingness. It is not an empty space.

Stillness, as a Form of Pure Time

A City of Sadness suggests that there are certainly many similarities, shared functions and imperceptible transitions between an empty space or landscape and a still life. But they are not the same thing; a still life cannot be confused with a landscape. In Deleuze's definition: "An empty space owes its importance above all to the absence of a possible content, whilst the still life is defined by the presence and composition of objects which are wrapped up in themselves or become their own container" (Deleuze 16). But Hou is not Ozu, there are few pillow shots in his works, but mostly open landscapes and nature such as wilderness, trees and rivers. Shots of still life such as the lanterns and oil lamps in *Flowers of Shanghai* are used to make the characters live and speak in the hazy atmosphere. Sometimes the functions of still life and landscapes overlap or are in subtle transition, which is difficult to distinguish. For example, traffic signals or the clock, and an open-air cinema in *Dust in the Wind* constitute entirely different concepts of time: the clock implies a modern, precisely measured time, the open-air cinema suggests nostalgia. But in any case, "the still life is time, for everything that change is in time, but time does not itself change, it could itself change only in another time, indefinitely" (Deleuze 17).

2.27 A still life of the tree in the rain in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*.

2.28 The last empty space in *Dust in the Wind.*

2.29 The last landscape in *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*

One of the important features of still life is that it is a coincidence of emotional stretches and duration of time, so it often appears in lyrical sequence shots. For example, in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, at 114 minutes into the film when the rickshaw takes away the ill mother, the still life of a tree in the rain lasts 20 seconds, which acts as both a continuation of sadness and emotional relief after the tension. The tree is interposed between suffering and tears of the family, life and death (fig.2.27). A similar scene appears in the ending of *Dust in the Wind,* where an 'empty' space of mountains, clouds and the sea transfer Yuan's sorrow and links the far and the near, the virtual and the actual, the world and the I (fig.2.28). At the end of *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, Gao's car suddenly falls into the paddy field, the camera cuts to a long shot, where a stationary car and the field also form the same duration, representing the unchanging form that moves, but in which the change is produced, such as night turning into dawn or the sun suppressed by clouds (fig.2.29). "This is time, time itself, 'a little time in its pure state': a direct time-image, which gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced" (Deleuze 17).

Goodbye South, *Goodbye* does not involve Deleuze's "state of any-space-whatever, or space of disconnection and vacuity" (16). Hou's spaces are not fragmented, they are complete and self-contained. Jameson thinks that Hou has populist sympathy, because he does not directly face traumatic moments and replaces the direct gaze by the landscape scene (*The Geopolitical Aesthetic* 155). I partially agree with Jameson, but would add that landscape in Hou's films is not only the transformation of emotion, but also an aesthetic concept and a distinctive perspective of seeing the world. His landscapes can be separated from the plot and form pure chronotopes, leading the audience into the images rather than the plot. The still life in

Hou's films such as shabby streets, the long road, landscapes and furniture are extended in an elongated time so that movements are depersonalized. Time is filled by change which leads the audience from one space-time to another space-time.

Deleuze thinks "as the film proceeds, the idle periods are no longer important simply for themselves but recoup the effect of something important: the shot or the line would, in this view, be extended by a quite long silence or emptiness" (14). He further emphasizes that in Japanese director Ozu there is no difference between the remarkable and the ordinary, limit-situations and banal ones, the former having an effect on, or purposely insinuating themselves into, the latter (14). Deleuze's comment on Ozu is also suitable for Hou on the surface, but not without qualification. Hou's works contain the limit-situations, but only the potential image, which is wrapped in everyday ordinariness and never has been directly demonstrated. For example, Gao in *South Goodbye, South* has extraordinary potential and passion and always pursues a passionate life, but we only see his ordinary life (see this in Section 3.4). It is this potential conflict that makes the movie a tension between harmony and fracture. Although death is represented as a sudden accident, there are some inevitable elements hidden in the event. Seemingly Hou always made films about fate and represented the trajectory of fate falling, such as the end of *South Goodbye, South* where Gao's car falls into the rice paddy. The camera cuts to a landscape of quiet morning, time seems to stand still, but nature is not portrayed as an intervention to balance the disruption of the quiet scene with the falling of the car, nor is it used to portray a re-harmonising of the usual (the quiet morning) and the unusual (the falling of the car).

Hou's natural landscape not only appears in a decisive moment, or in an apparent break of the ordinary and the extraordinary, but fills the entire atmosphere. The natural environment is a part of ordinary life in which characters and landscape combine into one, where everything is ordinary and everyday. Therefore, nature in Hou is not only used to "renew what man has broken or restores what man sees shattered" (Deleuze 15), but an individual moment of time: a state of life. When characters experience political trauma, or love fades away, there will be an empty lens

of ocean or mountains appearing in his films, sometimes from a character's perspective, and sometimes from the director's. It is Hou's way of 'healing' internal unrest and fracture. For example, the sequence shot of Yuan wandering at the seaside releases suppressed and personal grief to the boundless ocean in *Dust in the Wind*. Shots of landscapes of the sea emphasize the atmosphere of parting, confusion and sadness in *A City of Sadness*. In *All the Youthful Days*, the sea is both a nostalgic mark and a sub-text of local culture. The sea in these films shows fate, change and mental processes, as crystallized time.

2.30 An idle period in seaside *All the Youthful Days.*

2.31 A long shot of a group of people going over the bridge in *The Puppetmaster.*

2.32 Yuan sadly wanders by the in *Dust in the Wind.*

Hou's films also contain many extreme long shots combining characters and movement. Such shots form a temporal space which combines people and a universe where time is a suspended moment involving the identity of the world and the I. For example in *All the Youthful Days* Qing and his friends are immersed in the confusion of life, where the old house, the river and sunset form a harmonious world (fig.2.30). In *The Puppetmaster* a group of people go across the bridge in the valley, which then turns into mobile white dots embedded in thick green (fig.2.31). In *Dust in the Wind*, Yuan loses his boss' motorcycle and painfully wanders by the seaside, where the waves break on the beach, and Yuan is absorbed into the grey repression between the sky and the sea (fig.2.32). In these scenes, characters and things are in motion, where this movement is an extension of action in time, but the actual pictures on screen present a near-stationary sense of duration. This is a direct time-image, independent from plots becoming a kind of emotional image; a time interlude.

Moving Continuum, the Dynamics of Spatial-time

Water and its mobility are the main carriers of this kind of image. A moist atmosphere not only envelops the earth, but also extends to rivers and oceans. Hou

creates seascapes in this way to signify important consequences not only because they are related to what is important in Taiwanese cultural geography, grey daylight, for example, and the specific movement of light and shadow, but also because the visual image tends to go beyond its stratigraphic or "archaeological" values towards a peaceful confluence of river and sea standing for the eternal. These scenes not only make viewers face towards the earth or the sea, but also return them to the reference of the eternal and change, that is a return to time itself by space. Hou creates the illusion by sometimes using ships, so that the sea, on which these ships ride, is a sequel of time, back to the past in memory. For example in *Three Times*[15] there is a scene of the man going through southern Taiwan by steamer searching for his lover. The focus of the camera moves from the character to the boat, then to the blue sea and the rolling waves, then to moving signposts, evoking the rhythm of the 1960s. This uniqueness of visual images brings the oceans, land and mountains together in a movement open to nature, and turns it into a dynamic flowing image, very distinctive in Hou's work, where dynamic water, whether the ocean, rivers, or rain, are used as metaphors of time passing, into which characters' action disappear, and become a part of the landscape.

Occupying the trip/ballad[16] are Hou's long takes of the train journey, boat trip, moving car and speeding motorcycles, in which the action image disappears and is replaced by visual and auditory images, which then become a duration of sequence shots. They involve capturing an ordinary moment and perception in everyday life. The characters are wandering and living in the gap of the action that is in reality an everyday state. Accompanying the wandering of characters is a direct time no longer dependent on the action.

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[15] *Three Times* was made in 2005, it features three chronologically separate stories of love between May and Chen, set in 1911, 1966 and 2005, using the same lead actors, Shu Qi and Chang Chen. These three stories are *A Time for Love*, *A Time for Freedom* and *A Time for Youth*. The first two stories have a strong sense of nostalgia, the last one focuses on alienation and broken emotions amongst youth in contemporary Taipei. The scene mentioned here is in *A Time for Love*, where the hero looks for his lover on a small steamer going through the south of Taiwan.

[16] Many of Hou's works borrow a trip/ballad form, i.e. a train journey, steamer, car trip, a journey by motorcycle or on foot: small trains make many round trips between the urban and the rural, differentjourneys occur between the south and Taipei,;a grandmother seeks to find a road back to the mainland,;a young man's jaunt...but the object is everyday banality taken as family life in an era of turmoil.


2.33 A moving sequence shot of the train going through the cave in *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*


2.34 The vision of landscape slowly expanding.


2.35 The vision goes into the depth of field following the movement of the train.

So, for example, Hou uses a long take of a train going through a cave in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (and similarly in other movies) (see figs.2.33-2.35), where the space slowly moves toward viewers by the moving depth of field, coercing them into this particular chronotope. Time expands following the expansion of space, and this space is always in the time. These scenes of moving scenery have a function of forming images and absorbing both potential and real time. So, what does this time mean? As a variation of a long take, the function of the depth is not only to keep the integrity of the space, but also to make the unbridled depth belong to time and no longer to space. As Deleuze said, this function of depth "is irreducible to the dimensions of space. As long as depth remained caught in the simple succession of parallel planes, it already represented time, but in an indirect way which kept it subordinate to space and movement" (108). This sequence is also an interlude, which represents the passage of time by indirect (spatial) form, it is both independent and connects the potential atmosphere of the film, such as nostalgia and break. Sometimes, this interlude also directly reflects the time, such as in *Dust in the Wind*, where Yuan grievously cries when he is told that Yun has married another man, and then the film inserts a long take of landscape, where a jute grove at sundown slowly sinks into darkness. It is a bleak symbol of time, an ending position, which includes the sad chant of youth and love. Here the idle period sublimates personal time and a pure state rather than only making a simple spatial compensation to soothe emotional tension. For the director, it is a moment to mitigate individual trauma from the potential turning point of fate. This moment has a permanent significance, which links a bigger world going beyond individual grief. But this does not mean "nothing", and Hou does not represent

religious concepts of the sort of afterlife or eternal life requiring a transcendent perspective of suffering in the here and now, in a sure way. He just creates a unique extension of the visual sign: “to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound” (Deleuze 18).

A Silent Energy

In Hou’s landscapes signifying the empty and filled with still life, time and space are in a never-ending continuation. One and the same horizon links the cosmic to the everyday, the durable to the changing: one single and identical time as the unchanging form of that which changes. Paul Schrader thinks that nature or stasis is defined as the form that links the everyday in “something unified and permanent” (qtd. in Deleuze 17). In ordinary life, natural space is a part of the personal life of the material, but also a part of the spirit. Empty spaces or blanks enable time to linger in the still life or landscape, these images (still life, empty space and landscape) restrain the movement, and rediscover the energy of the fixed shot. This energy not only releases cultural and aesthetic elements, but more importantly, it gives the scene a direct penetration, creating a pure rhythm of time. Deleuze writes,

> In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought. (17)

Tarkovsky also thinks that the cinematographer succeeds in fixing time in its indices (in its signs) perceptible by the senses (qtd. in Deleuze 42). This means that the signs must be open directly to the time, and thus space will become temporal. Hou develops two directions in this approach: one is to uncover the everyday ordinary time and make it profound; the other is to construct a kind of temporal space in which the space not only includes cultural sub-texts, but also historical ones. This involves another important dimension in Hou’s films where landscapes are portrayed as usual, ordinary things like nature, islands, factories and family houses, but portrayed too with some kind of strong oppression from the outside world. Put into the background

of time, they can represent the topography of history (my main concern in the next chapter).

The aesthetic responses which arise in Hou's films, such as that coming from his use of the everyday, involve alternative forms of knowing; of experience. Bergson sees art as revealing the individual to him or herself; the novelist who challenges the conventions of "spatialised" language, he says, "has brought us back into our own presence" (134). Bergson's discussion is focused on fiction, but as I have sought to show here, film, and especially Hou's films, goes further in challenging spatial language. Hou, creates rhythms in space and time rather than simply telling stories. Idle periods in Hou's films represent features and energy of philosophy and aesthetics by their spatial-time form. In short, in Hou's hands they do not simply emphasize the triviality of everyday life or emotional duration, but release a "silent energy" within the films themselves, which creates a tension of narration, freeing daily scenes from simple representations and turning them into an important aesthetic mode. It is especially in the contrast between the alternating rhythms created by the energy of the slow movement of daily life and the outside turmoil placed in the unremarkable, crumbling environment of Taiwan which is most profoundly articulated in his movies, giving them all a unique, otherworldly quality. Although they are realistic, these films produce an aura around a single image that makes them appear to be out of time.

To bring this chapter to a close, then, my analysis here, of the mode of personal time constructed in Hou's films has been based on Deleuze's theory of the time-image. I have sought to demonstrate that Hou develops two directions in his approach to time: one is to uncover everyday ordinary time and imbue it with historical meaning; the second is to construct an everyday temporal space. By means of bifurcation, compression, crystallization and circulation, time, for Hou, no longer follows the causality of plot, but intertwines with daily trifles. It is this intertwined system that constitutes a situational reality - the reality of the individual life time. The situation is no longer enslaved to the layout of official time, but its own internal meaning: where life time connects repetition and memory, where people's words and gestures tend to be timeless, where the representation of personal time is paramount. When I have

talked of time in Hou's films I have inevitably also raised the issue of space. I turn now to a more detailed examination of Hou's poetics and politics of space in his films.

CHAPTER 3

Remapping Taiwan: Space as a Time Monument

I draw in black, but I gaze at the blank.

– Pan Tien-shou

People do not live in places but in the description of places.

– Wallace Stevens

In *Of Other Spaces* (1984), Michel Foucault argues that space is winning over history in contemporary culture.[17] A similar position was expressed by Fredric Jameson, whose essay 'The End of Temporality' (2003) poses the question: "after the end of history, what?" The answer increasingly appears to be spatial alternatives.[18] For Jameson, this shift in thinking is a consequence of the end of colonialism which brought together people, who previously lived in, metaphorically speaking, different time zones, into one space (700-1). Foucault and Jameson also indirectly point to the importance of film and moving image in a wider sense as a perfect embodiment of Bakhtin's chronotope, thereby bridging time-oriented modernism and space-obsessed postmodernism.

Deleuze used the term "deterritorialization" (1987) to discuss this sort of spatial politics signifying a post-modern way of life that is nomadic and diasporic. I analyze

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[17] Foucault thinks the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle; themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world, where the nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics, an epoch of simultaneity. We are currently in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. "Des Espace Autres" Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuite*, 1984, 229.

[18] Jameson's dictum that time was the dominant of the modern (or of modernism) and space of the postmodern means something thematic and empirical all at once: what we do, according to the newspapers and the Amazon statistics, and what we call what we are doing. I don't see how we can avoid identifying an epochal change here, and it affects investments (art galleries, building commissions) as much as the more ethereal things also called values. in *Critical Inquiry*, The University of Chicago Press, 2012. Vol.29, No.4 (Summer 2003) pp 695-718.

Hou's films from this perspective in this chapter, most especially to highlight his very distinctive poetics of spatiality by looking at the chief characteristics of spatial representation in those of Hou's rural films and later urban films which are concerned with historicizing the transformative forces of urbanization as they impact on people's daily lives. In these films, I explore the various ways that Hou presents the "crisis of choice" people face in the wake of this urbanization and modernization, and the ensuing chaos and unrest at the deterritorialized nexus that affects them. In so doing, I examine his treatment of not only the contradictions and paradoxes in city-life, but also how the city fundamentally changes the rural, and affects the human sense of displacement and belonging. I look at the way he seeks to capture the migrant workers' plight in the city, and their experience transiting from the rural to the city, especially in the transformations consequent to urbanization and the rural moves towards dis-integration. I further examine the way Hou focuses on presenting the city as complex, magical and unpredictable. And I am further interested in the way that landscape in Hou's films conveys an emotional gaze towards the rural but in doing so does not offer a romantic nostalgia for the past. I am equally interested in the way that the spiritual texture of the films suggests that both the city and the rural are not portrayed by Hou as ideal destinations, indicating that there is no romanticized homeland for modern people, but, as I propose here, what there is an important national space specifically informed by Hou's own border vision.

I am, therefore, interested in the way that Hou portrays the sort of spatial transformations in urbanization which firstly leads to the loss of ordinary spaces, and then to a continuous displacement in urban life. Thus dis-integrated rural people in cities endure the multiple experience of a rootless displacement. I am further interested in the way that Hou's later works are full of supplementary spaces that metaphorize fragmental post-modern life, ultimately leading to a placelessness of space (Edward Relph 1976), while the nostalgia for the countryside, as seen in his film *Millennium Mambo* (2001), for example, becomes a signifier of nothingness. As the represented subject is outside of the city, space must be formed in what Williams has called the "border vision" (1973). Although "border vision" is a literary concept

for Williams, I want to show that it has significant purchase for Hou's takes on the urban space in his films. In addressing the city from the outsiders' perspective, that takes give Hou's cities a strong sense of alienation in the midst of a confused atmosphere. I argue that this marks out both his cinematic limitation and breakthrough as a film auteur because it precisely constructs a group's life history, as well as a complete and clear development of the city during urbanization.

Hou's representation and use of "landscape", "the rural" and "urban space", are important here. Consequently I interrogate those of his films that use the city and countryside as a physical territory, a living place, an unspoken character, or a symbolic presence. This interrogation yields not only a gallery of "pictures" that portray the many faces or terrains of the rural and urban - but also a whole new vocabulary of the land that describes it equally as urban, rural, agrarian, countryside, homeland, backdrop, and landscape. Through this analysis of landscape I seek to demonstrate the viability of Hou's cinema as a benchmark of Taiwanese national identity by his bringing into critical focus the very space the rural and urban occupies. Whether this space is figured as idyllic or troubled, mythological or historical, obsolete or perennial, it offers its own rich medium through which to enunciate "the national". What he shows, and uses in his re-defining of the national, is the unfolding urban, agricultural and rural landscape in front of the camera. A rural landscape, in particular, that has nearly ceased to exist around many villages in Taiwan. I am therefore particularly interested in the transition of the idea of "landscape" from being understood simply as a noun to a much more nuanced understanding of its use as a verb in Hou's films. I show how landscape is not only an object to be seen or a text to be read, but also a process by which social and subjective identities are formed. With W.J.T Mitchell I "ask not just what landscape 'is' or 'means' but what it does, how it works as a cultural practice" (Mitchell 1), most especially in the various spaces, city, rural, open and borders, that Hou concerns himself with.

Barbara Mennel thinks "the city as a site of invention and innovation had defined labor as modern and industrialized in a capitalist system in contrast to rural, traditional, and premodern subsistence labor" (131). Georg Simmel noted that in

contrast to the quiet life in rural communities characterized by social networks, kinship, and family, the metropolis produced quickly changing impressions on individuals (174-175). Discontinuity and fragmentation characterized city life, where actions and events assaulted individual inhabitants actively and unexpectedly. This shift at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century created a radical rupture of the "sensory foundations of psychic life" and created a new kind of "sensory mental imagery" (Simmel 175).

Simmel further described the effect of the modern metropolis on subjectivity in a combination of imagery and sensory perception, motion and stimuli, a combination that encapsulates the potential of the medium of film to express the characteristics of the city. Williams proposes that the idea of the country is paradigmatically associated with "childhood" (297). And thus the individual story of rural films, for example, represents the history of humankind, outlined by Simmel as a shift from rural to urban. The metropolis is also defined by Simmel as a place of money economy, which for him goes hand-in-hand with the metropolitan rationality that redefines human relationships in terms of exchange value and turns all action in the metropolis into "production for the market" (Simmel 176). The potentially alienating effect of the metropolis necessitates that the metropolitan character reacts with "his head instead of his heart" (*ibid* 176). In order to be most efficient and highly productive, according to Simmel, cities display the "highest economic division of labor" (182).

Emphasizing that division of labor is reflected in many films that depict differentiated professions, showing a city in which the class relationships are expressed through its spatial compositions. As Barbara Mennel wrote:

> The owners of the means of production live and socialize in spacious offices, gardens, and a sports arena, all of which are elevated, while the workers of Metropolis live below the surface with no access to light, art, or nature, and are reduced to their functions in a differentiated workplace. (27)

To what extent, then, does Hou reflect these issues and in what ways, do his films engage with those rural and city spaces which differentiate peoples' lives and aspirations; their pressures and dreams? To what extent is the distinction between

rural and urban a significant one for Hou in his works? Is that distinction as Williams suggests, one where “pressures are subjected from within a system of living, itself now thoroughly part of a wider system”, where “there is no simple case of an internal ruralism and an external urbanism” (Williams 209)? In what ways does Hou show a world which is much more about a unified vision of reality rather than an alienating vision that pits the rural against the urban and the urban against itself? In what ways does Hou depict cities like Taipei and Kaohsiung, and the city experience of such places in his films, as representative of the fast-paced changes and transformations of the daily formation of the history of the worlds he is portraying? Finally, to what extent does Hou critically engage with the ideological rhetoric of urban and rural life and their changing daily realities as he unfolds in his films the way that people move between the rural, urban and border spaces he is so interested in, and with all these questions in mind, to consider just what constitutes his very distinctive poetics of spatiality in his films?

3.1 Open Space

Michel de Certeau defines the space of living in this way: “a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (117). In de Certeau’s sense, space is a place of practice (117). Accordingly he considers that an act of film is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a filmed text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs. This then suggests that we have to think about a possible transformation - from real space to seen space by representational means. For this, Jameson has a direct opinion: “all films, no doubt, register and record space; but we have to insert the specificity of the visual, by rewriting space as seen space, by translating the larger category imperceptibly back into this or that notion of the image” (149). This means that space in the cinema is not merely a view, but also a way of seeing, which creates and engages a characteristic emotional context, or is set in a context of spectatorship. For example, the mise-en-scene of the urban milieu can express a strong sense of claustrophobia: compressed and clogged with the detritus of

city life (telephone and electrical cables, traffic lights etc.). Urban space may therefore delimit, rather than amplify, opportunities for growth. Conversely, the mise-en-scene of the rural milieu, with its open, uncluttered vistas of big sky and expansive terrain, may also suggest a nostalgic cultural memory.

To talk about the space in Hou's films means to undoubtedly first think of the landscapes and the large number of often beautiful locations in long shots or establishing shots, which are dominant in his films. Even when presenting an interior, the composition is still open, relying on the windows and thresholds to bring the vast natural world into the movie. This unity of inside and outside provides a very eastern way of viewing and perception. Western audiences may question why these long takes repeatedly appear in his films. For example: an everyday panorama of family members sitting around the table to eat, meanwhile there are one or two people (kids or a dog) moving in the background; or old people and women sitting and chatting in the shade while there are children playing in the foreground, and two sailboats passing by on the quiet river in the background, blurring the limitation between inside and outside.

Such pictures appear on the screen almost every few minutes in Hou's films, where there are no close-ranges and close-ups. This sense of distance between seeing and seen is a particularly eastern aesthetic sentiment expressed by Hou. Such distance creates a harmonious and balanced relationship between the world and people. The tension of the composition comes not from tragic conflict, but is rather diverse and poetic creating a centrifugal space, a spatial density, and an emotional time where each single picture is a fragment of a pre-existing reality. This density blurs the boundary between external and internal space, where it becomes difficult to detach plots and figures from such space.

Western aesthetics often regards space as a hollow container for objects, which may signify the interval necessarily existing between two entities - space as spacing (Bordwell 103). The concept of space in Hou's works is both space and time (since both can be conceived in terms of intervals). Towns and villages are often registered in their vernacular, unmonumental aspects, through specifically named streets, houses,

or courtyards, where these spaces give everyday life, houses, corners, small stations, outdoor cinemas and streets for example, cannot be distinguished from private life, but link private and public space. It is rare to see closed house spaces shot from the outside to inside in Hou's films. He often places the camera inside the house or the room and shots the scene from inside to outside, across the threshold linking up the outside and the inside. As a child Hou said that he was fascinated with doorways and windows because they open onto tempting vistas (Hou 21). As so often in his films, the camera looks out from inside letting darkened rooms frame a teeming world beyond the threshold. This is an eastern way of dealing with the space in which the private space is truly open to nature and the wider world. These spaces are not for gazing on, but to signify the wholeness of ordinary life

As to the arrangement of the space of the house, Li Tian-lu's wedding scene in *The Puppetmaster* is a good example of the way Hou works. Here people are placed in the foreground, middle-ground and background, where they move from the house to the yard and extend to the street (figs.3.1-3.3). This process provides a contemplative way of showing that Li is accepted by the family - this shot must do duty for the wedding ceremony we won't see - and the shot will have a parallel in the later scene where Li and his family take refuge in a coffin shop on the eve of war ending, when his children set off firecrackers outside.

3.1 Li's wedding scene in *The Puppetmaster.*

3.2 Figures' movement from background to foreground.

3.3 Thresholds and a column balance the frame.

Bordwell thinks that:

> the shot initially seems to have no subject, so its many centers of activity dawn gradually. Thanks to blocking and clearing, centering and decentering, and subtly layered light and color, the shot traces a zigzag progress from one aperture, beginning and ending with the world in the

street beyond. (210)

Bordwell focuses on Hou's mise-en-scene, and notes the conscious link between the inside and the outside: "Hou's master shots sustained focus on the furniture, utensils, and hand props, often thrown into 'semidarkness' or including windows opening onto still more dense zones; and closer views open to the injection of stray details" (208). With this in mind I want to emphasize that Hou creates a distinctive approach to visual design: the columns are arranged on the diagonal which balance bilateral symmetry on the vertical axis; flowing elements appear in the background to obstruct the sight and form the depth of field, meanwhile the frame introduces graphic crowding and density. The camera's movements are from the inside to the outside and then back - from the house to the yard, from the yard to the immediate environment, from there to the field and the outdoor expanses and vice versa - emphasizing the contact between the private space and the open outdoor.

Similarly doors or windows are added in order to extend the view, while interiors and exteriors extend across from windows such as in *A Summer at Grandpa's* where people overlook the town's landscape from inside - these are matched in the synthetic editing of what are, in fact, different parts of the town. An intricate binding of planes via figure and camera movement across windows or thresholds is also afforded by depth-of-field cinematography, itself seemingly prompted by the location's conditions. At dawn, the doors and windows of houses and courtyards are opened and remain open. Without the barrier to block the town's sounds and sights - chatting voices and cicadas - these are brought indoors while exposing to neighbors the goings-on in the home and yard. Hou amplifies such detail. When doors and windows do close in the films of the Taiwan Trilogy, for example, it is in a moment of crisis, when the family is cut off from the community or suffering political violence. The vernacular local architecture, the light and weather by which it is seen, as well as the pre-industrial economy and tightly interlaced community that goes along with it are all taken up by Hou's camera.

The house in Hou's films is no longer a closed private space, but a junction where the current and the historical, the individual stories and the unity that binds them to

each other intersect. The house is perceived as a place where past and present, idyll and trauma, as well as family and nation, meet. Therefore, a person who has lost his/her house has also lost family and country. In a society that has been deprived of its national symbols, the house, like the village, the land, and the family, serves as a symbol that incorporates the various social and personal identities into the national identity and transfers them from relics of the past to present entities. The house signifies what no longer exists (the idyllic past, as well as its disintegration) and transforms it into something that does exist (and that has been revived in the present). Thus, like other symbols, "it enables the construction of the homeland within exile, granting a sense of people-hood and tradition from the distance and out of estrangement" (Said 359).

In *A City of Sadness,* for example, spaces occupied by the Lin family change through the crisscrossed planes of the shot. Variants of this camera position register stages of the family's changing. Hou recycles a camera setup to provide just-noticeable differences in setting or character presence, evoking a spatial memory of the Lin family's home, the hospital, and other locales, reflecting lived history through the ways in which a constant space shelters lived change (figs3.4-3.6). In *A Summer at Grandpa's*, Hou firstly depicts a Japanese-style house, where full shots present zigzag spaces and gridded walls, but overall in the film he presents variants of a technique of point-of-view shots to show the crisscrossing interiors and crowded village houses standing in rich contrast with the broad river, trees, and rail corridor (figs. 3.7-3.8).

3.4. *A City of Sadness*

3.5. *A City of Sadness*

3.6. *A City of Sadness*



3.7 An interior in *A Summer at Grandpa's.* 3.8 A location in *A Summer at Grandpa's.* 3.9 A panorama in *A Summer at Grandpa's.*

Similarly *All the Youthful Days* juxtaposes the byways of Fengkui with the seafront, then shows the jammed streets and vertically stacked open-faced apartments of Kaohsiung (figs. 3.10-3.12).



3.10 An establishing shot in *All the Youthful Days.* 3.11 The depth of field in *All the Youthful Days.* 3.12 The location of Kaohsiung in *All the Youthful Days.*

Hou's sense of location as controlled and contained space correlates to this conception of narrative and image. It is applied to exploit the architectural space of small towns but it is also at work, most daringly, in the use of exterior natural spaces. Interiors so often incorporate adjacent spaces, where exterior spaces are quite open and always break through the restriction in the enclosed film frame. From this, the camera grasps both interiors and exteriors and takes them as homologous participants into the molding of cinematic space. In the desire for the perfectly controlled mise-en-scene, Hou thus defines the heterogeneity of the location and, as in *All the Youthful Days*, for example, the contingent moods of the sea.

Hou's aspiration to photographic imprinting of what has really been and the semi-documentary film project are altogether permeated by Hou's elaborate control of the landscape. This is neither nature nor the illusion of nature caught in the raw but a landscape manifestly yielding to a dominating artistic will; to a vision that grasps it as material for its own use in a narrative style. The accumulative effect of exterior and traveling shots delineates the topography's near and distant parts as interlocked spaces.

The dialectic of exterior and interior, open and closed, of static camera movement that would seem to draw out multiple possibilities at every turn, vis-a-vis orchestrated control at every part of the shot - all of these inform Hou's cinematographic consciousness. Bordwell thinks that Hou's new cinema abandoned the anamorphic ratio, but the 1.85 format afforded him many opportunities to present a teeming lateral space (211). According to Bordwell, the lateral space is not only the "exhilarating variants of the technique" (211), but also a rich visual layer which teases us toward certain zones of activity.

In a way, Hou breaches filmic borders and progresses towards open spaces in long takes and slow pans, in camera sweeps across and up, and in takes that span people and places. And they do so in a flowing stream, using invisible editing, or the eye of the camera that passes over minute details: a little child tottering through the street (*All the Youthful Days*), a bough of a tree and a pole lying on the ground (*The Time to live and the Time to Die*). The entire space has been taken by the camera from the house to the courtyard, from the courtyard to the garden, and from the garden to the field that lies beyond. These sites are separated from each other, but the poetic camera creates a flow between them and, in so doing, also creates a link between people and nature and between closed and open. Open spaces bring a nostalgic feeling for specific features of the landscape, and weaves them into one harmonious whole. In doing so, Hou turns the cramped space into an infinite one, connecting house and village with the whole nation and integrating them into a whole harmonious space - a spacious (is)land. In this way, Hou's films try to reconstruct a natural wholeness as a site of nostalgia and yearning.

Hou is good at linking a special small site and a large place to represent the entire homeland in an idea of creating completeness. The landscapes therefore, allow the film to trace what is disappearing, expanding it, moreover, across a large life space for a long stretch of time. This ubiquitous natural landscape in Hou's cinema suggests an open, fluid spatial texture which contains nature and the drifting of one space from another. This is the typical Taiwanese experience - life on an island set adrift by historical and political forces - where this experience is lived inadvertently,

indistinctly, and as part of a spectrum of many diverse meanings. The minute details of everyday life constitute a way of clinging on to place and even grants permanency and stability to a Taiwanese identity that is still to be defined in "full". Therefore, there is an inherent unity in the endeavor of these films to form a complete imaginary map of what it is to be both Taiwan and Taiwanese. Hou attempts to capture limited space, to elevate the camera in order to encompass open expanses, or to highlight a specific detail and turn it into a symbol of wholeness. This process is presented in all his full-length films, whether rural or urban.

The Taiwanese Experience

The sense of space is not an abstraction - it is something which is seen, and felt: earth, water, plants, animals, human labor, monuments, and above all people, who continue the dreams and works of their predecessors. The ship, the train, fishing village, a mining area, small towns and cities emerge in different scenes in various films as Hou abandons his limited point of view, from which the landscape seems fragmented and dim, and shoots the scenery in its entirety. These films, for example *All the Youthful Days*, *Dust in the Wind*, *A Summer at Grandpa's*, and *Goodbye South, Goodbye* are more like the director's private journeys, touring his own Taiwan, from space to time. He also draws a blurred image of the map of the land in its length and breadth, thus conveying the organic connection with the landscape and control over it.

Spaces and locations often unfold in a series of concrete places. Almost each film has a different real site - a fishing village, a mining area, city (Taipei, Kaohsiung) and some small towns. Therefore, different selections are made of spatial types like a sequence of photography in an album which emphasizes each locale's unique identity putting the burden upon the individual to respond to an unpredictable situation. Such selections also suggest that between concrete places there exists a fundamental discontinuity and instability. Hou tends to represent transitions, margins, and mobility, or "borders", which are not of one place or of another.

Exteriors offered by the cinematic equivalent of the landscape are clearly familiar, with the pan, the freezing frame and deep-focus lens combining to produce an "ideal" panoramic view of a rural space that suggests an aesthetic capturing of nature, as

opposed to a being within it, that turns scene into scenery and nature into landscape. This stands in contrast to the panoramic view of the landscape - with its wide pan and deep focus, and equally, the "alienated gaze" characteristic of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Chinese landscape painting (see Eisenstein 354), in which the perspective offered from an elevated position atop a mountain or hillside provides a lofty, faraway gaze upon nature and figures positioned way down below, compared to the genre of the traditional scroll in which the gaze of the artist was at eye level, looking at the scenery, with the action seemingly from the immediate sidelines.

For the long shot, the camera is always at a distance, often in some inconvenient observation point from where one can only see a large space containing obscure figures. However, this means that it is not only alienated and distant; it is also the view of one who clings to all of the details - the sensuous, the concrete, the minute - of the reality being described. This is the view of one who can no longer enter the filmed image and therefore remains outside of it as an observer. This is particularly demonstrated in the representation of the rural in Hou's cinema - the landscape of the countryside - and can be said not only to take us toward but also to take us away from the land. The rural landscape is shown to us and makes us close to the rural, however, once the natural relationship with the land is severed, the imagined one can begin to take form. This potency is described at length by Simon Schama, who contends that: "before it can ever be a repose for the scene, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock" (18).

This leads me to one of the main characteristics of Hou's rural cinema: its connection to a way of life and past traditions. This connection is usually represented by means of narratives structured upon the performances of daily chores and rural observances and customs. One important feature that provides such structure both to the lives of the rural community and to the film itself is the cycle in which the agricultural community has disintegrated. Those are the chores and everyday rhythms depicted on screen by film interested in the connection to the secular life or its echo - both in their performance and placement in the narrative - the symbol of the seasons, natural atmosphere (rain, the wind, plants and the sea), of reproduction (birth, death,

rebirth), and of journeys (departures and returns). But these films themselves are not organized by Hou in simple cycles of the farmers' life such as the diurnal (showing action from dawn to dusk), seasonal (showing the activities on the farm from spring through to winter) or agricultural labor (sowing and harvest). Hou's approach is different from that of traditional rural films that tend to the depiction of agricultural life, because he presents disintegration and transformation of the rural community. Therefore, between spaces, he shows urban space appearing as the contrast to the rural and the border space (e.g. small towns).

For example, repeated images of small trains in some of Hou's films effectively transforms the natural countryside into a kind of extended suburban space; one in which the survival of more traditional agricultural villages is nonetheless sublated and somehow modified by their linked association in an intricate web and the maps of electric trains that lead into the cities. The flowing image of small trains indeed has become a new logo in the camerawork of Hou's films. In almost all his films, the shot of the empty station and the sound of the train in the distance end up articulating the narrative and tend to stand as signs or shorthand for mutations in an event. Hou's depiction of open space constructs a holistic Taiwanese geopolitical aesthetics. Indeed, it is as Fowler and Helfield think, that underlying all rural cinema is a contemporary consciousness that complicates yet also specializes in its apparent attachment to the past, while at the same time drawing it nearer to the concerns of urban cinema:

> the expression of ongoing conflicts within a rapidly changing society or culture and the need to maintain a connection to a pure cultural or national identity, lost through urban assimilation and the dissipation or abandonment of traditions and rituals that in the rural context had kept this identity alive. (2)

Even where something is deemed anachronistic or could be dismissed as folklore, rural representation frequently plays important roles in Hou's films. Such representation acts not only as a sub-text of the culture but also as a kind of archival entity that serves to build a rural life history containing each stage of mobility and disintegration. The three most prominent features shared in Hou's rural cinema are the

transformation of the land/identity in a change of era; the connection to the change of a way of life and cultural traditions associated with both the identity and the past. As such, the films function "as a hub that allows for the intersection of various complex sociopolitical and ideological issues and conflicts" (Fowler and Helfield 5).

Hou's cinematic representation of the rural milieu reveals the nation's past situation, meanwhile the same representation reveals the nation's future condition - that is to say, the degree to which the nation acknowledges and embraces modernity. Hou's depiction of the past points to a nation's secular life and its holistic displacement in the time (history) and nostalgia for its values, ideals, and comforts. On the surface, the rural-agrarian milieu itself represents a closed, secure world, but in the process of modernization, disruptive elements from the outside world intrude into the rural world where the sense of belonging, of community and collectivity are replaced by a sense of alienation and depersonalization - two key hazards of modern, urban-industrial life.

In some cases, the strong connection in rural cinema between the rural inhabitants, the land, and nature has the effect of "naturalizing" national identity, which is in fact an ideological and sociopolitical construction (Fowler and Helfield 11). "Homeland" is a familiar phrase in discussions of the nation and the national. Critical and theoretical work on this subject has tended to place the emphasis almost entirely upon the "home" rather than on the "land" (*ibid* 11). As such, as noted by Morley and Robins, the concept of home(land) has therefore become an expression of "the national," without any actual ties to a specific nation or national territory" (2-3). And yet, this idea of a metaphoric, rather than geographically or territorially specific, homeland does not account for films in which expressions of "the national" indeed are still very much tied to specific places. This is particularly true of rural cinema, in which the iconography of the land and of the rural way of life have very strong ties to "the national". However, here I would like to emphasize that Hou's representation of nationality is not an ideologizing stance but a cultural quality he creates through space where the city is neither absent nor in opposition to the rural, but juxtaposed as a displacement of the rural. In his later urban films, as I show further in this chapter,

places are no longer the clear supports of identity, but give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of postmodern cultural sets.

3.2 Landscape: the Space of Temporality

In one of its everyday usages, the term "landscape" signifies the specific arrangement or pattern of "things on the land":

> trees, meadows, buildings, streets, factories, open spaces and so forth. A bit more technically, "landscape" refers to the look or the style of the land: that is, it refers not just to house types, tree and meadow arrangements, or the order or make-up of a place, but the social or cultural significance of this order or make-up. (Meinig 3)

But more tellingly, perhaps, Landscape, in Mitchell's sense,

> is a medium not only for expressing value but also for expressing meaning, for communication between persons - most radically, for communication between the Human and non-Human. Landscape mediates the cultural and natural, or "man" and "nature", as eighteenth-century theorists would say. (15)

Mitchell emphasizes that "the landscape as the medium and the form of representation, is both an art and a complex system of meaning" (2), which echoes Jan Penrose's notion that "landscape is an emotional space: human beings may respond to the latent material and emotional qualities wherever they encounter them but they only begin to harness these when they transform space into places and territories" (3: 279).

Nature goes into art and becomes the landscape. But whether in painting or in early silent films, the primary function of nature has tended to be as background and setting, where the landscape is then conceived of as a paradigmatic site of individual experiences. This means that nature has to go through a selection process by artists to become a specifically depicted landscape. Landscape thus is often symbolic, and frequently contributes to social formation, impacting upon human associations and societal norms. In some dramatic films, the landscape is an illusionistic space where, as Graeme Harper suggests, "invented features are foregrounded and the topographical is secondary to the evocative, the relationship between individual or

group disposition and landscape depiction is even further heightened" (16). But, as Noe Steimatsky thinks, "the filmed location is really not a landscape painting, not a still photograph. As moving image, the earth seems to heave and pulsate like a corporeal presence, an immanence waiting to unfold" (169). In Steimatsky's sense, such manipulable landscape still has the power to transform our sense of orientation, dimension and depth (169). This can then be used to give a certain degree of relevance to the landscape, or at least to find a backdrop that lends itself to either give importance to the psychological characteristics of the characters, or to provide a context which increases the drama of the plot. Apart from these considerations, most film production tends to depend on creating landscapes which are exotic or have great natural beauty. Nature, seen in this way, through a medium as powerful as cinema, seems to be easily converted into landscape that is modified by human perception.

Bela Balazs has eloquently described just such reciprocity between the landscape and human physiognomy, between the look and its objects in the cinema:

> the film, like the painting, thus offers the possibility of giving the background, the surroundings, a physiognomy no less intense than the faces of the characters...It is as though the countryside were suddenly lifting its veil and showing its face, and on the face an expression which we recognize though we could not give it a name. (96-97)

Comparable to Balazs's formulation and more celebrated is Walter Benjamin's description of the "ceremonial character" of the aura, associated with a distant, reverential contemplation, as resting on the return look of the inanimate or natural object (188). Benjamin's descriptive term suggests a specific way of seeing in the traditional art of non-replication; that is, while landscape signifies the look of the space, it also signifies a specific way of looking at the space. As a representation of nature, Mark Roskill argues that a type of landscape painting emerged that developed in reaction to the kinds of images of the land that had been produced during the First World War. Roskill talks of the emergence of a "landscape of presence" that "evokes a world of nature lying beyond human order and control" (202). Here the elements of the landscape become a vehicle for the expression of mood and feelings that bring

"space and light into imaginative accord with one another" (202). At the same time, Roskill also suggests that "the landscape expresses the continuity of rural and peasant tradition, and great pain is taken to focus on the specificity of rural place" (203).

In general, rural images represent a pre-industrial/pre-modern or more recently, a postcolonial, appreciation of the natural beauty of the land; an association with the past as the land of the ancestors; a fear of the untamed, of the unfamiliar, the unknown; and a respect for the grandeur of the land. Rural landscape, when exploited by a filmmaker like Hou, triggers a wide range of responses like this, establishing landscape as essential to the narrative. By the same token, any definition of cinema that ignores the dimension of space fails to understand how the institution's specific qualities have always been, together with other routines and customs, distinctively dependent on particular physical geographies. Additionally, film also mediates and negotiates public senses of location and terrain. In short, as a textual form, "it shapes our vision of and insight into places, showing particular settings as sites of cinematic fiction.... Such settings are always uneven; nevertheless they come to form image maps in the minds of viewers" (Moran 225).

The landscape thus becomes a dominant, recounting predicate in some films. This recounting is private; it denotes sensibility, private feeling and private virtues; but can also be national as in Hou's films. Shinsuke Ogawa (1935-1992) once talked about Hou suggesting that Hou's films filled as they are with rain and water, allow the audience to easily identify an Asian milieu where rice is produced (*Reaping Film* 25). With an observation like this in mind, I also focus on the question of how Hou is able to maintain a natural aura and not reduce landscape to a picture postcard of an idealized nature. For Hou, as I suggested in Chapter Two, it is best answered by his creation of a sense of time in space. This sense of time contains two layers, one is the frame of the picture itself, and duration of the camera's movement within that frame; the other is his ability to create spatial changes in the development of linear time, where the landscape functions not only to invoke mood and atmosphere but also to elicit a sense of time and its relation between individual and world.

Panorama: Eisenstein's Echo of Motivation

What the experience of landscape in Hou's films underscores is the need for those spectators, for whom certain filmic shots appear analogous to landscape paintings, to rely on their pictorial culture and on the landscape sign - or gaze - in order to interpret them. This is because Hou uses the long shot to illustrate the ordinary space that invokes landscape to account for the experience we have of the place. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson think that the long shot or extreme long shot is "the framing for landscape" (191). But Martin Lefebvre argues that the long shot is an insufficient condition for the emergence of the cinematic landscape: "the first condition is elsewhere, in the spectator's gaze, which is to say, in their knowledge and their sensibility" (51). I agree with Lefebvre's view that the long shot is used in films which does not highlight the importance and independence of the landscape, but Hou, especially, combines long shots with long takes, adding time into the scene, enabling the setting to be gazed upon isolated from narrative. P. Adams Sitney suggests that the

> long shot often has an "establishing" function, locating an individual, a group, or even a municipality in a wider landscape. While it can emphasize human dominance, such as a city or a fortress capping a hill, or the massing of people and monuments, more frequently it serves to diminish the human scale. Furthermore, long shot takes on cinematic meaning in the context of other, closer shots and alternate perspectives. (108)

But if there are only infrequent or almost no close shots and close-ups at all in a particular director's films, this suggests that the director has created a unique filmic rhythm. I suggest this is true of Hou's work. Often Hou saves his cut in order to highlight such moments of intimacy within more impersonal - he uses the term, more "objective" (23) scenes. By contrast, the sustained long shot, or a cut backward to a broader view, can evoke a sense of the largest phases of narrative action. They often serve to swallow up people's petty concerns in a large rhythm of stability. Hou has said that he generally makes the long shots of landscape in the final phase of production, as he felt the need, when necessary, to counterbalance so many interior long takes (29).

His films are full of such scenes where the camera is situated in a very high and

distant position where figures are shown very small, making the space seem very open and vast. This, as I mentioned earlier, is the composition of the typical Chinese landscape scroll picture, where a panorama of landscape spreads out horizontally. The stationary camera puts the audience into this broad panorama where the centrifugal inner space breaks through the limit of the frame and extends the inner space to the outside of the screen creating unlimited off-screen space as for example in the shots featured below (figs. 3.13-3.18).

3.13 *Dust in the Wind.*

3.14 *Dust in the Wind.*

3.15 The last shot of *Dust in the Wind.*

3.16 *All the Youthful days.*

3.17 *All the Youthful Days.*

3.18 *A City of Sadness*

These scenes combine the virtual and the real, the far and the near, and create an ordered structure where there are multiple perspectives and vantage points with the absence of a single vanishing point, depth rather than flatness, the smallness of figures and objects, and vast areas of ‘empty’ spaces. Chinese classical painting involves a profound sense of time, which seeks to break through the barrier of spatial representation in order to integrate aesthetic space and time into the painting. This is another “panorama”, where the whole picture cannot be seen at once, continuously turning from one aspect of the scenery to the next one, from one episode to another, and then merges into a stream of time and space. This process of opening a scroll emphasizes the emotional atmosphere and shift of mood, rather than the documentation of the landscape. Eisenstein, for example, thinks that the classical Chinese scroll has musical features and is a visual sonata which contains dialectics of

Chinese classical philosophy - Yin and Yang, big and small, movement and stillness, river and shore (355). Eisenstein called this form of composition “echo of motivation” which distinguishes it from “repetition of motivation” in European painting (355). Moreover, another feature of this kind of scroll is that it always includes human beings, so that the landscape is never real empty (of humanity or human civilization).

Hou’s typical frame, functioning in much the same way as the classical Chinese scroll, is of figures as moving dots surrounded by the sky and trees, the sea and the beach, mountains and fog, rivers and ships. The camera and the poetic editing of these films hurdle over any obstacles along the way, burst into open nature, and construct a large space in lieu of the cloistered and cramped one where the characters actually live. The images tend to be rather diffuse, containing large areas of different tonalities that interact to evoke the sense of a bountiful and expansive nature. Such space is further expanded by the camera’s movements: changing from sky to cosmic, panning or tracking across landscapes, or contemplating the characters, showing a moving steamer or a traveling car, as they pass from the right side of the frame to the left. The shots are taken from various ranges - from medium to long shots and extreme long shots. The accumulation of such shots creates a harmonious space in which the near at hand is a part of the distant, and the high, like the birds in the sky, touches the low, such as people on the ground.

Hou clearly enjoys the charm and essence of Chinese classical philosophy and its aesthetic - the harmony between nature and humanity, expressed so often in painting. In terms of his camerawork, Hou shapes his scenes of landscape by re-purposing the long lens, while he spreads details across the anamorphic frame and then engages in a delicate play of balance and counterbalance. But emphasizing the aesthetic characters of such landscapes is not enough to explain the fuller meaning and value of landscapes in Hou’s films.

In some cases, the landscape can be deceiving, especially in those seemingly idyllic movies (not Hou’s) in which the rural landscape is arranged to cover the truth of real rural life. Nostalgia becomes an abusive form of offering misleading redemption in such films where a spectator can lose their actual relationship with the

land depicted. Unlike Hou's films, the rural as presented in the landscapes of such films is almost always empty of people. There are few or no depictions at all of the characters' relationship with the land, and often no sense of what difficulties and benefits that relationship might entail. "The beautiful is chosen over the ugly, the pleasure of landscape over the trials and challenges of working the land. Landscapes in there are controlled, peaceful, unthreatening" (Cardwell 26).

In contrast, Hou's landscape is not committed to representing a nostalgic utopia, but is realistic and includes people. The human being is an essential part in which the hardships of living and the beautiful landscape are intertwined with each other. Beautiful scenery for Hou is as ordinary as the suffering of life is ordinary. In a similar vein, Raymond Williams writing long before Hou started making films, thinks that "a working countryside is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation" (120). In order to represent the disintegration of rural communities, Hou shows rural society in transition where the landscape is pre-existed as the representation of the rural and is not separate from it or distinct from it. Hou particularly calls into question the fixity of ideas of time and space, giving consideration to the nature of filmic landscapes showing a widening of the divide between urban and rural, based on a clash between the time of history and the space of change. These images contain time within itself, a sort of messianic-like moment of stillness in the flow of time, arresting thought and allowing reality to collide and roll over until unacknowledged history goes over the past and its meanings.

In many films where a long shot operates with a long take a kind of complete and sublime topos of the landscape is created, for example, depictions of the sea can seem to encourage a rupture with ordinary experience in favor of a more spiritual quest. But in Hou's works, scenes of the sea are not arranged and landscaped as romantic scenery, on the contrary, they are presented with real-life situations and local conditions. The spiritual metaphor of the sea - melancholy drifting - is swallowed up by petty everyday life, the demands of economic development and the challenges of living. For example, despite the frequent appearance of seascapes in his films, Hou does not exploit bright and gorgeous color to highlight their elegance and beauty, and neither

does he emphasize their melancholy and gloom. The sea and the living of the local fishing community is neither overstated nor repressed, but calmly demonstrated as a geographical ecology. In *All The Youthful Days* (1984) the dry sea-wind, gravel paths of seaside whitened by the sunshine, flies flying around the dining table and the billiard room, signify stagnant life and idle youth, whose daily time is mainly spent in street fights, beach fishing and playing billiards.

Hou once remarked that the reason he made this film is that he once saw the teenagers' bored life in the fishing village of Peng-hu (west of Taiwan), and in this film he shows many scenes of that bored life (22-23). For example, 18 minutes in, there is a scene of three boys playing on the beach, two of them suddenly pull Ah-qing's (the hero) pants, which tear, and they are entangled each other (with music) on the beach (figs 3.19-3.21). This scene seems to be meaningless in the construction of the plot, but Hou thinks this is the focus of the film, which shows the theme - life is full, but not yet to be shaped and integrated into a society (23). These bored teenagers, have too much energy to release, so they waste time and life.

3.19 *All the Youthful Days*

3.20 *All the Youthful Days*

3.21 *All the Youthful Days*

Eisenstein insists on the principle of that sort of montage as the fundamental tool for cinematically expressing and organizing what he considers to be the music of landscape (353-355). But Tarkovsky thinks that time is a foundation in cinema like sound in music, color in painting, character in drama (*Sculpting in Time* 2003). A. L. Rees stresses the historicity of landscape films where: "landscape is already coded for us, not only by the technique and material we use, but also by the sheer volume of images which precede us and which we know" (124). Landscape thus plays a significant role in that volume of images. In that sense it functions paradigmatically in

the historical palimpsest of which it is made up in time and space. This brings an awareness of the landscape as not only spectacularly beautiful but as signifier of a past: an essential theme in Hou's work. As Annie James remarks, "This is a 'lost world' but one in which the audience can lose themselves and yearn to return to. As global change increasingly alienates, individuals use nostalgia as an antidote to preserve liberty and individuality" (198).

Temporal Topology

Three Times (2005) embodies the interleaving of space and time with individual nostalgia. This film is a rather confusing amalgamation of three different time periods: 1911, 1966 and 2005, in which various different characters are all played by the same actor (Chang Cheng) and actress (Shu Qi) as they move through what can only be seen as a series of vignettes focusing on questions of unfinished and unsatisfied love.

The first vignette, set in 1966, is notable for the sheer amount of movement around Taiwan that the characters are involved in. A man, on leave from the army, tries to find a pool hall attendant that he has fallen in love with. This section of the film follows this unnamed man as he travels around Taiwan until he eventually finds the girl. This segment overflows with a nostalgic atmosphere, especially symbolized by the numerous town signs, in which time and space are the markers of what is, in effect, a touristic reconstruction. In this unnamed man as hero's tour, the film's narrative is dissolved and scenes are reassembled around an adjacent series of locations (figs.3.22-3.24).

3.22 A sequence of sailing on the sea shot.

3.23 A long shot containing figures and ship.

3.24 A road landscape with the place name

Filmic temporality is transformed into a co-presence, a kind of trip/ballad form that suits both the exigencies of geography and the conditions of the tour. The spatial also asserts itself in terms of the physical elements available at the time (1960s). The

hero goes through the south of Taiwan by a small steamer. The steamer slowly sails on a blue sea, and the hero walks on the rough country road with noisy food stalls on the sides, all bringing the ordinary life and rhythm of the 1960s into the film.

There are no adventures or encounters in his trip, making the film very different from other familiar Hollywood road-movies. In the sequence shots of the trip, there are some extreme long shots opening to traveling shots over the landscape, across fields, and slowly down a country lane until appearing to respond to voices and music in a neighboring field. In sharp contrast is the third vignette featuring a lesbian's "Dream of Youth" in Taipei where the space suddenly turns to an open urban space from the enclosed space of a 1911 brothel (the second vignette).[19] It begins with the camera cutting to a long single take of a motorcycle speeding its way along the Taipei highway. The highway is backed by outlines of skyscrapers and various large buildings and it is this landscape, rather than the motorcycle, that the camera initially follows. It then follows the flow of traffic on the highway and then presents an everyday scene from urban Taipei: a busy highway, tall office buildings and no human element with which to make personal connections (figs. 3.26-3.27).

3.25 A scene of a speeding motorcycle

3.26 A flowing streetscape...

3.27 A scene of a lone traffic light...

These scenes show the tensions involved in the space and speed at different times, and as such form an historicizing landscape which allows for a constant checking of what has changed or has remained the same, allowing Hou to explore a transforming situation based on the contrast between the rural and the city. Hence, even in Hou's urban films, the rural also plays an important role, where the urban scenes are set on the edges of the city or in the countryside around it. These spaces are often actual

[19] The three vignettes are not arranged chronologically as in 1911, 1966, 2005, the temporality in the film is deliberately rendered in non-linear way so that the film begins in 1966, then moves back in time to 1911, and finally makes a leap to 2005.

locations whose function within the narrative is not metaphorical but real. In rural films, the city often appears in such a way that the picturesque preindustrial landscape can seem to be not simply escapist but as capturing a nostalgia for the past. In these films, the picturesque preindustrial landscape takes on a function as the embodiment of the nation, a living version of the national past, and as such the traditional rural Taiwan presented in such films actually has an almost archaeological-like value. Likewise, most of the traditional rural space on show in the films are natural spaces, not "improved" picturesque landscapes.

In this sense, Hou has a very complex approach to the rural and the past: he does not want to make films which divert from present-day realities, or that act as a rose-tinted journey into the past. He prefers his films to capture some past images in his memory but which actually have changed in present reality. These landscapes thus are real-imaginary spaces - they existed but if they are still around in highly urbanized Taiwan. This is distressing for Hou, who worries that it will become more difficult to find suitable locations for his movies in the future (Assayas *A Portrait of Hou Hisao-hsien* 1997). Certainly the whole realism space gives Hou's films a monumental significance, even though they are not understood to be monumentalizing.

Overall then, Hou attempts to portray a visual harmony between the natural land and the industrialization of the land itself. One major way he does this is to feature railway tracks which are often portrayed in such a way that drives the eye toward the background, where the tracks disappear into the city or the mountain, creating a harmony between the controlled urbanized regularity of the rails and the natural rural land (figs.3.28-3.30).

3.28 *A Summer at Grandpa's*

3.29 *Dust in the Wind*

3.30 *Dust in the Wind*

The rail tracks are therefore a powerful image for bringing nature and human

beings together not simply as some idyllic picture of harmony but to show the broader conflict of the 'harmonizing' of nature and industry. For Denis Cosgrove,

> landscape is a unity of people and environment which opposes in its reality the false dichotomy of man and nature... Landscape is to be judged as a place for living and working in terms of those who actually do work and live there. All landscapes are symbolic. (35)

Cosgrove returns the landscape to its territoriality. Indeed, beyond the study of the morphology of a region he describes landscape as "a set of relations which are woven between human beings and the land: agriculture, hunting, fishing, navigation and shipping, forestry, etc" (35). These relations are themselves reliant on vast economic and political stakes and possess otherwise imaginary and identifying aspects whose importance cannot be overstated. A landscape, as Mitchell says:

> draws us in with its seductive beauty, this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance, a king of resistance to whatever practical or moral claim the scene might make on us. The invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing - or more precisely, to look at looking itself - to engage in a kind of conscious apperception of space as it unfolds itself in a particular place. (viii)

Accordingly, in Hou's films, these scenes achieve a kind of embodied and embedded picturing. This is unlike the de-contextualized, panoramic picturing of landscape, which refers to neither person nor place, but both. Hou's picturing firmly contextualizes the land (placing it in time and space), and it is embodied because of the intimate, daily specific ways in which it is captured. His landscape is subordinate to the whole spatial layout and does not evade substantial questions such as the relations between land and power, a sense of belonging, removal from the land, deterritoriality, and a spatial contrast between the rural and the city.

3.3 Representing the Rural

Film is located in a landscape, and, whether authentic or imaginary, the scenery for Hou represents a powerful discourse of national identity. Several spaces encapsulate such rural identification: enchanted places, land, sea and field. Films

straddle these categories, and placing them appropriately helps to explore cinematic reconstructions of the Taiwanese "ethno-scape". Each of these spaces possesses a particular relevance for interpreting notions of ordinary people in films. Rural Taiwan is represented in these kind of films as space with time and as an icon of nature, a place that knows its origins and its destiny. Time does not stand still but moves more slowly, capturing space as a source of power.

In general, rural cinema functions as a kind of "innocent" cinema, where, as Catherine Fowler says, the peasant figure embodies a lineage and a way of life that have been sustained for centuries and thus have a certain "purity" and continuity of culture that can be used to evoke a shared past that, it might be argued, could also tie together a nation/culture in the present and future (142). This kind of film tends to concentrate on the nature of heritage, always set in the nation's past, where the return to the rural can be seen as an expression of venerability, going back to some kind of "authentic root." The past in these films is looked upon as a golden age in a nation's collective imagination and memory that seems comparatively simple, where the rural-agrarian milieu signifies a desire to return to that past. As such the rural-agrarian milieu itself represents a closed, secure world rarely intruded on. In fact, such films are confronted by modern capitalism and the speed of change threatening the 'preciousness' of rural life.

Hou's rural films are not like this. On the contrary, he subverts such representations of the rural by presenting the disintegration of rural communities as well as changes of tradition. Hou's aim is not to criticize rural reality or long for a pastoral golden age, but to objectively present this changed process. As such, his movies portray an illustration of the interactive changes between the rural and the city in the early urbanization of Taiwan. For laboring people, life in the countryside was never easy, but this does not mean that the challenges faced by farmers, fishermen and miners did not alter through time, or that these challenges were not greater during periods of era change.

Three movies in particular - *All the Youthful Days*, *Dust in the Wind*, and *A Summer at Grandpa's* - take rural life as their representative background, where the

rural in these films is not the traditional and protected space of some other films, but is always shown by Hou to be in transformation. In them, Hou sets up a juxtaposition of the rural and the city to emphasis the disintegration of rural space. The rural in Hou's films is an open field that is constantly subject to change and external elements to its homogeneity; urban dreams, industry and power are symbols of the sort of heterogeneity increasingly intruding into the rural. Hou's countryside is made by the landscape and the close relationship between human being and nature, mobility and stability. Sea and land may mold the island's inhabitants, but the hardships of rural life are given greater poignancy through an aesthetic of the countryside which uses local spatial patterns to comment on national character.

Hou's spatial aesthetics of film is achieved by his using many exterior scenes and establishing shots making a seemingly meaningless local space into a much more significant meaningful cinematic space. Such scenes can be seen throughout his rural films: people stand or sit in front of their houses or open doorways; or a group of people walk on a country road with a background of mountains, rice paddies or river. What appears to be innocent activity is in fact part of Hou's bigger aim which, despite the fact that these shots often seem sentimental and emotional, is to create a sense of community and commonality. Although there seems to be no direct sense of engagement and no potential for social exchange, the space itself is an attractive exchange invoking a common identity rather than imposing a particular ideological indoctrination of nostalgia and sentimentality. In Hou's films, then, the rural is used to designate settings of a non-urban nature, or where the nature of community is small enough to be classified under the label of village or small-town life. Rural spaces are thus not merely those open landscapes so beloved of some directors in wide-angle panoramic shots; they are also the house and the land that characterize rural life, what Martin Philips and Rob Fish see as suggestive sociospatializations (17:1). Kerry Kidd also thinks that the rural is "more than a landscape; a village or small-town street can be part of a rural space" (214). He further explains:

> paces of the rural also incorporate those moments or visions within characters and identity that separate the individual from the rest of the

> rural environment: the inner land. Crucially, rural spaces are actual, identifiable locations. They contain economies of living, rural-spatial politics, and dramas of embodiment. As such they are connected to the wider urban world and can therefore be distinguished from the literary word pastoral, which refers very often to a fantastical or non-identifiable literary idyll. (214)

Kidd's insight points out that we should not only focus on specific characterizations of the landscape but also on the deeper links of characters and identity, on the rural and the city. Something Hou most certainly does, as one of his major concerns is to suggest that certain places are more authentic than others, and that community, belonging, and a "sense of place" can only emerge in places where the bond between people and place is deeply rooted. His approach combines insights into the way people imbue their surroundings with often highly idiosyncratic meanings along with his own nostalgia for those places seemingly untouched by the trends of modernization and "progress". The countryside, particularly the small rural area or villages, did once offer simple and unambiguous models of community, but Hou shows that changes in local rural communities are a product of changes in the broader national relationship of land and lifestyle.

Because of Taiwan's geographical features - surrounded by the sea, and 70% of the territory is mountains - fishing and mining are the traditional industries of the island, and thus are particularly representative of its early communities. Essentially, these spaces embody a lineage and a way of life that have been sustained for a long time and thus might be said to have a certain "purity" and continuity of culture that can be used to evoke a shared past. As such, the local milieu seems to represent a closed secure world rarely intruded on by disruptive and corruptive elements from the outside world. But, in fact, this kind of traditional community is the first to face disintegration and changes under urbanization, industrialization and globalization. But Hou does not present this linear historical background on the screen, and he even erases some direct traces of it. Instead he goes into the individuals' living situations, exploring the inherent yearning of people wanting to get away from the old lifestyle

and to pursue a new life. He shows that even when there is no choice, young people prefer to waste their life instead of going back to a traditional way of life, where, for example, the disappearance of an older form of worship (to use it as a symbol of the traditional past) signals for Hou the disintegration of self-identity and the deterritorialization of the space such worship (and other traditions) once occupied.

Disappearing Communities and a Reflexive Nostalgia

All The Youthful Days (1984) is the first of Hou's New Wave films. Its Chinese name is *The Boys From Fengkuei*. Fengkuei is a real place in the Penghu archipelago which is the largest outlying island group in Taiwan. The most important industry in Penghu is fishing, thus forming the oldest and the largest fishing community in Taiwan. Its Chinese name is closer to the theme of the film and its discursive and extended features, not only about growing up, but also the space, the community, and a regional identity. This film primarily focuses on youngsters' boring everyday life in the small seaside community: fighting, playing billiards, and gambling. Moreover, the film draws clear parallels between the homeland (represented by the family and fishing community) and the city (represented by making love and the challenges in making a living).

Hou demonstrates in this film youth's hopeless future and the dilemmas of choice. Grey, blue and white are the main colors in the film, making the sea into a powerful symbol of both geography and lifestyle, signifying in particular a stagnant, monotonous life. In the spatial layout of the film, the sea is vast and also difficult to escape from, representing certain boundaries of space/life. The desolate imagery; the sun-bleached shoreline and village-roads, the wilder-field of tree-less land are not only visual spaces, but also feeling spaces: empty and lacking direction. Hou extensively uses establishing shots to highlight the seemingly unmoving regional space and the ever-moving landscape. For example, Ah-qing, the hero, often sits by the river, where the picture seems still, but the river is flowing and endless.

Importantly, in this fishing environment, we do not see real fishing life such as harvesting and labor. The fishery is in decline and the fishing village is a marginalized community where possibility of new life does not yet occur, while the development of

industry and commerce are still concentrated in the city. Ah-qing's family and his own life are an illustration of this disintegration of community. For young people, the city is the only place where they can go, but the city is not ready to easily admit and welcome the "other" in these early times of urbanization. Therefore, it seems destined that these young people's life in the city will start with frustrations and despair. Hou's early movies of growth are almost all based on this theme - hopeless life in the homeland and hard life in the city.

Hou's second rural film, *Dust in The Wind* (1987) provides a detailed portrayal of mining and the characteristics of an original mining area Hou-dong. This was once the largest base of the coal industry in the Japanese colonial period, and thus created the largest mining community, with a closed and unique lifestyle, bringing prosperity to neighboring small towns and driving the development of the railway network needed for transporting the coal. After the 1970s, as oil replaced coal, the mining industry moved into rapid decline.

Dust in The Wind is set in this time of decline when urbanization had started and the mining industry was depressed. But in this movie, this depression seems at first to be ignored, because the rich daily details and lyrical style portrayed in the film drive viewers into a quiet, beautiful landscape marked by a harmonious relationship between people, in which everything seems timeless. Spatially, fluid long shots and long takes of landscape show an almost poetic mining area: small trains, mountains, trees, childhood sweethearts and open-air movies, all appearing to indicate an archaic, but idyllic, pastoral life. This is the classic (though highly romanticized) way of portraying the typical daily situations of the pre-industrial era - pastoral, warm, friendly and lacking privacy between people. Hou's camera draws a panoramic picture where daily life is embraced by mountains, trees and dwellings on the hillside, in a beautiful and self-contained space: a pure rural community.

But the movie does not stay here for long. Instead it probes into the truth of the poverty and danger of the miners' life in such a beautiful and peaceful landscape. Here almost every family has many children, and older children drop out of school early and go to the city to look for work. In the beginning of the film, Yuan's father

injures his leg in a coal-mine accident. The subsequent news report falsely reports the miners' lives and income, and the resultant miners' strike goes nowhere crumbling to the pressures of the miners needing to make a living. This seeming solid community is actually in a precarious situation, especially the younger generation - the hero and the heroine Yuan and Yun - who were born and grew up in the mining area, and develop a childhood romance. But as the decline of the coal mining industry, they then have to make their living in the city. The decline of the industry and patriarchal authority are intertwined with the fathers and their traditional way of life having exited the center of this community, where young people are now faced with having to find a new life.

In this film, outside scenes are charged with a particular emotional life. National stereotypes of mining life include a quality of masculine roughness, closeness of community, little separation between workplace colleagues and social life, such as Yuan's father playing poker and chatting with workmates after work every day, or playing a game of moving stones when drunk. But fathers no longer encourage sons into the same occupation. Instead, they hope their sons will pursue a new life in the city.

Despite being in decline, the mining economy carries with it significant sociological connotations of a characteristically industrial, mass-produced way of working and living habits. Mining is a traditional industry, but a strongly industrialized one. This juxtaposition between rural space and social transformation more usually associated with an urban lifestyle creates a sense of tension within the film between story and landscape. This is neither urban nor rural; it is a classically dystopian vision, but by its very social isolation and emptiness it seems otherworldly, a part of the real landscape rather than the landscaped countryside or pastoral scene. Meanwhile, the local landscape represents a power articulation of the tensions between living and working; being unemployed or labor-less and being abandoned. The abandoned stretches of semirural land function as effective punctuation marks in the visual narrative and also as symbolic representations of the decay in this portion of the rural-dystopian scene. Characters are portrayed not just in terms of their external

environment but also in the way in which they react and are situated indoors like Yuan's family who live in an extremely poor house, bare and comfortless.

Hou depicts the community as something with which the people and their past had an intimate relationship. He thus presents an alternative past and also a potential future - their representations are simultaneously "old" and "new". He opens up alternative ways of engaging with a variety of landscapes, with fluid long takes of the small train as a drive to the distanced gaze upon landscapes and the modern life that characterizes rural environment engendering a very contradictory emotion for the rural and traditional community. It is a reflexive treatment of nostalgia that may even be said to govern the whole of the film: it does not show that the countryside is just a place of leisure for the city-dweller, the exotic for foreign audiences, but a treatment that demands examination of the viewers' position to the rural. At this point it is tempting to conclude that the movie cautions against the dismissal of "nostalgia" films as synonymous with stylistic conventionality and intellectual superficiality, but I would suggest that on the contrary it illustrates that such films can simultaneously adopt a nostalgic idiom and critique it from within.

3.31 *Dust in the Wind*

3.32 *Dust in the Wind*

3.33 The last shot in *Dust in the Wind*

This is made very clear at the end of the movie. Lost childhood sweetheart, Yuan comes back to the mining area, and he calmly talks about the growth of crops with his grandfather in the mountains (figs.3.31-3.32). The last scene has a shot frozen in a graceful landscape of sky and sea with humid air, green trees, majestic mountains and the blue sea, which again seems to present a harmonious space between people and nature (fig.3.33). It seems that the beautiful natural landscape has cured the sadness of lost love and oppression of urban life. This scene seems to imply a spiritual return to the space, but this return is uncertain, or even impossible. To this end, landscape and

space still maintain a harmonious and peaceful situation. But mining itself is a heavily polluted industry damaging the environment, and in the end young people cannot find any hope of life here. In this way, the seemingly charming landscape operates paradoxically as a sublimated, nostalgic space, but this nostalgia does not provide a real "return of the countryside".

The third film in Hou's rural trilogy *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984) probes the disintegration of the inner rural spirit in fresh and delicate landscapes. This film is about a special growing experience of a city boy spends his summer holiday in his rural grandparent's home, where he glimpses the life of the adult world and the truth of rural subjectivity. In the sense, the film structures an external "viewpoint" to make the countryside into a space of being seen and experienced, and is full of simple, idyllic sentiment. It shows a "classic" model of childhood, where the rural functions as a site of growth and learning, and the people encountered in the countryside display all the characteristics of both virtue and evil. Again, Hou does not portray idyllic rural life, but instead looks more searchingly at the dystopian, anti-idyllic, aspects of contemporary rural life. Visual pleasure is afforded by Hou to the viewer by the "hapticality" of the depiction of the rural space. The numerous landscape shots recall painterly treatments of the rural environment, and as such, a key contradiction in the film is the disjuncture between the picturesque scenery and the actual happenings in the community.

For example, the hero and narrator Dong finds himself in an alienated space; it is not a perfect world. As Dong discovers, the rural hides crime and violence such as robbery and rape, just as the city does. All these negatives are contained in the beautiful natural setting of the small town, bringing to the film an anti-utopian tension. Hou's perspective is not critical realism, but the charging of the rustic space with a strong nostalgia for an old rural life, now changed. Love is a symbol of that change. For example, Dong's uncle in this film, is a fashionable young man who relies on his wealthy family in order to pursue free love. He falls in love with a girl in the neighboring town. In the beginning of the film, in Dong's eyes, things seem sweet. But with the developing of the plot, their love becomes vulgar and embarrassing - the

girl becomes pregnant and thus forces the uncle to marriage. As the uncle lost his family economic support so his living becomes exhausted, and love also becomes gloomy. The wedding in Dong's view, clearly signifies this by there not even being a wedding dress. The uncle's love in the film is entirely local, and there is no outside force to impact on it, but it is still not pure and perfect, instead it contains some very vulgar elements - the gap between rich and poor, premarital pregnancy and unrecognized marriage. In addition, an insane girl is raped, and truck drivers are robbed and wounded, all of which imply the loss of old honest values in the villages. Love in this film is more about the loss of love within the disintegration of community.

Dust in the Wind provides a clearer illustration of this where the main story-line is based on Yuan and Yun's love: they once had a pure love, but are forced to earn a living by leaving their hometown to go to work in the city. Yuan joins the army and Yun finally marries a postman in the city. In this story, the causality of love breaking is neither the main point, nor the director's interest, who just wants to show individual weakness and innocence, an unknowing of fate in a particular time. Blocking their love signifies the change of lifestyle from the village to city rather than as a result of their distance and separation from each other. Hou's depiction of the love in this movie is quite elegant and subtle, despite the fact that there is no dramatic plot and no direct scenes that present the heroine's betrayal. Hou's perspective is from the young man's point of view presenting the inexplicable change and loss of love, using this loss metonymically as a comment, I would suggest, on the film's theme of change and growth. In this film, the old ethics of the rural ties still exist, impacted by urban life, but still maintaining the basic relationship of the neighborhood to the mining area.

Urban life affecting love is evident, then, in these films, where fragmented personal life and emotions constitute a symptom of that urban life. *All the Youthful Days* directly presents this symptom. In this film, Hou still presents love from a young man's perspective. But unlike *Dust in the Wind*, the hero in this film is not in love, he just has a secret crush. It is the uncertainty that brings to the film and the character a strong repressed feeling and finally results in a sad ending. For the film, ethical constraint and belonging have completely disappeared, and love in this film is closer

to the drifting status of urban life: the fragmented identity, vague future and hopeless pursuit of life. The changing of communities in *Dust in the Wind* and *All the Youthful Days* not only defeats the idea that the homeland is the constant and sole principle of collective mobilization, it also questions linear conceptions of history, continuity and progress.

One way or another, then, representations of the rural, and the parallel relationship of the urban/rural continuum, play a key role in understanding Hou's films. Drawing on well-established cultural traditions and invigorated by contemporary critical debates, the rural in such films often seems to embody the nation. A particular picturesque version of rural Taiwan is frequently offered as an alternative to the Taiwan of modernity - although it often seems less an alternative than the true Taiwan. "Silence of the rural" is as Massey said:

> displaying the representation of differing, ambiguous notions of the landscape, the countryside, and rural tradition. Instead, we might regard the return to the past as "a politicization" of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act, from that of remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present. (Massey 17: 14)

In such a sense, then, rural space is in part about providing an authentic mise-en-scene in which a familiar narrative might unfold. But it is also about providing a romanticized visual pleasure, a pleasure that might be taken up by the discourse and practices of heritage tourism. While the pervasively green setting does not simply provide a more thorough and complete version of the escape from modernity and the city, it does stock rural archetypes. But there is a paradox: if these films intend to promote the rural-agrarian way of life, then the rural scenes would certainly offer more picturesque and appealing vistas. This also suggests that rural images in films are more realistic than deriving such images from the imagination. Hou's image are indeed realistic and beautiful, but his aim is not to promote the values and traditions associated with the rural environs but to critique the denationalizing values of the modern, urban-industrial way of life.

Hou's rural films can therefore be seen as a journey towards the city. In such a journey, there are no dreams, no romance, no hometown fantasy, only inadvertent losses. By focusing on the experience of a rural community continuing to migrate to urban centers, these films provide a thoughtful consideration of the problems of migration, urban life versus rural, and traditional forms of culture versus modernity and globalization. In this way, Hou expresses progress, instead of the tendency to regress, where the re-traced countryside is just a rediscovery about time: a nostalgia for time. This reflexive nostalgia creates an inherent tension in the films and is further accentuated by Hou's montages and daily details. Shots featuring signposts of the past or performances of traditional island culture are juxtaposed with shots featuring signposts of modernity and change: for example, images of a motorized ferry are intercut with shots of old wooden boats moored at the island's quay in *All the Youthful Days*. Similarly, shots of motor cars are intercut with shots of small trains in *Dust in the Wind.*

The films do not just lead away from the country. They also return there. As Paul Willemen observes, "nations are retroactive not retrospective constructions to which we are invited, often not very subtly, to adhere" (10). Though such an idea seems uncomplicated, it actually invites a more dialectical response. There is no doubt that such a conception regresses into romanticized ideals of homeland, home, belonging, and connection to nature and cosmos. However, the regression also marks a progression of individual life in the course of time. Hou was born in 1948 and made some successful commercial love-films[20] before *All the Youthful Days*, and before forming his own filmic style in the New Film Movement[21] in the 1980s. He experienced the process of modernization and urbanization of Taiwan from the 1960s to the 1990s. As such his temporal nostalgia means that there is no real hometown that

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[20] *Cute Girl* (1980s); *Cheerful Wind* (1981); *The Green, Green Grass of Home*(1982); *The Sandwich Man* (1983)directed with Wan Jen and Tseng Chuang-Hsiang.

[21] The Movement of New Movies in Taiwan, also called "the movement of New Wave films lasted from 1981 to 1990. In 1983, a movie in three parts - *Sandwich Man* -was made by Hou Hsiao-hsien, Chen Kun-hou and Wang Tong, which led to a dispute about new and old films and the role of censorship. It was ultimately released without cuts and paved the way for many New Wave movies. On January 24, 1987, fifty filmmakers and intellectuals issued the "1987 Taiwan Movie Declaration" which is regarded as the end of the movement of New Wave movies.

can be yearned for by people in modern world. The return to the rural tends to be less an expression of venerability than of vulnerability.

Therefore, I would argue that Hou's rural films are neither an escapist nor an intentional preservation of the rural as a closed secure world; instead, the space of the countryside is shown as a real and living place, but not as a means to use the rural in order to evoke a shared past. Instead, Hou reactivates these rural spaces by removing exoticism, and restoring them as real and living spaces. The effect is the creation of a space at once very close and familiar, but that has never been observed and experienced like this before. For example, Hou represents rural Taiwan intimately in its everyday realities and as a real and living place rather than a once lived in, imaginary space. He expands the space of the border/small town and represents it as a potential signifier of the larger national state of affairs in Taiwan without necessarily endorsing a political claim to its place within the nation. As Cosgrove says, "The consciousness of a relation to land or nation - the sense of place, individual or collective - is not accessible easily, if at all" (Cosgrove 26). But in these rural films Hou at least captures a real earth rather than an exotic one.

He does this with even more complexity in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (1996), to which I now turn, where in his portrayal of the triumph of the city, his presentation of the rural displays the breaking and linking that takes place between the land and people, industry and agriculture, locality and globalization and tradition and modernity; where history and geography combine to define an individual identity steeped in the process of urbanization and globalization manipulated by invisible "power geometries" (Massey 27).[22]

3.4 Deterritorialization and Appropriation in *Goodbye South*, *Goodbye*

[22] Doree Massey's (1999) concept of "power geometries" is useful for thinking about how space, place, production and consumption are connected. Massey proposes that power is exercised through all scales and levels, and that its "geometry" must be understood in relation to how different social groups and individuals are placed in distinct ways in relation to time-space flows and interconnections (Massey 1993). Difference cannot just be conceived in terms of a variance but must also be seen in terms of relational power, with people limiting or enabling the capacity of other groups to participate in consumption on the same terms. People, knowledge and things are situated in relation to flows and interconnections (for example, transportation, financial flows, communications, knowledge and social transactions) (Mansvelt 27). Places are viewed as articulated and hybrid moments in networks of social relations, with "the spatial as a product of power-filled social relations (1999:41). In *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, the concept of "power geometries" provides an important reminder that the identity and the land do not exist in a vacuum, but are constituted and transformed through space.

Goodbye South, Goodbye is a story about gangsters' daily life backgrounded by Hou's bigger-picture critique of globalization and urbanization. As such, this film is a restatement about the rural that is no longer a place of belonging. Gao, a bully over thirty years old, works in a gang at a casino. He wants to complete his father's wish of going to Shanghai to run a restaurant, and then to marry his girlfriend. He has two young attendants - Bian and Mahua - who are the "newest generation" and who constantly make trouble for him. Gao becomes entangled in the trifles of his family and the gang, who rush between Taipei and the south of Taiwan (Jiayi).

Tying up a series of everyday fragments is the title of the film - *Goodbye South, Goodbye* - suggesting an emotionally progressive spatial sequence with its narrative structure of bidding farewell and parting forever. The 'South' in the title appears to function more as a representational space rather than a simple noun of direction. Mitchell thinks that space and place make a dialectical opposition in ordinary language. "Space has connotations of abstraction and geometry, while place resonates with particularity and qualitative density" (ix). He suggests that to some extent these connotations reverse de Certeau's oppositions, insofar as they link space with number, negation, measurement, surveillance and control, while place retains a concrete, complex, and sensuous existence beneath the spatial codes of mapping and depiction (ix). In this light, space in this film becomes much more than a simple location. Jameson also thinks that the space in films is not to be reduced to mere places. Because "place and place name alike are only the starting points, the raw material, from which a rather different realization of concrete space is produced which is no longer scene or backdrop for an action or for actors, but includes those in some new, qualitative way" (50).

The function and characteristics of space in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* go much further than in any of Hou's other movies. Hou develops new scenotopes transforming space into a story of the deterritorialization and appropriation of space. This story will match the aforementioned story of Gao's life journey in its form - in which Gao's personal experience is the representation of whole deterritorialization of space and identity. The spatial interpretation offers a different route into the film, which is a non-

subjective way of telling that story and thus may not really be “the same” any longer in the important sense.

Scenotopes

When the practice of space connect to this film that is each new episodic unit is accompanied the development of a different type of concrete space itself, so that we can see a virtual anthology of a whole range of distinct spatial configurations, pinned side by side in some photograph album. This is also the *scenetope* in Jameson’s sense.

As I will argue that the scenetopes are represented in the film by intermediary combinations and catalytic operations, a space into another like the adventure of space. These intermediary combinations - the train, the car and the motorcycle operated by flowing long takes to capture wide-open spaces. These not only signify the changing times in rural (and urban) Taiwan but also the changing ways in which land and space is used. There is always a dialectical relationship between the inside closed spaces of the vehicles and the outside open space of nature and the nation. This dialectic pervades the mise-en-scene, shot composition, and the narrative of those parts of the film that feature cars and trains as vehicles and symbols of displacement, in the way that Naficy considers that “vehicles provide not only empirical links to geographic places and social groupings but also metaphoric reworking of notions of traveling, homing, and identity” (257).

If, as de Certeau said, the vehicles of mass transportation are called “metaphorai”, and stories could also take this noble name (115), then the narration of the film is used this word in kinetics of the image: the vehicles traverse and organize places, and link them together to make space and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.

3.34 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.35 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.36 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

The story opens with a 4-minute scene of a moving train (figs.3.34-3.36),

revealing for the audience a train station in mountaineous areas and town streets and houses. The fluid long take is clinging to the original state of the local, all connected to achieve a romantic spatial experience. The beginning mingles with Taiwanese underground music[23] making an border space of the south into the film so as to reveal the story's emotional tone: nostalgia and decadence confront the change of traditional life style and the disorder of society. This is the first time Gao and his attendants go to the south, in this sequence, and as it moves on with the camera mounted on the back of the train the nostalgic space starts to resemble old sepia photographs as if it will back into the unrepresentable depth of space/time. So this opening suggests a strong grassroots spirit and emotion to come. The intermediary camera serves as a barrier between the screen and the audience, seeming to push the audience away and causing the space to gradually disappear in the depth of the screen. The scene constitutes a strange contrast as16 minutes of the movie are then taken up with sequence shots of the train passing through the tunnel of a mountain (figs. 3.37-3.39).

3.37 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.38 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.39 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

A similar scene also appears in *Dust in the Wind*, and is now a familiar mark of Hou's mobile long takes, where the visual impact of such atmospheric camerawork enables the train to become an integral part of the camera, but is not excluded from the screen like the camera itself. In such a "striated space" (Deleuze *A Thousand Plateaus* 493) it is as if the camera enters the interior space of the screen enabling viewers to follow the camera slowly going into an unknown almost hallucinatory-like out of time world.

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[23] The soundtracks in this film almost collect all the selects of Taiwan underground (rock-) music such as Lin Qiang, Summer Lei, Sissey Chao, and LTK Commune. These musics reinforce the movie's theme of the lost and confusion of rural Taiwan. This opening music is Lin Qiang's "Self-destruction" - expresses his melancholy and gloomy scream for chaos of the real world and the destruction of the industrial civilization for traditional world, as well as its damage for humanity.

This sequence shot does not occur in the beginning of the film, but is suddenly inserted between shots of the southern casino and urban space. In the plot, it can be seen as the scenery along the way when Gao and his partners return for the first time from the south. Thus, its meaning is completely different from *Dust in the Wind* - as the harmonious living environment - but hints at the possibility that the rural space might be landscaped. This visual richness is both realism and nostalgia in which it almost rules out the color, even though is colorized. Such abundant nature, wet landscape and overloaded visual elements are presented by the mobile train which match Hou's nostalgic style – a seeking and commemoration of the past. However, we are given in this shot a gaze on deep space creating a hypnotic effect which subverts common nostalgic images.

Images of trains frequently appear in Hou's films, but they never symbolize passion and speed. On the contrary, they are slow and engage in the pace of the past. This is signaled visually by the way that trains are both expanded spatially and temporally by long-focus photography taken from the inside of the train travelling through tunnels. They create a visual atmosphere which in turn becomes an important symbolic site in idyllic memory. Real idyllic space is not available within the film or its inner world, as the train contributes to Hou's creation of a "heterotopia without geographical markers" (Foucault 25). As Foucault says, "a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by" (23-24). As such, in Hou's films the train does not only express modernity, but also the past, a past modernity. For example, at the beginning of the film a fellow in Jia-yi[24] asks Gao why he chose such a romantic way of traveling by taking the train. Gao says he hadn't traveled by train in a long time and his attendant Bian wanted to try again, presumably for nostalgic reasons.

Somewhat different from the train images, but still creating a dreamlike floating and spatial hallucination, is the 37 minutes long take sequence when Gao drives to

[24] Chia-yi County (Chinese: 嘉義縣; pinyin: Jiāyì Xiàn) is a county in southwestern Taiwan surrounding but not including Chiayi City. It is the sixth largest county in Taiwan.

move to a new house because his family's community will be relocated. This is the first time that the city emerges in a strange open space in the movie seen through an alienating perspective by the green glasses worn by Gao (figs. 3.40-3.42).

3.40 *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*

3.41 *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*

3.42 *Goodbye South, Goodbye.*

The curved overpass, linear striated highways and square residential buildings, shown in this long take, construct abstract beauty, but do not erase the twisted and centrifugal characteristic of the space, suggesting homeless drifting in the city and a possible escape. Gao's experience of the metropolis also suggests a feeling of homelessness with Taipei seeming strange in that it betrays the natural visual habitat with all its skyscrapers, overpass bridges and highways where human beings are pressured and generally made to feel insignificant. The music in this sequence also acts as the signifier of another space - a clear melodious Taiwanese ballad flutters in a deformed urban landscape - this is Gao's psychological portrayal, yearning for the past but while living in the present. The importance of this sequence derives not because it is a wonderful cinematic technique, or a visual gimmick, but because it changes the texture of the film: it forces the tone of realism in the former sequence to post-modern alienation and hybridity.

The green scene directly creates an inter-textual platform for the red scene 50 minutes into the film, when Gao and his partners go to the south again, where the camera is also filming from the inside of the car. This time Bian wears red glasses and drives the car. A filter is used to present a red horizon from Bian's perspective creating diffuse twilight-hues (figs. 3.43-3.45) and, I would suggest, an eschatological decadence and confusion. Compared to the earlier green scene, the red one presents a peculiar atmosphere of agitation and unrest redolent of the qualities of film noir, while

the music in the background is the "Silicon" of LTK Commune[25] filling the scene with instability, danger and the unknown.

3.43 *Goodbye south, Goodbye*

3.44 *Goodbye south, Goodbye*

3.45 *Goodbye south, Goodbye*

This is the first time that the south of Taiwan enters the film in the form of an open space presenting a completely ordinary world - village, houses, field and trees, which are quiet and full of rustic atmosphere, although this nostalgic idyllic landscape is defused with the less than idyllic melodies of black rock. But this is Bian's inner world, a world of transitional time, which is exaggerated, uneasy and violent. Such a confluence of music and pictures brings an inner spiritual tension - a desolate feeling of time and space, representing unreliability and uncertainty of space - as the city is not home, neither is the rural. As Naficy says, "under the diasporized circumstance, space becomes untrustworthy. Place, on the other hand, becomes attractive and emplacement a viable resistive option" (219-220). The emphasis on the utopian liberating spaces of the homeland's landscape and on the dystopian, is part of the film's quest for what Michael Dempsey calls "a lost harmony" (178) - a physical, natural, and spiritual home - which is a key theme in Hou's films. However, since this seemingly harmonious place always harbors dangers and fears, homecoming is impossible, intensifying the nostalgia for it, as expressed in the fantasy of homecoming, either to nature or to the homeland.

In such scenotopes, this red space is both open (range) and completely autonomous (rule), simultaneously acting as a metaphor of life in the south. It is different from the scene of the station in the beginning of the film because the station

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[25] (Taiwanese: Lô-chúi-khoe Kong-siā 濁水溪公社) is a well-known Taiwanese "underground" band founded in 1990. Their music has been variously described as having elements of punk, rock, nakasi, Taiwanese folk songs. And the themes of musics are mainly about social chaos, unemployment and survival plight, social movements, life frustration and sexual impulses, etc.

is a border which accommodates mobile and heterogeneous factors. This red sequence, the silence of the rural hides sound and fury, and resists outsiders. The highway suggests that the space has been striated, especially by the roadside poles and street-lights, symbolizing the "unnatural" for the countryside, and also creating a three-dimensional depth of space where the highway is like an invader into this space. Hou opens up inner space in this way, effectively extending the depth of realism as it evokes the intangible beyond the mere "image". The abstraction of the southern plains suggests a possibility that the journey in the south yields nothing: no home is found, and no salvation, chance, or new insight is produced. What appears important here is that the journey itself not the goal, but rather, film noir-like[26], the various frustrations that the characters encounter.

This is a turning point of topography on the plot chain, after this sequence, the space of the dry plain will continue and contrasts with the space of the misty mountains in Jia-yi. From the further long take at 103-106 minutes in, the south comes into the movie by the naked form of space. If we think the space of the red car-scene as the outside of the south, then the space of the motorcycle-scene is its hinterland. In the internal topography of the film there is a significant spatial displacement - from outside to inside, from the edge to depth (figs 3.43-3.45).

3.46 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.47 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

3.48 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

Now without the protection of car or train, the space shifts to the misty mountains in Jia-yi. The long take of two motorcycles captures the scene of the

[26] Film noir is a cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas, particularly those that emphasize cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. Hollywood's classical film noir period is generally regarded as extending from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Film noir of this era is associated with a low-key black-and-white visual style that has roots in German Expressionist cinematography. Many of the prototypical stories and much of the attitude of classic noir derive from the hardboiled school of crime fiction that emerged in the United States during the Great Depression. (See, e.g. Biesen (2005), p. 1; Hirsch (2001), p. 9; Lyons (2001), p. 2; Silver and Ward (1992), p. 1; Schatz (1981), p. 112). Hou Hsiao-hsien mentioned in his *Master Class*, he wanted to make *Goodbye South, Goodbye* as a noir film, but the actors and conditions could not be achieved (37).

mountain area in the south of Taiwan with its winding roads, sloping hills, rain forest, humid air and mountain tunnels. The wind blows Bian's hair (fig 3.47), and is also a signifier of space, the sea and the mountain. This very realistic presentation of this space releases visual and emotional tensions which had been suppressed by the narrative and nostalgia in earlier scenes. The natural light catching the excitement of the speed of the motorcycles is underscored by the tones of country music. The characters now blend into their surroundings in ways not seen before and free their spiritual yearning for an intense, stormy and unpredictable life. At the end of this sequence, Hou cuts into a rich layering establishing shot (fig. 3.48) which again makes the verdant space of the south into a redoubled beautiful landscape. In this shot, trees are in the foreground, the mountain is in the background, and the small train is going through the middle, reproducing the deep terrain of the southern mountainous region.

But this is the last time the film expresses the south in such a lyrical and idyllic way, when people and space are in harmony. A paradox in these seemingly harmonious spaces unfolds. Bian wants to get his compensation for the land he has lost, but his share has been pocketed by his cousin who is a policeman. Such scenes reveal the power-relations behind the control and ownership of the land, and the injustice of suppressing individual rights to it. Bian's subsequent assault and kidnapping provide further examples.

Bian did not take his share back, and offended his cousin, then he was not only beaten by his cousin, but also was kidnapped as he wanted to take a gun to enact his revenge. In this kidnapping sequence, Hou shows a spatial panorama of Jia-yi's county. The space is different from any previous space shown in the film - hallucinatorily beautiful countryside seems to signal aspirations to a better life - in contrast, this sequence represents disorder and abnormal prosperity in a southern town. This is also the first time that the southern town emerges in the film. Compared to Taipei in the green scene, the country town lacks the same kind of metropolitan abstract beauty. It is full of the sort of grassroots activity indicative of the early period of urbanization, with a variety of dark forces wrestling within it (figs 3.49-3.51).



3.49 The country town of Jia-yi 3.50 Bian is kidnapped by policemen 3.51 Policemen took Bian away

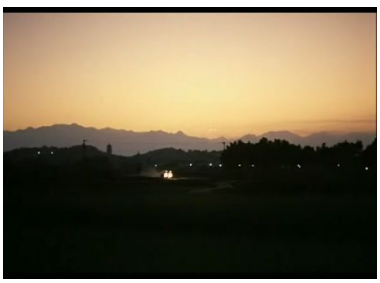
There are noisy streets, musty shops, strange neon lights and politically tendentious billboards that indicate a particular era of economic development. Bian and Gao enter different places - the betel nut stand, a small restaurant, the private casino and the telephone booth, all indicative of the daily lives of the local people - singing, eating, and gambling. Songs from karaoke bars and the sounds of gambling float in the street. This is secular life in the secular spaces in this southern county, but violence is hidden here - illegal guns, power deals and violent law-enforcement, exist everywhere. It is a space as Lefebvre said, "is a space of force, of violence, of power restrained by nothing but the limitations of its means" (262). The violence is a reflection of dysfunctional social relationships where - "the space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space" (289). Gao and Bian, the gangsters' life in this movie has been subverted, in which they no longer have the energy to oppose the dark forces and as such cannot achieve a personal ideal. Compared to their frustrations and powerlessness, policemen (such as Bian's cousin) in the film are always mighty and overbearing.

Hou emphasizes the dominant position of power, which not only controls the spatial order but also the process of plot. Bian returns to the south in order to recover his share of land that is occupied by local power; Gao goes to the south in order to deal with the land-related business for his gang. Power rests in the hands of three forces: state-owned enterprises, the peasant association and the underground gangs. Bian's plan serves as comment on the sort of power deals where a marginal group's interests and rights are jeopardized in the process of urbanization, mostly through violent means. Hou shows that such violence seems to be legitimized and normalized along with the transformation of land/identity during the whole process of

urbanization.

Hou's gangster characters do not belong to stable organizations. They invest in business, engage in economic development, and even farm, but are actually homeless people. The loss of the land means a complete loss of their identity and homeland. Bian tries to mend the fracture between his existence and land, identity and homeland, but is blocked by rural interest groups. He thus not only does not get the share of land that he deserves, but suffers a beating and detention from both local power and the police. In such an urbanized milieu, Hou shows a new power chain developing in the rural area where political deals and money are replacing the original connections of family and blood.

The rupture between the beautiful rural landscape and the real, often is metaphorical of space, the face of the rural is again marked in the last scene of the film by the form of a large space. After experiencing a series of frustrations and depressions in the south, Gao and Bian drive back to Taipei. As dawn begins to break on the rugged road, the car suddenly losses control and falls into a quiet green paddy field, accompanied only by the sounds of Bian calling for Gao. A row of flashing lights turns the viewer's attention towards dawn coming up over the distant mountains (figs. 3.52-3.54). The music suddenly stops and the deep shot of realism here seems to act as an invitation to stasis and contemplation: viewers are invited to slowly gaze, lingering on nature and its vast space. The south itself thus eventually becomes the director/audience's soulful object of the gaze.


3.52 The last scene in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* 3.53 *Goodbye South, Goodbye* 3.54 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

Here, in the logic of the topography, the film achieves an overall roaming of the space - two round trips - from the city to the country, and then return. This is also a route from the center to the edge, where the rural is the land of the end. The last scene is a

metaphor that seems to give the conclusion for whole spatial sequences, but also like a meaningful exclamation point. In this scene, the car does a U-turn and rolls off the road, which sketches out a fatalistic code - renunciation, finality and withdrawal. A moral reading of the film might perhaps interpret this ending as evidence of the fatalistic characteristics of film noir, or perhaps as an obligatory representation of punishment for a criminal act. The paddy field strengthens the impermanence of life by the stable spatial form that suggests the everyday always contains breaking, doom and unexpected accident. Certainly, in Jameson's sense, a scene like this uses dialectical opposition to complement the ideology of nature: "so empty space is conceived as an empty field, at the same time as everything in this scene undermines its 'naturality' and unmasks this seeming 'nature' as nature's opposite, as 'civilization' and industry, as human praxis" (61). Moreover, the car is actually a product of modernity, industry and urbanization and is a symbol, therefore, of time itself, while the paddy field is a spatial mark which links the past, agriculture and tradition. In this way, Gao's death might best be seen as a collision of modernity and tradition, and a failure of the yearning for the past.

In essence, what Hou is doing here is to appropriate the de-territorialized spaces he includes in a film like this as a successful way of remapping south Taiwan, generating a sense of completeness or a "totality effect" which cannot be explained by the content of the film alone. This aspect of Hou's work, and originality, is worth exploring in more detail.

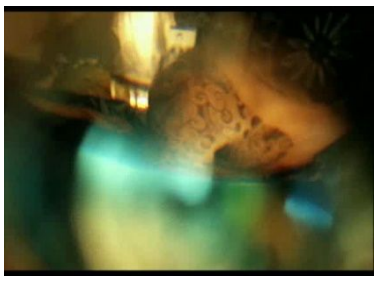
Public and Private

Almost all the interior spaces in *Goodbye South, Goodbye* are a blend of the private and the public, for example Gao's dwelling, which is shared with his partners, the family restaurant, the gambling house, cabarets, hotels, even the individual hotel room and the paddy field. In such a way, the public dimension predominates but the private one cannot be easily separated out as an independent element. This disappearance of the private space is symptomatic of Bian's lost land-identity and Gao's failed expectations for an ideal marriage.

On the surface, the paddy field appears to be open in all senses without fences blocking it in. Its public nature is, however, changing, for land and fields requisitioned

by the government and various companies are no longer 'free' spaces. As Deleuze would say, they are deterritorialized (Deleuze *A Thousand Plateaus* 441). Agricultural land is certainly not public, but private property. But the general perception of such a space is that it's open and empty which seems to invite outsiders to gaze on it at any time. But on reflection the space of the empty field rapidly unmasks itself, "not as the demonstration of a space which is open and public simultaneously, but rather as the confused attempt to image such a space, which may in fact be unimaginable" (Jameson 67).

This sort of opposition between public and private suggests that an inconsistency exists between the very conception of a public space and the regime of private property, and in particular of the commodification of land. Therefore, the paddy field is a drifting and fragile space like all the other public/private, closed/open spaces interrogated by Hou in this film: Gao's love, for example, which is represented two times in seemingly private and interior spaces, where the idea of the "private" contains an inner tension between images of the "family" and the more physical conception of privacy associated with closed bedrooms and bathrooms.



3.55 Ying watches Gao by a glass ball. 3.56 Gao is talking about his plan. 3.57 The cramped interior space.

The first one is set in Gao's place, medium shots obscure the space and blur the background (figs 3.55-3.57). The soft light invites a viewer to focus on the characters' state and the atmosphere of love - Gao is planning their future with his girlfriend Ying. But the glass-ball which appears in this scene through which Ying watches Gao, presents a magical reality and uncertainty (fig 3.55). Shen Xiao-yin thinks this scene presents Ying's subjective view, which means that Gao and his two attendants seem trapped in the flow, in Ying's eyes (49-84). Shen also thinks that this is Ying's magical, incomplete viewpoint lens (*ibid*). My view is that this scene functions as a

foreshadowing for Ying's leaving later on, and also suggests the illusion and impossibility of Gao's ideal of love.


3.58 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*


3.59 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*


3.60 *Goodbye South, Goodbye*

The second scene is set in a hotel, Hou exposes the illusory nature of space, representative perhaps of Gao's unrealistic expectations in love. Blue curtains and soft light point up the hallucination of space/love (figs 3.58-3.60). Naficy has a pertinent discussion of such a space:

> in these dislocatory sites, rooms can be rented, anonymous access to the usual amenities and comforts of home obtained, and forbidden desires fulfilled - all for a fee and without the messy and complicated human relations that characterize life at home. (253)

In this light, as places that "symbolize a way of life in transit rather than in residence" (Wall 133), hotels allegorize the drifting nature of love and space.

Jameson thinks the space of a hotel in film contains a semiotic pun, because "that 'strong' and 'positive' form of privacy, an easier representational one - the space of bedrooms and bath rooms - will be substituted" (68-69). Therefore, the concrete term "space" is imagined, not as public but rather as open - that is, as a space through which anyone can wander at will, and erase their traces. This is what Foucault refers to as heterotopias which "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable'' (26). Here, the hotel and the paddy field have a certain deep similarity: they are open, but private. Hou, I would suggest uses these two spaces in particular to refer to home and homeland, but neither of these are ever obtained by the characters he presents in this film.

The Edge and the Center

Goodbye South, Goodbye also involves some place names - Canada and America

as well as Shanghai and Shenyang (both located in mainland China). These spaces are imagined as "elsewhere" in the film, corresponding to the way Hou treats the south of Taiwan. These spaces have none of the univocity or stability of a "proper" (de Certeau 117), but they make the film a suspending of space based on the deterritorialization of home(land). The film does not deliberately present any physical global spaces, but always shows "living in a foreign land" as a spiritual yearning and longing from ordinary people.

The gesture of "living elsewhere" forces the notion of "space" to be changed from a static noun to a flexible entity that can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized. In the film, the deterritorialization of the local is forced by economic development, while reterritorialization becomes a kind of life instinct for ordinary people. The local place experiences great changes when the land is sold, the hometown is lost, and the locals are made homeless. Therefore, individual space is disappearing, with a result that ordinary people struggle to find a space of their own and subsequently have to create an imaginary space as some sort of spiritual utopia where they can dream of another, better, life.

This film, then, is a microcosm of the process of globalization. In the series of spaces presented for example, the paddy field signifies an abrupt end, a real place of death and closure. We do not expect it to end here if we follow the rhythm of film. This, then, is the sense in which it seems appropriate to inscribe this complex and unique space of the "edge of the world" into its scenotopes. The center is an object of desire and is always made and imagined in the journey from the edge to the center. In this imagined scenotope, Taipei is a place easily "entered" into, but paradoxically it is actually a failed object of desire, because, as demonstrated in the green scene, people do not really want to flee into Taipei, but to go to a more distant utopia: Gao wants to go to Shanghai, Ying is planning to go to America, and Gao's boss Xi-ge says his family have emigrated to Canada and he will join them. The film cinematically captures the link between the peripheral localised land and global centers, and expose these centers as an impossible representation - a non-space which is hard to reach. In the representation of such a space, home, relatives (e.g Bian and his cousin) and

Taiwan exist in a soothing yet desolate landscape, where a gangster (Gao) leads viewers to experience the south, and a Taiwan which everyone wants to leave. This, I would suggest, is Hou's expression of the feeling of "love at last sight" in his view of a Taiwan, in this movie at least, where the home(land) is moved, dispersed and made part of the flow of globalization (Yeh 71).

Appropriation

Gao and Bian were born in the south, return to the south, flee the south, but finally are trapped in the south, which connotes the now dysfunctional character of the rural. The fantasy of escaping from the south and Taipei to begin life elsewhere seems frustrated by a physical environment that defeats the attempt to leave its confines. Nature and daily details provide the basis for an appropriation of space incompatible with schedules, measurements and itineraries. In the case of combining the interior and the exterior, the space of appropriation overlaps with the space of individual dreams and desires. Its strategy of resistance is the attempt to escape from the deformed city and the dark countryside.

As such, *Goodbye South, Goodbye* appropriates space inherent in time, but it does not make the time abstract. Gao's death, for example, is an illustration of the loss of time: he lives in a modern world and he accepts the convenience of industrial society and urban life, but his mentality is still firmly rooted in traditional values such as his responsibility for love and family and respect for promises made. But in the modern world, these values seem outdated and ineffective, and they cannot help him achieve his dream or change the world. On the contrary, they make more disappointments for him, so that he finally loses everything - his father, his lover and his own life. In a nostalgic atmosphere, these losses are shown by gentle and de-dramatic forms, but the tragic feeling and the conflicted tension are always inherent in the film. In contrast to Gao, Bian and his girlfriend - the new generation coming from the south - are escapist, lazy, idle and have some self-destructive elements. They have a more intense confusion than Gao because they have lost their traditional beliefs and have not yet found a new direction of life. The south should be Bian's hometown, but what Hou shows is the mutual exclusion from and alienation of the hometown and the returnee.

Hou's rural films, then, are all about the process of the countryside being constantly urbanized. In *All the Youthful Days* and *Dust in the Wind*, the city and the country still retain a strong mutual attachment, but in *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, they are shown to be isolated and fractured from each other. The direction of the journey has profound symptomatic and symbolic value that shapes not only the drifting characters in the spaces shown but also the drifts of the spirit in time. Reflexive nostalgia is embedded into the film's title *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, making it highly cathartic, resonating with the multiple meanings and values of identity. At one level, "south" refers to southern Taiwan in general, which is the pre-modern agricultural space, more underdeveloped than the north. At another level, south represents directional value - as the rooted place of the aboriginal peoples, which is traditional and pastoral, and a misty spiritual space. But in fact, the film deconstructs these ideas, creating a south which is not the place of returning but the site of departure. On the surface the film appears to be a film of journeying or travel, but its inner theme is about the de-territorialization of secular space as part of rapid urbanization.

Hou once said that he made this film in order to re-present some secular spaces in south Taiwan (17). As such, Hou presents a loss of hometowns and the de/re-territorialization of space. Hou is not interested in what the land might represent in terms of the past, its origins, or rootedness, but what it represents at the moment in time, what Shen Xiao-Yin refers to as Hou catching the rhythm of contemporary Taiwan (51). As Hou himself said when talking about the way he changed the original script, he did not use the usual way, but directly catch the modern feeling and the instinctive mise-en-scene (118).

3.5 The City: a Border Vision

Hou's portrayal of urban space provides a strategy for reading his films where the built environment is mutually implicated in the construction of the common spatial images and marks of time he constructs. Whether in rural or urban movies, such images frequently appear - small towns, trains, railway stations, docks and post offices enabling him to create a world of borders and urban spaces. The borders of the maps he makes in his films are marked by long shots, and their coordinates are plotted

by the movements of the camera over the landscape (panning, tracking zooming in and out, and traveling). Openness and mobility pervades the mise-en-scene, shot composition and the narratives of his films featuring buses, cars, trains and motorcycles as vehicles and symbols of displacement of space. These in turn construct a mobile region, a suspended imagination. As a flowing space, the small town, for example, functions as a transfer station from the rural to the city, and as a distribution center for materials and crowds, farmers, miners and fishermen from the surrounding countryside.

In all of that flow the train is a special way for Hou of linking the rural and the city, opening up urban and rural spaces in which his flowing long takes can be both a symptom and a catalyst of spatial transformations. In de Certeau's sense, the train can traverse space and make itself independent of local roots (111). The railway is at once the landscape of borders and its "life blood" (Williams 163). Consequently, in his films Hou is responding to the real-life human concerns and contradictions of the new social and economic forces of his time - hope and loss, disintegration, order and false order where the train does not represent historical events accurately, but rather serves as a window into the changing notions of time and space. Mennel, in a different context, calls this 'the train effect', suggesting that it "functions as shorthand for the particular configuration of social reality, subjectivity, cognitive perception, economics, and medial representation that took place in the context of nation and modernity" (211). The "train effect" marks the changes of time, place, and perception within notional contexts of modern discourses on cities. Ships and docks serve a similar function.

In the process of urbanization, the border countryside is the buffer zone between the rural and the city functioning neither as rural nor as city. It is both the geographical space of the rural transforming to the urban, and the cultural space of traditional rural lifestyles and values transforming to urban modernity. Williams extends this idea of the geographical space of borders suggesting that they lie "between custom and education, between work and ideas, between love of place and an experience of change" (198). Therefore, Hou's border is not only set between

farms and mines, the way of the countryside going to the city, but also as a cultural border. This is embodied in Hou's admiration for traditional values and beliefs, but Hou does not resist the city, nor does any nostalgia for the rural mean he considers the rural as the ideal future. He just presents uncontrolled personal loss and sorrow in the changing of the times. This is what is sometimes called Hou's pathos (Jameson 155), but in fact it is only a sober, realistic observation of the way of the world.

Outsiders' City Map

In Hou's early films, the city acts not only as an alien and indifferent system but also as the unknown, perhaps unknowable, sum of so many lives, jostling, colliding, disrupting, adjusting, recognizing, settling, and moving again to new spaces. If the city, as Williams has said, "has dual status: casual and systemic, opaque and visible" (227), then Hou's city is casual, opaque, everyday and even dark. He observes the city from an outsider's perspective, creating an outsider's city map, so to speak, where the camera captures hurrying figures on the street, but keeps the reality behind them in a blur. In his later urban films, the characters become marginalized people without a tomorrow. Whether early migrant workers or late urban youngsters, who all live in confusion, the difference is that migrant workers have their own past, an origin of country, a homeless hometown.

In *All the Youthful Days*, the sequence shots of several teenagers from a fishing village looking out at Kaohsiung from a high building is a good example of the way the outsiders' gaze creates a city map unavailable at ground level. In this film, these young people are cheated going into an unfinished high-rise building to see a non-existent movie. They despondently look over the city from a part of that building not yet finished with walls and windows. The camera follows the characters' viewpoint and looks down, constructing a panoramic view of the city. But the city is pushed away by the height and distance of the camera position and becomes a beautiful and blurred image in a permeated mist. The noisy sounds of the 'real' city have been calmed down under this gaze. Similarly the river turns into a stationary crystal in the frame, a diagonal line extending across the whole width of the screen (figs. 3.61-3.63). This framing effectively turns the complexity of the cityscape into a much simpler

text to read.

3.61 *All the Youthful Days*.

3.62 *All the Youthful Days.*

3.63 *All the Youthful Days.*

This, then, is an imaginary map of the city, created in particular by Hou's use of pan shots because generally speaking viewers cannot experience the city at such a height in daily life, especially without the barriers of walls and windows getting in the way. It is metonymic I would suggest of the encounter between outsiders and the city. As de Certeau says, "Their elevation transfigures them into voyeur. It puts *[them]* at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes" (92). Under this mechanism of observation, the mirror image is made by the cement, steel and missing wall which reminds viewers that this might well be a mirage. As one of characters says, it is really like a big movie screen, and in color. According to de Certeau, "the panorama - city is a 'theoretical' (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices" (93). This scene thus makes the outsiders disentangle themselves from the murky intertwining of daily behaviors and makes them alien to them. For outsiders, the pleasure of such an observed mechanism is also illusory because "they live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (*ibid* 93).

All the Youthful Days shows the early style of the city of Kaohsiung in all its details. Many location shots, ferries, docks, streets, markets and billiard rooms contribute to the creation of a nostalgic everyday space in the old city. These spaces make people think of changed and unchanged parts of the city in which some things no longer exist, and other things do but are changed. In the outsiders' wanderings, images present the city like a souvenir. In their wandering route, the contemporary city disappears in some areas, such as the current financial district, cultural plazas,

parks and government offices, and in other areas it is exaggerated and expanded such as the docks, stations and food stalls. As de Certeau suggests, “To walk is to lack a place” (103). It is through walking that outsiders create their own space in the city. As such, the city is broken up into countless tiny fragments of space. These spaces cross and collide with each other and constitute a centrifugal city map where there are no striking landmarks, monuments, squares or office buildings.

In such depictions of urban space, Hou elides the dichotomy between private dwellings and automobile-dominated streets, and he holds out the tantalizing prospect of a public spatial realm that is negotiable on foot. Most striking, however, is the film’s predilection for those sort of public spaces that Krakauer identifies as uniquely cinematic: crowed streets, docks, stations and factory interiors. It offers a “walking cure” through which the city is encountered and rendered spatially coherent and productively resonant. Film creates a recording of the tour between the walking and the camera. Places of characters’ past which are captured by Hou’s camera are not just a geographic map to read but a historical book.

All the Youthful Days is a good example of the way that Hou captures this tension between geography and history by exploring the collision of the urban and the rural. The film presents outsiders who are unfamiliar with the system of signs in the city unable to recognize the sign of a bus stop or to find a road by recognizing its street sign, thus experiencing what Ben Singer describes as a total “Benjaminian shock” (72). Hou shows this shock by illustrating that the two different spatial systems between the city and the rural are not open to each other in all senses. In the process of recognizing and knowing urban signs, it is, as Williams said, that “the men and women who came from the country to the cities did not need to be told what they had lost, any more than they needed to be told what they might struggle to gain in their new world” (271). Jameson also thinks of this as “properly Third-World urban representations, all that can be conjectured as a minimal generalization is perhaps the now conventional form of the peasant as witness, the narrative point of view of the villager seeing the metropolis for the first time” (*The Geopolitical Aesthetic* 154).

Jameson’s statement is debatable because Taiwan is not the Third World, but from

the outsiders' perspective, the city itself is a place full of changes where the signs of modernization provide the means to shorten the distance between people (between urban and rural) through technology and mass media. But this distance, and the Benjaminian shock it creates, is only superficial. Hou's importance is that he provides rich clues about the living practices of outsiders by their daily routines, or the nature of their lives, while speculating on the city's potential to facilitate a memorable space of representation.

So, for example, scenes of labor in Hou's view of old Kaohsiung suggest a transfer of rural labor and mode of production where outsiders quickly become materialized and marginalized. A drifting and unstable life forces them to live together and form various small communities, where their lives, like their dwellings, become like a closed, isolated, world in the city. Hou shoots this space from outside to inside to emphasize its self-contained and internal openness (fig.3.64). Such spaces are different from the urban slums and industrial communities, as they are scattered, transitional, spaces in the city signaling disintegration of the rural, and foregrounding the wanderings and depression of outsiders in what is best described as 'nowhere'.

3.64 *All the Youthful Days*

3.65 *All the Youthful Days*

3.66 *All the Youthful Days*

These enclosed living spaces correspond to the closed labor spaces where people become tiny parts on an impersonal assembly line (fig.3.65). The repeated shots of the large buildings, overshadows the smallness of these workers, whose monotonous and repetitive movements reduces them to parts of the machinery. This impersonality is also reflected in the way that Hou uses layered locations to explore the relationship between outsiders and the city. For example, figure 3.66 shows an open shot, with boats docking at the shore in the medium shot, and the beautiful, blurred cityscape in the long shot as the far background. This contrasts with the laborers in the close shot,

reaffirming the way that Hou lets the spatial layout follow the subtext which basically says that the beautiful city is always in the distance, existing in a dream-like landscape.

In this film, the outsiders' living map is from the closed residence to the closed factory, and in between this are secular spaces brought by their walking. They create an outsiders' sight for the camera by roaming, this sight in itself separates them from the city and puts them outside the city. While *All the Youthful Days* presents the mobility and vitality of space in a city, Hou shows that within this space its early migrants have not really conquered the city and have not been conquered by the city either. In *Dust in the Wind* set in the Taipei of the 1970s Hou shows a more detailed and concentrated relation between outsiders and the city. Having left their hometown Yuan and Yun's life in the city is not easy. Yuan engaged in heavy labor and changed jobs frequently, but in his spare time he studies in a night school. Yun apprentices to a private tailor, at the beginning she burned her hand as she was unskilled. But Hou's focus is not the representation of suffering, but the life modality of this migrant group, and the city situation at this stage.

3.67 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.68 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.69 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.70 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.71 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.72 *The Dust in the Wind*

This sequence of shots (figs.3.67-3.69) which show migrant workers' living spaces in Taipei, are presented as gloomy, narrow places. The moving photograph album of the city includes a messy, rough environment and a commercial cityscape -

shopping malls and department stores (figs. 3.71-3.72). An establishing shot of the city from the exterior of Yuan's dwelling (fig. 3.68), for example, throws light on the way space can be experienced as time, what Michelson calls a "time monument" (Michelson 173).[27] Here, the figure and the suspended balcony are all enclosed in old buildings, where the figure is very small and seems like a floating white shadow in the image. In this way, the longer the zoom time lasts, the bigger the space contained by it becomes. In this four-minute sequence, the camera captures the early urban situation from inside to outside, from top to bottom and from wide to narrow, unfolding as it does the depressed sense from the alleys hiding behind the city. The camera has effectively moved the viewer from an enclosed space of a specific loft into the desolate alleys of city. Fig. 3.70 presents Yuan and Yun passing the alley, where the narrow aisle and concrete walls squeeze the space into a line suggesting the impossibility of escape from this space.

Expanded and compressed locations, mise-en-scene, and shot composition in Hou's cinema, like these in *The Dust in the Wind,* are spatiotemporal propositions about displacement and emplacement. Every open and closed location, mise-en-scene, or specific shot provides spatiotemporal indices and demonstratives that situate the diegetic characters (sometimes using their own proper names) in time and place, while providing a commentary about, or allegorizing on, displacement and emplacement.

3.73 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.74 *The Dust in the Wind*

3.75 *The Dust in the Wind*

[27] Annette Michelson argues that Michael Snow's *Wavelength* is a metaphor for consciousness, drawing on ideas from phenomenology in support her thesis. Michelson discusses *Wavelength* as the film which "reintroduced expectation as the core of film form after Brakhage and Warhol, redefining space as an "essentially a temporal notion". See "Toward Snow," in *The Avant-Garde Film: a Reader of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1987, 173-83. Oringinary Published in *Art Forum*, June, 1971.



3.76 *The Dust in the Wind* 3.77 *The Dust in the Wind* 3.78 *The Dust in the Wind*

In the presentation of interior space, the camera penetrates dark and blurry areas in the city - the backstage of a cinema, private workshops and family shops, which are both outsiders' workplaces and living spaces. Yun's workplace in the tailor shop is suspended in the middle of a staircase and is enclosed by iron bars. Whether the camera shoots it from the outside (fig.3.75) to the inside or vice versa (fig.3.76), it looks like a prison cell. A change of a character's job does not necessarily improve their living conditions, whether from a noisy workshop to a shabby loft, or from a private shop to the back of a cinema (figs 3.73, 3.77, 3.78). Such spaces appear often in this seemingly plotless movie, but all the while Hou is recording the social and economic patterns of early urbanization in Taipei. He continually demonstrates the hardship of city life, for example Yuan endures a harsh boss and poor working conditions for a long time just for reading some prints in a printing workshop. But Hou is not making a film that is simply concerned about social injustice, he captures and opens up these spaces in order to enable the loss of individual existence in such repressed situations to be revealed. In so doing, hidden and shaded places in the city disturbing the apparent order and prosperity of the city, surface, reshaping perceptions not just of the city but also in critically reshaping the relationship between people and that city.

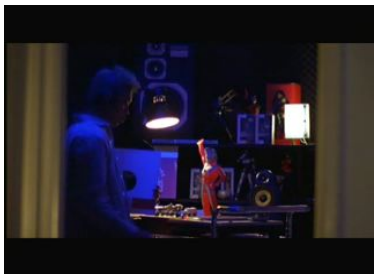
Claustrophobic Dynamics

Millennium Mambo(2000) depicts in detail the invasion of technology in private interior spaces, and the emergence of compensatory medium spaces. It opens with a slow motion shot of Vicky (the heroine) running over a land bridge in the night, her floating figure, the cold blue light and the monster-like bridge, mixes into the rhythm of electronic music, form an incongruous futuristic vision (figs. 3.79-3.81).



3.79 *Millennium Mambo* 3.80 *Millennium Mambo* 3.81 *Millennium Mambo*

Creating a dreamy space like this is one of the marks of Hou's later urban films. The film is based on a misplaced time design that traces the past (the 2000s) from the virtual future (the 2010s). Scenes are shot in cold colors and are edited at a confusing pace to imply not only the change of time, but also the change in how time is experienced at different points in space. Taking Taipei as the background, this film reflects the increasingly centrifugal character of space by virtue of its conspicuous omission of known city landmarks. The film emphasizes the city's fantastic high-rise modernist architecture with multiple pathways of traffic below, reflecting the changing moments of temporality and space in the move from modernity to postmodernity. The film also explores problems of space and temporality by presenting non-coherent images of the city in a nonlinear narrative that engages with the fact "that the city, the built and lived environment, changes everyday mirroring the lack of memory (Mennel 142). In an allegorical reading, the film asks how our human memories and emotions can be maintained in the face of the onslaught of urban change and virtual reality.



3.82 *Millennium Mambo* 3.83 *Millennium Mambo* 3.84 *Millennium Mambo*

A large amount of blue light is diffused in the film which together with electronic, audiovisual and other mediating technologies creates a strong sense of alienation between people and space at the end of the millennium (figs.3.82-3.84). This movie shows almost no real locations in Taipei, instead the scenes tend to concentrate on interiors, whether in Hao (Vicky's boyfriend) and Vicky's cramped apartment, or Jie's

(the gangster brother) home, giving the film a highly claustrophobic atmosphere, in both its concrete spaces (e.g. nightclubs and karaoke bars), and also its virtual spaces (e.g. Hao's room of video games and electronic music).

The claustrophobic sense is reinforced by the coexistence of the public and the enclosed. For example, the sort of Karaoke bars and nightclubs shown in this film are public spaces but are actually closed off to most people, which suggest a double absence of emotion and communication. These are compensatory spaces of emotion containing explosive passions, where through the noise and lights normal communication is blocked and new and alternative forms are created. Jean Baudrillard calls this a hallucinatory space where we project ourselves, "into a fictive, random world for which there is no other motive than this violent abreaction to ourselves. Building ourselves a perfect virtual world so as to be able to opt out of the real one" (35).

This microcosmic illusion is brought about by the electronic media finally arriving at the macroscopical illusion of space and time. For example, the narration of voice over is Vicky looked back to the past (2000s) from the future (2010s), where the past is only the bifurcation of a virtual future, thus allowing the present moment to escape out from the reality, and acts as an agency of dreams and memories. Time thus presents some jumping links such as the scene of Yubar (Japan)[28] that should appear at the end, but appears in the middle, supporting the hallucination of time. It is obvious that the film shows that the order of time can be manufactured, manipulated and reversed if it is based on memory. Meanwhile, in the time labyrinth, the space also practices the reflexive contrast - Yubari, juxtaposed with Taipei in this film, is a strong reflexive space contrasting with the claustrophobic interior of Taipei, where its distant snow country, unlike Taipei, seems like a fairytale world but just like the character's sleepwalking of memory in the narrative layout.

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[28] Yubari is a middle city in Hokkaido in Japan, which had a prosperous period of coal mining, but also fell into financial difficulties due to the closure of mines. The city started to seek industrial restructuring in the 1990s, so it organized an annual International Film Festival.

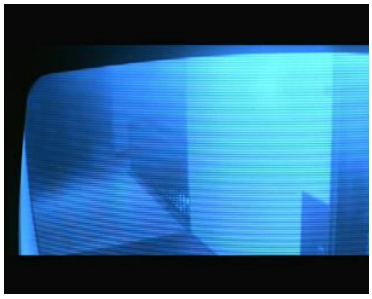


3.85 Yubari in *Millennium Mambo* 3.86 *Millennium Mambo* 3.87 *Millennium Mambo*

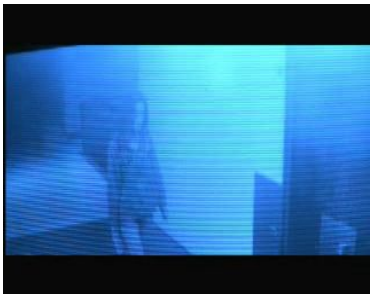
Slow pan shots capture the panorama of Yubari at 41 minutes in the film, while the voice-over is indicative of the past, so that the scene creates a dreamy atmosphere. The camera shows posters of old classic films in the street conveying the impossibility of shedding the past, and by juxtaposing the beautiful winter landscape of Yubari and the confusion of urban Taipei, Hou creates a dream-like experience where his own nostalgia is unfolded in the narrative. A yearning for other times attaches to the space: snow landscapes in Yubari, the grandmother's snack bar, old movie posters, quiet streets, which stand in contrast to the alienated, fragmented Taipei (figs.3.85-3.87). This spatiotemporal journey of elaborate structured portrays the north nostalgically, and shapes the representation of the memory and space also characterizing the film's open ending.

The film manipulates time and space in various ways, making use of such postmodern features as "bullet time", slow motion, and quick jump-cuts. But it seems that the more technology advances, the more the cinematic city is imbued with nostalgia, and the advanced technology becomes both the reason for, and the result of, the nostalgia. It also provides a more dialectical way of thinking: in a fragmented world, where media itself and human experience are both fragmented. Except for inversion and dislocation of time, the medium space stresses the reflexivity of space, such as the monitor which is used at 64 minutes in the movie. After the breaking up of Vicky and Hao, Vicky come to Jie's home, then Jie asks her what happened and lets her into his apartment. It should be shot in front of the door, but the director presents it by the image of an electronic monitor of door locks (figs.3.88-3.90). This approach creates distance and doubt between diegetic characters and between them and the audience, which are further modulated by surveillance, exhibitionism, and other forms

of visual power relations. There is considerable ambiguity regarding whether the audience is gaining or losing sight, hearing, or power. Similarly, this reflexivity is also reflected in the voice-over: Vicky narrates her own story, but uses the third person-"she"- instead of the first person-"I"-which gives the subjective position an outside perspective, and functions to create slippery situations where identity and narrative agency are multiplied, camouflaged or obfuscated. This intentional misplacement gives the film a strong alienation and divisive tone, especially facing the dark memories in Vicky narrative from her calm and indifferent tone. When the narrative is no longer committed to creating reality, speech becomes disjointed with its subject, creating a new world of reality based on metaphor.



3.88 The monitor is applied in the scene.



3.89 Vicky appears in the monitor.

3.90 Jie lets Vicky into his home.

The open spatiotemporal configurations in this film, then, tend to express the there-ness and then-ness of the homeland, while the presentation of closed-form Taipei favors the inscription of the present-ness and the here-ness of fragmental spaces. By the reflexive question of the truth that claims visual representation, the film as postmodernist simulacrum promotes the absence or insignificance of any real location, city or otherwise, and endorses not only the paranoia of the characters but also of the viewers.

Placelessness of Space

Hou's representation of the post-modern urban space, and the isolation of people in that space can also be seen clearly in *A Time for Youth*[29] which represents the control and deformation of space by the fast and the furious. In this film people

[29] *A Time for Youth* (Chinese name is "The Dream of Youth") is set in 2005 Taipei, which takes the story of Taiwan artist Ouyang Jing as the prototype. Jing is a bisexual who is suffering from heart disease and epilepsy, but she loves life and music. The film represents her emotions and life situation: she has a close girlfriend Micky, but she also falls in love with a man - the photographer Zhen. Hou Hsiao-hsien uses this film to explore the ways that youth challenge the limits of life.

completely lose normal contact and communication amongst themselves in the spaces they occupy.

3.91 *A Time for Youth.*

3.92 *A Time for Youth.*

3.93 *A Time for Youth.*

3.94 *A Time for Youth.*

3.95 *A Time for Youth.*

3.96 *A Time for Youth.*

The city of Taipei is once again the background against which the film is shot although it is presented in a more open and realistic style than *Millennium Mambo*. The opening of the film has the camera cutting to a long single take of a motorbike speeding its way along the Taipei highway. The highway is backed by outlines of skyscrapers and various other large buildings, and it is this landscape, rather than the vehicle, that Hou invites the viewer to initially follow. The camera follows the flow of traffic on the highway and then shifts to an everyday scene from urban Taipei (figs. 3.91-3.93). This image of the urban space that the two main characters will then inhabit becomes synonymous with isolation and alienation. This sense of spatial disorientation is further conveyed in the opening sequence. In a series of long shots whose central relationship seems at first difficult to ascertain, the city appears as a disconnected series of traffic-conveying streets and strip-mall buildings. Once again, the impression conveyed by this neighborhood is one of little cohesive spatial identity functioning more as an overwhelming spatial expanse that frustrates rather than invites.

After some time the motorcycle rejoins the highway and it is then that the camera focuses on the two people riding it, one being a woman trying to get warmth and

comfort by holding the man's body (fig.3.95), while her body is trembling, like the symptoms of epilepsy (fig.3.96). In later scenes we will see again the woman going on dates with the man, in which the motorcycle goes through the noisy streets and speeds along the deserted highway. In these scenes, they speak very few words and generally without significant communication. However, the impressive setting of the (post)modern city, with its over-sized architecture, its celebration of machinery, and its reduction of humans to orderly masses, fetishizes the surface aspects of (post)modernity, emphasizing in this film in particular, the emptiness of human beings and the city itself.

3.97 *A Time for Youth*

3.98 *A Time for Youth*

3.99 *A Time for Youth*

To that end, this movie focuses on the alienation of emotion in an alienated city space. The man Zhen is a photographer and where he lives more like a darkroom than a living space: many photos hang on the wall, the light is blurred and hallucinative, suggestive of refined passion and sexual desire (fig. 3.97). The woman Jing and her same-sex lover Micky live in an elegant apartment, where she lights scented candles seemingly filling the gap of emotional betrayal and indifference (fig. 3.98). The gay bar replaces the sort of public space, like the karaoke bar shown in *Millennium Mambo,* and becomes a hallucinative space intertwined with love and desire (fig. 3.99). But they are a kind of placeless space, filled with elegant non-local things functioning more as images than as objects to be used. On women and space, Jameson thinks:

> The women's dramas are spatial, not only because they are somehow postmodern (although the characterization of postmodernity in terms of the new social movements in general and of feminism in particular is a widespread one), but also and above all because they are urban, and even

> more because they are articulated within this particular city. (*The Geopolitical Aesthetic* 153)

Accordingly, this movie touches a marginal group - lesbians and their daily life. The characters embrace a bisexual female singer's experience of the city, disorientation, double alienation nomadic, postmodern sexuality. The film offers a dilemma of liberated sex and gender with neither hurt nor deprivation. Even the city offers them some place as the queer playground, but they still have huge insecurity for the future and loyalty. In addition, the lesbian in the film is a girl with a congenital heart disease, and epilepsy, both life-threatening. Therefore, her life is more confused, broken, passionate and temporal than most other people. The experience is represented in the relationship between Jing and Micky and Zhen, which is an encounter without beginning and end, only fragments of passion released in the distorted cityscape and rapid moving sequences. At the end of the film, Jing's girlfriend leaves her and leaves a suicide note, but in the next shot (the last sequence), the camera cuts to Jing with Zhen riding a motorcycle speeding on the highway.

Speed is important in Hou's work. As Foucault once emphasized, the complex imbrication of three factors in spatial forms - territory, communication and speed exceed received understandings of the architectural and usefully define centrifugal space (qtd. in Dimendberg 175). Dimendberg also thinks that the spatial centrifugal variant is located in a shift toward immateriality, invisibility and speed. Separation replaces concentration, distance supplants proximity, and the highway and the automobile supersedes the street and the pedestrian, where centripetality facilitates escape or evasion by facilitating invisibility in an urban crowd (*ibid* 178). Accordingly, this scene at the end of this film clearly highlights urban centripetality from speed and alienation, where, although there is an open urban location, this large space is desolate and depressing. Centrifugal space exacerbates fragmentation and the alienation of space. This fragmentary experience - now accelerated by "motoring fast" - has remained a perceptual condition, especially in this film. Benjamin recognized the cinematic quality of the metropolis, and his own writing mimics the process and effect of editing and juxtaposing interior and exterior spaces when he describes urban space

as “now a landscape, now a room” (10). Human beings in the metropolis are continually subordinated to the material dimension of (post)modernity in shots of modernist architecture, industrial design and electricity.

As such, the city in Hou’s urban films is often associated with a lack of emotion, and an acting style is developed according to which actors deliver their lines solely by moving their bodies. Simmel referred to this type of emotional detachment linked with the city and alienation as resulting from “the intensification of nervous stimulation” (175). The typical character in Hou’s films thus reflects Simmel’s description of the “blase attitude”, a psychic phenomenon of “unconditional nervous stimulation” (178). Mennel further considered that

> film associates the city with alienation, isolation, danger, moral decay, and a suppressed but very present sexuality. The alienation of characters finds expression in their repeated movement alone through the urban space and their chance encounters with other lonely characters. (49)

In this way, Hou’s repeated spectacle of highway and urban landscape reinforce this huge loneliness and floating desire. The city skyline of fast-moving vehicles, highways, viaducts, railings and taxis cannot provide a belonging space of emotion, but simply promotes a helpless and fragmented feeling. These cityscapes, especially in Hou’s mobile long shots, are read and experienced by the audience, but they do not refer to concrete local places, or the spaces of spiritual yearning. They are the globalized spaces increasingly inhabited by characters and their cultural foundations losing their sense and identity of the local.

This loss is particularly represented in Hou’s later works as a symptom of globalization leading to fragmentary personal experience and the placelessness of space. The distorted space of speed, for example, demonstrate the disappearing of essential differences between places, whether apartments, hotels, or squares and highways. Similarly, Edward Relph examines ways in which places may be experienced authentically or inauthentically. He writes:

> An authentic sense of place is a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places - not mediated and distorted through a

> series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions. (64)

He argues that, in our modern era, an authentic sense of place is being gradually overshadowed by a less authentic attitude that he calls placelessness: "the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place" (*ibid* preface).

But in depicting this anxiety from the homogeneity of space, Hou tries to discover and recover the characteristics of both local and unifying space. He focuses on many urban secular spaces - alleys, markets and snack booths - all of which characterize the everyday dimension of the city. The camera is often frozen in a position where vehicles and people come and go into the frame and continuously break the composition, or the camera slowly pans from the far to the near, like looking for a character in a crowd and thus implicitly forcing a viewer's eyes to slide to the depth of street and the city (fig. 3.100-3.102).

3.100 *A Time for Youth*

3.101 *A Time for Youth*

3.102 *A Time for Youth*

Vehicles coming and going bring a short break into the frame but also construct a real-life streetscape (fig.3.100). In scenes like this Hou tries to link together the individual space and the city, internal space and external space, the past and the present, creating a heterogeneous unity through his portrayal of the hybridity of space. This is a mark of Hou's later films, but also his blind spot, because while he tries to present urban life, his vision from the borders blocks him from fully going into the center of the city life and catching completely its inner spirit.

Lives of marginalized groups involve a tension of passion and rebellion, often characterized the most by consumerist and superficial dimensions of the city. To this end Hou has said that modern people's emotions are very open and have many options,

but they also lead to confusion for those who cannot find their direction (Assayas *A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-hsien*), like so many characters in his films. So, those youngsters such as Bian in *Goodbye South, Goodbye*, Vicky in *Millennium Mambo*, and the lesbians in *A Time for Youth* indulge in dark emotions and passions. Urban life has its inherent orders and energy like the countryside, but this is not easily determined in Hou's urban movies, as his city is very much the homeless city; a city of the displaced.

Derrida, for example, thinks that all national (i.e. all modern state) culture "is rooted first of all in the memory and anxiety of a displaced - or displaceable-population. It is not only time that is out of joint, but space, space in time, spacing" (83). The displaced and the displaceable is the measure of history, which advances through uprooting. In this light I want to emphasize that Hou's films, where his various representations of the city are central to his visual story (or the micro-history) of time coming out of joint in a space that ceased to be itself a long time ago, show a space in progress, 'a spacing' to use Derrida's term. As an homage to the visual history of Taiwan, Hou's long, obviously staged traveling shots, recall a national memory of landscape, what a review of Hou's films should be defined as 'Cinema against forgetfulness'. It is a cinema about the uncanny universality of the local and marginal, and Hou's is such a cinema. It questions the univocity of history and the planning of space, conscious that administrated space results in various forms of exile. It captures the moments of transition from being to non-being in the nuances of bodies that keep moving through sheer willpower. And yet it knows itself to be susceptible to deconstruction and oblivion. For Hou, space, like his treatment of time in space, has implicit adjacent relationships with tradition and modernity, modernity and post-modernity, industry and agriculture, edge and center, urbanization and globalization. Time and space completes a unity of form and content in Hou's films, and they do so most particularly in his treatment of the city and urban spaces and in his treatment of landscape and rural open spaces.

3.6 Spiritual Borders

As I hope to have showed in this chapter, Hou has concentrated in his work on

that unresolved complex of impulses and attachments of which, "the relation of country and city, as states of mind and feeling, was the most evidently available form" (Williams 268). Hou's rural experience is rich and real, but the depiction of the border in his films calls for better understanding the close relationship between the rural and the city rather than confrontation and division between them, than has often been given in other analyses of his works. As a border person himself, Hou does not belong to the city, nor is he entirely representative of rural farmers, he is a man in a changing world. The "border country" is his space of life and growth. His autobiographical movie - *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* - makes this clear. His family came from Guangdong in mainland China, then moved to Taiwan and was living in Fengshan (a small town in southern Taiwan) until he joined the army and was then professionally educated in film. His family is not a rural family engaged in agricultural labor. Hou is one of the many professional people who work within this border structure, often with uncertainty about where they really belong in it. This uncertainty and rootlessness is the typical feature of the border: not the city and not the rural. This gives his movies a special openness, not only toward the text itself, but also toward the social formations that produce and receive his work. That work is about a diverse and mixed world, where the everyday life of ordinary people can be swallowed up by a rapidly re-structuring society, where new technology, industry and consumerism impact on traditional values and ethics. The Taiwanese dialect, for example, is increasingly mixed with Mandarin; and underworld language is mixed with formal language symptomatic perhaps of a world which is neither of the ordered, future city, nor the quiet, conservative countryside.

It is, for Hou, and the characters he puts in it, a border world enabling him to explore change, confusion, alienation and loss. In this way, each film such as *All the Youthful Days*, *Dust in the Wind*, *A Summer at Grandpa's* and *Goodbye South, Goodbye* can be seen as a microcosm of the changing world in which the rural and the urban open to and interact each other. These films articulate the degree to which the action in the film is inflected by the border, where the boundaries between the rural space and the metropolis remain permeable. At once separated from the city yet

unable to resist contemplating it, Hou's position as a critical observer of such boundaries and borders is constantly reiterated throughout the films, marking out his significant importance as an original and distinctive filmmaker.

Space as a Time Monument

In closing this chapter, in the films I have discussed here I have tried to show how Hou accurately presents the "crisis of choice" of people in the advent of urbanization and modernization, and the ensuing chaos and unrest at the deterritorialized nexus that connects the urban and the rural. In so doing, I have shown how he reveals not only the contradictions and paradoxes in city-life, but also how the city fundamentally changes the rural and affects the human sense of displacement and belonging. Several of his movies capture the migrant workers' plight in the city, and their experience transiting from the rural to the city, in the long and extensive transformations consequent to urbanization, the rural moves towards dis-integration, to the point of breaking, while the city becomes (more and more) complex, magical and unpredictable. I have also shown how the landscapes in Hou's films convey an emotional gaze for the rural but not a pure nostalgia for the past. The spiritual texture of his films suggests that the city and the rural are all not the ideal destination, and there is no real homeland for modern people.

Williams believes that it is the isolated treatment of the urban and rural which results in their isolation (291). But I have tried to show here that in Hou's films this isolation is not a romantic view made simply for film but is caused by a real-life fault of politics, economy, and development planning. More importantly, Hou's corpus does not present the city and the country as a simple dichotomy. Instead, it captures societal shifts and interactions, sometimes in similar, and other times quite different ways in the individual films. The rural in Hou's corpus presents different forms of "time monument", for example, Hou shows that it has always been there, changed and disappearing maybe. Importantly, I wanted to show that his border vision drives him to capture the outsiders' hopeless world and the marginal groups' disoriented space enabling his personal experience and perspective to constitute an ethically viable form of historical representation in his films, where he can both show and critique the

vicissitudes of history in an individual life in the stage of social transformation. I have further wanted to show that it is significant that he sees this history through the process of the long transformation of rural Taiwan, into a more urbanised society where the traditional groups are dissolved and replaced by migrant workers. His films offer a way of drawing attention to an actual phase of a history which has gone largely unrecorded but which is undoubtedly there. Hou's important contributions as a filmmaker thus rests on the fact that he uses film to speak for the many who may never get to speak for themselves about such historical change. His films therefore depart from official historiography about the representation of urbanization: they document undocumented other histories - histories that tend to be locked away in the lacunae of official historiography.

In this way, Hou's films dispel some of the uncertainties of the present, and establish a sense of continuity with a more localised past. But, given the overwhelming hegemonic realist vision of the country as the "true Taiwan", it is necessary for him to set the narratives of his films in the past in order to better maintain a sense of continuity or to proclaim a deep sense of national identity.[30] It is not enough simply to represent rural Taiwan, or at least that particular version of rural Taiwan that has taken hold of the real images of the ordinary people and secular world. Taiwan is thus remapped and configured in the time of significant transformations in Hou's films, most especially by his very distinctive, and original, poetics of spatiality and time; a poetics which incorporates individual narratives into a multifaceted, complex reality, which is both heterogeneous and homogeneous, tangible and intangible, private and public. It is a poetics which has at its very core a powerful motivation to re-read, and re-map history.

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[30] Here the national identity means "Taiwan identity". The history of unification and separation between Taiwan and mainland China is well known: before 1945, Taiwan was a Japanese colony, while mainland China was variously colonized by the Japanese and other foreign powers. After 1949, Taiwan island was controlled by the KMT, while mainland China and Taiwan Island have markedly different histories in the political realm and also in terms of their stages in economic development. Hou's movies represent identity characters of Taiwan island whichare different from the mainland Chinese. His Taiwan trilogy directly refers to the political and historical traumas of this difference. "Home" or "a sense of belonging" in Hou's films do not therefore point to "mainland China", or to any kind of imagined community, CCP, KMT or DDP, but to a very specific Taiwan regional identity.

CHAPTER 4

The Poetics of Memory and Mourning

A Possibility of History in the Taiwan Trilogy

Mourning without solidarity is the beginning of madness.

—Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects* (1990).

Ewa Mazierska once wrote that "cinema is a part of history, namely a discourse on the past" (1). That past is often strange and mysterious to the individual. Movies are commonly used as transmitters of that past and history, often seeking to reconcile them with the present. But as Jameson suggests, in the postmodern era of consumer capitalism, the present changes so quickly that we lose a sense of both the past and the present, thereby becoming schizophrenics who are unable to differentiate between different moments of history and our own biography (125). In *Between Memory and History* (1989), Pierre Nora makes a similar observation: "The acceleration of history", has resulted in "an increasing slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, yielding a general perception that anything and everything may disappear - these indicate a rupture of equilibrium" (7).

Andreas Huyssen develops a complementary argument to that offered by Jameson and Nora, maintaining that the gap between past and present is disappearing because "the recent and not so recent pasts impinge upon the present through modern media of reproduction like photography, film, recorded music, and the internet, as well as through the explosion of historical scholarship and ever more voracious museal culture" (1). Anton Kaes puts it in even simpler terms: "[The] further the past recedes, the closer it becomes. Images, fixed on celluloid, stored in archives, and reproduced thousands of times, render the past ever-present" (ix).

So, the boundaries between the past and the present melt. The unmediated, "pure" past becomes impossible to reach. And with that melting, history enters a state of

crisis. Mazierska elaborates on this saying:

> The sign of the crisis of history (as well as its ability for renewal and development) is, on the one hand, an immense growth in metahistorical research and, on the other, an increase in what tended to be left behind or marginalized in historical studies, namely micro-history or history written from below, which includes oral history and family history. (3)

In the academic world, this sense of a crisis in history has created the development of "memory studies" and its penetration into other disciplines of the humanities, such as literature and film studies. At the same time, the "memory boom" adds to the perception of the current crisis in historical research (Klein 2000). The shift from history to memory is attributed to the Holocaust: a historical event which, due to being perceived as a traumatic rupture in the Western experience and understanding of history, defies "ordinary" historical representation and can be accessed only through the work of memory (Mazierska 4; Winter 53; Hirsch 1-13).

This memory boom inevitably raises a question about the relationship between history and memory. Pierre Nora signals the crisis of memory thus: "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" and "there are lieux de memoire (sites of memory), because there are no longer milieux de memoire, real environments of memory" (7). Nora's arguments coincide with Michel Foucault, who argues that "what the workers at the end of the nineteenth century knew about their past was remarkable and this knowledge is fast shrinking" (25). Nora perceives history as an aggressor on memory, whose "true mission is to suppress and destroy it" (9). Nora's prose contains certain extreme elements, but today, we inevitably accept his invitation to face and talk about the past.

Kerwin Lee Klein thinks that we "use memory as a synonym for history to soften our prose, to humanize it, and to make it more accessible... Memory appeals to us partly because it projects an immediacy we feel has been lost from history" (129). This means, as Mazierska has said, that is "an edification of a wit-ness or anybody who remembers over a professional historian who has only a second-hand knowledge of the past" (4).

In visual media like contemporary cinema, there is a strong tendency to present past events via recourse to somebody's memory or cultural representations. In non-mainstream/avant-garde filmmaking, the tendency of "memorizing history" is even stronger (Skoller 2005). A famous and most controversial example is *Shoah* (1985) by Claude Lanzmann. The director of this film does not use any documentary footage to represent or confront the Holocaust. He does so entirely by interviews with people who remembered the genocide, who held onto snippets of traces of past events in the present, such as trains and train platforms, and by his showing empty shots of absent of Jews where they were once present. Through these ways Lanzmann ponders the question of history and its representation whereby the past is un-representable as past; it can only be represented in and as the present.

I am interested in that theorizing and representation of history and memory, particularly in the way that a director like Hou represents the past in a place like Taiwan by going beyond the gap between fiction and documentary, but not falling into the "trap of history discourse". I am further interested in how those un-representable situations of history are represented in his films whilst avoiding the "nostalgic reconstruction of history" (Jameson 225) by his not using, the more common "fetishism of violent image" (LaCapra 78). I am particularly interested here in Hou's "Taiwan Trilogy" - *A City of Sadness*, *Good Men*, *Good Women*, and *The Puppetmaster*, together with his autobiographical film *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* - films which highlight the relationships between personal memory and historical trauma, and between narrative forms and national identity. These films all touch on large historical facts: the 2-28 Incident, the Second Sino-Japanese War, KMT's White Terror and the U.S. defense of Taiwan in the Korean War, which are commented on by Hou not as taken-for-granted historical facts but as they were experienced in ordinary peoples' lives: in their disillusionment, death and melancholy. Hou does not place the traumatic history of these events into "fetishized and totalizing narratives" (LaCapra 78), but into the telling of ordinary people's stories in what might best be described as a roundabout representation for the unrepresentability of where "recollection, in image or words, does not resuscitate anything, but it does save

the historical real from indifference, from oblivion" (Roth 196). Hou does so in a way, I argue here, in the words of Didi-Huberman:

> So that history, liberated from the pure past (that absolute, that abstraction) might help us to open the present of time. The saving does not promise a particular future, but it does open possibilities. And possibilities, imagined with the help of trace, survivors, are all we can gleam from the traumatic past. (171)

In this way, Hou's films deconstruct dominant ideas of traumatic history with its refusal of transparent storytelling, by radically asserting the impossibility of representing the past in such a way with its absence of personal witnessing. Rather, Hou creates a kind of instantiation of the discourse in order to resist the stereotyped approach of historical representation and its doubtful authenticity.

As such, his "subjective deconstruction of history" (Mazierska 5) is based on personal memories in order to interrogate and then restate history, where "each of the films mounts to a critique of the instrumentality of history for national identity politics and forcefully resists the idea of history as a narrative capable of subsuming and disciplining the heterogeneity of the social body" (Ma 29). I am particularly interested in the narrative devices of memory enactment which Hou uses in order to revisit the 'official' history of national identity in Taiwan, especially his deployment of the film within the film, the semi-documentary and the personal voice-over. This recalls Jameson's view that films should find new ways to approach historical material that offers the audience a subjective experience of history in post-modern contexts (*Signatures of the Visible* 218-219). For Žižek, that would entail not the pursuit "to recreate reality within the narrative fiction...but, on the contrary, to make us discern the fictional aspect of reality itself, to experience reality itself as fiction". For Žižek, this would be the "ultimate achievement of film art" (77).

With these thoughts in mind I examine Hou's Taiwan trilogy and *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, with its particular emphasis on the personal experience of historical trauma, and the dismantling of dominant history with what Mazierska has called "micro-history or history written from below, which includes oral history and

family history" (3). Hou's mise-en-scene steers away from the phantom of history, but unfolds in the trivial sequences of personal memory that in rendering processes of memories as micro-historical representations frees the audience from the captivity of the typical events, and returns a subjective sense of history to the viewer. I begin with the premise that Hou's Taiwan trilogy is a provocative text on memory as historiography. I argue that through these films Hou challenges the spectator to rethink the past through the residual presence in cinema which "weaves together many individual narrative threads into a text" (Anton Kaes 180). Motivated by Kaes, I specifically explore "the narrative threads are intertwined attaches a certain meaning to the historical event, which by itself has a multiplicity of potential meanings" (*ibid*).

Instead of reaffirming an unmediated sense of loss, guilt, and trauma, I argue that Hou's trilogy and *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* use individual stories and personal memories, and their resultant heterogeneity, to intervene in the officially sanctioned and reproduced representations of the past. I further argue that Hou's multilayered texts generate antagonisms, striking particularly at the heart of the familiar, reiterating a commonsensical questioning of national identity. I thus infer that Hou's representational tactics go beyond a textual deconstruction of the historical enterprise, and also beyond a straightforward substitution of one set of stories for another: the trilogy's invocation of mnemonic processes of recording and transmission raises questions concerning the ways through which particular subjects of memory enter the intersubjective realm of history in the political or politicized contexts of official discourse.

In the Taiwan trilogy and *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, the domination of the past over the present is conveyed not only by the films' plots, but also by their form. These distinctive forms intertwine the themes of the movies together, where the past also haunts practically every character included in the narrative. The films move emotion and value towards ordinary victims, and demonstrate that they are indeed deserving objects of mourning, where moral obligations and practical forms exist in order to remember the past and work through history. Hou addresses the impact of trauma on an individual in the context of, and closely allied with, the overarching

social, political, and collective memory. My focus in this chapter, then, will be on how Hou represents trauma in the individual and how he keeps the wounds of that trauma open. These are sometimes wounds that may never heal, and are often representative of a series of traumatic reactions and influences to, and interpretations of, the historical state of Taiwan, on the one hand, and a state of mind, on the other hand.

They are connected to horror, nightmare, vicarious remembrance, the loss of identity, and the decline of paternal power into deadness, inscrutability, and faceless authority. They operate in a manner whose obscurity, temporal discontinuity, illogicality, and ungraspability are appropriate to the symptoms of trauma (Caruth 5; LaCapra 718-19), and as such these films cross-match, for example, an individual or family crisis to a nation's crisis, and in "discovering" their once hidden memories of historical events links them to a history that is not the benign presentation of official history books, but is one of strife and violent exclusion. I regard these films as profound propositions of "history/memory films", each offering interpretive options beyond those available in standard melodramatic historical films. Hou opts for open endings and for narratives which appear incoherent and difficult to grasp, encouraging the viewer, I would argue, to distrust stories, and readings of history, which would more normally come across as well-told narratives.

I begin with *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* - a film about Hou's own memories of boyhood.

4.1 Death, Loss and Absence

The Time to Live and the Time to Die features a middle-aged male voice-over narrating his childhood and adolescence, in which the main story-line is the vicissitudes of his family. It portrays a traumatic history, containing the loss of loved ones - father, mother and grandmother. The film not only configures the path of these family vicissitudes, but also at the heart of the film's spirit, the inner traumas derived from absence and loss caused by these vicissitudes. The loss of family and the absence of hometown are intertwined in what Barrett calls the individual everyday "common trauma" (Barrett 5). Both the loss and absence have a cross-progressive relation: the absence of the hometown leads to the father's depression and death,

which in turn enables the father to become a metaphor for the loss of geographical hometown, and with it the larger sense of a national identity.

The film presents in detail the absence of homeland and displacement of identity from the perspective of daily life: for example the father buys cane-furniture because it is easy to discard when they leave Taiwan. The grandmother tries to find a route from Taiwan back to mainland China, but her grandson Ah-hsiao thinks the return is impossible, and he does not look forward to returning. The uncertainty of where their hometown is, Taiwan or China, aggravates their melancholy and confusion of identity. While alive the father never talked about his obsession and despair about homeland until his death, but the finding of his handwritten autobiography and diaries provide the only traces of his growing homesickness. His death remains unexplained. Its trauma to those left behind as incomprehensible as the history that he symbolized - an indefinable loss and horror.

Hou's probing of memory does not stay simply on the surface of suffering but delves deeply into historical reflection most especially through the autobiographical recording of the father's nostalgia for homeland. This is a private writing of history which constitutes just one of the many reflexive layers that make up historical memory, but which are generally ignored in the construction of official history. Hou deconstructs that history in films like this, and questions the sort of official propaganda which, for example, always claimed that Taiwan achieved victory by counterattacking mainland China. Using letters from the mainland, Hou shows that the family in this film received completely different messages confirming that a return as impossible for them.[31] These letters and diaries constitute a folk text which stands counter to the official historical narrative. Consequently Hou recounts an alternative historical narrative in which the ordinary people of Taiwan rescue their personal

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[31] This is an extremely prosaic film, the director does not emphasize the background of the era deliberately, but puts this in the daily details. For example, a postman brings letters, which are forwarded from Southeast Asia; the father gives the children stamps to collect, and the family discuss the miserable life in mainland China - mainland people are refining the iron and steel, but create numerous scrap iron. The relatives in the mainland are not allowed to study in schools and they are suffering from hunger. Meanwhile, the KMT uses broadcasts to vigorously propagate an airplane pilot who died in the confrontation with the CCP's army, tp let the Taiwanese believe in the possibility of recovering the mainland.

history from the oblivion produced by the dictatorship.[32] Seen in this light, the character of the father gains symbolic force as the fictional character that recovers the power of memory as an act of resurrection of the hidden to that which is silenced. Although the father's image is ambiguous, alienated and silent, it is a silent witness experiencing the vicissitudes of a history that has not always featured him, or others like him.

The mother's death in the film provides another dimension to the everyday ethic of family life and history. The mother's death is a long and painful process, awakening Ah-hsiao's guilt of his adolescent rebellion and deepest memory, where the camera captures rich static landscapes to probe the accumulation of everyday meaning and reflexivity of time. The way in which the film remits the past, over and over again, in a series of visual and aural references to the daily suffering is structured in a delicate emotional atmosphere shown by rain, houses, trees and singing or in daily words that have direct reference to death. Trauma, memory and nostalgia, shown in this way can help maintain a proper dynamic between, in Adam Smith's terms, "reference and abstraction" (112). If the film looks and sounds as it does, it is both because something multifarious and grievous has happened and because that something echoes traumatic feelings in Ah-hsiao who sees and hears the emptiness and beauty here; feelings that reconstruct themselves after the represented event as memories that possess him. In the mother's funeral scene, for example, melodious religious singing is mixed with Ah-hsiao's unexpected sobbing, signifying his double guilt for his mother and for the time itself. It is not a presentation of sadness and nothingness, but a self-scrutiny where people confront time and loss. That self-scrutiny not only belongs to the character and the narrator, but also to the audience.

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[32] This refers to the Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship. From 1948-1975, Chiang's government and army retreated to Taiwan, where Chiang imposed martial law and persecuted people critical of his rule in a period known as the "White Terror". After evacuating to Taiwan, Chiang's government continued to declare its intention to retake mainland China. Chiang ruled Taiwan securely as President of the Republic of China and General of the Kuomintang until his death in 1975.



4.1 The dead grandmother in the in the empty house.

4.2 The grandmother dead for a long time.

4.3 The four brothers gazing at the grandmother's body.

For example, that reflection on time reaches its maximum symbolic effect in the scene of the grandmother's death (fig.4.1). Compared to the father's sudden death and the mother's long and painful death, the grandmother's death is silent and lonely - nobody noticed when she died. The voice-over[33] of the middle-aged male talks of the time "when we found ants crawling on the grandmother's hands), we do not know how long it had been since the grandmother died" (fig.4.2). Here between the "when" of the grandmother's dying and the "when" of her actual death there is an unbridgeable abyss, a lack of knowledge about the circumstances of her death, and hence of the grandmother's own history. The voiceover is calm - "until today, I often think of the road that was the grandmother back to the mainland, maybe only me and her walked through that road, and that afternoon we picked many guavas on the way". The impossibility of history is further emphasized in the moment when the brothers gaze at the grandmother's body (fig.4.3). This gaze in long takes crosses the frame of the screen and bridges the outside of the screen becoming a confronting moment between the audience and the history on screen. This technique by Hou effectively means that the family's guilt about the grandmother no longer merely belongs to them but also to the viewers. In the context of Hou's own life, the film appears to be both a therapeutic exercise in recollecting and refiguring past traumas and also, perhaps especially, to signal the complex issues involved in exploring hometown and identity - in this case, as a personal history whose collective ramifications may be easily transferred onto the national stage.

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[33] If we see this film as an autobiographical movie, logically the voice-over should be the director . But the text and voice-over actually constitutes an ambiguity of identity, that is to say we don't know who the speaker is, the director or a fictional character.

Certainly, Taiwanese director Chen Kuo-fu thinks that the memory in this film is the memory of the era and the nation (*Theater Lover's Life* 7).[34] Chen argues that the gaze of the four brothers is so long it is like a review of the century - witnesses of melancholy and trauma in half a century of Taiwan's history (*ibid*). Chen's evaluation includes the concepts of time and self-confrontation, suggesting that the movie found a personal fulcrum to reflect the passage of time, in which the ending makes the film achieve a reversal where the object of gaze is no longer that of the brothers, for example, but of the audience. In this way I think the grandmother's death also means the disappearance of a spatial imagination - the Meijiang bridge[35], the mainland, the returning road will be forgotten and erased, or just to be remembered in the middle-aged narrator's yearning. Together with the grandmother's impossible return, her death, as Homi Bhabha puts it, following Benedict Anderson's formulation in a very different context: "articulates the death-in-life of the idea of the 'imagined community' of the nation" (315). And yet, with reference to Doris Sommer's analysis of Anderson's famous formulation, the grandmother's symbolic position, may be interpreted as the remnant of the "mystical inflection" that created the imagined community in the first place (37). According to Sommer, the "imagined community" means the diasporic Chinese in Taiwan.

The film integrates the trauma of exile and death into historical memory, and poses these questions: whether individual death feeds into collective traumatic memory, and how this family tragedy links with historical structure. I would suggest that the overwhelming representation of daily routine - cooking, washing, cleaning and chatting - constitute the "subject" and whole "valuable time" of this particular film, all of which makes up for what is structurally missing - the absence of a real home. For Ah-hsiao's parents and grandmother, the home in Taiwan is a kind of home

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[34] Here Chen Kun-hou's "nation", I think has a broader dimension - the whole Chinese "national memory". All "nations (identity)" involved in my dissertation are all defined according to different contexts in the films.

[35] Mei-jiang Bridge is located in Meizhou in Guangdong Province, which was built in 1934, and it is the eastern gateway and hub of surface transportation. After the Anti-Japanese War and civil war, it was still intact, but has since become a bottleneck between north and south of the Meijiang. In the grandmother's memory, it is the indispensable gateway to the Chinese mainland.

under erasure, a home that is home, but not the homeland (in mainland China). My point here is that the kind of abstract arguments about the creation of new kinds of memory spaces or national identities needs to be better grounded in the analysis of the everyday practices and domestic rituals through which the idea of home and homeland is daily constructed and reconstituted. These everyday actions express an attribute of cultural identity, and more importantly, in Hou's films, represent an endless mourning for the loss of homeland.

The grandmother in the film, for example, always makes Joss Paper (ghost money) and seeks a road back to the mainland.[36] Of these two actions, the former is a default of death, and the latter is the performance of an identity trace. The daily routine is a process whereby the past, or the experience of the other, is repeated as if it were fully enacted, fully literalized. This sort of repetition is related to LaCapra's "acting out" (141), that is, for the grandmother, the experience of hometown is maintained in her daily actions only as an elusive memory that feels as if it no longer resembles any reality. But Hou does not use any flashbacks to represent the grandmother's memory, here. Instead, she herself becomes a symbol of that past, where the loss of homeland exemplified in the grandmother has become a permanent absence. When loss is converted into absence, like this, it represents "the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted" (LaCapra 46). This is the typical "post-traumatic" symptoms of Hou's family who while not dying from direct political violence, did so from melancholy brought about by the trauma of permanent absence from homeland.

In *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch proposes the notion of "post-memory" (2008 106-107) to refer to the memory of later generations not directly involved in specific earlier events, but which are still part of the family narratives of the events that preceded their birth. Hirsch develops this notion for the children of survivors, but she

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[36] The film shows many times that the grandmother lets Ah-hsiao accompany her back to the mainland, more often she gets lost, the pedicab drives her back home. This has become the grandmother's spiritual addiction in her old age.

believes it is also applicable to the collective cultural memory of the traumatic events of the so-called second generation. On the sense, Hou's film is not his direct memory, the recollection in film is indirect, secondary, belated. It is a post-memory of the initial traumatic history. The medium of film itself can only provide a story of post-memory because "its relation to the source is mediated, not by recollection, but by imagination or creation (memory is also mediated, but it holds a more direct connection to the past)" (Camila Loew 21). The "belatedness" contains another temporal structure in connection with another place, and in another time. Cathy Caruty also thinks that "for history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat different, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (18).

The indirect referentiality of history is also, I would argue, at the core of Hou's films of the political shape of Taiwan culture, in their repeated confrontation with identity transformation. In the geopolitical sense, Taiwan has not been pushed to the margins, but placed in a Neverland that is a virtual abyss. In Hou's cinematic universe, national identity is not so much a biological or preordained fact as a construction or a performance that involves choices, mimicry, doubling, and transgression more than obligation and responsibility. As a result, identity in his films is not stable or unitary but mobile and multiple, reinforcing the identity dilemma. The most striking example is Chen Cheng's (KMT Chairman) funeral sequence in the film. The radio is broadcasting this live with a solemn dirge, several veterans are shown respectfully listening, but Ah-hsiao and his idle friends indifferently play billiards, conflicting with these veterans. Hou exploits this contrast between the two groups by using them, in effect, to reveal complex identity layers in the different generations of Taiwanese, and, by extension, in the official history of Taiwan which, as a history, is absolutely alienated from Ah-hsiao's real life. Hou positions Ah-hsiao's generation in an exiled structure - from familial and national structures, the embarrassment of such a position being that they never can remake an identity or rediscover a suitable replacement. The film positions them in the gaps between the two representing their daily situation as

one that forces them into an imaginary Taiwan where identity can be constructed, reconstructed, deconstructed - even performed.[37]

At a bigger picture level, then, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* represents the identity dilemma of the *waishengren* (outsiders, or people from an outside province) and their second-generation[38]: parallel to the nationalist state's diminishing will to recover the mainland, where the mind-set of those desiring to return home has been changing gradually since the 1970s. But the deep drive to return has never completely disappeared (Kuan-Hsing Chen 153). For that generation of *waishengren*, like the parents and the grandmother in this film to adopt Taiwan as their true home or to say to a *benshengren* "I am also a Taiwanese" is difficult, if not impossible. But the truth of the matter is that Taiwan has been, and is, their only home. Many accepted this harsh reality only after the political changes of the late 1980s made it possible for them to return to their supposed homes on the mainland (like my maternal grandfather did). In the 1960s and 1970s, for the second generation, like Ah-hsiao and his brothers in the film, having been born or having grown up in Taiwan, it is much easier to say "I am a Taiwanese, and my home is in Taiwan, but at the same time I am a Chinese," whereas it is simply not possible to force those in the grandmother and the father generation to become Taiwanese.

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[37] Here I want to emphasize that after the Kuomintang regime moved to Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo implemented the long buildup of Chinese chauvinism which caused great harm to Taiwanese society. In their effort to eliminate Japanese colonial culture in Taiwan and replace it with their own Chinese nationalist mythology, both Chiangs intervened in all social realms. Their methods - White Terror totalitarianism - led to the appalling mutilation of the collective psychic structure; a mutilation that can be seen in today's warped modes of communication, suspicion of other people, and alienation. In the film, Hou did not directly represent this psychic mutilation, but he reveals the nostalgia and melancholy of the first generation of bensheng ren and the confusion of identity of the second generation. Even if Taiwan, and not Mainland China, is their true homeland, they must identify themselves as Chinese. This national 'Chinese' identity is imagined, repeatedly performed by political propaganda and violent suppression.

[38] The complex "ethnic concept" of bensheng and waisheng, was politically constructed in the concrete historical processes of everyday life. The years from 1945 to 1949 are a dividing line: those who came to Taiwan from China before then are called bensheng ren (which literally means "people who come from the province" of Taiwan), and those who came after are labeled waisheng ren (literally, "people who come from outside the province" of Taiwan). Within the category of bensheng ren, Minnanese (who speak the language of the southern Fujian province) are the largest population; Hakkanese and aboriginal people do not necessarily identity themselves as bensheng ren (Chen 124), although these simple classifications cannot account for the entire range of identities of those who have lived in Taiwan. For instance, there is no common language or customs among the waisheng population, and the term "waisheng ren" is meaningful only in relation to the term "bensheng ren" (124). Similarly, there is much diversity among bensheng ren: some came to Taiwan much earlier than others, but they do not have a unified language; and the extent of their relationship with mainland China also varies. Different dialects signals different identities, where, instead of "ethnic conflict" the local term "provincial register contradiction" is preserved to connote the central clash between bensheng ren and waisheng ren (124).

The lack of a precedent or analogous situation makes it difficult to determine how best to conceptualize the plight of *waishengren* in Taiwan. Are they settlers, migrants, immigrants, refugees, or people in exile? Are they part of a diaspora? Is the KMT regime a government in exile (which would mean that it resides outside mainland China), a regime from another province, a defeated regime, or simply a cold-war regime? None of these common terms accurately describes the complexity of the history. Given the context provided in this film, it seems reasonable to describe the KMT as a defeated, exiled regime existing under a global cold-war structure, and to describe *waishengren* as those who came to Taiwan with that regime. Even if these complexities can be clarified in theoretical terms, people holding different political positions or those of other ethnic identity may insist on other understandings. "One thing is certain: to call the KMT a 'regime from the outside' or a 'colonial government', as is commonly done, only partially accounts for the historical characteristics of the regime" (Chen 154).

This is an important reason why Hou's movies present a kind of symptom of spiritual drift and melancholy. For *waishengren* or *benshengren* or the second-generation of *waishengren*, the notion of national identity is a "myth" without solution; a special islanders' experience. The China-homeland, represented in so many of Hou's films by the domestic home, does not exist here. It is, as Joelle Bahloul said about surcharged memories of places, especially domestic spaces, that they are "part of the syndrome of exile, they are an 'embodiment of the life cycle' and therefore an 'embodiment of genealogy' - highly cathected substitutes for the physical traces of lineage their bearers have been forced to abandon" (177).

Undoubtedly, the film creates a traumatic "aura" through the overwhelming portrayal of everyday actions and family space. As I discussed earlier in this dissertation, these daily actions absorb the performativity of the film, and bring a real feeling of the non-real. Michael Fried notes that the artist must present the everyday in an antitheatrical form in order to maintain the qualities of wonder and attention (Roth 201). This is what "near documentary" aims to do - to bring out the absorptive qualities of daily life to convey "the historicity of the everyday" at an archaeological

site, without giving the beholder the sense that these things are there only for him or her. This resonates with Michael Roth's argument that "a 'successful' representation of trauma will necessarily seem like trivialization, or worse, like betrayal" (91). In a further explanation, Roth stresses that the intensity of a trauma is what defies understanding, and so a representation that someone else understands this seems to indicate that the event was not as intense as it seemed to be. "A trauma - much like a utopia - is supposed to be beyond a representation that would fix it firmly in the conventions we have for taking in the world" (91). Kaplan also argues "there is a focus and an intensity that seems impossible until one has reached back into the trauma and accepted the necessity (or inevitability) of death because trauma's pain is too much" (60). For a director like Hou, then, an acceptance of death instead of a fear of death can produce the fragmented, disjointed prose of film, which serves not simply to represent events but to question them.

Hou once said that "film is a kind of nostalgia" (98), where nostalgia is understood both in space and the time. The nostalgic distance is the engine of all exilic identities. In the case of the mobile identity, it works reductively and by introjecting difference, while in the case of multiple identity, it operates additively by projecting similarity or difference. In Hou's movies there is the same representation about trauma: loss and death tangle with the absence of home(land). As I discussed in an earlier chapter in the process of the urbanization of Taiwan, the homeless feeling also haunts ordinary people. In addition to *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, the Taiwan trilogy separately presents the trace and thinking about home and identity by portraying different individual experiences and perspectives. The sense of belonging and identity are constructed in doppelganger characters and activates the films' narratives of desire, nostalgia, and memory for other people, places, and times.

In certain forms of contemporary theorizing, defining one's identity through articulating the traces of one's traumas has become a much more general phenomenon. In Roth's sense, this articulation "may be a privileged form of discourse in the sense that giving testimony about one's own traumas is not subject to the same regime of truth as giving testimony about an event one has witnessed" (96). In the trilogy, Hou

further probes the past by tracing trauma, presenting a picture of how death and loss are directly embedded in complex transformations of political power.

Death as the Testimony

If, as I suggest here that it is, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* is about the life and traumatic memories of *waishengren* and their second-generation in postwar Taiwan, then *A City of Sadness* is about the sadness of *benshengren* in the changes of the political regime after the war. Taking the "2-28 Incident"[39] - as its theme, *A City of Sadness* begins with a voice-over of the Japanese emperor's broadcasting the edict of surrender at the exact moment when the mistress of the oldest brother of the Lin Family, Wen-xiong, is giving birth to a boy, who would be soon named "Guang-ming" which means "bright". He is one of four brothers all of whom by film's end will be mad, dead or have disappeared. The Japanese surrender ended the colonial era in Taiwan, but the Taiwanese did not really see the "bright" side. The Lin family acts as a microcosm of the fate of ordinary Taiwanese-*benshengren* in the transformation of power. Their suffering is an embodiment of the historical traumas that took place at this time, and one generally erased from the official history books. For the surviving Taiwanese, national identity must be imagined, and they have to accept an imagined national expression of Taiwan as the Republic of China where Taiwan is considered as just one part of China, even though they have been partitioned for more than 40 years. This imaginary national identity in Taiwan always existed until the end of martial law and the fanatical rise of the independent consciousness of Taiwan in the 1990s when many Taiwanese plunged into another "myth" of the Taiwanese nationalism, namely ethnic chauvinism.[40]

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[39] This event results from the high-handed policy of the KMT government and officials' corruption leading to unsustainable living for the local Taiwanese. Then at the end of February 1947, it triggered large-scale political events of the people against the government, which included the military repression of civilians, locals attacking new immigrants, as well as the Taiwanese gentry being hunted and killed by police. The event lasted nearly three months, until the end of the wipe out of the KMT on May 16, 1947. It has also been called the "2-28 Massacre", the "2-28 Tragedy" and the "2-28 Uprising". Before the rule of the Democratic Progressive Party, the KMT government regarded this incident as a revolt against the government, even though it was a riot incited by the communist Chinese authorities before martial law ended. Later, other views appeared to argue that it was racial or ethnic, and renamed it as the "2-28 Event". This event was a taboo subject in Taiwan until the lifting of martial law in 1987, when the Taiwanese began to review and publicly study this event.

[40] In the global Cold War, the KMT took the policy of the anticommunists associated with pro-American education for the entire population, *waisheng* and *bensheng* alike. The enemy was defined as communist bandits, and this fear of communism has contributed to the pro-American, pro-Japanese politics of the Taiwan

In *A City of Sadness* Hou engages with these issues of national identity by presenting a strong rootless feeling and melancholy which not only comes from the continual loss and deaths of the Lin family's male members, but also from the questioning of identities and memories that have been destroyed and erased. The representation of political trauma is a desperate narrative, in which death and loss are internalized in individuals' unspeakable pain. Hou traces back the deep identity transformation in historical change: after 1945, the Japanese withdraw from Taiwan and Taiwan would be expected, by some at least, to return to China. This movie presents Taiwanese life during this time from 1945 to 1949 when the KMT moved to Taiwan.[41]

The 2-28 Incident of 1947 signaled the start of a long period of fascist military rule and, together with the subsequent White Terror era, it became a symbol for political mobilization. The KMT's authoritarianism intensified the will among many of the *bengsheng* population to become independent, to stand on their own two feet, and to defend their home. In this film the intellectuals of Taiwan such as Kuan-rong and Wen-qing who longed for returning to the mainland before the civil war, but after experiencing the 2-28 Incident, became disappointed and even despaired for the KMT government. Kuan-rong eventually hides in the mountains to engage in the independence movement of Taiwan. The history after the 2-28 Incident presented a reversion: Taiwan should be returned to China after the World War II, as Kuan-rong

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independence movement. The emotional drive for independence found its first official expression in the era of Lee Teng-hui (1990s), who, although coming from the KMT, was the first *bensheng* president. A second and fuller expression of Taiwanese triumphalism came when Chen Shui-bian, representing the *bensheng*-dominated Democratic Progressive Party, was elected president in 2000. His election ended the KMT's monopoly on state power and ended the series of outsider governments that had ruled Taiwan since 1895. (153)

[41] The civil war between the CCP and the KMT was not just a factional struggle for political power, or a simple reflection of the global ideological struggles of socialism and capitalism. It was also an ideological struggle over China's road to modernity. When the defeated KMT withdrew to Taiwan, it felt a sense of entitlement. To the new arrivals, the base they were building to eventually recover the mainland was part of their own territory. The KMT and *waisheng ren* never thought of themselves as invading outsiders, and never imagined they would stay for the long term. Dreams of recovering the mainland were sustained by the global cold-war structure and nurtured by U.S. military and economic support. The dreams later became memories of a loss, a wound that could no longer be healed. After half a century, the KMT still cannot quite bring itself to publicly acknowledge that its right to participate in deciding China's destiny was lost forever when it was defeated in 1949 by the CCP, or that its survival would have been impossible without the support of a Western imperialist power. See Kuan-Hsing Chen *Asian as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham and London: Duke University press, 2010.

says “Taiwan is going return to the embrace of the motherland and will get asylum”.[42] The identity connection between Taiwan and China has not yet broken before the 2-28 Incident, but was marked with submission and acceptance. Taiwan’s national attribute would be established after the 2-28 Incident if the political state of China had not changed. However, the actual history goes the other way; the KMT was defeated in the civil war and moved to Taiwan, and China was divided into two. Taiwan did not really return to the motherland, instead the “fatherland” fled to Taiwan to seek asylum. The concept of “nation-state” achieved a reversal that is not “the son” longing for “the father’s” recognition and acceptance, but “the father” taking the possession of “the son” and renaming “the son”.

Hou represents the complex history that is the ordinary Taiwanese’s dilemma of identity splitting, by concentrating on a family living space squeezed out by the speculators from mainland and its officials. In the film’s main plots, the Lin family’s men, whether joining the army, engaging in business, or working as a photographer invariably suffer misfortune. The shadow of death envelops the family like a diffused grey filter in the film’s hue, in which every dead man is connected to a vague and awkward identity - the traitor. Hou does not directly show any images of power and authorities, but focuses on the generally absent role of the neglected individual in the writing of history. For example, the older brother Lin Wen-xiong died due to an outside power - murdered by the “Shanghai Gang” - and detailed strife and conflict of business shockingly reveal the crisis of survival and powerlessness of the local Taiwanese when they face the collusion of both the KMT government and the outside gangs. The second brother Lin Wen-sen never appears in the movie as he served in the Japanese army in Southeast Asia during the Second World War. To that end he becomes a symbol of the absence of that group of people who disappeared without trace, and were erased from colonial history. As a character in the film he has never been “gazed” on by the audience, but his death presents them with questions about

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[42] Here the motherland in “return to the motherland” means the China ruled by the KMT ruled, not the CCP. This is the reason why Kuan-rong and other intellectuals were disappointed in the KMT regime and joined the left-wing movement in the mountains after the 2-28 incident.

identity, because, serving in the army in the South Pacific, means he must have participated in the second Sino-Japanese war as a Japanese mercenary. Therefore, the second brother only lives in his family's memory and mourning. The third brother, Lin Wen-liang was tortured to madness by the KMT government accused of treason bringing a new wound onto the Taiwanese from this new regime, and Lin Wen-qing, the fourth brother, a photographer, who is a deaf mute, is completely aphasiac and might best be interpreted as functioning as a traumatic, though silent, monologue on Taiwanese colonial identity. He is witness to political violence and the awakening of *benshengren* identity, but his resistance only brings him trouble.

Trouble marks *A City of Sadness* throughout, inscribed as it is within the conditions of the civilian experience of political violence. After the lifting of martial law in Taiwan in 1987, a rewriting of history, both academic and popular, has been rapidly increasing, especially when previously forbidden topics such as the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror became available for investigation. This very significant rewriting is clear evidence of the struggle over who has the power to interpret history (see Chen 62). The most important function of historical reinterpretation is to evoke a popular memory. By this film, Hou shows that collective memory does not just exist "out there" (*ibid* 63), but is constructed and reconstructed through the representation of the past into the present.

Homi.K Bhabha thinks that "the counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries - both actual and conceptual - disturb those ideological maneuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (300). *A City of Sadness*, functioning as a counter-narrative to the official national narrative, presents some of the fissures in the internal narrative of the nation, by concentrating on the way the individual voice and individual experience as heterogeneous elements escape the construction of official national discourse. This questioning of the essentialism of identities and resistance to the established official discourse are expressed by multifarious representations, "loss of identity" being a very dominant one. For instance, another main character in the film, Kuan-rong is enlightened by left-wing ideology and experienced the violence of the 2-28 Incident,

and thus devotes himself to the revolution for independence. He tells Wen-qing: “do not tell my family and let them think I have died, my body has belonged to a beautiful future of the fatherland”. This is a clear and direct expression of national identity, in which he is eager to contribute to the realization of his “country” by his individual death. I personally think that his “fatherland” does not refer to an imagined Chinese community, but to local Taiwan. Kuan-rong’s national identity is an intellectual awakening which interweaves with the expression of Wen-xiong - an ordinary businessman: “our Taiwanese are the most miserable, whether Japanese or Chinese, we are always bullied and humiliated, no one actually protects us”. This helpless sense of identity is also marked in Kuan-mei’s[43] female poetic introspection: “we thought of escape, but where will we go?”

Kuan-mei’s narrative contrasts with Wen-qing’s silence. Wen-qing and Kuan-mei are excluded witnesses out of the historical center. As a result, their witness has value as part of a history of becoming, where Kuan-mei’s diaries, letters and Wen-qing’s photography produce a new history and preserve the testimony of ordinary people. Wen-qing’s work is distinctly marked by the absence of sound and a heightened emphasis upon his status as a creator of image. Michael Roth thinks that “photography amplifies the rim of ontological uncertainty by raising questions of presence and temporal disjunction in a mnemonic context of desire and absence” (184). This means that in photographically captured events of the past, we can no longer find our way in history - no longer navigate within our own personal memories without the filter of photo-like images. Although the past has become accessible, it is only accessible in image-like terms. In this sense, the role of Wen-qing overlaps with the director - witnessing, through the camera, the absences in essentialist views of history.

Individual questions of national identity will eventually melt into the essentialist national discourse, but the death of the individual marks the actual presence of the past. Death appropriates the sedimentary moment in historical writing into a living

[43] Kuan-rong’s sister, who fell in love with Lin Wen-qing and married him. As a witness of the 2-28 incident, the movie takes her diary and letters as a narrative perspective and testimony.

representation of memory. Hence Hou in this film offers a performative logic of individual identity by taking into consideration physical destruction as a means of resisting the occupation of essentialist discourse, and exploiting private memory to resist the forgetting of historical writing. In political violence, death for ordinary people is not only the loss of identity, but also the loss of voice. Using a voice-over and featuring female diary and letters, this film uses individual voices from real historical texts in order to listen to women who speak another, non-official, version of historical language. The discourse reveals the insurmountable nature of lies in the official history. Furthermore, the female subjective narrative reminds viewers of the represented limit of traumatic memory and of the power of a reflexive dimension to history (for further discussion, see 4.3). The film arrives at a depth of handwritten history, which presents the loss and myth of identity from a private perspective reinforcing the potential of an individual voice from history, and thus offering a new possibility of rewriting history.

Good Men, Good Women similarly explores the trauma of national identity by enactment of female memory. It is a story about two women, in which the death of men acts as the signifier of female remembering. The film has a complicated form, which not only presents a split of personal identity (an actress plays two roles), but also a split of time (the juxtaposition of past and present). Drama is created by the use of "the film within the film" which shows a double mourning for the past. The haunting of the past is split into a dual mode, specifically between two forms of unbearable, protracted crises which haunt not only the concrete, tangible attempts at re-establishing the form of everyday normalcy, but also and in particular attempts to be a belated, narrative repetition and reconstruction of a distant historical wound. The core of this story, I would suggest, "is thus a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth 7). These two stories, both incompatible and absolutely inextricable, ultimately define the complexity of what I refer to as history in the text that I read. In Jiang Bi-yu's story - revolution and love, the intertwining of confrontation with death

and the confrontation with life, an impossible and necessary double-telling, constitute her historical witness. Liang-jing's story is the inextricability of the story of one's life from the story of a death, where the repeated dream about her dead lover is a profound link between the death of the loved one and the ongoing life of the survivor.

The double telling embodies the double enactment of memory: the actress Liang-jing's lover died in gangster violence a few years earlier, and she has since been living in a nightmare of that past. The movie constantly intersperses her past by the form of this recollection-image constituting one layer of memory. Her diary which recorded this past was stolen, and the thief sends a page of the diary to her by fax machine. Every Liang-jing's voice-over reading of her diary in the middle of the night forms a behavior which is not only mourning for her dead lover but a recurring prompt for her to constantly relive the past and its trauma - an act of witnessing that Cathy Caruth refers to as a "speaking wound" - a trauma borne by another that speaks to the wound of the hearer (also see 4.3). Liang-jing's diary voice-over echoes Caruth's words:

> we can read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the event of his (her) own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another wound. (8)

Jiang Bi-yu's story is seemingly unrelated to Liang-jing's modern story. It tells of Jiang's experience of tracing a group of young Taiwanese who went to China to participate in the war against the Japanese and who later suffered political torment in the Taiwan White Terror in the 1950s. Liang-jing enacts Jiang's experience conflating the experiences of two people into a joint memory of the female traumatic experiences of the loss of men through violence. This is the second layer of memory.

In this layer, Jiang's story reveals a deeper issue of female identity and self-awakening: Jiang initially was not fired up with the pursuit and ideals of revolution and country, but her husband was full of passionate revolutionary ideals, and she followed him to participate in the war and engage in the underground revolution. In the process, she lost two children and her husband, but she always insisted on her

husband's revolutionary ideas until her death. The movie explores the impossibility of revolution and national identity in a special historical context. The impossibility is mixed with the question of female presence - what is the pure revolutionary ideal, and the meaning of ideals when loving a man compared to loving a revolutionary? There is no answer given, but instead the film represents the female trauma and the transition of that trauma in the enactment of memory.

Liang-jing's story is finally sublimated by Jiang's uncomplaining love and persistence, and turns the individual trauma into an open working through of history. The enactment is a spiritual appropriation that turns Liang-jing into Jiang and finally fuses the two characters. The appropriation of identity brings proliferation of meaning - Jiang joined the revolution due to her husband, at that time her faith in revolution depended on love. After her husband died, she maintained his revolutionary ideas and wrote down her memories as a witness to history. Here, Jiang achieves a transformation from choice of object to direct recognition of the object achieving a revolution in her own private world. The same transformation also occurs in Liang-jing, who plays Jiang's story in the film within the film. This "film within the film" has a profound ethical nature. Liang-jing in playing Jiang acquires a reflexive distance by the very act of acting enabling her to better face her own trauma, and in turn connects the loss of Jiang's past into Liang-jing's, and the viewers' present. It is in the final scene of mourning ritual for Jiang's dead husband, where Liang-jing achieves empathy with Jiang Bi-yu sharing the same trauma of loss.

Unlike *Good Men, Good Women* where one character plays two roles, *The Puppetmaster* takes two characters to play one person - old Li Tien-lu himself and a young actor performing Li's past. The film takes Li's personal life as a trigger to represent the history of the Japanese occupation era in Taiwan (1895-1945). As a starting point in the trilogy, this film probes the loss and trauma of Taiwanese identity in colonial living, which was mixed with the distortion and confusion of Li's personal identity: Li's father, originally surnamed Fang, married into and lived with his wife's family, Li thus used his mother's surname instead of his father's. And a fortuneteller once said that he would bring his parents doom, so he could not call his parents

“father” and “mother”, but “uncle” and “aunt”. The personal experience and the historical identity of Taiwan form an intertextuality: confusing the attribution of blood and the father’s absence.

The film reopens the question of patriarchy, as the analysis of men’s death and loss in the trilogy reveals. One of the factors affecting how the patriarchy is expressed in a society is its relation with state power. The nature of the state-patriarchy alliance encourages the development of particular forms of femininity, masculinity, gender relations, and other related oppositional positions. Comparing the patriarchal structures of Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, Chen Kuan-hsing thinks that the weakest is Taiwan, because the political regimes of both the KMT and later the DPP have both been symbolically castrated (155). This castration has a long history from Japanese colonial Taiwan, which is reflected in Hou’s films by the figures of weak, dead or absent men.

In *The Puppetmaster*, not only Li’s consanguinity is misplaced and confused, but also death and loss go through all his life. These deaths have a function of marking time, which interweave in moments of collective memory to remind audiences of the huge gap between personal memory and official records. As an example of this sort of history subtext, Li recounts that the day his grandmother died was the “Japanese Emperor’s birthday”, and he was invited to perform a puppet show, and did not stay with his dying grandmother; he also lost his father-in-law and a child on the eve of the end of the war, and he remembered the actual historical time only because of the death of his loved ones. As a survivor, Li’s life is in wandering and unrest, while his oral narration of this provides an alternative testimony about the colonial era. For instance, in Li’s narration, Japanese colonists forced him to perform a drama of war propaganda but also admired and respected his puppetry art, simultaneously blurring the border of colonizers and colonized. Hou exploits this ambiguity of emotional expression beyond the deconstruction of history, by creating a hypertext of history. One may argue that this is an exaggerated and romantic representation of relations between the colonizer and the colonized. But indeed there were some inter-marriages and deep friendships between Japanese and Taiwanese at that time, which would seem

to indicate that such friendly relations did exist among now forgotten and unknown people. Although in Hou's movies there is a tendency to romanticize the open-mindedness of the colonial relationship, the film does not cover up the real conflict that existed. For example, the character of second brother Lin Wen-sen in *A City of Sadness* who fought with the Japanese army in Southeast Asia enables Hou to avoid simplifying this colonial relationship, but to reveal its complexity and diversity.

As a semi-documentary, Li appears in the film in what Dori Laub calls "the third level of witnessing" that is one "in which the process of witnessing is itself being witnessed" (62). Here, Laub says, image and the narrator are both struggling to reach a truth that is elusive. One of the main characteristics of this witnessing position is the deliberate refusal of an identification with the specificity of the individuals involved - a deliberate distancing from the subject to enable the interviewer to take in and respond to the traumatic situation. When a film constructs this sort of position for the spectator, as Kaplan has said, "it enables attention to the situation, as against attention merely to the subject's individual suffering, and this positioning thus opens the text out to large social and political meanings" (Kaplan 125). Accordingly, at the heart of Li's life story is an unmediated testimony not only to the nature of historical events but also to what, in trauma, resists simple comprehension. Li's losses of family are passed on through his narratives, and do not simply represent the act of an individual death but also the impact of its very incomprehensibility. His family trauma, then, "as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality - the escape from a death, or from its referential force - rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (Caruth 7). It is a story of survival that constantly reminds viewers of the sense of who has been altered by such confrontation with loss.

The Hidden History

So far, then, in the four films discussed in this chapter I would suggest that there is a strong link between Hou's own internal traumatic experiences of living in Taiwan and his reflections on its history and their impact on the aesthetic form he creates in his films. Hamid Naficy thinks that "accented filmmakers who live in various modes of transnational otherness inscribe and reenact in their films the fears, freedoms, and

possibilities of split subjectivity and multiple identities" (271). I'm not sure whether Hou can be classified amongst Naficy's "accented filmmakers", but he does use various cinematic strategies, like voiceovers, the film within the film and semi-documentary styles, in order to create distance among diegetic characters, between camera and diegetic subjects, between screen and spectators, observer and observed, original and copy, home and exile. The hybridized forms he creates depend on both multiplicity of identity and multifocality. Hou has tried to put into the medium of film a different sense of Taiwanese' relationship to the past, and a different way of thinking about national identity. These films still express that same trauma presented in some other films by different directors, but Hou chooses to depict the events of the loss itself rather than revive on screen some re-creation of what has been lost.

Tracing history based on personal trauma, Hou "does not operate as a stabilizing search for origins, but rather focuses on the disjuncture between popular and institutional memory, on the points of breakage that riddle fantasies of national belonging" (Jean Ma 49). In effect, as Zoran Samardzija once said, "no 'authentic' internal national origin that is not already a product of either civilization discourses or the conflicts of international politics" (267) can be untangled from the historical present and the contexts that structure its emergence within a nation's understanding of its own history. Hou avoids such a "stabilizing search of origins" (Jean Ma 49) as he also avoids the 'trap of institutional discourse', by emphasizing personal traumatic experience, thus finding a significant new memory lens through which to read, and then, rewrite history.

Hou's perspective in these films is personal and secular, transcending the border of ethnicity and nation to focus on the emotions of ordinary people. In this way, *The Puppetmaster* and *A City of Sadness*, for example, provide a unique dimension to showing the obedience and cooperation between local Taiwanese and the colonial administration by Hou's configuring in his films "a changing process between the colonizer and the colonized people, presenting "double integration" and "cultural hybridity" (Bhabha 4). The "hidden histories" captured by memory have played a critical role which constitute "what we really are" or "what we have become" (Hall

706). They cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about "one experience, one identity" (*ibid*), without acknowledging its other side - the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, Taiwan's uniqueness. These films insist that the national identity is something real - not a mere trick of the imagination - but shed considerable doubt on the idea that the national narratives of the past that have privileged particular losses, for example, are actually accurate. These films testify to the complexities entailed in the process of trying to represent an ordinary people with a private history through a vague, officially sanctioned "identity". As such all histories have their real, material and symbolic effects which in these films Hou brings to the screen with the impact of individual lives and memories, by recreating the historical context of the obliteration of individuality and the voicelessness of ordinary people. The films may not be able to recover the destiny of each individual, or give comfort in their suffering, but they do make a claim for the importance of remembrance within the context of a community. They juxtapose the present and the past by recollection, by deconstructing historical narration and by observing the personal experiences of those participating in the course of everyday mundane moments. This is very challenging film-making. The power of memory, in Hou's films, is its movement from individual loss and the reconstructed ethics of individual and personal witness which then positions viewers themselves as "witnesses" to trauma in an elusive, disturbing, haunting way, provoking in them, I would argue, a need to take responsibility. These are not simply entertainments. Each film while not necessarily exploring the specific structures of injustice and discomfort, alludes to a specific "family" trauma, which metonymically positions the spectator into the historical contexts of those structures.

These are stories of loss: of individuals and of national history. The acts of making these films, I would suggest, becomes the work of mourning that loss. Using Freud's notion of *Trauerarbeit*, or mourning work, Eric Santner has aptly defined it as "a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses; it is a process of translating, troping and figuring loss" (144). But they are also stories of absence. Hou is a director whose works deploy ways of both acting out and working

through absence. His filmic world is one of utopia absent, not utopia lost. In Hou, there is no true utopia, and any intimation of a lost or a future utopia becomes evanescent and insubstantial. In a way, as LaCapra has said, “deconstruction is itself a way of working through and playing (at times acting) out absence in its complex, mutually implicated relations to non-full presence” (67).

4.2 Violence and Trauma

These movies explore the national identity of Taiwan and how it changes repeatedly until it becomes an open and insoluble problem. This exploration often done in the most benign of ways in some places, often cause one to forget how traumatic the events depicted in them really are. The alienation involved in those events makes a powerful force in the representation of political violence, but while such an approach might avoid direct visual bloodiness, the sense of sadness of such events can never be reduced.

4.4 *All the Youthful Days*

4.5 *A City of Sadness*

4.6 *A City of Sadness*

Hou uses long shots and a high angle lens to handle the violent action that is so much a part of this period of Taiwan’s history in order to show the figures who are suffering in as blurred a way as possible. He creates a perspective that takes a broad view of the nature of such scenes of violence so that a vast natural space is projected onto the screen with only the attackers’ sounds breaking the apparent tranquility of the scene (figs.4.4-4.6). Scenes of the actual violence and torture are omitted - the only thing we can hear is the noise and the tones of melancholic music under the voice-over. In this way, Hou balances the films’ dual natures: their political/historical and poetical/lyrical dimensions. As I have shown already, the trilogy is concerned with history, representation and politics, but it also portrays a subjective, humanist turn. Hou reconciles here two areas of experience that were previously often disjointed in

his work: the lyrical/subjective and the political/collective. These two realms are now superimposed and sometimes inscribed in each other. It is this particular insistence on the relationship between past events and poetry, the universal and the concrete, that reveals Hou's engagement with politics and history. In the trilogy, the films' political connotations emerge precisely from their lyrical, transcendental dimension and from the tension between referentiality and abstraction.

In *All the Youthful Days*, for example, the perspective is to illustrate the aesthetics of violence: a kind of anti-climax that cuts nature or obstacles into the fighting climax, where a violent scene is shadowed and the violent bloodiness is weakened (see fig.4.4). This is emphasized in the trilogy by two features: firstly, by indirect representation; and secondly, by there being only victims, no perpetrators. Hou evades direct bloody violence and only presents the atmosphere of violence and the everyday-life repressed emotions caused by it. If the definitive scene of graphic realism is, as Michael Fred has said of painting, one that the viewer can't bear to look at - or listen to - then this is realism par excellence (65). But Hou's films are not simply marked as real, but as variously manipulated - subject to long shots, blurry, frozen (fig.4.5). This is a sequence in the process of being viewed, not only by the spectator of the film, but by a diegetic spectator, as well. It is important to point out that the figure of displacement and restlessness, central to Hou's cinema, is also always in contrast with the immobility of exterior surroundings. The muted green and nostalgic tones of the landscape are imbued with bloody violence (figs 4.5-4.6). The immobility of setting is thus contrasted to the turbulent times and unpredictable fate.

Absent Perpetrator

The absence of the perpetrator in the political violence resonates with the daily perspective of trauma: the individual as the bearer and the witness of historical violence. This is not a straight-out showing of violence, but a representation of the violence in everyday life. Some critics argue that Hou deliberately escapes from reality and wallows in a beautiful landscape instead of the bloody killing and uses his lens to whitewash tragedy (see Wu Qi-yan 83-87; Li Zhen-ya 263). But this criticism ignores the point that this is a kind of spatial philosophy of representation in which

the traumatic moments and political violence are not spectacle or gimmicks to attract viewers, but are fused into daily trifles and thus become an individual inner wound. In Hou, unlike in many neo-realist films for example (see Deleuze 14), everything is ordinary or banal, even death and the dead.

Similarly, the representation of ordinary people in political, neo-realist, films is very rare. Even when they appear, they show up mostly only as a symbol of sacrifice or political abuse. They never act as protagonists. Hou offers an opposite approach where the power, perpetrators and politicians are hidden and never have full representation on screen, while the ordinary people and their daily life are the subject of his films. In *A City of Sadness*, for example, Hou represents public violence (the 2-28 Incident), but only two scenes directly describe the scene of conflict: one is the violence and killing occurring on the train, another happens in the hospital from Kuan-mei's perspective. These two scenes are both very restrained, and the purpose of representation is not to highlight the spectacle of violence, but to trace the embarrassment of national identity and individual trauma. For example, the scene at the hospital starts when Kuan-mei opens the windows at night and hears the noise, she goes downstairs and sees the crawling wounded, then she joins the busy work of doctors and nurses (figs.4.7-4.9). The whole sequence shot does not highlight the horror of bloody violence, nor does it show the tense confrontation between victims and perpetrators, but rather inserts a broadcast voice-over from Chen Yi (Taiwan Chief Executive) at the end of this scene.

4.7 *A City of Sadness*

4.8 *A City of Sadness*

4.9 *A City of Sadness*

4.10 *A City of Sadness*

4.11 *A City of Sadness*

4.12 *A City of Sadness*

The violence happens on the train is the personal experience of Wen-qing and Kuan-rong, when Wen-qing was almost killed as he is deaf and could not speak Japanese and the Taiwanese language (figs.4.11-4.12). This scene contains many meaningful details which go beyond the representation of violence itself, for example, in the killing, a mob wants to kill Wen-qing and he uses different languages - Japanese and Taiwanese dialects to ask Wen-qing where he comes from. This is a significant symbolic: using others' (third-party) language to separate the other. Here the deaf-mute Wen-qing is an embodiment of Taiwanese aphasia, who silently bears the violence and the trauma of history. In fact, Hou does not take the "ethnic conflict" as the core of constructing the whole story, but tries to trace the plight of individuals behind the conflict exemplifying and enriching the motivations for ethnic conflict as well as the history behind it. The hidden daily conflict seemingly lacks a direct relation with political history, but offers profound folk details to decode the "2-28 Incident", and demonstrates the complexity of the conflict between locals and outsiders, authority and ordinary people, as well as personal memory and official records.

This subtle complexity of language and ethnicity is mainly presented in the scenes when the oldest brother Wen-xiong talks with Shanghai gangsters where their dialogue is constantly transferred from the Shanghai dialect to the Cantonese and then to the Minnan dialect (of the southern Fujian province), and then reversed. In these scenes, the Shanghai dialect has an overriding advantage of identity, for example, the boss of Shanghai gangsters can understand the Minnan dialect, but he still proudly uses the Shanghai dialect, and must translate it into Cantonese (by a translator) and then translate it to the Minnan dialect, signalling that he does not want to

communicate with Taiwanese on equal terms. So this linguistic clash is a part of the violence of power. When the KMT retreated to Taiwan, a large number of officials, soldiers and rogue traders and Shanghai gangsters came into Taiwan following the regime. They had a relationship with the government and relied on the hierarchy for a living. They colluded with government to split the relations of *bensheng* Taiwanese and take over their living space. This was the most secretive conflict between *waishengren* and *benshengren* in the 2-28 Incident. In this film, the eldest brother's story is an important illustration about this conflict. The eldest brother originally was an honest businessman and a pillar of the Lin family, who owned several boats and stable businesses. But late he involved in the trap of *waishengren*-Shanghai gangsters as his third brother Wen-liang is coerced by Shanghai gangsters to smuggle from Shanghai to Taiwan. Shanghai gangsters use their official privilege to threaten him and eventually kill him. The eldest brother's inability and helplessness thus corresponds to the outsiders' tyranny which controls and provokes *bensheng* Taiwanese in order to squeeze and destroy local businesses. The death of the eldest brother is filled with strong violence and heavy sadness. But as a sample of elliptical narrative, the film makes the audiences visualize and imagine what happened behind such violent scenes. The plot seems indirectly related to the 2-28 Incident, but it reveals a shadowy dimension under the surface of the conflict, that is a daily, imperceptible atmosphere of political violence hidden in personal living, and hence showing the underlying cause of trauma in the totalitarian regime.

As a movie representing a certain political event, violence itself is a core element in *A City of Sadness,* a film which constructs a symptom of political conflict affecting ordinary people, where, for example, all the male members of the Lin family are harmed or killed in the 2-28 Incident. The riot scene on the train is a climax of this sort of daily conflict, and a flash point of the larger political contradictions. This is not achieved by simply showing violence but rather consists of Hou creating a trance-like atmosphere where the people and victims, and the camera itself, push everything into a state of aberration, in order to communicate violence as well as to make private business pass into the political, and political affairs into the private.

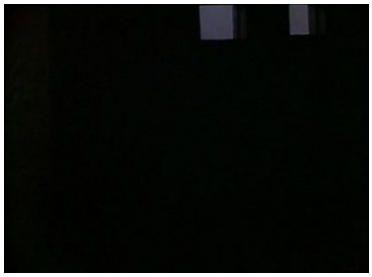
Turn off: an Aesthetics of Violence

The entire structure of the story in *A City of Sadness* presents violence as "turn off" violence. John Corner proposes two useful terms: "turn on" and "turn off" violence - two ways in which depictions of violence might be different. "Turn on" violence would seek primarily to give excitement by heightened action (from the chase, fight, raid, crash, etc.), as well as intensified character performance and spectacular visual effects (104). "Turn off" violence would seek to portray the violence within the moral framing of everyday life, while building into the viewing experience a certain degree of disturbance and distress; the viewer would be invited to engage in an ostensibly non-pleasurable form of looking, which might include shock and disgust (104). The key issue is not so much how screen violence measures up to real life but the way in which the viewer is invited to watch the violence and where that violence fits into the dramatic context. Accordingly, Hou's adjustment for the "turn off" violence is that making it is both realist and obscured. He brings a distance between the audience and violence, where the audience perceives that the tension of violence is not from verisimilitude of the scene, but the disturbing and harrowing imagination it invokes. It is the violence-aesthetics of alienation.

This aesthetic performs in an inverted way to traditional movies, in which always and only the people exist. Hou does not show the revolutionary ideal or the mainstream ideology of political correctness. We also cannot see a united people, instead, what we see is only the ordinary people living in depressed situations who are the subject of political power. The reflection of this political power is captured in the film through an aura of sequence shots, and reduces the discomfort from the bloody violence, but does not reduce tension of horror and sadness. The most prominent presentation is the long takes of the prison scenes in *A City of Sadness*, which use techniques of space and sound to skillfully evade the terror of torture.

4.13 Cellmates' farewell.

4.14 Oppressive atmosphere.



4.15 Footsteps on the black screen.

4.16 Wenqing is looking at the outside

4.17 A cellmate leaves the room

4.18 Guards take away a prisoner

The sequence begins with a lonely light in the dark accompanied by prison guards' footsteps, and then there is a moving, silent silhouette: symmetric frame photography where singing mixes with gunshots - no torture, bloodiness, or interrogation is shown - the scene is minimalist and the sound conveys an atmosphere of violence. This is a kind of psychological image of violence, basically hiding the violence but showing the mental state of the people in the violence. The still shots above are the scenes of Wen-qing in prison, facing execution: this sequence in black and white creates a monotonous, depressed atmosphere – a cramped space, fellows' farewell, and an extreme fear from Wen-qing's perspective that is he reflecting on the moment of life and death (figs.4.13-4.17). The guard's back is shot from a low angle, and then we hear the sound of shots fired off screen (fig.4.18). In this sequence, the song of *Sapporo Carriage Song*[44] comes from outside the screen, remote and sad, which is played to soothe the audience's emotional stress.

Julia Kristeva, in her philosophic-poetical explorations of the power of horror in the psychological life of phobic adults, speaks of their relation to horror in terms of an

[44] This is a Japanese song, sung by a male chorus which was very popular in Taiwan during the 1940s that tells the mood of someone who watches friends leave by a carriage knowing that they will never meet again (Assayas et al, 2000: 60-61). At the end of this song, sounds two shots, which means two inmates were executed. From Wen-qing's perspective, this song is a farewell and remembrance.

attempt to pass over an untouched and untouchable abyss (*Pouvoirs* 53) where there is "a 'something' which I do not recognize as a thing at all. A crushing weight of non-sense", something "not me," and yet "not it" either, unnamable" (*Power of Horror* 9-10). As Perriam says, "If an object of fear forms in the mind it does so precisely to give at least some shape to that something which is nothing and which threatens to destroy sanity and integrity of personality" (Perriam 80). As he looks into and onto the dark and political violence, Wen-qing is not just placing himself as an individual in relation to political violence and history, but confronting also the hint of a much more undefined antagonist. In the darkness and in his reflection - inside him, the suggestion might be - there is horror without name, but framed by politics and the state.



4.19 *Good Men, Good Women* 4.20 *Good Men, Good Women* 4.21 *Good Men, Good Women*

A similar treatment - the same scene and same song also appear in the sequence when Jiang Bi-yu is arrested in *Good Men, Good Women* (figs 4.19-4.21), where Hou presents not only the emotional aesthetic of restraint but also a particular view of the political violence. Hou focuses on the individual situation and the effect of violence, from the perspective of the victim. He traces the crisis of individual life, to constitute an assemblage which brings the real together, in order to make them produce collective utterances and hints at the horror beneath those scenes. The shooting, filmed in the repressive dark, has a horrifying familiarity to it. It is a historical reiteration that deepens the sense of the iterative structures of the film linking individual and collective experience (see Kinder 126-32). Traumatic memories, are therefore ushered back into the realm of the present.

Victimized Victimizers

If political film is an equipment of violence, then Hou's equipment maximally

shows the anonymous individuals able to bear violence or death, and aim to demonstrate that the machine of violence invisibly operates in everyday life. Scenes of attacks and torture are treated as absence and as a sign of history. Given that this history consists of a series of denials of loss, Hou's films, then, respond to the negation of death as an actual event by recourse to a melancholic refusal to forget. Whether they are the "2-28 Incident" or political White Terror, they encompass a series of erasures that transcend the infliction of bodily injury, and are, as Jean Ma has said, "instantiated by the ambiguous absence of the disappeared, when death cannot be attached to a body; the erasures of identity when death is relegated to anonymity; the distorted significance of the death justified by a false charge" (67).

The trilogy's casualties accumulate as the trace of a history of violence and death comes to occupy a central position in the films' reflections on the border of memory and history. This implies that the "belatedness" in relation to war or political violence is inside the individual, and it seems that fifty years or so must lapse before an event or an individual finds the right time to return to trauma. Modernist historiography makes us consider an important set of questions that disturb the stable sense of historical truth - who has the power to define an event, how the representation of violence is bound up with its reproduction, whether every commemorative act is at once an act of forgetting. In the Taiwan trilogy these questions converge upon the imaging of death as a historical event. The films do not merely make subjective the entanglement of death, survival, and the limits of remembrance, but are driven by an awareness of these limits in their very making. For instance, Hou has stated that the production of *The Puppetmaster* was prompted by his awareness that Li Tian-lu was nearing the end of his life (Assayas *A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-hsien*). Hou felt it urgent to capture and preserve the experience of Li as a remarkable performer, a living repository of history, before it was too late. Li in fact died five years after the film's release. Jiang Bi-yu passed away during the making of the film inspired by her life story, *Good Men, Good Women*, an event that is noted within the film. Their deaths call attention to the threshold upon which the trilogy turns, as well as a shift in national politics. The post-martial law era marks a pivotal moment in time when those

who experience the transitional period firsthand approach the end of their lives[45]. Therefore the viability of such witnessing is called into question not only as a result of the crisis of memory lost over time but also as a result of the loss of identity in relation to the veracity of one's own experience. These involve a crisis not only for the individual but also for the larger historical accounting of political events. "Situated upon this generational threshold, the survival of memory takes on a special urgency, as memory gives way to history or myth to ever more people" (Huyssen 2).

These films create a correlation between the crisis of death and memory, and as stories of trauma, "as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality - the escape from a death, or from its referential force - rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (Caruth 7). Dominick LaCapra considers:

> As historical events that are indeed crucial in the history of peoples, traumas might instead be seen as posing the problematic question of identity and as calling for more critical ways of coming to terms with both their legacy and problems such as absence and loss. (79-81)

Chris Berry maintains "that the elimination of the 1947 uprising from Taiwan's official history provides an example of the 'active forgetting' identified by Ernest Renan as the nation's 'foundation', the value of trauma rests with its signaling of a refusal to forget, its resistance to a narrative that selectively remembers history in the interests of the state" (qtd. in Jameson *Postmodernism* 1). In its radical loyalty to its own moment, the traumatic event resists any assimilation to the fabric of a social memory reconstructed after the fact. Situated at a remove from processes of consciousness - unintegrated, un-representable, hence "absolutely true to the event" - "trauma marks a blind spot in history discourse by revealing an inherent contradiction within the structure of knowledge itself" (*ibid* 64).

With the director as the second witness, this identity strengthens the issue of the memory as testimony in relation to representing trauma. In a memoir, Ann Kaplan

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[45] See Zeng Yu-wen, Li Tian-lu. *The Puppetmaster-Tian Lu's Memoirs*. Taiwan Yuan-liou press, 1991. Jean Ma, *Melancholy Drift: Marking Time in Chinese Cinema*. Hong Kong University Press, 2010, 42.

thinks that "'truth' in regard to events is not, per se, at issue. The main thing about a memoir is the emotions that are remembered and the ways in which the writer expresses them" (43). LaCapra also thinks "[i]n historical trauma, it is possible to locate traumatizing events. But it may not be possible to locate or localize the experience of trauma that is not dated or, in a sense, punctual" (LaCapra 81). This means that the trauma of (filmic) representation is essentially a representation of the traumatic experience, an intermediary representation - it is a matter of what the director chooses to emphasize:

> It involves processes of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and "giving voice" to the past-processes of coming to terms with traumatic "experiences", limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms. (LaCapra 186)

I want to argue, then, that Hou's films in the trilogy do indeed represent traumaby 'writing trauma". Narrative codes and represented approaches shape both the impact of the trauma on the individual and how it is remembered. This raises the crucial question of how aesthetic forms and the ethics of representation interact, and ought to interact, with other factors or forces - voice-over, performative, rhetorical, ideological, political - in other genres, and in hybridized forms or modes. And the ways in which national/social codes and discourse split and juxtapose in both the individual narration and the image representation.

Hou erases the image of the perpetrators but uses individual narration to stand witness to the violence of those perpetrators - to express certain unspeakable injuries and forms of abjection. Different narrative forms - diaries, letters, live oral narrative - are frequently used in the films prompting important discursive instances of private memory and trauma. As such, the narrator interacts with objects of narration in various ways involving degrees or modulations of empathy, distance and proximity. Hou does not identify with any given set of subject positions in the seemingly fatalistic grid that marks these political events - the grid linking perpetrator, victim, grey zone, resisters, and those born later. He prefers to not simply replicate those

subject positions or experiences but rather to explore them and their complexities, by representative forms with varying modes of empathy and critical distance. The films also try to contribute to working out a complex subject position that could not be beholden to victimization and instead have practical implications in social and political life. In *Good Men, Good Women*, for example, an audience might perhaps suspect that what was taken as fact in the first-person narration is possibly, indeed probably, invented or imagined. In the case of *The Puppetmaster*, the hybridized status of the text is explicit, but this status does not assuage the possibility of an audience being unsettled. In fact, it is as LaCapra says:

> the upset or sense of unease comes not only from the excruciating nature of the account but from our very inability to tell whether anything in these stories that are explicitly presented as hybridized is indeed fiction, since there seems no internal way to distinguish what was experienced, elaborated from experience, and invented. (209)

Indeed, despite the critical framing and seeming fictionality of story-devices that imply a certain respect for the audience as viewers who should not be deceived or manipulated - "one is nonetheless tempted to believe that everything in these stories is, if not empirically true, at least too close to fact for the audience's comfort" (209).

History-as-Memory-as-Trauma

Corresponding with the absent perpetrator, individual trauma is invoked in connection to the violent historical content as well as to an individual's self-consciousness, and its relevance to the traumatized family, community, nation and collective memory. Hou's work embodies the past by bridging individual concerns to historical ones. Jean Ma calls this the heuristic of "history-as-memory-as-trauma" (Jean Ma 27).

Trauma theory has since emerged as the dominant conceptual model of historiography, invoked in various contexts to describe the difficulties of representing a past consisting of atrocity and violence. Thomas Elsaesser points out that trauma theorists "want to articulate a theory of the subject not around desire and its constitutive lack (the Freud-Lacanian route), but around memory and its - politically

enforced, patriarchally inflicted - gaps, absences, and traceless trace" (194). Cathy Caruth also notes, "in trauma, the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbering to it and immediacy may take the form of belatedness" (5); trauma's "refusal to be simply located" and its "insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (8) make it a difficult matter to "cope with in any attempt at mapping the numbing, achronological, paradoxically inaccessible experience of it onto histories, whether personal, collective, national, recorded, or represented" (Perriam 76). Hou exploits ellipsis, splitting, dislocation, and deferral reproducing this difficulty; and it does so in a way that ought to disallow the normalizing matching up of meanings by encouraging a genuine attention to disjunctures, rather than to equivalences.

The complexity of his storytelling is balanced with a deceptively simple representation, where the multiple temporalities at play in watching his films remind viewers of the historical whirlpool swirling around some of the most ordinary moments of daily life. The everyday perspective offers a new thinking about the representation of trauma. LaCapra asserts that trauma literature forms "a kind of captivity narrative that has the power to make ordinary life seem difficult to reenter and ordinary explanations appear as placebos for what can be apprehended only with extreme difficult and with no pretense to complete understanding" (211). Conversely, Hou breaks through the difficult and captive narration by different hybrid forms and the reconstruction of memory. While trauma narratives cannot preserve the events of the past, there is a kind of redemption found to keep open a wound and with it a re-thinking of history. Also, they deny the viewer the satisfaction of redeemed trauma and recognition of the self through national history. The images in no sense redeem what they discuss and do not provide a higher insight as recompense to derive from even the most tragic of accounts. They leave one in a state of necessary unease and with the perhaps equally necessary "traumatic" feeling - the feeling that anything analogous to the situation in which these images arose should be remembered and perceived in the passing of time.

Chris Perriam thinks "one of the greatest difficulties in locating the traumatic in

the film is the constant deferral of identification of a traumatized subject, whether collective or individual" (77). This means the viewer is not necessarily the one who has witnessed political atrocities especially as time passes. It is also questionable that most viewers have had an experience of growing up that is so violent and so hedged in by damaging authority that they are possessed by images similar to those shown in the Taiwan trilogy. According to Perriam, it is as if the past event in the crisis has not even been experienced, or as if "events witnessed, remembered, and suppressed have been disconnected from the individuals represented or interpellated (as viewers) and redistributed, by the structures of the fiction, among the characters, places, and objects" (77-78).

But in a manner true both to the "radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience" (Caruth 2) and to "theoretical assertions about the collective nature of trauma, this begins to make sense" (Perriam 78). If the viewer is frequently dropped into the abyss of individual memory by cinematographic and narrative suggestion, the images remitted there are images that cause just as much damage to "the tissues of the community," to use Erikson's term (185); "the human beings represented at the bottom of the well of their imagination represent a "gathering of the wounded" (187). And, as such these images relate to the political meanings of the films and meanwhile form a kind of personal narrative that has the power to make an ethical dimension to political violence.

Such reflexive approaches enact the concept of witnessing because the protagonists in the films do not ask for sympathy or situate themselves as victims. Ruth Leys notes "personal testimony concerning the past is inherently political and collective that the narration of the remembered trauma is so important" (109). What returns to haunt the victim, these stories suggest, "is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (Caruth 6). The Taiwan trilogy obsessively centering on memory and history as it does is thus inseparable from the question of the boundaries and limits of the community and the nation and the interplay between them.

4.3 The Ethics of Witness

Ann Kaplan thinks that "[v]icarious traumatization may be an inevitable part of sharing what others have suffered, but it too can have socially productive aspects in specific contexts" (21-22). This raises the question, then, to what degree an ethics of witnessing involves different narrative mechanisms and aesthetic strategies in the trilogy. "Witnessing" is the term I use in Kaplan's sense for prompting an ethical response that will perhaps transform the way someone views the world or thinks about justice (122). Vicarious traumatization is a component of witnessing, which not only intensifies the desire to help an individual in front of one, but also leads to a broader understanding of the meaning of what has been done to victims, of the politics of trauma being possible (123).

Dori Laub has offered one powerful set of insights about witnessing that illuminates it as being more than just the usual empathy or vicarious trauma. In *Truth and Testimony: the Process and Struggle*, Laub points to the urgency of finding a witness where there was none before, who can then understand how important it is for a narrative that could not be articulated to be told, transmitted, and heard (69). Even more important is that the interviewer-listener (viewer) "take on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt the bore alone, and therefore could not carry out" (69). Most importantly for representation of film, "it is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the emerging truth" (69).

Kelly Oliver establishes a connection with Dori Laub's notion of responsibility. She develops a theory of subjectivity based on witnessing (85) in order to distinguish between historically determined subject positions and subjectivity, which she defines as "an infinite responsibility" (87), as "testifying to both something you have seen with your own eyes and something that you cannot see" (86). For Oliver, to be a subject is to be responsible in this larger sense: "that which precludes a response destroys subjectivity" (90). Like Laub and Oliver, Kaplan is also concerned with the issue of responsibility, and she argues for finding ways to enable us to be responsible - "to do this, one has to learn to take the Other's subjectivity as a starting point, not as

something to be ignored or denied - it is only in this way that we can gain a public or national ethic (123). Kaplan clearly believes that "films may be pertinent in constructing a position for the viewer that enables him or her to take responsibility (123).

Oliver thinks that "to recognize others requires acknowledging that their experiences are real even though they may be incomprehensible to us" (106). This idea of experiences being possibly incomprehensible to us is also mentioned by Laub when he distinguishes three distinct levels of witnessing that he has learned from his interviews with Holocaust survivors. The first is the position of "being a witness to oneself". The second level is participation "not in the events, but in the account given of them, in (his) role as the interviewer of survivors who give testimony" (62). This level involves a witness becoming part of the struggle "to go beyond the event and not be submerged and lost in it (62). The third level is one "in which the process of witnessing is itself being witnessed". As Laub says:

> the traumatic experience has normally long been submerged and has become distorted in its submersion. The horror of the historical experience is maintained in the testimony only as an elusive memory that feels as if it no longer resembles any reality. The horror is, indeed, compelling not only in its reality but even more so, in its flagrant distortion and subversion of reality. (62)

It is these elements of elusiveness and subversion of reality that are echoed in Hou's films. These works position the viewer as a "witness" to trauma in an elusive, disturbing, split way that nevertheless provokes in the viewer a need to take responsibility. Each film explores the structure of subjectivity and memory, and represents it by the specific "quiet" or "family" trauma; each film enables the spectator to project this trauma to their own particular circumstances.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a psychologist, notes that old memories fuse with new ones when the rupture of one's sense is a daily occurrence, meaning the narratives of trauma told by victims and survivors are not simply about facts, but are primarily about the impact of those facts on victims' and about the painful continuities

created by violence in their lives (86). As I discussed earlier, Hou's images focus on the individual narrative, that is the victim's memory, which resonates with Gobodo-Madikizela's view - the reproduction is not an undifferentiated depiction about traumatic events, but the feeling and memories of individuals caused by the event itself.

Trauma marks *A City of Sadness* and *Good Men, Good Women* in the moments showing paralysis and continued mourning, in the endless repetition, the circularity. This kind of narrative aesthetic shows trauma as narration without narrativity - that is, "without the ordered sequence leading to a determined end we associate with narratives" (Kaplan 65).[46] But both films have a sort of "ending", a kind of "closure", which attempts to oppose general traumatic narration and narrative. Thoughts erupt into the represented space of both films as fragments, hallucinations, fiction and flashbacks of various modes trauma. However, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* and *The Puppetmaster* are different in this, as their narration in a calm clear voice details images vividly connected to personal life memory. There are two main ways this happens. First, in *The Puppetmaster* the memories are not always in chronological order: they are fragments, pieces, that weave back and forth between different phases of Hou's own childhood and Li Tian-lu's past. Second, intense sad emotion is frequent in the film although Hou does not deliberately provoke emotion. Many memories are recalled without explicit reference to emotion, but still, the events that were especially traumatic and that are accompanied by emotional signifiers stand out all the more.

Caruth argues that to cope with trauma, there is a need to find a way to express it, to fit it into a narrative continuum (41). The diverse daily lives that Hou recounts provide the narrative continuum into which he inserts the pain of loss, and in which he did not find a remedy for it. In the films I am discussing here, on the one hand, time is arrested by a perpetual never-changing daily life, and, on the other, the films lead a viewer towards remembrance, shaping the distance between the time periods shown. Hou both expresses the intimidations of trauma, and also works through the resultant

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[46] See Ann Kaplan "Memory as Testimony in World War II" in *Trauma Culture*, 65. Her insight is focused on Freud's Moses and Monotheism and Duras's *La Douleur*.

grief, thus allowing a trace, a return to past. Also, Kaplan thinks the difference between empathic reactions and witnessing is the distance where "the empathic sharing entails closeness but may lead to the over-identification of vicarious trauma. Witnessing has to do with an art work producing a deliberate ethical consciousness" (122). Accordingly, Hou keeps the viewer somewhat distant - part of producing the spectator as a "witness" to the events in the narrative.

Self-cognition of Voice-over

In his autobiographical film, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, Hou constructs a first-person narrator - the director himself, in which his voice-over appears several times. The middle-aged narrator expressing in a kind of vicissitudes-of-life way prompts the audience into recollection. The voice pulls away the time and sublimates the family misfortunes on the screen from the actual suffering to a more reflexive commentary of the era and the nation. This middle-aged narrator is never shown in the movie, he is just an invisible narrator in the background and hence a symbol of self-reflection. The narrator is thus isolated from the filmic text, but not outside of the text completely, taking the voice-tone of a bystander who tears apart the fictitious nature of the filmic text itself and implants an individual sense of reality.

The first-person narration takes a limited perspective so that the audience cannot know the whole story and thus has to construct the logic of the plots themselves. This approach avoids directorial omniscience, where the narrative is no longer an authority to lead or rule the audience, but provides a distance which not only evokes a nostalgic mood, but also acts as a filtering mechanism for anxiety and painful emotions while encountering the history being shown. Alienated narrators can provide a hidden text to add to the possibilities of viewer interpretation. In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Bordwell argues that the "director's statements of intent guide comprehension of the film, while a body of work linked by an authorial signature encourages viewers to read the film as a chapter of an oeuvre" (211). Thus the institutional "author" is available as a source of the formal operation of the film, especially when the film is to be taken as autobiography in the filmmaker's confession (211). More broadly, "the author becomes the real-world parallel to the narrational presence 'who'

communicates (what is the filmmaker saying?) and 'who' expresses (what is the artist's personal vision?)" (211). The contextualization of the film should not stop with film. Daily life (or dailiness) as a major form of expression in the Taiwan trilogy, for example, which is fragmentary and ephemeral, makes the narrative form piecemeal and occasional. So, there is an increased breakage of logic, fuzzy meanings and constantly unpredictable developments. The audience has to construct the logical chain between the hiding and the showing - so to speak.

The form of memoir also provides a creative freedom for a director to construct a political history by individual experience, even from a child's perspective, often giving the film a vague and uncertain sentiment. Such ambiguity, I suggest, reinforces the drifted nature of memory and the unconsciousness of historical events in individual life. Also this freedom offers the director a new approach, for example in the film I am discussing here, to choose time, space and plots, in which the overwhelming everyday sequences create a bifurcation from both linear history and so-called correct political statements. Thus, many trivial episodes turn *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* into a kind of dailiness-diary, providing a text detached from the middle-aged heterodiegetic narrator's voice.[47]

The narrator remains outside the frame of the story that he narrates, thus functioning as a witness of time and history in the overall control of the visual and sonic registers. The narrator in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* calmly talks about his family's past containing within it a series of traumas and the grief of losing loved ones. The film is not committed to creating a fictional world, but to creating a reality of memory. The heterodiegetic narrator does not "mimic" the authority and power of the extradiegetic voice-over narrator, but gives a kind of "free-floating, bodiless status, a voice from on-high" (Stam, Burgoyne, and Lewis 100). This is also

[47] For the types of filmic narrator, Robert Stam provides a very clear and detailed classification. There are two basic sites or zones in which a narrator operates in the film-text. The first zone is the personified Character-Narrator, who tells a story from within the frame of the fictional world. This is called an Intradiegetic Narrator. If the character-narrator appears as an actor in his or her own story, he or she is called a Homodiegetic Narrator; if the character-narrator does not appear in the story he or she recounts, they are called a Heterodiegetic Narrator. The second zone in which a narrator functions in film is in the overall control of the visual and sonic registers. This external, impersonal narrator is called an Extradiegetic Narrator: "external to (not part of) any diegesis" (Prince 29). In film, this type of narrator manifests itself not through verbal discourse but through a range of cinematic codes and channels of expression. see New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. Routledge: 1992, 97.

the “frame narration” in Kozloff’s concept or what Lubomir Dolezel calls authentication authority - “the ability to establish and verify the facts of the fictional world - than do embedded narrators, who are more likely to be perceived as unreliable narrators, and who must ‘earn’ their authentication authority” (qtd. in Stam, Burgoyne, and Lewis 101).

This means the narrator in the film is still somewhat restrained since he does not appear in the movie. The extradiegetic narration in this film is the primary agency responsible for relating events, but it is always exterior and logically prior to the fictional world itself, which it encloses. It goes beyond the fictional world and provides an authentic annotation for the fictitious world. In addition, this narrator is not completely an objective third party, but is emotional, and brings fully personalized affection into the film, defining the lyrical setting and endowing the film with a powerful poetic force. The narrator thus has to keep a certain distance between the filmic text and the audience - if he is too close, the fictional world will lose its freedom of representation, and if he is too distant, the audience will likely be trapped into misunderstanding the information provided.



4.22 *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* 4.23 *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* 4.24 *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*

In this way, the distance of the sound to the image must be able to connect the filmmaker, the lead character, and the narrator, whose exiled life, like Hou himself, his family, his brothers and sister, feature in home-history style cinema scenes (figs 4.22-4.24). The key difference between this first-person singular narrated autobiographical film and others is that Hou avoids the narrative sequence in which people are able to integrate their individual life history with their sense of the course of an objective history (Connerton 19). What is lacking in the family history is precisely those terms of reference that reinforce the sense of a linear trajectory, a

sequential narrative shape: above all, in relation to the past, the notion of legitimazing origins, and in relation to the future, the sense of an accumulation in power or money or in influence (*ibid* 19). This also extends to his biopic, *The Puppetmaster*. By featuring doubles whose stories are largely based on his own, Hou inscribes himself in the film as himself manifestly, fully, and indexically. His films of such self-inscription may have something to do with their deep differences in feeling structures, which are pessimistic, traumatic and nostalgic. Here the out-of-field in the film, as Deleuze has said in a different context, "shows a power of a different kind, exceeding any space or set: it is connected in this case to the whole which is expressed in the image, to the spirit which is expressed in matter" (236).

In *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* there is no linear trajectory that moves to a simplistic impression of closure to events as do more conventional cinematic family trauma films; nor are there cathartic moments of revelation or transformation to give closure to the narrative. Though the film recounts personal experience and at times is autobiographical, Hou is never content simply to become the traumatized subject at the center of a drama of victimhood. As such this film never functions as a kind of therapeutic device for the self-healing of his personal wounds.

In *The Ethics of Autobiography*, Angel Loureiro searches for a new method for autobiographical discourse. Loureiro's retrieval of Levina's philosophy for autobiographical writing and his proposal to locate its specificity in its ethical dimension is especially relevant to autobiographical discourse on traumatic events.[48] Loureiro finds that autobiography is a "singular act of self-creation as response, responsibility, and promise (of truth). This is a dialogical act, addressed at an Other, and thus intrinsically contestable and always incomplete" (5; Loew 12). Loureiro's proposal engages with the performative nature of ethics and rhetoric: the recovered subject is not the extratextual subject of the past; self-creation of the subject in the text implies a performative gesture that complies with the need to respond to the other

[48] For Emmanuel Levinas each subject, unique and irreplaceable, defines itself in its intersubjective relationships; each subject is conformed not only with the other but also for the other. See Levinas' *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A.Cohen, Duquesne University press, 1987; Camila Loew's *The Memory of Pain: Women's Testimonies of the Holocaust*. Rodopi: 2011, 12.

(Loew 12). Therefore, we no longer remain stuck in the impossibility of mimetic representation, nor all possibility of cognition excluded, as result from de man's proposal (*ibid*). As such the middle-aged narrator in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* actually constructs a self-cognition which is intent on demonstrating that the image is now understood not as correspondence, but as the author's desire and belief in the effectiveness of representation, which in turn is no longer re-presentation, nor re-creation, but rather a discursive creation of reality.

Authority of Oral Narrative

This discursive creation also appears in *The Puppetmaster*, Li Tien-lu's biopic which constructs a life history of the Japanese colonial era through Li's personal memory. The film's double articulation is heightened by the fact that Li himself makes appearances in the film. Reposing in the same set previously inhabited by the actor who plays his youthful self, Li spins a calm and charming narration about his past. These scenes attach a visible body to the voice-over and pull back a curtain to reveal Li as narrator, directly addressing the camera as he speaks and thereby puncturing, Brecht-like, the invisible wall of fiction. By this distinctive style, the film focuses on the tribulation of Li's personal life and his profession in the changing times.

As an eyewitness, Li's narration creates a history in voice, which together with his imaged representation as a re-performance of voice, offers a special point of contrast in a film featuring both the continuous voice-over of its protagonist and the doubling of his identity. Li's voice - instantly recognizable, unique in its calmness and vicissitudes - functions as a marker of his experience and life, challenging the representational status of the image, and signifying an authenticity that cannot be copied or simulated, and thereby imposing a hierarchy among the various people standing in for the character. In this way, Li's oral narration actually constitutes a paradox of the film's representation: the voice guides the plot development of the fictional world, creating and maintaining a fictional world, but it also deconstructs and questions the fictional world. Hou, I would argue, in doing this creates a new mode of seeing and of listening - a seeing and a listening from the site of memory - opened to us as spectators of the film, and offered as the very possibility, in a catastrophic era, of

a link between different times.

4.25 *The Puppetmaster*

4.26 *The Puppetmaster*

4.27 *The Puppetmaster*

The film provides plenty of details and the construction of time-space has a kind of autonomous energy to invoke, I would further suggest, a strong nostalgia for past times. Hou deliberately employs a filter to give old colors to the scenes (figs 4.25-4.27) he shows, such as diffused yellow paddy fields, grey folk bazaars, and a farm road under the sunset, most of which do not directly link to the plot, but render a memorable atmosphere. These scenes rely on dislocation between the oral narration and images to reach the striking inner imagination of memory. Here narration is no longer a component of the visual image, but a part of it where as Deleuze has said, "the visual and the sound become two autonomous components of an audio-visual image, or, better two autonomous images" (248). It seems that talking ceases to see, to make visible, and also to be seen. The sound continuum thus ceases to be differentiated by what the visual image belongs to or the dimensions of the out-of-field.

The visuals and the sound do not reconstitute a whole, but create what Deleuze calls "a fusion of the tear" (268). These scenes accommodate the changes of the times into changes of theatrical types which extends the psychological depth of the movie as Li's "internal voice" where the soul is made from the "mechanical movement" of the puppet. As such I would suggest that this film is torn, to use Deleuze's sense of the term "'tear': where the division into body and voice forms a genesis of the image as 'non-representable by a single individual', 'appearance divided in itself and in a non-psychological way" (268). The puppet and the reciter, the body and the voice, constitute neither a whole nor an individual, but a symbolic device of life is like a drama. In his way, the past is thus excessively visualized: the enactment represents

Li's life memory, while the sequences of the puppets mirror Li's cultural memory (figs 4.28-4.30).

4.28 The glove puppetry.

2.29 The Taiwanese (folk) opera.

4.30 The Japanese propaganda drama.

In fact, Li's narration does not just signal the crossing of fiction and nonfiction, it also imposes a retrospective cast on the image and frames the entire story as a "narration from the end", namely, as a series of events transpiring in the past tense and enunciated from a future moment that is in turn anchored in an extra-diegetic reality, the real body of Li. This setting brings an essential question about representation of memory such that the movie is not only to preserve Li's memory, but to create it by revealing the process of the memory as imaged on screen. This seems to be able to achieve a reality only through fiction by paradoxically exposing the fiction. The audience is "in the process of witnessing is itself being witness" (Laub 62) and shuttling through the present and the past, reality and fiction, to maintain an alienation between the real and the fiction. Throughout, Hou produces doublings of past/present, memory/ignorance, youth/old age, exile/home. Through this doubling there is a feeling that something unseen inheres in all the time and places, but one doesn't really know what it is. The film introduces the possibility of feeling rather than chronology as a mode of historiography.

In *Film Fables*, Jacques Rancière thinks that memory is the work of fiction. But "'fiction' is not a pretty story or evil lie, the flip-side of reality that people try to pass off for it.... Fiction means using the means of art to construct a 'system' of represented actions, assembled forms, and internally coherent signs" (158). Rancière further makes a distinction between documentary film and fiction: "the real difference is not that the documentary sides with the real against the inventions of fiction, it is just that the documentary instead of treating the real as an effect to be produced, treats it as a

fact to be understood" (158). This means that a good historical conscience will focus on this paradox and pit its patient search for the truth against the fiction of a collective memory that underpins power in general. Following the thinking of Rancière then, we cannot think of the "documentary" part of *The Puppetmaster* as the polar opposite of the "fiction" part simply because the former image is from a real person, and the latter with actors who act out his story. In this way, Li's appearance isolates the artistic work of fiction simply by dissociating that work from its most common use: the imaginary production of verisimilitude, the effects of the real. This dissociation dilutes the tension of trauma and keeps the trauma open, which enables the audience and Li to trace and work through the past together. This hybrid aesthetic form has to do with Li being at a point where he is almost standing outside of his trauma, narrating "too close to the bone" (Allon White 1991) with the clarity that may come as one anticipates death.

A series of images that the director arranges always breaks the cinematographic principles of montages in order to define very specific moments in the relationship between the personal memory and the representation, and results in a smooth plane which creates a memory viewers can scan. Hou's film confirms Rancière's views: "In contrast to this tendentious reduction of the fiction invention to the stereotypes of the social imaginary, the fiction of memory sets its roots in the gap that separates the construction of meaning, the referential real, and the 'heterogeneity' of its documents" (159). This means that the semi-documentary film is substantially a mode of fiction at once more homogeneous and more complex.

Hou makes the fiction of memory and its artistic construction into a "lesson on memory" and on the duties of memory. Li's voice seems to be a constant reminder to the audience to connect it to the other image, to look at that image a little closer, to reread what there is to read in this image. But the "oral narrative" always plays with the authority of a voice that secures meaning at the price of weakening the image. Li's narrative is the means of ensuring the undivided authority of this voice. He is working in a narrative structure that creates a memory in the present as the intertwining of two histories of the personal and public. The visual image and the sound image are in a

special relationship, a free indirect relationship. Filming speech as something visible remains valid, but all the more so in that seeing and speaking in this way take on a new meaning where the film constructs the division between the sound, the image and the puppet show. For Hou, this is not an arbitrary construction, but a very rigorous one in order to create layers of memory representation.

Kaplan thinks that in studying memoirs of the traumatic, one has to bear in mind the vicissitudes of memory, in Janet Walker's term, and the workings of the unconscious, the imaginary (42). Walker points out that the "traumatic paradox" has to do with the ways in which "a common response to real trauma is fantasy" (809). She goes on to argue that the most effective films and videos about trauma are "those that figure the traumatic past as meaningful yet as fragmentary, virtually unspeakable, and striated with fantasy constructions" (809). Accordingly, Hou's two films of memoirs, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* and *The Puppetmaster* are not "fiction" in the usual meaning of that term. Hou is struggling to communicate something powerful that happened in the past, something that is his and Li's with strong emotion, in which *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* is clear, simple, "realist" narration. *The Puppetmaster* is a special case of the influence of fiction and documentary, but it makes the representation of memory more powerful, not as a literal rendering of "truth" as in the case of a witness in court for example, but as an effort to recognize the vicissitudes of memory. The gap between narration and image resonates with the problem of historical representation, with blanks of violence or death beyond what we can know and understand; but "it is in the event of this incomprehension and in our departure from sense and understanding that our own witnessing may indeed begin to take place" (Caruth 56).

Gender in Traumatic Memory

The Time to Live and the Time to Die and *The Puppetmaster* represent male memories from the male perspective and experience, whereas *A City of Sadness* and *Good Men*, *Good Women* both offer the female memory from female-centered perspectives using female narration, and both importantly focus on the centrality of relationships. Hou does not deliberately stress the distinction of gender, but he

provides a reference perspective - female trauma and memory always "locate themselves within emotional relationships at stake in the past, while male writers may focus more on institutional, historical, or sociopolitical contexts" (Kaplan 43). This means the female trauma overlaps with family trauma that is, "traumas of loss, abandonment, rejection, betrayal" (*ibid* 19). In the sense of T.M. Luhrman, it is the "quiet traumas" (158), or what Deidre Barrett calls "common traumas" (5). However, it is worth noting that Hou does not focus on the female internal structural trauma, but on crisis and a split of the female subjectivity as destruction and loss of male family members in political violence.

This concentration on subjectivity results in a different approach to the representation of historical trauma, revealing the ethics of witnessing, and indeed the releasing of the tension between deep personal and linked social traumatic impacts found in independent statements. In this way, *A City of Sadness* represents political violence through female diaries and letters used in a voice-over. Kuan-mei, the fictional female witness, is both an observer and a victim in the violent event, who plays the role of an observer. As Hou has said:

> It allowed me to create an ambiguity in the narrative structure which I found very exciting - how the whole story is told from the point of view of a woman, who reports the events while expressing her emotions, she represents a point of view that is both objective and subjective. (69)

Kuan-mei's voice-over appears in the film only a few times, but each time carries strong emotion and poetic tone: from "the landscape is so beautiful on the road" in the beginning of the movie to its ending - "I do not care about the identity of the native or the mainlander, as long as Wen-qing (her husband) and my son are at my side, I feel very happy". Even after her husband was arrested, she still says that "it is now already late autumn in Jiou-fen (a place in Taiwan), wild flowers are blooming as vast whiteness, so beautiful". The paradox is that this poetic narration appears every time along with the plots of violent invasion and family tribulation. It can be inferred that the calm, sentimental expression fills the black hole of emotion and the blind spot of the memory of extreme events, creating a buffer space of representation relating the

incomprehension of trauma. Her alienated narration is almost outside her trauma and uncannily intertwined inside and outside of history, which crosses borders normally held firm in ordinary life.

In *Facing the Extreme*, Tzvetan Todorov proposes the notion of "everyday virtues" (dignity, care for the other, and activities of the spirit), in opposition to "heroic virtues," which are based on abstract, symbolic, absolute values that justify the fight for a cause (always an ideal). Todorov contends that thinking about these everyday virtues, it was easier for women to maintain a moral dimension in the face of the extreme conditions that seemed to eradicate any possible human dignity or moral act (293-4). The conclusion Todorov reaches is that one series of virtues is as important as the other, but that the virtues associated with the feminine (the everyday ones) have been unfairly underestimated in society (Loew 7). In *A City of Sadness* the female role is not to emphasize the responsibility and importance of women as is often the case in many political films, and is also not specific about the cause of the traumatic landscape viewers enter, but places them as "witness" to the heroine's extreme distress and loss, with suggestions that a violent power order is responsible. On the one hand, this keeps the viewer somewhat distant - part of producing the spectator as a "witness" to the events in the narrative; on the other hand, it maintains a moral dimension in extreme moments and events - making the audience transcend the suffering and violence to rethink a traumatic history from a female perspective.

A City of Sadness mimics the structure of traumatic history by the way that Kuan-mei's images intrude increasingly into the narrative and are given meaning. Kuan-mei's narration in the film is separated from the main diegesis by an inversion of the usual sound-image hierarchy: it controls the spiritual texture of images, and dismantles the superior position of authoritative, patriarchal, discourse. The representation of female characters acts as a discursive agent in the film to deconstruct the dominant portrayal of male narrators as disembodied authors, troubled by the threat of negated testimony and erasure. In this way, Kuan-mei's narrative corresponds to the perspective of the victim and the spectator, which is thus both impersonal and personal. Ryan says, "everything the impersonal narrator says yield a

fact for the fictional world" (534), while the personal narrator, by contrast, "has to earn his authentication authority" (Dolezel 18). Accordingly, as the two-in-one, Kuan-mei does not simply report or describe the facts but creates a discursive world that provides the film a space for repressed voices and personal historical feelings interweaving a unique female experience and evaluation of political events.

Kuan-mei's narration is taken from her diaries and letters, and subverts the simpler and more confident formulation of official narration on the same event, generally creating Hou with an opportunity to present an alternative view of history. A good example of this is the different views expressed about the 2-28 Incident between Kuan-mei and Chen Yi, who was Taiwan's governor-general at the time. Kuan-mei and her colleagues at the hospital where she works gather to listen to an announcement by Chen Yi who says: "Compatriots of Taiwan, on the night of the 27th during an investigation in Taipei, someone unfortunately was killed. I have already taken this matter in hand. Those who killed others during this incident have already been sent to court to be tried and punished. We have arranged treatment for a women with slight injuries...." Chen Yi deliberately downplays the significance of the conflict and the anxious, confused response of those involved. The sound of Chen Yi's voice then gives way to Kuan-mei's voice-over: "Today the radio reported fighting in Taipei between Taiwanese and mainlanders. Taiwan is under martial law. At the hospital, we are all afraid. A war has just finished, how can another begin?"

4.31 *A City of Sadness*

4.32 *A City of Sadness*

4.33 *A City of Sadness*

These two voice-overs establish a historical tension between the official voice of the state and the voice of ordinary people; between a public broadcast and a private diary, and between the truth and a lie. The diary presents a record of personal experiences - "hand-written history" - about the violent history, calling into question

the claims made in the publicity controlled by the state. The subsequent doubts raised in the official voice-over by the dislocating effects of the personal one foreground incongruities already present in the core of the film, and are made even more powerful by the contrasting prolonged silence accompanying the many long, drawn-out shots in which the camera constantly cuts to the still landscapes of the sea (figs. 4.31-4.33). These contrasting elements enter into rivalry, overlap, supplement each other, and cross and transform into each other, enabling the spectator to become increasingly aware that "the visual and the sound do not reconstitute a whole, but enter into an 'irrational' relation according to two dissymmetrical trajectories" (Deleuze 268). Narration, in this way, arguably enables a performative "working through" to take place for viewers as well as for the protagonist of the film, because it raises the possibility of alternative readings. Viewers are positioned to make a choice of what history to side with.

As an extreme historical event, the 2-28 Incident is differently labeled in different historical stages: before the advent of the argument for Taiwan independence, the 2-28 Incident was considered a taboo subject that was not allowed to be mentioned. After the lifting of martial law, it tended to be viewed as a "sadness" in the history of relations between native Taiwanese and the mainlanders and was considered as a "shame" on the political landscape. Therefore, the reproduction of this event was always going to be a sensitive topic. But *A City of Sadness* goes beyond the usual discourse on this event, and reviews this event from the perspective of civilians, family and women. This variant interpretation reveals complex, hidden elements behind the original violence veiled and blurred for years in the official history. In Hou's version, the original core of the event - ethnic conflict - is considered not to be a cause of the event but an excuse for the original politically motivated violence. As Jean Ma has said, this discursive, reflexive approach challenges the representation of a politically volatile set of past events and has provoked vociferous criticisms as well as impassioned defenses of the director (27). This film certainly caused some controversy, but, I suggest, its significance is not whether it closely follows linear history but whether it can contribute to our ability to make tentative historical sense of

some of it (Didi-Huberman 30). This is Walter Benjamin's notion of the "flash" - of the illumination of an instant that should not be confused with a claim of totality, of complete comprehension. I agree with Didi-Huberman's insistence that the abdication of totality should not be a rejection of what traces might be able to tell us. "We must do the 'archaeological work'; we must dig into the image to help us think more precisely, to help us imagine and remember" (Roth 193). Hou's work forces viewers to do just that by changing a spectator's relationship to the fragments of the past and historical records. Viewers of Hou's films are not expected to treat the film and its witness to history as communicating the unveiling of the one essential meaning, but to engage with uncertainty and thus to accommodate a more open and complex historical perception. Hou's films force the audience to focus on the subtle everyday things; on personal feelings; on personal accounts. The complexity of a film like *A City of Sadness* is that it is no longer committed to hold onto the officialized logic and causality of political events, but rather to provoke the heterogeneity and incomprehensibility of those often traumatic events. It offers a new reflective space of witness.

Acting as a Means of Mourning History

Hou is a very reflexive director and *Good Men, Good Women*, with its "film within the film", is a very good example of how his reflexivity can create a film which, like *A City of Sadness*, deconstructs what constitutes 'real history'. *Good Men, Good Women* does just that by featuring a modern actress's life and memories interweaved with a revolutionary woman's story of the 1940s. The film creates an alternative mode of seeing and of listening to female trauma between eras. What we see and hear, in the film, resonates beyond what we can know and understand; but it is in the incomprehension and in our departure from sense and understanding that out own witnessing may indeed begin to take place (Caruth 56).

A City of Sadness presents how men are destroyed and disappear in political violence, a consistent theme in *Good Men, Good Women* where there is a complete absence of men, already dead before the story begins, is the repression of the masculine. This film is about women's memories and the objects of their mourning.

The actress Liang-jing's subconscious seems overwhelmed, so that she lives in the present, acts in the present tense, and leaves no room for history. At the beginning of the film, Liang-jing's diary was stolen and sent to her by unnamed fax, which means her private memory was usurped by an anonymous person, and she thus lost her personal history. The action of her reading the faxed pages of the diary is both the subject for the narration of the voice-over and a mourning device associated with her trauma and a usually non-shared personal history. Quickly thereafter, the voice-over of mourning expands well beyond this function to absorb the narrative into a continuous stream of consciousness, with her voice describing her thoughts in the present tense as well as conveying the historical facts around Jiang Bi-yu's past.

In "the film within the film" the fiction of memory is set in opposition to the "real fiction" that "ensures the mirror recognition between the audience in the theaters and the figures on the screen, and between the figures on the screen and those of the social imaginary" (Rancière 159).The film within the film is shot in black and white giving the fiction a documentary feel (figs 4.34-3.36). Hou explains this by saying that "people today know the history of 1940s only through medias of old [black and white] photos and images, which is Liang-jing's imagination about that period" (47).

4.34 The Film within the Film

4.35 The Film within the Film

4.36 The Film within the Film

Liang-jing is an actress living in the present moment, whose lover's death a few years ago is haunting her memory and life, and she constantly relives that past through her diary. The movie presents this by creating two parallel histories within the film, hers and Jiang Bi-yu's in the 1940s. The parallels subtly question the modern female life, that is love and sex as free and open, but the spirit is emptier and more unsettled than Jiang Bi-yu in the 1940s. Compared to Jiang's political tribulations, responsibility and courage of witnessing history, Liang-jing's memory is just about

personal loss.

This juxtaposition achieves a double vicariousness of trauma in Liang-jing's split identity: her modern female "common trauma" and Jiang's historical trauma. In the beginning, Liang-jing moves freely between the two pasts and intentionally alienates herself from the trauma of history to create an objective narration, and then she turns to self-questioning. The film deals with the trauma of nation, that is a politics of terror and loss - and an attempt to remember such loss and another - the modern, "common" personal trauma. This displacement from political trauma to individual trauma involves a repressed memory of traumatic events and their impact on a woman as a displaced process of trauma, and hence enables Hou to develop an exploration of female responsibility for history.

As such, the displacement is not framed in a closed narrative of remembering and forgetting, but opens up a female history. It opens it up, however, but not by asking for a historical understanding from Liang-jing to Jiang Bu-yu. For example, in the final scene of the mourning ritual for Jiang's husband (see fig 4.33) who died during the White Terror, Liang-jing is shown to have empathy with Jiang Bi-yu as they both suffered the same traumatic loss. The ending is a moment of history extending to the present, and transforming fiction to reality - Liang-jing's diary voice-over tells us that the film production crew will go to Guangdong for shooting on location, meanwhile, the real Jiang Bi-yu died in hospital at the age of 74 years. This background narration reminds us of a real site of memory, and even though the witness has died, her history and trauma should be rescued from oblivion.

Trauma in this film is not treated as an unhappy, melodramatic event. The protagonist does not regain a new happiness - on the contrary, the traumatic event is only the beginning and remains generally undefined, unexplained, unframed, and unresolved. As Kaplan once said, trauma can never be "healed" in the sense of a return, but if the wound of trauma remains open, its pain may be worked through in the process of its being "translated" via art (Kaplan 19). In this way, Liang-jing's trauma is still not comforted, but she ends the haunting of her own past, and goes on to work through its history with the audience.

Female trauma is unique and timeless, constructing the female's own history. When the collective or public traumatic memory turns into individual trauma, it means that historical trauma is commensurable with the everyday experience, especially for the female experience of loss. The "empathy" of Liang-jing for Jiang Bi-yu drives her to understand the strange traumatic event and turn her into a new witness of violent history. As the lovers are linked in their traumas, what takes place in Liang-jing's narration is the establishment of their respective histories. The establishment of history, however, is not simply an act of empathy or understanding, but rather constitutes the very heart of their link to each other. The final scenes of mourning are indeed at the climax of the narration of the story requesting understanding and precisely marking the possibility of their connection. For understanding the possibility of the dead, the man's body is a vehicle of empathy that, on the level of immediate experience and emotions, is experienced as an act of violence. The traumatic histories of the two women can emerge only in their relation to each other and only in the way in which this relation creates a gap within the mutual understanding of their site of memory.

The truth of the woman's story thus emerges not only in the power of its reference, but in the site that enacts the impossibility of history. Yet it is also precisely within what this site cannot fully know that the possibility of another history opens up. The fusion of Liang-jing and Jiang Bi-yu offers the possibility toward past and traumatic memory being marked (vicariously) in the female losses of different reasons and of different times that are dispersed and settled into comprehensible, but always traumatic, narrative.

The double fiction here corresponds to the two forms of memory that coexist with relative independence from each other. On one hand, Hou probes the ordinary or common memory. Liang-jing's diary is the carrier of this memory and she lives in the field of that memory. As Loew says, "Common memory is a superficial memory that actualizes itself to reinforce the living instinct in the most basic, everyday actions, such as breathing, eating, communicating" (Loew 26). On the other hand, Hou develops a memory of trauma through the familiarization of "superficial" memory, as

it comes into contact with the "deep memory" of history. In this process, the body is emphasized as a vehicle of sense memory. Liang-jing experiences Jiang Bi-yu's trauma associated with torture, fear, losses of children and the man. Imposed on Liang-jing's body, this awakens Liang-jing's inner traumatic memory. It is the confluence of these two memories that offers the possibility of the collective or public trauma to be transferred from incomprehension. The strategy Hou devises to present the duality of memories leads the film to avoid conventional narrative and exploits a combined characteristic of testimony, poetry, and drama.

It is as Kaplan thought that women in the past did not participate centrally in national catastrophes such as war, but they did participate *vicariously* in their many roles, and they were therefore subject to vicarious traumatization (20). In *A City of Sadness* and *Good Men, Good Women*, the painful female memories explored expose the complex interrelatedness of the subject with the powerful and inevitable historical and political forces in which they are inescapably caught up. Hou tries to establish some new structures of vision within which there can be "witnesses" for the testimony of women, who are still subject to historical violence even as new subjectivities are being represented in films. These structures make silently endured traumatic experiences able to be "spoken" or imaged, as in *A City of Sadness* and *Good Men, Good Women*, where the women begin the task of working through, in LaCapra's sense of this term, via mourning.

The voice-over in the two films neither confuses the narrator's own voice and position nor seeks harmonization with, or closure of, history, but allows questions to be raised through its unsettling nature about the acting out and their mourning (LaCapra 15). The forms that complicate the referentiality or "aboutness" of history are particularly insistent with respect to intensely invested traumatic events on individuals. These are bound up with our transferrential implication in the past and its images - an implication that must be questioned for the usual representation of history in films whether objective or not without succumbing to the deceptive and even harmful project of objectification that denies transference, eliminates the role of critical self-reflection, and suppresses the voice of the other (ordinary people),

including its ability to raise questions for oneself and one's assumptions.

LaCapra points out that we must find ways in public education and practice to move emotion and value toward victims who are indeed deserving objects of mourning (214). Accordingly, Hou's ways give victims a subjective position, and an opportunity to mourn for the trauma of ordinary people, which, in turn, allows the viewer to participate in the experience of victim's memory. The director does not allow the spectator easily to "survive" the protagonist's death or wounds, but leaves the viewer with an uneasy, disturbed feeling, with the sense of having been moved empathically and ethically (Kaplan 135). While the films require contextualizing for the broader view to be appreciated, this in no way mitigates their power to move the audience ethically, in order to reveal the structure of memory and to invite viewers to take responsibility for a specific history.

4.4 A Possibility of History

The films discussed in this chapter address the impact of trauma on an individual in the context of, and closely allied with, the overarching social, political, and cultural memory of a particular period. In them, Hou produces a visual correlative to the subjective, emotional, and visual experience of trauma, and leaves the situation uncertain for the viewer. Therefore, the entire world of film is "inside" the traumatic experience, with its visual distortions, its displaced narration, its melancholy and hallucination, its dissociations and splittings of identity, its uncanny intertwining of mourning, and its crossing of borders. To that end, I suggest that the world of Hou's films is basically that of a traumatic experience related to a destabilization of memory and time. These films are not specifically about the cause of the traumatic landscape viewers enter, but about the placing of those viewers as "witnesses" to the ordinary people's extreme distress and mental suffering, suggesting that a violent order, and not the repressed ordinary people, is responsible. As such these repressed ordinary people are positioned to "forget" traumatic events perpetrated on them, as the nation as a whole is reluctant to hear the victimized voice in order to establish and maintain political "harmony". But Hou creates witnesses to these hitherto hidden events through his audiences.

From events like the 2-28 Incident or the White Terror in Taiwan, and some political events[49] in Mainland China, 'ordinary people' have learned that the rewriting of history textbooks to better reflect reality. In Taiwan, apologies from the state and compensation funds to redress past wrongs and traumas, and the erection of monuments that remembers that past as needing redress may have real meaning; these efforts have tended to be limited and largely symbolic. None of these actions can fully heal the wounds of the victims, their families, and everyone else who suffered as a result of the events. These painful memories can easily be covered by the new discourse of political propaganda. This is why Hou's daily "perspective" is so important, because it makes ordinary people accept ongoing mourning, keeping the wound open.[50]

In these films, Hou's attention to memory and history encouraged by trauma theory "prompts a retreat from film theory's imbrication with questions of fantasy and spectatorship" (Radstone 191). This retreat engages with the ways particular subjects of memory enter the intersubjective realm of history and deeply questions the political contexts that pave the ways for official historiography. To do this Hou uses a series of different filmic approaches - the semi-documentary, the film within the film, and multiple voice-overs, in order to construct an inherent reflexivity.

In Naficy's sense, reflexivity is a performative strategy, which involves a mediation that creates distance and doubt between diegetic characters and between them and the audience (276). The distance in Hou's films also motivates the double characters and activates the films' narratives of desire, nostalgia, and memory for other people, places, and times. Moreover, distance propels the reflexive aesthetics,

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[49] This refers to political events which happened in mainland China, for example, the anti-rightist movement (1957-1958) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

[50] Trauma can never be healed, especially for the political history of East Asia. Most efforts to deal with the history of East Asia have been appropriated by the state, which means the result cannot be politically neutral or even trustworthy. There is a lack of credible groups in the popular sectors (most of which are divided ethnically or by their positions on national issues), and as such there is no one who can deal patiently with the topic of reconciliation and address it in depth. The difficulty is further compounded by the fact that under the new conditions of globalization, increasing the pace of development has become the state's national and nationalist priority. Historical questions are relegated to a secondary status, if they are considered at all. This is what I mean about the importance of "open the wound". See Chen Kuan-Hsing Asian as Method: Toward Deimperialization, 158.

which mediate the acts of seeing and being seen, exhibitionism and voyeurism, and presence and absence. In short, distance allows, even necessitates, a variety of mediated and performative strategies in order to touch the past and enact the memory, which goes through history and escape from control of that history. Landy thinks that "film is responsible for constructing the world but that cinema is also a means of "detecting" the nature of this construction" (262). The reflexive style undertakes a critique of historical representation in cinema and of cinematic representation in history, and Hou, as I hope to have shown here, is a master craftsman in this.

Each one of Hou's films discussed here shows the importance and the burden of the past, the dilemma of whether to live in the past or to focus on the present. As films of history/memory, they offer a way beyond a melodramatic historical film, and encourage the viewer to distrust stories which come across as well-told narration. The reflexive forms invoke in the audience the filling in of gaps and fissures in the films, and in history overall. As such, the most important aspect of these films is the texture and nature of historicizing. Klaus Kreimerier writes that "film is a product of the new sensibility toward the historicity of small spaces" (17). That is to say, film is attentive to the need to move away from the epic and monumental to reach into the everyday with its inherent problems and contradictions. Hou's films do just that. Daily life or dailiness functions in his films as "creative" memory, and, I would argue the key to understanding Hou's major concern in his films is how to adequately, and inclusively, represent the "everyday political memory by asking questions like: Who speaks for whom? Who is the guardian of memory? What distinguishes different investments in the past?

These films offer thinking dimensions about these questions but do not provide definitive answers. In exploring the contradictory nature of daily life as the represented mode, films obviously show that memory can lead to a more complex understanding of the nature of political trauma, but it can also serve to erase the memory of political violence, in a way that is seemingly a betrayal of past. Hou's films, then, become part of a storehouse of images for the traumas that remain in ordinary people, calling for rituals of witness and commemoration.

In this way, Hou's films, and especially the Taiwan trilogy, are actually provocative essays on memory, challenging the spectator to rethink the past through its residual presence in cinema. In Anton Kaes's terms, the form of cinematic historicizing entails "weaving together many individual narrative threads into a text. The way in which the narrative threads are intertwined attaches a certain meaning to the historical event, which by itself has a multiplicity of potential meanings" (84). This is certainly true for Hou's work where as Landy says in another context, "The emphasis on the polyphonic nature of the text becomes an oblique critique of monologic discourses, the language of official history" (Landy 255-256).

Hou's multilayered texts generate antagonisms, striking particularly at the heart of familiar paradigms. Hou creates what Deleuze calls "new associations"[51], reinforcing in his films what Deleuze has said about the fact that history has been and continues to be created in and circulated through media and that the imperative for change, for new associations, entails a different mode of expression in and critical analysis of media (265). In Deleuze's words:

> What is in play is no longer the real and the imaginary, but the true and the false. And just as the real and imaginary become indiscernible in certain very specific conditions of the image, the true and the false now become undecidable or inextricable: the possible proceeds from the impossible, and the past is not necessarily true. (274-275)

Deleuze's view resonates with the research of trauma and memory, as a "historical practice", film (is similar to photography) in that it "does not escape from the difficulties of evidence and of the 'constructed' nature of historical understanding"; they function "neither as a pure trace of the past, nor as a mere invitation to spectacle" (Roth 204). Hou's films remind us of what cannot be seen, and that is why, through

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[51] Deleuze's comments on *Syberberg's Hitler: A Film from German* are close to this discussion of cinematic uses of the past. He thinks the revolutionary courtship of the movement-image and an art of the masses becoming subject was broken off, giving way to the masses subjected as psychological automata, and to their leader as a great spiritual automaton. This is what compels Syberberg to say that the end-product of the movement-image was Leni Riefenstahl, and if Hitler is to be put on trial by cinema, it must be inside cinema, against Hitler the filmmaker, in order to "defeat him cinematographically, turning his weapons against him ...but at what price? True psychomechanics will not be found unless they are based on new associations, by reconstituting the great mental automata whose place was taken by Hitler, by reviving the psychological automata that he enslaved." (264).

their varying poetics of time, space, memory and the ordinary they matter to the remapping of history and the rethinking of theory within its representation within popular culture.

CHAPTER 5

Epilogue

The Poetics of the Ordinary in the Representation of History

An image is nothing more than a relation.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary* (1940)

5.1 Film and History

Boleslaw Matuszewski, a pioneer of cinema, understood the intertwinning relationship between film and history. In 1898, or some three years after the birth of cinema, Matuszewski saw film as a new and highly valuable historical source. He thus urged that film be treated with the same sort of respect granted to historical documents such as books and paintings, going as far as calling for the creation of film archives. For Matuszewski, the specific value of film in relation to history related to its immediacy and talent for mimicry (26-7). That is to say, the advantage of cinema rested in its ability to record things which we cannot see with the "naked eye". It also better helps us see historical events and to study their causes (26). However, Matuszewski stood on the side of official history since he regarded public and official life as events of great importance, but the everyday life of ordinary people was not. The latter paradigm would constitute what we now term "cultural history", which for Matuszewki was not worth registering for posterity, much less so for the archives of history (11).

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin takes the contrary view. For him, the special value of film lays precisely in its ability to capture ordinary human behavior which slips from the notice of

"professional" historians. Siegfried Kracauer (1960), on the other hand, similarly appreciates cinema's mimetic qualities and its historical value, going as far as making the pronouncement that in terms of its mimetic and historical values, cinema has surpassed all older arts. The most powerful glorification of cinema as a mimetic medium appears in Andre Bazin's essays, especially *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (1960) in which he describes cinema as a descendant of the practice of embalming the dead, noting its capacity to prolong the lives of the embalmed (9). Most particularly Bazin marvels at the capacity of photography and cinema to reproduce reality mechanically: "photography and the cinema", he says, "are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all, its very essence, and our obsession with realism" (12). For Bazin, the filmmaker records that which exists in his eyes, mechanically reproducing reality as celluloid traces and imprints. The situation has changed in the digital age, but, as Rodowick observes, perceptual realism remains an important goal for creators of digital images (99-110). On the particular matter of digitally reproduced reality, Mazierska elaborates succinctly: "Creating the impression that what we watch on screen truly happened did not disappear from the agenda of 'historians with cameras', only they attempt to achieve this impression by different means" (21).

Some post-Bazin film theorists[52] in questioning the usefulness of film for history suggest that it gradually moved from shooting reality to editing. However, as Mazierska has said, "cinema's ability to connect or disconnect events more often than praised was dismissed for being counter-productive in achieving valuable historical results" (12). In defence, Hayden White, primarily drawing on the works of Foucault and Jameson, argues that the works of fiction, like history writing, similarly rely on the use of narrative discourses, or narratology as discursive devices:

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[52] Bazin is an earlier generation film theorist who thinks the filmmaker records what exists in front of their eyes and the reality leaves a trace on a print. In the digital age this is no longer the case. As D.N.Rodowick observes, one of the defining features of digital cinema is combining images recorded from physical reality with images generated only on computer in the absence of any recording function or physical referent (2007: 102-3). Post/Neo-Baziniana mainly refers to a number of theorists of digital images, whose main concern is the dislocation between image production and physical referent. Major figures are Michael J.Anderson, Dudley Andrew, Bruce Isaacs, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Joseph D. Anderson.

> far from being a neutral medium for the representation of historical events and process, [narratology] is the very stuff of a "mythical" view of reality, a conceptual or pseudoconceptual "content" which, when used to represent real events, endows them with an illusory coherence and charges them with the kind of meanings more characteristic of oneiric than of waking thought. (ix)

This means that historical narration is not unlike fictional works. White thus maintains that "historiophoty", understood as history conveyed or rather created by film, is essentially no different from traditional historiography to the extent that "cinema not only bears witness to important events, but also transmits them in a manner which comes across as more attractive to the general public than any other form of historical discourse" (Mazierska 13).

White's idea of historiophoty concurs with Robert Rosentone's call to investigate how films work to create a historical world. For Rosenstone, the form of historical research is as significant as its content. The investigation thus entails focusing on the rules of engagement that highlight codes, conventions, and practices by which they bring history, or traces of the past, to film (12). Richard Neupert and Jeffrey Skoller, drawing on Deleuze's concepts of movement-image and time-image, argue that films gravitating towards classical, mainstream cinema or "closed text", help to reaffirm a dominant ideology and a hegemonic vision of history, while open and avant-garde films tend to question history (Neupert 1995; Skoller 2005). For David Martin-Jones, hegemonic nationalism is one such dominant ideology. In his book, *Deleuze*, *Cinema and National Identity* (2006), Martin-Jones discusses this phenomenon with particular respect to cinematic representations of national(ist) discourses. Drawing on Deleuze's philosophical works on film, as well as on Homi Bhabha's and Benedict Anderson's theses on the construction of national history and identity, he concludes that movement-image tends to be more or less pedagogical "in that it aimed to establish one dominant view of national history, and identity, while the labyrinthine time-image reflects the potentially un-grounding performative rethinking of those notions" (33).

All these critical positions have influenced my thinking in this dissertation with

respect to my study of Hou Hiao-hsien's cinema, where I was initially motivated by Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988-98) inspiring me to look closely at the matter of history and its narration in film. What has been particularly important in my thinking here is Godard's meditation on the relationship between film and history by the way of the image demonstrating the need to learn how to see and understand the visual world, and the infinite possibilities by which the film media can do just that. History, for Godard, is the connecting of events distant from each other in space or time. The history of distant epochs is never complete because what happened a long time ago can be seen anew when juxtaposed with, and looked at through, new lenses (Mazierska 15). For Godard, precisely because cinema has the capacity to throw new light on the old it carries a great responsibility towards humanity. I have tried to show just that in this dissertation by examining some of the ways that Hou in some of his films has thrown new light onto our understanding of Taiwan, its history and its development of a national identity.

5.2 Sideshadowing, a Representation of History

Post-modern re-considerations of the nature of historiography have changed their understanding on the epistemological status of "scientific" history. It has shifted from its previously dominant position to the currently more balanced status that allows other story-telling ways to stand alongside the more traditional type of written history as equally apt, but different, ways of producing knowledge about the past. However, even a cursory look at how these alternative approaches achieve the aim of informing us about the past reveals that these different ways of "writing" history achieve their ends through very different techniques, and provide very different types of knowledge about the past. R.J. Raack, for example, argues that film is better suited to capture the chaotic, complex and contradictory qualities of the social world than conventional written history which is, as Rosenstone puts it, "too linear and too narrow in focus to render the fullness of the complex, multi-dimensional world in which humans live" (1176). Each understanding of history is inextricably linked to a particular vision of the identity of the human participant in historical discourse.

Hayden White rightly points out that "the historical evidence produced by our

epoch is often as much visual as it is oral and written in nature" (1193) and, as such, demands a different set of skills of the historian from those appropriate for the analysis of written documents. White argues that history on film should not be seen as a supplement or complement to written history, but as an entirely different kind of historical discourse with its own distinctive representational practices, its own syntax and grammar (1193-94). He thinks that, for any historical period in which visual data such as photography exists, history rendered on film is likely to be more accurate than any written history since such imagistic evidence "provides a basis for a reproduction of the scenes and atmosphere of past events much more accurately than any derived from verbal testimony alone" (1194). White, therefore, rejects the suggestion that the scholarly historical monograph necessarily possesses a superior claim to accuracy. Taking these arguments into consideration, it becomes apparent that Jarvie's denial of the appropriateness of film for "writing" history on the basis of its unsuitability for rendering detail signals that his conception of history is founded on some deeply embedded assumptions about what details actually matter when it comes to understanding the past.

Ian Jarvie thinks film is rich in detail about the everyday lives of people in past times, but there is rather less emphasis on the close analysis of major political, social, economic and military events and their causes and consequences that constitutes the very stuff of history. This means in Jarvie's sense, while films are somewhat better than traditional written academic history at conveying certain kinds of information about the past, they are less suitable for providing the political, economic and social commentary that is the currency of academic history. It follows from this that how film's aptness as a medium for "writing" history is evaluated depends on the relative value attached to different aspects of the past - "Jarvie apparently regards the daily details that film is particularly well-suited to conveying as less important than analysis of the exceptional or notable events that "make" history in the more traditional understanding of the term" (Chopra-Gant 67).

Chopra-Gant believes that the contradictions between film and written history, which effectively conceive history in fundamentally different ways - one as a

democratic means of accessing a general, though not necessarily rigorously accurate, understanding of life in past times, the other as a specialised and rigorous empirical enterprise open to only a small constituency of experts - are not easily reconciled (67). Although Rosenstone's position is closer to that of Raack than Jarvie, he sensibly avoids having to decide between the two by arguing for a wider conception of history, which permits the coexistence of an array of different types of historical "writing" that includes both the historical film and the scholarly written history. As Rosenstone points out, even among the more "serious" written histories, there is no standard format for the work: "on many historical topics, one can find short and long works, for the amount of detail used in a historical argument partakes of the arbitrary or is at least dependent on the aims of one's project" (1178-9); but this variability does not damage the credibility of the work. Similarly, while film may not possess the same sort of history as the academic monograph, its limitations in this area are counterbalanced by its far greater ability to "directly render the look and feel of all sorts of historical particulars and situations."(1179).[53]

The role of the historical filmmaker, then, is not someone that simply interprets the historical events from written or verbal material into a visual form. As White has said, rather than regarding film as a translation of a (superior) written discourse, it is necessary to acknowledge the differently constructed narrativity of both filmed and written histories (1195) and the tendency of both forms to employ "shorthand" representational strategies such as stylization and stereotyping. These techniques inevitably distort the accurate reproduction of original details within historical narrative to some degree, but do so in the interest of achieving a broad historical verisimilitude within the work as a whole (1199). I think White treats history and historical representation in a more open and forward-looking dimension. In this way,

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[53] See Mike Chopre-Gant's *Cinema and History: the Telling of Story* (2008) 64-68; Hayden White's "Historiography and Historiophoty", *American Historical Review* (1989) 93,5, 1193-9, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1989). "Introduction: historical Fiction, fictional history, and historical reality", *Rethinking History* (2005) 9, 147-157. Jarvie's "Seeing Through the Movies", *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (1978),4-10, 374-97. Rosenstone's "History in Image/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", *American Historical Review* (1988), 90-100, 1170-90. "The Crisis of History/the Promise of Film", in *Media International Australia* (1996). *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (1996).

films representing history not only challenge the traditional position of subjectivity between audience and history, but also opens a new possibility for understanding history.

History is always the result of rivalries and conquests, and there is no real means to change those truths - indeed, no possibility to change them. To that end, “the history of cinema is the history of a power of making history” (Ranciere 55). In this sense, Hou’s films, as I have sought to show in this dissertation, offer re-readings of established histories which offer new worlds, new visions, new histories.

If using a geological stratum as a model to think about history, the past does not fall away to reveal the present as in progressivist modes of historiography. Rather, “the past coexists simultaneously with the present as sedimented layers that become enfolded to produce an object” (Skoller 78). Deleuze and Guattari, use the crystal as a metaphor for the coexistence of different strata of time: “the amorphous milieu, or medium, is exterior to the seed before the crystal has formed; the crystal forms by interiorizing and incorporating masses of amorphous material” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 49). The crystal metaphor continues with its translucent multifacets as a metaphor for this coexistence of different planes of time within the cinematic time-image: “what the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of past which are preserved” (Deleuze *Cinema 2*, 99).

The crystal is, I believe, a productive metaphor for describing the poetics of Hou’s use of time and the interpenetration of the textures of past and present, image and sound. As such, Hou’s films, I would argue, are connected inextricably to Deleuze’s vision in that vision demands that we think about time in its multiplicities rather than in its chronologies and therefore challenges us to rethink the forms of historical representation, as I have, I hope, shown to be evident in Hou’s film-making. Michael Bernstein calls this “sideshadowing”, - the generating of creating alternatives for the understanding of historical events as a result of the multiple factors that

surround them.[54] Bernstein writes:

> sideshadowing champions the incommensurability of the concrete moment and refuses the tyranny of all synthetic master-schemes; it rejects the conviction that a particular code, law or pattern exists, waiting to be uncovered beneath the heterogeneity of human existence. (3-4)

Sideshadowing, then, like the light passing through a crystal, creates an awareness of the indeterminacy of relations, but does not deny the reality or historicity of events. As multiple possibilities open the way for different ways of interpreting an event, sideshadowing displaces the question of the truth of an event - which can always be called into question - onto the ethics of the event's representation (Skoller 42).[55]

I have sought in this dissertation to show that Hou's films do just this. The power of his films, I have argued, lies in what remains unseeable, but which can be felt. This

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[54] Gary Saul Morson (1996) explains that most narratives are developed through foreshadowing and "backshadowing" (foreshadowing ascribed after the fact), which tends to reduce the multiplicity of possibilities in each moment. Michael Bernstein thinks foreshadowing is the built-in evidence of an inevitable conclusion to the story being read. In this narrative form, the reader or viewer starts to see signs from the beginning of the story that will lead directly to the "fate" of the character at the end. The reader and author are able to foresee the fate of the character long before the character does. The implication is that if the character were more aware, he/she too would be able to read the inevitable writing on the wall. Foreshadowing often removes the sense of the eventness of a situation in flux, the outcome of which is not inherently guaranteed. So foreshadowing creates a reading of an event that gives an impression that all events have causal relations to one another by "naturalizing" what is described through the seamless elision of one narrative event into another.

The reverse of foreshadowing is backshadowing, which takes place when prior knowledge of a situation's outcome is shared by both the reader or viewer and the author. In this construct, all actions and events move inexorably to a result that is already known. Moreover, the emotional power of the narrative is based on what the reader or viewer already knows, not on what is being learned. This shared knowledge removes the possibility in the reader's mind of other ways a character might respond or other ways an event could turn out in the face of how ultimately it did. By making our knowledge of their doom the only source of judgment and concern, it strips their lives of any significance.

As Bernstein argues, when the narratives of characters' lives, whether fictional or real, are structured by foreshadowing and backshadowing, both reader and author sit in judgment of the characters and the meaning of their existence. These ordering devices structure our perception of the movement of time in relation to concepts of inevitability and causality that seep into the way we understand events in the world. Insidiously, they become naturalized as the way we understand the history of our own lives. See Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards* (2005), 40-41; Michael Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusion: against Apocalyptic History* (1994), 1-8, 40-45; Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: the Shadows of Time* (1996).

[55] See Michael Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusion: against Apocalyptic History*. Bernstein chooses the Holocaust as the prime example of our tendency toward foregone conclusions. He argues eloquently against politicians and theologians who depict the Holocaust as fore-ordained and its victims as somehow implicated in a fate they should have been able to foresee. This "foreshadowing" demeans the variety, the richness, and especially the unpredictability of everyday life. In addition, for a parallel of literary sideshadowing, also see Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: the Shadows of Time* (1996). He explains that most narratives are developed through foreshadowing and "backshadowing" (foreshadowing ascribed after the fact), which tend to reduce the multiplicity of possibilities in each moment. But other literary works try to convey temporal openness through a device he calls "sideshadowing". The concept suggests that to understand an event is to grasp what else might have happened. Time is not a line but a shifting set of fields of possibility. Morson argues that this view of time and narrative encourages intellectual pluralism, helps to liberate us from the false certainties of dogmatism, creates a healthy skepticism of present orthodoxies, and makes us aware that there are moral choices available to us. These seem very pertinent to my reading of Hou Hsiao-hsien's films' narrative strategy and image style.

narrational intensity comes from his accumulation of discrete sequences, each successive one deframing the next. This is what Skoller called "a quintessentially anti-illusionist gesture that fractures narrative continuity and repeatedly throws the viewer back into the context of his or her own present by constantly having to work to reconnect one sequence to another" (121). In this way Hou produces both a representation of a state of being in his films' fictional characters and a concrete real-time experience for the viewer. These films evoke, rather than represent, the daily rhythms and emotional conditions of the films' characters and community. In this sense, sideshadowing is a formal device in Hou's films, creating a space in which people, cultures, daily life and events can be contemplated in all their humanity by the opening up, as I hope I have shown, that Hou does, offering new possibilities for seeing and re-reading old complexities.

5.3 Deleuze and the "Becoming" of History

I have emphasized in this dissertation a view, as Geoff Pingree has said, that "history is neither the static remains nor the reliable evidence of something but a process of searching: what we are able to do, what we choose to do" (45). Taking daily life as the main content of a film, as Hou does, therefore opens up new possibilities for understanding history, in a similar way to the written word's dominion over history. This also offers an opportunity for extending the horizons of our historical understanding so as to include the daily and the affective dimensions of life in time past - what did it look like? What did it feel like to live in those times? - in addition to the recounting and analysis of exceptional events, which remains a key element of our understanding of the past. Realist films can be perceived as historical echoes. Echoing the imperative concern with moving away from the obvious in relation to historicizing, Deleuze suggests that history is also "dreams and nightmares, ideas and visions, impetuses and actions of the subject involved, while the givens of the situation merely contained causes and effects against which one only struggles"(190). Deleuze's writing, in *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* on movement and time image respectively, are especially fruitful for looking beyond narrative analysis to understand how images function as "sheets of the past," as "crystals of time",

reflecting and refracting image from past and present, questions of presence and absence. Like Gramsci's and Hall's writings on common sense, Deleuze's work "enables a reading of history that helps to expose the fragmentary, tentative, and changing nature of memory" (Landy 8).

Deleuze considers the important difference between classical and modern political cinema is about the relationship between the political and the private (217-218). In this light, individuals can only experience a sort of daily life which itself is always immersed in politics. Here families form an important field, a network of relationships. They are so close-knit that all changes of plot are based on the change of families. It can be said that this is a matter of secular pastoral families, but, in fact, their importance is that "there is no longer a 'general line', that is, of evolution from the Old to New, or of a revolution which produces a leap from one to the other" (218). This represented mode of history is essentially a "becoming": the becoming of history and the becoming of people. Deleuze and Guattari explain, "Becoming" is a process of change, flight, or movement within an assemblage, the process is not one of imitation or analogy, it is generative of a new way of being that is a function of influences rather than resemblances (*A Thousand Plateaus* 258-59). The process is one of removing the element from its original functions and bringing about new ones. The act of displacement and emigration alluded to in these image begins to signify, politically, the breaking up of social relations in which individuals in a given situation can be defined in relation to a whole people.

I have argued that Hou, as a filmmaker, both articulates and reconstructs the past as people's history in which one may journey back at will. Not surprisingly, he is positioned within the canon of Taiwan cinema as a filmmaker and archivist, who re-frames the past and the ordinary as the subject of his films. These films offer personal stories of this phenomenon of memorializing the past; they reach back to the core of violent events, to represent and thereby reenact the nature of history. The stories in no sense redeem what they discuss and do not provide us with the higher insight that is the recompense we might expect to derive from the most tragic of accounts. At most they leave one in a state of necessary unease and with the perhaps equally necessary

"never-ending" feeling - the feeling that anything is analogous to the situation in which we can truly feel our powerlessness.

When Deleuze writes of a modern political cinema in which "the people no longer exist, or not yet...the people are missing...(*Cinema 2* 216), he is referring to a cinema that acknowledges the crisis of that powerlessness - of postcolonial displacement, which in the case of Hou's films has resulted in the nameless image of homelessness. With the Taiwan trilogy, I have sought to demonstrate that Hou can be seen to have attempted a new kind of political cinema that rethinks its representation not by reinstituting the humanistic idea of a "name to every face", but rather by instituting one that, as Deleuze suggests, is "contributing to the invention of a people" (*ibid* 217). That is to say, Hou's films acknowledge the potential for people coming together to form new relationships and communities that might reconfigure the notion of loss implied in histories of displacement. Not reflecting but inventing is the fundamental difference between the aesthetic and social science approaches to historiographic representation and opens onto a new idea of what political filmmaking might be.

In this sense, Hou's films, I argue, are a typical case of becoming: the becoming of people and the becoming of history. For example, the traumatic history of family in *The Time to Live and the Time to Die;* the history of political violence in *A City of Sadness*, and the personal colonial history in *The Puppetmaster*, which variously represent and rescue the history of subordinate groups from silence, and collectively seek to give a voice to people who are voiceless: they reconstitute a bifurcation of history. In the sense of Prasenjit Duara, this bifurcated history is matched by a changing, controversial historical identity, because an advantaged identity is used to oppress or hide other identities when it expresses the origin of the history. Instead, the repressed identity can seek to build a contrary representation even narrative structure (72), as Hou does in his films. Such a representation of history lacks precisely those terms of reference that are conducive to, and reinforce, the sense of a linear trajectory, a sequence narrative shape: above all, in relation to the past, the notion of legitimating origins, and in relation to the future, the sense of an accumulation in power or money

or influence (Connerton 19). Therefore they have a different rhythm and this rhythm is not patterned by the individual's intervention in the working of the dominant institutions (19).

5.4 Memory

Paul Connerton focuses on the category of oral history in the reconstruction of history. This is a useful concept for understanding Hou's films because these films, as I have shown in some details in preceding chapters, have the striking feature of being private history which becomes national. They are secular, fragmented and everyday. The most typical example is *The Puppetmaster*, which shows the characteristics and the uniquely cultural rhythms of Taiwan in quite different ways from the general biographical film. This rhythmic pattern does not follow a historical logic to create a linear history nor does it interfere in politics. Instead, it creates a completely personal history based on personal memory which can be juxtaposed with that linear history. Similarly, *The Time to Live and the Time to Die,* as a family memoir, contains changing times but is dominated by secular family life. It is about a family informally constructing a duration of history for themselves, where everyone, no matter how unimportant, is portrayed. The scenes of daily life hardly give any space to politics, but politics is embedded in the story, because the narrative of personal life is a part of a group of interrelated narratives. That is to say, the collective memory cannot be removed from personal memory.

This is an important dimension in the films of life history where the memory is the main carrier of history, constituting a different socially determined structuring of memories. For example, the memory of revolution and White Terror in *Good Men, Good Women* or the memory of the "2-28 Incident" in *A City of Sadness*, are represented by the mode of private memory. The political situations in these films are a series of cycles of daily encounters. For this mode, Chou Tien-wen, the screenwriter of Hou's films, argues that the representation of a historical era is ultimately only the representation of the author's point of view, limited by his or her attitudes and assumptions. A completely objective and total account of a historical era, whether in the writing of history or fiction, actually does not exist (281). I have sought to show

that this view can be seen as the generalized historical notion of Hou's work, that is, his following the imperative to produce a total and unambiguous story of the past is superseded by the higher truth of the impossibility of this very task, a truth that points to the spuriousness of any claim to represent the past as it actually happened.

However, this approach also brings some further questions which Hou engages with: when the political events are represented by the memory, how can it determine that the simple continuous time fragments are the event? What in the memory stream prompts us to remember those things? When are events restored for individual experience, and what is history? When we remember the everyday state of the moment, do our daily trifles contain the same meaning as the events? Or, when daily life covers the historical event, what has really happened? And what is constructed by history?

Pierre Nora argues:

> history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic.... The transformation of memory implies a decisive shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to its subjective reception, from repetition to remoralization. (8)

Nora stresses the form of memory comes to us from the outside; because it is no longer a social practice, we interiorize it as an individual constraint. According to Nora, rendering the expression of the individual history, the director must try hard to capture dispersed details of the significant moment in linear history. This type of film is similar to the works of Solzhenitsyn and Wiesel, who hold that writing history is standing on the opposite side of history (Connerton 15). It is not only the documentary practice of the historical reconstructions, but also saves the historical memory and experience of those social groups whose voice may be in oblivion.

Strictly speaking, the memory in Hou's films "is not a psychological memory as a faculty for summoning recollections, or even a collective memory as that of an

existing people" (Deleuze 221). It is a special relationship between political events and personal experience, between the people and the director. This is exactly a representation from the director's post-memory of historical events, which gets rid of the external perspective of the general political movies, and constructs a personal subjectivity in movies. Kafka spoke of this power taken on by memory in small nations: "The memory of a small nation is no shorter than that of a large one, hence it works on the existing material at a deeper level" (Kafka 76). Deleuze also points out that "the memory of a small nation is no longer psychological nor collective, because each person in 'a little country' inherits only the portion due to him, and has no goal other than this portion, even if he neither recognizes nor maintains it" (Deleuze 221). Kafka therefore considers that the subjects of these narratives are monads in the vein of Leibniz, i.e. they are conceptions of the individual as expression and no longer as representation of the world (66).

Accordingly, as the ordinary people are oppressed and missed out in official records, a director, like Hou, is actually in a situation of producing utterances to represent the collective memory, where the political impact is then immediate and inescapable. That is to say, the author "must not make himself into the ethnologist of his people, nor himself invent a fiction which would be one more private historical story: for every personal fiction, like every impersonal myth, is on the side of the "masters" (Deleuze 222). In order to destroy myths from the inside and outside, authors have to become "intercessors"(222), that is, by taking real and not fictional characters, and putting these characters into the condition of "making up fiction", of "making legends", of "story telling". The "story-telling is not an impersonal myth, but neither is it a personal fiction: it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from politics, and which itself produces collective utterances" (222). In this way Hou does not make the myth, nor create links of myth, but blurs the boundary between the reality and fiction. In Deleuze's words, he "takes a step towards his characters, but the characters take a step towards the author: double becoming" (222). Therefore the director picks ordinary people and even real people as the prototypes (such as Li Tian-

lu and Jiang Bi-yu) to engage with their own fiction, description and creation. This makes the fiction itself memory, where memory is invention of a people.

5.5 History and Ordinary Life

Nietzsche once said that nothing important is ever free from a "nonhistorical cloud" (Preface). Deleuze argues that "Nietzsche is talking about the way things happen, about events themselves becoming. What history grasps in an event is the way it's actualized in particular circumstances; the event's becoming is beyond the scope of history" (*Negotiations* 170). This means that "becoming" is not part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become", that is, to create something new. That something new, I have argued here, in Hou's films is his engaging with the folds between reality and fiction by showing an overflowing everyday atmosphere where the movie is no longer presupposed to be the imaginary whole, but where daily moments and personal memory can be re-combined to create a life history of the individual saving the historical from indifference, from oblivion. "This saving does not promise a particular future, but it does open possibilities. And possibilities, imagined with the help of traces, survivors, are all we can glean from the traumatic past" (Roth 196).

To this end, Hou is a unique practitioner of "the form is the content", where the form of the film attests to how certain histories are remembered and evaluated. His films transcend a textual deconstruction of the historical enterprise, and beyond a straightforward substitution of one set of stories for another. He raises questions concerning the way in which particular subjects of memory enter the intersubjective realm of history - questions with deep implications in the context of Taiwanese politics. In this way his representational approaches deeply overlap and match with the continuously transforming identity of islanders, in which the individual is only able to remember their private history - the history of memory - and takes their memories as the reflection of official history. It is as David Martin-Jones said:

> a jumbled, fragmented, multiplied or reversed film narrative...can be interpreted as an expression of the difficulty or narrating national identity at a time of historical crisis or transformation. Such narratives formally

> demonstrate a nation's exploration of its own "national narrative" and examination of the national past. (1)

Although the individuals in Hou's films are almost innocently drawn into political events, the intention of these films no longer constitutes the basis of a possibility of evolution and revolution as in classical cinema, but on the impossibilities of official history writing and revolutionary ideals. If consciousness, evolution and revolution no longer exist, the political history that built and unified people no longer exists, either. These movies are thus based on personal memory in a heterogeneous representation.

The memory, according to Pierre Nora is the "history": "what we call memory today is therefore not memory but already history. What we take to be flare-ups of memory are in fact its final consumption in the flames of history. The quest for memory is the search for one's history" (13). The atomization of general memory into a private one creates an obligation to remember and protect the trappings of identity. In the tradition, which has no other history than its own memory, to be Taiwanese, for example, is to remember that one is such; but once this incontestable memory has been interiorized, it eventually demands full recognition. What is being remembered? In a sense, it is memory itself.

Nora thinks if the nation has become a given; history is now a social science, memory is a purely private phenomenon. Nora thus argues that the memory-nation is thus the last incarnation of the unification of memory and history:

> the passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his own historian. The demand for history has thus largely overflowed the circle of professional historians. (15)

This means that memories of the experiences of traumatic events well accomplish what history is unable to capture or explain. It is as Dirlik has said, "memories may serve to capture glimpses of the past for groups who have been erased from history.... Memory serves to bolster the self-images of newly empowered groups seeking to overcome their images as victims in history" (76).

There are different ways to represent history by memory in image, two are common: one is to take the means of historical collage or blending in narrative, and multiply the possibility of plot and individual experience. This type of film shows that space conquers time, which takes history as the background embedded in the story and makes it a piece of scenery of tragic life. Here the history is just an unclear index and a referent like the excuse for structuring the pains and sorrows between characters. In these films, history becomes an empty signifier when it joins the narrative. The second is a re-assembling of history which is different from blending: blending is suspending and exiling history, and re-assembling. It is Viktor Mayer-Schönberger's "repair memory", namely, film is a memory device which can be used to supplement or even replace the memory like a prosthesis. This is a typical strategy of ideological ventriloquism in order to cover up the truth of the history or the 'true history', and what is to be expressed is the lie without lying. This kind of movie both reconstructs the history and, the ideology of the moment. They go beyond conflict and disassociation of the history to cure the pain of history and re-achieve the renascence of "nation". This kind of movie also represents everyday life of ordinary people, but is just intended to provide a personalized footnote to history.

Hou's films, I would argue, are defined by neither of these two approaches; his films, as I have sought to demonstrate, are about the "people" - the people's state in time" (Hou 18). Taking his own words as a reference, his way of formulating history by memory, in individuals' daily life, suggests that history is invisible, but it naturally cannot be detached from the time when the film represented the "human" life in realism. If the past is personal recollection, then the history is the people's history, which is both a "becoming" of history and a "re-discovery" of history. Official history inevitably tries to erase personal experiences, but memories continuously resist the oblivion and the digestion of discourse. When the problem of events is forced to succumb to historical logic, the trivia of everyday life can carry on the responsibility of disassembled history. This suggests that the figuration of historical events creates the possibility of opening onto the virtualities that surround the event, either as forces that inflect its outcome or as ideas generated. In Hou's films there is no essence of an

event, but the potential for that event. As Deleuze writes: “multiplicity tolerates no dependence on the identical in the subject or in the object. The event and singularities of the idea do not allow any positing of an essence as ‘what the thing is’” (*Different and Repetition* 191).

In the sense, the rhythms of the past and historical situations are conveyed to the audience by atmosphere and an incomprehensible personal experience. The director is not engaged to create an entire historical story, but to represent the virtualities of the event. There are many trivial sequences in Hou’s films, for example, which do not directly show political force but only capture personal life in some historical moments, and the ambiguous relationship between personal memory and official history, which displays many episodes unrelated to the main plot such as the recurring details of the accompanying occurrence of political events. The overwhelming daily life in Hou’s films, I have shown above, suggests a question in Nora’s sense: How can we fail to read, in the shards of the past delivered to us by so many micro-histories, the will to make the history we are reconstructing equal to the history we have lived (294)? The ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity is no longer the genesis that we seek but instead the decipherment of what we are in the light and what we are no longer (295).

My position throughout this dissertation has been to show that for Hou’s history is not the narrative of past things, but a mode of co-presence of the past and the present, a way of thinking and perceiving, the co-belonging of experiences and the inter-expressivity of the forms and signs that give them shape. Some bored young men dancing at the beach, the strange headlight of a car in the night countryside, the pure sky and clouds after the storm, a busy bistro of the street corner - but also the folk troupe going through a drawbridge between mountains, dirt road of countryside, ships in the mist - all of these everyday images have belonged to art since history became the name for the co-belonging of individual experiences. Rancière thinks that history is this mode of shared experience where all experiences are equivalent and where the signs of any one experience are capable of expressing all the others (178). He cites Novalis’ dictum - “everything speaks” - to expound that “every sensible form

is a tissue of more or less obscure signs, a presence capable of signifying the power of the collective of experience that brings the sensible form into presence" (178). Rancière further explains "that each one of these signifying forms is open to striking new relationships with all other forms, generating thereby new signifying arrangement" (178).

Hou constructs images into icons of presence in the sense of Rancière's "history and poetics of history"[56] and uses the way of diversion of being to take shots into image of elementary gestures of human life. On the condition Hou goes beyond the privilege of cinematic form created by the Western filmmaker, who brings an approach of the film bears the witness of history and the ordinary poetry that makes every shots with every other element to tell a personal history, even if it means a change of pleasure principle of cinema narrative to some extent. I have stressed that Hou is neither a romantic artist nor a filmmaker of realism. This is why his films seem so distant from the audience even though he always films ordinary life.

5.6 The Limits of Representing History

In the film *Night and Fog*, one of the great early efforts to bring Nazi mass murder into public consciousness, the voice-over declares repeatedly that you can understand nothing of what went on here, even as you are shown heaps of body parts. Michael Roth thinks that Alain Resnais' film contained an explicit warning about the limit of representation even as it confronted viewers with images of immense brutality (191). And this warning would be strongly echoed over the years, reminding viewers, readers, and spectators of the disabilities involved in the representations of traumatic events of history. Especially today, image has become a field in which questions of history, truth, and authenticity are being explored with particular acuity. With the development of technologizing the image, Roland Barthes once defined of the photographic image is that "the thing has been" (76) which is no longer unshakable.

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[56] Rancière links Hitchcock's "affect-bearing image" to evaluate Godard's Histoire(s) du Cinema, and he thinks this reserved historicity sustains the poetics of Histoire(s) du Cinema, the poetics that make every sentence and image an element that can be associated with every other element to tell the truth about a century of history and of cinema, even if that means changing their nature and meaning". Godard digs into this reserve to construct the real plot of Histoire(s) du Cinema: cinema, although it never ceased bearing witness to the century, consistently misunderstood its own testimony. See Rancière's *Film Fabric* (Oxford New York, Berg 2010), 178-179.

So what can we rely on to get into history? How does the camera work in telling the truth about history? What is the work of film in illuminating the grounds of truth telling at this moment in historical representation?

In fact, for the un-representability of historical violence, film is useful not because it holds the truth of historical events, but because it can contribute to our ability to make tentative historical sense of some of it. In Roth's words, "the images should stimulate thought - not merge into a total image that keeps us from thinking about the details of what happened" (192). In a similar vein, Hannah Arendt has argued that: "lacking the truth, we will however find instants of truth, and those instants are in fact all we have available to us to give some order to this chaos of horror. These instants arise spontaneously, like oases in the desert" (257-258).

Didi-Huberman repeatedly insists on the point that attention to some images is not a substitute for, or even a claim of, historical understanding. He thus turns to Arendt, and also to Walter Benjamin's notion of the "flash" - of the illumination of an instant that should not be confused with a claim of totality, of complete comprehension. Didi-Huberman insists that the abdication of totality should not be a rejection of what traces might be able to tell us. This means that "we must do the "archaeological work"; we must dig into the images to help us think more precisely, to help us imagine and remember" (Roth 192-3). The critical response to Didi-Huberman is Lanzmann, who commented that Didi-Huberman's "obscure intention" led to a fetishizing of the image and a devaluing of accounts by witnesses. Lanzmann emphasized that art should not aim to reproduce the visible but to expand visibility. He said that, "the cult of the image for the image constructed a new memory based on an adoration of specific photographs, a memory that became a substitute for thinking and imagining what happened" (Interview in *Le Monde* January 19, 2001).

About the feature film inevitably requires the reproduction of image, Didi-Huberman offers an alternative to the choice between skepticism and consolation. "To approach does not mean to appropriate," he writes, "approaching images of the past need not mean fetishizing them as magical keys to unlock the otherwise unknowable (88). The alternative to post-modern denial of the image must include "attending to

one's own absence," a modest approach to both knowing and skepticism" (88). Such modesty would mean attending to possibilities rather than achieving certainties: "it is not a matter of unilaterally positing the unsayable and the unimaginable of this story; rather, it is a matter of working with it, yet against it: by making the sayable and the imaginable into infinite tasks, necessary yet inevitable lacunary" (155). Michael Roth echoes with Didi-Huberman to consider:

> images are not the cure for the lacunae of a traumatic history, but they do change our relationship to those fragments of the past that are left to us. We must not treat images, and other testimony, as communicating the unveiling of the one essential meaning, but neither should we reject them as always already deceptive. (195)

This is exactly what Hou does in his films. He offers, through his very distinctive poetics of time, space, memory and the ordinary, a new way of thinking about historical representation by expanding the visibility of image, and thus gives the audience a kind of real historical aura that is history implied and haunting in our everyday life. His dismantling and deconstruction of history implies the fictionality of history, where scenes do not have to repeat the phantoms of history, but through the representation of more trivialized personal narratives free the audience from the tyranny of officialized histories. Hou's films thus challenge "the modernist aura of authenticity, originality, and essential meaning, calling into question narratives that are linear, universalized, or triumphalist versions of history" (Skoller 68). These films are interventions into the "voice-over" of "official" history, which speaks at us, deconstructing power and authority. As such, one of my main concerns in this dissertation has been to show that the sideshadows of Hou's films illuminate "more-contemporary notions of historical multiplicity that ask us to consider that the past is filled with contingencies, marginalia, imaginings, and that these are integral to any image of an event" (*ibid* 68).

In his *Signatures of the Visible*, Jameson argues that we should use new ways to represent history in films. In his view, the most significant feature of the post-modern situation is incommensurable between the reality of personal subjective experience

and the authenticity of the abstract objective world which is constructed by de-centralized capitalism. In his words:

> Such a proposition evidently implies that history-writing also knows a political unconscious, and that its surface or manifest topics also symbolically act out deeper perplexities and attempt to resolve contradictions that often have little enough to do with the official subject matter at hand. (223)

He further argues:

> it is the presence of narrative that authorizes the transfer, and, in a period in which historians have become keenly (or uncomfortably) conscious of their fundamental narrativity, allows us to hypothesize a libidinal economy such that the storytelling form itself carries a freight of meaning and tells a supplementary story in addition to its immediate or local historiographic reference. (227)

In his *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, Jameson analyzes Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers* (1986) and considers it as a re-mapping of Taipei (114) because the audience is no longer able to identify their feelings and moral positions in the internal space of the movie. Jameson also thinks that Hou's "social material - drawn from youth and the countryside - is quite distinct from that of Edward Yang, and the spirit of his fine works - a kind of populist pathos or sentimentalism - is also distinctive" (155). He certainly asserts Hou as Taiwan's leading film-maker after the liberalization of 1987, when for the first time the history of Taiwan since World War II could publicly be discussed, as for example in *A City of Sadness* (1989) (155).

But as I hope I have shown, in Hou's films, neither the homeland nor its history provides a stable referent. In this respect, Hou's films seem to be post-modern, but Hou describes his films as "daily cinema" (19-20): a cinema that at its core is not post-modern despite the fact that it employs post-modern poetics. It is a kind of cinema that seeks for the "reality" beyond imitations and attempts to reveal the truth behind the images and the manipulations of language.

Rancière thinks that:

> a classical artist would hardly think of achieving his effects by mocking conventions; nor would he dream of allowing himself to identify the end of a story, the fulfillment of a narrative contract, with the meta-narrative argument of the end of an era, a myth, or a genre. The only good end is the one that contains the action within its proper limits, the one that leaves open the possibility that the action may be continued, restarted. (92)

Of course, this is the "risk of art", and Hou has always assumed that risk. Before the *Flowers of Shanghai*, he never let the action of any of his films gain its effect by overflowing into legend or by being identified with this or that place, moment, or figure of the epic.

The ordinary things in Hou's films are never as connected shots, but the aesthetics and continuity continuously represent the detailed beauty of daily life. In Hou's films the everyday is timeless, and its repetition and circulation give the camera an authority to capture the real not only as a collection of reproducible episodes but also as a flow of life moments. In Hou's films, it is these moments that constitute an entirety of life which make the past accessible, even accessible in image. This kind of film makes us pay attention to the tiny things in our life, in a close, intense way, which means we are lifting the actions out of the ordinary, and seeing their dailiness for the first time.

"We should be seeing life itself" (4), Wittgenstein writes in *Culture and Value*, from a point of view that is normally closed to us in our everyday world. It is banal, but is also uncanny because we do not usually get to pay close attention to the ordinary within the framework of a stage, within the framework of a work of art. Michael Fried notes that artists must present the everyday in an anti-theatrical form in order to maintain the qualities of wonder and attention, otherwise the everyday appears as inauthentic (76-77). This is what "ordinary" films aim to do - to bring out the absorptive qualities of daily life to convey "the historicalness of the everyday" in images, without giving the beholder the sense that these things are there only for him or her. In these films, "the past is imagined, even performed, but it remains real and not theater" (Roth 201). The world offered by images achieves representation while

acknowledging their "to-be-seenness", by accepting that they are to be beheld. But this acknowledgment resists being there merely for the beholder; the cinematic world is not made for or by the beholder.

Hou I have argued does not seek the consoling image that helps us understand or imagine the whole of historical events. He wants only to use specific daily sequences to help us achieve a flash of understanding of events that are never to be presented. Of course, using these images one runs the risk of trivializing the past. One also runs the risk of thinking that one has got closer to the 'really real' - the past in its essence. In this light, the representation of history often falls into historical traps. But Hou's films actually circumvent a traditional mimetic approach. As Didi-Huberman has said "the imaginable certainly does not make radical evil 'present' and in no way masters it on a practical level: what it does do is bring us closer to its possibility, always open in the open [two opens] of some familiar landscape" (155). By bringing viewers closer to this possibility, Hou increases our chances for flashes of understanding of the traumatic past.

5.7 Articulating the Past

In approaching Hou's films in this dissertation then, I have sought to bring another mode of attention of reading the past to the table - another rhythm of seeing; another set of filmic poetics. Meanwhile, we will inevitably face the questions - why can we not just ignore everyday life? What does it offer us that we do not have already, that we do not know already? Hou's films, I have argued, constantly remind us that the family and ordinary life are the first to be destroyed in historical violence, but they are also tough and lively. In the testimony of survivors, the daily beauty and fragility cannot only touch people but also can come closest to the historical truth. Film as the medium of representation is not to appropriate the history in historiography but to approach history in reality. Therefore, the director, as Edithe Wyschogrod called it, should be a "heterological historian":

> He is the agent of an irrepressible desire, a passion for the others who are voiceless and who exist both inside and outside the thread of an articulated narrative, hidden and awaiting exhumation...the historian abides with the

nameless dead in the non-space of ethics, of the promise. (38)

In the ethics of representation, Hou challenges as a filmmaker, as a film explorer and as an archivist, whose films consist of slow pace, slow acting style and a slow line delivery. He favours a rather static and observational camera that is prone to long takes, long shots, and slow fades in and out; and a concern for the life of ordinary people and the routine practices of their everyday existence.

Robert Dawidoff has talked about the resistance we have against seeing something become merely history because this means it gets swept up with all sorts of things that reduce its distinctness for us. There is a tension between the clarity of vision of the particular artifact and the comprehension that comes through establishing interrelationships. To treat something as historical means at the very least to connect it via chronology to events before or after. The singular, disconnected phenomenon cannot be historical because its entrance into the historical record requires a kind of contextualization that denies singularity. Thus, when we try to historicize an event that is dear to us because of its intensity, we necessarily reduce its singularity. As Carl Schorske has noted in his *Thinking With History*: "Thinking with history... [r]elativizes the subject, whether personal or collective, self-reflexively to the flow of social time" (3). According to Schorske, making something "history" means "making it part of something else, or placing it in relation to something else" (Roth 211). This is why there can be no unique historical events except in a trivial sense in which everything is unique.

There has been an effort to adopt a religious or sacralizing attitude to face certain extreme events, which is in part an effort to keep a distance between them and the ordinary occurrences that we remember or write about as history. It can be understood that these efforts as attempts to prevent a catastrophic event from becoming "merely historical", that is, something that fits easily into the narrative when we tell about the past. But "the efforts can backfire, creating an easy target for those who would confuse our caring about particular events with a refusal to pay attention to others" (Roth 211). For example, in Taiwanese history, one of the sources of significant debate, as discussed earlier on in this dissertation, has been how to understand the "2-

28 Incident of Ethnic-Clashes" historically. To do so means necessarily to understand it comparatively. Comparison can feel like a mode of erasure; but it can also be a mode of memory and sustained attention.

In his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein said that "Everything we see/could be otherwise. Everything we can describe at all/could be also otherwise." In this light, I have sought to show that Hou's films fully inscribe themselves in a cultural context marked by a search for a new relationship with space, time and memory as a way of coming to terms with the contradictions of collective history. If, as Pascal Bonitzer has said in *May not have the Story: Eric Rohmer and his Films*: "The screen is a hiding place" (4), then Hou exploits the ordinary (everyday life) in order to hide the extreme (political violence), offering a "real" world similar to documentary. He balances contingency and ephemerality with the feeling of fate and necessity, and approaches the maelstrom of history wanting to have a closer look but knowing the political horror beneath those ordinary lives. He shows a suffering, an individual history and the lives of families that were never recorded in official history. He shows a repressed historical experience of national identity.

As such, a distinct feature of Hou's film-making consists of his taking a limited set of familiar materials and transforming them by means of a unique system of a narration at once rigorous and loose; one that displays specific strategies of syuzhet organization and stylistic development. He develops stylistic features to an unprecedented level of saliency and nuance. Through the work of his formal system, certain referents and commonplaces become deepened and enriched. To use David Bordwell's term, he "poeticizes" everyday life and history, where "To feel the force of the poeticizing of everyday life, one must sense, however vaguely, the fine grain of the poetic organization itself. To follow the labyrinth of form and style one must take, even tacitly, concrete human problems as a point of departure" (Bordwell 161).

Hou's films are remarkable for their air of calm contemplation, where the camera work is steady, not frequently moving; it rests, rather than rebounds. There is little movement within or between the frames to direct our vision or to hurry us or the films along. Each shot or scene is held for several seconds or even several minutes before

gracefully giving way to the next. So the experience of watching these films is like that of looking at works of art in a gallery or museum. Like documentary sources and poetic retrospectives, these images aspire to render reality, time, space, memory and history as new art.

Andreas Huyssen states that memory and representation figure as key concerns at those times when twilight settles around memories of the past and around the carrying of those memories (those who actually "lived" the past and experienced the events retold through historical accounts). Closely tied to human memory are the ways in which a culture constructs and lives its temporality. Correspondingly, "all representation, whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound, is based on memory" (2). Huyssen goes on to say that even though some media will try to provide us with the "delusion of pure presence," we know that the representation of an event always follows the event itself. As such, "memory does not lead us to some authentic origin or give us verifiable access to the real" (2). Rather, it is itself based on representation and reconstruction especially in its belatedness. Moreover, "the past does not exist in essence, to be plucked from our memories" (Helfield 60). We must articulate the past in order for it to become memory and thus history. Hou does exactly this in the films discussed here.

5.8 Corollary

In closing then, in this dissertation I have specifically probed the relationship between film and history, focusing on the representations of the ordinary in relation to time and history. In this way, I have sought to offer an abstract reflection about time and history in the visual world where the moment is history. I have done so by emphasizing Hou's remarkable breakthroughs in film as constituting challenges to represented forms of official history and national identity in Taiwan.

Throughout the dissertation I have examined the relationship between this concept of official history and its re-articulations as microhistories (particularly with respect to Taiwan) that privilege the life history of particular individuals, both on a theoretical level but also with very specific exemplification from Hou's films through which he creates microhistories which speak of the continuously transforming

identities of the island-nation,[57] in which everyday individuals (as opposed to those with public and official influence) are the ones to speak - to remember their own histories but also to exercise their memories as critical reflections of official history.

Taiwan sits on a nest of politicalized controversies with regard to its status and political past. As such I have been concerned to show that Hou's movies demonstrate Taiwan to be an open space which is decisively shaped by the political and economic dynamics of East Asian history. Its history with mainland China before the twentieth century, its colonization by Japan in the first half of that century, its separation with mainland China in the civil war, and its subordination to U.S hegemony after the Second World War are, in some ways, "a perfect compression of the region's modern history" (Chen Kuan-Hsing xii). For examination of the past, Hou "does not operate as a stabilizing search for origins, but rather focuses on the disjuncture between popular and institutional memory, on the points of breakage that riddle fantasies of national belonging" (Jean Ma 49).[58]

I have also examined the relationship between ordinary film and history, in which I have tried to clarify the particularity of everyday film as a problem for history representation in general, and in particular with reference to Hou's films and Taiwan. I have explored in some detail how Hou transforms ordinary scenes of everyday life into microhistories.[59] I have also investigated the relationship between

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[57] I use this definition to emphasize that Hou's films indeed constitute a national identity and history about Taiwanese, but not Chinese. From a geopolitical view, it is a bifurcated history juxtaposed with Chinese history, but from the historiography angle, it is a micro-history juxtaposed with the official history, which I have called the "life history of individuals" in this dissertation, especially as reflected in such cinematic characteristics as dailiness, elliptical narrative, and reflexivity in Hou's films, all of which are essentially rooted in exploring changes of geopolitical identity.

[58] My dissertation has not addressed the future of Taiwan's political formation, because I have been specifically concerned with Hou's movies which mostly focus on the past traces of history. In these films, Hou does not express a clear political orientation on Taiwan's present or future. In my opinion, I do not think Taiwan is a renegade state. It is a possibility that Taiwan will become part of a newly constructed Chinese geopolitical entity. Hou's films reflect the plight of Taiwanese tracing their identity and nation, and this plight finds its most significant expression in his films in the gaps between changes of regime and official history.

[59] I have borrowed this term from Mazierska which is a useful concept as it is distinct to official history. As Mazierska has suggested, microhistories, are the missing components in established and traditional historiography which has tended to regard them with contempt and not as representative of "proper" history. In the same way, in *The Writing of History* (1988), Michel de Certeau combined principles from the disciplines of religion, history, and psychoanalysis to redefine historiography and to rethink the categories of history. He examines the West's changing conceptions of the very role and nature of history itself, from the seventeenth-century attempts to formulate a "history of man" to Freud's Moses and Monotheism with which de Certeau interprets historical practice as a function of mankind's feelings of loss, mourning, and absence. "Through these combinations with an

interstice/episode and entirety and the self-contained historical aura from the often disjointed sequence shots in his films, but set against the background of the ways in which trivial time and history, in the wider dimension of cinematic history, draws critical attention to a "history" that highlights the "relationship of interiority that puts every image into relation with every other" (Rancière 186). I have explored the various ways that one particular filmmaker can 'filmize' history, meaning that from the historiography, whose force it possesses, to the film, there has been a journey, from the moment when the subject could no longer be thought of as the world but as the individual.

In the generally understudied films I have used for this dissertation, I have tried to show the ways that Hou typically constructs and emphasizes personal experiences of time and history. Most especially in the way that he avoids the sort of historical periodization found in official annals. His films therefore do not fall into established historical eras such the colonial period (before 1945) and the totalitarian period (under Chiang Kai-shek's rule in the postwar years). He always makes the same kind of movies that uses the same motifs of daily life to narrate reality about time and memory, and to draw attention to Taiwan's bifurcated history especially about journeys of return. In their engagements with and exploration of different historical backgrounds that inform the film's diegesis, I have aimed to show that his movies probe a little deeper than the one that comes before. The circle of life always stays open, and constitutes an emotional landscape on the history-line. The history-lines in Hou's corpus do not narrate the past *per se* but the co-presence of the past and the present that fosters a way of thinking and perceiving experiences of co-belonging as well as the inter-expressivity between forms and signs that give them shape.

Hou's films, then, cannot be simply defined as "the film of history" or "the film of politics", but rather as "the film of time" or "the film of people". This means that this

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absent term, history becomes the myth of language. It is born in effect from the rupture that constitutes a past distinct from its current enterprise. Its work consists in creating the absent, in making signs scattered over the surface of current times become the traces of "historical" realities, missing indeed because they are other" (46).

kind of film through its prosaic and quiet qualities, privileges the visual over the written, opening the film and its viewer to insights and modes of expression not possible by literary means. We are able to see the world around its characters. It seems nothing much happens to them, and they do little besides their living. This invites us to move beyond the actions of characters and to look at the world around them. The relationship between a traumatic subject and the act of witnessing is central to understanding this reading of the form of Hou's films. They reflect a vastly different tone and social memory than other historical films; their connection, lies in the way they all use time as the central formal element to move viewers away from the specificity of stories told, toward the experience of the temporal rhythm of daily life lived. Hou is committed to an image of time as a way of exploring the prosaic everyday that might sensitize the viewer to the complexity and richness of Taiwanese past and present. To use Deleuze's words, and which have been central to everything I have argued about Hou's work in this dissertation, is that he restores "our belief in the world - this is the power of modern cinema (when it stops being bad)" (172).

Hou is not the formalism filmmaker to shape exquisite sequences for pessimism stories. Form, in his films, is always the mise-en-scene of space and time. In such mise-en-scene, there is a rule of trifle and tragedy, as well as the tension between resisting and insisting the rule. The camera operates and creates an ethics virtue is consistent with virtue of cinematography: the virtue of silence, the interacted virtue of history and being, and the virtue of placing people to the track of interrupting the circular movement. In this light, Hou replaces art with a morality and a re-reading of history which, with respect to ordinary people, helps restore a belief in a simple faith in humanity and its everyday world.

Appendix 1:

Special Terms

2-28 Incident: On 28 February 1947, the newly arrived KMT army clashed with local Taiwanese residents triggering a series of protests, strikes, and riots. Estimates of the number of people killed and injured range from ten to thirty thousand. The event has had long lived consequences. Symbolically it is seen as the beginning of the KMT's authoritarian rule, as well as a market of ethnic conflict.

Bensheng ren (literally, "inside-province people"): people who come from the Taiwan province. This is the common term for Han Chinese who were living in Taiwan before the KMT exodus from mainland China from 1945 to 1959, as opposed to aboriginal Taiwanese. See also Waisheng ren.

Waisheng ren (literally, "outside-province people"): people who come from outside the Taiwan province. Commonly translated as "mainlander", this is a common term for the two million people who came to Taiwan as part of the KMT exodus at the end of the Chinese civil war, as well as their descendants.

CCP: the abbreviation for Communist Party: The CCP has ruled mainland China since 1949 after defeating the KMT in the Chinese civil war.

DPP: the abbreviation for Democratic Progressive Party. Founded in 1986, the DPP was the main opposition party in Taiwan during KMT rule. The DPP took power in 2000 with the election of Chen Shui-bian as president.

KMT: the abbreviation for Kuomindang: Founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1894, the KMT was defeated by the CCP in the Chinese civil war in 1949. Its leaders and many of its members moved to Taiwan to set up a government that claimed to control the mainland as well as the island. It was defeated by the DPP in 2000 and returned to power in 2008.

White Terror: a totalitarian campaign under the KMT in Taiwan in the 1950s and

1960s to control dissidents, especially leftists. Its name contrasts its users, the "white" nationalists, with the "red" communists on the Chinese mainland.

Budai xi: (literally, "glove puppetry") is a type of opera using cloth puppets that originated during the 17th century in Quanzhou or Zhangzhou of China's Fujian province, and historically practised in the Min Nan-speaking areas such as Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, the Guangdong region of Chaoshan, and other parts of southern China. It had since established itself more firmly and contemporarily as a popular art form in Taiwan.

Gezai xi: (as known Taiwanese (folk) opera. literally: "song-drama") is the only form of traditional drama known to have originated in Taiwan (see Wang Ying-fen 2002). The language used is a stylized combination of both literary and colloquial registers of Taiwanese Hokkien. Its earliest form adopted elements of folk songs from Zhangzhou, Fujian, in China. The story elements are traditionally based on folk tales of the southern Fujian (Minnan-speaking) region, though in recent years stories are increasingly set in Taiwan locales. Taiwanese opera was later exported to other Hokkien-speaking areas.

Taiwanese opera is considered as the embodiment of Taiwanese history and tradition because the political identity crisis of Taiwan shaped its development (see Chang, Huei-Yuan 111-129).

Sino-Japanese War: (There were two wars known as the Sino-Japanese War) The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) between China (the Qing Dynasty) and Japan (the Empire of Japan), primarily over control of Korea. Japan won this war and occupied Taiwan. The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) between China (Republic of China) and Japan (the Empire of Japan), from 1941 on as part of World War II. Japan as a defeated party ended the occupancy in Taiwan.

LTK Commune (aka LTK, Taiwanese: Lô-chúi-khoe Kong-siā 濁水溪公社) is a well-known Taiwanese "underground" band founded in 1990. Their music has been variously described as having elements of punk, rock, nakasi, Taiwanese folk songs. The themes of musics are mainly about social chaos, unemployment and survival plight, social movements, life frustration and sexual impulses, etc.

In recent years band members have self-consciously applied the label “Taik” (from Taiwanese + -k ending, as in punk, rock) to their music – a reference to the Taiwanese Taike (台客) subculture.

Appendix 2:

The Synopsis of Hou Hsiao-hsien Films

To date, Hou has directed a total of eighteen feature films, and three short film segments of omnibus films, which leads to a total twenty-one films Out of the twenty-one films he has directed, he has written or co-written eleven of those films, in addition to writing or co-writing ten other films directed by other filmmakers, including *Taipei Story* (1985) (Dir. Edward Yang), *Heartbreak Island* (1995) (Dir. Hsiao-ming Hsu) and *My Favorite Season* (1985) (Dir. Kun Hao Chen). In this appendix, I will provide a synopses of films discussed in my dissertation, which mainly focuses on his new films since the 1980s, excluding *The Assassin* (2015).

1. *The Boys from Fengkuei* (1983)(also known as *All the Youthful Days.* Chinese:风柜来的人; pinyin: *Fēngguì lái de rén*).

As Hou's first new film, it featured the beginnings of what Hou would later consider tenets of his cinematic style, which include more of a naturalistic style and focusing more on youth and provincial/rural life.

Ah-Ching (Doze Niu) and his friends have just finished school in their island fishing village, Fengkuei, and now spend most of their time drinking and fighting. Three of them decide to go to the port city Kaohsiung to look for work. They find an apartment through relatives, and Ah-Ching is attracted to the girlfriend of a neighbor, where they face the harsh realities of the big city and of growing up.

The film won the Golden Montgolfiere award (tied with *Wanderers of the Desert* (1984)) at the 1984 Nantes Three Continents Festival. It was also nominated for Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Cinematography (Kun Hao Chen), and Best Film Editing (Ching-Song Liao) awards at the 1984 Golden Horse Film Festival.

2. *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984) (Chinese:冬冬的假期; pinyin: *Dōng dōng de jiàqī*)

This film is inspired by screenwriter Chu Tien-wen's childhood memories, and the first part of Hou's trilogy of coming-of-age, followed by *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985) and *Dust in the Wind* (1986).

The story is about a young boy, Dong-Dong and his sister who spend a summer vacation at their grandparents' house in the country while their mother recuperates from an illness; they wile away the hours climbing trees, swimming in a stream, searching for missing cattle, and coming uneasily to grips with the enigmatic and sometimes threatening realities of adult life. For example, the Dong's grandfather angrily turns the uncle out of house as he falls in love with a girl and make her pregnant, the silly woman in the village is raped and two young local men rob and wound a driver.

This is Hou's fifth feature film, which won a Best Director award for Hou at the 1984 Asia-Pacific Film Festival and the Golden Montgolfiere award (tied with *The Runner* (1984)) at the 1985 Nantes Three Continents Festival, and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury-Special Mention at the 1985 Locarno International Film Festival. It was also nominated for a Best Child Star (Chi-Kuang Wang) and Best Adapted Screenplay (T'ien-wen Chu) at the 1984 Golden Horse Film Festival.

3. *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1985) (also known as *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*, Chinese: 童年往事; pinyin: Tóngnián wǎngshì, lit. "Incidents from a Childhood Past").

This film is inspired by screenwriter-turned-director Hou's own story of his coming-of-age. It is the second part of Hou's coming-of-age trilogy, preceded by *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984) and followed by *Dust in the Wind* (1986).

Spanning the years from1948 to1965, the film follows the maturation of Ah-ha (Ah-hsiao) as he and his family (parents, grandmother, older sister, three brothers) cope with the shock of leaving their homeland (e.g. the grandmother keeps talking about returning to the mainland to visit the ancestors). Having been only a child during the move, Ah-ha quickly acclimatizes himself to the new place, often putting him at odds with his more traditional family; he joins a street gang and has to choose between that life and taking the college entrance exam. The film uses a voiceover of a

middle-aged man to narrate the losses of his family – the death of his father, mother and grandmother, as well as their nostalgia in the turbulent political situation between Taiwan and mainland China.

As his sixth feature film, it won a grand total of 8 awards from film festivals all over the world: a Special Jury Award at the 1985 Asia-Pacific Film Festival, a FIPRESCI Prize at the Forum of New Cinema at the 1986 Berlin International Film Festival (or Berlinale), a Best Original Screenplay (Hou Hsiao Hsien and T'ien-wen Chu), a Best Supporting Actress (Ru-Yun Tang) at the 1985 Golden Horse Film Festival (where it was also nominated for Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Original Film Score (Chu-chu Wu) and Best Sound Recording (Chiang-Sheng Hsin) awards), a Special Jury Award at the 1986 Hawaii International Film Festival, a Rotterdam Award for Best Non-American/Non-European Film at the 1987 Rotterdam International Film Festival, a Kinema Junpo Award at the 1990 Kinema Junpo Awards (also for Dust in the Wind), and a Special Jury Prize at the 1986 Torino International Festival of Young Cinema.

4. *Dust in the Wind* (1986) (Chinese:恋恋风尘; pinyin: *Liàn liàn fēng chén*)

This film is based on co-screenwriter Wu Nien-jen's own experiences, and the final part of Hou's coming-of-age trilogy.

A love story about a young couple from a village in the northern-east part of Taiwan. The boy, Ah-yuan goes to Taipei to work after graduating from junior high school, so he can earn money to send home. The girl, Ah-yun follows him the next year and they work hard to earn enough money to marry. Then Ah-yuan must spend three years in the military and the girl marries someone else. Although Ah-yuan regrets what happened he does not blame Ah-yun.

The film won a Kinema Junpo Award for Best Foreign Language Film Director at the 1990 Kinema Junpo Awards and Best Score (Hou Hsiao Hsien) at the 1987 Nantes Three Continents Festival (where it was also nominated for the Golden Montgolfiere).

5. *A City of Sadness* (1989) (Chinese: 悲情城市; pinyin: *bēiqíng chéngshì*)

This film is the first part in Hou's trilogy of historical films that include *The Puppetmaster* (1993) and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995).

The film is about the story of a family embroiled in the tragic “2-28 Incident” that was wrought on the Taiwanese people by the Kuomintang government (KMT) after their arrival from mainland China in the late 1940s, during which thousands of Taiwanese were rounded up, shot, and/or sent to prison. The film was the first to deal openly with the KMT's authoritarian misdeeds after its 1945 takeover of Taiwan, which had been restored to China following Japan's defeat in World War II, and the first to depict the February 28 Incident of 1947, in which thousands of people were massacred.

The film focus on individual trauma and the real cause behind this historical event, which depicts the Lin family’s experiences during the February 28 Incident. The eldest brother Wen-heung (Sung Young Chen) is murdered by a Shanghai mafia boss, the middle brother Wen-leung (Jack Kao) suffers a traumatic brain injury in a KMT jail house, the second brother Wen-sen serves in the Japanese army in Southeast Asia, and the youngest brother Wen-ching (Tony Leung Chiu Wai), who is both deaf and mute, hopes to flee to the mountains with his friend to fight in the anti-KMT resistance movement. By the end of the film even the photographer Wen-ching has been arrested by the authorities, leaving only his wife Kuan-mei to tell the story of the family’s destruction.

Wen-ching’s deafness began as an expedient way to disguise Tony Leung’s inability to speak Taiwanese (or Japanese - the language taught in Taiwan’s schools during the 51-year Japanese rule), but wound up being an effective means to demonstrate the brutal insensitivity of Chen Yi's ROC administration.

A City of Sadness was the first Taiwanese film to win the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival, and is now hailed by many critics as a masterpiece. The film also won Best Director and Best Leading Actor (Sung Young Chen) awards at the 1989 Golden Horse Film Festival. And won a Kinema Junpo Award for Best Foreign Language Film at the 1991 Kinema Junpo Awards, a Best Foreign Language Film award at the 1991 Mainichi Film Concours, and a Special Award from the USA Political Film Society in 1990. It was also nominated for a Best Foreign Film award at the 1991 Independent Spirit Awards.

6. *The Puppetmaster* (1993). (Chinese: 戲夢人生; pinyin: *Xì mèng rénshēng*)

Hou's tenth film, the second film in his "Taiwanese History Trilogy". A sprawling half-documentary, half-narrative film hybrid that tells the story of Li Tian-lu, the most celebrated puppeteer in Taiwan. Based on the memoirs of Li Tian-lu, this story covers the years from Li's birth in 1909 to the end of Japan's fifty-year occupation of Taiwan in 1945. The director let Li himself appears in the film as a narrator to tell his story of becoming a master puppeteer but who is faced with demands to turn his skills to propaganda during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan in World War II. During these years, Li constantly changes his performance repertoires in order to survive, meanwhile he has experienced the death of his family and a fruitless love, who sighs that life is like dramas.

The film won the Jury Prize at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival, where it was nominated for the Palme d'Or. The film was also another masterpiece listed in the 2012 British Film Institute Sight & Sound poll, with three directors and seven film critics declaring it as "one of the greatest films ever made".

7. *Good Men, Good Women* (1995) (Chinese: 好男好女; pinyin: *Hǎonán hǎonǚ*)

It is the last installment in the Taiwan trilogy, like its predecessors, it deals with the complicated issues of Taiwanese history and national identity.

This film is a post-modern time-jumping and fourth-wall breaking narrative that jumps between the modern-day life of an actress named Liang Ching (played by Annie Shizukah Inoh) and the historical role of Chiang Bi-Yu, who she was portraying in a 1940s period piece film. Jack Kao also appeared as her boyfriend, Ah-Wei. The film depicts the real-life story of Chiang Bi-Yu (Annie Shizuka Inoh). In the 1940s, she and her newlywed husband, Chung Hao-Tung (Giong Lim), head to mainland China to join the anti-Japanese resistance. During the war, she is forced to give up her baby for adoption. After the war they return to Taiwan, as Chung is to distribute a communist paper called "The Enlightenment". However, as the Korean War deepens, Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang regime intensifies the White Terror and Chung is eventually executed. The film consists of three intermingling storylines and scattered throughout the film are interludes of an actress (also played by Inoh) who

prepares for the role of Chiang Bi-Yu, and also confronts her deceased boyfriend's past.

The film was nominated for the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, and won Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay (T'ien-wen Chu) and Best Sound Recording (Duu-Chih Tu) at the 1995 Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards, where it was also nominated for Best Feature Film, Best Leading Actress (Inoh) and Best Film Editing (Ching-Song Liao) awards.

8. *Goodbye South, Goodbye* (1996) (Chinese: 南国再见,南国 pinyin: *Nánguó Zaìjiàn, Nánguó*).

Hou's twelfth film was set in rural Taiwan and concerned the lives of Taipei petty criminals. This is a change in Hou's films, but also a shift of the theme from the history to current life (1990s). The story starts when Gao (Jack Kao) rides the train to Pinghsi to set up a 10-day gambling den with his friend Hsi (Hsi Hsiang). He takes his acolyte Flatty (Lim Giong) and Pretzel (Annie Shizuka Inoh), Flatty's girlfriend, who works part-time in a night club. Gao's girlfriend Ying (Hsu Kuei-Ying) works in the same night club as Pretzel and she doesn't like the people around Gao, finding them dangerous. Gao has already made a deal with Hsi to invest in a nightclub in Shanghai, but Ying doesn't want him to go. Instead, she wants him to stay in Taiwan to open a restaurant. A succession of unexpected troubles lead them to the brink of disaster, and finally Gao dies in a southern rice field. Throughout the course of the film is the unsavory alliance between the underworld and the politician, with Hou showing the money politics and people's unrest under the get-rich-quick schemes in Taiwan in the mid-1990s.

The film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival and also won a Best Original Film Song award (for composer/lyricist/performer Giong Lim and his song "Self-Destruction") at the 1996 Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards.

9. *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998)***Flowers of Shanghai*** (Chinese: 海上花; pinyin: *Hǎi Shàng Huā*)

Hou's thirteenth film, *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998), was a period piece set in the

elegant brothels (also known as “flower houses”) of 1880s Shanghai. The screenplay was written and translated by acclaimed novelist Chang Ei-ling, along with frequent Hou’s screenwriter collaborator Chu T'ien-wen, based on a novel by Han Bang-qin.

The story features four brothels, in fin-de-siècle 19th-century Shanghai (Qing dynasty), several affairs are described. Events presumably take place in 1884, a year named in one of the scenes. The action involves four men who live for pleasure, and takes place mostly in the light of oil lamps, giving the film a claustrophobic feel. Preparation and consumption of opium and tea occur more than once, and dishes of food are served and hot towels prepared in several scenes.

The main characters are the courtesans known as Crimson, Pearl, Emerald, Jasmine and Jade. Crimson belongs to Huifang Enclave (薈芳里) brothel; Pearl and Jade to Gongyang Enclave (公陽里) brothel; Emerald lives at Shangren Enclave (尚仁里) brothel; and Jasmine works at East Hexing Enclave (東合興里) brothel. The relationship between the wealthy patrons and the courtesans are semi-monogamous, frequently lasting many years.

The courtesans are purchased at an early age by the owners of the brothels, otherwise known as “Aunties”. In spite of the trappings of luxury and the wealth surrounding them, the graceful, well-bred courtesans live lives of slavery. Although there are only a few references to the courtesans being beaten, we are led to understand that there are frequent beatings of the girls and women from the harsher Aunties and that beatings for perceived misbehaviour are common. Because of the oppressive social conventions, the best that the courtesans, known as “flower girls”, can hope for is to pay off their debts someday (possible through a wealthy patron) or marry into a better social status.

The silent Master Wang leaves the courtesan Crimson in favor of Jasmine, with whom he fell in love in only ten days, after two and a half years with Crimson. He offers to settle Crimson’s debts. Wang sees himself with multiple ties and between hardening fronts. The dependencies turn out to be reciprocal. Crimson has only Master Wang as a customer, and must sustain herself from his money to feed her entire family. Master Wang wants to redeem Crimson many times, but she refuses.

Master Wang in a drunken rage breaks into Crimson's room, and finds out that Crimson has a lover. Wang angrily marries Jasmine.

Allegedly Wang strikes Jasmine as she has seduced Wang's nephew, who then attempts to commit suicide. Jade tries to poison her customer as he gives her a promise of eternal love, even unto death, but finally he breaks his promise forced by family pressure. Freedom and a marriage are to be arranged for Jade. Crimson, at the end, prepares an opium pipe for her current companion in the quiet blissfulness of being together, Master Wang having departed for Guangdong.

The film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival and also won Best Director and Best Art Director (Wen-Ying Huang) at the 1998 Asia-Pacific Film Festival, the Golden Crow Pheasant award at the 1999 Kerala Film Festival, as well as a Jury Award and a Best Art Direction award (Wen-Ying Huang and Chih-Wei Tsao) at the 1998 Golden Horse Film Festival, where it was also nominated for Best Feature, Best Director and Best Makeup & Costume Design (Wen-Ying Huang, Shu-Chen Liao and Bu-Hai Shen).

10. *Millennium Mambo* (2001) (Chinese:千禧曼波; pinyin: Qiānxī Mànbō)

It is Hou's fourteenth film and the film that marked his first collaboration with actress Shu Qi, who would later go on to appear in four of Hou's later films and become his Muse.

The film follows Shu as a character named Vicky, who narrates from 2011 about her life 10 years earlier - her youth and the story of her changing life at the beginning of the new millennium. She works as a hostess in a trendy bar and is torn between two men, Hao-Hao (Chun-hao Tuan) and Jack (Jack Kao), and her journeys display the parallel journey of the psyche and how one girl deals with her fleeting youth.

The film's free-wheeling style, cinematography and sound design was praised by critics, and also garnered the Technical Grand Prize for the film's sound designer/mixer/director Duu-Chih Tu at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival, where it was also nominated for a Palme d'Or award. The film also won Best Cinematography (Ping Bin Lee), Best Sound Effects (Duu-Chih Tu) and Best Original Film Score (Kai-yu Huang and Giong Lim) at the 2001 Golden Horse Film Festival.

11. ***Café Lumière*** (2003) (Chinese: 珈琲時光; Japanese: *Kōhī Jikō*)

This is a first Japanese film directed by Hou Hsiao-Hsien for Shochiku as homage to Yasujiro Ozu, with direct reference to the late director's *Tokyo Story* (1953). It premiered at a festival commemorating the centenary of Ozu's birth.

The story revolves around Yoko Inoue (Yo Hitoto), a young Japanese woman is doing research on the Taiwanese composer Jiang Wen-Ye, whose work is featured on the soundtrack. We do not know why Yoko wants to collect the composer's materials, at the same time, there are many mysteries in Yoko's private life: she lost her mother in her childhood, but she has a very good relationship between her father and the foster mother. On the surface she is a gentle and traditional girl, but she is pregnant when she comes back from Taipei, and insists on being a single mother. This causes a conflict between her and her parents. Hajime (Asano Tadanobu), a owner of the small bookstore, who is Yoko's friend and likes her, but does not prepare mentally to assume responsibility as they are in an ambiguous relationship.

The film won the Golden Tulip award at the 2005 Istanbul International Film Festival, and was also nominated for the Golden Lion award at the 2004 Venice Film Festival and a "Best Film Not in the English Language" award at the 2004 International Cinephile Society (ICS) Awards.

12. ***Three Times*** (2005) (Chinese: 最好的時光; pin yin: *Zuìhǎo de shíguāng*; lit. 'Best of Times)

This film marks Hou's second collaboration with actress Shu Qi and first collaboration with actor Chang Chen. It is also his sixteenth film, and weaves together three separate stories that describe the relationship of a couple played by Shu and Chang during three separate time periods: (1)"A Time for Love" set in 1966 Kaohsiung, Taiwan; (2) "A Time for Freedom" set in 1911 Dadaocheng, China; and (3) "A Time for Youth" set in 2005 Taipei, Taiwan.

A Time for Love

Set in Kaohsiung in 1966, with dialogue in Taiwanese Hokkien, twice failed College Entrance Examinee, young Chen (Chang Chen) meets beautiful Xiu-mei (shu qi), a scoring girl in a billiards room; they have a subtle feelings for each other. Chen

later serves in the military and Xiu-mei is his the greatest spiritual sustenance. When Chen gets a vacation to visit Xiu-mei in Kaohsiung, but she has already left there to go to Jia-yi for work. Chen rushes to Jia-yi but does not find her. Finally, Chen finds Xiu-mei in a billiards room in Yun-lin. Xiu-mei both express surprise and joy, and they eat at the roadside stalls. Chen misses the last bus back to his unit, and they have to wait outside the station hand in hand.

A Time for Freedom

The dialogue in this part is presented only through on-screen captions. The story is set in Dadaocheng(大稻埕) in 1911, when Taiwan is a Japanese colony. Mr.Chang is a married intellectual, who has a close relationship with a popular geisha. The geisha's little sister gets her freedom with Chang's financial aid, and the geisha asks for her own ransom, but Chang does not give it as they have different identities. The geisha secretly weeping, plays and sings the sad melodies of Nanguan(Southern Pipes)- *Nous Nous Sommes Unis*, *To-Bi Ke*. Although the Wu-chang Uprising was successful after this, the geisha missed her freedom finally. The theme of freedom joins with the theme of love - the young courtesan dreams of liberty and Taiwan itself at this time was occupied by the Japanese.

A Time for Youth

Set in Taipei in 2005, with dialogue in Mandarin. A premature birth causes heart disease and epilepsy in a young woman Jing, who has a close homosexual girlfriend Micky, but she falls in love with a man (Chen) working in a photographic shop. The film represents Jing as a diseased bisexual women, who has to radically live in the moment, indulging in music and love.

The film was nominated for the *Palme d'Or* at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival, it won the Golden Apricot at the 2006 Yerevan International Film Festival, Armenia, for Best Feature Film and received positive reviews. The film was remade in Hindi as *Teri Meri Kahaani*.

13. *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007) (Chinese: 红气球的旅行; French: *Le voyage du ballon rouge*)

It is a French-Taiwanese film directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien and the first part in a

new series of films produced by Musée d'Orsay, and tells the story of a French family as seen through the eyes of a Chinese student. The film was shot in August and September 2006 on location in Paris. This is Hou Hsiao-Hsien's first non-Asian film. It references the classic 1956 French short *The Red Balloon* directed by Albert Lamorisse.

Suzanne (Juliette Binoche), a puppeteer, lives with her little son Simon in an apartment in Paris. While her daughter Louise is away in Brussels she is worried over a financial battle with her tenant, Marc, Suzanne hires a Chinese filmmaker named Song as Simon’s new nanny.

The film was nominated for the Un Certain Regard award at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival and also won the FIPRESCI Prize at the 2007 Valladolid International Film Festival as well. The film's cinematographer, Mark Lee Ping-Bin, also won 2nd place for a Best Cinematography award from the National Society of Film Critics.

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