

Music and Sound in Post-1989 Taiwan Cinema

Yen-ying Su

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Yen-ying Su, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 23. Aug. 2011

Abstract

Although film music research has been on the rise over the last decade, most research has focused on the Hollywood tradition. An increasing number of projects focusing on film-scoring traditions other than Hollywood are nevertheless beginning to reveal the richness of localised traditions and increase our understanding of the purpose of film music elsewhere. This thesis is a study of music in Taiwan cinema, focusing on the period 1989-2009. After the 1987 lifting of martial law and the 1989 release of HOU Hsiao-hsien's celebrated *A City of Sadness*, restrictions on cultural production in Taiwan were relaxed and cash from other Chinese-speaking communities as well as European and American companies began to be invested in Taiwan cinema. This influx of foreign capital has combined with the cultures of multiple colonisers to create the heterogeneous approach to filmmaking and the hybrid musical cultures found in Taiwan today.

How do all these changes affect our understanding of the relationship between music and moving images in Taiwan cinema? How has music in Taiwan cinema reflected and responded to changes to its internal and external environments? I shall examine these questions from three perspectives. In Part One I briefly summarise the country's cultural history in order to flesh out an argument about the environment in which film musicians were working. I also define important conceptual terms such as Taiwan cinema, Chinese-language cinema, Cultural China, transnational cooperation, and so on. In Part Two I investigate the influences of Chinese aesthetics on music in Taiwan cinema, particularly on HOU Hsiao-hsien's use of silence. In doing so, I suggest that the changing philosophy of silence in HOU's films reflects his response to political and cultural currents over the past two decades. In Part Three I examine music in martial arts films, particularly in Ang

LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). As an important genre in China and the first to gain popularity in the West, martial arts films have long been subject to transnational exchange; to study the role of music and musicality in martial arts films is therefore to gain a useful perspective on the shifting forces that have influenced Taiwan cinema and Chinese-language cinema over several decades. The success of *Crouching Tiger* has given rise to more frequent transnational exchanges in Taiwan cinema than before. In Part Four, I will examine the music in two more recent films, *Cape No.7* (2008) and *Secret* (2007), to examine film music's ability to reflect the struggles in today's Taiwanese society to construct its own cultural identity.

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Note on Romanisation and Translation

The romanisation of names belonging to Chinese characters remains a much-debated issue reflecting political concerns: the *pinyin* system is used in the People's Republic of China (PRC, mainland China) while the Wade-Giles system is applied in the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan).¹ Since the fall of the KMT Nationalist government in Taiwan, some scholars have attempted to replace the Wade-Giles system with the internationally-recognised *pinyin* system; however, the Wade-Giles system is still widely used in Taiwan and used for spelling the names of Taiwanese citizens on their passports.

In this thesis, both the Wade-Giles system and *pinyin* system are used according to the following guidelines: directors whose names already have an internationally known romanisation are kept the same whether they are in the Wade-Giles system or the *pinyin* system (for example, HOU Hsiao-hsien is in the Wade-Giles system while ZHANG Yimou is in the *pinyin* system). For other less well-known international names and specialist terminology, the *pinyin* system is applied. While these guidelines offer both convenience and consistency, they are not intended to reflect political preferences. Some composers and filmmakers, however, have appeared in public under numerous names. For example, the most distinguished sound designer in Taiwan cinema is TU Du-che and his name is spelled variously as 'Tu Duu Chih/Du-Chih Du/Tu Duu-Chih /Tu Duu-chih/Du Chih Tu/Du-chih Tu/Duu Chih Tu/Duu-chih Tu' according to the IMDB.com record.² In cases where there is room for possible confusion, I use the spelling preferred by the composers or filmmakers themselves, having established this information during interviews with them. In

¹ ROC stands for Republic of China, the official name for Taiwan; PRC stands for People's Republic of China, the official name for mainland China. Since both ROC and PRC contain the word 'China', and today the term 'China' usually refers to mainland China, due to China's 'One China' policy, the term 'Taiwan' is more frequently used today, albeit that ROC is still the official name for Taiwan.

² *The Internet Movie Database* <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0239002/>> [accessed 21 May 2009].

instances where I have been unable to obtain personal confirmation, I have referred to the *pinyin* system.

Personal names, when written in Chinese, are presented surname first (for example, the surname of director HOU Hsiao-hsien is ‘HOU’) and many Chinese-speaking directors keep their English name in this order. However, some internationally recognised directors’ names use English name conventions, such as Ang LEE, whose surname is LEE. It is impossible to identify which character is the surname unless one knows the original Chinese name. In order to avoid confusion, I shall capitalise all romanised Chinese surnames.

In the notes and bibliography, sources originally published in Chinese have been translated into English, with their *pinyin* romanisations in brackets following the English titles. Thus, the book 跨世紀臺灣電影實錄, 1898-2000 will become *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000* (Kua shi ji Taiwan dian ying shi lu, 1898-2000). Unless otherwise noted, the translations of texts originally published in Chinese and for interviews conducted in Mandarin are my own.

Introduction

Although film music research has been on the rise over the last decade, most film music literature still focuses on the Hollywood tradition.¹ In their introduction to *European Film Music*, Miguel Mera and David Burnand point out that because most existing research ‘has concentrated on a canon of Hollywood film music, composers and systems. [...] many of the assumptions and functional models on which film music studies have been based over the last twenty-five years are at best narrow and at worst misleading’.² Recent scholarship has started to pay attention to music in other film traditions, however, such as those in India, the Soviet Union, Australia, and various European contexts.³ Research projects focusing on film-scoring traditions other than Hollywood reveal the rich elements of local traditions and increase our understanding of the roles music may play in film. This thesis aims to contribute to this emerging debate by examining music and sound in post-1989 Taiwan cinema, to investigate the role sound has played in constructing a film industry’s cultural identity on screen over the past two decades.

This is the first major study to examine the developments of music and sound in

¹ Examples of literature examining the narrative function of music in the Hollywood tradition include: Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Examples of literature that focus on the interaction between popular music and Hollywood cinema include: Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Regarding the close relationship between American musical and Hollywood films, examples of literature include: Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Rick Altman, *The American Musical on Stage and Screen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

² Miguel Mera and David Burnand, ‘Introduction’, in *European Film Music*, ed. Miguel Mera and David Burnand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 1.

³ For other film music traditions, see for instance: Rajiv Vijayakar, *The History of Indian Film Music: A Showcase of the Very Best in Hindi Film* (New Delhi: Bennett, Coleman & Co., 2009), Robynn Stilwell and Phil Powrie, eds., *Composing for the Screen in Germany and the USSR: Cultural Politics and Propaganda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Rebecca Coyle, *Reel Tracks: Australian Feature Film Music and Cultural Identities* (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2005), Roger Hillman, *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), and Tatiana Egorova, *Soviet Film Music: An Historical Survey* (London: Harwood Academic, 1997).

Taiwan cinema, and to do so from both musical-cinematic and cultural-social perspectives. I provide an account of the ways in which music and sound have developed in Taiwan cinema, particularly over the last two decades when transnational co-operation has increased but tensions between the global and the local have intensified. I present detailed textual analyses of the soundscapes of selected films, and contextualise these in the history of sound and music in Taiwan cinema, making use of interviews with film music composers, sound designers, producers and film music critics, all of whom have worked in Chinese-language cinema for many years. I also ground my case studies within prevailing social-political situations, both internal and external to Taiwan, and reflect upon their audio-visual textualities with reference to cultural theory. My transcriptions of interviews conducted in Mandarin and my readings and translations of Chinese texts serve to provide valuable points of access to resources that are otherwise inaccessible to English speakers.

A research project on film traditions other than Hollywood presents difficulties, however. First, since most available literature is based on the traditional Hollywood canon, existing research models and theories might or might not work. For instance, leitmotif-style orchestral underscoring forms a major component in the Hollywood film music tradition, and as such the techniques of analysing this style of orchestral score have been developed quite significantly. Nevertheless, people might feel very frustrated if they attempt to analyse and understand the music of Chinese-language films in this way. Secondly, in terms of commodification, most people would agree that the Hollywood film tradition dominates in comparison to other world cinemas. As a consequence, research into other film traditions unavoidably confronts the complicated issues of 'global versus local' and 'colonial versus colonised'; in an era of the internet, when information exchange is fast and cheap, and when market law

is so powerful in the world commodities system, no local film tradition can be immune to the influences of dominant film cultures such as (but not limited to) Hollywood.

Though dominant film cultures might threaten local film industries, the latter might nevertheless also benefit from the former, and might themselves also contribute something to other film cultures. Mera and Burnand are aware of this mutual cultural exchange:

The prevalent argument that European cinema is threatened by the external power of Hollywood is in reality much more complicated than polarized studies would initially suggest. Given the increased ease of communications, the processes of globalization, and the intricate nature of film financing, the fluency between European and Hollywood film is a vital feature of both industries and cultures.⁴

I would argue that common characteristics can likewise be found between Chinese-language films and other film cultures. In Chinese-language film music and cinema studies much has been done to examine both the triumph of Hollywood's globalising power on the local market, and local resistance to such globalising power by retaining the ethnic elements of less mainstream forms of cinema on the other. However these two research focuses both ultimately draw attention to a one-way clash between the global and local, the external and internal.⁵ More recent

⁴ Mera and Burnand, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁵ On the triumph of Hollywood in local markets, see for instance, Stanley Rosen, who points out that 'the Taiwan case presents [...] an example of a market in which the local product has been virtually invisible'. Stanley Rosen, 'Hollywood, Globalization and Film Markets in Asia: Lessons for China?', p. 43, online article from <http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic152447.files/rosen_Hollywood.pdf> [accessed 17 July 2010]. As for conditions in China's film industry, Sheldon H. LU states that 'Chinese national cinema is once again seriously challenged by the global cultural hegemony of Hollywood even as the state attempts to save it by censoring the foreign'. Sheldon H. LU, *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 7. LU also argues in favour of retaining ethnic elements as a means of resisting such globalising powers, claiming: 'given the shrinking domestic [Chinese] film market, the system of film censorship, and the changes in China's film industry, what is termed "Orientalism", or the exit to the global cultural market, is also a strategy of survival and renewal for Chinese filmmakers'. LU, *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*:

research into Chinese-language film music and cinema in general has noticed the emergence and the increasing importance of a two-way mutual and mobile relationship between the global and the local, albeit one in which imbalances of power in cultural exchanges exist.⁶

Arjun Appadurai's concept of 'grassroots globalisation' offers a useful framework for re-imagining the dynamics operating between the local market and the globalising power of a dominant film culture. For Appadurai, 'grassroots globalisation' means 'globalisation from below', an alternative to the globalisation led by dominant capitalist powers which 'strives for a democratic and autonomous standing in respect to the various forms by which global power further seeks to extend its dominion'.⁷ Although the definition of globalisation remains subject to debate, two can be noted: one which emphasises the homogeneity caused by global capitalism, and another which maintains a relatively optimistic expectation that divergences among cultures and societies will be stressed by the current of globalisation. In connection with the former, scholars tend to emphasise the dominant power of imperialism or global capitalism and the relative vulnerability of the local population, or the poor, in which the one-way flux from the global to the local, either economically or culturally, is the centre of discussion.⁸ Thomas L. Friedman's internationally bestselling book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* is an example. Its argument about homogeneity is in the book's title: the world is *flat*.

Identity, Nationhood Gender, p. 132.

⁶ See for instance, Michael Curtin and Hemant Shah, eds., *Reorienting Global Communication: Indian and Chinese Media Beyond Borders* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Will Higbee and Song Hwee LIM, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', *Transnational Cinemas*, 1 (2010), 7-21.

⁷ Arjun Appadurai, 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination', in *Globalization* (4th print, 2005), ed. Arjun Appadurai (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 1-21 (p. 3).

⁸ For discussions suggesting that globalisation results in cultural homogeneity, see for instance, Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2005); Cees J. Hamelink, *The Politics of World Communication: A Human Rights Perspective* (London: Sage, 1994); For those who consider that globalisation leads to cultural heterogeneity, see for instance John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pinter, 1991); Mike Ed. Featherstone et al., eds., *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995).

In his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Appadurai proposes another framework for the study of globalisation, one which draws our attention to ‘disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy’, and which tries to take into account how Others see themselves.⁹ I acknowledge some of the lessons of his study here by including interviews with Chinese-speaking filmmakers and perspectives from Chinese-language texts; both provide opportunities for the voices of such Others to be heard — certainly Others as defined in Western-centred scholarship, of which this thesis is institutionally a part. Appadurai tends to believe that the world won’t be culturally homogenised, and in his later essay ‘Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination’ he suggests a new debate with the aim of challenge existing areas of study, particularly those in the US academic arena. For Appadurai, US scholars ‘need to find out how others, in what we still take to be certain areas as we define them, see the rest of the world in regional terms’.¹⁰ He takes the definition of the Pacific Rim as an example: while US scholars use this term to refer to certain areas in Asia, what ‘do people in Taiwan, Korea, or Japan think about the Pacific Rim, if they think in those terms at all’?¹¹ To Appadurai, the way the regions ‘imagine their own worlds’ should be taken into account in the production of new knowledge in these areas of study; otherwise, the subjectivities of regions may be sacrificed and buried under the existing knowledge-exchange system among dominant academic powers.¹²

Although we have to admit that cultural and economic capitalism is still all around us, Appadurai reminds us to pay close attention to, and not underestimate, power from

⁹ The central thesis of Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large* comes from his earlier essay ‘Disjuncture and Difference in Global Cultural Economy’, which is also the second chapter of the later book. Imre Szeman, ‘Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*’, *Cultural Logic: An Electronic Journal of Marxist Theory and Practice*, 1 (1997) <<http://clogic.eserver.org/1-1/szeman.html>> [accessed 27 June 2010].

¹⁰ Appadurai, ‘Grassroots Globalization’, 8.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 14-15.

the regions, the locals, and the poor — the opposite end of the power spectrum. This emphasis on a globalisation from below, or a globalisation from the ‘periphery’, is crucially important to my thesis. By drawing attention to globalisation from below in Taiwan cinema via close readings of selected films and detailed analyses of interview material, I shall examine the flow of creative activity and creative and financial exchange on the understanding that the relationship between the global and the local, the external and the internal, has become mutual and mobile. I shall demonstrate that certain hierarchies and boundaries between Taiwan and Hollywood or European film cultures, and between Taiwan and its Chinese creative and financial partners, have blurred to a significant extent and that this is reflected in the production of its film soundscapes.

My account of the emergence of a new globalisation from below begins in 1989, an important year for both Taiwan cinema and Chinese-speaking communities in general. It is the year when the first Taiwanese film, *A City of Sadness* (HOU Hsiao-hsien), won a major award at an international film festival.¹³ 1989 is also the year of the Tiananmen Square incident in China and the moment when the government of the People’s Republic of China gradually started to release its control over cultural production. Together with the 1987 lifting of martial law in Taiwan, all of these changes have contributed to a much freer, heterogeneous cultural atmosphere within Chinese-speaking communities. Not only have European and American companies increased their investment in cultural production among Chinese-speaking communities since 1989, business connections and cultural exchange within Chinese-speaking communities have also been enhanced. Cultural production in general, and film production in particular, before and after 1989 are therefore quite different.

¹³ *A City of Sadness* was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1989.

Conducting and managing a research project which engages with the last two decades of Chinese-language filmmaking is complex given that transnational co-operation has emerged since the 1980s. Moreover, Taiwan's diverse indigenous cultures, its various cultural influences from multiple colonisers, and its strong cultural links with other Chinese-language communities and other neighbouring countries all have to be taken into consideration in examining the role music and sound play in constructing the cultural identity of today's Taiwan on screen.

In Taiwan cinema, the music and the rest of the film system need to be understood in the context of their historical and cultural backgrounds, which are influenced by, yet different from, those of the Hollywood system. Over the centuries Taiwan has been colonised numerous times: by the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Japanese, and Nationalist China. Alongside the multiple cultural traditions that are indigenous to it, cultures belonging to the colonisers have also been imprinted on Taiwan and its history.¹⁴ At the same time, Taiwan enjoyed close relationships with other East Asian and Southeast Asian communities during the martial law and Cold War eras. Meanwhile, Taiwan's relationship with the United States has also been very close: the US supported Taiwan both as a country bordering communist China, and as a military base against it. After the end of the Cold War and the lifting of martial law, Taiwan revived its economic relationship with China, and since 2002 China and Hong Kong have been its biggest export markets. Furthermore, under the capitalist commodity system, Taiwan has been highly active in joining other Chinese-speaking communities and offering transnational co-operation in terms of business and cultural production: in this new millennium, Chinese-language cinema has emerged as the third biggest production pool in the global cinema market. Given that the

¹⁴ The history and cultural formation of the Taiwanese people is complicated and will be discussed in Part One.

Chinese-speaking population is over 1.4 billion, Taiwan's affinity with the image of 'Cultural China' has also become an essential theme in its local film and music industries.¹⁵

Given Taiwan's long history of colonisation, one which has been both political and cultural and even undertaken by multiple powers, Homi Bhabha's concept of 'the third space' proves useful for understanding the hybridity and liminality of the resulting cultural 'products', in the present case music and film.¹⁶ Bhabha develops the concept when discussing hybridity as a cultural possibility enabling differences between races, cultures, nations and regions to be heard.¹⁷ For Bhabha

It is in the emergence of the interstices — the overlap and displacement of domains of difference — that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.¹⁸

By proposing the concept of 'the third space' Bhabha argues that what is important is the mutuality and interdependence between coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed. This observation is particularly relevant to a country undergoing a period of transition, such as Taiwan: a country that has emerged from the colonial period but is still searching for a secure cultural identity. The ideas of 'hybridity' and syncretism steer us away from simple binarisms such as that between nativism and assimilation, which has for decades evoked endless debates in Taiwan. In a cultural context

¹⁵ The term 'Cultural China' was introduced into Chinese-language cultural studies by historian TU Wei-ming to deal with the complex historical and cultural bonds between Chinese-speaking regions. I discuss this further in Part One.

¹⁶ The term 'liminality', developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, now refers to 'in-between situations and conditions that are characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes'. It vividly portrays the current stage of Taiwanese society, a society that has broken free from political colonisation but is still anxiously searching for and attempting to establish its own cultural identity. Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra, 'Introduction: Liminality and Culture of Changes', *International Political Anthropology*, 3 (2009).
<<http://www.politicalanthropology.org/the-journal-current-a-past-issues/57-ipa-journal-3/171-ipa3-introduction-liminality-and-cultures-of-change>> [accessed 28 April 2012].

¹⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 53-56.

¹⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

conceived in hybrid terms, ‘the third space’ is an imaginary place where voices from both sides can be heard and respected. Bhabha’s post-colonial concept of the third space proves especially useful in Parts Three and Four; it enables us to avoid falling into the interminable search for an authentic stereotype that can be used to represent music in Taiwan cinema, and it also helps us to appreciate the heterogeneity of Taiwan’s various musical cultures, and thus to perceive the richness of the music in its cinema.

In Part One, I explore how various cultural forces interweave and then act on this small but dynamic island existing on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, and investigate how music in Taiwan cinema has responded to political and social change and to contesting cultural forces. Against the background of this filmmaking environment, and making use of not only close textual analyses of individual films but also interviews that I have conducted with Chinese-language speaking composers, directors, and sound designers,¹⁹ I then present a series of studies. Rather than focusing on individual composers or sound designers, I proceed by examining three overarching sonic issues that I have identified in Taiwan cinema: the manifestation of Chinese aesthetics in its music and sound; the influence of local opera traditions on its sonic practices, especially the dialogue between bodily movement and music in martial arts film; and its particular deployment of popular music. An approach focussing on the aesthetics of directors more than on those of film music composers themselves is consistent with the transnational mode of productional co-operation that I identify. None of the directors I discuss in this thesis has established a long-lasting co-operative relationship with a specific composer, and in the films I have selected, the directors were mostly in charge of choices of musical design; as

¹⁹ Since transnational co-operation among the three key Chinese-speaking regions is frequent today, I interviewed not only Taiwanese composers, but also film music composers in Hong Kong.

such, the aesthetics of the directors seem to be more crucial in the development of music and sound in Taiwan cinema as a whole. The one exception is *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang LEE, 2000), in which I focus more straightforwardly on the composer's classical music and Chinese music compositional skills.

The director-based approach in Taiwan cinema can be considered a species of 'auteurism', whereby the director treats music as 'a key thematic element and a marker of authorial style', according to Claudia Gorbman's definition. The auteur-director takes active control and emphasises his/her personal preference in most aspects of filmmaking, including choice of music. In this way the music of auteurist films not only conveys 'meaning in terms of plot and theme, but meaning as authorial signature itself'.²⁰ An auteurist approach to music is demonstrated in the case studies discussed in this thesis: music and sound are the aspects of the cinematic apparatus that HOU Hsiao-hsien uses to manifest his Cultural Chinese aesthetics and to maintain his cultural identity in transnational co-productions (see Part Two); Ang LEE treats music and sound in *Crouching Tiger* in such a way as to fulfil his dream of globalising a local genre by combining musical ideas from various cultural traditions (see Part Three); and popular star and director Jay CHOU fully displays his talents as director, composer, pianist and actor in his films (see Part Four).

The first question to arise here from the concept of auteurism is the extent to which certain aesthetic concepts from the Cultural Chinese tradition have both contributed to the music and sound of Taiwan cinema and also become individual director trademarks. The concept of *liubai* (literally 'leave blank') is one such aesthetic concept; originating from the Cultural Chinese tradition, it has been widely

²⁰ Claudia Gorbman, 'Auteur Music', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 149-62 (p. 149-51).

applied in Taiwan cinema as well as in Chinese-language cinema.²¹ My discussion will focus on films by HOU Hsiao-hsien. HOU has himself claimed that the concept of *liubai* is a core aesthetic concept which demonstrates the Cultural Chinese affinity of his films. He has applied the concept of *liubai* since the period of Taiwan New Cinema (the 1980s), when directors began to search for and aim to establish a specific style that represents Taiwan's own cultural identity in order to save the declining local film industry.²² The concept of *liubai* in HOU's films therefore not only links his films with the Cultural Chinese tradition, but is also a unique feature distinguishing his films from others.

In addition to this aesthetic concept from the Cultural Chinese tradition, regional operas in Chinese-language communities have provided inspiration for the music and sound of Chinese-language films. My discussion of the link between regional operas and film focuses on a genre which specifically originated in the Cultural Chinese traditions but is now a globally influential one: martial arts films. By examining the music in the martial arts film of Ang LEE, who grew up in Taiwan and works in the US, issues closely relating to the two core ideas of this thesis emerge: namely, how cultural identity and transnational business models are explored in Taiwan filmmaking. The hybrid content of musical elements in LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), whether from Cultural Chinese traditions or from the West, greatly contributes to LEE's efforts in blending ideas from various cultures whilst keeping the Chinese flavour as an essential spirit. This is an excellent example for demonstrating how two-way influences between a dominant film culture and a local one exist in Taiwan cinema today.

²¹ In addition to the films by HOU Hsiao-hsien discussed in this thesis, films by TSAI Ming-liang and JIA Zhangke are noted for their silent content, and minimal use of non-diegetic music.

²² The detailed historical background and aesthetics of Taiwan New Cinema will be introduced in Parts One and Two.

Popular music and song are another major source of music in Taiwan cinema, as in most film traditions. The third topic here is how in today's transnationalist era popular music on screen relates to the formation of cultural identities in Taiwan (generational, ethnic, national, and regional). Jay CHOU's *Secret* (2007) and WEI De-sheng's *Cape No.7* (2008), two of the most commercially successful recent films, are taken as case studies for their iconic status in recent Taiwan cinema. The selection and use of both popular music and classical instrumental music in these films allegorise internal struggles and relate to the formation of cultural identities in today's Taiwan. Although both films foreground popular music, the performance of classical music turns out to be the medium via which various cultures are able to be reconciled. This is where Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation' provides a useful explanatory framework. I argue that in these films, classical music provides just such a space in which both sides can communicate.

All of these musical issues, and the case studies chosen, demonstrate responses by Taiwanese directors and musicians to the tensions between the global and local over the last two decades, and how a local culture might resist and negotiate with imperialist powers by transforming itself and gradually developing a challenging power in order to survive and to develop a two-way influence. These three topics inform Parts Two to Four respectively, while Part One sets up academic contexts and identifies conceptual terms that are core to the project: Taiwan cinema, Chinese-language cinema, Cultural China, transnational cinema, and so on. A brief cultural history of Taiwan is also introduced in Part One to flesh out an argument about the cultural environment in which the film musicians and directors were working.

Part One Music and Sound in Taiwan Cinema

Chapter 1. Academic Contexts and Conceptual Frameworks

In 1989, Taiwanese director HOU Hsiao-hsien made *A City of Sadness*; the film won a Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival and in doing so became the first of many Taiwanese films to win major awards at international film festivals. As James Udden notes, this was ‘an event that sent shock waves throughout the entire Chinese-language film community, even in mainland China. Never before had a top prize at a major festival been won by a Chinese language film, making this the equivalent of when *Rashomon* [a Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa] won this same award back in 1951’.¹

The award-winning success of Taiwanese films in the mid-1980s and thereafter brought glory to the nation;² such films provided important opportunities for a small nation to speak for itself on the world stage.³ *A City of Sadness* was also the first film in Taiwan cinema to insist on the use of authentic location sound rather than dubbing, and as such 1989 is also recognised as an important year of change for sound recording technology in the industry;⁴ although recording technology and

¹ James Udden, ‘Taiwan’, in *The Cinema of Small Nations*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Duncan J. Petrie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 144-59 (p. 153).

² Some countries disregard Taiwan as a legitimate nation. However, with the rise of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1980s, the country’s films can now enter international festivals in the name of Taiwan, rather than as representations of ‘Taipei, China’, ‘Taipei’, or ‘Chinese Taipei’. These earlier classifications were problematic to Taiwan because they forced it to be known as a region of the PRC. WU Chia-chi, ‘Festivals, Criticism and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema’, in *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, ed. by Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert CHEN (London: Routledge, 2007), 75-92 (p.79). For more detailed discussion on Taiwan New Cinema, see Chapter Two.

³ LIU Xiancheng, ‘Re-examining the Criticism for Taiwan Cinema in the 1980s to the 1990s (Fang kailishi shiye: jianshi bashi dao jiushi niandai pianzhi de Taiwan dainying lunshu)’, in *Discourses on Contemporary Chinese-language Films (Dangdai huayu dianying lunshu)*, ed. by LI Tianyi (Taipei: Shi bao, 1996), pp. 79-102 (p. 88).

⁴ *A City of Sadness* is the first feature film in which synchronised recording technology was used

equipment continued to evolve after 1989, the basic process for recording film sound did not alter much over the ensuing years.⁵ The success of *A City of Sadness* also quickly followed the 1987 lifting of martial law, and thus represents a turning point in Taiwanese cultural production as well as all other aspects of Taiwanese life.

After the lifting of martial law, restrictions on language, music, plot content in fiction and film, and media outputs were loosened.⁶ Four languages are spoken in *A City of Sadness*: Mandarin, Taiwanese, Japanese, and Shanghainese. In musical terms, the film offers traditional Taiwanese wedding ceremonial music, funeral ceremonial music, Japanese songs, Mandarin songs, Taiwanese folk songs, Western folk songs, Beijing opera, Taiwanese opera, and orchestral underscoring. The use of multiple languages and diverse musical elements in this film demonstrates Taiwan's cultural diversity.

The multiple cultural backgrounds and linguistic contexts that exist in Taiwan help to justify scholars' use of the term 'Taiwan cinema' over 'Taiwanese cinema'. While the term 'Taiwanese cinema' might be more appropriate to the demands of English grammar, it does not have a place in discussions of cinema in Taiwan because of the complexity of its politics and cultures: most films from Taiwan are in

during location shooting. CHANG Ching-pei, *The Box of Sound and Image: The Career of Sound Designer TU Du-che* (Shengse hezi: yinxiao dashi du du zhi de dian ying lu) (Taipei: Da quai wen hua, 2009), p. 233.

⁵ Author's interview with TU Du-che, 29 June 2009. TU Du-che is probably the most prestigious sound designer in the Chinese-language film industry today. He is the sound designer for several major Chinese-language directors, such as HOU Hsiao-hsien, WONG Kar-wai, Edward YANG, and so on, and has been the sound designer of more than one hundred Chinese-language films since the 1980s according to IMDB database (he actually began working in the film industry as early as the 1970s according to author's interview with him). <<http://www.IMDb.com/name/nm0239002/>> [accessed 18 July 2010]

⁶ In the martial law period, the Nationalist government created further rules to restrict the use of Fukien (Taiwanese) and other dialects in schools and the media. For example, on 8 January 1976, the Taiwanese President declared *The Radio and Television Law*, which stated that: 'all foreign-language programs shall have Chinese subtitles or be dubbed in Mandarin [...] (Chapter 1, Article 19)' and 'The language used for domestic broadcasting shall be mainly Mandarin; the ratio of other dialects used in programs shall decrease year by year. (Chapter 1, Article 20)'. From *Global Legal Information Network (GLIN), Library of Congress* <<http://www.glin.gov/view.action?glinID=198060>> [accessed 28 August 2009]

Mandarin rather than Taiwanese, and people from different ethnic and age groups have diverse understandings of the terms ‘Chinese’ and ‘Taiwanese’. For these reasons, film scholar Ru-chou Robert CHEN proposed the term ‘Taiwan cinema’, which is now generally accepted in academic circles. According to CHEN, Taiwan cinema is ‘about films made in Taiwan, whether they have been financed and directed by the Japanese, Chinese or Taiwanese. Moreover, a Taiwan film may use one or more [...] different languages and dialects — Japanese, Taiwanese or Mandarin, depending on different social and historical circumstances’.⁷ In this thesis, the term ‘Taiwan cinema’ is applied to filmmaking in Taiwan from the period of Japanese colonisation to the present. CHEN’s definition dates from the 1990s, when transnational co-operation among Chinese-language regions had just emerged but transnational co-production between Taiwan cinema and European or American film cultures was not yet common. The financing bodies he mentions are limited to the Japanese, Chinese or Taiwanese nations. Nevertheless, since the mid-1990s, and especially following the success of *Crouching Tiger*, the co-production model has not only connected Japan, Taiwan and other Chinese-language speaking communities, it has also linked Taiwan with European countries and Hollywood.⁸

As a result of increasing transnational co-operation and diverse political and cultural currents in post-1990s Taiwan cinema, CHEN has more recently proposed the concept of ‘Cinema Taiwan’ as an alternative to his ‘Taiwan cinema’. ‘Cinema Taiwan’ refers to ‘Cinema(s) in Taiwan’, and aims to describe a ‘more market-driven and cosmopolitan, more jagged and factional’ Taiwan cinema from 1990 onwards.⁹

⁷ Ru-shou Robert CHEN, ‘Taiwan Cinema’, in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film*, ed. by Yingjin ZHANG and Zhiwei XIAO (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 47-62 (p. 47).

⁸ For example, many of TSAI Ming-liang’s films are Taiwan-French co-productions, Ang LEE’s *Crouching Tiger* is a Taiwan/Hong Kong/China/USA co-production, CHEN Guo-fu’s *Double Vision* is a Taiwan/US production, and HOU’s *Three Times* is a Taiwan/France production.

⁹ Ping-hui LIAO, ‘Preface: Screening Contemporary Taiwan Cinema’, in *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity, and State of the Arts*, ed. by Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert CHEN (London:

While the term ‘Taiwan cinema’ might imply ‘a coherent film culture within a national cinema framework’, Cinema Taiwan emphasises the heterogeneous and transnational content of Taiwan cinema since the 1990s; it stresses the difference between Taiwan cinema pre- and post-martial law.¹⁰ As a consequence of the growing transnational business models that were being used in Taiwan cinema after the lifting of martial law, in 1987 the country’s film culture was no longer limited to a fixed national identity. The transnationalist concept of ‘Cinema Taiwan’ enables us to understand the many dimensions of film culture in Taiwan, he argues; Taiwanese filmmakers work across geographical and political borders. Although ‘Cinema Taiwan’ might be a more accurate reference to the situation in the country right now, this term was not intended to be a substitute for ‘Taiwan cinema’, and since the latter term is favoured in scholarship, I shall use it throughout this thesis.¹¹

1989 was not only when Taiwan cinema came to international attention; it is also a key moment in the history of Chinese culture because the Tiananmen Square incident took place on 4 June during that year. As Jason McGrath observes: ‘The resulting disillusionment and cynicism among intellectuals and artists [...] led to an abandonment of high cultural ideals and an embrace of commercialism and the profit motive in the following decade’.¹² The end of the Cultural Revolution came in 1976, and the period that followed from 1978 was known as the ‘new era’; thus, the period after 1989 is sometimes identified by Chinese critics as the ‘post-new era’.¹³ In this era, the embrace of commercialism has gradually influenced the

Routledge, 2007), pp. xiii-xv (p. xiii).

¹⁰ Darrell William Davis, ‘Introduction: Cinema Taiwan, A Civilizing Mission?’ in *Cinema Taiwan*, ed. by Davis and CHEN, pp. 1-13 (p. 4).

¹¹ I have discussed the uses of these two terms with CHEN himself. He explained that he proposed the term ‘Cinema Taiwan’ in order to emphasise the recent heterogeneous essence of Taiwan cinema; however, the term ‘Cinema Taiwan’ is not a substitute for the term ‘Taiwan cinema’ when referring to films in Taiwan.

¹² Jason McGrath, *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 3.

¹³ McGrath, *Postsocialist Modernity*, p. 6.

Chinese government to release its control over cultural production and economic trade; however, it must also be noted that censorship in China remains strict especially in comparison to Hong Kong and Taiwan. The economic and cultural exchanges on both sides of the Taiwan Strait — between Taiwan and China — have intensified whilst political tensions have been sustained. Regarding films produced by China, Sheldon Hsiao-peng LU has said, the ‘number of coproductions with foreign companies has been increasing since the beginning of the 1990s, and in 1993 about a quarter of China’s films were funded by foreign capital. [...] Most of these coproductions were funded by sources in Hong Kong and Taiwan’.¹⁴ China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, recognised as the three major Chinese-speaking communities, gradually came together to form a powerful if somewhat loose entity, and since the 1990s this bloc has become an integral part of the international film stage.

The result of these cultural rapprochements is that it has become increasingly difficult to talk about Taiwan cinema in isolation of the bigger cultural phenomenon that is post-1990 Chinese-language cinema. The term ‘Chinese-language film’ (*huayu dianying*) was introduced by scholars from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1990s.¹⁵ There was an urgent need for a new term to be identified because existing terminology was no longer always applicable: traditionally, a ‘Chinese film’ was called a ‘*zhongguo dianying*’, but the word ‘*zhongguo*’ referred to ‘China’ in

¹⁴ LU, ‘Historical Introduction’, p. 9.

¹⁵ Sheldon H. LU and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH, ‘Introduction: Mapping the Field of Chinese-language Cinema’, in *Chinese-language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics*, ed. by Sheldon H. LU and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), pp. 1-24 (p. 10). See also their note on p. 23, which I reproduce in full: ‘For instance, LEE Tain-Dow organized a conference on Chinese-language films in Taipei in 1992. A similar conference on Chinese-language films was also held at Hong Kong Baptist University in autumn 1996. For book-length critical studies centred on the idea of ‘*huayu dianying*’, see ZHENG Shusen (William Tay), ed., *Cultural criticism and Chinese-language Cinemas* (Wenhua piping yu huayu dianying) (Taipei: Maitian, 1995); LEE Tain-Dow, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Chinese-language Film* (Dangdai huayu dianying lunshu) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua, 1996); YEH Yueh-yu, CHEUK Pak-tong, Ng Ho, eds., *Romance of Three Places: Twenty Years of Chinese-language Cinemas* (Sandi chuanqi: huayu dianying ershi nian) (Taipei: Caituan faren guojia dianying ziliaoguan, 1999); PU Feng and LI Zhaoxing, eds., *Two Hundred Classics: Two Hundred Best Chinese-language Films* (Jingdian liangbai: zuijia huayu dianying liangbaibu) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 2002).’

Mandarin. With more and more scholars from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan now exchanging ideas across geographical and political boundaries, it became important to find a politically neutral term that could be used to refer to films from these three regions. The new phrase, 'Chinese-language films', has since become common in scholarly writing. Chinese-language films include productions from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and all other Chinese diasporas, and may be in one of numerous languages used across pan-Chinese regions, including Mandarin, Hakka, Fukien, Cantonese, Shanghainese, and so on. The case studies of this thesis reflect this plurality of language.

The identification of Chinese-language films as a phenomenon partly reflects the fact that China is a vast political entity containing such a wide variety of ethnic groups that any intellectual construction of a national cinema is likely to be externally driven to some extent; it also partly reflects the simple fact that a transnational approach has been brought to bear upon it. Such an approach nevertheless provides a particularly effective framework for researching cinema in Chinese-speaking communities across regions that hold different political ideals but succeed in relating to each other in economic and cultural terms.¹⁶ While recognising that each community has its own unique traits which are freely played out, by suggesting a 'transnational' model Chinese-language cinema scholars place an emphasis on the complex historical and cultural bonds that have linked these Chinese-speaking regions. Political tensions are left aside. Because of the apolitical concept of 'Chineseness' that many have sought to identify, sinology scholar TU Wei-ming has proposed another concept: 'Cultural China'.¹⁷ This term suggests 'a Chinese culture or cultures that exist before or after

¹⁶ LU and YEH, 'Introduction: Mapping the Field of Chinese-language Cinema', p. 10.

¹⁷ According to TU, Cultural China 'can be examined in terms of a continuous interaction of three symbolic universes': the first 'consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. [...] the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese'; the second 'consists of Chinese communities throughout the world', and the third 'consists of individual men and women,

nation-formations, and is/are deeply connected to contingent statehood and transnational relations'.¹⁸ For Anne Ciecko, Cultural China is 'an emergent cultural space and global site of Chinese identities'.¹⁹ As Ciecko's concept is somewhat more enabling for the critic of this complex body of films than the concept of national cinema, I am adopting it for this project. The term 'Chinese' may hold negative connotations for some Taiwanese people — given that it is usually associated with the PRC or Nationalist China — but there is no doubt that 'Cultural China' forms an essential part of Taiwanese culture as well as the language of film music in Taiwan cinema. As I shall argue, a fantasy of what China is, or could become, might be conveyed in the lyrics and musical styles of popular songs, in the aesthetics of silence, or in references to musical languages originating in Beijing opera. All of these demonstrate ways in which the language of film music in Taiwan cinema continues to be associated with Cultural China.

The term 'Chinese' in this thesis is therefore a cultural rather than a political reference. Via their links with the (abstract) Cultural Chinese tradition, people in Chinese-speaking regions form what Benedict Anderson would call an 'imagined community' — in the present context, I would argue, a community imagined both from outside and inside the Chinese-speaking communities themselves — notwithstanding the political tensions between them. According to Anderson's definition, the community

is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the

[...] who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities'. TU Wei-ming, 'Cultural China: The Periphery as the Centre', in *Daedalus* 120 (1991), reprinted in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, ed. by TU Wei-ming (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-34 (pp. 13-14).

¹⁸ Anne T. Ciecko, 'Theorizing Asian Cinema(s)' in *Contemporary Asian Cinema*, ed. by Anne T. Ciecko (Oxford: Berg, 2006), pp. 13-31 (p. 20).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.²⁰

Anderson's concept is useful for interpreting the increasing co-operation between the three major Chinese-speaking regions, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, all which have different political inclinations but are bound together in certain discussions of cultural identity and in certain cultural products because of their common cultural inheritance. Since the 1990s directors from the three major Chinese-speaking regions have also formed positive working relations. As mainland Chinese director ZHANG Yimou acknowledged at the 1992 Academy Awards press conference in Hollywood, 'Now more and more mainland Chinese [people] realize that China is really three areas: the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Among directors, there is a great deal of contact and exchange across these three areas'.²¹ These three regions have experienced many advantages by cooperating with each other; resulting successes include Ang LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, whose male lead is from Hong Kong, female lead is from China, and both director and the male supporting actor are from Taiwan. For scholar ZHANG Yingjin,

The People's Republic, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and their cinemas are marked as socialist, capitalist, and colonialist, respectively. Yet to exaggerate these differences would be to overlook a common cultural tradition of social, ideological, and aesthetic forms that stands behind and informs Chinese cinema as a whole.²²

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 6-7.

²¹ ZHANG Yingjin, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), p. 22; quoting from Mayfair Mei-hui YANG, 'Of Gender, State Censorship, and Overseas Capitals: An Interview with Chinese Director ZHANG Yimou', *Public Culture* 5, (1993), 297-313 (p. 308).

²² ZHANG, *Screening China*, p. 20.

By co-operating with other Chinese-speaking regions and presenting themselves as united in the world cinema market—as an imagined community—producers of Chinese-language films have benefited immensely: their budgets have been kept low, they have produced better quality results, and their markets have continued to grow. Chinese-language films have gradually emerged as potential competitors to Hollywood.²³

Although a transnational business model can be easily identified by looking at the formation of production teams and at the companies investing in the films, in this thesis I shall concentrate more on the effects of transnational co-operation; for instance, I shall consider ongoing negotiation between the local and the global by analysing the musical dimension of contemporary Taiwan cinema. For example, in a transnational production such as *Crouching Tiger*, how did the film music composer and the director strive for a balance between adopting traditional Chinese musical idioms and borrowing Western musical ideas? The negotiation and co-operation process is not only crucial to cases in which Taiwan cinema co-operates with European or American film cultures, it is also effective for Chinese-language film music composers who now have to work for Chinese-speaking communities other than where they live. All the composers of film music and sound designers that I interviewed reported that they have worked, or are currently working, on projects for Chinese-speaking communities away from their home base: Taiwanese composer Jeffrey CHENG has been composing pieces for the Beijing Orchestra; Hong Kong-based composer Peter KAM has worked on several Taiwanese films as well as projects in China; TU Du-che works with HOU Hsiao-hsien (in Taiwan) and WONG

²³ As Michael Curtin notes, ‘Indian and Chinese centres of film and television production have increasingly emerged as significant competitors of Hollywood in the size and enthusiasm of their audiences, if not yet in gross revenues’. Michael Curtin, *Playing to The World’s Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 3.

Kar-wai in Hong Kong/New York; and Taiwanese composer LO Chi-yi has been working in both Hong Kong and China. Not all of these projects are film music compositions; they also include computer games and television advertisements. Nevertheless, Jeffrey CHENG and Peter KAM predict that there will be more and more transnational co-productions because there are advantages for each community when it commits to the transnational cooperative model. For example, the cost of hiring musicians in China is still much lower than in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and so music for Taiwanese films is often recorded in China.²⁴ Moreover, fewer films are produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan than in China; Hong Kong and Taiwanese composers and directors often therefore extend their working networks to China. Nevertheless, when working in partnership with directors, performers, and musicians from other regions, composers face both challenges and opportunities: they need to compete with composers from other regions and Chinese-language communities for projects. While such partnerships present both advantages and disadvantages, generally my informants view them as having had a positive impact on film music composition in Chinese-language films.²⁵

In my discussion thus far the term ‘transnationalism’ has referred to co-operation between Taiwan cinema and other Chinese-language cinemas. However, its use to suggest a cross-nation, regional relationship among different political entities with a shared cultural heritage is only one of the ways in which I apply it.²⁶ In examining

²⁴ As Jeffrey CHENG points out, ‘although little film music in Taiwanese films is currently recorded by musicians in China, I think the amount [of this kind of transnational cooperative model] will increase in the future’. Author’s interview with Jeffrey CHENG, 10 April 2009.

²⁵ For example, I asked Taiwanese composer LO Chi-yi whether he felt under pressure because of the increasing number of transnational co-operations in Chinese-language communities. He answered: ‘No, I think it’s wonderful. To me, I can get projects from Hong Kong and China, and due to the convenience of the internet, I don’t have to go there in person. I like this free working style. I can work in Taiwan, and upload my compositions to the FTPs of companies in China. We can also discuss everything via the internet. Furthermore, we can combine and take advantage of the talents and resources from both sides.’ Author’s interview with LO Chi-yi, 21 April 2009.

²⁶ Sheldon H. LU is one amongst the first and representative scholars applying the concept of ‘the transnational’ to discuss the film cultures in Chinese-language communities. For more discussion, see

the prizes awarded to Taiwanese directors at international film festivals, the transnational business model has worked not only between Taiwan and other Chinese-language communities, but also between Taiwan cinema and European or American film companies, particularly after the success of Ang LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. This film was the first in Taiwan cinema to win an Oscar for the Best Foreign Film category, and was also the most commercially successful foreign film at the American box-office in the year 2000. It was a truly transnational project, put together by a number of Cultural China film companies: HSU Li-kung of Zoom Hunt in Taiwan, Bill Kong of Edko films in Hong Kong, and Ang LEE and James Schamus through New York-based Good Machine.²⁷ Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH claim that 'Ang LEE set out to transform Chinese-language cinema by using Hollywood'.²⁸ East Asian countries — such as Korea, Taiwan, and the PRC — used to impose limitations on imports, including the quota of foreign films that would be allowed into the country.²⁹ However, the US has persuaded those countries to open up their local markets as part of world trade negotiations; recently, WTO rules forced even the most conservative country, the PRC, to do so.³⁰ As a response to challenges from Hollywood and global capitalism, East Asian film companies have since enhanced their interdependent co-operation and now search for ways to sell their products overseas.

LU, 'Historical Introduction: Chinese Cinemas (1896-1996) and Transnational Film Studies', pp. 1-31.

²⁷ Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: BFI, 2008), p. 26.

²⁸ Davis and YEH, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 25.

²⁹ For example, Taiwan 'limited foreign film exhibition to the circulation of only two prints at a time, until 1994'. See Davis and YEH, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 9.

³⁰ On 13 August 2009 a news article was published entitled, 'WTO upholds US complaint over China's film, music, book imports'. It stated, 'The World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled [on] Wednesday in favour of a US complaint over China's imports of publications and audio-visual products. The ruling largely upholds the US[']s allegations that certain Chinese measures constituted restrictions to the imports of such products and are inconsistent with WTO regulations.' *China Daily*, 13 August 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2009-08/13/content_8565879.htm> [accessed 31 August 2009]

One of the Academy Awards that *Crouching Tiger* won was for Best Music. Whether we examine the musical dimension of this film via the musical language of the score, or via an examination of the biographies of the musical team as a whole (the composers, performers and singers), the transnational nature of its production is quite clear. The music is by TAN Dun, who was born in China but has lived in New York for more than 20 years. The cello part of the orchestral underscoring is performed by Yo-Yo MA, a Chinese-American. The title song ‘A Love Before Time’ is performed by Coco LEE (also known as LEE Wen), who is also Chinese-American, and recorded both Mandarin and American versions of the song. The musical elements themselves include percussion patterns from the Beijing opera, the leitmotif idea from both Western opera and classic Hollywood narrative scoring, orchestral underscoring reminiscent of classic Hollywood practice, and performances of Chinese traditional instruments such as the Ba-wu (a woodwind instrument originally from southern China), Er-hu (a string instrument originally from northern China), and percussion instruments as used in Beijing opera. TAN Dun claims, ‘we attempted to search for a balance by mixing Chinese traditional music with Western orchestral music’,³¹ not only in order to combine talents from various Chinese-language communities, but also to create a new style of music by mixing elements from the West and Cultural China. The film music language and production models used in *Crouching Tiger* offer an excellent case study as to how Taiwan cinema now co-operates with other Chinese-language communities as a bloc, and how it has adopted the Hollywood commodity system in order to shine in the global cinema market. Here Ang LEE brought together talents and resources from the Chinese diaspora and marketed them to the West as a collective Cultural China. I

³¹ LAN Zuwei, *Film Music Composers* (Sheng yu ying: ershi wei zuoqujia tan huayu dianying yinyue chuanguo) (Taipei: Mai tian, 2001), p. 206.

shall investigate the film's manifestations of musical de-localisation and re-localisation in Part Three.

The transnational relationships between Taiwan cinema and other international film cultures, mainly French, serve as interesting counterweights to the Taiwan-Hollywood relationship and raise their own issues. My central question is: how do transnational relationships between Taiwan cinema and other film cultures produce different aesthetics? Furthermore, is Taiwan cinema largely responsible for such aesthetic styles due to the fact that each of its filmmakers has created his/her own creative style? For instance, French film culture is known for its anti-Hollywood stance and its production ties with Taiwan cinema have produced an altogether different aesthetic to that of *Crouching Tiger*. French film culture has been less interested in LEE's work than it has in HOU Hsiao-hsien's work with its traditional and localist roots. HOU is one amongst the first Taiwanese directors who, in the face of commercial pressures from Hollywood and the declining local market since the 1980s, realised the great potential of connecting with film audiences other than Hollywood all over the world.³² HOU's first internationally financed film was *Flowers of Shanghai* in 1998.³³ Though unsuccessful in the local Taiwan market, the film was highly acclaimed by critics both at home and abroad. As Ti WEI puts it, HOU is clearly aware of his situation and has claimed that 'the size of the audience for his *Flowers of Shanghai*, is "twenty thousand in Taipei, two hundred thousand in Paris"'.³⁴ Having gained the appreciation of French audiences, critics, and investors, HOU's post-2000 Chinese-language productions have all been Taiwan/France co-productions (with one exception, *Café Lumière*, a Taiwan/Japan

³² Ti WEI, 'How did HOU Hsiao-hsien Change Taiwan Cinema? A Critical Reassessment', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 271-79 (pp. 277-80).

³³ *Ibid.*, 278.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

co-production). In 2007, he was even invited to shoot a French film called, *Le Voyage du ballon rouge* (Flight of the Red Balloon), commissioned by Musée d'Orsay and featuring Juliette Binoche.

The soundscapes of HOU's films are very different from those of LEE. HOU's films are relatively silent; for instance, orchestral underscoring is barely used. Critics have associated HOU with the French auteur director Jean-Luc Godard, since their non-linear narrative strategies and sound editing bear similarities.³⁵ Both Godard and HOU prefer to use soundtracks recorded on location, but then re-organise the sound materials to create a sense of audio-visual disarticulation.³⁶ This might help to explain why French companies chose to invest in HOU's work over LEE's. The French film industry will promote a different category of film to what Hollywood does. Both film cultures also promote different aesthetics and Taiwan cinema is diverse enough to have directors who have worked with both styles. In comparison to LEE, HOU has used different strategies to respond to transnational co-operation and the dynamics between the local and the global (i.e., in search for a balance between keeping Taiwanese flavour while at the same time being attractive to global audiences) in the last two decades, as I explore in Part Two.

As discussed above, three kinds of structure for transnationalist forces can be identified in Taiwan cinema today: partnered with other East-Asian communities (mainly Chinese-speaking communities like China and Hong Kong, and also Japan

³⁵ HOU himself has confirmed Godard's influences on the structures of his films. HOU states, 'Ellipses and other indirect narrative methods are, ironically, more clear-cut and to the point. [...] In this, I have been influenced by Godard's *Breathless*, by his free-style structure and methods'. Peggy CHIAO, 'Great Changes in a Vast Ocean: Neither Tragedy nor Joy', *Performing Arts Journal*, 17 (1995), 43-54 (p. 48). For the comparisons of sound design in HOU's and Godard's films, see Adrian Martin, 'What's Happening? Story, Scene and Sound in HOU Hsiao-hsien', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 258-70.

³⁶ Martin, 'What's Happening? Story, Scene and Sound in HOU Hsiao-hsien', 267. More detailed audio-visual analysis on HOU's films will be explored in Part Two.

and Korea); partnered with European countries (mainly France); partnered with Hollywood. These three forces incorporate the different aesthetic styles of many Taiwanese directors. Directors must therefore consider not only which aesthetics they will use, but also who their target audiences are and what their marketing strategies will be. Diversity in filmic aesthetics extends to a film's sound and its musical language, and the choices are clearly different in each of the three structures I have identified. The case studies here have been categorised according to musical style and different modalities of transnationalism. Listed below are the key themes for each part:

	Topic	Transnational co-operation	Case studies
Part Two	Hearing Chinese Aesthetics in Films	Taiwan cinema/European	<i>Three Times</i> (HOU Hsiao-hsien, 2005)
Part Three	Music in Martial Arts Films	Taiwan cinema/Hollywood	<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i> (Ang LEE, 2000)
Part Four	Popular Music in Recent Taiwan Cinema	Taiwan cinema/East Asia	<i>Secret</i> (Jay CHOU, 2007)

Figure 1.1 Key theme of each part

The cultural complexities of Taiwan affect the types of film the country produces, as well as their music and sound. Even though the transnational production and business model prevails, some local elements nevertheless remain in the language of film music/sound. These include traditional folk songs, instrumental music, and operas by the Fukien and Hakka ethnic groups and aborigine tribes; all of these sounds have been adopted by Taiwanese film music composers into their work.

These local elements, along with the cultures of multiple colonisers — from both neighbouring Asian countries and the West — have all contributed to the hybrid musical culture that prevails in Taiwan, and constitute the musical culture in which Taiwan's film music composers and directors have grown up. An overview of the cultural history of Taiwan is therefore useful not only for appreciating the cultural environment in which film musicians work, but also for appreciating the cultural complexities of the broader context of Taiwan cinema.

Chapter 2. Overview of the Cultural History of Taiwan

Before 1900: aborigine tribes, the Dutch, and immigrants from mainland China

The modern history of Taiwan is one of colonisation. The country is an island measuring approximately 36,000 km² and with a population of twenty-three million. Its first settlers were Malay-Polynesian aborigines who arrived as early as 4000 B.C. and from them descended the aborigine groups of today.¹ The Dutch East Indies Company arrived in 1624 and after that the Dutch occupied Taiwan. At that time, the Portuguese named Taiwan 'Ilha Formosa' (beautiful island) and it was not regarded as Chinese territory at all. The Dutch presence is still felt in present-day Tainan, a city in southern Taiwan, where the occupiers established Fort Zeelandia and Fort Provintia.² As well as the Dutch, the Spanish also showed interest in setting up trading centres in Taiwan. In 1626 the Spanish claimed the present-day Keelung area in northern Taiwan as theirs, and later, in 1628, built Fort Santo Domingo (present-day Tan-shui), from where they could sail up the Tan-shui river to the place now known as Taipei city. The Spanish occupation ended in 1642.³

The Dutch and Spanish occupations introduced a mercantile system and maritime trade to Taiwan, making the country one of only a few places in East Asia to have direct contact with Westerners in the seventeenth century. Western missionaries came to Taiwan aboard the trade ships and taught the Taiwanese people Western music and songs, though mainly for liturgical purposes rather than educational ones. Western music was taught in missionary schools and sung in chapels but did not become

¹ *National Taiwan University Center for Indigenous People* <<http://www.cip.ntu.edu.tw/main06.htm>> [accessed 25 May 2009].

² Ronald G. Knapp, 'The Shaping of Taiwan's Landscapes', in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. by Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk, NY; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), pp. 3-26, (p. 12).

³ Knapp, 'The Shaping of Taiwan's Landscapes', pp. 12-13.

widespread until the late-nineteenth century, when Japan took over Taiwan. In 1662 the Dutch were defeated by Chinese general ZHENG Chenggong,⁴ who refused to surrender to the new Manchu government (Qing dynasty)⁵ in China and took Taiwan as his base of operations. ZHENG's forces governed Taiwan over the next twenty years but then surrendered to the Qing dynasty in 1683. Following this period, Taiwan became integrated with the Qing Empire. Although the Qing dynasty had barred immigration to Taiwan, many people living in the Fukien and Guangdong provinces were attracted to the flat and fertile land of Taiwan and thus took the risk of entering Taiwan illegally. People from the Fukien province were mostly immigrants who created their own language and culture in Taiwan; likewise, people from the Guangdong area mostly speak Hakka and live according to their own culture in modern-day Taiwan. Those immigrants gradually occupied most of the lowlands and the existing lowland tribes either assimilated with the immigrants or fled from them to the mountains. Aboriginal tribes that lived in remote mountains, where farming land was scarce, were at a safe distance from any outsider penetration since it was difficult for newcomers to reach them. Although immigrants assimilated the cultures of lowland tribes which have since disappeared, cultures of highland tribes have been well preserved, and together with cultures of the Fukien and Hakka people contribute to the hybrid culture of modern-day Taiwan.

⁴ ZHENG Chenggong (1624-1662) was a military leader during the end of the Ming dynasty. When the Manchu took over Beijing and established the Qing dynasty, he refused to surrender and led several unsuccessful campaigns against the Qing dynasty. ZHENG then moved to Taiwan, defeated the Dutch and claimed Taiwan as his military base in 1662. He died in the same year and his son, ZHENG Jing, succeeded him as the King of Taiwan. ZHENG Jing died in 1682 and his troops surrendered to the Qing dynasty soon after.

⁵ The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) was the last ruling dynasty in Chinese history. Unlike the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), ruled by the Han, the Qing dynasty was established by the Manchu, who were an ethnic minority living in the Northeast part of China. Because the Manchu were an ethnic minority, they imposed strict decrees to force others into submission. For example, any man who did not adopt the Manchu hairstyle would be executed. They referred to it as the 'keeping hair or head' decree. The Manchu also issued harsh censorship to force the opposition into silence. Such decrees resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, and also revolutionary movements throughout the Qing dynasty.

1895-1945: Japanese colonisation

Film production and the contemporary school system (including music education) in Taiwan were both initiated under Japanese colonisation, which make this period an important one for the present study. In 1895 the Japanese defeated the Qing Empire in the First Sino-Japanese War and Taiwan was ceded to Japan according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki.⁶ In reflecting on their experiences under Japanese colonial rule, the Taiwanese people have produced a variety of accounts revealing some of the tensions associated with being colonised. On the one hand, Japanese colonisation was harsh and repressive, with Taiwanese unable to secure high positions in government institutions or the education system. The Japanese were a minority but owned most of its wealth. For these reasons, the Taiwanese still considered reconnecting with China to be the preferred option once Japanese colonisation ended, even though Taiwan had never really been governed by China.⁷ On the other hand, Japan initiated many infrastructural developments in Taiwan and led it through a process of modernisation. Japanese leaders aimed to establish an empire that could compare with the colonial achievements of Europe.⁸ Japan secured her first colony, Taiwan, after the Sino-Japanese War and this event was viewed by the Japanese as the first step towards the establishment of a European-style Empire.⁹ The Japanese soon realised that military suppression could not work in the long-term and turned their efforts towards infrastructural developments to ensure they would benefit from Taiwan's economic

⁶ The Treaty was signed in 1895. In addition to Taiwan, the Penghu islands and Liaodong peninsula were also ceded to Japan. China also had to recognise the full independence of Korea.

⁷ The relationship between the Qing Empire and Taiwan was an 'affiliated' one. When the Qing Empire claimed Taiwan was part of its territory, it did so simply to keep Taiwan from being the base for revolutionary activists. The Qing Empire didn't pay much attention to Taiwan, nor to the country's internal construction.

⁸ Tsurumi quotes, 'Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru (1835-1915) expressed this aim in 1887: "What we have to do is to transform our empire and our people, and make the empire like the countries of Europe and our people like the people of Europe. To put it differently, we have to establish a new, European-style empire on the edge of Asia"'. E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1925, Harvard East Asian Series* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

resources; they also focused on education to attract the minds of the local Taiwanese people and assimilate them. Moreover, they sought co-operation from the Taiwanese elite to keep society in order. Under Japanese colonisation, Taiwanese people enjoyed a generally peaceful time and experienced the convenience of modernisation. As a consequence, some people in Taiwan, especially those who grew up under Japanese colonisation, now consider Japan to have been a better governor than the succeeding Nationalist party.

The Japanese government aimed to introduce a modern education system to Taiwan, and as Western classical music was considered synonymous with modernisation, it formed the core part of the syllabus for music education.¹⁰ Music education in Japanese-colonised Taiwan was constructed as two systems: primary music education and higher level music schools. Primary music education involved teaching songs that were mostly composed by Japanese composers or Western songs that were accompanied by Japanese lyrics; Franz Schubert's lied 'Heidenroeslein', for instance, was one such song, and its cultural significance will be further discussed in Part Four. Teaching Chinese songs or traditional Chinese music and Taiwanese indigenous music was restricted. The Japanese also set up higher level music schools where Western music theory, composition, and instruments were taught. The higher level curriculum was devised by several teacher training schools, such as those in Taipei, Taichung, and Tainan. Even today, when music departments have been set up in many universities, departments in teacher training universities remain the main resource for higher music education in Taiwan.

Music education was also supported by the Japanese government for political

¹⁰ Shih-yu LIN, 'The Role of Taiwanese Music in Taiwan's Institutions of Higher Education: Analysis and Interpretation of A Survey of Music Appreciation Instructors in General Education 2005' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaii, 2006), p. 16.

reasons: for better thought control and reform.¹¹ The Japanese restricted the learning of law, literature, and politics as subjects in higher level Taiwanese schools (where students were Taiwanese); however, medicine, agriculture, and arts subjects were strongly endorsed because these subjects are relatively neutral in political terms and so were less likely to cultivate revolutionary thoughts against the Japanese government. In order to attract more students to the subjects promoted by the Japanese government, opportunities were provided for Taiwanese students to study music in Japan. Before 1945, most established Taiwanese musicians or composers had studied in Japan at some point, and ultimately returned to Taiwan to become the country's first generation of educators in Western music. Among them was the most famous of them all, JIANG Wen-ye (1910-83). JIANG was raised in Taiwan and studied music in Japan, and then went on to win the composition prize at the 1936 Berlin Olympics for his orchestral piece 'Taiwan Dance (Taiwan Wuqu)'; he also won a prize at Venice's 1938 International Contemporary Music Festival for his piano composition: 'Five Sketches (Wushou Sumiao)'. JIANG later moved to China; unfortunately, he then suffered a great deal during the Cultural Revolution because of his Taiwanese and Japanese connections. When in 2003 Taiwanese director HOU Hsiao-hsien was invited to shoot his first Japanese film, *Café Lumière*, for the centenary of the Japanese director Yasuhiro Ozu, JIANG's story and music were adopted as one thread in the film's narrative (the main character is engaged in research into JIANG's music); it served as an example of the link between Taiwan and Japan and the complex triangular relationship between them and China.¹²

¹¹ Hui-hsuan CHAO has written about the ways in which the Japanese and Taiwanese negotiated their respective colonial roles through music. See Hui-hsuan CHAO, 'Musical Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule: A Historical and Ethnomusicological Interpretation' (unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Michigan, 2009). Also see Angela Hao-Chun LEE, 'The Influence of Japanese Music Education in Taiwan During the Japanese Protectorate', *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 23 (2002), 106-18 (pp. 107-08).

¹² Higbee and LIM, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema', 16-17.

It was during the period of Japanese colonisation that Taiwan was introduced to Western cinema, another symbol of modernisation. Whether we consider ‘cinema’ an industry, a cluster of cultural strategies, an art form, or a tool to construct identity through collective memory, the development of Taiwan cinema closely relates to the country’s history of colonisation and politics. Japanese influence over Taiwan cinema occurred as early as cinema’s 1901 introduction into the country. Japan aimed to be and was indeed the most modernised country in Asia, and cinema audiences in its colony were able to access films from all over the world as soon as they were imported to Japan. Films from Europe and the United States were shown in addition to Taiwanese home-made films, Japanese films, and films imported from China.¹³ Under Japanese colonial rule, all films had to be dubbed in Japanese or carry Japanese subtitles.

Sustaining the government’s political influence has been a key aspect of the development of Taiwan cinema, and can be traced back to the Japanese colonial period. The first feature film ever made in Taiwan, *Eyes of the Buddha* (Tanaka King, 1922), told the story of a Japanese man saving a Taiwanese girl from a Chinese official, and was obviously a form of propaganda. It was not until the film *Whose Fault Is This?* (LIU Xiyang, 1925) that the Taiwanese came to play a major role in film production, though the Japanese still controlled significant technical support and were the dominant force. From 1922 to 1943 most feature films made in Taiwan were produced by Japanese studios and also served as propaganda vehicles for colonial policy. *Sayon’s Bell* (Hiroshi Shimizu, 1943) is the most famous example of ‘national policy’ films. Sayon, an aborigine girl, carries luggage for her Japanese teacher who is going to join the army; she is later found drowned following a storm. The Japanese then builds a bell to mark the place where Sayon died and commemorate her patriotic

¹³ CHEN, ‘Taiwan Cinema’, p. 47.

behaviour. The film's theme song, whose lyrics speak of Sayon's sad story, tugged on people's heartstrings and became very popular. It is said that many Taiwanese were so deeply affected by the film that they soon voluntarily joined the Japanese army.¹⁴

The sonic dimension of film exhibition developed during the era of Taiwan silent cinema also absorbed certain Japanese theatrical conventions. The *benzi* (*benshi* or *katsuben* in Japanese) and the *rengasi* (*rensageki* in Japanese) are two examples.¹⁵ *Benshi* refers to the Japanese narration system for silent films which enjoyed parallels with both Noh and Kabuki, both of which are established Japanese theatrical traditions that include live narrators and singers giving voice to actions on stage. At first the *benshi* only told the story before a screening, but this method soon changed and narration was performed during the film. This mode of presentation became a popular feature of the silent film viewing experience in Japan and colonised Taiwan.¹⁶ It is true that some sort of complementary narrator system existed in almost every country during the silent era, and in many forms: narrator, lecturer, *spieler*, barker, or commentator. However in America and Europe filmmakers soon developed their own way of creating narrative by means of continuity editing, and during the teens the narrator system was gradually phased out. The *benshi* system continued until the 1940s. In Japan, film was considered a medium for stage actors, given the abovementioned Noh and Kabuki traditions of separately giving voice to the actions

¹⁴ LI Dao-ming, 'Sayon's Bell', in *Encyclopedia of Taiwan* <<http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=21161>> [accessed 20 March 2011].

¹⁵ CHEN, 'Taiwan Cinema', pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ On *benshi* stardom, see Hideaki Fujiki, 'Benshi as Stars: The Irony of the Popularity and Respectability of Voice Performers in Japanese Cinema', *Cinema Journal*, 45 (2006), 68-84; on *benshi* performance in Japan and Taiwan, see for instance, Isolde Standish, 'Mediators of Modernity: "Photo-interpreters" in Japanese Silent Cinema', *Oral Tradition*, 20 (2005), 93-110; Kuei-fen CHIU, 'The Question of Translation in Taiwanese Colonial Cinematic Space', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 70 (2011), 77-97; David Bordwell, 'Visual Style in Japanese Cinema, 1925-1945', *Film History*, 7 (1995), 5-31; Jeffrey A. Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators, and their Forgotten Narrative Art of Setsumei: A History of Japanese Silent Film Narration* (Lewiston, NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003); YE Long-yan, *The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization* (Rizhi shiqi Taiwan dianyingshi) (Taipei: Yu shan she, 1998).

on stage.¹⁷ The link between silent films and those theatrical traditions seems to have led to the much longer retention of the narrator system in Japan and its colony Taiwan than in America and Europe.

Benshi, characterised by film theorist Kaeriyama Norimasa as ‘photo-interpreters’, were responsible for introducing the backgrounds of films and for interpreting foreign stories that were unfamiliar to Japanese and Taiwanese audiences.¹⁸ As Michel Chion also notes, early commentators to foreign films ‘freely interpreted the intertitles that the audience could not read, since many moviegoers were illiterate and most were unable to cope with subtitles in foreign languages’.¹⁹ The function of *benshi* in narrating the story was still important when sound films first appeared in Taiwan, since even by then Taiwan did not possess its own film industry and almost all films were imported and acted in foreign languages. *Benshi* thus ‘functioned as mediators of modernity through their interpretation of foreign films’— a modernity which for audiences in Taiwan was both Western and Japanese.²⁰ In addition to introducing the backgrounds to film stories and narrating them live, *benshi* performed the function of ‘information broadcasting’ in Taiwan. One scene in Taiwanese director WU Nieh-chen’s 1994 film *Duo Sang* vividly portrays a *benshi* performance during the Japanese colonial period. Here the *benshi* not only narrates the story, but also makes announcements while the film is showing, such as: ‘Mr. Sega who lives in Duochukeng! Phone call for you at the box office’, ‘Announcement from the canteen! The ice creams are coming, ice creams are coming. Those who haven’t yet purchased your ice creams, please go to the canteen now’ and ‘Whose child is that? Quieten down! Please take more care of your child’. With their virtuosic voices and body

¹⁷ Brian Powell, *Japan’s Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity* (London: Japan Library, 2002), p. 45.

¹⁸ Isolde Standish, ‘Mediators of Modernity’, 93.

¹⁹ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 8.

²⁰ Isolde Standish, ‘Mediators of Modernity’, 93.

language, and a wide variety of functions to fulfil, *benshi* became a commercial attraction that encouraged audiences to visit and revisit the theatre. Each *benshi* would develop his own performative style and cultivate his own fans, to the extent that *benshi* became stars of the film industry and had their names listed on theatre advertisements along with those of the actors.²¹ This effect was enhanced by the fact that the film industry in early twentieth-century Japan and Taiwan focused on exhibition rather than production.²²

By the onset of the sound era, the *benshi* had established a vital position in the Japanese and Taiwanese film traditions. Musical accompaniment to silent films in Japan and Taiwan was also somewhat different to that in the West. Throughout the silent era musical accompaniment was used only intermittently. Music and *benshi* performances worked together to guide the audience through a film and reinforce emotional effects, though the two were not used simultaneously. Although music was considered an effective tool for emotional enrichment, *benshi* performance was viewed as more vital. *Benshi* performers even had the privilege of dictating to the band, or of controlling the speed of film projection.

Benshi is discussed in most books on Taiwan cinema and overshadows consideration of film accompaniment in Taiwan during the silent era, which is usually limited to a couple of sentences. For instance, in his book, *The History of Taiwanese Movies During the Japanese Colonization*, YE Long-yan offers only a few sentences regarding silent film musical performances in colonised Taiwan. YE points out that typically the theatre hired a band of five performers, and musical accompaniment was used mostly for tragic scenes.²³ Little detailed research has been done on musical

²¹ Hideaki Fujiki, 'Benshi as Stars', 71.

²² Ibid., 74.

²³ YE Long-yan, *The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization* (Rizhi shiqi Taiwan dianyingshi) (Taipei: Yu shan she, 1998), p. 186.

practices during the period. The materials that I have found nevertheless suggest that the style of musical accompaniment was similar to that used in other countries: films were mostly accompanied by a pianist or a violinist, or a small group of performers; indeed, one of the famous *benshi* WANG Yung-fong is known to have played violin.²⁴ The sources of musical accompaniments were probably either popular tunes originating from local areas, or classical tunes of the West; newly-composed scores, were rarely heard.²⁵

There are two possible reasons for the fact that less attention has been paid to the development of musical accompaniment for silent film than to the development of *benshi*. First, Western music was just emerging in schools during the Japanese colonisation period and music education in these schools focused on singing only. As a result, the number of Taiwanese musicians who were able to perform using Western instruments and/or to compose for silent cinema was very small. Hiring professional Japanese musicians to come to Taiwan and play accompanying music for silent cinema simply would not have been economically viable. Second, because *benshi* offered such an attractive style of presentation, it was often used to substitute for musical accompaniment altogether. By 1931, there were already 88 licensed *benshis* in Taiwan, whereas there were only 18 registered theatres,²⁶ a statistic which

²⁴ See 'WANG Yun-fong', in *Taiwan Memory, National Central Library* <http://memory.ncl.edu.tw/tm_cgi/hypage.cgi?HYPAGE=toolbox_figure_detail.hpg&project_id=twpeop&dtd_id=15&subject_name=%E8%87%BA%E7%81%A3%E4%BA%BA%E7%89%A9%E8%AA%8C%281895-1945%29&subject_url=toolbox_figure.hpg&xml_id=0000293127&who=%E7%8E%8B%E9%9B%B2%E5%B3%B0> [accessed 21 March 2011]. For more references, see CHEN Ling-huei, 'Cinema (Dianying)', in *Introduction to Media Studies* (Dazhong chuanbo gailun) (Taipei: Wu-nan Publishing, 2007), pp. 195-260 (p. 222); LI Dao-ming, 'Silent Film', in *Encyclopedia of Taiwan* <<http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=21178&Keyword=%E9%BB%98%E7%89%87>> [accessed 20 March 2011]; YE Long-yan, *The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization* (Rizhi shiqi Taiwan dianyingshi) (Taipei: Yu shan she, 1998).

²⁵ In addition to Western instruments, silent films in Taiwan were sometimes accompanied by traditional Chinese instruments. For example, Jin-niang ZHAN discusses how the traditional Chinese instrument Yang-qin had been applied in silent film music accompaniment in her master's dissertation 'The Development of Yang-qin Music in Taiwan' (Taiwan Yangqin yishu fazhan zhi yanjiu) (unpublished master's dissertation: Nan-hwa University, 2006).

²⁶ HUANG Jianye et al. eds, *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema 1898-2000* (Kua shiji Taiwan dianying shi lu, 1898-2000) (Taipei: Council for Cultural Planning and Development, Executive Yuan, 2005),

demonstrates that *benshi* was an essential element of the silent film viewing experience.

Rensageki, the other key Japanese influence on Taiwan cinema in this early period, means joined drama or chained drama. It was a hybrid genre in which film and theatre-based drama plays were joined together and the filmic elements were used to express the spectacle sequences. Such combinations of Taiwanese drama with film were reported in 1928, which not only provides evidence of the existence of *rensageki* in Taiwan cinema, but shows that Taiwanese opera contributed something important to the development of the country's cinema in the years following the period of Japanese colonisation. According to one news item:

The Taiwanese opera troupe, Jiangunshe, deployed *rengasi* in their performances in order to differentiate their performances from other troupes. They shot short films, and joined the filmic sequences to opera in order to show on screen what could not always be seen on stage. [...] This troupe [Jiangunshe] became famous for its pioneering originality.²⁷

In *rengasi*, the actors 'were the same in both media, playing the live scenes in the normal way and filling in the dialogue when [...] the screen was lowered for a filmed scene'.²⁸ In a chained performance like this, when the same actors acting the theatrical parts also spoke the filmic parts behind the screen, the latter was regarded as natural expression. Indeed, because audiences became used to synchronous speech behind the screen during the silent film era, Japan delayed introducing sound cinema. The *rengasi* and the *benshi* traditions have also had a great impact on the sound editing of Taiwanese productions since the silent era. As a consequence, there is more

Vol. 1, p. 112.

²⁷ The original title and exact date of this historical report is unavailable in HUANG's edition, only the year (1928) and the text. HUANG Jianye et al., *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema 1898-2000*, Vol. 1, p. 123.

²⁸ Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, p. 46.

discussion of *benshi* and *rensageki* than there is of musical accompaniment in scholarship on both Japanese and Taiwanese film history of this period. Considerable attention is also given to their influence on the work of today's Taiwanese directors, as I shall explore in Part Two.

As the report of *rengasi* practices in 1928 makes clear, local operas have been associated with Taiwan cinema since its earliest developments. Even today, the opera film — whether of Chinese or Taiwanese origin — is an important genre, which could be due to the historical importance and popularity of regional dialect operas in Chinese-speaking regions. There are more than 300 regional operas in China of which the well-known Beijing opera counts as one.²⁹ In contrast to Western classical music traditions, operas in Chinese-speaking communities are categorised as folk arts, and many regions have their own distinctive opera styles to reflect their languages.³⁰ The formats of Chinese regional operas are not fixed like the Western classical opera traditions. The repertoire of these regional operas might be themed according to Chinese history, folklore, or even news items that affect contemporary society. The melodic lines could be freely improvised on traditional motivic patterns to suit the length of lyrics (which are also freely-composed), and the melodic lines derived from the same melodic pattern might vary from actor to actor, or performance to performance. Both the music and stories of these regional operas provide rich material for film productions.

In both Taiwan and China the connection between regional opera and film has been close since the very beginning of film history: the first silent films, sound films, and colour films in China, and the first 35mm Fukien films in Taiwan are all based on

²⁹ HUANG Zuolin et al., 'Tradition, Innovation, and Politics: Chinese and Overseas Chinese Theatre Across the World', *The Drama Review*, 38 (1994), 15-71 (p. 15).

³⁰ For instance, Taiwanese (Fukien) opera is performed in the Fukien-speaking areas of the country; likewise, Cantonese opera is performed in the Guangdong province, southern China and Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, and Beijing opera is performed (in Mandarin) in the Beijing area.

opera even if they feature different dialects and operatic traditions. As Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar put it, ‘Opera stars were China’s first film stars. They were the billing attraction in these first films’.³¹ The first silent film production in China was the 1905 masterpiece *Ding Jun Shan* (literally *Dingjun Mountain*), a Chinese Beijing opera film produced by the Fong-tai Photography Company in Beijing which featured the Beijing opera star Lord TAN Shin-pei and consisted of four extracts from the Beijing Opera of the same title. This was one of TAN’s most popular operas and the choice of action scenes for the film was made so that the absence of speech and sound wouldn’t spoil the audience’s interest.³² The film was popular and the Fong-tai Photography Company continued to shoot Beijing Opera films. At that time, film was considered to be a new form of technology from the West, and a new entertainment industry that might threaten the population of local opera-goers.³³ According to GAO Xiaojian, the emergence of opera film proved to audiences that there was no need to choose between the traditional and the modern, between the East and the West, because a collaborative relationship could be formed between these two representational forms from which all could benefit.³⁴ A long-term advantage of film technology is that past performances of some prestigious opera singers have been preserved. Equally, traditional operas have provided stories, ideas, songs, and musical materials for filmmaking, so much so that film has helped to sustain the popularity of traditional operas, while opera stars and plots initially helped to generate interest in the new medium of film, which quickly spread across China.³⁵ The close relationship between dialect operas and film remains in Chinese-language films even today. The sonic and

³¹ Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 56.

³² GAO Xiaojian, *The History of Opera Films in China* (Zhongguo xiqu dianyingshi) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2005), pp. 40-47.

³³ GAO, *The History of Opera Films in China*, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-12.

³⁵ A feature film, *Shadow Magic* (Ann HU, 2001, China/Germany/Taiwan/US) narrates the story of the introduction of filmmaking to China in the early twentieth century.

specifically musical materials deriving from local operas and adopted by directors and film composers are distinctive characteristics of the music and sound of Chinese-language films, and will be discussed in Part Three.

During the Japanese colonisation, however, there were few examples of Taiwanese opera on screen: not only was every stage of filmmaking controlled and influenced by the Japanese, but also distribution. Even though the Taiwanese film market had become valuable, its film industry couldn't work independently. Moreover, Taiwanese opera was one indigenous genre that was subject to restrictions by the Japanese. For example, a report in the *Taiwan Civilian Newspaper* (Taiwan Minbao) on 13 January 1927 criticises the strict rules that were put in place by the Japanese and applied to local dramas:

Originally the Japanese authorities gave traditional dramas or Taiwanese opera freedom to perform. However, they now set up strict rules. They demand that all dramas be translated into Japanese, and say that they need to be approved by the authorities according to the censorship law. [...] Originally, the Japanese were strict in their evaluations of newly-composed dramas but they were less strict when it came to observing traditional repertoires or Taiwanese opera.³⁶

Taiwanese opera was also criticised by the Japanese and even by some Taiwanese elitists who viewed it as vulgar. Opera originated among the working class in Taiwan and aimed to be as easily-understood and accessible as possible, however the elitists viewed its lyrics, speech, and overall performance as lacking the elegance of traditional dramas, and thus felt that its content should not be made available to the general public.³⁷ From 1925 onwards, more and more newspaper articles asked for

³⁶ XU Yaxian, *History and Interpretation: Reading Drama-Related Media Articles in Japanese Colonisation* (Shi shi yu quanshi: riah shiqi Taiwan baokan xiqu ziliao xuan du) (Ilan: Centre for Traditional Arts, 2009), p. 349.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

restrictions to be placed upon performances, which might have hindered the merging of local opera with films.³⁸ Despite all this, Taiwanese opera continued to gain popularity, and was eventually assimilated with film in the 1950s. Between the 1950s and the 1970s it emerged as the most popular genre in Taiwan cinema, as I shall discuss below.

Interestingly, Fukien popular songs and films have also been closely intertwined with film since the Japanese colonisation period: the first Fukien popular song, entitled ‘The Peach Girl’, was written by famous *benshi* ZHAN Tianma, and sung by Taiwanese opera singer Chun Chun (her stage name; her original name was LIU Qingxiang), and the song itself was composed so as to promote a film with the same title. The song is composed in refrain style, in which there are twelve verses set to the same music. To ensure that the song was easy to sing and remember, the lyrics were set in a traditional Taiwanese folk song style: seven characters in one sentence and four sentences per verse. The lyrics of the song narrate the story of the film, although not in full: the last sentence of this song — ‘If you want to know the ending of this story, please see *The Peach Girl*’ — embodies the song’s promotional function. The popularity of the song attracted people to see the silent film and its fame brought it to the attention of Kashiwano Shinchiro, the manager of Columbia Records Corp. Shinchiro noticed the song’s marketing potential and invited singer Chun-Chun to make a recording of it. This record achieved great success, and during the Japanese colonisation period Fukien song was a main production category for Columbia Records Corp.³⁹

Composers, writers and singers from Taiwanese opera and traditional dramas have

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 343-47.

³⁹ WANG Yolán, *The Music of CHEN Guanhua: The Reservation of Speaking-Singing Music in Taiwan* (Chen guanhua de chui la tan chang: Taiwan bentu shuo chang yinyue baocun) (Ilan: Center for Traditional Arts, 2005), p. 28.

produced Fukien popular songs since the 1930s.⁴⁰ As several famous Fukien popular song composers, including CHEN Qiulin and SU Tong, were also instrumentalists who performed for Taiwanese opera, Fukien songs adopted musical materials from the Taiwanese opera repertoire.⁴¹ According to Fukien song historian CHEN Peifong, they themselves were also then absorbed into the Taiwanese opera repertoire. Fukien popular songs following ‘The Peach Girl’ were likewise usually composed in order to promote films.⁴² It was not until 1933, when famous Fukien songs such as ‘Wang Chun Feng (Whispering Hope)’ and ‘Yu Ye Hua (Flowers on a Rainy Night)’ had been composed, that Fukien popular songs came to be recognised as belonging to a musical genre independent of film.⁴³ These records opened the first golden era of Fukien popular song recording, which lasted until 1940 when the Japanese declared the Japanisation Movement.⁴⁴

Film production in Taiwan was interrupted by World War II, as were the studies of Taiwanese musicians living in Japan. During the War only films from Japan, Germany, and Italy were screened in Taiwan as a result of wartime censorship, and once the Japanese had withdrawn in 1945 film exhibition in Taiwan came to almost a complete stop.⁴⁵ According to the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan

⁴⁰ CHEN Peifong, ‘Reading Images of Colonised Taiwan via Three Types Japanese Yange [Song] (Cong san zhong yange lai kan zhong ceng zhimin xia de Taiwan tuxiang)’, *Taiwan Historical Research*, 15 (2008), 79-133 (pp. 89-90).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴² Shih-ting HUANG, ‘Fulao Popular Songs During the Japanese Colonization of Taiwan’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Houston, 2006), p. 16.

⁴³ YANG Kelong, ‘The Popular Songs in Taiwan (Taiwan Liuxing gequ yanjiu)’ *Taiwan Literature Studies Workshop, National Cheng-kong University, Taiwan* <<http://ws.tw1.ncku.edu.tw/hak-chia/i/iunn-khek-liong/sek-su/sek-su.htm>> [accessed 3 September 2009]

⁴⁴ During the Japanisation Movement, all cultural activities concerning local (Taiwanese) cultures were forbidden, including songs, dramas, films, and so on. For a more detailed discussion regarding the influence of Japanese colonisation upon the formation of Taiwanese cultural identity, see for instance Leo T. S. CHING, *Becoming ‘Japanese’: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁴⁵ Emilie Yueh-yu YEH and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island, Film and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 16.

‘in perpetuity’. Nevertheless, at the 1943 Cairo Conference,⁴⁶ the Allied Powers accepted CHIANG Kai-shek's request that Taiwan be returned to Nationalist China after the War ended. In the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty that followed, the British authorities stated that the PRC should take control over Taiwan while the United States authorities held the opposite position. The United States, determined to maintain good relations with the Allied Forces but also wanting to prevent a Communist invasion of Taiwan, referred to an undetermined Taiwanese sovereignty in the Treaty. Nationalist China (ROC), though not satisfied, agreed a compromise and accepted the undetermined Taiwanese sovereignty condition in the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty and along with Japan signed it in Taipei in 1952. From then on, Taiwan became an anti-Communist base both for the US and for Nationalist China, and this strong anti-Communist political stance would have a great influence upon cultural production in the years that followed.

1949-1987: martial law

The ROC government took over administrative control of Taiwan in 1945, when the Japanese troops surrendered. CHIANG Kai-shek's Kuomintang (or the KMT, which translates to mean ‘The Nationalist Party’) troops lost the war against the Communists in China and fled to Taiwan in 1949, claiming Taiwan as their base for retaking the mainland. At first the Taiwanese people were glad to be rid of their Japanese colonisers and thought that a return to ‘China’ would give them equal rights in politics. However, the KMT governed Taiwan in a very repressive manner. Taiwanese people, who had never had a chance to speak for their own subject positions but had been

⁴⁶ The Cairo Conference, held in November 1943, was attended by President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom, and Generalissimo CHIANG Kai-shek of the Republic of China (CHIANG was named Generalissimo of all Chinese forces from 1928 to 1932). The Cairo Declaration, announced after the conference, stated that Japan had to give up all the lands it had occupied since 1914 and that Korea would gain its independence.

repeatedly colonised over the centuries, soon became disappointed with the ‘return of China’ and protested for their independence once again. The tensions between the KMT and the Taiwanese people flared up and resulted in the 28 February Incident of 1949.⁴⁷ CHIANG Kai-shek declared martial law almost immediately and thousands of people were killed during the White Terror period.⁴⁸ The 28 February Incident remains a traumatic memory for Taiwanese people, somewhat comparable to the events of the Holocaust for Jews, and the atrocities of the White Terror period continue to be examined by writers, directors, composers, and politicians even today.

Despite the political turbulence, economic conditions in Taiwan revived rapidly following World War II. From 1951 to 1965, Taiwan received around NTD 1,400,000,000 (USD 42,000,000) in economic and military aid from the United States.⁴⁹ Although officially the aid was intended to support Taiwan financially, it was also there to protect its people from a Communist invasion and any political or military efforts to use the country as a military base in East Asia during the Cold War. This financial and infrastructural support helped Taiwan to establish a solid economic

⁴⁷ The 28 February Incident is also known as the 28 February Massacre. Around twenty thousand people were killed in 1949 during and after the 28 February Massacre. On 27 February 1949, agents from the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau and police confiscated cigarettes that had been smuggled by a widow called LIN Jiang-mai, in a Taipei street. They took the smuggled cigarettes and her money as well. One agent struck LIN’s head with his gun – she lay hurt and bleeding. The crowds became agitated and shouted out: ‘The mainlanders [are] not reasonable!’ ‘Return the money’. One of the agents fired into the crowd and one man was killed. More and more people gathered and protested to the police. On 28 February, thousands of people gathered in front of the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau and then marched towards the Governor-General’s office. The armed forces at the General’s office fired on the unarmed crowd and caused several deaths. The KMT troop’s killing spree triggered the buried anger of local civilians. War between the KMT and the locals became unavoidable.

The conflicts began in Taipei city between the ‘newcomer’ mainlanders and the Taiwanese locals; it then spread rapidly across the island and thousands of people died. On 10 March 1949, the KMT authorities declared martial law and curfews. During the following years, the KMT authorities arrested people who were involved in or simply suspected of anti-government movements. Suspected activists were executed in public, and many others were executed secretly or sentenced to many years of imprisonment. Around twenty thousand people were killed in 1949. For more information, see LAI Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and WEI Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ The White Terror period followed the 28 February Incident, when there was much repression under one-party rule; this lasted until 1987 when martial law was lifted. It is believed that around 140,000 people were imprisoned or executed during the White Terror period.

⁴⁹ Statistics from *Academia Historica* <http://www.drnh.gov.tw/www/page/B/page-B-03_a_02_d.htm> [accessed 24 May 2009]

system. Its economy developed rapidly and became one of the highest foreign exchange reserves in the world. Taiwan's progress as an economically thriving country earned it international prestige; it would be known as one of the Four Asian Tigers, alongside Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea.

The US brought to Taiwan not only economic and military aid but also aspects of its own culture. To local people at the time, American culture represented a higher value than that offered by Taiwan. At the same time, Nationalist propaganda policies meant that cultures from traditional China were also given a higher value than the Taiwanese indigenous cultures. Listening to and singing English-language songs therefore became fashionable for young people; in the 1950s and 1960s, when Taiwan was heavily subsidised by the US, English songs were at the top end of the popular song market, Mandarin songs came next, and indigenous Fukien songs were at the bottom.⁵⁰ Moreover, the Nationalist government ordered strict censorship over local song compositions following the 28 February Incident, which put local songwriters under huge pressure and meant that they produced fewer songs.

Composers and musicians of classical music were also put under pressure by KMT authorities as they were forced to adhere to strict censorship demands: composers had to be very careful when incorporating materials into compositions and performances that were associated both with mainland China (because of its Communist inclination), and with Taiwanese indigenous traditions (because of their nativist inclination). As Taiwanese composer PAN Shiji points out: 'On the one hand they [the new Nationalist government] wanted you to go back to your own tradition, on the other hand they did not want anything from mainland China to come in. So obviously it was

⁵⁰ Here 'English' songs is a general term, referring to all songs written in English, not specifically referring to songs from the US, the UK, or any particular region. In Mandarin, the term '*ying wen* (literally, English)' can generally refer to either 'American English' or 'British English'; thus, the word 'English' in this thesis is a general term, not particularly referring to 'American English' or 'British English' unless specified.

easier to just let the Western stuff in[;] at least it would not have any Communist poison'.⁵¹ Because artistic creations could easily be viewed as offering an 'incorrect' political stance if they quoted traditional Chinese material, or even anything to do with the Taiwanese tradition, composers and musicians regarded the Western musical tradition as an easier and safer option. Moreover, following the Nationalist take-over, Western music continued to be at the core of music education in Taiwan. Although Taiwan had had its own music textbooks for school music courses since the 1960s, their content was based mostly on the Western classical music tradition. While motivated by political purposes, Japan and the KMT's interference with cultural activities contributed to the overwhelming Westernisation of music education in Taiwan.

Cultural policies used by the Nationalists unavoidably had a great impact upon the film industry as well. Several KMT-funded film studios were established in Taiwan in 1949, which became rich by making Mandarin films which served as propaganda vehicles for the party. These film studios existed alongside the Taiwanese film industry and gave rise to what Emilie Yueh-yu YEH and Darrell William Davis describe as 'parallel cinemas'.⁵² YEH and Davis' idea comes from their study of diversity in Indian cinema; the cinema in this South Asian country 'sustains a variety of geographically, linguistically, and commercially distinct film practices [...] These practices also vary in their relations to commercial and artistic motives and therefore in their modes of address to audiences'.⁵³ YEH and Davis argue that 'parallel cinema' also existed during the post-war decades in Taiwan, where three types of parallel can be identified.⁵⁴ The first parallel arises from the complex linguistic make-up of

⁵¹ Quoted in Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tones: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), p. 191.

⁵² YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, pp. 17-19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Taiwan. Although Mandarin was the official language advocated by the KMT, it was a foreign language to the people of Taiwan. Thus, both Mandarin and Fukien films were produced, but by different camps within film studios and for different ‘parallel’ target audiences. The second parallel is an ideological one: KMT-sponsored film studios focused on propaganda cinema while Fukien film productions were highly commercial, producing parallel film cultures separated along clear ideological claims. The third parallel involves the scale of film studios: whereas KMT film studios were big and had a constant flow of finance, the studios that produced Fukien films were small and sometimes mid-sized, creating parallel filmmaking cultures according to resources. Parallel filmmaking culture is also evident in the styles of film music composition found in 1950s Taiwan cinema; Mandarin language songs were used side by side with Fukien songs, for example, and Western orchestral underscoring was used in conjunction with music from local Fukien opera. SHI Jei-yong, an experienced film music composer who has worked in Taiwan cinema for more than three decades, and whose father SHI Weiliang also worked in the film music industry, recently recalled:

My father, a noted ethnomusicologist, had also composed [music] for films such as *Fire Bulls* (Chia LEE, 1966). [...] In that era, the cost of hiring professionals was low, and the style of underscoring followed Hollywood’s production process: [...] the film company [Central Picture Corporation, funded by the KMT] hired an orchestra and the orchestra performed to the images being shown in the studio. [...] Many big budget films were underscored in this way. [...] This underscoring style lasted until the 1970s when I entered the film industry.⁵⁵

Thinking about Taiwan cinema with reference to YEH and Davis’ concept of parallel cinema enables one to take into account the tensions and segregation that divided the

⁵⁵ Author’s interview with SHI, 31 December 2009.

KMT authorities from the local Taiwanese people.

Year by year, however, the KMT tightened its grip on the Taiwanese; their own film studios grew and their own film practices entered the mainstream.⁵⁶ KMT-funded film studios made both Mandarin films and Fukien opera films, the latter of which was the most popular genre until a decline in Fukien film production after the mid-1960s. The first 35mm Fukien film in Taiwan cinema was an opera film, *Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan*, and dates from 1956. Directed by HE Jiming, it used a famous Taiwanese opera troupe known as Gong Le She and was so popular that two sequels were made the same year: *Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan II*, and *Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan III*. Taiwanese opera, *Gezaixi* in Mandarin (*gezai* means ‘songs’, *xi* means ‘drama, theatre’), originated from the Ilan region around the late nineteenth century, was usually performed outdoors in front of temples, or in public spaces in a village, and before the advent of television was the main source of entertainment for many Taiwanese people.⁵⁷ The most popular local theatre tradition in Taiwan, *Gezaixi* adopts folksongs from different parts of Taiwan but also incorporates mannerisms from Beijing opera. Its song melodies are fixed, and can be sung with different lyrics. Because of this element of musical ‘recycling’, the operas were easy for audiences to follow; it was also easy for actors to improvise lyrics to suit new stories. In turn, Taiwanese opera films could be made quickly and economically. Because they were accessible to audiences they soon constituted a highly popular genre. In the summary of her interview with the Taiwanese opera film director, LI Quan-xi, film scholar LIN Wenpei suggests some reasons which might

⁵⁶ From 1969 onwards, the number of Mandarin films exceeded the number of Fukien films. In 1972, ninety-seven Mandarin films in colour were produced, but only one Fukien film in colour and fifty-six black-and-white Fukien films were produced. Statistics from *The Database of Taiwan Cinema* <http://cinema.nccu.edu.tw/cinemaV2/twfilm_s_list.htm?KEYWORD=%A5x%BBY%A4%F9&DATE=&Login=%ACd%B8%DF> [accessed 31 August 2009].

⁵⁷ HSU Tsanghouei, *Colourful Ethnic Music of Taiwan, Series on Chinese Cultural Heritage*, trans. by LIN Shiukeh (Taipei: Council for Cultural Planning and Development, Executive Yuan, 1989), pp. 50-51.

have led to the success of Taiwanese opera film:

First of all, the clothes and costumes were all ready-made so there was no need to design more costumes for each new performance. Also, the actors in those opera films were mostly the same, and so the filming process was very fast and a film could be completed in just ten days, thus lowering the budget. As for the stories that were told, folktales provided unlimited ideas for film plots, [...] the audiences all loved Taiwanese opera. [...] Moreover, we would use spectacles and acrobatic scenes to entertain viewers of opera films.⁵⁸

Since the 1950s popular song compositions have also contributed to the music in Taiwan cinema. The close relationship between popular song and film was established with the inception of Fukien popular song compositions as early as the 1930s. The Fukien song market shrank because of poor economic conditions following WWII and strict Nationalist censorship; however, the titles of thirteen out of forty-one Fukien films were taken from popular Fukien songs.⁵⁹ Given these statistics, one can understand how popular songs have come to share a close relationship with film production since the 1950s, though this interlocking commercial relationship also exists in Hollywood.⁶⁰ The close relationship occurs not only in Fukien films, but also in the Mandarin films that entered the mainstream in the late 1960s and remained there until the arrival of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1980s. As LAN Zuwei concludes, in Taiwan cinema of the 1960-70s 'where there [was] a film, there [was] a song'.⁶¹

From a film composer's point of view the borrowing of popular songs has not necessarily been a positive development for film. SHI Jei-yong points out that in the 1950s,

⁵⁸ LIN Wenpei, 'In Those Difficult Times (Bi lu lan lu ershi nian)', in *The Era of Fukien Films* (Taiyu pian shidai), ed. by the Editorial Team at Chinese Taipei Film Archive (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 1994), pp. 63-72 (p. 65).

⁵⁹ CHEN, 'Three Types of Japanese Yanke', p. 96.

⁶⁰ Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, p. 2.

⁶¹ LAN, *Film Music Composers*, p. 19.

a big orchestra was hired by the film studio and performed with the images. [...] This underscoring style lasted until the 1970s. [...] The change in the 1970s gradually damaged the film music industry in Taiwan cinema. Around 1970, an American film *The Graduate* brought in the style of taking popular songs as underscoring. People then realised that orchestral underscoring was not indispensable: using popular music and songs was also good.

Moreover, when melodrama gained popularity in the 1970s, orchestral underscoring lost its stage. The borderline is very distinct: once the era of Qiongyao began, popular music and songs became the mainstream in musical underscoring.⁶²

Why? Saving money! Using popular music saved a lot on budgets. The record company also grabbed the opportunity to promote their records. [...] A film might need, say, seven or eight songs, and those eight songs could form half of the soundtrack. Then they changed the arrangements of some songs, for example, three original songs could become five songs on the record — a record was then produced!⁶³

Pop music underscoring became the norm, particularly in romantic films adapted from Qiongyao's novels, and 'quick' and 'cheap' were the main concerns in the 1970s.⁶⁴

The increased use of popular songs and pre-existing music formed a parallel development to traditional underscoring in the history of music in Taiwan cinema.

SHI goes on:

The record companies provided half of the music for films, and the other half was quoted from other films, such as *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, and so on. Suddenly, original-composed musical underscoring was gone! [In the 1970s], the productions of Taiwan cinema were quite big, but it was also a period of decline in the history of film music in Taiwan cinema.

I entered the film industry in the late 1970s. I had just graduated from school but I could produce eight films a year! Although I did eight films a year, I have to say, the quality was really bad: a keyboard and two musicians. We didn't even have good midi mixers but our work was still acceptable.⁶⁵

⁶² Melodramas in the 1970s are mostly adaptations from the writer Qiongyao's novels.

⁶³ Author's interview with SHI, 31 December 2009.

⁶⁴ In the 1970s, the quantity of Taiwan local film industry shifted, but most productions were limited to the most popular genres, such as romantic films adopted from Qiongyao's novels and martial arts films.

⁶⁵ Author's interview with SHI, 31 December 2009.

To SHI, the lack of respect and disinclination to pay for original music on the one hand, and the lifting of music from other films and borrowing of popular songs on the other, resulted in more disadvantages for the film music industry and Taiwan's wider film music culture than advantages. Many film composers left the industry as a result. The quality of music in Taiwan cinema hardly improved at all until the Taiwan New Cinema period, when the industry was looking for a breakthrough and hired young composers returning from abroad. Nevertheless, popular song production flourished: helped by their appearance in films Taiwan's popular songs not only gained popularity locally; they also expanded to other Chinese-speaking regions.⁶⁶

Fukien popular songs and films also came under pressure from the 'Mandarin Movement' as well as the 'Radio and TV Law' which were defined by the Nationalist government to suppress local Taiwanese culture; both the quality and the number of productions gradually decreased. Not until the 1970s, when the nativist movements emerged as a response to Taiwan's frustration in international affairs, did this situation change (albeit only slightly). Following the end of the Cold War the countries that refused to recognise the PRC as a legitimate representative of China proceeded to change their diplomatic policies. In 1971 Taiwan (the ROC) left the United Nations just before the latter officially recognised the PRC in Beijing as the representative of China. More and more countries formed an official relationship with the PRC and as a consequence, these nations were asked to abandon their formal relationships with Taiwan. In 1978 the US switched its alliance with China from the ROC in Taiwan to the PRC in Beijing. This presented a severe situation in terms of international

⁶⁶ For example, as Wai-chung HO points out, 'Taiwanese music constituted roughly half of the music played in the discos of Guangzhou (located in South China). [...] Popular music in mainland China was dominated by Hong Kong and Taiwan, and China has found it difficult to censor cultural productions originating both in and outside national borders since the late 1970s'. Wai-chung HO, 'The Political Meaning of Hong Kong Popular Music: A Review of Sociopolitical Relations between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China Since the 1980s', *Popular Music*, 19 (2000), 341-53 (p. 343).

relations but it also stimulated the Taiwanese people to rethink their national identity. Taiwan built relationships with countries that it viewed as allies; above all America, a powerful country which, according to the general perception of Taiwanese people, represented 'the West'. The main issue for the Taiwanese people was how to define themselves when confronted by others. Anti-American movements, anti-KMT protests, and movements for re-establishing the independence of Taiwan were proposed one after the other from the late 1970s onwards. The people of Taiwan wished to establish an independent identity for their country and to return to their cultural roots.

Thus, nativist movements have risen from all aspects of cultural production in Taiwan. In music from the late 1960s onwards, Taiwanese composers and scholars started questioning the overwhelming Westernisation of music education and musical composition. Ethnomusicologists XU Zhanghui and SHI Weiliang founded the so-called 'folksong collecting movement' and collected more than 2000 folksongs in Taiwan.⁶⁷ They hoped this collection would help to preserve Taiwanese indigenous musical traditions that had been ignored and become endangered under both Japanese and Nationalist rule. However, these folksongs also provided precious raw materials for Taiwanese composers. XU Zhanghui was aware of a similar anxiety that was being felt by composers in other Asian countries whenever they were confronted by the 'East meets West' issue and in 1973 invited composers from Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong to establish the 'Asian Composer's League'. XU has stated:

Originally, we were about to join the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music). However, the ISCM is an organisation based on a Western perspective. We understand that the ISCM makes a great contribution to world musical culture, but we believe that a league based on an Asian perspective is

⁶⁷ ZHANG Yi-xian, 'The History of the Folksong Collecting Movement (Minge caiji yundong shi mo ju chengguo yanjiu)' (unpublished master's thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, 1988).

quite necessary at this moment in time, given that there are crucial issues for Asian composers to discuss, like how to adopt Western music, how to preserve indigenous musical cultures, and how to compose Oriental contemporary music.⁶⁸

There is urgency in XU's words as he expresses an expectation for both Asian and Taiwanese composers to find paths different from Western traditions.⁶⁹

The nativist ideology also had a similar impact upon literature, and that nativist literature provided materials for Taiwan New Cinema later in the 1980s. Writers proposed a 'pro-Taiwanese' approach to writing and even claimed Fukien as the only legitimate local language to be spoken in Taiwan. This was the second nativist literature movement in the history of Taiwan, the first having occurred during the Japanese Occupation; as June Yip points out, both movements were expressions of 'nationalism in its most classic form, envisioning a nation constructed on the dualism of self and other'.⁷⁰ Yet these writers' purist, nativist approach turned out to be an oppositional force against KMT authority, and was immediately suppressed. Among the acts of suppression that were imposed upon the political movements (calling for the independence of Taiwan as well as equal and democratic rights for its people), one that stands out is the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979;⁷¹ it was a crucial event that marked the turning point for democratisation of Taiwan. The conflict between civilians and authorities during the Kaohsiung Incident was the biggest since the 28 February Incident, but unlike the White Terror period (which followed the 28 February Incident), it initiated a democratising process.

⁶⁸ XU Zhanghui, *New Chinese Music* (Zhongguo xinyinyue shihua) (Taipei: Yue yun, 1992), p. 53.

⁶⁹ According to my reading of XU's books, the term 'Oriental' here is used to categorise music other than Western music; it does not refer to any particular musical style and genre.

⁷⁰ Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 29.

⁷¹ Kaohsiung Incident: When martial law was still in effect, Taiwanese people were not allowed to express anti-government thoughts in public. However in the late 1970s, two opposition magazines were set up: *Formosa* magazine and *The Eighties*. *Formosa* magazine grew steadily and then became a rallying point for democratising movements. People involved with the democratic movements held a march on 10 December 1979, which resulted in a public conflict between the KMT authorities and members of the opposition. The opposition leaders were arrested and later sentenced by the KMT authorities.

President CHIANG Kai-shek died in 1975, and his son CHIANG Ching-kuo succeeded him as the President of Taiwan and leader of the KMT. CHIANG Ching-kuo led Taiwan towards another economic peak in the 1980s and gradually loosened much of the political control. Taiwan New Cinema became the most important movement in the development of Taiwan cinema and was associated with this cultural liberation.⁷² This cinematic form marked a new style in filmmaking and a new ideology concerning the function of film in Taiwan society. Although debates continue as to whether or not Taiwan New Cinema has been beneficial to Taiwan cinema overall, this new form undoubtedly attracted the attention of international companies who were willing to invest in the country's film productions.

The film industry nevertheless faced many challenges during the 1980s. Due to the growing popularity of cable television and the MTV enterprise, films were now cheaply accessible at home, so people became less willing to pay for cinema tickets. Moreover, Taiwanese opera films, Taiwanese melodrama and martial arts films made in the 1970s no longer attracted audiences.⁷³ In addition to the audience's changing tastes and the attractive packages offered by cable television, Taiwan cinema lost its overseas markets for diplomatic reasons: following the end of the Cold War, more and more countries wanted to establish a formal relationship with the PRC and imported fewer products from Taiwan as a result.

In order to revive Taiwan cinema, one of the country's major film companies, the Central Motion Picture Corporation, invested in productions by young directors, hoping they would make films with innovative ideas. The first film commonly identified as an example of Taiwan New Cinema was *In Our Time*, a four-episode

⁷² YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 62.

⁷³ Film scholar Ru-chou Robert CHEN observes that Taiwan's economic success 'had the effect of changing the tastes of the audiences, who no longer wanted to be taken into a world of fantasy where lovers spent all their time talking about their feelings without doing anything else, or where a swordsman would sacrifice everything simply to kill an adversary'. CHEN, 'Taiwan Cinema', p. 55.

production created by Jim TAO, Edward YANG, KE Yizheng, and ZHANG Yi. This film differed from ‘previous modes of filmmaking preoccupied with generic repetition (i.e. Taiwanese opera films), escapism (melodramas), or the “literary tradition” rooted in didacticism and traditional Chinese cultural heritage (martial arts films),’ and ‘prefigured a movement devoted to local experiences of growing up, social transformation and history of Taiwan’.⁷⁴ Like Italian neo-realism, Taiwan New Cinema became known for its realistic and sympathetic representations of everyday life in this country. The biggest contributors included CHEN Kuo-fu, HOU Hsiao-hsien, Mark LEE Ping-bing, LIAO Qing-song, TU Du-che, WU Nien-zhen, CHANG Yi, WAN Ren, and Edward YANG. HOU Hsiao-hsien, though the most famous of them all, produced films that both received appreciation and courted controversy. The filmic aesthetics and sonic practices employed by HOU originate in Cultural Chinese aesthetics, and make his films distinctive from others aurally, as I will discuss further in Part Two.

Given that films from Hong Kong and Hollywood came to dominate Taiwan cinema from the late 1970s, in order to compete local filmmakers sought to create their own film language. Those identified with Taiwan New Cinema did not simply adopt what was offered by the dominant film cultures, but rather experimented with new ideas on narrative construction, filming techniques, and also music and sound design. Young Taiwanese composers returning from abroad incorporated the leitmotif idea and Western contemporary music (like rock and roll) but did so in a different way to Hollywood composers. For instance, a Taiwanese composer might use a particular instrument or melody to refer to a specific character or location, but would seldom apply the orchestral styles used in Hollywood scores. Nor would they deploy a leitmotif as many times as in a Hollywood film, or have it played by as many

⁷⁴ WU, ‘Festivals, Criticism, and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema’, p. 76.

instruments in as many different arrangements. When I asked my informants why, and also why the Hollywood orchestral underscoring style is less used in general, many claimed that it was because they had much lower budgets and less time available. For Jeffrey CHENG:

The limited budget spend on film music composition is a big problem. It means that at the moment it is usually impossible to hire a professional orchestra to perform film music. [...] We generally use computers and MIDI to generate the sounds we need. Of course, the music generated and played by mechanical devices is much less 'human' than music played by real instruments, but we do try our best to make it sound close to that produced by real instruments. This kind of working process always saves a lot of money.⁷⁵

Cincin LEE shared a similar experience, claiming that in Taiwan cinema the limited money paid to a composer – perhaps a couple of thousand pounds (GBP) – included the fees for employing musicians, and for rehearsing and recording their performances. For her film music composition is therefore a precious chance to try out new ideas; she has learned a lot and is very happy composing film music, but for her it is not a way to make a living.⁷⁶ These composers testify to the fact that it is virtually impossible for Taiwanese composers to undertake a large-scale leitmotif-style orchestral score.⁷⁷

In terms of sound design, Taiwan New Cinema was the period when sound editors began to establish their own personal libraries of sounds collected from everyday life which they could use to enhance filmic reality. Sound designer TU Du-che, who has worked in Taiwan cinema for almost four decades, recalls:

As a sound designer, the biggest change [in Taiwan New Cinema] was paying much more attention to the quality of sounds. At that time, we had to collect

⁷⁵ Author's interviews with Jeffrey CHENG, 10 April, 2008.

⁷⁶ Author's interviews with Cincin LEE, 13 January, 2010.

⁷⁷ Author's interviews with SHI, LEE, and CHENG.

ambient sounds on location during a shoot, since we did not yet have a database of sounds. We also collected sounds from every corner of Taipei city.⁷⁸

TU's journey collecting ambient sounds started while he was working on *A Flower in the Rainy Night* (WANG Tong, 1983). From then on, after reading a script TU would make a list of the sounds he needed and go everywhere to collect them.⁷⁹ For TU, ambient sounds collected on location reflect the specifics of that unique place, and can't be found in a commercial sound library: the sound designer is better off collecting the sounds himself. For instance, there are many motorcycles on the streets of Taiwan, but in a library made in the US street sounds won't include the sounds of motorcycles.⁸⁰ When TU's team members go somewhere for filming, they collect ambient sounds of that particular place, and then categorise and store the sounds in their database. After thirty years of collecting, TU's studio has sounds collected not only in Taiwan but also in other places in the world. TU says: 'my database is a precious collection that money can't buy'.⁸¹

Composers and sound designers also challenged the necessity of using popular songs as a non-diegetic backdrop, as had been the norm for the former Taiwan cinema. Instead, they proposed sonic realism, in which there would be a limited use of non-diegetic underscoring. They also convincingly argued that music should offer its own narrative meanings rather than simply to serve as a background enhancement to accompany images on-screen. TU continues:

I was a recording assistant in the 1970s when Qiongyao's melodramas were popular in Taiwan cinema. They used to insert many popular songs or pieces of music in films without paying much attention to the surrounding sounds or other

⁷⁸ Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

⁷⁹ CHANG Jing-pei, *The Box of Sound and Image: The Career of Sound Designer TU Du-che* (Shengse hezi: yinxiao dashi du du zhi de dian ying lu) (Taipei: Da quai wen hua, 2009), p. 209.

⁸⁰ CHANG, *The Box of Image and Sound*, p. 212.

⁸¹ Ibid.

possibilities. I was too young and had no power to change that style. But during the period of Taiwan New Cinema young filmmakers, including me, finally had the chance to challenge the old and experiment with new ideas.

In terms of musical underscoring, for example, in the earlier period [i.e., the 1970s] music was inserted whenever there was a need for emotional emphasis. However, in Taiwan New Cinema, when the surrounding background sounds were of better quality, the films were closer to reality from an aural point of view, and so audiences didn't feel uncomfortable even when there was no musical underscoring in a film. For the film *Xiao Taofan* (literally 'The Little Fugitive', ZHANG Peicheng, 1984), I persuaded the director to eliminate all music and only use sound effects instead. Our experiment received a good response and we proved that using non-diegetic popular songs and music need not be the only option.⁸²

TU touches here on many of the main characteristics of music and sound in Taiwan New Cinema: the films make significant use of silence, and favour an aesthetic of realism. For Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers, the audiences play an active role through their viewing experience. The narratives might not always follow the logic of cause-and-effect (in so doing pose a challenge to the Hollywood narrative style): they might produce a multi-layered structure; the camera might not fully focus on the actors but instead produce a long static take in a hall where people would otherwise be walking around and talking with each other; the music needn't be set louder during moments of emotional expression; the film could instead feature long periods of silence. Overall, audiences were encouraged to make their own interpretations of what they were viewing, as TU explained to me:

In earlier films [films of the 1970s], music was for signalling points of emotional change: the audience's emotions were triggered all together whenever they heard music. In other words, audiences were assigned passive roles in film viewing. [...] However, we [Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers] thought that everyone

⁸² Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

should make their own interpretations and be moved by different points in the same film. Their emotions should not be triggered simultaneously because music occurs at a certain point. It is not necessary to remind audiences when they should be moved, and for that reason we minimised the use of music. The elimination of music would help individual members of the audience to make their own interpretations.⁸³

I will return to this approach to filming, and its impact on both sound and musical language in my discussions of HOU Hsiao-hsien's productions in Part Two.

This movement aimed to return audiences to Taiwan cinema. Nevertheless, the focus was now on these award-winning films rather than on the ones that were attracting local audiences. This led to debates among scholars and critics as to whether film was an art form or a commodity.⁸⁴ In 1991, some 'anti-HOU' critics and historians in Taiwan published a book called *The Death of the New Cinema* in which they accused Taiwan New Cinema of killing the country's film industry. Supporters counter-argued that Taiwan New Cinema was not at fault: the film industry was shrinking because of the dominance of Hollywood imports and the popularity of cable television. They emphasised New Cinema's role in putting Taiwan cinema into the global market.⁸⁵

After 1987: post-martial law

Taiwan has continued the democratisation process since the 1980s, and in the process has helped to generate new cultural productions. The first political party in opposition, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was founded in 1986; in 1987, President

⁸³ Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

⁸⁴ LI Tianyi and CHEN Peizhi, 'The Sociological Survey of Taiwan (New) Cinema in the 1980s (Bashin niandai Taiwan (xin) dianying de shehuixue tansuo)', in *Discourses on Contemporary Chinese-language Films*, ed. by LI Tianyi, pp. 34-77.

⁸⁵ For example, as James Udden points out, Taiwan New Cinema 'failed in its original goal of saving the domestic commercial film industry,' however, 'the New Cinema launched Taiwanese films into the international festival realm, giving them a presence that has continued to this day'. Udden, 'Taiwan', p. 152.

CHIANG lifted martial law. CHIANG Ching-kuo died in 1988 and was succeeded by LEE Teng-hui, who was born in Taiwan; both the Chiangs were born in China. LEE continued the democratisation and localisation processes in Taiwan. Unlike CHIANG Kai-shek, who considered Taiwan to be a province of China (the ROC) and a temporary base for him to retake the mainland, LEE gradually suspended most of the operation of Taiwan's Provincial Government. In 1991 LEE also pushed elected members (since 1947) of the Legislative Yuan (the supreme national legislature according to the Constitution) and National Assembly to resign. LEE not only localised government organisations, he also lifted some of the restrictions on Taiwanese indigenous cultures in all respects. As a result, during the 1990s, more and more Fukien and Hakka literature, music, and art were taught in schools and spread through the media. At the same time, Taiwanese musical traditions were added to the music curriculum. All elementary and middle school music teachers were required to take certain hours of *xiangtu yinyue* (literally, native soil music) training in order to teach the expanding curriculum and in 1996, a new course *xiangtu yishu* (native soil arts) was added.⁸⁶ Taiwanese-related materials, which were previously regarded by the KMT as 'low' and 'uneducated', now came to form an essential subject in the reformed curriculum. LEE's localisation policies were adopted by CHEN Shui-bian, his successor and the representative of the opposition party — the DPP; CHEN's policies emphasised the independent identity of Taiwan. For example, KMT-era history and geography textbooks considered Taiwan to be a province of China and a part of Chinese history. But this unbalanced and subordinate relationship between Taiwan and China was reconsidered and changed during educational reform.

Today, music from all Taiwanese ethnic groups (i.e. Hakka, Fukien,

⁸⁶ *The History of Ministry of Education, Taiwan*
 <<http://history.moe.gov.tw/worldhistory.asp?YearStart=81&YearEnd=90&page=3>> [accessed 3 September 2009].

Mandarin-speaking, aborigine), as well as from all other world music traditions (including Western classical music and popular music), and from all historical periods (from ancient music to music of today) are included in the music curriculum. The openness of Taiwanese music culture also attracts more and more international companies. Pop singers from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the Chinese diaspora (such as the American-born-Taiwanese) all consider Taiwan to be a potential market for their music, and so record and distribute their records there. Foreign singers introduce new musical styles, ideas, and concepts to Taiwan, which contribute to the multicultural and hybrid context of music it has itself promoted. At the same time, they make the already-crowded market even more competitive which makes it more difficult for local singers to stand out. Today, the challenge for Taiwanese musicians and composers is not pressure from colonisers or governmental supervisions; rather, it is the pressure from market law which has become a substitute for martial law as the 'unseen hand' behind Taiwanese cultures.

Nevertheless, popular songwriters, film music composers and 'serious' composers all benefit from today's liberal atmosphere. Almost all the film music composers I interviewed pointed to the hybrid musical culture in today's Taiwan cinema. Cincin LEE, a composer of music for films, popular songs and musicals, described it as follows:

So many diverse musical elements coexist; nevertheless, all of them have been preserved very well: that is the characteristic of musical culture in Taiwan. You can get music full of colonial colour, inherited from the difficult colonial history that Taiwan has had. The culture of this island changes constantly, and at the same time absorbs ideas from all the cultures that have been introduced here. This is the most charming and distinctive side of musical culture in Taiwan.

So in film music we have Japanese style music, full of nostalgia; we also have electronic music, contemporary music. These diverse musical styles co-exist

quite well in Taiwan cinema.⁸⁷

Professor and film music composer SHI Jie-yong refers to it as ‘a cross-boundary musical style’. He explains:

The definition of ‘cross-boundary’ means that a composer can compose in the contemporary compositional style, but is at the same time familiar with Western classical compositional idioms; sometimes you also have to mix in ideas from popular music or folk music. A film music composer should have these kinds of ‘cross-boundary’ compositional skills, so that s/he is able to compose for films on different topics.

The ‘cross-boundary’ musical style is mainstream in Taiwan cinema, which is different from the Hollywood underscoring style, and from film music in China or in Hong Kong.⁸⁸

A film music style that belongs to neither Hollywood nor the Cultural Chinese tradition, neither to colonial powers nor indigenous cultures, but contains elements from all the cultural forces that have acted upon Taiwan, amounts to a kind of ‘third space’, in Bhabha’s sense.

The way music and sound function within Taiwan cinema is a good example of how a local culture can both resist and negotiate with imperialist powers, transform itself and, as per Appadurai’s formulation, gradually develop a challenging power with which to survive and establish a two-way relationship with the former power. All the case studies and discussion in the following three parts seek to demonstrate this point. The first figure to be examined is the leader of the Taiwan New Cinema movement, HOU Hsiao-hsien. By investigating the changes in sound in HOU’s films over the last two decades in the context of political and cultural currents, I show how he responds to, and maintains a balance with, the tension between preserving local differences and homogenisation under a globalising power.

⁸⁷ Author’s interview with Cincin LEE, 13 January 2010.

⁸⁸ Author’s interview with SHI, 31 December 2009.

Part Two Hearing Chinese Aesthetics: Silence in the Films of HOU

Hsiao-Hsien

In his article ‘Transcultural Spaces: Toward a Poetics of Chinese Film’, David Bordwell points out that certain stylistic patterns in Chinese-language cinema are indebted to transcultural representational forms. In his words, Chinese films are ‘a powerful transcultural medium, drawing not only on local knowledge but also on a range of human skills that are shared across many cultures’.¹ Yet he also points out that Chinese directors recast and reactivate those transcultural norms for their own purposes, arguing that this makes Chinese-language films ‘more energetic and imaginative than the American studio cinema and most of the work coming out of Europe’.² Bordwell’s conclusion may seem exaggerated; however, it draws our attention to the creativity of certain directors who have generally been considered as peripheral in Western-centred scholarship, and identifies something of the emerging tendency of grassroots globalisation in world cinema today. His observations mainly relate to the editing and framing of images, but in this part I will be drawing attention to a recurrent characteristic of the music and sound of these films: silence. Although silence is a transcultural compositional strategy in film, its functions vary according to the underlying philosophy of silence in different cultural and aesthetic traditions.

In Chinese-language films, silence could be understood as the manifestation of a specific Chinese aesthetic concept, namely, *liubai*. *Liubai* (literally ‘keep blank’) is a compositional notion in Chinese aesthetic practices derived from *xu*, which is one of

¹ David Bordwell, ‘Transcultural Spaces: Toward a Poetics of Chinese Film’, in *Chinese-language Film*, ed. by LU and YEH, pp. 141-62 (p. 144).

² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

the binary concepts of composing the cosmos in Chinese thinking. *Xu* stands for anything empty, blank or void, which is a conceptual space in contrast to *shi* — a concrete space. The unity and the beauty of any artistic creation are achieved by a careful balance between these two concepts and neither can be omitted or ignored. In other words, although *xu* represents a relatively passive tendency in appearance that is not as concrete as *shi*, and so is easier to overlook, *xu* is equally important and as essential as *shi*. This concept is not only embraced by the arts, but also as a philosophy for life: the idea of leaving spaces among interpersonal relationships, or a space between busy schedules, are examples of putting the concept of *xu/shi* into practice in real life. The music of silence, a manifestation of *xu*, is praised by both Daoist and Confucianist philosophies which consider it ‘just another expression of highly distilled sound’.³ In cinema, as Emilie Yueh-yu YEH and Darrell William Davis point out, ‘*liubai* entails inviting audiences into a cinematic space, not to understand, connecting cause and effect, but to experience’.⁴ The spatiality ‘is emphasized to privilege aura, ambiance, and mood. [...] Ellipses, elimination of a significant portion of plot, are likened to the traditional compositional principle in which a small section is believed to be more revealing than a totality’.⁵

My discussions on the concept of silence in Chinese-language cinema will focus on HOU Hsiao-hsien’s films given the fact that the *liubai* strategy is one demonstration of the ‘Oriental attachment’ that makes HOU distinct from other filmmakers and earns him a position in the world of art cinema.⁶ The extent to which the concept of *liubai*

³ Mittler, *Dangerous Sounds*, pp. 332-36.

⁴ YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 134.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The term ‘Orientalism’ in this part doesn’t refer to the colonialist bias carried by these words. As YEH and Davis suggest, ‘The East-West divide is a classic colonialist tool giving ample scope for comparisons that are, nevertheless, sometimes valid’. (YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Director*, p. 133.) I have applied these terms to differentiate HOU’s aesthetics, apparently inherited from Chinese or Taiwanese philosophy, from those from Western traditions, rather than to evoke colonialist debates that these terms might sometimes imply. YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Director*, p. 134.

YEH and Davis are not the only scholars who propose this argument. When discussing HOU’s filmic

is manifest in his films has already been widely-discussed in relation to his narrative constructions; the influence of *liubai* in the sonic dimension of his films remains unexplored, however. Two films, sixteen years apart, suggest not only that HOU has absorbed *liubai* into the soundscapes and overall conception of his films, but also that he responds to the tensions between the global and the local in these two decades. *A City of Sadness* (1989) is regarded as the climax of Taiwan New Cinema when Taiwan had just begun to step onto the world cinema stage, whilst *Three Times* (2005) was made when the contemporary transnational co-production model came into being. Notably, HOU's persistent inclination for Oriental aesthetics over the past two decades is demonstrated in these films, even though the filmic topics and the global cinema markets he faced when producing these two films were very different. The musical styles of these two cases are different, indicating perhaps that HOU keeps challenging the old and experimenting with the new throughout his career. Nevertheless, the ideological concept of *liubai*, manifest in the role of silence in his music and sound, provides strong aesthetic continuity. Discussions of these two films will form the second and the third chapters in this part.

style, the following scholars consider HOU's distinctive film language a manifestation of Chinese or Oriental aesthetics: MENG Hongfeng 'HOU Hsiao-hsien's Filmic Style (HOU Hsiao-hsien fengge lun)', in *Passionate Detachments: Films of HOU Hsiao-hsien* (Xu lian ren sheng: HOU Hsiao-hsien dianying yanjiu), ed. by LIN Wenqi, SHEN Xiaoyin, and LI Zhenya (Taipei: Mai tian, 2000), pp. 29-59; Benedice Reynaud, *A City of Sadness* (London: British Film Institute, 2002); Gary Needham, 'Ozu and the Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', in *Asian Cinema*, ed. by Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Gary Needham (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), pp. 369-83; Nick Kaldis 'Compulsory Orientalism: HOU Hsiao-hsien's *Flowers of Shanghai*', in *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*, ed. by Chris Berry and Fei-i LU (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 127-36; Jean-Michel Frodon, 'Experiencing the Existence of Time and Space on a Mango Tree in Fengshan (Zai Fengshan de mangguo shu shang, ganjue shen chu de shijian he kongjian)', trans. by LIN Zhiming, in *HOU Hsiao-hsien*, ed. by Olivier Assayas, French edition (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1999), Chinese translation (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 2000), pp. 13-31.

Chapter 3. The Aesthetics of Silence

Silence in Chinese art traditions and aesthetic practices

Liubai is an important and essential ideology in Chinese ink painting. As AN Jingfu notes, the blank part in classical Chinese paintings plays ‘an important role, representing mist, vapor, or air through which the spirit of the Tao [‘Dao’ in *pinyin* romanisation] circulates’.¹ It generates a mysterious atmosphere and both ‘the figures in the painting and the spectator of the painting are absorbed into these mysterious, dark parts’.² Both the figures and the spectator of the painting then attain ‘a sense of fullness according to Lao Tzu’s teaching that “great fullness appears empty”’.³ The blank aspect of classical Chinese painting not only provides a space for viewers to free their imagination; it is, according to AN Jingfu, also an opportunity for the spectator to get involved in the painted world. Artists are therefore encouraged to leave part of their paintings blank and not to reveal fully the objects they have painted. For Simon Leys, ‘the “blanks” in painting, the silences in poetry and music are active elements that bring a work to life’.⁴

In order to understand better the element of silence in traditional Chinese music, *qin* music, one of the primary instruments learnt and played by ancient Chinese literati, has to be introduced. *Qin* (also known as Chinese zither or *guqin*) music has existed for more than three thousand years and was proclaimed by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the

¹ AN Jingfu, ‘The Pain of a Half Taoist: Taoist Principles, Chinese Landscape Painting, and *Kind of the Children*’, in *Cinematic Landscapes: Observations on the Visual Arts and Cinema of China and Japan*, ed. by Linda C. Ehrlich, and David Desser (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 117-25 (p. 120).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Simon Leys, *The Burning Forest: Essays on Chinese Culture and Politics* (London: Paladin, 1988), p. 29.

‘Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ in 2003.⁵ In *qin* playing, a frequently-used technique consists of sliding the fingers up and down the string to create a vibrato effect. This technique is applied to prolong the note and let the sound fade out gradually. Sometimes the performers keep sliding up and down the string even after the sound cannot be heard by the ear, or their movements are extremely minimal and so only produce very quiet sounds. However, when audiences see the players’ movements, they understand that the ‘music’ is still there even though the sounds cannot be heard. This is a clear example of the manifestation of *liubai* in musical performance. As Frank Kouwenhoven points out, it is interesting that ‘the extraordinary importance attached to “silence” in *qin* music — that is, to the imaginary continuation of sounds beyond what the normal human ear can detect: silences — not only pauses and interruptions but also the dying away of audible sounds, supported by hand and finger movements that may continue for a while after any audible pitch has disappeared — are yet another way to suggest “deep, spiritual listening”’.⁶ In *qin* music, silence is a constructive element and essential to the spiritual fulfilment of a musical piece.

Liubai is very similar to the concept of *ma* in Japanese aesthetic practices and both are derived from Daoist philosophy. When discussing the concept of time in Japanese music, Luciana Galliano points out that *ma* is ‘a very precise definition of the perception of space and time in Japanese aesthetics’ and is fundamental in the concept of time in Japanese music.⁷ According to Galliano, *ma* might be ‘translated as “*a between*”. [...] It is the time between events, the space between objects, the

⁵ The list of ‘Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ is available on the UNESCO website <<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00011>> [accessed 13 August 2011]

⁶ Frank Kouwenhoven, ‘Meaning and Structure: The Case of Chinese *qin* (zither)’, *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 10 (2001), 39-62 (p. 42).

⁷ Luciana Galliano, *Yogaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), p. 14.

relationship between people, or that moment in a person's mind between thoughts. It is the white space in a pen-and-ink drawing, the pause between notes, or the moment in a *shite* dance'. The space between events is not 'a moment of division but a moment of union that lends character to what would otherwise remain nondescript and colorless', and so *ma* 'describes neither space nor time, but the tension in the silence and in the space surrounding sounds and objects'. Thus, silences can often deliver meanings rather than simply a blank in the visual/aural aspect. The concept of silence seems rather abstract and metaphysical considering that audiences may not be given enough clues to understand a piece. However, it is the freedom of imagination that silence delivers which is fascinating to both creators and audiences.

The concept of *ma* has also had an impact on Japanese cinema. David Bordwell points out that the concept of *ma* is essential in Ozu's cinematic poetics:

Whereas the Westerner often thinks of space as a hollow container for objects, *ma* signifies the *interval* necessarily existing between two entities — space as spacing. The concept of *ma* governs both space and time (since both can be conceived in terms of intervals). It privileges sheer empty spots, so that *ma* is not opposed to 'void' as 'space' may be in the West. [...] It encourages the recognition of 'mis-timed' elements in speech or music, as in the samisen accompaniment that never coincides perfectly with the voice's contours. *Ma* is at once an empty space, a blank or pause, and a displacement or disjunction that allows the perceiver to charge the gap with a range of potential meanings.⁸

Although Bordwell concentrates on Japanese cinema, his observations on the privilege of silence, space, and emptiness in Japanese cinema are also relevant to Chinese-language cinema. For cultural and historical reasons, Japan, China, and Taiwan share much of the same philosophical inheritance.

The implication and privilege of emptiness in space and time underpinning the

⁸ David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), p. 145.

cinematography of Chinese-language films is one of the fundamental characteristics that makes them so distinct from Hollywood cinema. As Linda C. Ehrlich and David Desser point out, ‘the organisation of the classical Hollywood narrative is marked by a linear and closed continuum of time and space in which all efforts are made to preserve this illusion of strict continuity’, but such ‘concerns do not necessarily correspond to the overriding aesthetics of many films from China and Japan’.⁹ In both Chinese and Japanese aesthetics, it is considered more important to experience the spiritual aspect of the blank spaces between objects than to understand the logic behind them. As freedom of imagination is encouraged, it is not deemed necessary to preserve the sense of strict continuity in filmmaking, and thus non-linear or multi-linear narratives develop. HOU Hsiao-hsien’s films are good illustrations of the non-linear or multi-linear narrative.

Silence in Western classical music and in the Hollywood film music traditions

Although the idea that silence might be viewed as a form of communication is ‘less widespread in Western social contexts’ than in Eastern/Oriental contexts,¹⁰ silence is not something new to Western music traditions. As early as in the Gregorian chant era, monks of the Benedictine chanted the Psalter each week as ‘a means of encouraging meditation’.¹¹ There was a pause in the middle of each verse that was long enough for the monks to inhale, exhale, with ‘each breath providing an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to visit’.¹² The idea of silence is considered a path to religious truths, an ideology found not only in Gregorian chant practice but also later in the thought of the twentieth-century composer Oliver Messiaen.

⁹ Linda C. Ehrlich and David Desser, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, in *Cinematic Landscapes*, pp. 3-12 (p. 6).

¹⁰ Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor, ‘Introduction’, in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, ed. by Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1-13 (p. 1).

¹¹ Losseff and Doctor, ‘Introduction’, p. 11.

¹² Ibid. See also Emma Hornby, ‘Preliminary Thoughts about Silence in Early Western Chant’, in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, pp. 141-54.

Silence has frequently been perceived as being a form of communication in twentieth-century Western music compositions. In his article, 'From Sound to Silence: The Classical Tradition and The Avant-Garde', Robert C. Ehle concludes that when composers of the twentieth century abandon traditional musical materials, they also abandon the concept of 'the sound as symbol', and silence becomes 'our new sound'.¹³ Many twentieth-century composers, such as Webern, Messiaen, Satie, and Cage, embraced silence as a new compositional idea.

Although silence is a frequently-used compositional idea in Western classical music tradition, silence tends to bear negative meanings in Western societies and is often suppressed because it is ultimately related to the idea of *non-existence* or death.¹⁴ In the early silent film era, music was played throughout the films but had little connection with the dramatic effects of images; one speculation for this phenomenon, Royal S. Brown points out, is that 'music was needed, psychologically, to smooth over natural human fears of darkness and silence'.¹⁵ Later on, when film music began to be noted as dramatically motivated, Brown's observation is still effective. He states:

If film music became dramatically motivated, then, it did so to fulfill another need, and that was to heighten the emotional impact. [...] thereby distancing audiences even further from their own thoughts and fears (of silence or whatever).¹⁶

In mainstream cinema, especially in entertainment-oriented Hollywood productions,

¹³ Robert C. Ehle, 'From Sound to Silence: The Classical Tradition and the Avant-Garde Author(s)', *Music Educators Journal*, 65 (1979), 35-41 (p. 41).

¹⁴ See for instance Stan Link 'Going Gently: Contemplating Silences and Cinematic Death', in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, pp. 69-86; Julie P. Sutton, 'The Air Between Two Hands: Silence, Music and Communication', in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, pp. 169-86 (p. 174); Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor, 'Introduction', in *Silence Music, Silent Music*, pp. 1-13; Toru Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

directors try in every way to get audiences involved in the films and therefore remove troublesome real-life experiences, such as silence, which evoke an uncomfortable sense of reality and spoil the context. For Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, Hollywood, which is also known as the dream factory, consciously or unconsciously avoids the use of silence.¹⁷

Even though silence carries relatively negative meanings in Western philosophy, it is still a powerful device for creating dramatic effects. Claudia Gorbman, in company with other scholars mentioned above, notes that ‘filmmakers traditionally [...] indeed tended to ignore musical silences in mixing their soundtracks’.¹⁸ Nevertheless, she also points out that the dramatic effects of musical silence cannot be overestimated. She discusses three kinds of silence in film, according to its placement and function. Gorbman takes a scene of cyclists roaming as an instance to illustrate what different kinds of musical silence would do to the same scene. The first one, diegetic musical silence, means the scene ‘might consist of the characters wending their way along the road to the sole sound of pedals and gears creaking’.¹⁹ Here the absence of background music — a manifestation of diegetic musical silence — functions ‘effectively to make the diegetic space more immediate, more palpable’.²⁰ Conventionally, this kind of scene would have background music and the underscoring would help audiences to understand the narrative better. The removal of background music here, as Gorbman points out, will confront ‘the audience with an image that they might fail to “interpret”’.²¹ This kind of silence, however, is very common if a director is attempting to emphasise the active role of the audience in the film-viewing experience.

¹⁷ Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, ‘The Music of Film Silence’, *Music and the Moving Image*, 2 (2009), 25-34 (p. 25).

¹⁸ Claudia Gorbman, ‘Narrative Film Music’, *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), 183-203 (p. 193).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Gorbman, ‘Narrative Film Music’, 193.

²¹ Ibid.

The second kind of musical silence that Gorbman identifies is non-diegetic silence, which refers to a soundtrack with no sound. This kind might seem odd, but it is sometimes applied in dream or ‘other filmic depictions of intense mental activity’. The third is structural silence, which refers to the musical silence that ‘occurs where sound previously present in a film is later absent at structurally corresponding points’. Since there is music in the structurally corresponding points, audiences will perceive the absence of music. This kind of musical silence makes audiences aware of some kind of narrative metaphor behind the change; it may suggest a loss, a betrayal, or a deception from an original state.

In addition to Gorbman’s systematic discussion, Kulezic-Wilson points out the dramatic effects that silence creates, especially in action films. For example, in Hollywood action blockbuster *The Matrix*, she reads silence as ‘an accented rest’.²² The film rhythm and movements created by spectacular choreography and post-editing are the soul of action films, and the musicality and dynamics of actions can’t be achieved without a perfect balance between stasis and movement. In *The Matrix*, directors Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski rely on complete silence when the action is frozen. In one scene the main character, Neo, while fighting with his enemies, jumps up, stays in the air and maintains a still pose for several seconds. In music theorists Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer’s terms, this functions as an ‘accented rest’.²³ As Kulezic-Wilson observes, it is not unusual to emphasise a specific moment by deploying silence in this way; however, the use of short durations of silence in scenes of fierce action throughout *The Matrix* is particularly effective.

Although film music scholars have noted the importance of silence, the hypothesis underpinning their discussions of Hollywood films is that this is one of ‘the

²² Kulezic-Wilson, ‘The Music of Film Silence’, 27-29.

²³ Ibid., 28.

possibilities of transferring structural devices and compositional methods from music and applying them to film'.²⁴ In other words, deep in Hollywood film music ideology, silence is something subordinated within the realm of music, or is at most a counterpart of music. In Chinese philosophy and, as I shall argue, in Taiwanese films, however, silence is not thus subordinated: it exists in parallel with, or in an even higher realm than, music. Silence is not only capable of functioning as a compositional device incorporated within sounds or music, but is also a dynamic component in the context of film itself.

Silence in HOU Hsiao-hsien's cinematic aesthetics

All creative work has limitations; if you didn't have limitations then there would be no boundaries and you wouldn't know what to do. But you have to be clear about what your limitations are. Once you know your limitations, they become your biggest assets. You can exercise you[r] imagination however you please within the space of the limitations.

Director HOU Hsiao-hsien, interviewed by Michael Berry²⁵

Taiwanese director HOU Hsiao-hsien's films provide excellent case studies of the creative use of silence in film sound. Silence in HOU's films is not only associated with his Cultural China filmic aesthetics, it has also been identified as something which marks him out in twenty-first century global cinema. HOU entered the film industry as a script writer and assistant director in the 1970s following his graduation from the National Taiwan Arts Academy; from the 1980s he became synonymous with Taiwan New Cinema. HOU was the first Taiwanese director to be named in world cinema, even earlier than Ang LEE — HOU's junior colleague at the National

²⁴ Ibid., 32.

²⁵ Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 251.

Taiwan Arts Academy, who then entered the Hollywood industry in the mid-1990s.²⁶ In a 1988 New York Film Festival World Critics Poll, HOU was voted ‘one of three directors who would most likely shape cinema in the coming decades’.²⁷ His compositional approaches and changes in cinematic styles from the past decades are considered by YEH and Davis to be ‘adjustments, conditioned by constraints and opportunities provided by a local industry characterized by meager capital, outdated equipment, and flexible techniques’.²⁸ Although his stylistic changes are ‘adjustments’ to the inevitable pressures that a domestic industry encounters when it is situated on an intersection of local and global tensions, as YEH and Davis point out, he turns the tensions between a shrinking local market that is full of limitations and the pressures of dominant global commercial giants into assets. HOU’s attempt to strike a balance between the local and the global is noticeable. No matter how his style changes, he retains certain Chinese aesthetics in his films. The concept of *liubai* is key among these.

Liubai entered HOU’s filmmaking aesthetics during the Taiwan New Cinema period of the 1980s, when he appropriated the concept as a way of manifesting that new movement’s central idea: realism. According to film critic Peggy CHIAO Hsiung-ping, escapist ideology prevailed in Taiwanese film productions before this period.²⁹ HOU, by contrast, consciously pays attention to and reflects everyday Taiwanese life in his films; indeed, most films discussed here portray serious issues in Taiwanese society instead of offering escapist entertainment. Due to HOU’s and other

²⁶ Ang LEE got his first major award at an International Festival in 1993 for *Wedding Banquet*. This was a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. Following this, he started to get funding from Hollywood companies and entered directly into the Hollywood film industry.

²⁷ The biographical article for HOU Hsiao-hsien on *The New York Times* archive, <<http://movies.nytimes.com/person/95029/Hou-Hsiao-Hsien?scp=1&sq=hhou%20hsiao-hsien&st=cse>> [accessed 17 July 2009]

²⁸ YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 136.

²⁹ Peggy CHIAO Chiung-ping, ‘HOU Hsiao-hsien, The Leading Figure of Taiwan New Cinema (Taiwan xindianying de daibiao renwu — HOU Hsiao-hsien)’, in *Passionate Detachments: Films of HOU Hsiao-hsien*, pp. 21-28 (pp. 22-23).

young directors' (such as TSAI Ming-liang and Edward YANG) realistic style and their achievements at international film festivals and within the context of global art cinema, 'cinema' no longer needed to be synonymous with entertainment: cinema was thereby elevated to become a representational form of art in Taiwanese society.³⁰

As discussed in Part One, Taiwan New Cinema emerged with the aim of luring local audiences back to Taiwan-made films from both Hollywood and Hong Kong cinema and triumphed in the 1980s Taiwanese film market. Although being distinct from Hong Kong and Hollywood films was their key idea, these filmmakers were not necessarily aiming to promote an anti-Hong Kong or anti-Hollywood agenda. Their main aim was to set up a distinct film language which belonged exclusively to Taiwan cinema. HOU was, consciously or unconsciously, challenging the filming aesthetics of those outsiders, and was 'seeking to address issues pertinent to Taiwan, and to find a film language distinctive enough to reinforce its localisation'.³¹ Recording everyday Taiwanese life is obviously a way to 'reinforce Taiwan's localisation' and to distinguish HOU's films from either Hollywood or Hong Kong productions. Film language is another. The editing of HOU's films does not follow the sort of linear narrative that audiences were used to from Hollywood films; two consistent characteristics of HOU's films, the static, long take and a silence-imbued aural perspective, distinguished his films from those more entertainment-oriented movies from Hong Kong.

The term 'realism' is often used in connection with HOU's film aesthetics.³² What this term might actually refer to as far as the visual and aural aspects of a film are concerned nevertheless requires some unpacking, and it is worth going back to the

³⁰ See WU, 'Festivals, Criticism and the International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema', pp. 75-91.

³¹ Needham, 'Ozu and The Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', p. 379.

³² See for instance Ru-shou Robert CHEN, who has discussed HOU's films in the context of a broader study as to how André Bazin's theory of film realism affects Chinese-language films. See Ru-shou Robert CHEN, 'Bazin at Work: the Concept of Realism in Chinese-language Films', *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 4 (2010), 57-64.

basis of André Bazin's theory of film realism. In his article 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', Bazin argues that there is a fundamental difference between photography and the other arts as ways of representing reality.

For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man. [...] Although the final result may reflect something of his [the photographer's] personality, this does not play the same role as is played by that of the painter. All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence.³³

This advantage continues with moving pictures. But in order to retain it in the latter, and keep human intervention to a minimum, Bazin insists on the importance of *mise-en-scène* over montage, because in montage more interventions are involved via cutting.³⁴ In his discussions of *mise-en-scène*, Bazin supports deep focus and long or uninterrupted shots, both of which are notable features of HOU's filmmaking style.³⁵

For Bazin,

shooting in depth is not just a more economical, a simpler, and at the same time a more subtle way of getting the most out of a scene. [...] (1) That depth of focus brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality. Therefore it is correct to say that, independently of the contents of the image, its structure is more realistic.³⁶

One of the features of deep focus and long shots is breaking out of the confines of the

³³ André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Vol. 1, p. 13.

³⁴ Bert Cardullo, 'Introduction', in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, ed. by Bert Cardullo (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. ix-xvi (p. xiii).

³⁵ Many scholars point out that long shots and/or deep focus are features of HOU's filmmaking style. See for instance, Valentina Vitali, 'HOU Hsiao-hsien Reviewed', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 280-89; Shigehiko Hasumi, 'The Eloquence of the Taciturn: An Essay on HOU Hsiao-hsien', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 184-94; Robert Chi, 'Representing and Understanding History in *A City of Sadness*', *Tamkang Review*, 29 (1999), 47-84.

³⁶ Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, p. 35.

screen frame, something we see in many of HOU's films.³⁷ According to Bazin,

The screen is not a frame like that of a picture but a mask (cache) which allows only a part of the action to be seen. When a character moves off screen, we accept the fact that he is out of sight, but he continues to exist in his own capacity at some other place.³⁸

In *A City of Sadness*,³⁹ in a scene in which Wen-xiong's family is preparing for the opening of Wen-xiong's new restaurant 'Little Shanghai', the camera is positioned at the main entrance of Wen-xiong's house, facing the living room, and remains there for several minutes, creating a long take. Although what we see is mostly the grandfather sitting in the middle, we experience more than what is within the screen frame: we know that children are playing somewhere, we know Wen-xiong is talking to a friend, and we can guess that probably some family members and staff members are preparing food outside. In other words, breaking out of the confines of the screen frame makes a character 'continue to exist in his own capacity at some other place' even though the actors are out of sight, as Bazin puts it. At first, we see Wen-xiong yelling at children and walking out of the screen frame (Figure 3.1(a)). Then we hear the grandfather, sitting in the middle of the screen frame, saying 'Children, don't play here, otherwise I will punish you!' (Figure 3.1(b)). Then we hear Wen-xiong's voice talking on the phone and responding to the greetings of a friend. He is not seen in the frame, but it is clear that he is somewhere in the living room, since his voice is clear and seems very close to where the grandfather is sitting (Figure 3.1(c)). While he is still on the phone, a girl walks in from outside and puts some food on the table (Figure 3.1(d)). Because the camera remains in the same position, we see her back first, and

³⁷ CHEN, 'Bazin at Work', 61.

³⁸ André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*; quoted in CHEN, 'Bazin at Work', 61.

³⁹ *A City of Sadness* (HOU Hsiao-hsien, 1989) is a film narrating the historical period of the 28 February Massacre. HOU presented this turbulent political history through the life of a single family, the Lins. More detailed analysis of the sound design and music in this film is in the next chapter.

not until she finishes setting the table and walks out do we see her face. As she is walking out, Wen-xiong ends the call and ‘enters’ from the right side of the screen frame to talk with the grandfather (Figure 3.1(e)). The camera remains in one position, and there is no particular focus on any character, ‘revealing’ reality rather than ‘adding’ to it, as it were. All this is in accordance with Bazin’s concept of realism.⁴⁰

As he points out, the deep-focus or long shot implies

both a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress. While analytical montage only calls for him to follow his guide, to let his attention follow along smoothly with that of the director who will choose what he should see, here he is called upon to exercise at least a minimum of personal choice. It is from his attention and his will that the meaning of the image in part derives.⁴¹



Figure 3.1(a) Grandfather is sitting in the middle. Wen-xiong walks into the living room from the right, but then soon disappears from the right side of the screen frame.



Figure 3.1(b) Grandfather yells at the children. (Here we can’t see the children, but we can hear the sounds of children.)

⁴⁰ As CHEN points out, ‘For Bazin, the function of *mise-en-scène* is not to add something to reality, but to reveal that reality, including all its cruelty and ugliness’. CHEN, ‘Bazin at Work’, 62.

⁴¹ Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, p. 36.



Figure 3.1(c) Although we see the grandfather and a woman within the frame, what we hear is Wen-xiong's conversation with his friend on the phone. (The subtitles read, 'Don't do that, You are welcome, Don't bother.')



Figure 3.1(d) The woman walks in.



Figure 3.1(e) The woman walks out, and Wen-xiong returns to the screen frame from the right.

Figure 3.1(a)-(e) The Restaurant Opening scene in *A City of Sadness*

My account of the realism of the soundscapes of HOU's films draws on two of Bazin's fundamental assumptions: getting the most out of reality, and assigning active roles to audiences. The concept of *liubai* is consistent with both. *A City of Sadness* is usually regarded as the first film in Taiwan cinema to use a direct, synchronised sound-recording technique, and as Adrian Martin notes, this change in sound-recording production meant that 'this national cinema was opened up to a greater, more authentic realism of voice, place, landscape and cityscape, and the natural elements'.⁴² Consider some of the earlier sonic strategies. In the 1970s, melodramas adapted from Qiongyao's novels, though very popular, were dubbed '*San ting dian ying* (literally, 'three-room films'), i.e. living rooms, dining rooms, and

⁴² Adrian Martin, 'What's Happening? Story, Scene and Sound in HOU Hsiao-hsien', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 258-70 (p. 267).

coffee shops, because of their formulaic settings.⁴³ And not only their storylines and settings were stereotyped; audiences might also have identified a lack of variety in the voices of their actors. According to sound designer TU Du-che, the quality of recording technology and equipment was such in the 1960s-70s that the voices of actors were post-dubbed. TU recalls:

Because there were not many good voice dubbers, you might recognize that almost all male main characters in Qiongyao melodramas had the same voice no matter who the actor was. [...] Or, you might find that LIN Qing-xia [a famous actress] had different voices in different films.⁴⁴

HOU prefers recording dialogue and sounds on location, as he noted in an interview with Gabe Klinger in 2006:

Realism is the main thing in most of my films. It's important that we record all the dialogue on location. TU Du-che [the sound designer] uses a recording device with eight channels of sound. All the sounds on the location are recorded, and most of them end up being used. In action films or thrillers, sounds are distorted and enlarged. In my films there's no need for this.⁴⁵

HOU's strategy of recording all the dialogue and sounds on location and using most of them can be read as a sonic equivalent of Bazin's sonic realism. For example, in the above sequence (the 'Restaurant Opening' scene), audiences can hear the sounds of children playing, Wen-xiong's conversation with his friend, the grandfather's murmuring, and people talking and walking in and out of the living room, even though not all those actions and characters are included in the frame. This parallels Bazin's discussions on 'breaking out of the confines of the screen frame' in order to

⁴³ LIN Fangmei, *Deconstructing Qiongyao's Love Kingdom* (Jiegou Qiongyao aiqing wangguo) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2006).

⁴⁴ Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

⁴⁵ Gabe Klinger, 'HOU Interview' <<http://elusivelucidity.blogspot.com/2006/02/rotterblog-4-hou-interview.html?showComment=1139440260000>> [assessed 4 March 2009]

reproduce the realistic situations in aural perspective. These sounds construct a sound-space that gives us an *impression* of the scene and creates a sense of reality.⁴⁶ The realism here means that, partly by virtue of this sound and dialogue, we feel we are almost sitting in a corner of the living room where the camera is situated. If we were there, we would be able to hear all the sounds and dialogue in the scene, and we would also be able to hear people talking nearby, even though they are out of sight: the aural and visual arrangements in HOU's films are similar to our experiences in reality and our perceptions would not be restricted by the confines of the screen frame, in Bazin's term. This realism is somewhat different to that advocated by Dogme directors, which conveys the 'impression of chaos, [and] distorted sonic overload'.⁴⁷

The long take style and the disarticulation between images and sounds, shown above, may also be linked with the concept of *liubai* in Chinese painting. HOU explains the link as follows:

Sometimes my actors would leave the frame, but I still won't change my shot, hence you get an empty shot on the screen. Here I am utilising a concept from Chinese painting — *liu-pai* [*liubai* in *pinyin* romanisation] (literally, 'to leave a whiteness') which means that even after the character has left the frame, or even when you have an unexplained space outside the frame — though it is empty and imagined, the audience must join together with me and complete the shot.⁴⁸

As Gary Needham puts it, HOU was searching for a new style 'with a resistance to the transparency and affective manipulation of emotions'.⁴⁹ Unlike the 1960-70s

⁴⁶ Martin, 'Story, Scene and Sound in HOU Hsiao-hsien', 267.

⁴⁷ Dogme is a filmmaking movement initiated by Danish directors Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg in 1995. It was a protest against highly commercial, large-budget films, and stimulated people to re-contemplate the essence of filmmaking. There are ten rules (comprising 'The Vow of Chastity') that a Dogme film must follow, such as 'The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa'; 'Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot'; 'The camera must be hand-held'; 'The film must not contain superficial action', and so on.

⁴⁸ Alice OU, *Taiwan Films* (Taipei: Variety Publishing, 1993), p. 347. Quoted in Needham, 'Ozu and The Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', p. 380.

⁴⁹ Needham, 'Ozu and The Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', p. 379.

melodramas with their prevalent use of non-diegetic popular songs and sound effects as a commentary on the characters' actions or for establishing moods, HOU minimises the use of non-diegetic music and popular songs, and deliberately leaves some aural spaces in silence — *liubai* in the aural domain. For *A City of Sadness* he invited a Japanese film music composer to write some non-diegetic orchestral underscoring, but wanted it mainly for transitions, when characters travel from place to place. This means that it serves as ambient music more than as a technique for amplifying and manipulating emotions. In Appendix 1 I list all of the film's major musical cues (both diegetic and non-diegetic) to illustrate at a glance how music functions in the film, as indeed in most of his other Taiwan New Cinema films (see Appendix 1). One can immediately see that the songs are mostly used diegetically, unlike in 1960s-70s Taiwanese films, and we can also clearly identify their sources: the people in the story-world sing or play them, or the song is on the radio. Of the 22 musical cues, only 8 involve non-diegetic orchestral underscoring; the others involve diegetic songs, ceremonial music, and traditional opera performances. Minimising the non-diegetic use of songs and music in this way enhances the sense of reality.⁵⁰

The shift in musical taste from non-diegetic songs/music to a combination of diegetic songs/music with non-diegetic orchestral underscoring, not only manifests HOU's aesthetics of realism, it also signifies his endeavour to distinguish his films from entertainment-oriented melodramas and martial arts films. In the early stages of Taiwan New Cinema, HOU and other young directors' creative and revolutionary efforts succeeded in saving the declining local market, however not for long.⁵¹ Seeing the great potential of art cinema audiences globally, HOU's filmic approach developed to take into account the local and global changes in the 1990s. In a 1998

⁵⁰ Needham, 'Ozu and The Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', p. 379.

⁵¹ WEN Tien-hsiang and Gan Sheuo HUI, 'HOU Hsiao-hsien: A Standard for Evaluating Taiwan's Cinema', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9 (2008), 211-38 (p. 218).

film documentary *The Taiwan New Cinema*, HOU said,

I used to film movies about Taiwan's history, with solemn stories and characters, because people were facing enormous upheaval — family, country, separation from relatives — but contemporary subjects are not so heavy. They are basically about subtle, interpersonal involvement, “the unbearable lightness of being,” grievances, instincts, your sensory capability. This kind of self-centered desire, where the self is like an animal, the world of passions and desires, is a topic toward which I am moving, inevitably.⁵²

HOU's words confirm the stylistic change of his films in the 1990s. His 1993 film *The Puppetmaster* is a documentary style movie narrating the life of puppetmaster LI Tian-lu,⁵³ *Goodbye, South, Goodbye* (1996) is a story of the aimless underclass in Taiwan, and the 1998 *Flowers of Shanghai* is a sensational portrait of the life in Shanghai's brothels in the late nineteenth century, his first film unrelated to Taiwan's culture and history. In these films, HOU gradually moved away from the sad, solemn history of Taiwan's past, and employed his subtle, humanist style to delineate people's passions and desires.⁵⁴ Although HOU made some changes to his film style, he kept for his 1980s films the long-take 'static aesthetic',⁵⁵ which includes his embrace of silence in both aural and visual arrangements, and credited them to the influence of Chinese aesthetics, i.e., the concept of *liubai*.

⁵² YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 176.

⁵³ For more in-depth discussions on this film, see Peggy CHIAO, 'Great Changes in a Vast Ocean: Neither Tragedy nor Joy', *Performing Arts Journal*, 17 (1995), 43-54.

⁵⁴ For example, Philip Lopate says: “‘Flowers of Shanghai’ is one of the cinematic highpoints of the 90's, a tribute from one fin-de-siècle to another, by a master who keeps growing”. Phillip Lopate, ‘A Master Everywhere Else Is Ready to Try America’, *New York Times*, 10 October 1999. <<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/10/movies/film-a-master-everywhere-else-is-ready-to-try-america.html?scp=24&sq=hhou%20hsiao-hsien&st=cse&pagewanted=3>> [accessed 25 July 2009]

⁵⁵ ‘Static aesthetics’ is the term that Chinese-speaking scholars and critics use to either praise or criticise HOU's films. It refers to his oblique, detour narrative technique, and the long take with slight movement. See for instance, Emilie Yueh-yu YEH, ‘Poetics and Politics of HOU Hsiao-hsien's Films’, in *Chinese-language Film*, pp. 163-85 (pp. 175-76).

Chapter 4. Silence as A Dynamic Component in *A City of Sadness*

(1989)

A City of Sadness focuses on the historical period between 1945 and 1949, a traumatic time which has been deliberately forgotten and repressed by the Taiwanese government and Taiwanese people alike. Its release right after the revoking of martial law was crucial, if politically sensitive, and Taiwanese people and international political observers eagerly looked to the reactions and feedback. Many expected to see a dynamic and controversial plot following such long-term political constraint in the country. By contrast, HOU dealt with this tough topic through very distant and obscure gestures.

HOU condensed the political history of an entire nation by presenting a response to it through the life of a single family, the Lins. LIN Wen-xiong, the oldest of four LIN brothers, is the spiritual centre of the family but is later tragically killed by Shanghai gangsters. The second LIN brother, who never appears on-screen, is a doctor who disappears during the war in the Philippines. The third brother, LIN Wen-liang, suffers a mental breakdown at the beginning of the film. Following treatment for his illness, he joins a drug smuggling business with Shanghai gangsters. When Wen-xiong realises that his younger brother is involved with drugs, he forces Wen-liang to quit. Wen-liang is then set up by his former accomplices and ultimately sentenced to imprisonment. The eldest brother, Wen-xiong, pays off the gangsters and begs them to save Wen-liang, who is then released from prison but becomes seriously ill, both mentally and physically. The youngest brother LIN Wen-qing is a deaf and mute photographer. He marries a nurse called Hinomi, the younger sister of his friend Hinoe. Hinoe is a political activist involved in an anti-government movement, and he

hides away in the remote countryside to avoid detection by the Nationalist army. Unfortunately, Hinoe's secret side is soon discovered by the Nationalist government and he is killed. Near the end of the film, Wen-ying is arrested for his close relationship with Hinoe and disappears, never to return.

A mute central figure

The most controversial issue in *A City of Sadness* is its treatment of the 28 February Incident, an event that no-one dared to touch during White Terror Period.¹ In approaching this sensitive issue HOU chose to keep his main character, Wen-ying, completely silent. How does a silent character shoulder the task of narrating such a complicated historical event? In the case of *A City*, the concept of *liubai* can help us to hear the profundity of Wen-ying's silence. If we take a look at the picture shown below (see Figure 4.1), we cannot be certain as to what it is: are we seeing two faces or a vase? If we focus on the black parts, we see two faces, but if we focus on the blank part, we see a single vase. Our subjective perception of the vase, the blank part, can be constructed by its counterpart, the inked faces. As Reynaud points out in his general discussion of *liubai*-influenced art, by 'inserting large amounts of blank space into his landscapes, the painter brings to light his subjective vision to capture the *invisible essence of things as they are filtered through his emotions or his memories*'.² The blank spaces, thus, 'mark the place of the subjects'.³ The dialogue between the painted and the blank spaces delivers the spirit of Chinese paintings. The same

¹ Although martial law was lifted in 1987, two years before the film was shown, *A City* is one of the first media productions to narrate the 28 February Incident in depth. When the film was finished and about to be screened it failed to pass governmental media censorship: HOU was asked to cut out several sections before it could be shown to the public. HOU sent the whole film to the Venice Film Festival and won the Best Film Award, the most prestigious award that Taiwan cinema had received at that time. Thanks to this, the film was permitted to be screened in its original version. On 28 February Incident and White Terror Period, see Chapter Two.

² Benedice Reynaud, *A City of Sadness* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*

principle could be applied to *A City of Sadness*. Here, the concept of Void (emptiness, blankness, *liubai*) can help us not only to understand HOU's use of empty visual spaces, but also to develop a perspective on the film's soundscape.⁴ The subjectivity of the deaf/mute central figure Wen-qing, for instance, is mainly constructed by his wife's off-screen narration. Wen-qing is a blank space from an aural perspective, but his wife's voice-overs, their exchanges of written notes (shown on the intertitles), and the sounds surrounding his silence gradually form a complete picture.



Figure 4.1 A Vase or Two Faces?⁵

HOU has explained the deaf/mute character in purely programmatic productional terms. When answering film critic David Noh's question regarding this character, he said:

We decided to do this film in synch sound, which is basically unheard of in Taiwan. For Tony LEUNG [LIN Wen-qing in *A City*] to speak Mandarin and also Taiwanese was not possible, so to get rid of that problem we decided to turn him into a deaf mute and that seemed to work.⁶

Whether HOU's intention was as simple as he claimed or as complicated as some scholars argue, this character's effect on the film is profound. Critics and scholars have produced different readings of Wen-qing's disability/ability. Wen-qing's muteness has been interpreted as full of both tragedy and strength. As NI Zhen points

⁴ Ibid., pp. 78-83.

⁵ From Illusions Gallery, Dr. David T. Landrigan, Psychology Department, University of Massachusetts Lowell. <<http://dragon.uml.edu/psych/rubin.html>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

⁶ David Noh, 'Taiwanese Director's Sadness Recalls Island's Turbulent Past', in *A City of Sadness* <<http://cinemaspace.berkeley.edu/Papers/CityOfSadness/int2.html>> [accessed 2 March 2009]

out, in the Western literary tradition ‘tragedy is often expressed as apotheosis and catharsis in the midst of conflict and destruction; but in the East, in Chinese literature, “fate is often a blank space, a blank image, a great, unending rhythm, sounding without human will, irresistible, transcending the individual”’.⁷ Accordingly, the ‘blank’ setting for the main character’s voice in this film is not a drawback but an example of tragic expression. Michael Berry concludes that in *A City of Sadness* ‘pain, atrocity, and sadness are all mitigated by the politics of nonrepresentation and silence’.⁸

Wen-qing’s muteness represents a tragic and powerful accusation directed against the atrocities committed by the Nationalist government, and as such brings to mind Chion’s description of the power of the mute in film. For Chion, to ‘encounter the mute is to encounter questions of identity, origin, desire’; indeed the mute ‘is often assigned the role of moral conscience, for next to him everyone feels guilty’.⁹ The origin of Wen-qing’s ‘loss of voice’ speaks for the buried history of the 28 February incident, a point that can be illustrated in a sequence when Wen-qing and Hinomi are listening to the radio before Wen-qing tells her about the unfortunate incident which resulted in his turning deaf. The song on the radio is the German lied ‘Loreley’, and Hinomi tells him of the story behind the song through a series of written notes: ‘Loreley’ was known by all to be a siren who sat on a rock next to the Rhine. Her hypnotic voice entranced sailors, which resulted in them ignoring the dangerous reefs, their ships being run aground, and many of them dying. Wen-qing responds to Hinomi’s ‘Loreley’ story with his own of becoming deaf, and does it in a way that reminds me of Jacques Attali’s discussion on ‘Music as a Simulacrum of Sacrifice’ in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Michael Berry, *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 222.

⁹ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 96.

Noise: The Political Economy of Music. Attali declares that ‘the myth of the sirens is quite clear: their song kills whoever hears it. The exception is Ulysses, who is offered as a simulacrum of the scapegoat, bound and incapable of commanding the obedience of his rowers, who are voluntarily deaf to protect themselves from the violence of the sound’.¹⁰ Wen-qing’s personal story unfolds after the song of ‘Loreley’, as if to imply that his deafness is a necessary state because it will allow him to ‘protect himself from the violence of the sound’, a violence that might also be associated with authority.

Although his becoming deaf/mute seems an inevitable result of the violence enacted by the authorities, in which he plays the role of the oppressed, his misfortune may also be seen as symbolising a moral conscience that highlights the authorities’ guilt.

Another observation by Chion is useful here. Although forced to be silent, the mute ‘is presumed to harbor *the final word*’ though one which ‘he cannot or wishes not to utter’.¹¹ He might function ‘as the place where the story’s crucial knowledge is lodged [...] which can never be wholly transmitted’.¹² Scenes reflecting this sort of understanding of the cinematic mute occur in *A City of Sadness*. In the scene on the train, the single sentence Wen-qing tries so hard to utter, but which is barely comprehensible because of his strange sound and pronunciation, is: ‘I am a Taiwanese’. The film is set just after the 28 February Incident; the local Taiwanese people are furious and so organise the territorial army to launch random attacks on mainlanders. The way they determine whether a person is a Taiwanese or a mainland is by asking him/her, ‘where are you from?’ in Fukien, a language most Taiwanese speak. When the armed people ask Wen-qing this question, his odd and unclear pronunciation makes them think he is a mainland, and they start beating him

¹⁰ Jacques Attali, *Noise, The Political Economy of Music*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 29.

¹¹ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 97.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

up, until his friend comes back and rescues him. In this scene in *A City of Sadness*, stating one's identity clearly and confidently, a basic and fundamental right for a national of any country, becomes a crucial thing that can 'never be wholly transmitted' — recalling Chion's words above. Wen-qing's muteness, as in some other films, takes on the sense of a 'living reproach' to the silence of the Taiwanese concerning the 28 February Incident and warns of 'an inevitable final struggle',¹³ an absolute power that the muteness embodies.

Wen-qing's silence seems to be hinted at in the film's title. The original Chinese name for *A City of Sadness* was *Beiqing zhengshi*. The word *beiqing* is two characters in Chinese: *bei* translates as 'sadness', and *qing* 'relationship, sympathy'. *Beiqing* is stronger than the word 'sadness' in English; more specifically, it refers to deeply-buried sadness that seeks others' understanding and sympathy. This sadness is best captured in Wen-qing's deafness/muteness since it conveys 'a strong message in that the pain of suffering renders language inadequate and that traumatic memories are better preserved in speechlessness'.¹⁴ Hinomi's quiet acceptance of Wen-qing's imprisonment at the end of *A City* resonates with the real life response of most Taiwanese people, who were silent and obedient before the authorities in order to protect themselves; this response can also be linked with the action of Ulysses' rowers 'who are voluntarily deaf to protect themselves from the violence of the sound', as Attali puts it.¹⁵ In this way the 28 February Incident became an unspoken pain that was buried deep in the memories of these individuals and Taiwanese society as a whole.

¹³ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁴ Gary G. XU, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), p. 112.

¹⁵ Attali, *Noise*, p. 29.

Constructing the subjectivity of a silent character by other means

Despite Wen-qing's silence, he is surrounded by sonic designs — notably radio broadcasts and Hinomi's off-screen narrations — constructed in such a way as to suggest cinematically his subjectivity and thoughts. Hinomi plays an important role. Her notes provide a commentary for Wen-qing's thoughts and the historical background, while her off-screen voice-over forms an essential part of the sonic design and narrative. Audiences might be aware of Hinomi's narrations throughout the film, but we seldom see her speak. In other words, Hinomi is almost as silent as Wen-qing in the diegetic sonic world, despite the fact that her voice-over narrations are heard on several occasions. Her voice-overs communicate not only her personal feelings but also observations on behalf of Wen-qing; in addition, they provide a supplementary commentary to transitions and margins during the film. One might even say that Hinomi's commentary-based voice-over function is similar to that of *benshi* narrators during the silent film era; her narrations serve a creative function in filling in the silences.

Applying voice-over narration to a sound film, however, suggests further narrative and artistic meanings than simply those of clarifying narrative. Hinomi's voice acts as an aid to overcoming Wen-qing's deafness and muteness. Chion's discussion of the not-yet-seen voice with the not-yet-spoken character in his theorisation of the *acousmêtre* is useful here.¹⁶ For Chion, 'The counterpart of the not-yet-seen voice is the body that has not yet spoken — the silent character (not to be confused with the character in the silent movie)'.¹⁷ These two cinematic extremes are 'the two

¹⁶ According to Michel Chion, *acousmêtre* is an 'invisible character created for the audio-viewer by means of an acousmatic voice heard either offscreen, or onscreen but hidden (behind a curtain or other obstacle)'. Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 466.

¹⁷ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 23.

disjointed halves of a single elusive entity'.¹⁸ We see this played out quite literally in *A City*, since Wen-qing's thoughts are expressed through his written notes to Hinomi, and are communicated to the audience not only through the intertitles showing his notes but also through Hinomi's voice-over descriptions. Through his notes and her explanations, little by little viewers are able to piece together the plot as well as understand more and more about the male protagonist's background. In other words, Hinomi's voice-over provides a way of establishing both Wen-qing's subjectivity and her own: she is a silent observer and her subjectivity is built-up as the role of an observer.

Hinomi's voice-over not only serves to narrate the mute Wen-qing, but is also the sound that informs audiences about crucial points of the plot that haven't been fully displayed or that have been completely omitted on screen. For Chion, the woman's voice 'seems to possess ubiquity'.¹⁹ An example of this in *A City* is the first time we find out about the declaration of martial law when Wen-qing is imprisoned, which takes place near the end of the film. Wen-qing dresses up and takes a photo of himself with his son and Hinomi. Accompanying the still shot of the photograph, Hinomi's voice-over is heard: 'Ah-shua, your uncle [Wen-qing] has been arrested. We don't know where he is now'. Nothing concerning Wen-qing's arrest is shown through images; it is recounted exclusively through Hinomi's voice-over.

The concepts of both *liubai* and *ma* are useful in developing critical responses to Hinomi's voice-over, which is accompanied on-screen by several types of artistic shot: when she is writing her diary, when the story that she narrates is given a visual background but the diegetic sounds of the event remain in the background at a low volume, or while the audience views an empty shot or a long take of landscape or

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 119.

other place. Her voice always describes an event that has already occurred, so there is always a temporal and spatial gap between the image we see and the voice we hear. On the one hand, the temporal and spatial gaps produce a distant, mysterious atmosphere; on the other hand, viewers are given two different points of view and are able to place themselves simultaneously in both temporal and spatial locations. As David Bordwell notes, the concept *ma* ‘suggests that between concrete places there exists a fundamental discontinuity, especially of point of view. It favours attention to transitions, margins, and thresholds — the *en*, or “border”, which is neither of one place nor of another’.²⁰ In the Hollywood narrative tradition, where the cause-and-effect chain is emphasised, the discontinuity, transition, or margin between two entities is somehow suppressed. Yet the artistic magic of Hinomi’s voice comes from its privileging of the spaces or gaps between two entities. Because of the privileges given to the existing spaces, a nonfocal, multi-layer narrative construction is set up without being limited in the cause-and-effect chain or the filmic frame.

In *A City of Sadness*, Hinomi’s voice is not the only aspect of sound which invokes the *liubai* concept. Michael Berry argues that distance, silence, and absence are at the heart of HOU’s aesthetics of violence,²¹ and that these strategies are manifested in the sonic construction of *A City* in several ways: not only through Wen-qing’s deafness and speechlessness, and Hinomi’s voice-over commentary, but also in the silencing effect of political propaganda heard on the radio. Let us consider the autocratic and arbitrary voice of authority as represented in the film. It is heard from a relatively remote source — the radio — and yet brings disequilibrium and tension to everyone’s life, despite the fact that the sounding body is unseen and off-screen. This is a classic example of *acousmêtre*, which is described by Chion as a function and an effect.

²⁰ Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, p. 145.

²¹ Berry, *Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film*, p. 223.

Berenice Reynaud also observes that,

Radio voices are often used in HOU's cinema as a medium to carry authoritarian or official messages and to create a tension between the disembodied, mechanical quality of their source and — conversely — the domestic settings in which they are heard, the living bodies receiving them and whose steps, mundane gestures, breathing, moaning and small talk can be heard in counterpoint. [...] In *A City*, the use of radio voices creates another contrast — between — the *language* of the broadcast and that of the listeners.²²

What Reynaud observes here is that the tension caused by voices coming through the radio is a result of the contrast between the mechanical quality of radio sounds and mundane soundings related to living bodies; it also reveals a contrast between different languages. Both of these tensions are vividly identified throughout *A City*.

In addition to Reynaud's two observations, I would suggest the radio voices also imply a tension between absolute powers and powerless people. Chion categorises four kinds of power which the *acousmètre* possesses: the ability to be everywhere (ubiquity), to see all (panopticism), to know all (omniscience), and to have complete power (omnipotence).²³ All the abilities identified by Chion are manifest in the use of radio in *A City*. The Governor CHEN Yi's first radio speech begins with an empty, still landscape shot: 'Compatriots of Taiwan, last night, on the evening of the 27th in Taipei, someone was unfortunately killed during a smuggling investigation. I have dealt with this issue.' A landscape shot, featuring half-sky and half-mountain, appears before the voice is heard (see Figure 4.2). Viewers see the still landscape scene for fifteen seconds before CHEN's voice is heard. In this sequence CHEN's voice seems to emanate from the sky, from somewhere that is nowhere, part of boundless nature; we do not see the radio itself until after the following scene, when doctors and nurses

²² Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, pp. 65-66.

²³ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 24.

gather in the hospital around a radio and listen to CHEN's speech quietly and attentively. During this sequence the power of CHEN's voice confirms he is everywhere, can see all, knows all, and has complete power, just like the *acousmètre* described by Chion. Everyone is subjected to CHEN's voice as well as his power and must be obedient to his orders; there is no possibility of negotiating or speaking up for themselves. The radio voice of CHEN silences powerless ordinary people.



Figure 4.2 The landscape shot when Governor CHEN's broadcasting takes place

The huge gap between powerful authorities and the powerless locals is reflected in the silencing effect of the radio voice in *A City*. The powerless status of Taiwanese people pre-1945 also seems to find an equal in Wen-qing: he tries to speak up for his identity (in the scene on the train), but no one understands what he is uttering; he tries to join Hinoe's anti-government movement, but his efforts are rejected; he tries to run a photo shop to support his family, but he is soon jailed by the military. In short, just as ordinary Taiwanese people were powerless up until 1945 and could only keep silent and listen to authority, Wen-qing and Hinomi seem unable to act for themselves in *A City of Sadness*.

Music in *A City of Sadness*

The concept of *liubai* is applicable not only to the silent parts of *A City of Sadness*, but also to the musical construction overall. HOU uses music in a very concise way in most of his films, but in *A City of Sadness* he makes use of a variety of musical materials, mostly within the diegesis. Four categories of musical material can be found: songs (including Fukien, Mandarin, Japanese, and German songs); traditional opera excerpts (from Beijing operas, Taiwanese operas, and Hakka operas); ceremonial music (for weddings and funerals, or Chinese New Year music, and Lion dancing music); and compositional underscore (see Appendix 1 for details). The languages used and the musical origins of these musical materials are very diverse and reflect in musical form the hybrid nature of Taiwanese society. Furthermore, the use of various languages as well as musical traditions in *A City* suggests HOU's intention to advocate decentralisation. For instance, the silencing of the main figure makes it difficult to define the 'central tone' of this film; moreover, audiences hear languages and music from different traditions and regions and so are exposed to various historical periods and geographical locations. Additionally, the multilayer narrative structure, as discussed above, allows the film to become a ' "dialogic web of multiple, heterogeneous and fragmentary stories" and "wisps of narratives" '.²⁴

An excerpt from the German lied 'Loreley' follows the Beijing opera performance and is a useful example of how HOU's arrangement of musical underscoring also contributes to his distinctive narrative style: it is fragmentary, ambiguous, and will not necessarily follow a cause-and-effect logic (see Figure 4.3). In a scene where Wen-qing's friends visit him at his house, he is apart from them, in the corner of the room, choosing to sit close to Hinomi instead. Wen-qing turns on the radio for Hinomi

²⁴ Rosemary Haddon, 'HOU Hsiao Hsien's *City of Sadness*: History and the Dialogic Female Voice', in *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*, ed. by Chris Berry and Fei-i LU (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 55-65 (p. 57).

and she explains to him via written notes (shown on intertitles) the content of the song that is playing, namely ‘Loreley’. Wen-qing then tells Hinomi about the accident that resulted in his becoming deaf: ‘I have been deaf since I was eight years old. Before then, I loved to listen to Beijing Opera and imitated their singing. [...] I fell down from the tree and then fainted for a couple of days. When I woke up, my father told me, using written notes, that I was deaf. I was too young to know the consequences and continued being naughty afterwards’ (see Figure 4.4). After this intertitle is shown, but while ‘Loreley’ is still playing, a Beijing opera singer is seen performing on-screen. The song gradually fades out and the opera performance becomes louder. The camera zooms out and we see an open space in a village, with singers performing on an outdoor stage while spectators sit on chairs listening. The camera maintains distance and shoots from behind the seated audience; the only sound we hear is that of the Beijing opera performance. No sounds are heard from the spectators. In the following cut, the opera music continues but this time we don’t see any performers in the frame; instead, a group of boys is seen. Some of them are sitting quietly, some are chasing others, and two are acting as if they are performing the Beijing opera. A teacher enters and the boys quickly take their seats.

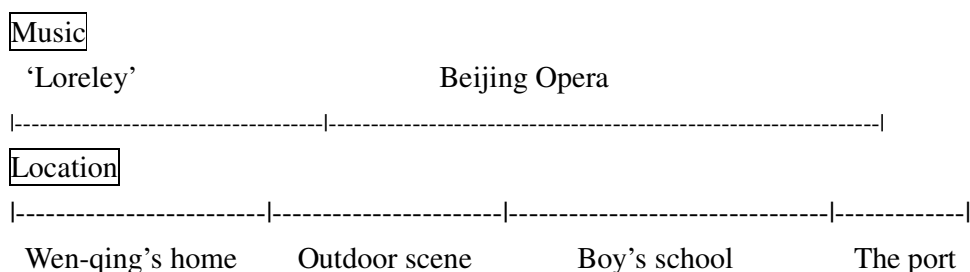


Figure 4.3 An illustration of how music and image are arranged in the ‘Loreley’ excerpt

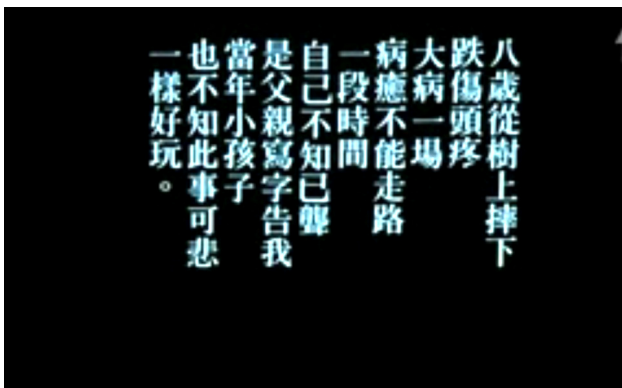


Figure 4.4 Wen-qing's childhood story shown by intertitles

In the sequence shown above (Figure 4.3), both the song and the Beijing opera excerpt traverse between the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces, and a discontinuity occurs between the music, the images, and music with images. As June Yip observes, 'HOU's film is full of temporal disjunctions, gaps, and discontinuities that leave audiences with a rich and complex, though ambivalent and incomplete, sense of history'.²⁵ When we hear 'Loreley' in the room scene, it is intended as diegetic music; when the camera moves in the direction of the opera singer, the song is non-diegetic. The opera performance is diegetic, but when the camera moves towards the boys, it appears to be non-diegetic; it might be argued that the opera performance takes place 'next to' the boys' school. Furthermore, no dialogue is heard during the opera sequence, and none of the characters that come into view have appeared in previous sequences. One might ask, is this opera sequence a flashback? This may well be the case. However, if we follow conventional Hollywood narrative logic, the sequence following the flashback might return to the scene that preceded it; alternatively, directors might use different lighting techniques or styles of dress and costumes to indicate to the audience that 'this is a flashback sequence'. HOU does not speak about his story in this way.

²⁵ Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 95.

As the opera excerpt continues, HOU offers an empty shot of a port where many boats sit. The sky is becoming dark (or perhaps dawn is about to come). The opera song gradually fades out. The next shot is of Wen-qing's brother's dining room and kitchen, where a man is seen eating (not Wen-qing or his brother and not a central character in this film) while the cries of a baby are heard even though we see no infant on-screen. There remain several gaps and blank spaces — both aural and visual — throughout this sequence: three minutes in total. The music is anempathetic to the images it accompanies: for instance there are prominent audio lags, such as when the camera moves to the outdoor Beijing opera performances but the song 'Loreley' continues, and when we are given a shot of the port but the Beijing opera music continues. The gaps exist between individual images, between musical cues, and between music with an accompanying image; HOU feels no need to fill them in. The discontinuities between music, images, and music with image, running throughout HOU's film, has prompted certain scholars to link his work with that of the French auteur director, Jean-Luc Godard.²⁶ However, I would disregard any links between HOU's work and Godard's strong anti-Hollywood stance; instead, I would suggest that it is HOU's traditional Chinese propensity for the concept of *liubai* that inspires him to construct his films in this way. The gaps in his films are not deliberately designed to challenge the Hollywood tradition; rather, they invite audiences to let their imaginations run wild and to take on active roles as viewers. This is also the central principle of Taiwan New Cinema. Therefore, HOU's frequent allusion to the philosophy of *liubai* in his films not only establishes his distinctive personal style, but also reflects his support for Taiwan New Cinema; it points out a way to put the ideology of Taiwan New Cinema into practice.

These discussions point to how the concept of *liubai* is employed in the sonic

²⁶ Needham, 'Ozu and The Colonial Encounter in HOU Hsiao-hsien', p. 374.

construction of *A City* and thus create an intriguing dialogue between the silent character, the voices that surround his silence, and also between music and image. In the following chapter, I shall discuss another film that pushes the use of diegetic silence to the extreme. One of the three episodes in *Three Times* (2005) includes a diegetically silent moment that lasts more than forty minutes — a pregnant silence filled with meanings.

Chapter 5. A Pregnant Silence in *Three Times* (2005)

HOU's filmic style changed after the year 2000, as did the music he uses. Since then his films have all been transnational productions, creative partnerships mostly between Taiwan and France: he applies more compositional devices of Western origin than ever before, but also retains traditional musical ideas of Taiwanese origin, such as puppet performances and *nanguan* music. Crucially, however, he sustains the concept of *liubai* and silence as a space of creativity in his soundscapes — noted as a trademark of HOU's 'Oriental' attachment.

Three Times (2005), which was showcased at the Cannes film festival, is a sensuous, nostalgic masterpiece made up of three episodes: 'A Time for Love' (set in 1966), 'A Time for Freedom' (1911), and 'A Time for Youth' (2005). The original Chinese title for *Three Times* is 最好的時光 (which literally means 'The Best of Times'). HOU explained the title's significance at a meeting with the press:

Our lives are full of fragmentary memories. We can't give them names, we can't classify them and they have no great significance.

But they lodge in the mind, somehow unshakeable. For example, I used to love to play billiards when I was young, and I have a memory fragment of the song 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' always playing in the pool-hall. Now I'm pushing sixty, and these things have been hanging around for so long it seems like they're part of me. Maybe the only way I can discharge my debt to them is to film them.

I think of them as the best of times. "The best" not because we can't forget them, nor because they're things that have now been lost. The reason they're the best is that they exist only in our memories. I have the feeling that this is not the last film I'll make in this vein.¹

HOU's words reveal the nostalgia of this film. The three episodes are independent in

¹ From the film company's press materials for public use, microfiche in British Film Institute library.

terms of context, yet the lovers in all three episodes are played by the same actors; this acts as an effective way of unifying the whole. The first episode is a love story set in the 1960s. CHEN, a soldier on leave, falls in love with a pool girl called May. The second episode, which takes place in a brothel and is set in 1911, is a love story between a political activist called Mr. CHANG and a courtesan known as Ah-Mei. Both dream about their freedom. Mr. CHANG devotes himself to the revolution and aims to ensure that Taiwan becomes an independent country, while Ah-Mei dreams about setting herself free from the brothel by marrying Mr. CHANG. The third episode tells the story of the so-called Generation-X and is thus set in the modern era; there are crowded cities and a lack of relationships between people.

Songs are used to represent time and space in all three episodes: Western popular songs 'Rain and Tears', 'Smoke gets in your eyes' in the first episode; *nanguan* art songs in the second; and several contemporary rock numbers in the third. The uses of popular song in the first and third episodes reflect those more commonly associated with Hollywood traditions, and, more specifically, become signifiers of time and space: the meanings of song lyrics work to support the overall narrative. What has attracted my attention is the sonic construction in the second episode because it replicates the mannerisms of silent film. In other words, the viewers experience a forty-five minute diegetically *silent* sequence, right in the middle of a sound film. Again, *liubai* proves a useful explanatory framework for discussion.

In the second episode, Mr. CHANG regularly visits Ah-mei's place whenever he travels to Taipei. Ah-Mei's sister, Spring, is pregnant by Mr. SU and so Mr. SU wishes to take her as his concubine. However, this does not materialise since financial issues cannot be settled between Mr. SU and Madame. Mr. CHANG is generous enough to make up the difference and helps Spring to leave the brothel. A month later, once Spring has left, Mr. CHANG comes back to Taipei and visits the

brothel again. Ah-Mei is so happy to tell Mr. CHANG that Madame is to adopt a young girl who will require training from Ah-Mei and that once she had been well-trained, Ah-Mei will be able to get married and leave the brothel as her sister did. It turns out that Ah-mei's expectation is simply a dream of her own: Mr. CHANG is not willing to marry her. He leaves Taipei for his career and Ah-mei can do nothing to fulfil her dream of getting married and moving away. She must stay at the brothel.

HOU sets the plot in 1911 and may adopt facets of silent film as a way of paying homage to the past, or as a signifier of filmic temporal reality. However, it goes further than that. When asked what his reasons were for inserting a silent film manner into a sound film, HOU claimed that it was pure pragmatism. It was because the actors playing the two central figures could speak neither ancient Han dialect nor Japanese as spoken during 1911's Taiwan.² At the same time, HOU's realist principles (discussed in the first chapter of this part) prevented him from using post-dubbing techniques to overlay Han dialect and/or Japanese, or to allow the characters to speak in Mandarin as used today. The language issue in this episode is the same as that in *A City of Sadness*: the characters can't speak the language HOU requires, and so this becomes an inherent limitation in the production. Nevertheless, talking to film scholar Michael Berry, HOU argued that 'limitations can become the foundation for new creativity':

These limitations are reality set in stone. There is no way around them, you simply have to think within their parameters. So knowing your limitations is really the greatest freedom an artist can have. The longer you make films, the clearer it becomes that there are inherent limitations that come with form.³

² News item 'The Premiere of HOU Hsiao-hsien's Three Times', 20 May 2005, *Epochtimes*, <<http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/5/5/20/n928669.htm>> [accessed 15 February 2011]

³ Berry, *Speaking In Images*, p. 251.

In the case of *A City*, Wen-qing's subjectivity is constructed according to the sounds around him. Sounds to do with Hinomi's voice-over and radio broadcasting complement Wen-qing's silence in *A City's* narrative. Yet, in the second episode of *Three Times*, all the characters are silent. Perhaps the different functions of sound and silence in sound and silent film sparked HOU's creativity, and he transformed the 'inherent limitations that come with form' to produce the narrative and atmosphere he wanted. The silent sequence in *Three Times* does not seem to have presented limitations, but rather an opportunity for exploring new narrative possibilities involving sound and music.

HOU's insistence on language realism presents a possible solution to linguistic incongruity, given that there are awkward Mandarin pronunciations in many Chinese-language films, especially in transnational productions. For example, although several of the central figures in *Crouching Tiger* are Chinese in appearance, they are originally from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Malaysia, and so their Mandarin pronunciations sound very different (people from Hong Kong and Malaysia don't speak Mandarin at all) and appear odd to the people of China and Taiwan.⁴ HOU's experiment nevertheless raises a fundamental question: does dialogue, which is faithfully produced in sound films, necessarily deliver more explicit messages to us than unheard dialogue in silent films? Most people might answer 'yes' and argue that whereas we can hear dialogue in sound films, we can't in silent productions; spoken dialogue in sound films must, therefore, help to deliver more explicit messages. Yet, as Chion points out, 'silent film had the entire narrative arsenal of the novel at its disposal'.⁵ In a silent film, language was 'doubly present:

⁴ See Chapter Eight for more information on feedback from audiences belonging to Chinese-speaking communities, as well as those from non-Chinese speaking communities who have all responded to *Crouching Tiger*.

⁵ Chion, *Audio-Vision*, p. 170.

explicitly, in the text of intertitles, and implicitly, in the very way the images were conceived, filmed, and edited to constitute a discourse, in which a shot of a gesture was the equivalent of a word or a syntagma'.⁶ The intertitle actually 'allowed great narrative flexibility' because it 'could be used to establish the story's setting, to sum up a part of the action, to issue a judgment about the characters, and of course, to give a free transcription of the spoken dialogues'.⁷ Although there are various functions that intertitles may serve, *HOU* did not apply as many as Chion discusses, and almost all of the intertitles in *Three Times* are used to narrate dialogue between Mr. CHANG and Ah-mei. Nevertheless, Chion's discussion reminds us that, in fact, later silent films allowed narrative flexibility in their use of language even though no spoken dialogue could be heard.

As Chion points out, there are two main features of the sound-space in silent films: the heard silence and the silently heard sound. Silent film was deaf insofar as it 'prevented us from hearing the real sounds of the story. It had no ears for the immediate aural space, the here and now of the action'.⁸ And yet, because a viewer is 'forced to be deaf', s/he hears voices 'that resonates in his or her own imagination. [...] Voices in silent film, because they are implied, are dreamed voices'.⁹ The notion of dreamed and implied voices reflect the narrative situation in *Three Times* well, especially considering the fact that Ah-mei's love for Mr. CHANG goes unrequited. Her own desires are hardly heard, and both her desires for freedom and Mr. CHANG's ambition to set Taiwan free are left as nothing more than dreams. Chion's description of what the audience might do in these silent spaces is entirely consistent with the idea of silence as a space for the imagination; a manifestation of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 7.

⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

the concept of *liubai*.

Since there are no diegetic sounds in the middle episode of *Three Times*, I would therefore argue that this creates a *liubai* space from which narrative meanings might emerge. Devices such as the frequently used intertitles, the musical accompaniment, and/or the carefully edited and framed images deliver what are usually conveyed in sound films by diegetic sounds and dialogue. In an interview with me, TU Du-che, the sound designer who worked on this film, explicitly connected HOU's use of silent film technique for this episode with the concept of *liubai*:

When working on this episode, HOU pointed out that the languages used in early twentieth-century Taiwan were very elegant and classical. Young actors today are incapable of learning and speaking their language in a classical way. *Liubai*, which keeps this spoken part blank, would therefore be a better choice because it prompts audiences to pay attention to actors' facial expressions and body language. Because the actors' voices are eliminated, audiences are encouraged to free their imaginations, to imagine what those actors are doing, by seeing their facial expressions and movements. We only have to give them some hints in the sentences on the intertitles to narrate the whole story.

We actually recorded all voices when this episode was filmed, but then we erased the voices. We discovered the beauty of silence: you looked at those actors' elegant movements, in conjunction with some hints in the intertitles, and you guessed what they were doing, all together constructing a beautiful, intangible story. The beauty of this episode would be spoiled if you could hear everything.¹⁰

TU's words tell us the reasons behind keeping all voices silent in this episode and remind us of the beauty of *liubai*. Yet TU also points out that 'when you eliminate all diegetic sound, the question remains as to what sounding elements should be added to provide audiences with enough support to understand the narrative'.¹¹ The sounding elements added in this episode are mainly *nanguan* music and a piano

¹⁰ Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

¹¹ Ibid.

solo.

An endangered musical tradition: *nanguan* music

To speak for silenced groups and to preserve or promote Taiwanese cultural traditions are two frequently occurring elements in HOU's films, from as early as his Taiwan New Cinema productions. As Chris Berry and Fei-i LU point out, if 'the directors of what is now known as the Taiwan New Cinema have something in common, it may be their concern for filming Taiwan's history'.¹² As already discussed, in *A City of Sadness*, HOU takes the long-suppressed 28 February Incident in Taiwanese history as his story, and draws on the music of Beijing opera, Taiwanese liturgical ceremonies (wedding, funeral, and Chinese New Year dragon dance), and Mandarin, Fukien, and Japanese folk songs. In *Three Times*, HOU uses *nanguan* music and in *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007) traditional Taiwanese puppet performance. The music in these films is performed in traditional ways, not least because whole pieces are played rather than ten second excerpts. In other words, audiences are able to appreciate short but intact traditional musical performances. *Nanguan* (literally 'southern pipe music') has been described as 'a living fossil of ancient Chinese music', having originated in the Fukien Province of southern China and been introduced to Taiwan around three hundred years ago.¹³ *Nanguan* is not only an ancient musical tradition, it is an endangered one. It has always to some degree been culturally silent because it didn't belong to any musical genre that the government promoted, neither during Japanese colonisation nor during the Nationalist period. Furthermore, *nanguan* is sung in the ancient-Han dialect and this makes it difficult for contemporary audiences to understand and learn it. For all of

¹² Berry and LU, 'Introduction', pp. 4-5.

¹³ CHOU Chiener, 'Learning Processes in *Nanguan* Music of Taiwan', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 21 (2002), 81-124 (p. 81).

these reasons, the *nanguan* musical tradition has nearly died out in Taiwan. However, it is now promoted by lovers of the *nanguan* tradition, and *nanguan* masters are willing to teach it at very low cost in order to keep their musical tradition alive.

In *Three Times*, since almost the entire middle episode is diegetically silent, the audience's attention is bound to be drawn towards the beautiful *nanguan* songs: it would be hard not to notice the music consciously, and this might have been part of HOU's cultural agenda. His strategy in this episode means that *nanguan*, an ancient musical tradition now silenced in mainstream contemporary Taiwan musical cultures, is introduced to both local and global audiences.

The continuous musical accompaniment in this episode is set in an A-B-A' structure, in which songs from an ancient *nanguan* musical tradition are applied in two A sections and the quasi-Debussyian improvised solo piano music appears in section B (Figure 5.1).

Episode 1 Sound Film

Episode 2 *Nanguan*—Piano music—*Nanguan*—Sound film (short)

Episode 3 Sound Film.

Figure 5.1 The musical structure in *Three Times*

The use of *nanguan* music is entirely appropriate to the identity of Ah-mei (the central figure) and the fictional period, thus it also supports the narrative. According to CHOU Chiener, 'a *nanguan* group primarily consisted of male amateur musicians, who saw themselves as gaining social capital through performance, but the music was also performed in at least two other contexts: professional opera (*liyuanxi*) and the entertainment offered by [the] courtesan'.¹⁴ *Nanguan* music had been performed by women for a long time; however, as CHOU points out, women 'did not appear in

¹⁴ CHOU, 'Learning Processes in Nanguan Music of Taiwan', p. 82.

the history of this tradition, in that all these females were courtesans. These courtesan performances [...] were less publicly acknowledged, as is common with all such performances in the broader Chinese musical tradition'.¹⁵ Ah-mei's identity as a courtesan is indeed only subtly implied by the backdrop of *nanguan* music and also the location: 'Dadaocheng' is shown on the screen. According to LIN Yi-ru, Dadaocheng and Mongjia were two areas in Taipei city where courtesans gathered between 1897 and 1914.¹⁶ The time (1911), place (Dadaocheng), and identity of Ah-mei (a courtesan) are artfully established in the first thirty seconds, without the need for any dialogue, diegetic sounds, or any appearances or gestures from the characters, simply by the presence of *nanguan* music.

The lyrics of both *nanguan* songs support the story. Historically, most *nanguan* songs sung in performances by courtesans were sad love songs. As LIN points out, this was because 'many men from the mainland came across the Taiwan Strait for a living and so they left their beloved. These songs reflected their memories for their beloved. Also, [...] courtesans expressed their emotional bonds to their patrons through these lovesick songs'.¹⁷ The first *nanguan* song we hear is 'Gung Chun Chie Tuo' (literally 'with you together') which was commonly sung by courtesans during the Japanese colonial period.¹⁸ The lyrics concern an adolescent girl who commits herself to the man she loves, before they spend their first night together. The war horn is sounded at night and the man has to go back to the camp. Towards the end, the lyrics say, 'I know we are meant to be, I know we are'. Since the lyrics do not offer the man's response, in the context of this film, this song implies that although Ah-mei may long for Mr. CHANG's love, ultimately they may not have a

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁶ LIN Yi-ru, 'A String of Melodized Singing Voice: A Study of the Music of Taiwan Yi-dan in the Japanese Colonial Period' (unpublished master's thesis, National Taiwan University, 2008), p. 22.

¹⁷ LIN, 'A Study of the Music of Taiwan Yi-dan in the Japanese Colonial Period', p. 73.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 206.

happy ending.

With the song ‘Gung Chun Chie Tuo’ having already established time, space, and the relationship between Mr. CHANG and Ah-mei at the opening of this episode, the camera leads us to the dining room where Mr. CHANG is eating at a table along with his friends. Continuous and uncut, the song accompanies the sequence from the beginning of this episode to the scene in the dining room, at which point we see Ah-mei performing on the Pi-pa; her music and the images of her performing then fade and the following scene in her room commences, which is set to a piano accompaniment. Not only do the accompanying *nanguan* songs support the narrative; the way images are filmed and edited conveys further messages. In the first *nanguan* song scene, Ah-mei is shot from behind and only part of her body is shown (see right foreground in Figure 5.2(a)). She is sitting down, holding her Pi-pa (a Chinese string instrument) and performing in the corner of the dining room, while Mr. CHANG and his friends are in centre frame. The *nanguan* song continues until suddenly Mr. CHANG turns to look at Ah-mei and smiles (Figure 5.2(b)). A shot/reverse shot is taken of Mr. CHANG’s viewing perspective, and a 180 degree turn to shoot Ah-mei from the front: we have been encouraged to believe that it is Ah-mei singing the song over the last four minutes because her lip movements match the song lyrics heard in the dining room (Figure 5.2(c)). The scene of Ah-mei’s performance is followed by the shot of Mr. CHANG smiling at her. The editing of images in this sequence implies a hierarchy between Mr. CHANG and Ah-mei, and this hierarchy will be further confirmed in the second *nanguan* sequence: we see Ah-mei’s performance through Mr. CHANG’s eyes — a classic point-of-view shot.



Figure 5.2(a) Mr. CHANG is eating with his friends.



Figure 5.2(b) Mr. CHANG looks at Ah-mei.



Figure 5.2(c) The camera then turns to Ah-mei.

Figure 5.2(a)-(c) Screen grabs of 'the first *nanguan* song' scene

Ah-mei's performance fades out twenty seconds later, once we have seen her face and the *nanguan* song has come to an end. The title of this episode, 'A Time for Freedom', is shown, which introduces the main part of this episode. Scenes following the title page are accompanied by the sounds of a piano, and we do not hear another *nanguan* song until the moment towards the end of this episode when Ah-mei realises, heartbroken, that Mr. CHANG won't marry her. Here the second *nanguan* song 'Tu Mi Jia', narrating an unrequited relationship, parallels and supports the narrative. In this sequence, the end of the piano music and the reappearance of *nanguan* music, accompanying Ah-mei's question, seem to signal a return to the realistic situation, in which she is/will be a courtesan and her dream of marrying Mr. CHANG will not be fulfilled. Retrospectively, the nondiegetic piano accompaniment to most of the sequence constructs it as her dream.

The song, 'Tu Mi Jia', continues and leads to the next scene: Ah-mei's second *nanguan* performance in the dining room. This scene is largely parallel to the opening *nanguan* sequence. However, this time Mr. CHANG doesn't turn around to look at Ah-mei as he had in the previous scene (Figure 5.3(a)). The camera now frames Ah-mei from the left, and her facial expressions are hardly recognisable (see Figure 5.3(b)). Differences in the editing of these two *nanguan* sequences reinforce the hierarchical relationship between Mr. CHANG and Ah-mei: when Mr. CHANG fails to look back at her in the second scene, her subjectivity cannot be established as a whole. This hierarchy is confirmed by paralleling these two sequences. Although the spoken language is removed here, a *liubai* in the diegetic sound world, the framing and the editing of images all help to deliver narrative meanings. The music, which moves from piano to *nanguan* song, also suggests Ah-mei's awareness of her dream compared to the reality of being a courtesan.



Figure 5.3(a) Mr. CHANG, who never turns around to look at Ah-mei.

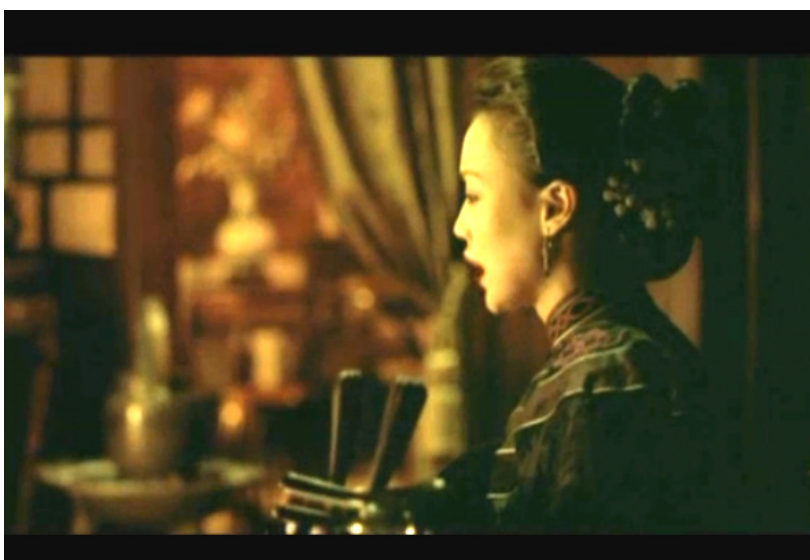


Figure 5.3(b) Ah-Mei

Figure 5.3(a)-(b) Shots in the second *nanguan* scene

‘Tu Mi Jia’ is a song that describes the story of unrequited love and the lyrics of these two *nanguan* songs support such a narrative: while at the beginning of the film, Ah-mei looks forward to finding true love with Mr. CHANG, by the end she realises that it will not be reciprocated. The scene that follows the second dining room sequence is in the hallway of the brothel; the caption ‘Three months later, The Wuchang Uprising’ is shown as the sound of *nanguan* fades. In the sequence that follows, diegetic sounds are faithfully reproduced: the singing, the instrumental performances when the old mentor teaches the little girl singing, and the sound of

scissors when Ah-mei opens the letter from Mr. CHANG. Nevertheless, no diegetic dialogue is heard and the intertitle is still in use. In other words, the last sequence of this episode draws the silent episode to a close by foreshadowing the coming of the next episode, a sound film section.

Music without lyrics — the piano

In *Three Times*, HOU's use of *nanguan* music along with his minimalist editing and framing of images helps to narrate a story without spoken dialogue and to delineate the emotions of the plot around the diegetic silence — a *liubai* — in diegetic sound-space, just as a voice-over does for the silent central figure in *A City of Sadness*. However, as mentioned above, between the two *nanguan* songs there is a section of piano improvisation. Regardless of whether the piano section is examined from the viewpoint of its musical genre (music without text), its musical texture (it is a freely-improvised style), or the way the pianist works with the director (the pianist didn't see the images she was accompanying), this section seems to be deliberately constructed to avoid strict logical development. In this episode piano music then creates an atmosphere that invites audiences to experience the film rather than to understand it, which again links with the aesthetics of *liubai*.

Part of HOU's cinematic embrace of the *liubai* philosophy seems to be to assign audiences more active roles in the watching experience by deliberately leaving 'blank spaces' in both aural and visual domains. In *nanguan* musical sections, the diegetic dialogue and sounds are silenced, yet the song lyrics deliver some relatively specific narrative meanings. The same is not true of music without a text, such as piano music. Moreover, the piano music is improvised in a quasi-Debussyan style: it is full of ornaments, fast running passages, parallel chords (parallel octaves, sixths, and so on), absent of any sense of metrical pulse. The characteristics of

quasi-Debussyian piano music, which puts the emphasis on changes of mood and colour rather than following systematic harmonic and motivic developments, supports HOU's poetic filmic strategies. In Chinese aesthetics the logic of cause-and-effect is not a narrative preference but rather the idea of *liubai*: as YEH and Davis put it, for films this means 'inviting audiences into a cinematic space, not to understand, connecting cause and effect, but to experience'.¹⁹ From this perspective, the improvisatory piano style — which ignores conventional (cause and effect) motivic developments and architectonic harmonic structure but emphasises the freedom of harmony and melodic development in order to emphasise sensibility — provides HOU with an appropriate backdrop to support his *liubai* aesthetics.

Overall, phrasings of the piano accompaniment coincide with the narrative sections of the episode: the music diminishes when the image fades out, and whenever a new image sequence begins, another musical section is presented. Each section has a different tone colour; some have more fast passing notes while some have more sustained notes, albeit that the music in all sections is freely-improvised, metreless and revolves around the same tonal/modal centre. The tone of this piano improvisatory section, therefore, is similar to that of a poem, in which each phrase has a different colour and the pianist provides each small narrative part with a different style of improvisation.

According to TU Du-che, the editing and synchronisation of music in this piano sequence was done by HOU with his technical teams; it was not synchronised by the pianist. Here not only for the audiences, HOU also assigned the pianist a very free space for creation and an active role in the filmmaking process:

¹⁹ YEH and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, p. 134.

There was no score for the piano, so the pianist improvised according to her feelings. [...] She didn't play the piano while watching the film. She just imagined the scenes and improvised. [...] We then thought about where and how to cut and place her piano improvisations with the images. Therefore, when she played the piano, she had no idea how her music would be cut and how we would arrange it with the images. She was free to improvise whatever she imagined.²⁰

It is entirely in the spirit of *liubai* that HOU deliberately creates very vague narrative connections between the image and the music; not only is the audience unable to hear the characters in the film, the pianist in the recording studio was unable to see the images she seems to have accompanied. We might conclude from this that HOU hoped that the music might help audiences to *experience* the feelings of each scene rather *understand* the meaning of images. Both the pianist and the audiences are encouraged, in the spirit of *liubai*, to free their imaginations while they respectively improvise and watch.

Sonic transitions: the magic of *liubai*

Since *Three Times* has a three-episode structure with the silent episode in the middle, it is interesting to see how HOU deals with transitions between the sound and silent episodes. These transitions are smooth, and I would argue that the idea of *liubai* may contribute to their seamlessness. In Chinese ink painting and calligraphy, there is a technique derived from the concept of *liubai*, called *feibai* (literally, 'flying white', see Figure 5.4), for which the brushstroke has deliberately insufficient ink, so that there seems to be no distinct borderline between the ink part and the blank part. As Simon Leys puts it, the ink in the painting and calligraphic strokes 'are divested of part of their material substance; they are thinned out in order better to reveal the

²⁰ Author's interview with TU, 29 June 2009.

actual gesture that originates and underlies them'.²¹ In doing so, the edges between the black and the white are blurred, leaving audiences the space for imagination, in the same way *liubai* does.



Figure 5.4 An example of *feibai* technique in calligraphy²²

We might hear the transitions between the silent and final sound episodes according to this principle. When the second *nanguan* song, ‘Tu Mi Jia’, fades out near the end of this episode, we see a *nanguan* master teaching a small girl, and hear their singing as the backdrop. No dialogue is presented between the teacher and the girl, however. The next cut leads us to Ah-mei’s room, where the servant delivers her a letter from Mr. CHANG. Ah-mei slowly opens it with scissors; the *nanguan* teaching in the hall next to her room can still be heard but at a lower volume. Intertitles show the poem that Mr. CHANG has written on the letter; sounds of the *nanguan* master teaching the girl can still be heard. With the *nanguan* music sustained, the camera stays on Ah-mei in this last scene: she touches the letter gently and weeps. The image fades out into complete darkness, though the last few notes of *nanguan* music can be heard if one listens very carefully. From the dark on-screen visual blank, the sound of motoring slowly emerges, an audio lead in practice, and we are led to a scene showing a couple riding a motorcycle over a bridge. We have

²¹ Simon Leys, *The Burning Forest: Essays on Chinese Culture and Politics* (London: Paladin, 1988), pp. 29-30.

²² From

<http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b0097d601000830.html-type=v5_one&label=rela_prevarticle> [accessed 1 September 2008]

arrived at the third episode set in 2005.

As in the calligraphy technique *feibai*, here the border between cinematic silence and sound is blurred. In the last sequence of the second episode in *Three Times*, HOU adds in diegetic sounds little by little, a very subtly executed ‘audio lead’. This is done without the use of spoken language; while the intertitles continue to be used, the audience won’t necessarily sense the transition between the silent and sound-based sequences. Furthermore, just as Chinese zither performers prolong the feeling of the music by sliding up and down the string to produce the ‘music’ of silence, audiences in *Three Times* hang on to the exquisite silent world while the sense of a silent film thins out. Once again, we experience the beauty of *liubai*.

The fade out

By embracing the concept of *liubai* HOU has turned silence into a profoundly versatile part of his filmmaking and also forged profound ties with traditions of Cultural China. As Bordwell concludes, Chinese cinema ‘owes its energy not only to national and regional traditions, but to the sheer power of film in the hands of creative artists’.²³ Co-opting the concept of *liubai* is HOU’s key way of claiming his Cultural Chinese identity. In *Three Times*, *liubai* seems to have inspired him to reactivate and recast certain silent film mannerisms for his own purposes, and to create sonic constructions that are quite distinctive. Crucially, HOU’s deployment of silence provides an alternative and creative approach to reconsidering the role that silence plays in the expressive vocabulary of cinema.

²³ Bordwell, ‘Toward A Poetics of Chinese Film’, p. 161.

Part Three ‘Bring the World Together’: Music in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang LEE, 2000)

Perhaps one of the most visible, globally popular, and cinematically influential forces to emerge from Taiwan cinema has been the martial arts genre, particularly the work of Ang LEE. The success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang LEE, 2000) and its stylistic fusions led to the American Film Institute selecting the film as one of the five significant ‘events’ in the world of the moving images during 2000: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* ‘brings the world together’, its website claimed.¹ ‘Bring the world together’ is a rather strong claim, especially given its political overtones; nevertheless, it reflects something of the hybrid essence of *Crouching Tiger*, a blend that in turn reflects the production contexts of Taiwan cinema. The American Film Institute claimed that *Crouching Tiger* ‘marked a watershed moment in the ongoing emergence of global cinema which fuses storytelling style and substance from many cultures into a new sensibility that is accepted and enjoyed irrespective of language’.² The core substance among the fused elements in *Crouching Tiger* derives from the Cultural Chinese tradition: namely, the martial arts film. The story is from Cultural China — an adaptation by martial arts fiction writer WANG Dulu of a story that dates back to the Qing Dynasty. The actors and actresses themselves are all Chinese in appearance even though they belong to different

¹ The complete text is as follows: ‘CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON BRINGS THE WORLD TOGETHER. The success of CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON marked a watershed moment in the ongoing emergence of global cinema which fuses storytelling style and substance from many cultures into a new sensibility that is accepted and enjoyed irrespective of language’. From American Film Institute website.
<<http://www.afi.com/tvevents/afi2000/afi2000.aspx>> [accessed 2 May 2010]

² From American Film Institute website. <<http://www.afi.com/tvevents/afi2000/afi2000.aspx>> [accessed 2 May 2010]

nationalities. To this extent *Crouching Tiger* looks like a very regional production, one that displays considerable history and aesthetics from the broader Cultural Chinese tradition. However, LEE actually attempted to ‘present a contemporary rendition of a classical Chinese work in a way that was acceptable to the West’.³ In order to do this, he reconfigured genre stereotypes from martial arts films, (re)packaged ideas from the Cultural Chinese tradition as well as from the West, creating a kind of ‘third space’ for both sides, and delivered a film that he hoped would attract audiences all over the world.⁴ We can read this film as an example of grassroots globalisation that draws attention to the non-dominant film culture.

The music and sound of *Crouching Tiger* reflects a similar hybrid production pattern.⁵ For the film LEE and the composer TAN Dun mingled various musical idioms and styles from Chinese culture and from European and American cultures. The techniques are similar to those that Miguel Mera has discussed in his extensive analysis of the score for LEE’s *The Ice Storm*, whose style he characterises as ‘a fascinating mixture of classical Western instruments, gamelan and Native American flute’.⁶ In *Crouching Tiger*, the musical elements used include the leitmotif idea, originally from Western opera, the idea of smooth transitions between narrative and spectacle scenes, typical of American film musicals, and an orchestral underscoring style typical of Hollywood narrative film. At the same time, it draws on the percussion patterns from Beijing opera and performances of traditional Chinese instruments, such as the Ba-wu (a woodwind instrument originally from the southern

³ Georgette WANG and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH, ‘Globalization and Hybridization in Cultural Production’, in *East-West Identities: Globalization, Localization, and Hybridization*, ed. by CHAN Kwok-bun, Jan W. Walls and David Hayward (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 77-98 (p. 95).

⁴ See WANG and YEH, ‘Globalization and Hybridization in Cultural Production’, pp. 77-98.

⁵ The hybrid musical style is characteristic of many of Ang LEE’s films. As he points out, ‘so far I have used music from both the East and the West in my films, [...] except in *Sense and Sensibility*.’ CHANG Jing-pei ed., *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking* (Shinian yi jiao dianying meng) (Taipei: Shibao Publishing, 2002), p. 217.

⁶ Miguel Mera, *Mychael Danna’s The Ice Storm: A Film Score Guide* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2007), p. 170.

China), Er-hu (a string instrument originally from the northern China) and a number of Chinese percussion instruments. TAN claims, 'we attempted to search for a balance by mixing Chinese traditional music with Western orchestral music'.⁷ TAN and LEE combined talents from the Chinese-language communities: the main theme of the film is played by Chinese/American cellist Yo-yo MA and sung by Taiwanese/American singer Coco LEE, for instance. However they created a new style of music by mixing elements of the West with those of Cultural China. The Beijing opera percussion idiom, which is commonly used in martial arts films, establishes the Cultural Chinese flavour, and yet is transformed into a fresh style that makes the percussion sequences sound closer to the Hollywood film music tradition. The fact that *Crouching Tiger* won an Academy Award for Best Music shows that its music stood out.

Best Music is not the only Academy Award won by *Crouching Tiger*; it was also awarded Best Foreign Language Film, Best Cinematography, and Best Art Direction. On the one hand, the Academy Award triumphs recognise the film's novelty; on the other hand, they suggest that it accords with global public tastes, considering the fact that nominations for, and the winning of, Academy Awards are significantly related to revenues.⁸ The success of *Crouching Tiger* initiated a series of martial arts productions in Chinese-language film circles: *Hero* (ZHANG Yimou, 2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (ZHANG Yimou, 2004) and *The Promise* (CHEN Kaige, 2005), *Kung Fu Dunk* (Yen-ping CHU, 2008), *The Treasure Hunter* (Yen-ping CHU, 2009), *True Legend* (Woo-ping YUEN, 2010), *Jianyu* (Chou-bin SU, 2010), *Wu Xia* (Peter CHAN, 2011), and so on. All of the martial arts films mentioned above are major productions aimed at the transnational market, and which draw on talent from both

⁷ LAN, *Film Music Composers*, p. 206.

⁸ S. Abraham Ravid, 'Information, Blockbusters, and Stars: A Study on the Film Industry', *The Journal of Business*, 72 (1999), 463-92 (p. 467).

sides of the Taiwan Strait, even both sides of the Pacific Ocean, and attract international funding. This phenomenon shows that film cultures other than European and American traditions are not necessarily weaker any more, but are resources that provide novelty to Hollywood: a mutual give-and-take process between cultures has emerged, LEE notes.⁹ This has immediate economic consequences, given that Hollywood is expected to earn up to eighty percent of its revenue from abroad in the next twenty years.¹⁰

Although more and more Chinese-speaking directors have tried to follow *Crouching Tiger*'s model to achieve global success, so far no one has replicated LEE in international revenues and numbers of important awards received in the field of martial arts films. The success of *Crouching Tiger* is described by historian Jennifer W. Jay as '(re)packaging Chinas and selling the hybridized culture in an age of transnationalism'.¹¹ My exploration of music in *Crouching Tiger* proceeds from Jay's claim: Chapters Six and Seven focus on the ways in which LEE '(re)packages Chinas' via the martial arts film genre in the visual domain and martial arts director King HU's concept of 'cinema opera' in the sound and music, and also explore *Crouching Tiger*'s use of transnational Chinese talents such as choreographer YUEH Woo-ping (Hong Kong), composer TAN Dun (China/US), art director Tim YIP (Hong Kong), cinematographer Peter PAU (Hong Kong), the main actors Yun-Fat CHOW (Hong Kong) and CHANG Chen (Taiwan), and main actresses Michelle YEOH (Malaysia) and ZHANG Zi-yi (China). Except actors and actresses, all the

⁹ CHANG Jing-pei, ed., *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking* (Shinian yi jiao dianying meng) (Taipei: Shibao Publishing, 2002), pp. 450-53.

¹⁰ Christina Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood: Breaking down the Notion of a Distinctly American Cinema', *YaleGlobal*, 25 March 2003 <<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/asia-factor-global-hollywood>> [accessed 18 August 2011]

¹¹ Here Jennifer Jay uses the word 'China' in the plural form to refer to a transnational China created by LEE's team of Chinese diaspora talents. Jennifer W. Jay, '*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: (Re)packaging Chinas and Selling the Hybridized Culture in an Age of Transnationalism', in *Reading Chinese Transnationalisms: Society, Literature, Film*, ed. by Maria N. Ng and Philip Holden (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), pp. 131-42.

abovementioned people on the production side won Oscars. LEE claimed in one of his public statements, 'I think the achievement is an accumulation of all the endeavours that all Chinese filmmakers have put in over the years'.¹² Chapter Eight presents a detailed textual analysis of music and sound in *Crouching Tiger*, exploring how musical ideas and concepts from different cultural traditions have been developed, transformed, and blended to make *Crouching Tiger* a hybridised product that might attract audiences around the world.

¹² From CNN.com (2001). Quoting from Jay, '*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: (Re)packaging Chinas and Selling the Hybridized Culture in an Age of Transnationalism*', p. 132.

Chapter 6. Martial Arts Genre Film and Cinema Opera: Roots of the Cultural Chinese Tradition in *Crouching Tiger*

Long before film technology was invented at the beginning of the twentieth century, martial arts training and tales were an established part of Cultural China. For centuries, martial arts tales have been invented and subsequently assimilated into Chinese literature, regional operas and, more recently, films. They are deeply implanted in the hearts of the Chinese diaspora, including in Taiwan, forming a part of the core culture that links this imagined community across the boundaries of nations. This community is not only constructed from within (from people of the Chinese diaspora), it is also framed from outside. To people in the West, these martial arts tales present an image of a remote, imaginary Cultural China. As Roger Garcia claims, martial arts films are ‘a form of “mythic remembrance” for the diaspora, a legitimating fantasy’.¹ David Bordwell interprets Garcia’s idea further: no matter how ‘unhappy Chinese history has really been, one can imagine belonging to a country of stable traditions — not of law or government, but of honorable personal conduct. The *wuxia* [literally, martial arts and chivalry] tales make honour a matter of family, school and, ultimately, the individual’.² Martial arts tales and films are thus a distinct cultural expression that helps to construct the sense of ‘imagined community’ for people of the world-wide Chinese diaspora, people who have distinct political inclinations but share the same Cultural Chinese inheritance. The tales provide LEE with resources for making a film based on Cultural Chinese traditions but for a global audience.

¹ David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 194.

² *Ibid.*

These martial arts tales were absorbed into Chinese-language film production soon after the new technology from the West was invented, and the emergence of martial arts films in the early twentieth century made a great contribution to the establishment of a united national filmmaking identity. The first peak period of martial arts film production was initiated with the production *Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (Shichuan ZHANG, 1928). This film was extremely popular and was followed by second and third sequels in the same year, sequels 4-9 in 1929, sequels 10-16 in 1930 and sequels 17-18 in 1931.³ The popularity of the film, eighteen series within three years, was not only the greatest in Chinese-language cinema, but has also been without any competitors until now. The *Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* series was also important in improving filmic techniques. In order to keep attracting audiences, the filming and technical teams of *Burning* had to incorporate more and more spectacular scenes, such as wires to make characters fly and walk on walls, while applying editing techniques to present unbelievable martial arts skills.⁴ The flying and walking on wall sequences in *Crouching Tiger* are therefore old tricks. In addition to this series, between 1929 and 1931 there were more than 250 martial arts films, about 60 percent of the total film production in China at that time.⁵ The rise of martial arts films in the 1920-30s was also a key event, not only for the improvement of film technology, but in establishing a local film industry in the history of Chinese-language cinema. Since the film industry in China at that time was not as developed as that in the West, Chinese-made films were unable to compete with imported films, as most films on screen in China were imported from outside China.⁶ Given this significant imbalance, the emergence and popularity of

³ From Chinese Wusia Knight-errant, Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, Taiwan, ROC. <http://edu.ocac.gov.tw/culture/chinese/cul_kungfu/c/4121-1.htm> [accessed 31 October 2009]

⁴ JIA, *The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films*, p. 52.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶ For example, the budget of a Hollywood film was around 150,000 to 200,000 USD while the

martial arts films, a local popular film genre, had positive effects on the relatively weak film industry in China. Furthermore, although based in several major film studios in Shanghai, martial arts films gained popularity within the Chinese diaspora of Southeast Asia.⁷ The ancient Chinese aspects in *wuxia* films created an abstract China that people in the Chinese diaspora share spiritually, a certain affinity that constructs a ‘deterritorialized Chinese subjectivity’, a subjectivity that ‘cannot be contained by the state apparatuses of either mainland China or Taiwan’.⁸ This period, 1928-31, marked ‘the early transnationalism of martial arts film’ for film scholar Stephen Teo, while the late transnationalism began in the 1970s.⁹ In other words, for Teo the transnationalism of Chinese-language cinema began as early as the 1920s, and began with martial arts films.

The film industry in China and in Taiwan faced constant interruption by the wars that followed.¹⁰ After the civil war ended in 1949, the popularity of martial arts films dropped in China but developed further and flourished in Hong Kong and Taiwan. They reached their second peak in 1960s-70s Taiwan cinema and Hong Kong cinema. As discussed in Chapter Two, the 1960s-70s was the first golden era of Taiwan cinema, and the popularity of martial arts film production contributed to this peak era. With melodrama it was one of the two main genres. During this period

budget of a Chinese-made film was 5,000 to 20,000; Chinese-made films were unable to compete with these imported films on quality. LU Hongshi, ed., *Chinese Cinema: Description and Interpretation* (Zhongguo dianying miaoshu yu chanshi) (Beijing: Zhongguo Dianying Publishing, 2002), pp. 100-14; quoted in JIA, *The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films*, p. 48

⁷ ZHANG Zhen, ‘Bodies in the Air: The Magic of Science and the Fate of the Early “Martial Arts” Film in China’, in *Chinese-language Films*, pp. 52-75 (p. 70).

⁸ Mayfair Mei-hui YANG, ‘Mass Media and Transnational Subjectivity in Shanghai: Notes on (Re)Cosmopolitanism in a Chinese Metropolis’, in *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. by Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 341; quoted in Stephen Teo, ‘*Wuxia* Redux, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a Model of Late Transnational Production’, in *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*, ed. by Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung LI and Stephen CHAN Ching-kiu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 191-204 (p. 194).

⁹ See Teo, ‘*Wuxia* Redux’, pp. 191-204.

¹⁰ There were numerous wars that took place in China, such as the Sino-Japanese war in the 1930-40s, and the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists in the 1940s.

several martial arts film directors and stars emerged, such as King HU, CHANG Che, GUO Nan-hong and CHENG Pei-pei.¹¹ This is the generation of martial arts films that entertained LEE throughout his childhood in Taiwan. Among the directors HU's martial arts aesthetics inspired LEE most, and LEE praised and wanted to revive HU's 'operatic' style when making *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.¹²

King HU's cinema opera

King HU's martial arts film style was praised by scholars as 'cinema opera' in which he invented 'a combination of pure cinema and operatic stylistics derived from traditions in Beijing opera'.¹³ As Huaiting WU and Joseph Man CHAN point out, HU's influences, such as 'the incorporation of dance and the acrobatic moves of Chinese opera into a previously stiff style, the use of elaborate camera movements, and the offer of equal or superior standing in the world of action to women' can be recognised in LEE's *Crouching Tiger*.¹⁴ Born in Beijing in 1932, but moving to Hong Kong in 1949, HU began martial arts filmmaking in Hong Kong. However, he soon left Hong Kong and established his martial arts film career in Taiwan since he

¹¹ Bruce LEE, who also emerged in this period and is well known worldwide, is not included in my discussion of martial arts films for three main reasons. While *Crouching Tiger* belongs to the sword-fighting style, LEE's films belong to the fist-fighting style, and although his case illustrates well how a local genre can be sold globally, his films were made in the 1960s-70s, which falls well outside the temporal scope of this thesis. Finally, the fact that his films are from an earlier period means that the theoretical issues involved in discussing their reception in the West mainly concern nationalism, rather than transnationalism, the theoretical thread of this thesis. For discussions on nationalism in Bruce LEE's films, see, for instance, Siu Leung LI, 'Kung Fu: Negotiating Nationalism and Modernity', *Cultural Studies*, 15 (2001), 515-42; Yuan Shu, 'Reading the Kung Fu Film in An American Context: From Bruce LEE to Jackie CHAN', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 31 (2003), 50-59; Vivian LEE, 'Virtual Bodies, Flying Objects: The Digital Imaginary in Contemporary Martial Arts Films', *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 1 (2006), 9-26.

¹² See CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*; Stephen Teo, *King HU's A Touch of Zen* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).

¹³ Teo, *A Touch of Zen*, p. 97. For further discussion of how HU incorporated Beijing opera idioms to make his productions distinctive from others, see for instance, Teo, *King HU's A Touch of Zen*; Peter Rist, 'King HU: Experimental, Narrative Filmmaker', in *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, pp. 161-71; Hector Rodriguez, 'Questions of Chinese Aesthetics: Film Form and Narrative Space in the Cinema of King HU', *Cinema Journal*, 38 (1998), 73-97.

¹⁴ Huaiting WU and Joseph Man CHAN, 'Globalizing Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Global-local Alliance and The Production of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*', *Media Culture Society*, 29 (2007), 195-217 (p. 207).

regarded himself as an *auteur* director, and wished to avoid the quick, duplicative production model of Hong Kong filmmakers. HU's artistic style made his martial arts films attractive and he became one of the first Chinese-language directors to be awarded a prize at a major international film festival: his 1970 production *A Touch of Zen* won the Technical Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975.

HU's combination of filmmaking techniques with Beijing opera idioms creates a very particular audio-visual result. The music, sounds, bodily movements, and narrative in traditional Beijing opera relate so closely to each other that the common English phrase 'going to the opera' is rendered in Mandarin as *ting xi*, which literally means 'listening to theatre'.¹⁵ Beijing opera has two main plot types: civil plays (*wenxi*) and martial plays (*wuxi*); in civil plays, emotions are mostly expressed by singing, while in martial plays, activity is expressed by martial displays. The sounds and music which accompany martial displays are mostly performed by the percussion orchestra, which consists of four basic instruments: 'the drum-and-clapper (*guban*), the large gong (*daluo*), the small gong (*xiaoluo*) and the cymbals (*naobo*)'.¹⁶ The percussion orchestra could perform with or without melody orchestra (pitched instruments), and is usually without melody orchestra during fight scenes. When performed independently, the four functions of the percussion orchestra are to provide speech punctuation, movement punctuation, sound effects and structural punctuation.¹⁷ 'Speech punctuation' refers to those moments when the percussion orchestra provides aural punctuation marks, such as question marks, commas, etc., while accompanying the speech of stage performers. For example, a three-line poem in the traditional Beijing opera *Silang Visits His*

¹⁵ Colin Mackerras, *Peking Opera, Images of Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 52.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), p. 233.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 255-62

Mother is punctuated by the percussion orchestra in the following way:¹⁸

(The speech)	(The percussion orchestra)
The <i>wutong</i> tree locked in a golden courtyard,	D D
A long sigh	
carried away on the breeze.	d d D D
[‘D’ refers to ‘one firm beat by small gong’; ‘d’ is ‘one firm beat of the right stick of clapper-drum.’]	

Here the | D D | percussion passage works as a comma while the passage d d | D D | as a full stop. In addition to providing regular points such as a comma and a period, the percussion orchestra also amplifies dramatic points. Take a short sequence in *Yu Tangchun*, for example:¹⁹

WANG Jinlong:	Prisoner!	
YU Tangchun:	Yes.	
WANG:	Do you have a statement?	
YU:	Yes, I do.	
WANG:	Submit it.	
YU:	It... I cannot.	d d d d O D – [‘O’ means a rest.]

Here the percussion passage signifies a dramatic turn of mood: YU claims that she has the statement and is expected to submit it to the court, but she suddenly changes her position to say she can’t.

‘Movement punctuation’ refers to moments when the percussion punctuates major movements on the stage, such as entering, leaving, crossing the stage, beginning or ending an action, and so on. This function is especially important in dance-acting scenes and combat sequences. For example, when a character completes the action of writing a letter, we hear a single percussion strike. A percussion passage also stresses emotional feelings lying behind movements made by a character. For

¹⁸ Quoting from Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre*, p. 256.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

example, when a character is nodding his or her head in order to show that s/he has made a decision after a process of thought, the head movements are likely to be accented by percussion strikes and the strikes are also meant to express the character's determination, or an emotional expression. In short, these percussion passages punctuate not only the movements of characters but also their emotions: there may therefore be different percussion passages for the same character when s/he walks in fear as opposed to when s/he walks in anger. By listening to the percussion accompaniment, viewers are already able to tell the characters' feelings without hearing any lines. As in the dance-acting scenes discussed above, the percussion passages in combat displays not only punctuate the movements but also offer expressive effects.

The 'sound effects' category Wichmann has defined means that the percussion orchestra is used to convey sound effects for any natural or human-made events, such as rain, wind, a knock on the door, etc. The percussion orchestra also functions as a sectional signifier: it punctuates the opening of each play, with 'scene openers' (*kaichang*), transitions ('scene shifters' (*zhuanchang*)), and the closing of each play ('tail sounds' (*weisheng*)).²⁰ These stylised musical elements are so well-developed that one can imagine what the movements are simply by 'listening to' the Beijing opera. One does not actually need to see them.

The fight scenes in HU's films were accompanied by musical idioms adapted and developed from Beijing opera. In fact, the close links between Beijing opera and martial arts films have been present since the very beginning of Chinese-language cinema, even when film production developed from the silent to the sound era. The first Chinese-made film, *Dingjun Shan* (Dingjun Mountain, 1905), consists of four fight scenes taken from a Beijing opera, also entitled *Dingjun Shan*, and featuring a

²⁰ Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre*, p. 261

famous Beijing opera master Lord TAN. In Beijing opera performers have to learn how to make every movement, such as how to walk, sit, point fingers, wave their hands, and so on, and they are required to control these gestures deliberately. This is especially important when one considers the fact that in traditional Beijing opera, the stage is almost empty. Traditional Chinese operas keep props on the stage to a minimum, which is in keeping with the nature of an ‘abstract theatre’, and “[s]cenes exist on the actor’s *body*”.²¹ As YUNG Sai-shing puts it, ‘Chinese opera is an actor-oriented theater’, in which the audience’s focus is on actors’ performing skills.²² Performers have to communicate with audiences by mime gestures, rather than by using real stage props, in order to lead audiences into the meanings and the emotions of the scenes. For example, when a Beijing opera performer is walking upstairs, there are no stairs on the stage. The performer skilfully mimics the ‘stepping upstairs’ movements. When he/she opens a door, there is no door on the stage. When he/she is eating, there is nothing in his/her hands. Beijing opera theatre audiences are not confused by this empty stage formula; since the gestures are highly stylised, there is no difficulty in understanding what the performer is doing. In the silent film era before the invention of sound synchronisation, and when editing and other devices that help audiences to understand film narrative were still in their infancy, fight sequences from a Beijing opera had some advantages on screen. They could be easily understood because of the well-known bodily gestures, which ensured that the absence of sound in the silent era wasn’t an issue. Moreover, Beijing opera was already an enduring performing art in Chinese society. Beijing opera lovers became potential audiences for films as a new technology and a novel representative art form from the West. As JIA Leilei concludes, ‘the Beijing opera

²¹ YUNG Sai-shing, ‘Moving Body: The Interactions Between Chinese Opera and Action Cinema’, in *Hong Kong Connections*, pp. 21-34 (p. 28).

²² *Ibid.*

fight scenes in *Dingjun Shan*, not only re-interpret the art of traditional Chinese opera, but also mark a crucial point in the development of Chinese martial arts films. [...] This film, particularly, had a great impact on the design and performance of fight scenes in Chinese martial arts films'.²³ The films were still silent, however.

Although martial arts film directors incorporated the fighting gestures of Beijing operas from the early 1900s, in the following decades those directors focused on developing spectacular fighting gestures rather than paying attention to refining the music and sound accompanying them. It was not until the late 1960s when HU, a director who was a Beijing opera lover and had learnt it in his youth, deployed and developed the sounds and gestures of this operatic tradition further in martial arts films. Of the elements adopted, music and sound were the most distinctive.

As JIOU Hsiung-ping points out, HU is the first director to have incorporated percussion idioms and the expression of eyes in martial arts film editing, all of which make the filmic rhythm more energetic.²⁴ These stylised uses of percussion to accompany movements and actions in Beijing opera are found in HU's martial arts film. Let us take a short excerpt from HU's *Raining in the Mountain* (1979) to consider how audio-visual synchronisation works in his films. The film concerns two groups which arrive at a temple in order to search for a precious sutra. In this excerpt, one of the groups, a female thief and her partner, are going to steal the sutra from the temple. The woman is in the temple while the man is outside, and he is waiting for the woman's signals to climb over the wall and sneak in. An audio-visual analysis of the excerpt follows:

²³ JIA, *The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films*, p. 43.

²⁴ JIOU Hsiung-ping, 'The Warrior in Film Making: Maestro King HU', *UNITAS*, 13 (1997), 100-10 (p. 105); quoted in Ning DAI, 'Sound Designs in Martial Arts Films: A Comparison of *Come Drink with Me* (King HU) and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang LEE) (Wuxiapian sheng yin guize zhi yunyong: King HU *Da Zui Xia* yu Ang LEE *Wo Hu Cang Long*)' (unpublished master's thesis, National Cheng-Chi University, 2005), p. 58.

Chinese Snare Drum			
		The woman looks around.	The man climbs on the wall, then jumps down.
Wooden Clapper			
	The woman looks around. She runs. She stops running.	She makes a turn.	A close-up on the man A close-up on the woman
Chinese Bass Drum			
		A close-up on the man, who is outside the wall.	

Figure 6.1 Analysis of an excerpt from *Raining in the Mountain*



(She looks around)



(A shot on the man outside the wall)



(She gives him a signal)

Figure 6.2 Shots from the excerpt from *Raining in the Mountain*

From the audio-visual analysis above, one can see how the percussion precisely synchronises with the actors' movements and the camera movements. The percussion music is in a highly improvisatory style, rather than in any fixed metre or rhythmic mode.

The high degree of synchronisation between music and movement in both Beijing opera and HU's cinema might invite comparisons with the rather similar Hollywood technique of 'mickey-mousing', a sync technique that 'consists of following the visual action in synchrony with musical trajectories (rising, falling, zigzagging) and instrumental punctuations of action (blows, falls, door closing)'.²⁵ This technique is frequently used in cartoons and in video games, and is also deployed in some non-animation films. The technique of mickey-mousing vividly punctuates the movements but has been criticised as redundant on the grounds that it lacks aesthetic quality since those sound effects are too close to the moving images;²⁶ both the sounds and the movements are somehow predictable. However, as Chion points out, mickey-mousing serves a distinct function when the bodily figures 'go by too fast'.²⁷ According to Chion, our eyes seem relatively slower to identify fast-moving images than our more dexterous ears. Mickey-mousing therefore 'helps to imprint rapid visual sensations into memory' and 'plays a more important role in this capacity of aiding the apprehension of visual movements than in focusing on its own substance and aural density'.²⁸

Chion's observations about mickey-mousing are relevant to martial arts films. For most viewers, the distinctiveness and pleasures of the martial arts genre come from those fast-moving acrobatic fights. According to LAN Zuwei, these

²⁵ Chion, *Audio-Vision*, pp. 121-22.

²⁶ Annabel J. Cohen, 'Understanding Musical Soundtracks', *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 8 (1990), 111-24 (p. 119).

²⁷ Chion, *Audio-Vision*, p. 122.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

closely-synchronised sound effects were usually added during the post-production editing and performed by Beijing opera percussion instrumentalists in the editing studio, since this was the most efficient way to make the sound effects and bodily movements synchronise precisely.²⁹ However, the dynamics of how a fight scene is created and delivered by a close combination of sounds and images is far more complicated than might be suggested by those spectacular gestures which easily catch audience attention. If music and sound effects are completely excluded from dialogue-free fight scenes, the dynamics of the fighting fall flat. The musical and sonic signals for fluctuations and points of tension and relaxation are all gone.

What HU achieved was not as straightforward as simply incorporating the music and stylised movements from Beijing opera into his films to make a close imitative relationship between sounds and images. First of all, unlike some martial arts directors who treat martial arts displays as a combat show, HU considers martial arts displays as dances. He claims:

I've always taken the action part of my films as dancing rather than fighting. Because I'm very interested in the opera, and particularly its movements and action effects, [I have] always keyed [the action sequences] to the notion of dance [so as] to emphasize the rhythm and tempo, instead of making them more 'authentic' or realistic.³⁰

HU's approach, to regard martial arts displays as dances, makes the fight scenes in his films highly graceful. As action actress CHENG Pei-pei, who worked with HU but is also one of the main characters in *Crouching Tiger*, recalls:

When HU invited me to be the main female character in his martial arts films, I told him that I was not an action actress and I have no idea how to fight. HU

²⁹ Author's interview with LAN, 7 January 2010.

³⁰ Teo, 'The Tao of King HU', p. 30. Quoted from Hector Rodriguez, 'Questions of Chinese Aesthetics: Film Form and Narrative Space in the Cinema of King HU', p. 81.

said, ‘that’s fine, you are a dancer, you just act like you are dancing’. HU taught me those fighting gestures, and I then memorised them as I was dancing.³¹

In addition to treating fighting as dancing, HU artfully used camera movements and editing to set up the style described as ‘cinema opera’, a style that combines the advantages of film and Beijing opera. Dance scholar Judy Mitoma points out how film, as the new technique, can change the way we experience dance: ‘Film and video have spawned entirely new forms of dance, created when director and choreographer go beyond the constraints of the body and find new ways to capture human motion’.³² For example, when the American avant-garde filmmaker Maya Deren made her film-dance *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945), she stopped the camera when the character was at the side of the forest, moved the character to the other side of the forest and then restarted the camera, using cutting and editing techniques to connect all excerpts to create the illusion that her character was dancing ‘uninterruptedly’ all over the forest.³³ This technique of using editing and camera movement to create illusions is certainly evident in martial arts film from the early twentieth century, albeit easily detectable from the artificial ‘extra work’. The frame of stage performances is set: the edges of the stage outline and ‘frame’ the audiences’ view, whilst in filmmaking the frame is regulated by the camera, which can move, zoom in, zoom out, pan, and so on, to capture the movements from any direction and any distance: the body is set free and can move without constraint. With this freedom, what shall or shall not be included in the frame of the camera, and how to connect the cuts, depend on the directors’ and

³¹ Interview with CHENG Pei-pei in the documentary *Cinema Hong Kong* (Ian Taylor, 2003, Hong Kong).

³² Judy Mitoma, ‘Introduction’, in *Envisioning Dance: on Film and Video*, ed. by Judy Mitoma, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. xxxi-xxxii (p. xxxi).

³³ This kind of technique was new in film-dance at that time; nevertheless, it ‘was originated by magician-turned-filmmaker George Méliès at the turn of the twentieth century’, according to filmmaker Amy Greenfield. Amy Greenfield, ‘The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren and Harris’, in *Envisioning Dance*, pp. 21-26 (p. 23).

choreographers' designs. HU's achievements have been praised as 'cinema opera'.

By way of illustration, consider the example of the fight scene in the famous bamboo forest in HU's *A Touch of Zen*, and compare this to the now equally famous Bamboo Forest scene in *Crouching Tiger*. HU's Bamboo Forest fight scene is so distinctive that including a fight scene in a bamboo forest was imitated in subsequent martial arts film productions, including LEE's *Crouching Tiger*, although LEE imbues his production with ideas from Hollywood musicals and so makes his Bamboo Forest sequence stand out from others.³⁴ Film scholar Stephen Teo, who coined the term 'cinema opera', has conducted a detailed analysis of this scene, which he regards as representative of cinema opera. Here the term 'opera' refers not only to Beijing opera but more specifically for Teo to the acrobatic performance in Beijing opera. One excerpt in *A Touch of Zen* (1969) that Teo identifies as a good example of HU's cinema opera style is when YANG (the female warrior) jumps into the air and then dives to the ground, killing the officer and ending this Bamboo Forest fight. The vault is made naturally but the body movements are from Beijing opera.³⁵ YANG reaches a considerable height by jumping onto the male warrior SHI's hand first: SHI pushes her into the air, and through a series of somersaults, dives to kill the officer (see Figure 6.3). This excerpt was filmed separately: the vaults were done on the trampoline and the dive was done 'with the player actually diving into a lake from a ten-meter platform put up specially for the scene'.³⁶ The shots were then connected through montage post-production techniques. This process is what Teo refers to as a combination of Beijing opera acrobatic display and filming technique.

³⁴ As Stephen Teo points out, Ang LEE's *Crouching Tiger* and Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers* 'owe much to HU's film: the key textural indicators of this influence are the Bamboo Forest fight sequences in *Crouching Tiger* and *House of Flying Daggers*, both directly inspired by HU's seminal Bamboo Forest sequence in *A Touch of Zen*'. Teo, *King HU's A Touch of Zen*, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁶ *Ibid.*



(Jump from Shi's palm)

(Into the air)

(Dive)

Figure 6.3 Shots in the Bamboo Forest sequence of *A Touch of Zen*

In contrast with LEE, realism is what HU is concerned with when making fight scenes. For this reason, a trampoline rather than wire work was used for creating a super jump, and all those super-human acrobatic displays came from the actors' genuine play, albeit after post-production editing. Since the sense of realism is important, this sequence of the film is mostly accompanied by diegetic sound effects, such as the yelling of warriors, the weaving of bamboo branches, and sounds of swords clashing. However, at the end of the fight, a short musical passage is heard, which marks the end of the scene (see Figure 6.4).

Sheng (Chinese woodwind instrument)

Drum Finally, SHI kills one soldier. *tr* >

Violin I The soldier gradually lies down on the ground

Violin II The camera zooms out, showing both warriors and the dead soldiers.

Violin III

Cello A close-up on YANG, who is tired and almost faints.

Bass Another soldier lies down on the ground

Figure 6.4 The ending music of Bamboo Forest sequence in *A Touch of Zen*

As discussed above, one main function of music in Beijing opera is that of marking the beginnings, transitions and endings of scenes. As this excerpt illustrates, the uses of music and sound effects in HU's fight scenes were similar to those in Beijing opera, which mostly functioned as gestural and emotional signifiers, camera movement signifiers or structural markers. During the period before computer graphics were used in martial arts films, HU's incorporation of Beijing opera and filming techniques opened a new era of martial arts film productions: it was followed and further developed by later martial arts film directors and film music composers, including LEE and TAN when they made *Crouching Tiger*.

Chapter 7. Assembling Transnational Chinese Talents

Following the establishment of the martial arts film genre in the 1970s by King HU and CHANG Che, the 1980s New Wave movement in Hong Kong cinema and Taiwan New Cinema led to a decrease in the popularity of the subgenre known as the *wuxia* (sword-fighting) style of martial arts film, which HU and CHANG had produced: *wuxia* gave way to the *kung fu* (fist-fighting) style that gained popularity in the West with the emergence of *kung fu* stars Jet LI and Jackie CHAN.¹ Although the fist-fighting movies were and still are popular in the West, LEE felt that they were not well-designed, and considered their lack of artistic and cultural depth to be unfortunate since those films were a medium through which many people outside the Chinese-language communities came to know about Chinese culture. LEE points out:

The martial arts productions in Taiwan and Hong Kong [...] stay at the level of sensory stimulation for a long time. Unfortunately, those low quality martial arts films and *kung fu* films have become a medium, even the only medium, for overseas Chinese diaspora and foreigners, including my sons, to understand Chinese culture; however, what they learn from those films are the relatively vulgar parts of Chinese culture.²

¹ Martial arts films can be divided into two categories: *wuxia* (sword-fighting) and *kung fu* (fist-fighting). As martial arts film director CHANG Che puts it, *wuxia* films 'use the notion of martial arts (*wu*) to express the content of chivalry (*xia*)'. Although there were many *wuxia* films produced in 1960-70s Taiwan cinema, the category *wuxia* films, 'mostly made in Taiwan, gave way to Hong Kong *kung fu* films by the early 1970s and have currently adapted to television in the form of lengthy serials.' Martial arts films were not popular in Taiwan cinema after the 1980s. The *kung fu* category in Hong Kong, nevertheless, was spread to the West by *kung fu* stars such as Jet LI and Jackie CHAN. Of these two sub-genres, *kung fu* is more global since it has 'many of the characteristics of the Cowboys and Indians stories', and so 'has travelled more easily into Western popular culture than the swordplay film'. Leon Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Masters: From Bruce LEE to Crouching Tiger* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), pp. 6-7. Also Felicia CHAN, 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Cultural Migrancy and Translatability', in *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. by Chris Berry (London: British Film Institute, 2003), pp. 56-64 (p. 64).

² CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 269.

As Huaiting WU and Joseph Man CHAN point out, even though some Hong Kong martial arts films ‘are quite popular, they suffer from the criticism of being low in aesthetic value and high in violence’.³ Though long categorised as B movies, when LEE decided to revive the martial arts film with *Crouching Tiger*, he aimed to elevate the genre into the A list by requiring ‘Hollywood standards’ from production companies and people from within Cultural China.⁴

To raise a genre that originated in the Cultural Chinese tradition to Hollywood standards implies elevating it via a process of Hollywoodisation, which in turn implies a cultural hierarchy, with Hollywood superior to conventional martial arts films. In fact, some critics have argued that *Crouching Tiger* is a ‘Hollywood film rather than a Chinese-language film’.⁵ However, LEE’s ultimate intention seemed to have been to gain the maximum audience. He sought to make a martial arts film that approximated his aesthetic ideal, and to promote a genre belonging to the Cultural Chinese tradition using the production values that global audiences have become accustomed to: namely, the Hollywood standard. LEE sought to explain why he thought martial arts films should be Westernised, and described his dilemma as to whether he should shoot in the conventional style or amend it to the ideal style he had in his mind:

I have thought about the possibility that audiences may not at first be able to accept my revisions, but I still want to give it a try. I’m certainly concerned about whether this style of martial arts film will be well received in Western art cinema. Once films in this genre have been classified as B movies by Westerners, it will be difficult to change this view of them. I will feel very sorry for this genre because it shouldn’t be limited in this way. This is my wish and my responsibility.⁶

³ WU and CHAN, ‘Globalizing Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Global-Local Alliance and the Production of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*’, p. 201.

⁴ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 384.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

LEE also emphasised his intention to shoot a martial arts film in order ‘to fulfil my yearning for an abstract image of Cultural China’.⁷ These public statements make it clear that LEE was attempting to globalise the martial arts genre while at the same time retaining its Cultural Chinese flavour. For him the notion of *elevating* martial arts films by means of Hollywoodisation meant imbuing them with a more humanistic and narrative sense and asking for better production quality. Such a movement towards employing aspects of the Western filmmaking language had in fact already become a common approach in this era of transnationalism, as will be further illustrated in the following two chapters.

One crucial reason why LEE was and is able to assemble Chinese talents and market Cultural China as a global film culture more successfully than others is his own life and work experiences. After twenty years spent living between Taiwan and the United States, and shooting films in Taiwan, the US, and Europe, LEE is familiar with cultures in these three regions, and has learned how to position himself in various cultural contexts. The same is true of choreographer YUEN Woo-ping and composer TAN Dun. The work experiences of these key members of the production team have helped the blending of various ideas in the production of *Crouching Tiger*; yet the process of defining their own identities among diverse cultures also presents some difficulties. My discussion of the ways in which they have negotiated themselves takes LEE’s case as its point of departure.

LEE’s reflections on his own cultural identity

Part of the reason why LEE returned to a genre which originated in Cultural China, having made European and American films for some years, is his struggles in searching for his own cultural identity while working and living in various other

⁷ Ibid., p. 268.

cultures. When reflecting on his own cultural identity, he has claimed, ‘I very much identify myself as a Chinese filmmaker’.⁸ Although he is always referred to as Taiwanese by the European and American press and retains his Taiwanese nationality, and although he has identified himself with Cultural China, LEE considers himself an outsider whether he is in Taiwan or in America: his Chinese affinity, the fact that he can be instantly categorised by his appearance and his name, remains uneasy. In his autobiography, spoken to and edited by CHANG Jing-pei, LEE reflects on this complex identity:

In reality, all my life I have always been an ‘outsider’. It’s difficult for me to define where my home is and to find a real identity. [...] I am considered a *waishenren* [literally, people from outside Taiwan Province, which refers to people who settled in Taiwan after 1949] in Taiwan, a foreigner in the US, and a *taibou* [literally, people from Taiwan] in China.⁹

LEE’s family moved to Taiwan after 1949, following the war. Even though he was born in Taiwan LEE was called a *waishenren*, which stands in contrast to *benshenren* — literally, ‘people from this province’, referring to people who already lived in Taiwan before 1949. He was originally educated in an elementary school full of mainlanders where Mandarin was the main language but later, in fourth grade, transferred to a school full of Taiwanese students in Tainan. LEE describes this event as the first ‘cultural shock’ in his life. He recalls, ‘It was a world I had never seen, [...] Everyone spoke in Fukien and that scared me. [...] I was in the minority, I didn’t understand what they said, I was so frightened’.¹⁰ LEE therefore had to cope with cultural differences much earlier than the period of his studies in America, and learning how to survive and adapt to the changing environment has been an issue in

⁸ Berry, *Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, p. 352.

⁹ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 463.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

his life since early childhood. Those experiences have had a significant impact on his subsequent filmmaking. He examined the issues of cultural conflict throughout the first decade of his filmmaking, and contemplated the possibilities of blending ideas from different cultures after he had the chance to direct English language films from the mid-1990s.

LEE left Taiwan after he graduated from the Taiwan Academy of Arts. He went to the University of Illinois, majoring in theatre before going on to New York University for film studies. Because of his cultural background, and as a foreigner in America, LEE is very sensitive to conflicts between cultures and made those conflicts the topic of several of his first films. *A Fine Line* (1985) was the film shot as LEE's master's thesis, its title referring to the line between two ethnic groups: those living on either side of Canal Street in New York, one Chinese and the other Italian. The film won awards for Best Director and Best Film at the New York University film festival, which attracted an agent from the William Morris Agency (one of the three major talent agencies in America) who signed a contract with LEE and encouraged him to pursue his career in the US.¹¹ LEE's first chance to shoot a film came in 1990 when his screenplay *Pushing Hands* won the top prize in a contest held by the Government Information Office in Taiwan, and LEE was funded to turn this script into a film. His first full length feature film *Pushing Hands* was released near the end of 1991, his second, *The Wedding Banquet*, in 1993.¹²

Both of these films deal with cultural conflict, not only between Taiwan and America but also between generations; as with LEE's other productions, these films are infused with Chinese cultural elements. In *Pushing Hands*, the old father Master CHU moves to America and lives with his son Alex, his American daughter-in-law

¹¹ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 51.

¹² Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Ang LEE: The Other Side of the Screen, Directors' Cuts* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), p. 10.

Martha, and his grandson Jeremy. Unsurprisingly, the father is unable to get along with his daughter-in-law and American culture and his son is torn between his two beloved family members. The term ‘pushing hands’ comes from a technique in Chinese martial arts which trains people to yield to force by redirecting the force. LEE himself has explained how he extends the concept of ‘pushing hands’ from a martial arts technique to an idea that illustrates Chinese philosophy:

The technique of ‘pushing hands’ [...] relates to the Chinese traditional philosophy of interpersonal relationships. [...] Experiencing and following nature, limiting personal preferences, are the lessons of life. If we apply this philosophy [i.e., following nature] to interpersonal relationships or to the relationships between people and the environment, we will see the spirit of ‘pushing hands’: be gentle and soft towards things, don’t be harsh when you are treated harshly, [...] emphasising the concept of balancing and compromising.¹³

In addition to being a metaphor for interpersonal relationships in traditional Chinese philosophy, according to Whitney C. Dilley, the title ‘Pushing Hands’ is a metaphor ‘applied to the forces of two cultures — American and Chinese — clashing in the film’.¹⁴ When Martha can’t get along with Master CHU, instead of fighting back Master CHU chooses to be nice to Martha, though he eventually leaves when his efforts don’t work. It is only then that Martha begins to understand Master CHU and decorates the guestroom for him to stay. Even though *Pushing Hands* was shot in New York, it received little attention in the US. LEE’s fame in the US began from his second feature film, *The Wedding Banquet*, which although a Chinese-language film, follows ‘the arc of a typical 1930s Hollywood screwball comedy’ according to co-producer James Schamus.¹⁵ However, the ending of *The Wedding Banquet*, where

¹³ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 66.

¹⁴ Dilley, *The Cinema of Ang LEE*, p. 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

everyone concedes aspects of his/her principles and compromises with one another is, for LEE, a manifestation of traditional Chinese philosophy: in other words, staying in the middle and avoiding extremes in personal behaviour manifest a different underlying set of beliefs than those found in Western philosophy, which places an emphasis on individual distinctiveness and can result in strong conflicts.¹⁶ This film won the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival and LEE's fame was established.

The cultural hybridity that LEE's producer James Shamus recognised in *The Wedding Banquet* is something LEE explored further. After his first three Chinese-language films, *Pushing Hands*, *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, LEE formally stepped onto the mainstream European and American film stage with his film *Sense and Sensibility* (1995). As a foreigner shooting European or American films, LEE faced many challenges, both from actors and audiences. As he has pointed out, 'when I made this film [*Sense and Sensibility*], I tried hard to "earn" my authority [in directing a Western-language film]: from the very beginning, step by step, I aimed to establish my ability and reputation in making a Western-language film'.¹⁷ One can imagine how hard it must have been for a Taiwanese director to make a Western film, especially one based on a novel by Jane Austen, which brought another set of traditional and cultural expectations.¹⁸ LEE recalls, 'On the first day of shooting, when we were making a sequence where Kate Winslet has a long dialogue with her mother, everyone was wearing earphones in the neighbouring room, listening to how I directed this scene. I was under huge pressure'.¹⁹ LEE claims that the way in which he was able to achieve distinction as a director of Western language films was

¹⁶ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 104.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁸ As Ang LEE said, 'it's my first time to work with famous stars as well as my first time to work with a Hollywood company'. CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 164.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 160-61.

simply by being aware of himself as a director from the Cultural Chinese tradition. As LEE explains,

Since the language is not my strength [when directing *Sense and Sensibility*], I paid more attention to the images. [...] For example, in the scene where Kate was walking on the hills, I applied the principle of ‘寓情於景’ [*Yuqingyujing*, a Chinese philosophical concept which refers to using the natural landscape to depict human emotions] from Chinese arts: thinking of the human being as part of nature, part of the scenery.²⁰

LEE’s strategy worked. Although the shooting process of *Sense and Sensibility* put him under tremendous pressure, LEE eventually earned the respect from the stars and the film was well received.

The success of his first Western language film boosted LEE’s confidence and also conquered the psychological barrier of the ability of a Chinese-speaking director to make an English language melodrama, which was considered a big breakthrough both for him and for other Chinese-speaking directors.²¹ He had proved himself capable of making good English language films and successfully entered the Hollywood system.²² He also proved that employing aesthetic and philosophical principles from the Cultural Chinese tradition was one way a Chinese-speaking director could direct Western-language films and survive in global cinema. LEE continued to be funded by Fox Searchlight and Universal for his next two Hollywood productions, *The Ice Storm* (1997) and *Ride with the Devil* (1999). As he states, ‘the West has exported its film culture and dominated the world cinema for a long time. However, if now a Chinese director can make a Western film, the

²⁰ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 162.

²¹ This film received more than twenty awards at major film festivals: Best Screenplay (Emma Thompson) at the Oscars, Golden Berlin Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival, Best Film at the BAFTA awards, Best Motion Picture at the Golden Globes, etc.

²² *Sense and Sensibility* is the first of Ang LEE’s Hollywood films and was funded by Columbia; *The Ice Storm* was funded by Fox Searchlight, and *Ride with the Devil* by Universal.

opposite direction of cultural output is possible and I think it is a crucial breakthrough'.²³ LEE's claim echoes the 'Chinese fever' phenomenon in global cinema, 'Chinese fever' being a term proposed by scholars to describe the exceptional number of Chinese-language films exported and the sharp increase in awards received at major film festivals.²⁴

Moreover, LEE's experience as a Taiwanese director shooting Western-language films urged him to think deeper about his cultural identity and how he should position himself in world cinema. LEE points out,

Directing Western films makes me aware that I am an oriental director. In the technical details of filmmaking, I want to work more like Westerners do, to meet their standards. Nevertheless, I am aware of the importance of insight or the emotional expressions of filmmaking. If I worked as other Westerners do, not only would I not be as good as they are, my work may also have no novelty if I just followed their route. We have to bring our strengths into full play in order to compete with the work of Westerners.²⁵

Although LEE has earned credits for directing Western films, he understands that the only way to compete with Westerners is to find something that represents the aesthetics of his 'oriental' culture.

It is interesting to note LEE's free use of the much discussed label 'oriental' (*dongfang* in Mandarin, '*dong*' means 'the East' and '*fang*' means 'the side').

According to my reading of LEE's words, the terms 'oriental' and 'Western' (*xifang* in Mandarin, '*xi*' means 'the West') refer to a hard-and-fast distinction between cultures from the East and the West, and a distinction between where LEE grew up and where he works while directing European and American films. Since LEE

²³ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 185.

²⁴ As Sheldon Hsiao-peng LU notes, 'Chinese cinema in the 1990s has entered a new phase of development. [...] While formerly targeted primarily at the domestic film audience, Chinese cinema is an integral part of the international film market today'. LU, 'Historical Introduction', pp. 8-9.

²⁵ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 162.

emphasises the mutual exchange relationship between different cultures, the terms ‘oriental’ and ‘Western’ seem relatively neutral and are judged as being equally important when LEE uses them. They do not seem to evoke the loaded debates in Said’s discussion of ‘orientalism’ in which the word ‘oriental’ seems to bear Third World connotations and the West suggests a superior status, both economically and culturally. Cultural studies scholar Ien ANG’s discussion regarding the change in implication of the ‘East versus West’ distinction since the 1990s supports this. For him, by the 1990s Asianness was ‘no longer linked exclusively to lamentable Third World connotations’ in light of the impressive economic rise of East and Southeast Asia, which had made the ‘Western world extremely nervous and jittery’.²⁶ Since then, Asia has been ‘touted as the model for an affluent, hypermodern future, not the residue of a traditional and backward past, as classical Orientalism would have it’.²⁷ In other words, Asia and the West enjoy a much more equal status than they did before the 1990s and a mutual exchange culturally and economically between the two sides is emphasised. LEE recognises this.

Nevertheless, questions may arise here as to why LEE sometimes refers to himself as a ‘Chinese’ director and sometimes as ‘oriental’. Does he consider the terms to be equivalent? Or does he mean to extend his target audience to other ethnic groups in the East, for example, Korean and Japanese people, about whom he uses the term ‘oriental’ rather than ‘Chinese’? I would suggest that for LEE the term ‘oriental’ means ‘an entity opposite to European and American Westerners’, a simple dichotomy by using ‘the East’ as the other side of ‘the West’. If LEE’s words are examined by paralleling his discussions concerning his personal identity, it may be noticed that he uses the term ‘oriental’ when he refers to ‘an entity opposite to the

²⁶ Ien ANG, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

West', as in phrases such as 'a mutual exchange between the oriental and the West', and he uses 'Chinese' when he discusses his position in 'world cinema', as in the sentence 'I [LEE] very much identify myself as a Chinese director'.

Equally interesting is LEE's implication that 'oriental' directors have particular strengths, and so the way to stand on the world cinema stage is not through the process of Westernisation but by establishing specific styles that 'oriental' people are good at. Although LEE had noticed this issue from his first English-language film, it was not until the success of *Crouching Tiger* in 2000 that he really discovered the strength of Chinese cinema. In his 2005 interview with film scholar Michael Berry, five years after *Crouching Tiger*, LEE points out:

Speaking frankly, we [Chinese-language filmmakers] don't do other things well. There is nothing special we could do with political thrillers, film noir, or love stories — we are not going to top Hollywood. [...] But when it comes to martial arts, we are an inspiring force in filmmaking. Those are films we excel at. [...] I cannot think of another genre that we do better than America.

As mentioned in the last chapter, although martial arts films were popular in global cinema, the genre suffered from 'the criticism of being low in aesthetic value and high in violence'.²⁸ LEE's revival is thus also an attempt to transform global audiences' stereotypes of martial arts films. In doing so, LEE wanted people on his production team who were familiar with traditional Chinese culture, but who also had experience living or working in cultures other than Chinese-language regions, i.e., people who had similar transnational experiences as LEE. He invited Hong Kong choreographer YUEN, who had many years' experience in choreographing and directing Hong Kong martial arts films, and had also worked in Hollywood. For performing and composing the music, he invited Yo-yo MA and TAN, who both

²⁸ WU and CHAN, 'Globalizing Chinese Martial Arts Cinema', 201.

have solid Western classical music training but also Chinese cultural connections. All of these efforts support LEE's endeavour in reviving and elevating a culturally local genre on the stage of global cinema.

The choices of choreographer and film music composer

Although King HU's fusing of Beijing opera and film techniques made the combination of sounds and bodily gestures more graceful than in previous martial arts films, music and sound in conventional martial arts films still tended to fall into the category of sound effects. This kind of musical design is probably due to a fundamental feature of conventional martial arts films: an imbalance between narrative and acrobatic scenes. This imbalance is also a crucial reason why most Hong Kong martial arts films are criticised for their lack of cultural depth and well-structured narrative. The music and sound of *Crouching Tiger* nevertheless provide a possible way of mediating between the acrobatic and narrative scenes, and of conveying more narrative meanings than is conventional in martial arts films.

The underlying difficulty of conveying narrative development during fight scenes has existed for years, yet few directors consider it a problem since enjoying the acrobatic scenes is an essential part of watching martial arts films. The Hong Kong martial arts filmmaking tradition has extended this disjointedness even further as a result of the fact that the fight scenes and the narrative scenes are made by two directors: the action director and the film director. The action director often has the same, if not more power and importance than the film director. Sometimes these two jobs are taken by one person: for instance, in Hong Kong LEE's choreographer YUEN Woo-ping is both an important action film director and a martial arts director. During the script writing, the team usually sets up several major fight scenes and only then moves on to formulate the script of the film. Hong Kong directors spend

most of their budgets on fight scenes, and the narrative scenes receive ‘whatever time and money was left over’.²⁹ It is clear that all these factors — the division of responsibility between the director and action director, the order of script writing, and the way budgets are spent — amount to a somewhat peculiar method of producing films: the fight scenes have at least equal, and often even greater, status than the narrative. Musical design, thus, mostly serves as sound effects in fight scenes, rather than as a means for delivering more subtle narrative meanings.

Although Hong Kong cinema is famous for its action cinema, the way its directors produce action changes dramatically when they co-operate with Hollywood directors. The same is true of Chinese-language directors outside Hong Kong, such as LEE. Action director YUEN Woo-ping’s experience of working variously in his home of Hong Kong, in Hollywood, and with LEE provides us with a useful example. YUEN was the son of the leader of the first generation of Hong Kong martial artists, YUEN Siu-tin, at whose school he received rigorous and demanding martial arts training before going on to become both an action choreographer and an action film director in the 1970s.³⁰ As was the case with other major action directors from Hong Kong, YUEN also received intensive Beijing opera training from his father. YUEN recalls:

The life of learning at that time was tough. [...] We practiced basic skills every morning, and then went to have Dim Sum at the restaurant. In the afternoon, we would learn the skills of playing weapons, like blade, spear, sword, and halberd. We also practiced Chinese boxing and somersaulting.³¹

YUEN began to perform Beijing opera on stage when he was seven but also went to

²⁹ Christina Klein, ‘“*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*”: A Diasporic Reading’, *Cinema Journal*, 43 (2004), 18-42 (p. 32).

³⁰ YUNG, ‘The Interactions between Chinese Opera and Action Cinema’, p. 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the film studio with his father, experiences which later contributed to his action filmmaking. He is known internationally as the action choreographer for *The Matrix* series of films (1999, 2003, US) as well as for *Crouching Tiger* and Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003, US).

Although YUEN's choreographic ability is appreciated by Hollywood directors (and LEE) and he continues to be invited to be the action director for their films, the working method which works well in Hong Kong does not operate effectively outside. In Hong Kong, YUEN is not only an action director; he is also the film director for more than twenty action productions.³² He is therefore very familiar with the language of cinema and knows how to make action scenes look good on the screen. He not only designs action gestures, he also sets the camera positions for shooting them. Nevertheless, when he worked on *The Matrix*, directors Andy and Larry Wachowski insisted that they had the last word. Even when filming the fight scenes, the Wachowski brothers got involved: they let YUEN set up the camera positions and direct the fighting, but they reserved the right to change his settings if they wanted.³³

LEE's attitude, when working with YUEN, was similar to that of the Wachowski brothers, and inevitably gave rise to tensions. Compared to *The Matrix*, *Crouching Tiger* was a more traditional martial arts film for YUEN; even so, LEE still insisted on being the one in charge. He recalls:

I cannot choreograph, that's just not my thing. But at the same time, I also cannot just take whatever he [YUEN] gives me like some directors do. I am a bigger shot and he had to listen to me! [...] Usually directors just give those scenes over to the action directors, giving them three minutes of film time and expecting back a good fight. But when you do that you lose the unity of the

³² According to YUEN Woo-ping's record on IMDb. <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0950759/>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

³³ See Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Master*, pp. 179-82.

film. [...] He had to put up with me and all my demands, which did restrain him on several levels.³⁴

In short, LEE privileged the narrative, and in *Crouching Tiger* considered the acrobatic spectacles to be part of the narrative rather than the major 'attraction'. LEE's attitude not only changed the working process between the director and the action director, it also had an impact on the musical design of *Crouching Tiger*.

In addition to adjusting the relative weighting of narrative and fight scenes, and the filmmaking itself, a process of de-localisation was necessary before the culturally local martial arts genre could be revived and launched onto a global stage. An important moment in this process was Jackie CHAN's transformation from a Hong Kong action film star into a global one. CHAN, who has been very popular in Asia since the late 1970s, tried unsuccessfully to transfer to Hollywood in the early 1980s. However, a Hollywood executive 'became more willing to let him do the things that had made him popular in Asia' from the late 1990s in order to attract CHAN's fans,³⁵ since Asian markets had turned out to be crucial for Hollywood revenues. As many scholars have pointed out, American action cinema has been influenced by the Hong Kong film industry.³⁶ Martial arts films in Hong Kong, although made for local markets originally, 'are also popular in the west where they are generally accessible through video'.³⁷ Nevertheless, CHAN's Hollywood style is different from his Hong Kong approach.³⁸ Hollywood turns CHAN's style, originally thought characteristic of Hong Kong film style, into a transnational one by 'inserting CHAN into familiar American genres such as the buddy-cop film and the

³⁴ Berry, *Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, pp. 344-45.

³⁵ Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood', *YaleGlobal*, 25 March 2003.

³⁶ See, for instance, Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993); Klein, 'The Asia Factor in Global Hollywood', *YaleGlobal*, 25 March 2003; Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung LI and Stephen CHAN Chin-kiu, eds, *Hong Kong Connections*.

³⁷ Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Western'.³⁹ This might suggest that a genre can be globalised only by inserting some elements from other film cultures into it, especially from the most dominant: Hollywood in most cases.

CHAN's career trajectory is similar to that of LEE's choreographer, YUEN, whose film style was also de-localised when he worked with Hollywood directors. For instance, in the Hollywood production *The Matrix*, many computer-generated scenes were inserted that rarely appear in traditional Hong Kong martial arts films, but are very common in Hollywood productions. Thus, the fight scenes in *The Matrix* are less similar to those in Hong Kong martial arts films than they are to those in Hollywood or Japanese action films, even though YUEN worked as the action director for *The Matrix* series.

Similar de-localisation and cross-boundary concerns are also evident in the selection of the composer and musicians for *Crouching Tiger*. LEE's choice of composer TAN Dun reflects a desire to cross the boundaries of 'high' and 'low' in terms of musical underscoring, while TAN's contribution also greatly contributed to LEE's endeavour to elevate the martial arts films from B movie to A list. The audio track in a conventional martial arts film usually consists of sound effects (yelling, the sounds of swords, and so on), Beijing or other regional opera musical idioms, and popular songs. The last are especially prevalent in TSUI Hark's early martial arts productions while he worked in the Hong Kong film industry. His method was to use the theme song of the film as the major source of the non-diegetic underscoring, regardless of whether it was in narrative scenes or in fight scenes. As David Bordwell observes, '[s]ince Hong Kong action cinema is predominantly visual, creators [had] not been concerned to develop musical resources very much. They seem content with employing music to highlight emotional qualities, whatever

³⁹ Ibid.

the risk of cliché'.⁴⁰ The sound in martial arts films is so stereotyped that audiences can predict what the sound is likely to be, which results in little novelty or surprise.

For the underscoring of *Crouching Tiger*, rather than choosing someone who was famous only for their popular music, film music or martial arts film music work, LEE chose TAN Dun, who had already been well-recognised for his classical music works. TAN was born in 1957 in Hunan Province, China. He began his music career in a touring Beijing opera company sponsored by the government when he was still in high school. In 1978, he entered the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing where he received formal training in composition. In 1987 TAN obtained a scholarship and went to Columbia University, New York, to pursue his PhD degree in composition and studied with the composer CHOU Wen-chung. TAN then remained in New York. As a composer who grew up in China but has lived in New York for decades, TAN's concert music is famous for incorporating Chinese traditional musical materials with contemporary Western compositional ideas. His creative, experimental works not only cross the boundaries between the East and the West but also between classical genres and modern multimedia techniques. In the last decade, TAN's operas and film music compositions have won him worldwide recognition. He was awarded the Best Original Score at the Academy Awards for his compositions in *Crouching Tiger*, and then went on to compose the music for ZHANG Yimou's *Hero* and FENG Xiaogang's *The Banquet*. Meanwhile, in 2006, TAN's opera *The First Emperor*, a story of the first emperor in China and featuring Plácido Domingo in the leading role, was premiered by the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

TAN's training and experiences are quite similar to LEE's and it is therefore unsurprising that their backgrounds might contribute to the hybrid content of

⁴⁰ Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, p. 235.

Crouching Tiger. Both grew up in Chinese-speaking countries until graduating from college, so both had a profound understanding of traditional Chinese cultures. Equally, however, their graduate study and work experience in the US provided them with ample opportunity to become familiar with Western cultures. When selecting the musicians to play for the underscoring to *Crouching Tiger*, TAN insisted on inviting Yo-yo MA to play the main melody, arguing that MA is ‘the spiritual glue of “low and high”, “romantic and action”, “East and West”’.⁴¹ These were the terms chosen by TAN to describe how the cellist MA ‘hit the nail’ on the head when it came to achieving the desired characteristics of the music in this film. For Christina Klein, the combination of TAN and MA invites us ‘to read the film in relation to a body of contemporary high-culture texts’ as both of them have explored ‘cultural globalisation from a musical perspective’.⁴² Klein is referring here to works such as TAN’s opera *Marco Polo* and MA’s Silk Road Project⁴³ which, like *Crouching Tiger*, attempts to create a style crossing the boundaries of cultures and nation-state.⁴⁴ One can also see the boundary-crossing endeavour that this film delivers by reading the promotional notes of *Crouching Tiger*: it was promoted as

⁴¹ Dan Goldwasser, ‘TAN Dun’s Dragon: Interview with TAN Dun’, *SoundtrackNet: The Art of Film and Television Music*, 15 December 2000 <<http://www.soundtrack.net/features/article/?id=65>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

⁴² Klein, ‘*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*’, 30.

⁴³ TAN Dun’s opera *Marco Polo* is a multi-cultural work that combines elements from Western avant-garde style and from the East (including Peking opera from China, Japanese Kabuki, and Indonesian shadow theatre). The multi-cultural novelty of this work was well received. One review reported: ‘Mr. TAN’s music utilizes Eastern and Western instruments, and unexpected trills, howls and laughter to create an opera that is truly a synthesis of East and West. [...] Unlike many composers before him, Mr. TAN is able to include Eastern influences to create music that doesn’t come off merely as an exotic quasi-Asian spectacle held at arms length by Western technique’. Eliot Morgan, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 21/02/1997, quoted in G. Schirmer Inc. website. <http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2420&State_2874=2&WorkId_2874=33573> [accessed 2 July 2010]

The Silk Road Project, founded by Yo-yo MA, is ‘a not-for-profit artistic, cultural and educational organization with a vision of connecting the world’s neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe’. This project ‘takes inspiration from the historic Silk Road trading route as a modern metaphor for multicultural and interdisciplinary exchange’. Quotations are from the official website of The Silk Road Project. <<http://www.silkroadproject.org/DefaultPermissions/Programs/tabid/144/Default.aspx>> [accessed 2 July 2010]

⁴⁴ Klein, ‘*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*’, 30.

‘*Sense and Sensibility* with martial arts’ and ‘Bruce LEE meets Jane Austen’,⁴⁵ both carrying strong implications that *Crouching Tiger* would not be like those low, violent martial arts films, but a film with a high-culture flavour.

⁴⁵ WU and CHAN, ‘Globalizing Chinese Martial Arts Cinema’, 211.

Chapter 8. The Hybrid Music in *Crouching Tiger*

In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* Ang LEE and his team adopted musical ideas from several cultures, but transformed and blended them in order to make the film distinct from its generic predecessors. With his Beijing opera training, TAN Dun deployed Beijing opera musical idioms, as many martial arts film composers had before him; however, here his underscoring also incorporated Western compositional techniques, including musical ideas from Western operas and film musicals.

More percussion than Beijing opera

Continuing the inheritance of King HU's films, in *Crouching Tiger* LEE and TAN retained Beijing opera idioms — the 'authentic' sounding elements of martial arts films — but presented them in different ways. TAN recalls,

LEE said that I might deploy the Beijing opera percussion idioms. However, it is not necessary for the percussion idioms in *Crouching Tiger* to be the same as that in Beijing opera. What LEE wanted me to do was to maintain the spirit of Beijing opera in my underscoring compositions rather than to proceed as in traditional martial arts films.¹

Relying on his training and experiences in both classical music composition and his early experiences as a Beijing opera performer, TAN extended and developed percussion idioms from Beijing opera. Although the music in some sequences of *Crouching Tiger* is performed largely by percussion (as in traditional martial arts films), each sequence is a coherent musical piece in itself, and not simply a series of short phrases or rhythmic patterns that emphasise bodily movements and/or camera

¹ LAN, *Film Music Composers*, p. 210.

movements, but whose phrases are not closely related to each other musically or structurally. For example, in the Night Fight scene discussed below, the sequence could be understood as a musical piece falling into three sections, which are connected structurally by the same rhythmic pattern. In other words, when viewers enjoy the visual spectacle of a fight scene in *Crouching Tiger*, they are given a well-structured musical piece at the same time. Although the drum beats in *Crouching Tiger* are not as precisely synchronised with movements as they are in Beijing opera, the physical gestures and the integrated musical accompaniment form a sense of poly-rhythmicity; music and physical gesture interweave to make the fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger* seem more like dances than in films by HU.

A short plot summary is important at this point. The story begins with LI Mu-bai's retirement. LI Mu-bai (CHOW Yun-fat) is a sword master belonging to the Wudan school, who falls deeply in love with YU Shu-lien (Michelle YEOH), a female warrior, though they haven't acknowledged their relationship openly to each other. Jen YU (ZHANG Ziyi), the daughter of Governor YU, is arranged by her parents to marry Mr. LU, and has secretly learnt martial arts from Jade Fox (CHENG Pei-pe) since she was a child. Jade Fox, who is Jen's servant during the daytime but her martial arts teacher at night, killed Mu-bai's master many years ago and has hidden herself in Jen's home to avoid being killed by her enemies.

Mu-bai decides to retire from his warrior life and sends his sword, Qingmingjien (literally, green destiny sword), to a prestigious governor, Sir TE. He and Shu-lien go to Sir TE's house where they meet Jen for the first time. When Jen hears the story of the sword, she makes the decision to try out her martial arts ability by stealing the sword at night. Unfortunately, Jen is soon discovered by servants and chased by Shu-lien. When the latter almost catches Jen and unveils her mask, Jade Fox interrupts their fight and saves Jen. Late one night, Jen sneaks into Sir TE's house,

intending to return the Green Destiny sword. Mu-bai confronts Jen, defeats her, and persuades her to be his apprentice. Jen refuses his request and escapes.

Unwilling to accept the arranged marriage, Jen runs away before the wedding and takes the Green Destiny sword with her. She can't figure out what to do next and goes to Shu-lien, though suddenly Mu-bai shows up and chases her to a bamboo forest where they fight again. As expected, Mu-bai defeats Jen, but she is soon saved by Jade Fox who takes her to a cave. Although Mu-bai eventually kills Jade Fox, he has been hit by a lethal dart and dies.

In the Night Fight scene, the first fight scene in *Crouching Tiger*, TAN adopts Beijing opera musical idioms largely as they were used in traditional martial arts films, yet develops this approach by organising the percussion phrases into a coherent musical piece. One might describe this sequence as a musical piece comprising an introductory section (from when Jen sneaks into Sir TE's house in the dark until she is discovered), a middle section (when Jen is discovered by LIU and fights with him), and a final climax (the fight between Jen and Shu-lien on the rooftop). The music in the introductory section begins with the *bangzi* (a wooden clapper) playing intermittent rhythmic patterns. At first, the phrases of the wooden clapper are short and with a pause of several beats between each phrase (see Figure 8.1). After Jen enters the room where the sword is placed, she opens the box, covers the sword with her black clothes, ties the sword on her back, looks around carefully and prepares to leave. The wooden clapper passage grows more and more intense (i.e. the pause between each rhythmic phrase becomes shorter and shorter) when Jen is playing out these gestures and, together with a crescendo of string instruments, both the crescendo and the intense phrases enhance the palpable tension, which impart to the audience the idea that Jen may soon be caught. Percussion music functions here in a Hollywood style, cueing narrative.



Figure 8.1 The wooden clapper rhythmic pattern in the opening of the Night Fight scene

As expected, when Jen walks out of the room, she is discovered by the martial servant LIU. The first stroke of drum music begins when she opens the door and encounters the servant. The basic rhythmic pattern of the drum music is the same as that of the opening wooden clapper (see Figure 8.1). Jen has a short fight with him but soon escapes by jumping up to the rooftop. More and more servants are called out to chase Jen, but their efforts are in vain. LIU keeps chasing Jen in the alleys; Jen jumps from roof to roof and the drum music continues. Jen then disappears from LIU's sight when he reaches the main entrance of Governor YU's house, where Jen lives.

The drum music stops when Jen disappears into Governor YU's house and a long tremolo, played by the wooden clapper, is heard. On the one hand, the turning of the music from polyphonic drums to the simple, monophonic sounds of the wooden clapper coincides with the number of people on screen: it is as if a single clapper stands for LIU himself standing alone on the street in front of Governor YU's house — an audio-visual synchronisation. On the other hand, the high-pitch tremolo sounds of the wooden clapper, normally used for signalling a turning point, a new beginning, or tension in Beijing opera, emphasise the doubt and the shock that LIU expresses: LIU murmurs (with a close-up shot on LIU's face), 'Governor YU's house'. Here we have a conventional sound serving as an emotional signifier, much as it had in Beijing opera (see Chapter Six).

The wooden clapper section also acts as a transition between the preceding drum

music (a short fight between LIU and Jen) and the following drum music (a much longer fight between Jen and Shu-lien). The continuous sounds from percussive instruments, where only the instruments change, function as a bridge between the sections or phrases. An emotional turn is signalled to the audience.

The drum music with the repeated rhythmic motive resumes at the moment we see both Shu-lien and Jen running on the rooftops: Shu-lien is chasing Jen. When she catches Jen and they fight on the ground, the drum again closely follows bodily movement: the fighting gestures of their feet coincide with the beats of drum music. As their fighting intensifies, the drum music is performed continuously with its own underlying tempo and not all the fighting gestures coincide with the beats of the drum music in the way they do at the beginning. If all the body postures coincided with percussive sounds, i.e., the mickey-mousing sound-image synchronisation, it would become boring and robotic, especially since this is such a long fight scene.

As mentioned above, the flexible tempo of rhythmic patterns that change in order to synchronise with bodily movements is an important characteristic of Beijing opera, since it is the percussionists' responsibilities to follow the actors' movements rather than the actors' to follow the music.² This is illustrated in the Night Fight scene. When we reach the last third of this fight scene, the tempo of the drum music accelerates, generating more tension. Although Shu-lien brings Jen to the ground, Jen escapes and jumps on the rooftop again, where Shu-lien keeps chasing her. Shu-lien draws Jen to the ground again, this time within a large space surrounded by high walls. Towards the end of their fight, their gestures and the percussive beats again coincide. Their jumps, spins and footwork coincide with the drum every two or four beats. Unlike the close-up shots on their feet in the first sequence, where the

² Hai-Hsing YAO, 'The Relationship Between Percussive Music and the Movement of Actors in Peking Opera', *Asian Music*, 21 (1990), 39-70 (pp. 65-66).

movements and the music coincided beat by beat, here we have a long shot in which both characters are seen in full body view. Since their movements coincide with the rhythm of the drum music, in this section it is as if they are dancing rather than fighting. When Shu-lien almost grabs Jen's face-cover, she is attacked by a flying dart. Jen quickly escapes. As the scene comes to an end, the music intensifies, the repeated rhythmic patterns becoming shorter until everything suddenly stops on an accented note. We get complete silence with a shot towards the empty wall in the dark — Jen is gone.

From the discussion above, one can see how the music is divided into sections of different tempi, which build up the climax step by step. Here percussion becomes a means by which TAN can guide audiences' feelings in accordance with the narrative. The percussive music of the sequence not only supports the narrative, it is also a self-contained piece developed from, and united by, the four-beat rhythmic pattern (Figure 8.1). TAN explains his compositional idea for this scene:

If you listen closely, you will discover that the drum music is different at the beginning than at the ending, regardless of tempo, of sound, and of the way the drums are played. At first, it sounds a little humorous and teasing; later, when the narrative develops, it turns to become like a flow of emotion that is burning and can't be suppressed. The music here is just like a narrator in *Jingyun Dagu* [a traditional Chinese performing art, in which the narrator narrates, sings, and plays percussion instruments], who is narrating a martial arts tale whilst playing the drums. The percussion sounds grow more and more intense and keep audience feelings in the air.³

TAN's strategy, putting more emphasis on supporting the narrative than simply using music to synchronise the bodily gestures, supports LEE's position regarding the prior importance of narrative even in fight scenes. LEE ensures that his efforts

³ LAN, *Film Music Composers*, p. 211.

not only demonstrate how a coherent musical piece supports the emotional ebb and flow within a fight sequence, but through careful use of details, also show how those fight gestures are arranged to reveal information about the characters' emotional feelings, the relationships among those characters, and how the sound and musical underscoring can delineate subtle feelings as well as interpersonal relationships. In other words, the fantastical bodily movements are more than just acrobatic pyrotechnics, and the sounds are more than simple highlightings of those movements: gesture and music are interwoven in fight scenes to construct narrative meanings.

The bodily gestures are indeed choreographed in order to convey narrative meanings. Consider again the Night Fight scene. The storyline of *Crouching Tiger* shapes the character Shu-lien as a traditional woman: although she is a martial arts heroine, she suppresses her feelings and her love to Mu-bai because of her obedience to social propriety (Shu-lien's husband has passed away and she thinks she cannot be remarried). Jen is the daughter of a rich, powerful noble family; she looks gentle and well-behaved during daytime but learns martial arts secretly at night and longs for absolute freedom.⁴ In this Night Fight scene, Jen is trying to escape Shu-lien by flying to the roof or climbing up the wall, a metaphor for the desire for freedom. However, whenever Jen tries to escape, Shu-lien draws her down to the ground and once even shouts *Xia Lai!* (literally, down here) to Jen: by remaining on the ground, Shu-lien is shown to be much more obedient to the rules.

⁴ For further discussion of the contrast between the two women warriors, Jen and Shu-lien, and the feminist issues in *Crouching Tiger*, see for instance Catherine Gomes, 'Crouching Women, Hidden Genre: An Investigation Into Western Film Criticism's Reading of Feminism in Ang LEE's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*', *LIMINA: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 11 (2005), 47-56; Fran Martin, 'The China Simulacrum: Genre, Feminism, and Pan-Chinese Cultural Politics in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*', in *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*, pp. 149-60; Ellen Riordan, 'The Woman Warrior: A Feminist Political Economic Analysis of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*', in *Women and Media: International Perspective*, ed. by Karen Ross and Carolyn M. Byerly (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 81-103; and LEE's discussion on the script writing process of *Crouching Tiger* in his biography, pp. 286-92.

According to the sound designer, the sound effects for this sequence are carefully designed to reflect the freedom/rules dichotomy that exists between these two women. The sound designer Eugene Gearty explained his perception of the sound differences:

LEE emphasised the importance of reality, so he asked me to collect sounds from nature. He didn't want those artificial sound effects in Hong Kong and Hollywood films. For example, I really punched people one fist after another in order to collect the punching sounds in fight scenes. My colleague Mark also provided me with some advice; he even bought some meat and bones to make the bone-hitting sounds. Because Jen's flying technique is quite good, her tapping sounds on the roof are soft. Shu-lien is older than her, and so her tapping sounds are heavier. Because they are so different, I made different sounds for them: one is more silent, the other more active. You can easily tell the difference. In this film, when Jen moves, the sounds from her clothes are even softer than those from Shu-lien.⁵

Gearty also mentioned how LEE asked him to proceed differently to other martial arts films and design different sounds for different characters:

LEE told me not to watch other martial arts films, which released my anxiety. Frankly, I was worried that I couldn't make it since this genre was a completely new area to me. LEE thought that the sound effects in earlier martial arts films repeated themselves too much, always sounds like 'shiu, shiu, shiu' or 'hu, hu, hu', no novelty at all. LEE asked for a whole new sound effect, and also hoped that sounds would be different for every character.⁶

Gearty's account indicates that LEE paid close attention to sound effects, looking into every detail, and asking the sound designer to be aware of creating sounds that supported the individual characteristics of every character. And yet, even though this

⁵ LAN Zuwei and HE Jingxian, 'Treasure Hunting in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: Interview with Sound Designer Eugene Gearty (Wo hu cang long xunbao ji: zhuanfang yinxiao dashi Eugene Gearty)', *Liberty Times*, 22 January 2001.

⁶ LAN and HE, 'Treasure Hunting in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*'.

is a fight scene, the narrative still enjoys top priority and the music, the body gestures, and the sound effects all work together to support the narrative meanings.

Borrowing techniques from film musicals

One of the problems that LEE had identified in earlier martial arts films, as film scholar Christian Klein points out, is the lack of integration between the narrative and the action; LEE sought to solve this structural flaw by borrowing techniques from the Hollywood musical,⁷ a genre that bears similarities with martial arts films. As Roger Ebert puts it, ‘Fight scenes in a martial arts movie are like song-and-dance numbers in a musical. After a certain amount of dialogue, you’re ready for one’.⁸ As well as the alternation of narrative and spectacle scenes, the genres also share a close link between body gestures and music and sound effects. Film scholar Leon Hunt has compared stars in both genres, noting that ‘Jackie CHAN is often likened to Gene Kelly, for his athleticism, his sense of rhythm and love of incorporating inanimate objects into choreography’.⁹ The integration of the narrative and the spectacle represented a problem for martial arts film directors as much as it did for American film musical directors. While the former seem to ignore this structural flaw, American film musical directors have sought for decades to smooth the transitions between the narrative and the spectacle and to integrate both types of scenes.¹⁰

⁷ Klein, ‘“*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*”: A Diasporic Reading’, 31-32.

⁸ Roger Ebert, ‘*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*’, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 22 December 2000. <<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20001222/REVIEWS/12220304/1023>> [accessed 20 February 2010]

⁹ Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Master*, p. 25.

¹⁰ In Chinese-language regional operas, actors often start fighting suddenly after a sequence of dialogue, without transitions or bridges, and the dialogue or the narrative sequences resume immediately after the fighting ends. In this structure, it would appear that no transition period between these two (the narrative and the spectacle) is necessary. Probably since Chinese-language audiences are already used to this structure, they do not seem bothered by the abrupt, often disjointed transitions between narrative and spectacle, nor do they think the lack of narrative content of the fight sequences creates a ‘pause’ in the narrative rhythm of the whole film. Therefore, Chinese-language

In *Crouching Tiger* LEE borrowed from Hollywood some of the solutions it had already developed to deal with the inherent structural problems of its musicals. He changed the conventional structural plan of the martial arts genre to make the fight scenes subordinate to and serve the narrative; he asked TAN to compose coherent musical pieces for the major fights, rather than using a series of musical phrases or rhythmic patterns; he also carefully designed the transitions between narrative and fight scenes to highlight to the audience the fact that they were either entering or leaving the imaginary world of the fight scenes. According to the executive producer and script co-writer James Schamus, he and LEE ‘had the musical consciously in their minds as they were making the film’.¹¹

As discussed above, the acrobatic displays privilege the development of narrative in the working process of most Hong Kong martial arts films, in which major fight scenes are set up first before formulating the script of the film. Structurally speaking, most Hong Kong martial arts films have an opening fight and an ending fight: i.e., the first fight conventionally appears in the early minutes and films are expected to end with a long fight in which either the protagonists or the antagonists are eventually defeated. In other words, audiences are given fight scenes before they have had a chance to get a sense of what the story of the film is, and the ending presents a simple black-and-white answer, with either good overcoming evil or vice versa. In *Crouching Tiger*, LEE adopted neither the opening nor the ending fight format. The first fight does not happen until fifteen minutes into the film, when the main characters have appeared and their relationship has been outlined. The first fight, when Jen steals the sword from Sir TE’s house to test her own martial arts ability and to show her rebellion against her fate, is then a reasonable development

martial arts film directors haven’t paid as much attention to smoothing the transitions as American film musicals directors have when dealing with genres with similar structural problems.

¹¹ James Schamus’ interview with Christina Klein. *Ibid.*, 42.

in the story as thus far narrated. It is not simply an excuse to showcase her martial arts skills.

In structural and functional terms, the major fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger* were converted into parallels to the musical numbers in American musicals by integrating the musical accompaniment of fight scenes and designing transitions between narrative and spectacle. In a conventional martial arts film, such as HU's production analysed above, short melodic phrases or rhythmic patterns accompanying the bodily movements enhance the beauty of the gestural acting, but those phrases, even within a fight scene, are not integrated into a seemingly united musical piece. The fight scenes in conventional martial arts films are actually closer to reality than those in *Crouching Tiger*, albeit some filmic techniques are applied to create those superhuman acrobatic displays. For example, HU edits the film so that the audience sees 'clear shots of how and where the swords hit and hears the clanging of swords as they clash together', which makes the fighting style 'much more plausible, realistic, and "authentic"' than that in *Crouching Tiger*.¹² Nevertheless, the spectacle part in musicals, musical numbers, usually function as sites of fantasy and idealisation, in contrast to the dialogue, which is used to represent reality. The performative nature of the fight sequences in *Crouching Tiger* is boosted by their unreal, fantasy atmosphere and the stage-like location arrangements, and as such they seem to have similarity to musical numbers.

The differences between the Bamboo Forest scenes in King HU's *A Touch of Zen* and in *Crouching Tiger* illustrate the above point. The first comparison lies in the fighting gestures. In *A Touch of Zen*, the jumping is simply higher than normal people

¹² LU's conclusion after comparing the bamboo scenes in *A Touch of Zen* and *Crouching Tiger* is that the 'unrealistic' fighting style in *Crouching Tiger* is one of the reasons for the lukewarm reception of this film in Chinese-language communities, where people have seen and appreciated HU's realistic style for years. Sheldon H. LU, 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Bouncing Angels: Hollywood, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Transnational Cinema', in *Chinese-Language Film*, pp. 220-36 (pp. 227-28).

can achieve (it was achieved by jumping from spring beds, as we see in Chinese acrobatic performance). In other words, although the fighting gestures are impressive, they can theoretically be achieved by trained people. However, in the Bamboo Forest scene in *Crouching Tiger*, the first shot is a long shot in which we see Jen and Mu-bai flying through a row of houses. Each of their jumps enables them to fly above several houses, and the height of each jump is more than two storeys. Later, when they enter the bamboo forest, they stand still and then fight on the tips of bamboo trees for several minutes. Those fighting gestures, which clearly cannot be achieved in reality and are only possible with the aid of wire work, computer graphics and special effects, deliver an imaginary fantasy world (see Figure 8.2).¹³ Viewers are informed by the unbelievable jumps and superhuman fight moves on the top of bamboo stems that this is a world of fantasy.



a. Flying to the bamboo forest (Jen and Mu-bai are circled for clarity)

¹³ Both Sheldon H. LU and Stephen Teo have discussed the ‘realism versus fantasy’ contrast between HU’s and LEE’s Bamboo Forest scenes. Their discussions focus on the editing and the choreography styles, not on the music or music-image integration in these sequences. See LU, ‘Hollywood, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Transnational Cinema’, p. 228, and Teo, *King HU’s A Touch of Zen*, p. 73. Regarding the making of this scene, Stephen Teo points out, LEE ‘had to resort to wires, and then remove them later with digital computer technology in order to show the preternatural feats of his characters flying from tree top to tree top’. Teo, *King HU’s A Touch of Zen*, p. 73.



b. Fighting on the tips of bamboo trees

Figure 8.2 Two superhuman, unrealistic shots in the Bamboo Forest scene

In addition to the fantastical world represented by its superhuman fighting, the transitions connecting this bamboo fight with the surrounding narrative, the musical arrangements, and the audio-visual editing all contribute to the Bamboo Forest sequence's affinity with a Hollywood musical number. Its music could be read as a coherent musical piece with a four section design; this, together with the dance-like fighting, makes the scene seem more like a dance number in a musical than a fight scene in a conventional martial arts film, where fighting gestures are accompanied by a series of short musical phrases or rhythmic patterns. The first section is the first appearance of the Ba-wu melody. An audio-visual analysis of this section is as follows:

5

Jen flies to the bamboo forest, and Mu-bai follows.

10

Mu-bai tells Jen that he wants to instruct her. Both jump.

Both fall on the tips of trees. Jen refuses to be instructed.

Figure 8.3 The first section of music in the Bamboo Forest Scene

In this opening section, Mu-bai follows Jen to the bamboo forest. Instead of the conventional energetic percussion music used in fight scenes, here we have the gentle, graceful sounds of the Ba-wu. The Ba-wu melody and the slow-motion swinging gestures of these two characters make them look as if they are dancing in the bamboo forest. The shape of the melody roughly corresponds to their body movements: the undulating melody signifies the weaving movements when they stand on the tips of the trees, moving up and down in the wind. The minor-seventh skip upward on bar 9 occurs when they both jump from the tips of the branches toward the sky, and the downwards perfect-fifth skip on bar 10 accompanies their fall from the air to the tips of the trees.

The Ba-wu melody ceases in the second section, a bridge that connects the first and third sections where the Ba-wu plays the main melody. Since Jen and Mu-bai cannot settle their dispute, they fight through the bamboo forest. Two short melodic motives played by strings are heard repeatedly in the second section, but in no systematic order (see Figure 8.4). Melodic pattern 1 is constructed by two notes on two pitches. Melodic pattern 2 is formed by four notes but is always repeated on the same pitch, even though it appears on different beats of the bar, firstly on the fourth beat, and later on other beats. The two short, unstable motives here, accompanied by a soft, sustained A played by strings, evoke the mysterious atmosphere that LEE wants to deliver in this scene: he has mentioned that this scene is ‘a play with “lights” and “shadows”’, a ‘luscious’ scene.¹⁴ The several close-ups of Jen’s and Mu-bai’s faces reveal the complex feelings between them. Also we are given some close-up shots with slow-motion cuts on Jen’s or Mu-bai’s facial expressions that

¹⁴ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, pp. 329-33.

signal the chemistry between them (see Figure 8.5). The second section ends.



Figure 8.4 The two melodic patterns in the second section of the Bamboo Forest scene

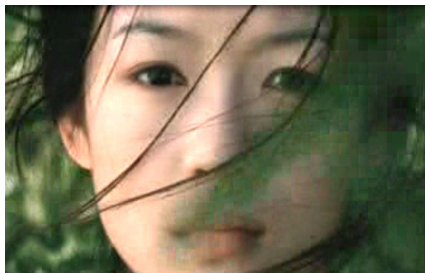


Figure 8.5 Close-up of Jen's face.

After several dramatic ascents and descents through the bamboo forest, Jen and Mu-bai are on the tips of the trees again, and the Ba-wu melody resumes; this is what I identify as the third, ending section. These three sections are in classical ternary form: ABA, in which the two 'A's have the Ba-wu melody and both characters are on the tips of the bamboo trees. When Jen is unable to defeat Mu-bai on the tips of the bamboo trees, she flies down and stands on rocks near a waterfall. The Ba-wu melody here, unlike that in the first section, has a full cadence which returns to the note A. The full cadence implies the end of the fight, and the descending melody from bars 4-9 in Figure 8.6 also parallels their flying down from the tips of the trees to the rocks near a waterfall.

5 Jen and Mu-bai fight in the bamboo forest, mostly on the tips. They fly down from the tips.

Both of them stand on the rocks near a waterfall.

Figure 8.6 The Ba-wu melody in the third section of the Bamboo Forest scene

In the ‘coda’ section, the melodies presented in the preceding three sections are recapitulated and joined with the rhythmic motive of the Night Fight scene. When Mu-bai asks Jen to be his disciple, the latter (Figure 8.1) is heard with the sustained notes played by strings (A and D notes are played together). When Jen refuses, the music becomes more agitated and the earlier melodic patterns (Figure 8.4) are played by strings and joined by the Chinese woodwind instruments playing the Ba-wu melody (Figure 8.6); both rise to a crescendo. The musical structure of the whole sequence can be illustrated as follows:

Section 1	The first presentation of the Ba-wu melody.
Section 2	A transitional section between two Ba-wu sections, in which the principal compositional elements are two short melodic patterns and a sustained note A played by strings.
Section 3	The second presentation of the Ba-wu melody, with a full cadence.
Section 4	The Ba-wu melody, the two melodic patterns and the rhythmic pattern in the Night Fight scene discussed above are all included.

Figure 8.7 Outline of the music in the Bamboo Forest scene

The music ends at the moment when Jade Fox catches Jen, suggesting a return to the real world not unlike similar moments in film musicals. Jade’s appearance interrupts the fantasy world of Mu-bai and Jen much as the police officer interrupts Gene Kelly’s dance in *Singing in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952); near the end of the dance a police officer appears, stares at Kelly and stands by him, as if to say ‘what are you doing? Be normal!’ The music suddenly halts, but then resumes at a much softer volume, prompting Kelly to sing the final phrase before leaving. The short sequence from the shot where the officer appears up to the ending of the music is a transition where both reality and the fantasy world coexist, which largely dissolves the line between the two opposites.

Also similar to *Singing in the Rain*, the fight scene does not suddenly end with Jade Fox's appearance, since a formal cadence is still needed. LEE then designs a short sequence in which Mu-bai follows Jade to the bamboo forest, and yet all that Mu-bai sees is bamboo trees, weaving in the wind. Here the audience is given an empty shot of bamboo trees and the sounds of rustling leaves are clearly heard. This shot lasts for seconds. On the one hand, it functions as the end of the fight between Mu-bai and Jen, but on the other hand, the sounds from nature (i.e. the rustling of leaves), a signal of acoustic realism, help to set up the return to the real world.

The change of space, costume and setting are also possible ways to signal the transition between narrative and spectacle.¹⁵ For example, the Bamboo Forest scene discussed above is preceded and followed by scenes in Shu-lien's house, a clear distinction between indoors and outdoors, and between reality and the imaginary (the aforementioned Night Fight sequence is applicable to this strategy as well). Some fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger* are played out in self-contained spaces that suggest 'a kind of performance arena';¹⁶ add to this their coherent musical accompaniments, and many therefore look more like musical numbers performed on a stage. In 'backstage' film musicals characters often literally perform on stage, but they also often perform from similar kinds of performance arenas direct to camera during 'integrated musical numbers'. For example, there are fights in a tavern (Jen with some male warriors), in a temple (Jen with Mu-bai), in a plaza surrounded by high walls (Jen with Shu-lien), and in the courtyard in Shu-lien's compound (see Figure 8.8). Fighting in these self-contained spaces, restricted by the surrounding walls, is then very similar to performances on stage in audiences' viewing experiences.

¹⁵ Klein, ' "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*": A Diasporic Reading', 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.



Figure 8.8 The fight in Shu-lien's compound

As discussed above, incorporating ideas from musicals into a martial arts film puts more emphasis on the role music plays — transforming it from a species of sound effect to more sophisticated underscoring. The graceful dance-like fighting, the novel musical underscoring and the greater attention to delivering narrative through those fight sequences in *Crouching Tiger* reveal LEE's endeavours to transform the image of the martial arts genre and to globalise it. As a popular genre from Hollywood studios, the film musical has, consciously or unconsciously, been firmly imprinted in more global audiences' experiences than any other entertainment product. Engaging Hollywood musical techniques in *Crouching Tiger* may also contribute to its understanding and acceptance by global audiences.

Musical ideas from Western operas

In addition to film musicals, another Western inclination in *Crouching Tiger's* music is borrowings from Western opera. LEE has claimed that:

We treat the underscoring of *Crouching Tiger* as a Western opera. I have never used such a great amount of music in my films before. [...]

I only gave TAN Dun two topics [from which he should develop musical ideas]. One was gentle and graceful, representing Southern China; the other one

was free and untrammelled, representing Xinjiang [Western China]. Apart from this, I hoped he would include percussion music in the fight scenes, since I love the percussion idioms in Beijing operas. [...] I also wanted to use the instrument Ba-wu. I liked the mysterious tone colour of Ba-wu.¹⁷

When asked to clarify LEE's concept of Western opera in relation to his film scoring commission, TAN himself described it in terms of every character in the opera having his/her own voice:

We use different instruments for different characters. We use instruments to 'talk' for themselves, just as the characters sing to express themselves in a Western opera. The cello represents LI Mu-bai's generosity and elegance, Er-hu represents Michelle YEOH's [YU Shu-lien's] virtuousness and Ba-wu [a woodwind instrument] means mystery. [...] I use different instruments, not only for representing different characters or qualities, but also for indicating the geographical locations. Er-hu is from Northern China, Ba-wu from the south and the Xinjiang hand drum for representing the Western China.¹⁸

Not only each character but each location in *Crouching Tiger* has his/her own instrumental voice, as TAN points out. Also, from the interview quoted above, one can see that an instrument sometimes signifies more than one icon; for instance, the Er-hu is linked with Shu-lien as well as with Northern China. The musical symbolism in *Crouching Tiger* is therefore applied in an abstract way; it is an approach by which TAN and LEE assign the characters and locations to specific instruments according to their similar temperaments. In this way, the instrumental voices, when they appear in the background with their appointed characters and locations, may imply, support or enhance a range of narrative meanings.

Consider one sequence in the middle of the film, when the sword has been returned and Mu-bai is practising martial arts in the courtyard at night. This

¹⁷ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 380.

¹⁸ LAN, *Film Music Composer*, p. 20.

illustrates how the multi-faceted musical symbolism works in *Crouching Tiger*. Shu-lien is watching Mu-bai practising martial arts, yet viewers do not know Shu-lien is watching since she has not yet been seen on the screen. However, here the sequence is accompanied by the solo melody of the Er-hu, the instrumental representation of Shu-lien. We hear Shu-lien's 'voice' first, and then the camera moves to focus on Shu-lien, who is standing next to a pillar in the hallway. The first shot of Shu-lien is her back, and after the next cut we see her from the front with a close-up on her face. When the camera moves from her back to her face, the solo melody of the Er-hu is replaced by the solo melody of the cello (the representative sound of Mu-bai). The solo melody of the cello is a variation of the preceding Er-hu melody, and so it sounds as if the cello is echoing the Er-hu. Mu-bai then notices that Shu-lien is watching him and so stops his martial arts practice. Shu-lien moves forwards to the centre of the courtyard to talk with him. Precisely as Shu-lien says, 'Green Destiny sword is returned. Are you happy with that?', the cello melody vanishes and the Er-hu melody re-enters. We are being invited to listen to Shu-lien's speaking. The volume of the background music decreases as the conversation between Mu-bai and Shu-lien continues. But if one keeps listening to the soft music, one can hear the solo melodies of both cello and Er-hu alternate, and sometimes overlap: the music seems to be suggesting the intimate conversation between the two lovers.

The sounds that occur during this sequence fall into three layers. The first layer comprises the foreground sounds: above all the dialogue between Mu-bai and Shu-lien. The second layer consists of the ambient sound, especially the intermittent singing sounds from cicadas. Cicadas' 'singing' sounds function here as a spatial and temporal signifier since cicadas are only generally seen and heard in Southern China at night. The ambient sounds from nature help to produce the realist sense of the

filmic world, which is one main function of diegetic sounds in film. The third level is the non-diegetic music level, in which the elegant melodies of Er-hu and cello, played one after the other, serve as a musical metaphor of a conversation between Mu-bai and Shu-lien.

Although the cello part represents Mu-bai and the Er-hu substitutes for Shu-lien, according to TAN, this kind of instrument-character metaphor is just one underscoring technique that he applies in the film. Of course it does not always happen when the character is shown or the instrument is heard (it would be very boring and redundant if this kind of metaphor happened all the time, for the same reason that mickey-mousing-style underscoring would be). What TAN uses to achieve coherence and continuity in his musical underscoring in *Crouching Tiger* is a commonly used device in the Hollywood underscoring tradition: thematic variation. Applying the concept of thematic variation in order to achieve better musical continuity is a novel idea in the musical design of a martial arts film, since most preceding martial arts film directors paid more attention to creating fabulous martial arts displays than to narrative construction or the music. However, compared with those used in conventional Hollywood underscoring, the thematic variation in *Crouching Tiger* is fairly simple and straightforward.

A theme initiated by the notes A-E-D-A-E is the most often heard melody in *Crouching Tiger* (Figure 8.9). It occurs a number of times in the film, albeit varied in different keys, by different instruments, at different tempi, or by different orchestrations on different occasions. For example, the two chase scenes involving Mu-bai and Jen are accompanied by a slow tempo 'A-E-D-A-E' theme played on the Ba-wu. This seems to evoke the ambiguous, mysterious relationship between them: on the surface their relationship is that of 'enemies', but sometimes it is 'teacher-student'. When they dance on the top of the bamboo trees, the theme even

imparts a sense of flirtation. In the sequence when Jade Fox's true identity is to be revealed and a fight with officers is expected, the theme is transformed as the dissonant intervals of A-E \flat -D-A \flat , and the melody is intersected as four accented notes played by brass, signalling the suspense and tense atmosphere of the fight (Figure 8.10).



Figure 8.9 The A-E-D-A-E melodic pattern



Figure 8.10 The variation of the A-E-D-A-E melody in Jade Fox's scene

This technique of thematic variation might be confused with the leitmotif technique, which is for David Neumeyer and James Buhler 'the most common musical device for structuring a film score on a large-scale level'.¹⁹ However, from the analysis above, one can see that although this melodic motive recurs, like others in the film it is not strictly related to a particular style topic, nor is it the case that the recurrence of this motive 'marks shifts in character and articulates large formal spans in the film' and 'allows one most readily to tie the musical score into a narrative analysis'.²⁰ I would suggest that those recurrent motives in *Crouching Tiger*, whether rhythmic or melodic, do unify the film, which is distinctive compared with music in conventional martial arts films, but they do not bear such profound narrative implications and structural indications as do those in a leitmotif-based Hollywood film score. It seems to be a nod to that underscoring, rather than a

¹⁹ David Neumeyer and James Buhler, 'Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (I): Analysing the Music', in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. by K.J. Donnelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 16-38 (p. 28).

²⁰ Neumeyer and Buhler, 'Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (I)', p. 29.

wholesale appropriation.

The reception debates

The above discussions and analyses have shown how LEE deconstructs the stereotypes of martial arts films and reconstructs a contemporary rendition of this traditional genre through a series of reflective dialectical processes between keeping the Cultural Chinese traditions and creating things which may be attractive to audiences more widely. The music and sound in *Crouching Tiger* contribute to those returns and reforms. Since deconstruction of the stereotypes of Chinese traditions involved displacing certain traditional elements, debates erupted over *Crouching Tiger*'s cultural authenticity following its release. Major critics from the West gave the fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger* much credit for the elegance and beauty of their slowed-down, quasi-dancing fights: William Gallagher of the BBC said, 'You may never see a more beautiful movie — and certainly no more majestic film has yet been made.'²¹ Paul Tataro from CNN claimed, 'This sweeping, dream-like fable is a near-masterpiece, replete with marvelously fanciful images and a touching love story.'²² Richard Corliss writing for TIME indicated that: 'In *Crouching Tiger*, that motion has its own poetry, [...]'.²³ By contrast, many critiques emerged from Chinese-language regions. For example, Maria Wong, a post-production film executive in Hong Kong, complained, 'there's simply not enough action. [...] *Crouching Tiger* is so slow, it's a bit like listening to grandma telling stories'.²⁴ One

²¹ William Gallagher, 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)', 18 December 2000, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2000/12/16/crouching_tiger_hidden_dragon_2000_review.shtml> [accessed 20 February 2010]

²² Paul Tataro, 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: a Gripping, Poetic Tale', *CNN.com reviewer*, 11 December 2000. <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/SHOWBIZ/Movies/12/11/review.crouching.tiger/index.html>> [accessed 20 February 2010]

²³ Richard Corliss, 'Year of the Tiger', *TIME Magazine*, 3 December 2000. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,90548,00.html>> [accessed 20 February 2010]

²⁴ Quoted in Steve Rose, 'The Film Is So Slow – It's Like Grandma Telling Stories', *The Guardian*,

actor in China, GE You wondered how *Crouching Tiger* could win so many awards, joking ‘perhaps *Crouching Tiger* amazes the foreigners’.²⁵

The filmmaking process of *Crouching Tiger*, a film which ‘displays the simultaneously localizing and globalizing tendencies of mass culture today’,²⁶ went down the route of hybridisation, blending ideas from both Cultural China and the West. This kind of production unavoidably provokes scholarly and critical debate regarding authenticity and national identity.²⁷ LEE has responded to those particular debates:

I asked for Hollywood standards when I made *Crouching Tiger*, and also wanted to add in the scent of art cinema. The result is that all the things from the East, the West, the ancient, the contemporary, the elite, and the vulgar are all together in *Crouching Tiger*.²⁸

In fact, culture is a living thing, as are cinema and language; they are not things in a museum. No matter whether in the East or in the West, culture is constantly in the process of adapting and changing. Why do martial arts films have to stay at the same B-movie level as before? Why can’t martial arts have a connection with the realm of art and humanist spirit so that the quality and culture of martial arts films is elevated? [...] Why is it that if a martial arts film is not wild, not low, not vulgar, and not leaning towards edgy culture, [...] then it means that this martial arts film is American-made?

I am shooting the film I want. [...]

Can we not be labelled? [...]

It’s unfair to say I am shooting this film for Westerners. Surely everyone seeks success, but my biggest concern is the quality. My film must be capable of competing with others when it is on screen.²⁹

LEE’s response shows that what concerns him the most is the outcome of the film

13 February 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2001/feb/13/artsfeatures2>> [accessed 14 February 2010]

²⁵ MIN Lin, ‘GE You criticises *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*’, *Eastday News*, 26 May 2001. <<http://birthday.eastday.com/epublish/big5/paper148/20010526/class014800007/hwz394793.htm>> [accessed 30 July 2011]

²⁶ Klein, ‘“*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*”: A diasporic Reading’, 18.

²⁷ For more details, see *Ibid.*, 18-42.

²⁸ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, p. 384.

²⁹ CHANG, *Ten Years, A Dream of Filmmaking*, pp. 433-35.

rather than the discussion of the dichotomy between East and West. His words also reveal the uneasiness and dilemma of being an international director and producing a transnational production like this.

The attacks on *Crouching Tiger*'s cultural inauthenticity seem to treat local cultures as fragile ones that can only accept influences from a dominant culture — here, Hollywood film culture. They suggest that whenever ideas that originate from Hollywood are adopted in a local film they render the film inauthentic. This kind of critique over-emphasises the uniform power of cultural imperialism and suggests that a cultural product can only be read in terms of cultural or national singularity, which seems inadequate for understanding cultural products today when boundaries among nations/cultures/ethnicities blur. Furthermore, the debates regarding the authenticity of Chineseness in *Crouching Tiger* imply that an 'authentic' stereotype exists and that any creations differing from this stereotype are inauthentic. Nevertheless, in this period of globalisation when transnational productions prevail, this assumption may bog us down in an endless search for a stereotype that simply does not exist; equally, the black and white 'Chinese' vs. 'Western' dichotomy results in debates about ideological purism more than it helps us to value the film in its own right.³⁰

Crouching Tiger needs to be examined from a broader perspective than the dichotomy of the essentialist debates regarding 'the oriental' and 'the West', given the fact that this kind of cross-border, hybrid production has become so common. Jennifer W. Jay concludes that what runs through *Crouching Tiger* 'is the transnational China created by LEE's team of largely diaspora talents; what propels the flow is the process of Westernization associated with marketing transnational

³⁰ WANG and YEH, 'Globalization and Hybridization in Cultural Production', p. 96.

China as a global film culture'.³¹ Jay does point out the spirit of LEE's strategy, yet her claim carries Western-centred implications with the application of the term 'Westernisation', which seems based on the assumption that Cultural China's modernisation shall be achieved through the process of Westernisation. Nevertheless, today East Asian countries take a much more active role on the world stage economically, politically, and culturally than the May Fourth Movement,³² whose intellectual members believe that the modernisation of China can only be reached through Westernisation.³³

Like Christina Klein, I have read *Crouching Tiger*'s music and sound in connection with LEE's tie with his homeland, with other members of Chinese-language communities, and with his American hostland. Klein's approach is constructive in terms of applying diasporic theory, since an awareness of geographic multiplicity, which is characteristic of the diasporic approach 'enables us to step beyond the sterile binaries of domination and resistance, corruption and authenticity, [...]'.³⁴ In the case of *Crouching Tiger*, the diasporic approach helps to banish outdated essentialist debates in which boundaries between nation-states and cultures are emphasised. This is a more appropriate approach for examining the soundscape of a film which is embedded in transnational flow.

My discussion of *Crouching Tiger* in this part is based on the conceptual framework of diasporic studies, and further demonstrates how the sonic dimension

³¹ Jay, 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon: (Re)packaging Chinas and Selling the Hybridized Culture in an Age of Transnationalism', p. 142.

³² The May Fourth Movement, also known as 'New Culture Movement', was a socio-political reform movement promoted by students and intellectuals in China from around 1916 through the 1920s. This movement aimed to ask for scientific, cultural, and political reforms that could make China strong enough to fight against Western imperialism, which marked the rise of Chinese nationalism in the early twentieth century. Although it was an anti-imperialist movement, the ways those intellectuals believed they could 'make China strong enough' was through learning Western technology, and a democratic political and educational system.

³³ Ien ANG, 'Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm', *Boundary*, 25 (1998), 223-42 (p. 231).

³⁴ Klein, '“Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”: A Diasporic Reading', 21.

of this film oscillates between the two extremes, namely, keeping a flavour of Cultural China and meeting global audiences' expectations, as is common in hybrid productions today. The above analysis of *Crouching Tiger*, as many others in this thesis, also represents a journey of discovery to find out how a Taiwanese director defines the culture he comes from, reconfigures his own culture, borrows ideas from others, incorporates things he appreciates, and then recreates a work that he considers to be a better representative image of his own culture for audiences all over the world. As LEE claims, 'give and take', a process of mutual learning, is the situation when 'East meets West' today. The main point, then, is not to examine whether a Taiwanese director removes something from the traditions or takes ideas from other cultures: the issue lies with what he takes, what he gives, and the reasons, implications and results of his giving and taking.

The *Crouching Tiger* phenomenon has demonstrated that Chinese-language films can be successful in world cinema; moreover, since it Hollywood and other major film cultures have made greater investments in Chinese-language films. Such developments present both advantages and disadvantages to the local Taiwanese industry. By examining music in two more recent films, *Cape No.7* (2008) and *Secret* (2007), I explore in the next part Taiwan's internal struggles to construct its cultural identity in the post-*Crouching Tiger* period.

Part Four Popular Music in Recent Taiwan Cinema

The international success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* led to various companies from Hollywood, Europe and East Asia investing increasing amounts of money in Chinese-language films, which reflects the growing globalising influence of what was once defined as the ‘powerless’ side — to borrow Appadurai’s terms of reference. The ways in which Hollywood and other film cultures co-operated with Chinese-language filmmakers also changed rapidly in the late 1990s. Tom WANG from BVI (Buena Vista International, the international distribution arm of Buena Vista Pictures Distribution, Inc.) points out that around 1996, in the case of the Hollywood-Chinese communities relationship:

The trend was to bring Chinese talent to the U.S. and do action movies cheaply. But now [2000] the trend is shifting towards, Let’s recruit the finest talent, put together some financing, and let them make their own movies in their hometown, because that is where their creativity will fully blossom. That’s why Columbia set up a production centre in Hong Kong, and that’s why they’re financing directors like Ang LEE, ZHANG Yimou, and TSUI Hark.¹

Following *Crouching Tiger*, Columbia invested in other Taiwanese directors, such as Sylvia CHANG and CHEN Kuo-fu; French companies invested in HOU Hsiao-hsien, Chih-Yen YEE and TSAI Ming-liang, while various East Asian companies financed Jay CHOU and Chao-bin SU. In most of these locally made transnational productions, not only can we see the use of elements from other film cultures, but the retention of local cultural elements, and thus a mixture of several cultures is evident in a single film. Music and sound in Taiwan cinema reflected

¹ Curtin, *The Globalisation of Chinese Film and TV*, p. 99.

these changes as well.

Investments coming from outside Taiwan offer many advantages, but also put pressure on the local film industry. On the one hand, they bring in many new concepts in both film production and marketing; on the other hand, the issues of cultural conflict and the preservation of local cultural elements become crucially important to local filmmakers and composers. In the case of Taiwan, the main pressures come from Hollywood, other Chinese-language communities such as China and Hong Kong, and other East Asian countries, particularly Korea, whose media productions have spread widely in recent years, giving rise to what has been described as the 'Korean Wave'.²

One cultural activity has emerged in recent years which bears witness to the Taiwanese people's attempts to search for a self-referential point in the face of the homogenising tendencies of globalisation. The '*Tai-ke* (literally, Taiwanese guest) phenomenon', a very current and controversial cultural issue in Taiwan, defines the territory of Taiwan's own culture, helps people to differentiate themselves from Others, and to a certain extent opposes the invasion of the Korean Wave.³ *Tai-ke* refers to the free hybridisation of diverse cultural elements in Taiwan and therefore embraces many forms of cultural expression, such as clothing, language and musical styles.⁴ In Taiwan's musical products today, a hybridised fusion of musical styles from different regions (such as Western rock with the Hakka language) and bilingual/trilingual lyrics (Mandarin with English, Mandarin with Fukien, Fukien

² For more on the 'Korean wave' in Asia, see for instance Beng Huat Chua and Koichi Iwabuchi, *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008); Doobo Shim, 'Hybridity and the Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia', *Media, Culture & Society*, 28 (2006), 25-44; Fang-chih Irene YANG, 'The Gentrification of "Korean Drama" in Taiwan', *China Information*, 22 (2008), 277-304; Samuel Seongseop Kim, Jerome Agrusa, Heesung Lee and Kaye Chon, 'Effects of Korean Television Dramas on the Flow of Japanese Tourists', *Tourism Management*, 28 (2007), 1340-53.

³ Hsiao-hung CHANG, 'We Are All Like Taiwanese', *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly*, 35 (2006), 85-134 (p. 86).

⁴ CHANG, 'We Are All Like Taiwanese', 88.

with English, or Hakka with English) are very common. As WU Bai, ‘the King of *Tai-ke* music’, points out:

I have always hoped to dance my soul on the world stage, and the soul here refers to the *Tai-ke* spirit. Its essence is to stand on our land and ground ourselves in what our land supplies us. [This is like] doing stretching exercises. On the one hand, my feet stand tightly on the ground; on the other hand, I let my hands stretch upward and try to transcend my own limitations. [...] The *Tai-ke* concert is trying to create, discover [...] the special characteristic and essence of our own culture. [...] We hope to transform it into a new Cultural Revival movement.⁵

Although *Tai-ke* means to include cultures and languages ‘on our land’, its self-referential process also involves a process of differentiating the ‘Self’ from the ‘Other’. Along with the influx of more and more foreign musical styles and stars, promoted and encouraged by the international record giants based in Taiwan, and the intensified integration of the East Asian economy, musical cultures and stars from neighbouring regions have also become popular in Taiwan and are widely perceived as threatening the local industry. Examples include artists and trends such as the Korean Wave, Japanophile, and ABC or ABT (American-born Chinese or American-born Taiwanese), all of whom engage with the issues of being a cultural ‘Other’ to the local music industry in Taiwan.

One noted example of conflict is that between *Tai-ke* singers and Korean stars. The first *Tai-ke* rock concert coincided with the visit of the Korean superstar Bae Yong-jun to Taiwan. Since Korean pop culture has recently increased in popularity in Taiwan, Bae Yong-jun’s visit attracted thousands of people. A Taiwanese rap singer composed a song taunting the Korean star but praising *Tai-ke* culture. The

⁵ WU Bai, ‘Do Not Let *Tai-ke* Become Another Excuse for Our Degeneration’, *China Times*, 17 August 2005. Quoted in Fang-chih Irene YANG ‘Rap(p)ing Korean Wave: National Identity in Question’, in *East Asian Pop Culture*, pp. 191-216 (p. 206).

lyrics are:

Taiwanese are fools. Korean singers in Taiwan earn easy money. Pop idol singers only need to have sunny smiles and charms like the boy [...] next door. Their lyrics are like farts. Tell me why you like them. Bae Yong-jun is not even half as handsome as Wu Bai [“the King of *Tai-ke*”].⁶

This 2005 event reignited debates on cultural nationalism. On the one hand, *Tai-ke* refers to cultures ‘on our land’; on the other hand, it often becomes a term to edge out cultures of the Other. The language of *Tai-ke* songs can be Mandarin, Fukien, Hakka, or even English. Korean, however, seems to be excluded.⁷

Although the power of Korean cultural products seems overwhelming to the Taiwanese, one example of the influence happening in reverse is that of the Taiwanese singer and director, Jay CHOU, who has gained popularity in Korea. To the Korean press, CHOU is an all-round singer, a model for young Korean singers and actors, and ‘has achieved what Ang LEE and HOU Hsiao-hsien couldn’t’.⁸

Referring to the film *Secret*, in which he also starred and underscored, one Korean newspaper reported:

Although some other low-budget films [like *Secret*] also do surprisingly well at the box office, the audiences’ positive reaction to *Secret* has been an inspiration in Korean entertainment circles.

The Taiwanese singer Jay CHOU, who is a top Taiwanese star, plays the leading role, and is the composer, script writer, and director. He began his career as a singer, and then expanded it to include performing arts, like young Korean stars.

However, the first film directed by the 30-year old CHOU has been

⁶ Quoted in Fang-chih Irene YANG ‘Rap(p)ing Korean Wave: National Identity in Question’, p. 202.

⁷ The inclusion of English in Chinese-language pop songs has existed in Taiwanese local music compositions for decades, and is very common. This historical fact might explain why the insertion of English in a Chinese-language song has seemed much more acceptable during the *Tai-ke* wave.

⁸ News item in *The Chosun Ilbo* (Chinese Edition), 16 January 2008. <http://chinese.chosun.com/big5/site/data/html_dir/2008/01/16/20080116000033.html> [accessed 28 May 2010]

immensely popular. The film looks low-budget [...] and CHOU's appearance is far removed from that of other handsome stars. What moves audiences deeply are the beautiful melodies throughout the film and the creative storyline expressing young people's feelings.

Korea also has many stars like CHOU who began their careers as idol singers. [...] However, compared with CHOU, where are our [Korean] stars? Many of them are unable to position themselves now because of the limitations of their idol singers' images and the parlous state of the music industry. [...] They do not have any real strengths. [...]

The decreasing number of cultural exports in the last two years has shown that the Korean wave is ebbing. But now Jay CHOU has achieved what the well-known Taiwanese directors HOU Hsiao-hsien and Ang LEE couldn't — promoting Taiwanese films. That is the power of a star.⁹

It is interesting that the reviewer compares CHOU, a young, first-time director, with HOU and LEE, both of whom are globally recognised directors. The statement seems exaggerated, but it does draw attention to one issue: that among a certain audience CHOU seems to have outshone HOU and LEE in 'promoting Taiwanese films'. What strategies, in either production or marketing, make CHOU's *Secret* 'more successful' (from the Korean newspaper's perspective) than the films of HOU and LEE? In the first chapter of this part, I shall consider CHOU's film *Secret* (2007) as an example of how both popular and classical music can be harnessed to produce an attractive but also a highly commercial creation in the face of the transnational pressure that most Taiwanese directors, singers and composers are having to confront.

In addition to the issue of the Korean Wave, the *Tai-ke* phenomenon also highlights the multicultural, multilingual nature of Taiwanese society, and suggests a more open and flexible approach to examining the cultural phenomenon in Taiwan

⁹ News item in *The Chosun Ilbo* (Chinese Edition), 16 January 2008. <http://chinese.chosun.com/big5/site/data/html_dir/2008/01/16/20080116000033.html> [accessed 28 May 2010]

and in defining the so-called Taiwanese cultural identity. As CHIU Kui-fen notes,

In the case of Taiwan, if its history is that of colonialism, its culture is hybrid and indeed transcultural in character. [...] Since translanguality is a unique feature in the languages of Taiwan, [...] we should rid [ourselves of any myths about] reclaiming the pure native language, as if uncontaminated by colonialism, in our attempt to debunk the ethnocentrism of colonial regimes.¹⁰

Although CHIU's application of post-colonialism in interpreting the cultural complexity of today's Taiwanese society has provoked debate among scholars, her argument does help in interpreting the complex cultures in present-day Taiwan, in the second decade after the lifting of martial law, when Taiwanese people are searching for a more inclusive approach to interpreting their colonial past and constructing what Anderson would call an 'imagined community'.

Both CHOU's *Secret* and WEI De-sheng's 2008 film *Cape No.7*, the most commercially successful film in the history of Taiwan cinema discussed in the second chapter of this part, are films which demonstrate the multilingual, multicultural context of Taiwanese society and examine the tensions among diverse cultural forces in today's Taiwan. Both use popular music as their central musical resource. These two films have achieved an almost iconic status in Taiwan cinema over the last few years and represent different narrative and musical approaches to the struggle between localisation and globalisation. In both films the chosen music, whether popular songs or instrumental music, serves to allegorise internal struggles and relate to the formation of cultural identities. For example, songs in many

¹⁰ CHIU Kuei-fen, "'Rediscovering Taiwan': Constructing Taiwan's Postcolonial Discourse ('Fa-hsien Taiwan': Chien-kuo Taiwan hou-chih-ming lung-shih)", paper delivered at the 16th Annual ROC Comparative Literature Conference, May 1992. Reprinted in *Canon and New Methods of Teaching Literature (Tien-lu yu wen-hsueh chiao-hsueh)*, ed. by CHEN Tong-jung and CHEN Chang-fang (Taipei: Bookman, 1995), 233-53 (p. 240); quoted in Ping-hui LIAO, *Postcolonial Studies and Multiculturalism in Taiwan: Issues in Critical Debates* (Pullman: Washington State University, 2000), p. 6.

different languages and taken from a variety of cultural origins are used in *Cape No.7*, manifesting the hybrid nature of Taiwanese society. The choices and arrangements of songs within the plots also vividly show the internal cultural tangles of today's Taiwan, where there still exists a hierarchy among cultures and ethnic groups. Although both films make extensive use of popular music, ultimately it is performances of classical music that enable the various cultures and historical moments to communicate and be reconciled.

Although these two films have many common characteristics, the ways in which they deal with cultural differences are quite distinct. WEI's *Cape No.7* was intended entirely for the consumption of local audiences: it lets the differences and conflicts among cultures speak out. English rock songs, Mandarin songs, Japanese songs, traditional Chinese music, aboriginal music and Western classical music all have their place, and most retain their original arrangements and instrumentation. However this gives rise to questions as to how the tensions and hierarchies among Taiwan's constituent cultures are constructed in the film, and how local people reflect on their colonised past in the hybrid cultural context of Taiwan today. CHOU's *Secret*, by contrast, seeks to find a common denominator among different cultures, and tries to minimise the differences between Taiwan and neighbouring regions. CHOU assimilates musical and filmic elements from several cultures and mingles them; as such, local Taiwanese flavour turns out to be one, but not the only or the major, thread in *Secret*. As a result, *Secret* was subject to a more complex marketing strategy to find a common ground for the sense of 'an imagined community' among the Chinese-speaking regions, regardless of the differences of nation-state or cultural boundaries. This approach may be one crucial reason why *Secret* is not only popular in Taiwan, but also in China and other East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea. *Secret* was released in 2007, which was after

CHOU had already gained popularity in Chinese popular music circles and had already marketed his products to regions other than Taiwan; thus, understanding the strategies CHOU employed to compose and sell his songs may provide a clue for examining the success of his subsequent film career. Like Ang LEE in *Crouching Tiger*, CHOU relies on a sense of 'Cultural China' to enable his songs to cross national boundaries.

Chapter 9. From The Periphery to The Centre: The Music and

Films of Jay CHOU

Though now also a film director, CHOU began his career as a singer: today he is unquestionably one of the most popular Chinese singers, not only among the world's various Chinese-language communities, but also in Japan and Korea. Perhaps surprisingly for a Taiwanese who has no connection with the West or mainland China, CHOU's albums are also extremely popular in China, where the authorities continue to marginalise Taiwan culturally and economically. Indeed, he has what is probably the very first fan club in China.¹

CHOU's fame quickly attracted the attention of certain film directors and he was soon invited to appear in several films. *Initial D*, directed by Wai-Keung LAI and Alan MAK in 2005, was CHOU's first film.² In it he plays the role of a quiet young man who has grown up in a single-parent family, with a father who is a heavy drinker, and whom he has to help by making money. Early every morning he drives through the mountains to deliver their homemade bean-curd to customers. His driving skills are noticed by some racing drivers, and he is asked to compete with them. In the end, he becomes a famous motor-racing champion. The character of the role in *Initial D* reflects something of CHOU's own experience of growing up. He grew up in a single-parent family; after graduating from high school, he worked in a record company as a songwriter; years later, his talents finally attracted the attention of a record company and then his own album was released. *Initial D* earned him two

¹ Anthony FUNG, 'Western Style, Chinese Pop: Jay CHOU's Rap and Hip-Hop in China', *Asian Music*, 39 (2008), 69-80 (p. 69). The information regarding CHOU's fan club comes from another article by Anthony FUNG, 'Fandom, Youth, and Consumption in China', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12 (2009), 285-303 (p. 288).

² More details of this film are available on the IMDb website.
<<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0439630/>> [accessed 7 May 2010]

awards and two nominations at local film festivals.³ One item of film news on the website Studio Briefing, 7 July 2005, used the headline ‘Taiwanese Movie Beats “Star Wars” in Hong Kong’ to describe the popularity of this film.⁴ CHOU was then invited by the well-known PRC director ZHANG Yimou to star in and compose music for ZHANG’s 2006 production, *Curse of the Golden Flower*, which also won him awards.⁵

Probably encouraged by these successes, CHOU invested in, directed, starred in and composed the score for the film *Secret* in 2007, a film in which he plays a high school student with musical talents, enabling him to display fully his professional piano playing skills and compositional talents. As he was a 28-year old pop singer in 2007, with no previous directing experience, this film did not attract many investors, and so most of the money came from CHOU himself. However, its box office revenue was surprisingly good for a low-budget film.⁶ *Secret* was not only popular among Chinese-language communities, it was also very popular in Korea. Although his filmmaking achievement has not proved as prestigious internationally as those of other big figures such as HOU Hsiao-hsien and Ang LEE, CHOU’s immense regional success deserves further examination.

³ Those were Best New Performer at the Golden Horse Film Festival (Taiwan) and Hong Kong Film Festival, and Best Original Film Song nominations at both festivals. Sourced from IMDb <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0439630/awards>> [accessed 7 May 2010]

⁴ The whole news item reads: ‘The low-budget Taiwanese action flick *Initial D*, filmed in Japan, has startled distributors in Hong Kong by beating out *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* at the box office there. The Associated Press reported today (Thursday) that the film has grossed \$3.6 million over its first 10 days, while the latest *Star Wars* installment has taken in only \$2.4 million over 46 days. *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* has taken in \$2.8 million over 25 days. The film, described by AP as “a testament to the far reach of Japanese popular culture,” is based on a popular Japanese comic book by Shuichi Shigeno and stars Chinese singer-songwriter Jay CHOU.’ ‘Taiwanese Movie Beats “Star Wars” in Hong Kong’, 7 July 2005, *Studio Briefing*, IMDb <<http://www.imdb.com/news/ni0074267/>> [accessed 10 October 2010]

⁵ CHOU won the Best Original Film Song award at the Hong Kong Film Festival and the Best Actor award at the Shanghai Film Critics Awards. Sourced from IMDb. <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1727100/awards>> [accessed 7 May 2010]

⁶ The budget of *Secret* was around 65,000,000 NTD (roughly 1,300,000 GBP), and the total revenue in Asia was 314,000,000 NTD (about 6,280,000 GBP).

Cultural Chinese appeal: a weapon to cross the boundaries of nation state

For sociologist Anthony FUNG, CHOU's success 'lies in his capacity to sublimate himself into an icon of Chineseness while maintaining his popular and commercial façade, i.e. his cool image', and his songs 'trigger the audience's emotions in a celebration of Chinese tradition and values'.⁷ FUNG's conclusion is drawn from his empirical research on the so-called 'Jay CHOU phenomenon' in the Chinese-language music industry. For FUNG, one crucial and major element of CHOU's iconic image in popular culture is his close link with the Chinese cultural tradition. Unlike some Taiwanese rappers, who prefer to use local languages such as Fukien and Hakka, or even Taiwanese aboriginal languages, to express their ethnic identities and aim to speak for those minority groups, CHOU chooses to use Mandarin as the major language of his songs, which is the official one used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. Although CHOU does have a rap section in Korean in his song 'Si Mian Chu Ge' ('Enemies All Around', 2006), he doesn't use local Taiwanese language to the extent that it would reinforce his Taiwanese identity. In other words, in light of trends towards regional integration, both cultural and economic, CHOU's strategy with his compositions is to tone down local characteristics that might reveal his Taiwanese origin, and to emphasise common factors among all Chinese-language communities, such as the use of Mandarin and traditional Chinese instruments, as opposed to languages or musical styles from Fukien, Hakka or Taiwanese aboriginal groups. The attachment to Chinese culture in his songs is probably one reason why Chinese-speaking teenagers around the world acknowledge him as one of their idols, regardless of their diverse nationalities: his songs are not only popular in the three major Chinese-language communities, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, but also in Singapore and among the Chinese

⁷ FUNG, 'Western Style, Chinese Pop', 73.

diaspora elsewhere where the Mandarin language is recognised.⁸

The ‘Jay CHOU phenomenon’ has been of considerable significance to the Taiwanese music industry, especially given that he emerged around 2000 when the Chinese-language popular song industry in Taiwan was beginning to see a gradual fall in revenues.⁹ CHOU’s first album, *Jay CHOU*, was produced when he was twenty-one years old and sold 350,000 units in Taiwan, a big hit for a new singer. In 2001 the record company released his second album, *Fantasy*, which sold 1.7 million units in Asia and established CHOU’s iconic status regionally: he has been lauded as one of the ‘Young Super Four’ in Chinese-language popular culture.¹⁰ Every year since 2000 (except 2009) he has released an album, and each album since 2002 has sold more than 2 million units in Asia. The piracy issue and the decline of the Taiwan song industry seem not to have had much impact on CHOU’s story.

CHOU’s case thus becomes valuable for investigating how a Taiwanese singer or musician can be popular in Cultural Chinese communities and ultimately have an impact in the film industry, too, and this case will be examined within the framework of regional integration of Chinese-language communities, cultural and

⁸ I taught a music lesson to exchange students from a high-school in Singapore when I was in Taiwan. The topic was ‘Taiwanese Music’, and I introduced various musical sources and styles in today’s Taiwan, including songs of all major ethnic groups in Taiwan and Taiwanese pop songs. When I introduced CHOU’s songs, most of the Singaporean students could ‘rap’ with CHOU throughout his songs from memory and without mistakes.

⁹ According to data from RIT (Recording Industry Foundation in Taiwan, the Taiwan branch of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry), until 1999 around 80% of the world’s Chinese-language popular song records were produced in Taiwan and Taiwan had the second largest popular song production in Asia (next to Japan). After 2000 it dropped to third, fourth, and sometimes even fifth place as a result of severe piracy problems involving illegal copies and internet downloads. From Robin LEE’s article ‘Recent Development [in the] Taiwan Music Market’, the production rankings for the years 2000-2007 are: 2000 (3), 2001 (4), 2002 (4), 2003 (5), 2004 (4), 2005 (3), 2006 (5), and 2007 (3). <http://www.ifpi.org.tw/record/activity/taiwan_music_market.htm> [accessed 14 May 2010]

¹⁰ The term ‘Young Super Four’ is a parallel to the ‘Super Four’. The term ‘Super Four’ refers to the four most famous figures in 1990s-2000s Chinese-language popular culture: Andy LAU, Jacky CHEUNG, Aaron KWOK, and Ming Leon LAI, all of whom have successful careers in popular songs, films and theatre.

economic, in an era of globalisation. The regional integration of the popular song industry among the three major Chinese-language communities, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, has not been particularly obvious since the 1990s. Even though since the 1970s popular songs from Taiwan and Hong Kong have occupied the mainstream of Chinese-language popular songs consumed worldwide, two political turning-points, one on each side of the Taiwan Strait, have been defining: the 1987 lifting of martial law in Taiwan and the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre in China. Both events resulted in a more flexible and open attitude towards cultural exchange.

Popular songs from Taiwan and Hong Kong are called *Gangtai* songs in China (*Gang* refers to Hong Kong, *Tai* to Taiwan). According to sociologist Thomas B. Gold, the pervasiveness in China of *Gangtai* popular culture (cultures from the ‘periphery’) is a parallel in the cultural realm of the increased integration of these three regions: ‘Hong Kong and Taiwan supplying the dynamism and the mainland the market’.¹¹ From Gold’s observations, several factors contribute to the wide popularity of *Gangtai* songs in China. First, *Gangtai* popular culture is already widely popular in other Chinese-speaking areas; second, compared to songs in mainland China, where the state exerts strict control over cultural products, *Gangtai* popular culture is more novel; third, the content of *Gangtai* songs is more personal, and is not restricted to topics such as nationalism or socialism; fourth, *Gangtai* songs are in Chinese-language dialects (Mandarin and Cantonese) and more accessible to audiences in China than songs from other regions; and finally, the escapist nature of *Gangtai* culture, with its martial arts adventures and romantic love stories, provides an escape for people in China who live in a relatively harsh real-life environment.¹²

Even if the strict political controls over cultural products and the harsh living

¹¹ Thomas B. Gold, ‘Go with Your Feelings: Hong Kong and Taiwan Popular Culture in Greater China’, *The China Quarterly*, 136 (1993), 907-25 (p. 907).

¹² Gold, ‘Hong Kong and Taiwan Popular Culture in Greater China’, 913-15.

conditions in China described in Gold's 1993 article have gradually changed in the past two decades, Gold's analysis is still an effective model for analysing CHOU's case, given that *Gangtai* popular songs retain their popularity today.¹³

Just as *Gangtai* popular singers have introduced many novel ideas to China, CHOU's rap musical style has also made an original contribution to the Chinese music industry. Yet CHOU is also keenly aware of China's political policy and skilfully maintains a balance between freedom of composition and acknowledgement of government concerns. For example, rap is historically associated with African-American culture and considered a musical style which has arisen from and for 'the margins'.¹⁴ On the one hand, rap is praised for its free style and aims to evoke controversial issues in real life and to draw people's attention to those issues; on the other hand (as happened in the historical development of rock music), the image of rap music is linked with violence because of the rappers' personal behaviour and the sometimes extreme content of their lyrics.¹⁵ Owing to rap's negative associations, it is banned by the authorities in China, although at the same time the government is aware of 'the potency of rap and hip-hop as a vernacular vehicle of expression for youth'.¹⁶ When mainland Chinese rap groups performed at the Workers' Stadium auditorium, they dressed in tuxedos, were guarded by armed police, and performed a hip-hop and R&B repertoire with Chinese characteristics, including, as Tony Mitchell describes it, 'a rap version of a traditional Chinese folksong and an

¹³ For a more recent description of the importance of *Gangtai* popular songs in China, see Latham, 'Gangtai and Mainland Chinese Pop Music' in his *Pop Culture China! Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), pp. 342-45.

¹⁴ For example, Tricia Rose uses the title 'Voices from the Margins' to discuss rap music and contemporary black cultural production. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20.

¹⁵ Rose, *Black Noise*, p. 1.

¹⁶ Tony Mitchell, 'Introduction: Another Root — Hip-Hop Outside the USA', in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, ed. by Tony Mitchell (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), pp. 1-38 (p. 25).

expression of support of [for] Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Olympic games'.¹⁷

It is clear that CHOU uses rap music to put his modern, individualistic image on show, and has quickly received teenagers' recognition as a result. Yet somewhat contrary to the original spirit of rap — which typically involved critical comment on controversial social issues — many of his lyrics and music videos display his love of and appreciation for China's cultural traditions. In other words, rap is a musical device by means of which CHOU distinguishes himself from other pop singers and links himself to Western modernity; it is not a tool with which he debates social problems. As Adam Krims observes, 'rap music outside the United States may always be said to respond to both local forces and global forces (especially, of course, those of the United States itself)';¹⁸ in the present case, the differences between the lyrical content of rap music in Taiwan and China reflect the different attitudes towards American imperialism in the two countries. In Taiwan, where the US is viewed as an ally but where the imbalance of political power is still apparent whenever Taiwan has to confront the US in foreign affairs or economic exchanges, most of the controversial, revolutionary image of rap music has been retained. China, on the other hand, views itself as a country equal to, or even stronger than the US, and tends to claim its rights and take a stand on its position much more firmly than Taiwan does. Although in China rap music is still considered Westernised mass music that youths can use to express their individualities and novelties, compared with Taiwan, China's rap music is less politically sensitive and less controversial in its lyrical content, and is even used as political propaganda. As Krims concludes, 'rap music may be mediated globally, but [...] a certain detailed view of its function can only be seen locally,

¹⁷ Mitchell, 'Hip-Hop Outside the USA', p. 25.

¹⁸ Adam Krims, *Rap Music and The Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5.

taking account of local uniqueness'.¹⁹

In addition to localising Western musical style, the choice of language, the lyrics, musical scales and instruments used, and the visual images in CHOU's songs, all display his 'Chineseness', a link to an abstract, remote Chinese cultural tradition rather than to any nation state. In lyrical compositions, CHOU's musical partner FANG Wen-shan composes many lyrics in a classical poetic style, closer to that of classical poems than to colloquial language. CHOU combines the classical poetic lyrics with his rap or R&B musical style, and he usually uses both Chinese instruments and Western instruments in a song: for instance, the Er-hu and Pi-pa with the piano and electric guitar, which creates a novel aural effect. In his song 'Fa Ru Xue' (literally 'Your Hair Is Like Snow', 2005), the lyrics are in a traditional Chinese literary poetic style, and the melodic line is in the pentatonic scale but performed in an R&B style, with conventional pop music accompaniment, namely, bass, piano, percussion, midi mixtures (some sections are accompanied by midi-produced Chinese plucked string instruments) (see Figure 9.1 for the main melody of this song). In addition to the sounds of his lyrics and Chinese instrumental arrangements, the music videos of CHOU's songs are full of the visual iconography of traditional Chinese culture, such as martial arts, calligraphy, Chinese chess, the Chinese tea ceremony, and so on (see Figure 9.2). In other words, although Western musical styles have been applied as compositional techniques and materials in CHOU's songs, he also creates a strong link with the cultural tradition of China.

¹⁹ Krims, *Rap Music*, p. 155.

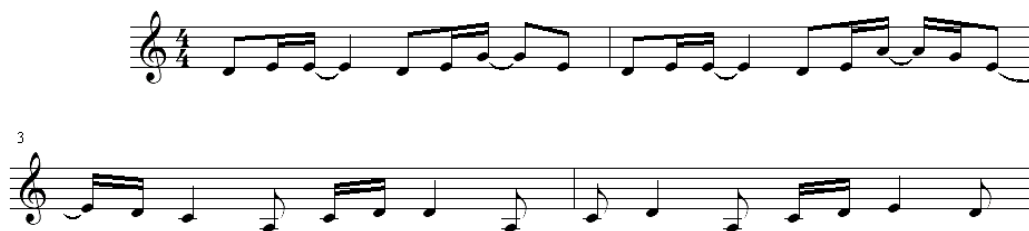


Figure 9.1 The pentatonic melody in CHOU's song 'Fa Ru Xue'



- (a) Image of traditional Chinese settings and musical performances in CHOU's 'Fa Ru Xue' music video
- (b) Image of calligraphy and martial arts performance in CHOU's 'Lan Ting Xu' music video

Figure 9.2 Visual icons of traditional Chinese culture in CHOU's music video

CHOU's iconic image of 'Chineseness' has attracted the attention of Hollywood. In 2011, he was invited to shoot the film *The Green Hornet* (Michel Gondry, 2011), produced by Columbia Pictures,²⁰ a remake of a 1966-67 TV series of the same title featuring kung fu master Bruce LEE.²¹ In *The Green Hornet*, CHOU plays the second male character, Kato, the kung fu expert played by LEE. Kato works with Britt Reid (Seth Rogen/Green Hornet) and Lenore Case (Cameron Diaz) in fighting crime. CHOU performs martial arts, takes part in car racing and plays the piano in this action film: all activities that have appeared in his previous films. The character

²⁰ For more detailed information concerning *The Green Hornet* is available on IMDb <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0990407/>> [accessed 15 June 2011]

²¹ Information concerning Bruce LEE's TV series *The Green Hornet* in 1966-67 is available on IMDb <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059991/>> [accessed 15 June 2011]

of Kato, then, is to a certain extent tailored to suit CHOU's character. Some critics have read the selection of CHOU as the main character as a way in which Hollywood intends to serve China's film-goers, since China is going to be 'the world's second largest film market'.²² As Ellen Jones points out, *The Green Hornet* (2011) 'passed over more obvious casting choices for the role of the sidekick Kato in favour of Jay CHOU, who was little-known in the west, but a bankable heartthrob in the far east'.²³ Nevertheless, choosing CHOU as this character has evoked some harsh criticism from fans of the 1966 version of *The Green Hornet*, who admire Bruce LEE and who do not think that CHOU, a popular singer, could play the character as well.²⁴ CHOU responded in his interview with the film critic and editor-in-chief of Collider.com, Steve 'Frosty' Weintraub. When asked how it felt to take on a role that Bruce LEE had played, he replied,

No matter who plays Kato, he would be nervous. Bruce LEE is a legend, so I do not want people comparing [me with him]. [...] I want to do a new style, like, more real in my life [*sic*]. So, I play the piano, so my Kato plays the piano.²⁵

Realising that he cannot be the professional kung fu star LEE was, CHOU draws on his musical talents to draw a distinction between him and other kung fu actors.

²² As Ellen Jones points out, 'China is set to overtake Japan and become the second largest cinema market after the US. [...] by 2015 China will have built more than 7000 new cinemas, and have annual box-office receipts of up to £ 3.7bn.' Ellen E Jones, 'Can Hollywood Serve China's One Billion Film-goers?', *Guardian.co.uk*, 9 June 2011.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jun/09/china-hollywood-film-industry>> [accessed 15 June 2011]

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Some users of IMDb dislike CHOU's performances and are in favour to LEE's version. For example, the user 'dragonballevosucked' from the US writes: 'I expected Jay CHOU's character Kato to be somewhat represented fairly (with respect to Bruce LEE), but most of the scenes have him doing all the hard work and not getting any action from the ladies'. User 'fauxep' from the US comments: 'I don't particularly care for the guy playing Kato. He's capable enough actor, but he's nowhere near as cool as Bruce LEE'. User 'DKOSTY' said, 'Bruce LEE created an interesting image in their 2 year ABC series. Most of that is scrapped here'.

<<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0990407/usercomments>> [accessed 15 June 2011]

²⁵ Video clip from collider.com. <<http://collider.com/jay-chou-interview-green-hornet/69337/>> [accessed 28 January 2011]

The Green Hornet nevertheless manifests the fact that CHOU's image of 'Chineseness' has not only contributed to his popularity in the Chinese-language music industry, but has now also won him an opportunity to work with Hollywood studios where he has become a symbol of Chinese culture. By linking himself with the remote, abstract cultural tradition of China, by being associated with kung fu films in the case of *Green Hornet* and with certain Cultural Chinese icons in his popular songs as discussed, he has relieved the tension between the 'political self' and 'political others' with regard to the issue of the nation state among Chinese-language communities. Instead, he constructs a 'cultural self' that includes Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and other Chinese diaspora.²⁶

Music in *Secret*

In terms of musical composition, *Secret* is the most representative of CHOU's films, since he himself directed, starred in and wrote its score. As already mentioned, his character in *Secret* resembles his image in real life. The boy YE Xiang-lun Jay (played by CHOU) is a high-school student who looks quiet and shy, and plays the piano very well. One day, when walking alongside the school's music block, he follows the sound of a beautiful piano tune and meets a pretty girl called Rain (Lunmei KWAI). As in many other romantic films, the two young lovers develop a simple, innocent love, riding their bicycles together after school, sitting in the harbour watching the sea, walking home together, visiting the record shop and sharing their favourite songs.

The story seems to be about a simple love between two music students, until there

²⁶ As Benedict Anderson points out, 'What I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which — as well as against which — it came into being'. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 12.

is a twist. Rain frequently misses school because of her asthma. One day, when Jay kisses another girl by mistake (he thinks that a girl who approaches him from behind is Rain), Rain runs away and never returns to school. Five months pass, and graduation day arrives. Jay plays Saint-Saens' 'The Swan' with the school orchestra during the graduation ceremony. While he is on stage, he glimpses Rain standing down the hall. By the time he has finished the performance and returned to the classroom, Rain has gone. When Jay sits in the seat that Rain sat in, words written in white correction fluid appear one stroke after the other on the desk. It seems as if someone is writing on the desk and the words are: I am Rain, Do you love me? Puzzled and shocked, Jay writes down the words 'I love you' but the words that seemed to be written by Rain soon disappear.

It turns out that Rain is a student at the same school in 1979, twenty years ago. One day she finds a piano score entitled 'Secret' down the back of a piano, plays the music out of curiosity, then suddenly the scene around her changes and she finds herself twenty years in the future. She meets Jay and falls in love with him and uses the music to travel back and forth between the two temporal spaces. She tells her teacher, Jay's father, about her love affair with Jay, and he thinks the story is made up. Rain's story soon spreads and her classmates tease her and she eventually leaves the school. When she returns to the school for her graduation ceremony, her classmates still do not believe her. Feeling sad and disappointed, she writes words in white correction fluid on the desk, but then has an asthma attack and dies.

CHOU designs an ambiguous but implied happy ending. After learning about the story, Jay immediately runs back to the piano room since the music block is due to be torn down that night. When he arrives, the workers have already begun the demolition work. He sneaks into the building and plays the piece as soon as he can. As the demolition proceeds, the lamps fall down, the windows and walls collapse

and Jay's hands are cut and bleeding. In the next scene Jay is at the 1979 graduation ceremony and is having a graduation picture taken with his classmates.

The role of classical music in *Secret* deserves close examination. As this story is about two students majoring in music, the film has many scenes involving the playing of music to show off CHOU's musical talents. Most are pieces of Western classical piano music. We hear him play works by Chopin and Saint-Saens. If CHOU uses certain Chinese cultural flavourings in his songs in order to connect with people from Chinese-speaking communities, here, he uses Western classical music as a way of linking Jay and Rain, two people living twenty years apart. Moreover, the use of Western concert music in *Secret*, a musical style that is much less dependent on language than popular songs and does not belong to any East Asian countries, plays down the Taiwanese or Chinese identity of this film and makes it more accessible to people from Korea and Japan.

The film's use of classical music can be usefully approached with reference to Homi Bhabha's concept of 'the third space'. It provides a neutral space for the two main characters, living twenty years apart, to connect, but also for audiences from different cultures to meet. Classical music, which has 'stood the test of time',²⁷ seems a useful cinematic device for providing 'the third space' for different generations or cultures. The mythical transcendental power of classical music is implicit in *Secret*. Performing classical music in the film also enables CHOU to cross the boundary between classical and popular music, and to further distinguish himself from other singers or movie stars.

My discussion of the way classical music functions as 'the third space' begins with the piano score, 'Secret', which plays a crucial role in the relationship between

²⁷ Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 91.

Jay and Rain: the two people living in different periods cannot meet unless ‘Secret’ is performed. The question arises as to why CHOU, a famous popular singer, uses a piano piece rather than a song here. The answer may lie in one of the differences between the functions of music with lyrics and music without lyrics. Music with lyrics may have more referential power, yet its dependence on language perhaps makes it less effective in this kind of hybrid product which is intended to be sold transnationally: a piano piece that does not have any particular regional or historical flavour works better than a popular song as a piece of music that two people from different periods can both understand.

The performance of ‘Secret’ within the film echoes Julian Johnson’s discussion regarding the museum quality of classical music. Johnson says, ‘for many, classical music is rather like the traditional oil paintings that hang in large public galleries. Both the gallery and the concert hall often seem similar in atmosphere to the museum’.²⁸ Almost echoing this, in *Secret* the magical power of the piano piece ‘Secret’ only works when it is played on the historic grand piano in the old music building (see Figure 9.3). One can see that the hall has a European interior, in a very elegant, antique style, with old treatises on the bookshelves and oil paintings of famous deceased composers (the most recognisable being Frederic Chopin) on the wall (see Figure 9.4). I will return to these portraits below. In the film, this beautiful building is going to be torn down after the graduation ceremony, a reference perhaps to the cultural decline of classical music traditions in today’s society. However, there is a further local resonance. The urge to leave old things and the past behind is also vividly apparent in Taiwanese society, where people are eager to forget their colonial past.

²⁸ Ibid.



Figure 9.3 The antique piano room in the old music building



Figure 9.4 The portraits of musicians on the wall

The piano piece, ‘Secret’, is in a quasi-Bachian contrapuntal style. A poem is written on the first page of the score: ‘Follow the notes upon the journey, At first sight [the thing one first sees] marks one’s destiny, Once the voyage comes to an end, Return lies within hasty keys’. The poem seems to be suggesting that when Rain goes into the future, only the first person she sees will be able to see her, and when she wants to return to her own time, she will need to play this piece at a fast tempo. The idea of arranging the plot so that the magical power of playing ‘Secret’, traversing between past and present, can only work on the old piano in the museum-like room of the hall, is perhaps a way of reminding us of the values of old, traditional things that we, people living in the modern world, now tend to overlook, or even disregard completely. It is also a way of reminding us of the ‘continuities’ in the importance and meaning of classical music in the midst of historical fluctuations,

which Lawrence Kramer mentions in his discussion of ‘why classical music still matters’ today.²⁹

To audiences in certain regions of Cultural China, piano pieces are more accessible, acceptable and likely to be received sympathetically than Mandarin pop songs. Indeed, even though CHOU is famous for his revolutionary Mandarin rap style, his classical musical training, particularly his piano playing, has often been emphasised in TV interviews, perhaps as a promotional strategy to distinguish him from other popular singers. For instance, at the 2002 IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) awards ceremony held in Hong Kong, when CHOU was given an award for his popular music and Yundi LI (winner of the Chopin Piano Competition in 2000) one for his classical piano music recordings, the two musicians performed an adaptation of Mozart’s ‘Turkish March’ together.³⁰ In 2007 CHOU invited LI to join him in his concert in Hong Kong and to perform with him his adaptation of Chopin for *Secret*. After the film’s success, when he returned to his former high school where the film was shot, CHOU (alone this time) performed Chopin’s Etude Op. 10 No.3 (‘Tristesse’) rather than sing any of his songs.³¹ More recently, he performed his adaptations of both Chopin and Liszt on a TV show.³²

²⁹ Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 90.

³⁰ Yundi LI is the first Chinese winner, as well as the youngest winner, in the history of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition. The excerpt of CHOU and LI’s four-handed adaptation of Mozart’s ‘Turkish March’ is available on youtube:
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iC5phN5yuJ0>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

³¹ CHOU returned to the high school from which he graduated. When he was about to leave, the students asked him to stay, and he performed this piece by Chopin. The video clip of CHOU’s live performance is available in many versions (perhaps recorded by different people) on the internet. One recording, for instance, can be found on:

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYUsRFZU2OM&feature=related>> [accessed 21 June 2010]

³² In a news report on 12 June 2010, it was remarked that ‘We all know CHOU is a super popular singer and also know he is good at classical music. However, CHOU seldom performs classical music in public. On 11th, Jay CHOU improvised a live piano performance particularly for FTV’s audiences, which merged his own melodies with those of Chopin and Liszt.’ From this excerpt, one can see how CHOU’s piano playing was taken as an advertisement to attract audiences to watch the show. This news is available on: <<http://news.sina.com.tw/article/20100612/3270779.html>> [accessed 21 June 2010]

Although CHOU's piano-playing skills are not up to professional standards, these public events have helped to establish for him an image as a pop singer who can also read Western classical music and play the piano well.

The best-known piano performance sequence in *Secret* is when CHOU has an informal contest with the student known at the school as 'the king of piano'. They both have to play three pieces, and the sequence has been variously praised and criticised by audiences and critics as 'CHOU's version of the piano battle scene in Giuseppe Tornatore's 1998 film *The Legend of 1900*'.³³ The first two pieces are by Chopin: his Etude Op.10 No.5 (the 'Black Keys'), which CHOU first plays in its original key then transposes a semitone higher, and another based on the melody from his Waltz Op.64 No.2. The third piece is from the piano battle scene in *The Legend of 1900*. This sequence not only revives Chopin's piano music — though part of the film's audience might already be familiar with it — but also shows off CHOU's pianistic virtuosity.

CHOU's piano performance in *Secret* creates quite a novel feeling since he does not play these well-known pieces simply by means of 'a correct or even compelling execution of the notes';³⁴ he actually gives new renditions of them, creating new meanings. If, as many scholars note, classical music has become marginal and popular music central to contemporary society,³⁵ CHOU's renditions, to a certain extent, revive the classical music pieces for popular culture, draw attention back to them, and take them out of the high-culture ivory tower. Even if they are unknown

³³ As film critic LAN Zuwei points out, 'there are three famous sequences in *The Legend of 1900*. [...] the first is when "1900" [the main character's name] plays a waltz on a windy night; the second is when "1900" competes with a jazz pianist. [...] CHOU adapts the second one, the "piano battle" scene'. LAN Zuwei, 'The Secret of How Jay CHOU Develops a Relationship with Girls through his Piano Performance' (Zhou jie lun tanqin ba mei de mimi), *Eweekly*, Vol. 129. <<http://app.atmovies.com.tw/eweekly/eweekly.cfm?action=edata&vol=129&eid=1129005>> [accessed 27 June 2010]

³⁴ Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters*, p. 89.

³⁵ Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music?*, p. 3.

to part of CHOU's audience, the pieces have become famous through his cinematic rearrangements. Their popularity after the film's release can be seen in the number of requests on internet forums such as Yahoo! Answers, requests from all over the world, for the titles of the pieces in *Secret* and transcriptions of CHOU's arrangements.

There are striking parallels between CHOU's decision to turn both earlier classical and contemporary musical pieces into virtuosic pianistic performances for his fans, with some nineteenth-century composer-performers, notably Liszt but in some respects also Chopin. It is therefore especially pointed that these two composers are frequently included in CHOU's repertoire. In addition to having his music played in *Secret*, Chopin is 'present' in other respects. For example, his portrait is hanging on the wall of the room where Jay and Rain play the piano, and his biography is being taught in the class when Rain walks into the classroom for the first time. Well before this film appeared, CHOU had publicly claimed his enthusiasm for Chopin. One of his albums, distributed in November 2005, was called 'Chopin in November'. The promotional blurb for the album on the official website of CHOU's ALFA Music explains the origin of its title:

Frédéric Chopin, "the poet of piano music", is a composer whom Jay CHOU (who began his musical education by playing Western classical music) appreciates very much. This composer [Chopin] [...] composed 21 nocturnes, and those nocturnes can be regarded as the most poetic works among all his compositions. By an interesting coincidence, all the songs in this album of CHOU's have very poetic titles, and the songs are poetic musical pieces with pictorial images, conveying a strong literary atmosphere. [...] So when the record company proposed 'Chopin in November' as the title of this album, [...] both [the record company and CHOU] readily agreed. [...] If one has to name 'the poet of music' in the Chinese-language popular song industry, CHOU is surely the one. [...] 'Chopin in November' is the album in which CHOU pays

respectful tribute to his idol, Chopin.³⁶

By aligning himself with Chopin, a composer noted for his poetic piano music, CHOU establishes himself as the ‘poet of music’ in the Chinese-language popular song industry.

The switches back and forth between classical music and popular music reveal CHOU’s sensitivity to his target audiences’ tastes; he knows quite well when and how to show the talents he has in order to promote his star persona. Perhaps this is why the Korean newspaper suggested that he promoted Taiwanese films better than HOU Hsiao-hsien and Ang LEE.³⁷

The audio-visual arrangements in trailers for *Secret*

CHOU’s abilities are also manifest in other ways. The music used in *Secret* is clear evidence of the fact that he pays attention to regional integration among Chinese-language communities. However, he also takes into account the economic and cultural differences among East Asian countries. *Secret* has three trailers, in Korean, Japanese and Mandarin, and each is different. Trailers, as Lisa Kernan notes, ‘can be seen to reframe their original fictional film narratives into a (window) shopper’s world’.³⁸ By examining the different audio and visual arrangements of *Secret*’s several trailers, one can see how CHOU (and his team) are keenly aware of audience preferences, and also recognise how audiences in these regions may perceive him and his products. Although designing different versions of trailers for

³⁶ From ALFAMusic website <<http://www.alfamusic.com.tw/album/Albums.aspx?id=72>> [accessed 21 June 2010]

³⁷ News item in *The Chosun Ilbo* (Chinese Edition), 16 January 2008. <http://chinese.chosun.com/big5/site/data/html_dir/2008/01/16/20080116000033.html> [accessed 28 May 2010]

³⁸ Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 6.

different regions is not an unusual strategy, it is quite remarkable that such efforts have been made to sell a low-budget Chinese-language film like *Secret* to countries other than Taiwan and China.

The styles of the Mandarin and Korean trailers are so different, however, that they seem to be for two different films, indeed two different films from two genres. Let us consider how these trailers choose and arrange their materials, and reflect on the reasons why they seem to point to different films. In the case of the Mandarin trailer, the film is presented as if it were a drama, or possibly a thriller, but the Korean trailer presents a romance.³⁹

The Mandarin trailer draws on several musical clichés of the thriller genre, such as unresolved harmonies and suspended phrases which tend to create tension; it also uses fast changing image-editing. It is accompanied throughout by an excerpt from the piece entitled ‘Ending’ on the soundtrack. Since this piece is used at the end of the film, when Jay runs back to the school, and then plays the piano while the workers are tearing down the building, the emotional effect of the music in the trailer is that of a suspended tension: the tempo is fast, the bass notes are emphasised, and the ostinato-style accompaniment in the beginning section is agitated. Following the unstable ostinato prelude, the tutti strings play a soaring fortissimo melody that seems to highlight and celebrate the power of love (Figure 9.5 and Figure 9.6).



Figure 9.5 The agitated ostinato accompaniment, played by strings.

³⁹ Both the Korean and the Mandarin trailers are available on youtube. The Korean trailer: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl7pxhhdDkc>> [accessed 16 June 2011]; the Mandarin trailer: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U118Ezrtkyc>> [accessed 16 June 2011].



Figure 9.6 The soaring melody, played by tutti strings.

In the trailer the music is accompanied by a series of visual montages in which the cutting is very rapid, which helps to construct the story as a thriller. Following the logo of the production company, it shows several huge windmills over a wide field, and here the music begins with low, dissonant chords that create a suspenseful atmosphere. The next cut leads us to see the sentence ‘Where are you?’ written in correction fluid on the desk. Without answering this mysterious question, a title card appears saying, ‘It doesn’t matter if we have the chance to see each other or not’; this sentence is then followed by several montage cuts, showing Jay and Rain standing on the shore, lying on a wall, meeting each other in the hallway in the school, and signalling that this story is a story about a relationship between two young students. From those images it seems to be a love story, but the mysterious music and those questions without answers clearly point out that this story has something strange and thrilling about it. Then Jay’s father (in the film) appears and says, ‘The end of her story is different from what I thought’. The tempo of the music soon becomes agitated, and the main melody played by tutti strings begins: both the suddenly-intensified music and the father’s sentence stir the audience’s curiosity and

create a tense atmosphere.

Whether we examine the Mandarin trailer from the point of view of its music, its voice-overs, its title cards, or its images, it looks like a drama, or possibly a thriller, rather than a romantic love story: the tense music continues throughout the whole trailer, the questions shown on the title cards never have answers, and the film is presented as if it has a 'secret', just as the title suggests.

The decision to make the Mandarin trailer in a dramatic Hollywood style, with spectacular explosive scenes and majestic orchestral scores, is perhaps because this has recently been the prevailing style in Chinese-language films, especially those with big budgets. By contrast, the style of the Korean trailer is very much like that of a typical Korean TV series: a love story that looks thoroughly innocent, pure and idealistic. As Angel Lin and Avin Tong point out, romance is a major theme in Korean dramas which are exported.⁴⁰ In the Korean trailer, the agitated orchestral music which features in the Mandarin trailer never appears; instead, the music consists of three excerpts from the film whose styles are completely different: they are a romantic piano solo, a four-hand piano duet piece that Jay and Rain play, and the romantic theme song sung by Jay CHOU, which dominates the last half of the trailer. The storyline of the Korean trailer roughly follows the narrative of the film: Jay traces the beautiful sounds of Rain's piano playing and meets Rain in a classroom. They fall in love with each other. All these excerpts are accompanied by a lively solo piano piece appearing at the beginning of the film when Jay first enters the school. The trailer cuts to the scene where Jay and Rain are playing the four-hand piano piece together and the music changes to their four-hand piano playing, too. As in the film, there is a twist in the middle when Rain talks to Jay: 'I

⁴⁰ Angel Lin and Avin Tong, 'Re-Imaging a Cosmopolitan "Asian Us": Korean Media Flows and Imaginaries of Asian Modern Femininities', in *East Asian Pop Culture*, pp. 91-125 (p. 93).

am going to tell you a secret. It is unbelievable that I have a chance to know you'. The music now changes to this film's theme song sung by CHOU. Then we are given a series of montage sequences, showing their romance, more of Jay's piano-playing scenes, and the tense final scene. Although at the end of the trailer the scene of the building collapsing is shown, which hints that something shocking may happen to their love, this sequence is only presented very briefly; moreover, since the whole of the second half is accompanied by CHOU's love song, the romantic aspect of the story is emphasised, rather than the thriller aspect in the Mandarin trailer.

In addition to the love-story plot, the Korean trailer emphasises CHOU's musical talent, presenting his piano-playing in visual images and as the background music. Furthermore, the second half of the trailer is accompanied by CHOU's love song. In other words, the Korean trailer seems to be a music video of CHOU showcasing CHOU's musical talents. In creating this trailer, CHOU (or his distributors) appears not only to have taken Korean audiences' preferences into consideration, they have also shown an awareness that the connection between CHOU and his potential audiences and/or his existing fans is mostly through his music, and that neither the ethnic link among Chinese-language communities nor the quasi-Hollywood characteristics of *Secret* would be attractive to Korean audiences.

Having begun his career as a local Taiwanese pop singer, CHOU has become a star in today's popular music and film industries. By giving his songs a Chinese cultural flavour, he has ensured that his works have been widely accepted in Chinese-speaking communities and he has also become an icon representing the image of 'Chineseness' to Hollywood filmmakers. His knowledge of classical music and his skilful piano playing have expanded the variety of his film scores, and as a result of their hybrid style, CHOU's productions have achieved popularity among

audiences in different countries. CHOU has sought the common denominator between different cultures and his classical piano skills have enabled him to create as in a kind of cultural 'third space' in his films, which has helped to minimise the differences between Taiwan and other neighbouring regions.

Chapter 10. Sounds of The People: Music in *Cape No.7*

Cape No.7 (WEI De-sheng, 2008), the most commercially successful film in the history of Taiwan cinema, has a contrasting style to *Secret* inasmuch as it highlights the differences among cultures in today's Taiwan. The film reflects the country's current cultural atmosphere, using a series of rock music performances to allegorise Taiwanese society's struggle to construct its cultural identity. The plot involves two parallel love stories: a Japanese man with a Taiwanese girl (a love story in the 1940s), and a Taiwanese man with a Japanese girl (a story 'today'). But it also involves the performance of rock music in different languages and from different cultural sources. For some, the film invites an allegorical interpretation around the coloniser-colonised relationship between Japan and Taiwan.¹ Moreover, the multi-racial and multilingual hybridity of this film has prompted people to examine the complex dynamics among the different powers in Taiwanese society today.² Few commentators have focused on the music and sound, even though the main thread of the story concerns a multi-racial rock and roll band and its music.

The story focuses on a band whose membership immediately points to the multi-racial and multi-linguistic content of this film. Aga (Yi-chen FAN) is a young rock singer who returns to Hengchun (where the story takes place) after he fails to fulfil his dream of becoming a rock star in Taipei; Old Mao (Johnny Chung-jen LIN),

¹ Many critics have pointed out the 'coloniser-colonised' complex in *Cape No.7*, the reading by XU Jei-lin (the head of the Japan Research Institute in Taiwan) being the most notable. In his article entitled '*Cape No.7*: The Shadow of A Colonised Subculture (Haijiao qi hao: zhimindi ciwenhua yinying)', XU severely criticises the self-abasement implied in *Cape No.7* and jokes that it is a film 'sponsored by the Japanese'. XU's criticism evokes discussions from both sides, either supporting or against his opinions. The original article was published on *UDN News*, 25 September 2008. <<http://udn.com/NEWS/OPINION/X1/4532323.shtml>> [accessed 25 June 2010]

² See for instance, ZHAN Min-xu, 'The Multi-cultural and Multi-racial Politics in *Cape No. 7* (Cong Haijiao qihao tan caogen Taiwan xiongxiang de kuawenhua zuqun zhengzhi)', paper delivered at the Aesthetics and Folks: 2008 Post-New Taiwan Cinema Phenomenon in Taiwan Conference, 29-30 October 2009.

an old postman who speaks Fukien and plays the Yu-chin (a traditional Chinese string instrument), but who subsequently plays tambourine in the band; Malasun (Nien-hsien MA), a young guitarist of Hakka descent; Dada (Joanne), a half-Taiwanese, half-Japanese ten-year-old keyboardist; and Rauma (Min-hsiung), a young aborigine guitar player. This combination of band members might look strange at first glance, but it seems explicitly designed to reflect the hybrid content of today's Taiwanese society; moreover, the struggle, either consciously or unconsciously, among the members is a miniature of the contest among the diverse cultural forces in Taiwanese society as a whole.

A brief plot summary will be useful. A somewhat oddly configured local rock band forms in Hengchun, a small town in southern Taiwan noted for its beautiful beach, because of a disagreement between the local government representative and the manager of a five-star resort. There is a contest between the concerns of the locals and the commercial benefits for the resort, the latter representing a power from the outside of this town. The government representative and the resort manager have a harsh conversation at the beginning of the film, and the narrative develops from this point:

Manager: This time, we are inviting famous singers from Japan. It will be a very successful summer festival!

Representative: No, why don't you arrange programmes performed by our local people? Whenever you hold the festival, what is left for our locals? Trash! Only trash all over the beach! The festival has nothing good for us! This time, you must use our local bands.

Manager: Are you kidding? Local bands? Do we have any local bands in Hengchun? Don't be silly. The people I invite are singers from Japan. It would be a shame if local bands performed with them.

Representative: [...] Well, believe me, I will find some people to organise a band, a LOCAL band. If you do not use our local band as the warm-up programme, I won't let your performance take place

on our beach. I will stir our locals up against your festival. A local band as the warm-up programme, that's the deal. Don't argue with me any more!

- *Cape No.7*³

The executive manager of the hotel next to Ken-ting beach in Ken-ting national park invites singers from Japan as he believes the Japanese singers will attract more tourists. The representative of Hengchun insists that the manager must arrange one local band as the warm-up programme. In their conversation quoted above, the manager seems to stand for an oppressor of local cultures; his five-star resort is a symbol of capitalism; he is rich, with good political connections; his resort is internationally renowned, which gives him the power to do what he wants in the local town. Here the allegory is clear. The representative's question about what would be left for our locals when the resort is built in a small town reflects the usual situation between the coloniser and the colonised: the colonisers take what they want and leave what they do not want to the colonised. The local representative's solid position suggests a turn from the oppressed who now recognise that they have the right to speak out rather than be silenced, and the locals are going to take part in the rock concert held in their town.

The town representative organises an audition in the town hall to select local musical talent for the concert. Members are selected and, although their musical talents do not qualify them all as rock band members, they seem to be the only ones available. The cultural hierarchy existing in Taiwan today is reflected in the process of choosing the band members. At the auditions Chinese traditional music, aboriginal music and Western rock and roll music are all performed. Two policemen, who are father and son and aborigine in ethnicity, perform their aboriginal music in

³ The original text is in Mandarin, translated into English by author.

the audition. The town representative chooses these two policemen for their musical talents but forces them to play guitar in the band. Later on when the father is hurt in an accident, his role is taken over by an elderly postman, Old Mao. Old Mao plays Chinese traditional instruments but he is also forced to learn the guitar. Failing to play the guitar well enough for the concert, he plays tambourine when the concert takes place. These members begin to rehearse for the concert. Since they are not all rock musicians, they have frequent disagreements about the pieces. For instance, the policeman, Rauma, proposes the idea of adding some aboriginal humming in the song, but his suggestion is rejected by Aga. Again, aboriginal music is ignored. As in Taiwanese society today, the sounds of some ethnic groups are consciously or unconsciously silenced; in the film, aboriginal music and Chinese traditional music are always the ones that are silenced.

At the end of the film, the rock band gives a successful concert and Aga finally finds Tomoko (from the 1940s story), now very elderly, and gives her the seven love letters written by the Japanese teacher. The final concert in *Cape No.7*, held on the beach, is semi-documentary. Rock and roll concerts are genuinely held every April on the beach in Hengchun with the aim of providing a place for unknown young singers to sing their songs. The scale of rock and roll festivals in Ken-ting expands every year: in 2011, there were seven festivals within four days and more than two hundred groups were invited.⁴ The company selling tickets estimated that the 2011 series of music festivals would attract two-hundred thousands concert-goers to this small town, which means peak tourist season to local people.⁵ Among the festivals, the most traditional is 'Ken-ting Chun Na' (literally, Ken-ting Spring Scream),

⁴ Sources from the official website of Spring Scream < <http://www.springscream.com/>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

⁵ CAI Zongxian, 'Spring Scream Attracts Two Hundred Thousands People (Chun na chun lang xian ershiwan renchao)', *The Liberty Times*, 27 March 2011 <<http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2011/new/mar/27/today-show2.htm>> [accessed 3 August 2011]

which in 2011 was already in its sixteenth year. In 2007, partly because of drug use at the festival, the authorities decided to put all of the festivals under government control and under the name of 'Ken-ting Music Festival'. Receiving applications from between twenty to six hundred bands, today the Ken-ting music festival is a major music event.⁶ With this popularity comes the involvement of commerce and politics. For example, the most controversial debate in politics last year was the issue of whether Taiwan should sign the ECFA (Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement), an agreement between Taiwan and China. One political party set up a booth at 2010 Ken-ting Music Festival in order to promote its ideals to young people, which vividly demonstrates the power of the large gathering.⁷ The Ken-ting Music Festival is now so popular that the commercial aspect outweighs the original idea of letting young people sing their songs. When the representative in *Cape No.7* insists on using a local folk band, therefore, he is reflecting something of the real history of the festival. He implies a call for a return to the simple and folk-oriented original intention of this event.

Mixed languages of the songs in *Cape No.7*

Although *Cape No.7*'s cultural allegory is fairly transparent, it is worth reflecting on how the film makes use of music in order to construct its utopian vision of a hybrid, multilingual Taiwan. Songs in English, Fukien, aborigine, Mandarin and Japanese and a rich hybridity of musical styles all contribute. In one scene near the beginning of the film, when auditions are being held to select appropriate people to perform in the concert with the Japanese singer, there are performances of aboriginal music,

⁶ From 'Hot Ken-ting' (the official Ken-ting tourist website) <<http://springscream.hotkt.com/ss1.htm>> [accessed 3 May 2010]

⁷ Yan-hui GUO and others, 'The Activity of Signing for ECFA Goes to Spring Scream Today (ECFA gong tou lianshu yongyue jin qian jin chun na)', *The Liberty Times*, 4 April 2010. <<http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2010/new/apr/4/today-t1.htm>> [accessed 3 May 2010]

electronic guitar music, piano music and traditional Chinese music. In the final concert scene, three songs are selected: two are played in the style of Western rock music but sung in Mandarin, and the final song ‘Heidenröslein’ can be traced back to Franz Schubert, but its main melody is introduced here on the Yu-chin (a traditional Chinese string instrument) and then arranged in the style of a Western rock song, sung variously in Mandarin and Japanese. Besides these songs and instrumental performances, Hollywood orchestral underscoring is another major influence. All of these musical styles and languages are heard in Taiwanese society today, though a cultural hierarchy remains — as in many other societies.

The way the songs are arranged in the narrative intersects with several cultural issues broached in the film, such as the Taiwanese people’s reflections on their colonial past, on the imperialist power in this global era, and the struggles of the Taiwanese to establish their own cultural identities in an era when questions of global versus local economic interests have come to the fore, and in the face of the increasing homogenising pressure of regional integration. It is interesting, for instance, to explore the implications of the particular languages used for the various songs in *Cape No.7*. Consider the English rock song ‘Don’t Wanna’ at the very beginning of the film, composed and sung by Yi-chen FAN, who plays the main character, Aga.

So many times I’ve tried
 Put in my heart and soul
 Never good enough for you
 I’m sick of all your lies
 It’s time to realize
 I’m better off without you

Don’t wanna waste my time and my life
 To settle in your dreams
 Don’t wanna be a fool and a slave

To satisfy your needs

You said it's over

It's never over

It's time for something new

I tried so hard

To get this over [to get over this]

To follow something new

The lyrics of 'Don't Wanna' emphasise the essence of the film: a desire to shed all control or repression, and to stand up on one's own. The song is first heard after the title sequence and following the main character Aga's angry announcement: 'Taipei, what a fucking city!' Aga smashes his guitar by hitting it against the base of a street lamp, gets on his motorcycle, starts the engine, and leaves crowded Taipei at night. 'Don't Wanna' then begins to play. The song continues and we see Aga riding past one city after another. As he reaches the southernmost town in Taiwan where he grew up — Hengchun — the song stops.

'Don't Wanna's' placement at the beginning of *Cape No.7*, its lyrical content and its connection with the following narrative, invite one to read it as a declaration of independence against a superior former power. On one level, 'Don't Wanna' expresses Aga's feelings of frustration towards Taipei city — a city full of opportunities for young people, but at the same time full of competition and unsympathetic to those who do not succeed. Here the modern capital Taipei is presented as superior to Hengchun, the small town where Aga grew up. On another level, the choice of English language here, a high-status foreign language used by the most powerful capitalist power to have dominated Taiwan, the US, suggests a symbol of cultural colonialism as well. When the main character Aga smashes his guitar (a vital, even symbolic, instrument in a rock band) and leaves Taipei, the most modernised city in Taiwan, he seems to speak out about his (and this film's) desire

to break away from the influences of cultural imperialism. The fact that ‘Don’t Wanna’ is the only English song in the film (all the others are in Mandarin, Fukien and aborigine) makes this moment all the more potent.

From English to other relatively local languages, the choice of language in the film’s rock songs sheds light on the dynamics among diverse cultural forces, and in turn on the tension between the globalisation and localisation of cultures in Taiwan over the last several decades. The social history of the musical genre — rock and roll music — whether in Taiwan or elsewhere in the world may provide us with a clue as to how to approach the cultural issues mentioned above. In his book *Sounds and Fury: Can Rock & Roll Change the World*, sociologist CHANG Tieh-chi traces several historical moments when rock singers have used their voices to express revolutionary thoughts. Their songs, combined with social activities, became a unifying force among people and even played a key role in promoting certain social movements. John Lennon’s ‘Give Peace a Chance’, associated with anti-war movements, and the ‘Lilith Fair’ music festivals, associated with feminism, are examples of this.⁸ Music historian Jolanta Pekacz has also examined whether rock is able to play a role in political transition; her research focuses on the role rock played in the collapse of communism in the former Soviet bloc.⁹ Although the historical developments of rock music have been closely associated with many revolutionary social activities over the last several decades, what was able to change the world, Pekacz argues, was probably the listeners’ spontaneous reactions to certain mottos rather than the music itself. What rock singers have done and are doing is expressing their concerns and reflecting on social issues in their songs.

⁸ CHANG Tieh-chi, *Sounds and Fury: Can Rock & Roll Change the World* (Shenyin yu fennu: yaogunyue keneng gaibian shijie ma) (Taipei: Business Weekly Publication, 2004), pp. 29-36.

⁹ Jolanta Pekacz, ‘Did Rock Smash the Wall? The Role of Rock in Political Transition’, *Popular Music*, 13 (1994), 41-49 (p. 48).

Those ideas are transmitted from their songs, and can influence their listeners' thoughts and stimulate them into further action. Rock and roll music, to a certain extent, stimulated people to reflect on the situations they live in and to take further action.

When rock music first came to the Chinese-language communities, whether in Taiwan (in the 1960s when the US army was still stationed there) or in China (in the 1980s when the country opened its doors to the West), the self-reflective, rebellious image of this musical genre was deepened and magnified. Rock music was a genre coming from the West, a relatively progressive and modern region in the eyes of people in Chinese-language communities; at the same time it represented a symbol of Western cultural imperialism.¹⁰ In China, rock's close association with political activists and students' associations resulted in control and restriction by the authorities following the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre; as a result, this type of music is not as popular as *Gangtai* popular songs (songs from Hong Kong and Taiwan).¹¹ In the case of Taiwan, although Western rock music has been imported since its heyday in the West during the 1960s, local rock compositions didn't become popular until the lifting of martial law in the late 1980s. In short, the political, rebellious colour embedded in rock music is also vividly shown in the development of rock music in Taiwan.

The history of rock music in Taiwan reflects the struggle among diverse cultural forces and democratic progress. Rock music came to Taiwan in the 1950-60s. This was a period when Taiwan's Nationalist government practised martial law and conducted strict censorship over local cultural production, but permitted the

¹⁰ For the reception of rock music in China, see for instance, ZHANG Aihua's *Individuality and Similarity: A Comparative Study on the Contemporary Sino-American Cinemas* (Gexing yu gongxing: zhong mei dianying wenhua bijiao yanjiu) (Beijing: China Cinema Publications, 2008), pp. 171-79; Latham's *Pop Culture China!*, pp. 345-50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

importation and broadcast of Western popular songs owing to the close relationship between the Nationalist government and the US. According to HU Tefu, the Nationalist authority's attitude towards culture — advocating Western culture but suppressing local traditions — is the main reason why US-dominated imperialism and cultural colonisation was imposed on Taiwan. HU recalls the music industry in the 1970s:

American music was the mainstream in all major schools and social activities. [...] The Nationalist government was very strict towards local cultural productions and had forbidden many literary and musical productions under the censorship law; however, the authority never interfered with the cultural colonialism phenomenon from the West. [...] Young people felt proud of listening to AFNT [Armed Forces Network Taiwan] radio programs. This city had been filled up with imperialism.¹²

The vast majority of Western songs imported at that time were in English. Since English was a subject only taught in schools above high school level in the 1960s, Taiwanese who could speak English were the elite, educated groups. Listening to Western songs thus became one activity that the educated youths could use to distinguish themselves from the uneducated grown-ups, or for the elite to distinguish themselves from others in their generation who couldn't speak English. Those Western popular songs were iconic examples of progress and freedom, which fuelled the imaginations of the Taiwanese people dreaming of a more modern, freer area: the West.¹³ In other words, the English songs occupied the more modern, advanced position in the cultural hierarchy.

Rock songs written and performed by local Taiwanese musicians in Mandarin

¹² HU Defu, '“The Beautiful Mother in Da-wu Mountain” and “Yuan Quan Hui” (Dawushan meili de mama yu yuan quan hui)', *Aborigines* (electronic newspaper), No.3, July 2000. <http://www.ignitefire.com/a_kimbo_news.htm> [accessed 25 June 2010]

¹³ As discussed in my first part, there is a frequently mentioned term — 'Western advanced countries' — in Mandarin. Here, the 'West' does not refer to any country in particular.

emerged later, in the 1980s, with the gradual loosening of political restrictions over cultural production. The 1987 lifting of martial law marked a turning point in the localisation of rock music, when the Taiwanese people became more eager to search for and reflect their own identity in both politics and culture. It wasn't only rock songs composed in Mandarin that began appearing in large numbers; rock songs in Fukien, the language suppressed for years by the Nationalist government, emerged as well. LIM Giong's 'Moving Forward' in 1990 was among the first several Fukien rock records. The lyric of the refrain in 'Moving Forward' goes, 'Ah! Moving forward, I am not afraid of anything'. This song declares the desire to be free and independent, which was in accordance with the explosive force of 'being set free' after the lifting of martial law, and the great success of this record fired up a wave of Fukien rock music compositions afterwards.

A local rock style '*Tai-ke* Rock' has emerged in recent years accompanied by the '*Tai-ke* phenomenon', all of which seeks to re-examine Taiwanese cultural identity. Since local Taiwanese cultures were considered to have a lower social status compared to so-called traditional Chinese cultures promoted by the Nationalist government, the term '*Tai*' (the abbreviation of Taiwan) was attached to them to signal their supposed vulgarity.¹⁴ In the recent '*Tai-ke* phenomenon', however, the vulgar implication of the term '*Tai*' is challenged and transformed. The hierarchies among English (an international language), Mandarin (a colonial language) and Fukien or Hakka (a local language) have been re-examined. All those languages are freely combined in *Tai-ke* culture; indeed, hybridity in language has become one of its defining characteristics.

¹⁴ For example, as discussed in the first part, in the martial law period (i.e., 1949-87), *Guoyu* (literally, national language) refers to Mandarin that used and promoted by the Nationalist government, while *Taiyu* (literally, Taiwanese language) refers to Fukien that used by most local Taiwanese people at that time. *Taiyu* was forbidden in school education and restricted in the media.

The selections and arrangements of songs in *Cape No.7* reflect the struggle among cultural forces in Taiwan. An English-language song is presented first but is then substituted by songs in local languages more frequently used in Taiwan; this echoes today's situation, in which Taiwanese no longer view things from the West as better and are keen to find local culture that can represent Taiwan. In addition to Mandarin and English, Japanese is used in the film and serves to remind us of Taiwan's cultural relationship with Japan. Significantly, perhaps, Japanese is heard mostly in the form of voice-overs which narrate the love story in the period of Japanese colonisation. These Japanese sequences are interspersed with the contemporary love storyline and accompanied by the same orchestral piece. Both the use of Japanese voice-over and the repetition of the same orchestral piece are quite striking aspects of the film's music and overall sound.

The sounds from a remote memory: the Japanese voice-over narration in *Cape No.7*

Japanese voice-over readings of the seven love letters written by the Japanese teacher in the 1945 love story are interlaced with the contemporary story. Whenever the voice-over narration of a love letter is presented, the same orchestral underscoring (entitled '1945' in the soundtrack) is heard. In other words, the combined sonic devices of voice-over narration and music are deployed as a medium to help audiences cross the temporal distance of sixty years.

The Japanese voice-over is highly suggestive given its language, how it is presented (i.e., in the form of voice-over), and the way it functions with the music and the images. On one level, the choice of Japanese as the voice-over language works simply to match up the historical background of the love story with the period of Japanese colonisation. At another level, it summons up 'Japan', and above all

what ‘Japan’, once the coloniser, means to today’s Taiwan, the once colonised. Some argue that the extensive use of Japanese in *Cape No.7* reveals the extent of the feelings the Taiwanese have for Japan.¹⁵ They argue that Taiwan still worships and yearns for its former coloniser, and that although the Japanese left Taiwan over sixty years ago, Taiwanese people still can not find their own way and consider ‘Japan’, the former colonial power, a better place.

Nevertheless, the placement and style of the voice-over seem rather to leave Japan as a remote memory; the plot even suggests that there may now be a reversal of the position of the coloniser and the colonised. Most people who grew up in the period of Japanese colonisation have now died, of course, and as a result few people in Taiwan today speak or understand Japanese, relying instead on the Mandarin subtitles to understand the narration. Therefore, the way in which the film switches back and forth between two languages signifies two different worlds to local audiences; one world is in its own language, existing in real life, while the other seems far away from them spatially, temporally, and culturally.

The Japanese voice-overs would be categorised as ‘disembodied’ in Kaja Silverman’s sense, since in *Cape No.7*, most are accompanied by montage sequences showing what is happening in the present. In other words, the voice-over articulates a story that we can only understand by hearing it (and through reading the Chinese captions); while we are listening to the love story sixty years before, we are seeing the images narrating the contemporary love story. As Silverman argues, ‘the voice-over is privileged to the degree that *it transcends the body*. Conversely, it

¹⁵ For example, XU Jie-lin (the head of the Japan Research Institute in Taiwan) severely criticises the self-abasement implied in *Cape No.7* in his article ‘*Cape No.7*: The Shadow of A Colonised Subculture’, which evokes discussions from both sides. The original article was published on *UDN News*, 25 September 2008. <<http://udn.com/NEWS/OPINION/X1/4532323.shtml>> [accessed 25 June 2010]

loses power and authority with every corporeal encroachment'.¹⁶ The disembodied voice-over then loses its definitive localisation, and the synchronisation of images and voices 'marks the final moment in any such localization, the point of full and complete "embodiment" '.¹⁷ In *Cape No.7*, although the voice-over helps us to travel back to enjoy the love story in the period of Japanese colonisation, it loses 'power and authority' without the support of images.

More crucially, one may perceive a reversed dynamic between the coloniser, Japan, and the colonised, Taiwan, by analysing the differences and similarities between the two love stories. In the 1945 version, the Japanese male teacher comes to Taiwan to make a living, and subsequently falls in love with his student, Tomoko. In the contemporary love story, the female lead is also named Tomoko, but now she is of Japanese descent and comes to Taiwan for her job. The 1945 Tomoko is abandoned by the Japanese teacher, but the 2008 Tomoko stays in Taiwan because the Taiwanese, Aga, falls in love with her and asks her to stay. In the 1945 story, the powerful, masculine role is played by the Japanese but in 2008 by the Taiwanese character; consistent with this, the powerless, feminine role is played by the Taiwanese in the 1945 story but by the Japanese in 2008. A reversed cultural dynamic is implied. Moreover, the 1945 love story is narrated entirely by the Japanese male voice, and not even a word is heard from the other side; it is a one-sided monologue, and sounds other than Japanese are completely silenced. In the 2008 story, by contrast, Mandarin, Fukien, English and Japanese all co-exist and the characters all appear comfortable with this linguistic hybridity, which reflects the mixture of language and cultural hybridity in today's Taiwan.

As director WEI De-sheng states, 'when a historical period has passed, people are

¹⁶ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 49.

¹⁷ Ibid.

always eager to get rid of the old things, to look forward to a new start. However, [...] the old and the new are not necessarily opposed to each other, a perfect reconciliation is possible. I am longing for a fresh, open-minded spirit in which the old and the new are able to co-exist peacefully'.¹⁸ Whether WEI has achieved what he claims here remains a matter of debate amongst critics and scholars. I would argue, however, that his selection and musical arrangements of Franz Schubert's 'Heidenröslein' in *Cape No.7* reveal yet another use of the soundscape to help explore these cultural tensions. In this case, the choice of Schubert seems an attempt to smooth and fill the gaps between generations and diverse ethnic groups.

Franz Schubert's 'Heidenröslein': 'the third space' for a happy ending?

When the young Taiwanese guitar player and singer who has grown up in post-martial law Taiwan, the seventy-something Taiwanese player of a Chinese traditional instrument, born in Japan-colonised Taiwan, and the famous young Japanese pop singer — three characters from entirely different backgrounds — come together to sing as a group, none of their own music is chosen, but rather Franz Schubert's 'Heidenröslein'. According to LO Chi-yi, the composer of *Cape No.7*, this song was chosen by the director.¹⁹ In the concert near the end of the film, the local band is due to sing two songs for the warm-up programme, but the audience becomes animated and asks for an encore. Aga politely declines and goes to leave the stage. Old Mao insists on staying, and begins playing the melody of 'Heidenröslein' on a two-string traditional Chinese instrument, the Yu-chin. Shocked and surprised, Aga returns, and sings the song in Mandarin. He not only translates

¹⁸ LAN Zuwei, 'WEI De-sheng: *Cape No. 7* Seeing the Rainbow of Local Film Productions (WEI De-sheng: hai jiao qi hao kanjian guopian de caihong)', *The Liberty Times*, 15 September 2008. <<http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2008/new/sep/15/today-life9.htm>> [accessed 26 June 2010]

¹⁹ Author's interview with LO, 21 April 2009.

the song, but also improvises on the melody and makes a rock song out of it. The Japanese singer, Atari Kosuke, is standing next to the stage. Hearing Aga's performance, Atari exclaims: 'Oh! I know this melody!' He then jumps up onto the stage and joins in the performance. The concert ends with their 'Heidenröslein' chorus.

Instead of a Taiwanese or Japanese song, the director chose a German lied, a song known to both ethnic groups but belonging to neither. It might be a symbol of the West; however, with the rock and roll arrangement and Mandarin and Japanese texts it no longer sounds like a German lied. It becomes a hybridised performance, and, as in *Secret*, functions here as a 'third space' in Bhabha's sense.

'Heidenröslein' is sung several times in *Cape No.7*, each time in a different arrangement. It is first sung by Old Mao in Japanese when he is riding his motorcycle to deliver the letters. It is then heard in the form of a duet between Old Mao and Aga. Here the song also represents the first harmonious moment between them. Aga returns to Hengchun after failing to become a rock singer in Taipei. He gets a temporary job in the post office, replacing Old Mao after he is hurt in a car accident. Every morning Aga picks up the bags of letters from the post office and goes to Old Mao's home, where they sit together in the front of the house while Old Mao reorganises the letters and maps out a delivery route. Since Aga has no interest in the job he is always late, which results in Old Mao complaining; their relationship is bad. One day Old Mao asks him to try to organise the letters by himself. Old Mao then sits on a chair next to Aga, tuning his Yu-chin, and sings 'Heidenröslein' in Japanese. Hearing the familiar tune, Aga hums along with the melody. For the first time when he and Old Mao are together, a relaxed and happy smile appears on Aga's face. The third time we hear 'Heidenröslein' is at the concert when it is sung in Mandarin and Japanese, as described above. The last time, 'Heidenröslein' is sung

by a children's choir in Japanese. Here, the Japanese 'Heidenröslein' is used as the background music, and its accompanying image is Tomoko (the old one) getting the love letters. She opens the letters to read them. The images then take us back to the 1940s when the ship is leaving and Tomoko is still standing at the port, waiting for her Japanese teacher. The film ends here.

One explanation for employing a song remote from both Japanese and Taiwanese ethnic expression is historical. As early as the period of Japanese colonisation, Schubert's 'Heidenröslein' was translated into Japanese and adopted in the standard Japanese music textbook.²⁰ After the take-over of Taiwan's Nationalist government, it was translated into Mandarin by ZHOU Xuepu, a professor of Literature at National Taiwan University, and this version was also selected for inclusion in Taiwanese music textbooks from the 1950s.²¹ 'Heidenröslein' is therefore a song with which both Japanese and Taiwanese are familiar. The choice of a song from a remote culture is also, however, a way of avoiding having to choose between the dichotomous Japanese and Taiwanese cultures.

Homi Bhabha's concept of 'the third space' is also useful for reading this slightly odd cultural inclusion in *Cape No.7*. By adapting a melody originating from a remote culture, but one which has existed in both Taiwanese and Japanese cultures for years, the tension coming from the strict dichotomy between the coloniser (Japan) and the colonised (Taiwan) is mitigated. Through the creation of a third sonic space of enunciation, director WEI suggests that a peaceful, open-minded arena where both sides may speak is possible. The musical arrangement here, using a children's

²⁰ According to LIOU Wenling, 'Heidenröslein' and some other lieder from Schubert were translated into Japanese, published, and adopted in music textbooks around the turn of the twentieth century. LIOU Wenling, 'The Introduction of Japanese Music', from the online database of Multimedia Centre, National Taiwan University.

<http://cvweb.lib.ntu.edu.tw/guide/music/music_intro/EAST004.HTM> [accessed 26 June 2010]

²¹ LIOU Meilian, 'From the Song *Santa Lucia*', article on Taipei Association of Music Education website. <http://www.taipeimusic.org.tw/music_windows_16.htm> [accessed 11 July 2010]

choir, also supports WEI's statement. When I asked the reason for this arrangement, the film music composer LO claimed, 'it was his [WEI's] decision to use a children's choir at the end of the film, because children's voices sound so pure and innocent'.²² It seems that WEI prays for a peaceful ending to the many conflicts between ethnic groups within Taiwan.

Conclusion

My account of the music and sound in Taiwan cinema has taken a chronological path with a view to illuminating the ways in which they have reflected and responded to changes in the country since 1989. A series of close analyses of exemplary films, contextualised and grouped according to three overarching musical styles, has enabled me to sketch out the development of the production and textual use of film music and sound in Taiwan cinema during a critical recent chapter in the country's history: from the lifting of martial law (*A City of Sadness*, 1989), through the period when transnational co-production emerged (*Crouching Tiger*, 2000), to the present day when we can perceive an equal commitment to localism and globalist integration (*Secret*, 2007; *Cape No.7*, 2008).

Although the internal and external conditions have been different during these three stages, processes of hybridisation have remained cultural constants. Even now, when a general consensus is emerging that Taiwan's own cultures should be preserved even as they reach out to an international audience, the biggest challenge for composers and directors remains how to cope with the differences and hierarchies among Taiwan's various cultures. In *A City of Sadness* the complex mixture of music and languages reflects the hybridity brought about by Taiwan's complex colonial history. In the context of tensions that had been suppressed for decades and were in danger of

²² Author's interview with LO Chi-yi, 20 April 2009.

erupting so soon after the lifting of martial law, HOU approached the issue of the 28 February Incident in an extremely subtle way, drawing on the concept of *liubai* in both aural and visual domains. His method is obscure, but HOU's *mélange* of musical and linguistic traditions manifests an intention to decentre traditions that had previously been considered culturally central or prestigious. A 'third musical space' affords opportunities for both the coloniser and the colonised — though particularly the latter — to raise their voices.

One of the results of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan and the Tiananmen Square incident in China was that the governments of Taiwan and China were forced to relax some of their restrictions on cultural production, which immediately led to a degree of openness of cultural exchange and co-operation between Taiwan and other cultures, indeed among all Chinese-language communities. My discussion of *Crouching Tiger* illustrates Taiwanese directors' negotiations with the trend towards transnational co-production which grew rapidly between Taiwan cinema and other film cultures (Hollywood in the case of this film) after the 1990s. I have argued that music plays a crucial role in placing *Crouching Tiger* as part of a film genre that belongs to the Cultural Chinese tradition, and is therefore able to create a sense of 'imagined community' for people in the Chinese diaspora, while at the same time functioning successfully in the global market. Appadurai's concept of 'grassroots globalisation' has proved enabling in accounting for the film's use of Chinese music, of a film genre originating from Cultural China, and production teams gathering talents from the Chinese diaspora, all challenging assumptions and tendencies in Western-centred scholarship to claim a higher status for cultures from the West. Yet it is important when examining hybrid cultural products not to assume that completely authentic native expression exists in any culture. Tracing cultural products to any single origin

will become more and more difficult with the rise of transnational collaboration.²³ In the case of *Crouching Tiger* I have argued that a ‘third musical space’ is created for the benefit of an audience within or beyond that of Cultural China: musical ideas from Beijing operas, Western operas, Hollywood underscoring and film musicals have all been integrated into this film.

With more and more European and American investment in Taiwan since 2000, cultural production has become more and more hybridised; however, as June YIP observes, ‘the desire to localize persists’.²⁴ *Tai-ke*, discussed in Part Four, is one major developing phenomenon that seeks to define the territory of Taiwan’s own culture. Although it is part of a broader attempt to establish Taiwan’s own culture, the highly hybrid context of the *Tai-ke* phenomenon reveals how anxious and paradoxical the Taiwanese people are in their search for a robust cultural identity: *Tai-ke* highlights local Taiwanese cultural elements but at the same time gathers features from various cultures such as Western rock music, Japanese clothing styles, and the English language itself. Music in the two films discussed in Part Four reflects related cultural uncertainties. The soundscape of *Cape No.7* speaks for local culture, via its uses of Taiwanese aboriginal music, traditional Chinese instrumental music, and Mandarin songs; while *Secret* tones down its localist flavour in order to ensure integration within regional or even global networks, inasmuch as it contains little music with a local Taiwanese flavour. The tension between localisation and globalisation for a country in a period of transition like Taiwan remains a challenging topic for ongoing exploration.

Focusing on Taiwan cinema one is aware not only that transnational co-operation is now a crucial part of Taiwanese cultural production but that over the last two

²³ YIP, *Envisioning Taiwan*, p. 243.

²⁴ Ibid.

decades Chinese-language regions have also quickly come to have world influence in the economic sphere more broadly. My discussions of Jay CHOU and *Crouching Tiger* testify to the fact that it is unsustainable to continue to describe Asia as being on the 'periphery'. This shift is further reflected not only in film production generally, but particularly powerfully in the production of music and sound.²⁵

Indeed the whole of this thesis has sought to demonstrate that the sonic dimension of Taiwan cinema brings into question binary accounts of 'periphery' and 'centre'; such terms need to be reconsidered not only in discussions of film music and sound production, but also in relation to the roles music and sound play in textual representation.

Research concerning the film music of Taiwan and Chinese-language cinema is still in its infancy. In this thesis I have opened up some central issue about cinema of the last two decades, but acknowledge that there are others which I could not cover. Although I discuss HOU Hsiao-hsien, Ang LEE, WEI De-sheng, and Jay CHOU in detail, for example, I have been unable to address the work of other internationally-known Taiwanese directors, notably Edward YANG, TSAI Ming-liang, CHEN Guo-fu, LI Xing, BAI Jingrui. Likewise, some other important genres are not covered, such as the humanist documentary films that have emerged in twenty-first century Taiwan cinema and contain many fascinating experimental ideas on image and music. Though usually low budget productions, those documentaries are full of experimental ideas and have won many prizes in film festivals all over the world. Further research is needed in this relatively unexplored field.

²⁵ According to Keane, Asianness is colonising international communications markets and the colonisation reveals itself on three fronts: 'The first wave of reverse colonization is hardware, [...] the second wave is content (Japanese *manga*, *anime* and TV formats; Hollywood remakes of recent East Asian cinema successes); the third wave is the cross-over of directors and actors from Asia to Hollywood'. Michael Keane, 'Once Were Peripheral: Creating Media Capacity in East Asia', *Media Culture Society*, 28 (2006), 835-55 (pp. 835-40).

Appendix 1 Music in *A City of Sadness*

Cue starts	Narrative	Musical characteristics	Musical styles
4:30 (disc 1)	Opening credits.		Non-diegetic score.
6:50 (disc 1)	Lion dancing performance.	Lion dancing music.	Diegetic ceremonial music.
7:15 (disc 1)	All the family members gather to take a photo. Wen-qing welcomes Hinomi's arrival in Jinguashi. Beautiful landscapes of Jinguashi are shown on the screen.		Non-diegetic score.
21:00 (disc 1)	Young, ambitious people discuss politics passionately. They sing a song, entitled 'The trilogy of exile'.	Mandarin song entitled 'The trilogy of exile'.	Diegetic song.
28:24 (disc 1)	In a school classroom, the teacher teaches her students how to sing a Japanese song.	The song is first sung by the teacher (as diegetic music). Later, the melody is repeated as a piano arrangement, and becomes non-diegetic music for the following scene.	Diegetic song.
37:18 (disc 1)	A brass band is marching in front of the hospital.	Marching band music. (Marching bands often perform at funeral processions. Therefore, the music here signals someone's death. It stops when the shot	Diegetic ceremonial music.

		cuts to a countryside view, where policemen are examining a dead body.)	
42:25 (disc 1)	Hinomi and Wen-qing are listening to music while the others around are discussing politics. Hinomi tells Wen-qing the name of the song and the story behind it (he is deaf); in turn, Wen-qing tells Hinomi stories of his childhood. (He has been deaf since eight years of age, following an accident. Prior to this tragic event, he enjoyed listening to the Beijing opera and imitated its singing style. He recalls how the teacher was often angry with him because of his bad behaviour.)	A German Song entitled 'Loreley', in an instrumental setting.	Diegetic song.
45:57 (disc 1)	An outdoor Beijing opera performance.	Beijing opera music	Diegetic opera music.
4:15 (disc 2)	Hinomi and Wen-qing take pictures at the seaside.		Non-diegetic score.
19:25 (disc 2)	It is Chinese New Year and Wen-liang has returned from prison severely wounded.	New Year ceremonial music.	Diegetic ceremonial music.

23:00 (disc 2)	It is morning; Wen-xiong has awoken, and chats with his wife as the tea is brewing.	Chinese New Year ceremonial music.	Diegetic ceremonial music.
36:57 (disc 2)	Hinomi's brother is accused as a political prisoner; he and Hinomi run away to avoid being arrested.		Non-diegetic score.
42:19 (disc 2)	Wen-qing is in jail, awaiting his trial and sentence. Other prisoners can be heard singing a Japanese song.	A Japanese song.	Diegetic song.
49:15 (disc 2)	At Wen-qing's home a girl can be heard singing and her voice is accompanied by the Er-hu. At the same time, Hinomi visits Wen-qing's family.	A Taiwanese Fukien song entitled, 'Spring flowers look forward to dewdrops'.	Diegetic song.
55:49 (disc 2)	Hinomi's brother hides in remote mountains. Wen-qing travels over mountains to visit him.		Non-diegetic score.
4:26 (disc 3)	Wen-qing tells Hinomi about his visit to her brother's place. Kuan-mei is worried about his brother and cries.		Non-diegetic score.
8:00 (disc 3)	Some friends have gathered at Wen-xiong's home. One of these friends — a man —	Fukien improvisatory song accompanied by the Er-hu.	Diegetic song.

	sings a Fukien improvisatory song and his voice is accompanied by the Er-hu.		
9:25 (disc 3)	Wen-xiong is gambling with his friends. At the same time, and also in the room, a girl is singing a Beijing opera song; the song is accompanied by the Yeh-hu.	Beijing opera song, accompanied by the Yeh-hu.	Diegetic opera music.
14:45 (disc 3)	The funeral of Wei-xiong takes place.	Funeral music.	Diegetic ceremonial music.
16:40 (disc 3)	Wen-Qing's wedding takes place.	Wedding music.	Diegetic ceremonial music.
19:00 (disc 3)	Hinomi walks around the market buying food.		Non-diegetic score.
34:45 (disc 3)	All LIN's family has a meal together (the closing scene).		Non-diegetic score.

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