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**Unpacking Identities:
Performing Diasporic Space in
Contemporary Taiwanese Theatre**

By

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre Studies

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the author's work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Furthermore, part of the work in this thesis has been discussed in the following papers, "Performing Diaspora-Cultural Identities in Taiwan Theatre" and "Beijing Opera and Cultural Identity in Taiwan", delivered at the Annual Conference of the North American Taiwan Studies Association in 2000 and 2002.

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Abstract

My thesis interrogates the complex and indeterminate nature of Taiwanese identity as it is articulated in post-1980s Taiwanese theatre productions. I argue that Taiwanese identity is negotiated in a 'diasporic space' that has manifestations through cultural hybridity, spatio-temporal disruption and homing in travelling. Initially, I establish the conceptual framework of diasporic space through critical investigations of the sociality of modern diaspora, post-colonial notions of cultural difference and hybridity (Homi Bhabha) and space-time dynamics as elaborated in Foucault's conception of heterotopias. The subsequent chapters consist of performance analyses and provide dramatic illustrations of these theories as they are imbricated in diasporic space.

Subsequently, I examine the appropriation of Beijing Opera aesthetics in a Taiwanese context, and argue that it engenders a hybrid identity by defying the totalising force of Chineseness. I also consider how national space and its attendant essentialist identity is attempted via a sacralised home of homogeneous constitution, thus arguing for the impossibility of identifying a stable national cultural identity due to infracultural differences in the diasporic community of Taiwan. To fully account for the lived experience of the Taiwanese, I then explore the dialectic force of history that shapes the cultural imaginary of home and identity in ten theatrical productions. I argue that, rather than being bound to a fixed home/land, Taiwanese identity is mediated in the spatio-temporal difference between the homes in the past in China and the present in Taiwan.

In addition, I examine the internal conflicts in present-day Taiwan that are unfolded through stories depicting everyday life. The Taiwanese constantly travel in and out of the present locality, and each journey in its own particularity touches upon broader cultural politics of locating home identity. Probing the various manners in which these chosen performances locate Taiwanese identity, I evaluate their achievement in presenting a multiplicity of theatrical possibilities and alternative perspectives of cultural reality that helps envision a 'new' 'diasporic' understanding of homing through travelling, inhabiting shifting moments and movements when/where identity is always being re-configured.

Preface

This thesis addresses the politics and polemics of Taiwanese identity in contemporary theatre practice, examining the extent to which Taiwanese identity is constituted in a dialectical relationship with Chinese cultural history in terms of its mapping of notions of home. This theatrical scheme of mapping identity involves not only a relative positioning of present-day Taiwan to the other space of a Chinese past, but also a positioning to a self-differentiated Taiwan in the future. In the last thirty years, Taiwanese identity has been an issue of debate in many cultural arenas such as the grass-roots literature and Taiwan New cinema. However, critical discussions of the role of the theatre in constructing Taiwanese identity remain scant. My research project is thus motivated by, though not limited to, a particular 'national' 'cultural' context. In this Preface, I will sketch out the main themes and arguments that will figure and develop in the following chapters.

My principle argument posits that Taiwanese identity is negotiated in a 'diasporic space' characterised by three cultural phenomena: cultural hybridity, spatio-temporal disruption and homing in travelling. These axes are referenced in the dislocated experience of the Taiwanese, and they are evidenced in contemporary Taiwanese theatre practice. Due to shared linguistic and cultural backgrounds, Taiwan has a close yet difficult relationship with China which imposes an ideology of ethnic nationalism upon overseas Chinese communities. However, this overarching Chinese identity is differentiated by native consciousness which evolves from local cultural

practices in Taiwan.

In Chapter One, analysing two specific texts which seek to define the Taiwanese theatre by an exclusive origin located in either Taiwan or China, I suggest that the nature of Taiwanese theatre is diasporic, and not fully accounted for by any single cultural origin. Then, by investigating the genealogy and sociality of diaspora, I locate the major thematics which constitute the performance analyses which I will undertake throughout the thesis. Present-day diaspora has emerged as an alternative collectivity to the modern nation-state, challenging the organic link between land, people and identity and hence allowing for new forms of solidarity to develop beyond national and cultural borders. I use black diaspora discourse in British cultural studies to illustrate that diasporic identity is constituted by changing history where spatio-temporal difference is considered. Having dealt with the implications of the diasporic, I explore the three features of diasporic space by first discussing the conceptualisation of 'third space' in relation to hybridity in Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theory. Third space is produced in the 'time-lag' of signification, during which cultural difference is negotiated through the articulation of a new hybrid subjectivity. In a post-colonial context, cultural difference is hybridised without collapsing into essentialist identity defined by cultural purity and origin. I argue that modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan exemplifies the operative dynamics of cultural hybridity. In Chapter Two, I show how traditional Beijing Opera is appropriated in modern Taiwan. Here, the process of modernisation breaks the semiotic closure of Beijing Opera, in which I suggest an abstract space of China and a Chinese national identity is imagined. To elicit a sense of Taiwanese-ness, *The Taiwan Trilogy*, a

project of nativisation, applies Beijing Opera formulas in the dramatisation of Taiwan's historical heroes. Their dedication to protect Taiwan from foreign intrusion evokes a place-bound Taiwanese identity that is nevertheless estranged by Chineseness, internalised in the opera formulas that aesthetically unify the performance style. This project thus highlights the hybrid dimension of Taiwanese identity.

In addition to traditional opera, the essentialist construction of a Taiwanese identity is also pursued in text-based theatre. The image of Taiwan is wrought as a utopia where racial and cultural differences are homogenised and historical contingencies are discarded. Chapter Three offers an analysis of two productions (*Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui*) that attempt to locate Taiwan in a mythic time and space. *Mundane Orphan* ambitiously offers a theatrical reconstruction of Taiwanese cultural history. Taiwan is presented as a multi-ethnic community and infracultural differences between various ethnic groups are illustrated. In *Little Town of Tamsui*, Taiwan is represented by an ideal heritage town of Tamsui where a shared past incites nostalgia. In Tamsui, the continuing transmission of cultural customs and family values enables the construction of the home-nation and cultural identity. But the temporal continuity and spatial enclosure essential to the making of national space is problematised by the questioning of the spatio-temporal limit of theatrical representation. Also, the singular national identity in these two productions is destabilised by internal conflicts in the representation of Taiwan. To fully account for the diverse complexity of Taiwanese identity, I argue it

is necessary to investigate the past of migration and the subsequent experience of dislocation for the Taiwanese that is interwoven and re-inscribed in the present.

Chapter Four and Chapter Five analyse ten productions by the Performance Workshop (*Love for Peach Blossom Spring*, *The Island and its Other Shore* and *Chinese Comedy in the Late 20th Century*, *Look Who's Cross-talking Tonight* and *The Complete Version of Chinese Thought (Cross-talk version)*) and the Ping Fong Acting Troupe (*Half-Mile Great Wall*, *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* and *Can Three Make It? Parts III, IV and V*). Chapter Four tackles the historicity in which Taiwanese identity is produced. The past homeland in China, its history and cultural tradition are examined with respect to their implications for the Taiwanese in the present. I suggest that the present home in Taiwan is mapped in contingency with the past homeland in China. In juxtaposition, differences from both places converge in a heterogeneous site, whose spatio-temporal dynamics I investigate through Foucault's heterotopias. Not unlike the notion of third space, heterotopias privilege incommensurable difference in a discursive space, working against homogenising and centralising orders. Heterotopias invoke a transient space where all the adjacent sites are simultaneously represented and also contested. Time in heterotopias is heterogeneous as illustrated in Foucault's example of the Polynesian vacation village whose reconstruction abolishes time, but the experience of Polynesian life in such a village compresses the entire history into an enclosed site. As such, the temporal division is disrupted between past and present, contained in the same site of heterotopia where the real (the present) space and the imaginary (the historical) space encounter each other's difference.

In a diasporic context, home is not a universal construct but has to be considered in contingent historical cultural contexts. The diasporic Taiwanese move between the past homeland in China and the present home in Taiwan, which converge in the same site of heterotopia where original identities are re-constituted. The Taiwanese identity is not grounded in either place but is negotiated in a diasporic space where identity bound to the essentialist ideas of race, nation and home is unsettled. This travel between past and present enhances the understanding of the impossibility of having a solid home within which a fixed identity is available for the Taiwanese as the past homeland in China and the present home in Taiwan are constantly and mutually displaced. I finally argue that the Taiwanese are homing in travelling and their identity is constituted by this movement.

After discussing the polemics of identity in historical cultural contexts, the lived experiences of the Taiwanese become the subject of concern in Chapter Five where not only China in the past but also Taiwan in the present is denied as a home of safety and stability. Chapter Five first presents the serial performances of cross-talk, the Chinese cultural tradition framed within the beef-show, a commercial entertainment representative of Taiwanese pop culture. This Chinese tradition is displaced as the cross-talk master(s) invited from China remains absent and the Taiwanese beef-show hosts conduct the cross-talk under the shadow of Chinese masters. The modern cross-talk performances proffer a thematic discussion of home in various formulations as they appear in the refugee experience of people in China and Taiwan. The Mainlanders having left China have yet to settle in Taiwan, whilst their hometown in China has already changed from the past. The homes in feudal China are already

destroyed in an earthquake; the homes in modern China and Taiwan in conflation with the nation are not firmly established.

These formulations of home in China and Taiwan are projected in disintegration, echoing the disappearance of traditional cross-talk represented by the Chinese master(s). The authority of the Chinese master(s) is constantly denigrated and finally displaced by a local in Taiwan, which is framed as a culturally inferior place to China. In these cross-talk performances, the Taiwanese move to the other space of the Chinese master(s) but only to find no real master(s), no authentic cultural tradition or original homeland is accessible there. The travel into the other space of China transposes them back to the beef-show restaurant, a metaphorical site for Taiwan that is on the edge of total destruction and has a dubious future. A home-bound identity is not secured either here or there. The 'disappearing home/land' is also the central motif in *Can Three Make It? Parts III, IV and V* developed around the capital city of Taiwan, Taipei where people lead a detached and anxious life. The Taiwanese have split opinions regarding Taiwan as a permanent homebase. The young people are eager to emigrate and the old people lack common or firm identification with Taiwan. Near the end of each of these performances, events of destruction take place. Though staged in a playful mode, these events blast the Taiwanese out of their safe homes and seemingly drive them to an escape from the city. A spirit of homelessness permeates. This escape from Taipei however, leads the Taiwanese back to the same city where the home construct still keeps collapsing. Escape, it seems, does not result in another home grounded elsewhere, but invokes a return to the same city that is marked by the hope that it will be different from its present state. Chapter Five illustrates the manner

in which present Taiwan fails to serve as a centre of belonging. The Taiwanese are homing in travelling between the falling city in the present and its double in a better future that is however always delayed in a theatrical loop of serial escapes.

I suggest that Taiwanese identity cannot be fixed by an invariable past in China or an imaginary future in Taiwan. Taiwanese identity is, I argue, constituted in a diasporic space where the past in China is re-inscribed in present Taiwan, which itself is re-considered in differences brought out via self-escape. Such escape enables a further exploration of the internal differences within Taiwan. The diasporic Taiwanese travel without a pre-determined destination. The wholeness of time/space in the conventional meaning of home/land and its pre-ordained identity is fragmented in travel, as movement interrupts the linearity of time and fissures the totality of space. Home and identity for the Taiwanese are, therefore, mapped in the configuration of movements through disjointed times and places; home is inscribed in their experience of dislocation, both mental and material. Home in this diasporic context pertaining to Taiwan emerges where the ontological forms of home disappear, displaced by an act of homing through travelling.

Through its interrogation of identity in the diasporic perspective, my thesis raises a new alternative to the binary options (pro-China and pro-Taiwan) heated by political identity discourses about Taiwan. This alternative has an especially critical as well as theatrical focus that is unique in the following ways. In terms of theatre literatures in Chinese, books about Chinese classic drama almost all discuss either aesthetic values or historical developments within the operatic tradition (Fu Gin 1995, Zeng Yong-yi 1986, Zheng Chuan-ying 1995). For the two genres considered in this

thesis, Beijing Opera and text-based theatre, there are books detailing the evolution of Beijing Opera (Mao Jia-hua 1995) and its modernisation in Taiwan (Wang An-qi 1996), but none yet examine the role that modernised Beijing Opera plays in the constitution of Taiwanese identity. The existing books about text-based theatre examine how Western aesthetics or colonisation affect its historical development and particularly in terms of fringe theatres (Chung Ming-der 1999, Ma Shen 1994, Qiou Kun-liang 1992, Yang Du 1994). However, no critical work has been published under the subject of identity about what I view as the two 'major' players in contemporary Taiwanese theatre, Performance Workshop and Ping Fong Acting Troupe, except two semi-biographical documents about their artistic directors (Hou Shu-yi and Tao Xiao-mei 2003, Lee Li-hen 1998). These companies are 'major' in the sense that they present to a relatively large and steady audience, and their works are influential cultural practices. Using mainly these two theatre companies' work analysed in a systematic fashion, my thesis maps the heterogeneous trajectory of Taiwanese identity, and in this way attempts to restore an important part of the theatre historiography of contemporary Taiwan.

In investigating theatrical performance in the constituting context of identity, my thesis takes an inter-disciplinary approach, as required by my research materials, i.e. the migration history and its consequence of infracultural differences that inform the production of Taiwanese identity. Therefore, I apply the invigorating concepts of the diasporic in relation to hybridity and home mapped in contingency with travel. I propose this inter-disciplinary research in order to fully address the complex nature of Taiwanese identity, employing theories of post-colonialism, de-construction as well

as ideas in human geography and cultural studies. My thesis in studying Taiwanese theatre and identity in the diasporic context also gives nuance to understanding the cross-cultural phenomenon of diaspora, a distinctive global sociality. The contribution of my thesis lies not only in taking the initiative to investigate Taiwanese identity performed in theatre. By contextualising this work in the diasporic, my thesis explores the dialectical dynamics of identity and theatrical performance from the contingent perspective of the diasporic. Identity in the diasporic rubric is always in flux, uprooted from a pre-determined centre of origin and re-inscribed in the routing through different times and spaces. Taiwanese theatrical performance is diasporic in the sense that the very enactment of representation necessarily causes ruptures in identity. Such identity relies on the mimetic reproduction of reality, which is always refuted by the indeterminate process of theatrical signification.

Although my thesis abides by a firmly anti-essentialist stand, I acknowledge that strategic essentialism is sometimes required in specific situations to contravene neo/colonial oppression or domination. However, such a strategy and its potent political efficacy are not of direct relevance to Taiwan, where Han-Chineseness though it tends to exercise an oppressive power, is constantly neutralised in multi-ethnic differences. This process is evidenced throughout the thesis. Limited by the space of this thesis, I am unfortunately not able to discuss extensively the differences marked by class, gender, sexuality, age and many other powers that I acknowledge throughout the thesis are also constitutive of Taiwanese identity. As Taiwan is inevitably absorbed into the network of globalisation, more and more indices of difference arise and continue to unpack and re-configure the content of Taiwanese

identity. Mapping the many and changing facets of identity is never a finished story and it has increasing critical currency in a diasporised world.

Chapter One

Mapping Out Diasporic Space

Introduction

My thesis aims to interrogate the construction of Taiwanese identity in a theatrical context. I argue that since Taiwan is an immigrant society where the majority of the population is of Han Chinese ancestry, Taiwanese identity is located in a diasporic space. China has always insisted on its territorial right over Taiwan, in spite of their formal separation for more than half a century. However, although Taiwanese culture has evolved separately, Chinese heritage still bears influential marks on the construction of Taiwanese identity. The self-assigned status of China as the motherland for all the ethnic Chinese living outside Mainland China is reified through the cultural imaginary fabricated in the popular media. Since the late 1980s, the Chinese film industry has prospered on the international market. In those films by the so-called fifth-generation directors¹ (Zhang Yi-mou and Chen Keige among others), China was delineated as a totalised nation space where ethnic solidarity was cohered by a naturalised link between people and land as the origin of life. *Red Sorghum* by Zhang Yi-mou is one well-known example. This unitary Chinese

identity geographically limited to Mainland China may exercise oppressive power on Chinese diasporas and overseas Chinese communities such as those in Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, the notion of a Chinese identity bound by one nation, sharing common ethnicity and inhabiting one land, cannot possibly account for the diverse lived experiences of the overseas Chinese. The question of the integrity of Chineseness is of course crucial in relation to the Taiwanese cultural production of national identity. Chapter One will discuss the manner in which the native consciousness which develops in the cultural practices of the overseas Chinese disrupts the integrity of the Chineseness directed towards racial and cultural essence. Hence, the tension between Chineseness and native consciousness of Taiwan is explicitly addressed in theatrical contexts. Analysing two texts by local scholars (*The Two Western Currents in Modern Chinese Drama*, Ma Shen: 1994 and *Taiwanese Theatre and Cultural Transformation: Historical Memory and People's View*, Qiou Kun-liang: 1997) that seek a 'clean-cut' definition of the Taiwanese theatre, I hope to illustrate that both texts stress the exclusive relationship of Taiwanese theatre with either Taiwan or China. However, I will argue, through a comparative analysis of these two texts, that the nature of Taiwanese theatre is decentred, i.e. diasporic, as a consequence of the unique socio-political history of

Taiwan.

My central argument is that Taiwanese identity is contested in a diasporic space, the anti-essentialist spatiality of which will be demonstrated in my performance analysis throughout the thesis. At the beginning of my analysis I delineate the transformation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan, then I investigate the problematic mapping of home-nation in text-based theatre. As manifest in contemporary Taiwanese theatre, diasporic space, I will argue, is characterised by three distinctive phenomena: cultural hybridity, spatio-temporal disruption, and homing in travelling.

However, prior to examining the manner in which Taiwan is mapped theatrically, I will attempt to construct a conceptual framework defining diasporic space, where I consider Taiwanese identity to be located. Diaspora, the migrational phenomenon and its geopolitical and cultural implications, in my view, are resonant with the formal dynamics of diasporic space. Through investigating diaspora discourse, I suggest that diasporic space defies the totalising space of nationhood, opening onto an anti-essentialist space which exists in the dialectic between the past and the present of diaspora. Defining this term within the context of contemporary Taiwanese theatre, I apply Homi Bhabha's notion of third space and cultural

hybridity to the performances of modernised Beijing Opera. I then utilise Foucault's ideas of heterotopia to map out a heterogeneous space where real and imaginary geographies are both accounted for. This space is theatrically illustrated as the Taiwanese engage the spatio-temporal disruption between past China and present Taiwan; both places are mutually constituted but also deviate from the original. Finally, moving outwards from the idea of identity as constituted in historical and cultural contexts, I argue that the Taiwanese are located in a state of flux, that is, their home and identity are configured in the movement of travelling through and between places and spaces.

The Taiwanese live on the border of Taiwanese and Chinese cultures and negotiate their identity through cultural differences that are combined yet set off against each other. The conflicting dynamics of cultural hybridity fracture the pre-given identity that is bound by land, race and cultural tradition. This hybrid dimension of Taiwanese identity will be illustrated in the modernisation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan. Beijing Opera and its internal Chineseness is confronted in the cultural climate of modern-day Taiwan, which seeks to renovate Chinese heritage. Furthermore, the nativisation project of Beijing Opera in Taiwan takes as its premise the configuration of a place-bound identity based upon portraying the

Taiwanese as a unified community fighting with one heart against foreign intrusion. This community is aesthetically unified by opera formulas, which nevertheless invoke a facet of Chineseness that jeopardises the integrity of the place-bound Taiwanese identity. Consequently, a hybrid identity emerges, mediated by cultural differences. Besides Beijing Opera, a similar intention to formulate an essentialist Taiwanese identity is also expressed through another important genre, text-based theatre. In the narratives of home (and its conflation into nation) as staged in text-based theatre, I will first demonstrate the problematic of a Taiwanese national identity built in an empty time and mythic space. Then, to fully address the dislocation experience of the Taiwanese, I will examine the production of diasporic space in specific cultural and historical contexts. Through analysing the theatrical reconstruction of the refugee stories in Taiwanese and Chinese history, I hope to illustrate that the Taiwanese engage the spatio-temporal disruption of both the present home in Taiwan and the past homeland in China. I will argue that the Taiwanese thus occupy a heterogeneous space where their identity is negotiated in the spatio-temporal differences between past and present, and in two locations.

In this chapter, in order to elaborate the conceptual foundation of the thesis, I will give a historical investigation of diaspora focusing on its genealogy and

modern application as a result of cross-cultural and transnational movements. In the late 20th century, the increasing mobility of population, capital and culture engenders numerous variants from the classic diaspora, as seen in Jewish exile, for example. Diaspora has become a phenomenal happening in the post-colonial age, and it contests the essentialist formation of the modern nation-state, that presupposes a domestic territory confined within rigid boundaries. Diaspora arises as the other of the Nation, designating an interstitial state of existence, a space in between cultures, where new modes of spatial affiliation and cultural identity are developed. In diaspora, any definition of identity as attached to the bounded territory and singular national culture is problematised. The work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy with particular reference to black diaspora will be useful in this respect. For, as in this thesis, in black diaspora discourse, diaspora constitutes an alternative social space outside the fixed boundaries of the modern nation-state and the diasporic identity is constituted as the effect of clashing cultural discourses.

Diasporic space, existing in an interstitial margin where cultures meet, has been anticipated in post-colonial theory, especially through Bhabha's notion of third space. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance*, third space fractures any fixed identity of nation as bound by an original culture and singular ethnicity. Third

space seeks to dissolve colonial discourse where an arbitrary binary is imposed to secure the colonial authority by excluding the different other. According to Bhabha (1994), the enunciation of subjectivity in colonial discourse is unstable and indeterminate as this enunciation as a process of cultural signification is mobilised in the economy of difference². Bhabha pursues third space via the notion of cultural hybridity. This heterogeneous space arises during the 'time lag' where cultural difference is articulated in contention. Third space highlights the translational understanding of culture and identity informed by the unsettled process of signification. This is particularly relevant to the modernised Beijing Opera performances in Taiwan where Taiwanese identity is negotiated in contention with Chinese heritage.

Besides the contentious articulation of cultural difference, Taiwanese identity in the theatre context is also addressed in the problematic of 'home' which is mapped as a heterogeneous time and space as a result of the collapse of the spatio-temporal division between past China and present Taiwan. I will analyse this notion of indeterminate geography through Foucault's heterotopia, a discursive space of difference which can also be socially produced and located in real sites like museums, cemeteries etc. Places, in both real and imaginary geographies, are

contested by each other's difference in sites of heterotopias, in-between spaces where time and space are engaged dialectically. In heterotopias, spatial binaries are unhinged and the subject is affected by spatial disruptions between here and there. This in-between dimension of heterotopias is revealing to the mapping of home and identity as indeterminate geography negotiated in the intertwining yet antagonistic relationship between the past homeland and the present home as delineated in the selected performances of contemporary Taiwanese theatre.

Home in diasporic space is not a place constituted by rigid boundaries, but is configured through the movement of travelling through various times and places in cultural history. This chapter finally seeks to engage a notion of travel in order to map diasporic space. This theme of travel will be further explored in the final chapter which explores the discursive significance of travel in a particular relation to the alternative mapping of home in a process of motion, which in my view constitutes a poetics of diasporic space. Through travel, the diasporic subject is spatially dislocated and re-located through the encounter with the spatial other whose difference is constitutive of his self-identity.

Differentiating Chineseness: an anti-essentialist view

In his historical research on diaspora that now has an international significance,

Robin Cohen identifies five categories of diaspora: victim, labour, trade, imperial and cultural (1997: x). Classic diasporas, such the Jewish and Armenian, are representative of victims of forced expulsion, whilst labour diasporas are formed of such people as the indentured Indians during British colonialism. The extension of business networks creates the Chinese diasporas in south-eastern Asia, and the Caribbean peoples illustrate how literature, music, and life styles cohere the community of a cultural diaspora. However, in modern times, the diaspora experiences have developed and become much more complex and diversified.

Admitting the arbitrariness and ambiguity that any method of categorisation could induce, Cohen consciously examines the possible overlap among these different categories. For example, the Chinese in different historical contexts have formed labour and trade diasporas. Not only do some diasporas carry distinctive characters of different categories but also the term itself has been extensively appropriated.

Cohen's book mainly discusses the Chinese in the category of trade diaspora, whilst Taiwan is not discussed as a case in point of diaspora but together with Hong Kong; both are quoted as examples of "overseas Chinese in *precarious* situations" (ibid.: 92 emphasis mine). The situation is precarious because of China's claim of sovereignty right over Taiwan. However, the overseas community is considered as

one variant of classic diaspora among others such as expatriates, immigrants, refugees etc... (Khachig Tölölyan 1991: 4). Considering the complexity of diaspora in its modern manifestations, it is highly difficult to reach a definitive model. In this thesis, Taiwan is viewed as a location of culture that presents unique cultural symptoms of a 'diasporic' nature.

The long history of Chinese migration³ indicates that the diasporic phenomenon has never been absent in the ethnoscape of Taiwan. But long before the Chinese outcasts exiled to Taiwan on a large-scale in the Ming and late Qing Dynasty, aborigines had inhabited the island. Taiwanese scholar and historian, Chen Fang-ming (1988) distinguishes three features that underline Taiwanese history. Being geographically marginalised, Taiwan has always celebrated a tradition of resistance against central dictatorship, a history that consequently brings out the desire for autonomy and an openness to foreign cultures throughout 400 years of colonialism⁴. Receptive to influences from China as well as foreign cultures, Taiwanese culture has long retained a hybrid aspect. The location of culture in Taiwan takes place in an interstitial space between the homogenised centre of China and heterogenising margin in Taiwan. Taiwanese identity, as I will demonstrate through the analysis of theatre performances, is mediated in a diasporic space

affected by Chinese culture. China stimulates the longing for the lost homeland and its associated past that is re-constructed in imagination and mediated in the 'situated knowledge' of Taiwan. This mediated diasporic space is manifested in the narratives of home in Taiwanese text-based theatre. The delineation of the home in the present is always underscored by the Chinese past which continues to live with the Taiwanese.

While political activists of the independent movement demanded that a pure Taiwanese identity be re-discovered and pressed for a complete break with Mother China; others insisted on their 'thicker than blood' bond. Another faction proposed the umbrella term 'cultural China'⁵ as a convenient replacement, under which regional differences of the overseas Chinese risk being silenced. Taiwan as an independent country seems only a futile slogan as this questionable status is acknowledged by few countries and China remains adamant on its territorial authority over Taiwan. Demographically speaking, Taiwan is composed of immigrants from various areas in China who arrived in different historical periods. However, the desire of the Taiwanese for a collective identification has always been present though the centre of identification has changed in different historical periods. The target of identification in the history of Taiwanese literature changed

three times to accommodate different socio-political contexts of colonisation and modernisation (Chen Zhau-ying 1995, You Sheng-guan 1996). The Taiwanese had been identified with pre-Communist China during Japanese colonisation when Taiwan was deemed as a province of China. At the beginning of the Nationalist rule in the 1940s and 50s, Taiwan deemed as representing *China propre* (in opposition to Communist China) was the centre of identification. From the late 1960s, Taiwan has gradually been alienated from the signifier of China and become the centre of belonging as an independent entity since the 1980s.

China located on the other side of the Taiwan Strait, having never been colonised by foreign powers, retains a self-imposed centrality. This is well illustrated in the totalising landscape charted in Chinese cinema during the 1980s. Most of it described events happening to ordinary people in remote areas (often poor and agricultural) and connoted an invisible nation (Communist China) to summon a full-hearted devotion, which helped people transcend individual tragedies in life. Thus, ordinary men are transfigured into quasi-heroes through working collectively for the ideal nation. In these films, the vitality of China is indicated as the camera swoops over boundless lands of opulent agricultural productivity. One exemplary sample is *Red Sorghum*, a telling story of a woman's

life at a winery in a remote village. In 1930s China, a young woman is sent by her father to marry an old leper who owns a winery. In the nearby sorghum fields, she falls for one of his servants. When the master dies, she and her lover take over the winery. When the Japanese invade and rule the area, they cut down the sorghum to make way for a road; the local community rises up and resists as the sorghum grows anew.

By utilising the point of view of the woman's grandson as the off-screen narrator, the important theme of genealogy is established. Her personal growth is framed in wine-making by which the vitality of Chinese people is symbolised for the survival not only of livelihood but also of nationhood. The film starts by scanning the sorghum field where a love-making scene takes place, metaphorically alluding to the myth of genesis in a Chinese context. A patchy field is cleared to claim "a sacred place for sacrifice" (Zhang Yingjin 1994:31) where the mother figure (the bride-to-be) lies on mother earth while the father figure looks up at the blue sky. Human reproduction is metaphorically represented through the vibrating sorghum leaves in the wind with practically no female body exposed. The female body plays an important symbolic sign for the liberation of female desire (Wang Yuejin 1991). In such a revealing moment, avoiding corporeality is perhaps less a

conservative treatment of sexuality than a deliberate device to assert the pure and celestial image of mother/China. *Red Sorghum* saliently invokes the carnivalesque celebration of natural earth and the primeval body. It appears explicitly political in the connection of the sorghum-wine to strengthen the labourers' fighting verve against Japanese invasion. Zhang Yingjin (1994) suggests that this film breaks the division between the private (biological, obscene body) and the public (agricultural, productive community). Taking his view further, I suggest that these two spheres are fused for defending a notion of nationhood. The individual body in its collective form rejuvenates the body of the nation.

Chinese film critic Chris Berry observes in the films by China's fifth-generation directors, a common narrative where China signifies a coherent nation while a more fractured identity appears in Taiwan New Cinema⁶ (1994: 42-65). Through an integrated reading of Jameson's critical essays (1986) about China's novelist Lu Xun, and a pioneering urban film of Taiwan New Cinema, *Terrorizer*⁷ (1992), I suggest that Jameson offers a similar view regarding the different formations of identity in China and Taiwan. In his erudite reading of the 'third-world' literatures, Jameson's strong Marxist stand prompts him towards making a problematic conclusion designating 'national allegory' as the ubiquitous

character of 'all' 'third-world' literatures. This coercive interpretation is refuted by Aijaz Ahmad who eloquently explicates that varied social conditions and different ideologies underlying the production of the third-world literatures seriously undermine Jameson's national focus (1992: 95-123). *Terrorizer* illustrates such a different third-world sociality in metropolitan Taipei, the capital of Taiwan.

Jameson fails to locate the political unconscious in a national format in *Terrorizer*.

Instead, he detects the absence "...of any ostensible worry about the nature of

Taiwanese identity, of any rehearsal of its very possibility" (1992:117). Shifting

from Jameson's observation regarding the cinematic absence of a Taiwanese

identity to the context of contemporary theatre, I will argue throughout this thesis

that Taiwanese identity is constructed against the grain of a totalising national

identity as conceived in *Red Sorghum*.

Red Sorghum is one example of the films by China's fifth-generation where Hong-Kong born cultural theorist Rey Chow identifies "primitive passions" (1995).

These primitive passions directed at China as a totalising signifier convey the

violence of "...Chinese imperialism vis-à-vis people who are peripheralised,

dominated, or colonised by Mainland China culture, in places as Tibet, Taiwan, and

Hong Kong" (ibid.:51). Similar to Hong Kong before 1997, Taiwan also faces the

imperialist discourse of nativism, completed in one pure ethnicity – the Han Chinese. Chow (1992) proposes a strategy to un-learn colonial knowledge for Hong Kong locals via a post-colonial self-writing based on “double impossibility”. Both the root of pure Chineseness and the hybridity of combining British and Chinese heritages are negated in this discourse. Conducting a semiotic analysis of popular music in Hong Kong, Chow emphasises how the Chinese root like a classic text of literature is decomposed and recomposed to reflect the “substance of contemporary city life in East Asia” (ibid.162). The pop music that circulates between Taiwan, Hong Kong and China underscores a diasporic cultural network. And Chineseness based on the political manipulation of blood, race and soil is disintegrated in this diasporic network where hybridity is not synthetic, but inscribed by the indeterminate articulation of cultural differences.

Cultural identity is not a matter of political administration but is implicated in recognisable sets of cultural practices. The cultural imaginary of overseas Chinese communities consists of ideas and images that are continually re-staged across the stable national narratives of Chineseness. Thus, diaspora discourse can form a particular threat to the dominant culture of Chineseness because it is not only the voice of the different other but also the voice of hybridity. It disrupts the

homogeneous nature of Chineseness, opening up a space of negotiation where cultural differences are not assimilated but re-articulated in a mixed form. As I will illustrate later in detail, the ambivalence of coded formulas in the modernised Beijing Opera performances in Taiwan cultivates the possibilities of narratives where identities are constantly produced and reconfigured through appropriating Chinese cultural tradition. The modern appropriation of the Beijing Opera aesthetics where the dominant discourse of Chineseness is generated, hybridises this discourse and reconfigures the notion of cultural identities as fluid and heterogeneous. Thus, the effect of these modern opera performances is to challenge the static status of any fixed national cultural identity whereas Chineseness is re-inscribed through “the catachrestic modes of its signification, the very forms of its historical construction.” (Rey Chow 2000:18)

I have explicated that Chineseness is not a monolithic given but an open signifier whose modes of signification are reconsidered in differences produced in the cultural historical reality of diaspora and overseas Chinese communities. The history of colonisation and modernisation in Taiwan challenges the immutable content of Chineseness grounded in the essentialist construction of ethnicity and culture. Taiwan in its local context produces cultural differences that problematise

Chinese heritage as the invariable origin. This cultural difference in contention will be further investigated in Chapter Two where modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan fractures the semiotic enclosure of Beijing Opera and its inherent Chineseness. Negation of Chineseness is not a total denial of Chinese origin but an articulation of the difference subsumed into the totalising Chinese identity under one race, one civilisation, one people and one nation. Taiwanese identity is mostly defined by the inability to articulate a stable identity as it is constituted in a clash of differentiating discourses. In the following analysis, I present a debate where the diasporic nature of Taiwanese theatre is underscored.

Defining Taiwanese theatre: a diasporic perspective

I have located above two established academic texts (Ma Shen, 1994 and Qiou Kun-liang, 1997) which attempt to clear a field for the Taiwanese theatre. Ma's text stresses the transitional relation of Taiwan's text-based theatre to 'spoken drama'⁸ initiated in China long before 1949, when Taiwan was officially separated from China. Qiou's text accentuates the local cultural practice for which the 'local' is strictly defined by its bond to the land in Taiwan. Ma mainly deals with text-based productions in the institutionalised theatre while Qiou writes about a wider range of

productions with a stress on the plebeian cultural phenomenon as denoted in Victor Turner's social drama (1982). Comparatively speaking, Qiou's theatre is widely dispersed and has more intimacy with the everyday life of the locals like the ritual practices in the country area. There is a tension between these two texts: the gap between the 'elite' high culture and 'popular' folk art. Spoken drama is praised for its 'intellectual' content in contrast to the 'vulgar' entertainment that folk art is said to provide. Despite the above differences, both texts express a similar desire in naming a pure and exclusive origin for the Taiwanese theatre. On the contrary, I will argue that Taiwanese theatre is, in my view, essentially diasporic.

'Indigenous' aboriginal ritual performances existed long before the Han Chinese moved to Taiwan. Early Chinese immigrants brought folk art such as Che-gu from their hometowns along the coastline of China. Before the Nationalist Party announced its rule of Taiwan in 1949, some Beijing Opera as well as spoken drama troupes from China gave performances and incited general interest among the locals. The history shows that Taiwanese theatre had engaged in interchanges with Chinese traditional theatre due to shared languages and cultural background. But after 1949, the political opposition between Taiwan and China largely reduced the frequency of such theatrical exchanges. Taiwan has since then developed

differently from China in both traditional (operatic) and modern (text-based) theatres.

In Ma Shen's (1994) study on Chinese modern theatre, 1949 serves as an index of periodisation of spoken drama in Taiwan that henceforward had a different development to China. The initial development of text-based theatre in Taiwan was dominated by the practitioners who came from China with the Nationalist Army. Ma's historiography underscores the ideology of the Nationalist regime, which eagerly retained the cultural link with China meanwhile degrading Taiwanese folk art such as the native opera, Gezaixi. In this ideological climate, the contrast between 'native' opera and 'modern' spoken drama was highlighted. Spoken drama regarded as a sign of Westernisation had the positive connotation of being 'modern'. This specific opinion of spoken drama was imposed by the intellectuals and the ruling class mostly composed of Mainland Chinese who came with the Nationalists. Identified with China as the motherland to return to, the Nationalist regime's scheme of maintaining 'national' culture in Taiwan focused on promoting Beijing Opera originating in feudal China. To the Nationalists, Beijing Opera represented 'authentic' Chinese culture which Taiwan as part of China also belonged to. Regional operas or folk art in Taiwan were consequently marginalised.

Ma Shen's (1994) principle argument is that 'Chinese' theatre has been Westernised twice. The first Westernisation took place in the last phase of Qing Dynasty or to be more precise around 1919 as part of the May Fourth Movement⁹, which called for a thorough Westernisation of Chinese society where the traditional culture was blamed for its corruption. Defeated by the West then, the Chinese intellectuals were suddenly forced to recognise the excellence of the science and democracy from which it was believed that the West had gained its power. This 'revolutionary' spirit spread into the realm of culture where a vernacular style of writing was advocated to replace the classic style. Thus, spoken drama that used colloquial language was promoted in order to modernise the sing-and-dance opera tradition inherited from feudal time. The second modernisation in Ma's historiography referred to the Little Theatre Movement in the 1980s when Taiwan instead of China moved to the central stage. At that point Taiwan's theatre, influenced by the aesthetic changes in Western theatre, revolted against the realist tradition. This time, Taiwanese theatre practitioners went overseas and learnt specific training systems of acting that they consciously applied in local performances upon their return.

Ma delineated how different historical contexts affected these two occasions

of Westernisation, led by the intellectuals in China and Taiwan separately. I suggest that Ma's historiography places Taiwanese theatre in the genealogy of Chinese theatre, in arguing that "[t]he theatre in Taiwan played a herald role in the second Westernisation of *Chinese theatre* as a result of history" (emphasis mine, 320). Ma gives full attention to spoken drama in Taiwan, while the operatic tradition like Beijing Opera or the native operas of Taiwan were only mentioned as a cultural background. However, he notes the 'Chinese' impact of traditional Beijing Opera on spoken drama in Taiwan especially in the ground-breaking performance of the Little Theatre Movement, *The New Match for Her-zu*, which adapted the narrative of a Beijing Opera episode and the stylistic operatic gestures and movements.

Taking the participant-observer position in anthropology, Qiou Kun-liang (1997) provides a quite different historiography from Ma's to define the Taiwanese theatre. He claims that the 'authentic' Taiwanese theatre originates from religious rituals and folk performances that have been commonly practised in many regions. Qiou sees Taiwanese theatre as having strong connections with the land, people and their everyday life in Taiwan. His book expounds the criticism that cultural practices immersed in the everydayness of the Taiwanese people are marginalised by the elite class of Mainland Chinese. The habitual attachment of this class to

Chinese culture prevents it from acknowledging the significance of folk art and rituals that are developed from the native 'soil' of Taiwan. Qiou's book directs our attention to this important yet often neglected aspect of Taiwanese theatre; i.e. the constructing forces of situated knowledge and life experience in the location of culture, where a distinguished 'Taiwaneseness' could be evoked. Qiou's stress on Taiwaneseness regrettably claims an exclusive ownership of Taiwanese theatre. In his problematic remarks below, the intention of excluding both Chinese and Western influences from the constitution of the Taiwanese theatre is striking. For Qiou, it is clear that after 1949,

Taiwanese theatre refers to the regional theatres such as Luan Tan, puppet theatre and Gezaixi... while Beijing Opera, other regional operas from Mainland China and spoken drama belong to Mainland Chinese and the intellectuals... (16)

Although he then amends his position to conclude that Taiwanese theatre should include all the theatre genres listed here, he expresses his discontent that most theatre researches focus only on Beijing Opera and spoken drama (26-29).

Furthermore, in a tone of dissatisfaction, he points out that research on Taiwanese theatre has been conducted from the restricted historical perspective of the Chinese

theatre, which as I pointed out above underlines Ma Shen's research approach.

The paragraph above may be an over-reaction to the militant intervention of the Nationalist regime to canonise Beijing Opera as the 'authentic' theatre tradition in Taiwan. But Qiou's personal background as a Taiwanese-native growing up in Ilan (where Gezaixi, Taiwan's most popular opera matured as an independent genre) also explains why his 'authentic' 'Taiwanese' theatre is limited to the vernacular culture of Taiwan. But he precludes the fact that besides Beijing Opera and folklore performances he prefers, there are other theatres thriving. Hakka Opera¹⁰, for example is one of them. Another prominent example is the ritual performances in various aboriginal communities, the oldest inhabitants of Taiwan. To construct a pure Taiwanese-ness, Qiou sets up a conceptual binary where not only Chinese heritage but also the multi-ethnic culture in Taiwan is deliberately overlooked. This essentialist definition reveals his intention to fix a pure origin for the 'Taiwanese' theatre in opposition to the 'Chinese' origin imposed by the Nationalists through the canonisation of Beijing Opera. Ma and Qiou's rather different texts prove mutual insufficiency in dealing with the infra-cultural as well as intercultural differences that infiltrate the historical development of Taiwanese theatre whose complex nature is, in essence, diasporic.

Qiou accentuates the local flavour of the 'authentic' 'Taiwanese' theatre whose operation is nourished and realised in everydayness and naturally activates a sense of Taiwanese-ness. Qiou's text is predicated on the organic relationship of theatre with land and the space of daily life in Taiwan. Ma instead stresses the genealogical connection of Taiwanese theatre with Chinese theatre in the field of spoken drama. Examining theatre history by linear continuity, Ma highlights Chinese influence on text-based theatre in Taiwan as he situates the latter in the genealogy of Chinese theatre. In this problematic positioning, Chinese theatre is posed as a source of originality, although Ma's book does at least acknowledge the 'different' development of spoken drama in Taiwan.

Spoken drama from the West was introduced in Taiwan receiving not only Chinese but also Japanese mediations (Lü Su-shang 1991, Qiou Kun-liang 1992 and Yang Du 1994). Though noting the Japanese mediations, Ma Shen's China-oriented research focuses more on the Chinese connection. In contrast, Qiou seeks an exclusive definition of the Taiwanese theatre which longs for cultural independence of Taiwan from Chinese heritage; he thus deems spoken drama a privileged genre of the Mainlander Taiwanese and thinks it is not so much connected with Taiwan and its people. These two texts illustrate a dialectical

relationship between Chinese culture and local knowledge in Taiwan as two contesting forces that affect the shaping of cultural identity in Taiwan. There is an oppositional tension between these two forces which are nevertheless intricately engaged with each other in the historical development of Taiwanese theatre. Both Qiou and Ma try to locate the subjectivity of Taiwanese theatre in a specific place as a singular cultural origin endowed with absolutist value. But I will argue that it is impossible to obtain a stable cultural identity of Taiwanese theatre in a diasporic state where the essentialist construction of any origin is inevitably problematised.

In the above debate on defining the Taiwanese theatre, I show the problematic of defining Taiwanese theatre by the essentialist notion of cultural origin. This debate gives a diasporic perspective in relation to the differentiation of dominant Chineseness by native consciousness of overseas Chinese communities as I outlined earlier. In this chapter, I hope to map out a diasporic space where I see Taiwanese identity as being negotiated. I will bring out the implication of the 'diasporic' via an analytical examination of the sociality in diaspora. Diaspora reflects a disseminating culture which rejects any designated centre or origin, testifying an anti-essentialist space where identity formation is scrutinised in relation to history, nation, homeland and cultural difference, all of which are

important propositions in my investigation of Taiwanese identity, as mediated through contemporary theatre practice. Below, I explore the social phenomenon of diaspora first through tracking its genealogy.

A genealogy of diaspora

Etymologically, the word diaspora combines the Greek verb *speiro* and the preposition *dia*, meaning to sow over, signifying a state of dispersion from the origin. The familiar application of diaspora refers to Jewish exile. The positive meaning in the act of scattering to grow elsewhere however is reversed in the Jewish context to imply the traumatic experience of ethnic expulsion. The Armenian is another classic diaspora associated with atrocious ethnic absolutism. Diaspora is, from very ancient times, charged with a strong political resonance that addresses the complicity among nation, race, and space. Although diaspora in the classical context signifies the forced dispersion of a certain race, its meanings in modern times are rather stretched as the moving pattern of people and configuration of community is complicated by the global phenomenon of high-capitalism and post-colonialism. The global mobility facilitated by advanced technology, de-colonisation and rapid and large capital flows in a free world market since the

1960s enabled the emergence of various forms of diaspora including expatriate, immigrant, exile, overseas communities, and refugee groups or individuals.

Diaspora now can be used to refer to for example, the Irish immigrant community in America as well as the expatriates of international firms all over the world.

Diaspora has become a “metaphorical designation”, expanded so widely as to represent a segment of a people that lives outside the homeland (William Safran 1991: 83). The loose definition above seemingly sides the diasporic with the figure of the nomad, hailed by some post-modern theorists, who adorn this figure with an indefinite subject configuration. But, this definition ignores the crucial fact that diaspora is always historically contextualised. I will not attempt to look into the specific historicity of different diasporas that is beyond the parameters of this thesis. In this thesis, through investigating into the genealogy of diaspora in its evolutionary context, I will demonstrate how the constitution of nation and culture as a natural and stable given is critically questioned. My investigation reconsiders the concept of national cultural identity and its problematic link with race and land, which is contingent on my discussion of Taiwanese identity negotiated in contention with Chinese nationalism connoted in the past homeland in China and its related cultural memory.

In the founding issue of the journal *Diaspora*, the term is defined as “an alternative cartography of social space”, proliferating in the infranational and transnational movements (Roger Rouse 1991:12). Diaspora exists as alternatives to the nation-state from which evolves new forms of collectivity. The nation-state arose in modern Europe in the 18th century and its establishment relied on the close and unproblematic ties between ethnicity, territorial right and nation. Nationalism, which flourished along with the modern nation-state, helped the emergence of European Imperialism, under which the colony was constructed as the different other excluded in the distance. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1983) shows how the essentialist nation that was deemed a primordial given is discursively constructed via collective imagination. By ways of religious power or racial lineage, Anderson explicates how nation is imagined in classic times. Furthermore, in establishing the link between printing capitalism and the rise of novel-writing, Anderson illustrates the ‘modern’ ‘cultural’ way of imagining a homogenous nation. National space is imagined through media, like newspapers. These media bear the mark of the clock time that co-ordinates people in different times and places into a simultaneous time of the Nation. In this time, the individuated difference of lived experience is conditioned into sameness. The associated national identity is thus

constructed and accepted as 'natural' and 'real'.

Anderson exposes the constructed and imaginary nature of the essentialist nation, and under the scope of constructivism, there is no entity of essence that can be identified as immutable and transcendental human nature. Essence is historically constructed and discursively produced; it is a notion defined in relation to difference produced in the social historical contexts. Anderson makes clear that nation, a discursive construct, is formed in the public sphere, collectively imagined and cohered as a stable whole. This imagined community is transmitted through various cultural products circulating among the public. The individual's need for belonging is integrated into a unified nationhood. This collective identification with the abstract space of nation is in a singular format premised on the full presence of a thing called Nation. The presence of Nation is imaginary and paradoxically built on the ontological absence of the thing. This full presence of Nation is sustained through synchronous temporality and abstract spatiality artificially imposed through the cultural imaginary, overriding individuated differences.

Along with European Imperialism, this abstract idea of nation was spread out to the distant colonies. After the colonies gradually gained independence in the late 19th century, the old hierarchy in the binary of the Euro-centre versus the colonial

margin was destabilised. Capital flow in the global market results in an accelerated immigration from the old colonies to the first world metropolis where the absolutist formation of nation defined by geographical borders and racial essence is brought into question. Furthermore, advanced technologies of communication and transportation precipitate cross-cultural exchanges, which cause changes to the cultural morphology in both local and global planes. Various forms of solidarity develop beyond geographical borders between nations and cultures; diaspora is one distinctive example.

Because diaspora is generalised to describe all forms of human movements, many discussions try to raise a clear definition. Most of them mark the distinction between modern diasporas along the lines of colonialism and capitalism, both of which trigger a large systematic human movement on a global scale. Robin Cohen's book on diaspora (1997) provides a preliminary typology by looking into the historical developments of some exemplary diasporas, but this typology encounters its limits in grappling with the constantly changing constitution of diaspora in different historical contexts. Cultural anthropologist, James Clifford in his influential essay also views it as impossible to define diaspora "either by recourse to essentialist features or privative oppositions" (1994: 310). He instead investigates

the diasporising conditions of diasporas and boldly declares that most communities in the 20th century are saturated in the global phenomenon of diaspora.

Although it is almost impossible to reach a resolute definition, there are some commonly shared characteristics among different forms of diaspora. Modern diaspora is mostly associated with a community that is physically displaced (by force or by choice) and caught in between cultures. It presents a highly complex cultural landscape where new subject positions are produced and this further complicates the over-determined process of identity formation. I would agree with Clifford in his insight about the difficulties of defining diaspora, which cannot be done through a simple act of exclusive comparison with the classic diaspora, as diaspora is constantly re-inscribed in changing histories. The notion of diaspora agitates actively against the essentialist thought of setting borders and creating categories, the basic premise behind any definition that is hard to achieve without exclusion through clean-cut borders. I suggest the attempt to define diaspora is anti-diasporic as it brings to the fore its internal dilemma. Diaspora defies essentialist division, as in the modern nation-state defined by geographical and cultural borders. Diaspora discourse problematises national space and unsettles its recognised totalising identity, the thematic concern in my performance analyses of

contemporary Taiwanese theatre in the subsequent chapters.

To fully explore diaspora as a cross-cultural phenomenon, it is important that each diaspora be examined in the specific historical context where it is produced. In the case of Taiwan, the earliest immigration of the Han people in the 17th century was to escape famine in the poor provinces in southern China. It was a voluntary act to look for a better chance of survival, not a forced dispersal as in the classic diaspora, nor a purposeful act to extend the business network like in Chinese trade diasporas. The last wave of large-scale Han immigration to Taiwan arrived in the late 1940s as a consequence of the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). Regarding the driving force of capitalism in creating diasporas, Taiwan has been industrialised rapidly since the 1950s and played a major role in the prosperous economics of the Asia-Pacific region from the 1980s. Some Taiwanese have immigrated to North America, Australia, etc but their motivation is not so much about financial gains but the anxiety over the unstable politics of Taiwan under the threat of China's 'military liberation'. In terms of colonisation, the Dutch left no influential marks of European legacy. The influence from the recent coloniser, Japan is more obvious but no emigration was induced as a consequence of colonisation. Although separated from China for a long time, Chinese culture has exercised a deep impact on Taiwanese

culture. After the economic reform in the 1980s, China is playing an increasingly important role in the world economy. The recent rapid rise of Chinese economy attracts foreign capital including that of Taiwan meanwhile stimulates more cultural exchanges between Taiwan and China. Because of this special socio-political and economic background, it is difficult to place Taiwan comfortably in the neat niche of either post-colonial nation, classic or modern diaspora.

The Taiwanese share with many people in diasporas the experience of dislocation, collective memory about the past, nostalgia towards the homeland and also anxiety about making a home somewhere. Therefore, instead of pigeonholing Taiwan as a Chinese diaspora, I will alternatively pursue the engaging relationship between Taiwanese identity and diaspora discourse. I will mobilise the term, 'diasporic' because it covers a wider range of diaspora experiences and does not take on the impossible task of distinguishing for example, between the modern and classic diasporas, or between the refugee and the exile since they overlap at many points. The Chinese nationalism that Taiwan faces gains its currency from the problematic natural link between nation, land and race, a key issue in diaspora studies. In diaspora discourse, I suggest that an anti-essentialist space is enhanced. And the diasporic identity negotiated between the homeland and the present locality

is resonant with Taiwanese identity mediated in memories about the past homeland in China. To investigate the notion of the diasporic, I now move on to a critical analysis of anti-essentialist space opened up in black diaspora discourse, particularly as evidenced in the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy.

Nation, culture, and the diasporic identity

The work of two diaspora theorists in British cultural studies, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy examined below illuminates the alternative social space that black diaspora stakes out and how its spatial dynamics affect the constitution of diasporic subjectivity. In "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*" (1987), Gilroy reacts against the political conflation of nation into a singular configuration of racial purity by the exclusion of different others, that he observed in England in the 1960s. His next major work, *The Black Atlantic* (1993b) has an ambitious aim to theorise the diasporic consciousness in the analytical context of modernity. The dominant force of *The Black Atlantic* is generated from the slave ships that circulated in the Atlantic region where there is a circulation of black vernacular cultures. *The Black Atlantic* delineates an imaginary space where the differences arising in the routes of the travelling cultures are assimilated in a creative fashion instead of being

homogenised by the common root as invoked in Pan-Africanism. The privileged origin in a fixed time and space of pristine Africa is problematised in black diasporas whose constitution highlights the ruptured historical time and fragmented social space. Gilroy criticises Pan-Africanism as it is generalised mainly by Africo-American intellectuals to apply to all black people, arguing for a diasporic subjectivity that is informed not by “where you’re from” but by “where you’re at”, not by root but by route (1993a).

This African-centred Pan-Africanism relies on the invocation of a pure and stable past in ancient African civilisation. But this recourse to the idyllic homeland tends to bypasses the historicity of slave oppression. To Gilroy, this bypass overlooks the fact that the once traumatic experience of slavery has already been transformed and become a positive force in eliciting the black diaspora consciousness. Gilroy argues that the ethnic absolutism connoted in Afro-centralism works in complicity with the Western discourse of modernity that stresses a linear progress towards enlightenment. Gilroy reformulates such progressive temporality ingrained in European modernity whose historical continuum is disrupted by the temporalities produced in the slave experience of diaspora. This experience that exists in the cracks of modernity is uprooting as the

black slaves were forced to leave homes in Africa but it is also re-assuring as this shared experience provides a common ground for developing affiliations among the dislocated slaves in diaspora.

The Black Atlantic tracks the genealogy of music forms like reggae, soul and hip-hop that evolve in historically specific routes. As African music traditions travel in the black diaspora network, they incorporate regional differences and change accordingly. The African cultural root is transformed during this process of routing and as such, the identities of both Africa and the black diaspora gain a performative perspective. These music traditions in repetition elicit the 'changing same' that for Gilroy can compensate for the agonising splitting of the 'double consciousness' of black people, which in Du Bois's words is "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others,..." (1994:2). In *The Black Atlantic* the African root is no more fixed in an imaginary space of primitive civilisation but is displaced in the routing process during which cultural traditions are enacted in difference. Through envisioning a black cultural networking in the Atlantic region, Gilroy problematises the imposed natural link between territory, kinship and identity. He makes it explicit that the fractured history of modernity and the fundamental ambiguity of historical time is crucial to the formation of diasporic

identity that is no longer defined by the singular notion of ethnicity that transcends different times and places. For Gilroy, ethnicity cannot be reduced to a single bloodline and is “an infinite process of identity construction”(1993b: 223). Thus, ethnicity like identity is over-determined in nature. This anti-essentialist theorisation of identity and its attendant evolving notion of ethnicity is also considered in Hall’s “new ethnicity” where the teleological link between ethnicity and identity is problematised. New ethnicity is a form of discursive representation that contextualises histories, languages and cultures that are also discursively constructed in specific yet different times and places (Hall 1992).

Gilroy’s diasporic identity is in constant transformation, engaged intimately with the traumatic past of slavery, a past that is repositioned in the present where it takes on a different positive meaning. Also discussing black diaspora, Hall highlights the hybridity of different social presences whether cultural, ethnic or political and each is intertwined in each other’s constitution. While Gilroy tries to elicit a continuing sameness from a changing and shared past for the black people, Hall also returns to an Africa that although also situated in the past is already tainted with ‘profound discontinuity’. In contrast to Gilroy’s indulgence of the original slavery legacy, Hall takes precautions in invoking Africa as the immutable origin,

focussing instead on the contemporary condition of Africa. However, both illuminate the configurations of diaspora by discursive politics that operate on and change the constitutions of community, culture, memory, time and space.

Hall states that every subject is enunciated from a certain position like his own from the Jamaican diaspora in London (1990). For Hall, Africa is the homeland to which the Afro-Caribbean can never go back no matter how much symbolic power it may evoke. For Hall, the Afro-Caribbean diasporic identity is informed by at least African, European, New World (American) presences. These former two presences and their intertwined histories of creolisation and assimilation mark the New World, a presence characterised by narratives of displacement and transformation that constitute “the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery” (1990: 236). For Hall, it is diaspora that defines the nature of Africa not the opposite way around. The heterogeneity in the present diaspora re-configures the African presence that originally constitutes diaspora. Gilroy on the other hand gives priority to the slavery past and argues that this traumatic experience has already been transformed after the primary journey of slavery ships. How the historical past has transformed and defined the present in diaspora is Gilroy’s concern while Hall stresses the immediate reality of diaspora that is closely

involved with the historical past which is already heterogeneous.

Both diaspora theorists defy the oppression inherent in the essentialist construction of nation, ethnicity, and identity associated with a homogeneous time and an abstract space in Africa. They anatomise these essentialist categories in the specific contexts of now and then in black diaspora. The imagination of a mystical, pure and homogeneous Africa originates from nowhere but a place void of historic specificity. The static spatiality of a transcendental homeland is problematised by the diversified experience and fractured historicity of black diaspora. The diasporic identification has a reference point in the past but it does not come with a pre-given identity. The above investigation of black diaspora suggests that the diasporic subject forms affiliations across geographical, national and cultural borders and the diasporic identity is negotiated in the spatio-temporal disruption between past and present, here and there.

Despite their different modes of deploying the past in Africa, Gilroy and Hall nevertheless set in motion the spatial dynamics of present diaspora. Their works underline the critical role of cultural difference in the constitution of diasporic identity. Hall regards the diaspora experience in the Afro-Caribbean context as defined by “a conception of ‘identity’ which lives *with and through, not despite,*

difference; by hybridity”(1990: 235, emphasis mine). The diasporic subject occupies a space of overlapping cultures and identity is constantly produced and re-produced by the ‘changing same’, sameness out of difference. For both theorists, the diasporic identity is prescribed by the notion of hybridity, a key critical term that is further developed in Bhabha’s post-colonial theory that addresses the polemic of difference, which I will discuss below in this chapter.

Gilroy and Hall use different cultural products to demonstrate their conceptualisation of diaspora; pop music and black cinema have their individual historical backgrounds and different systems of representing the diasporic subject. Therefore, the theorisation of diaspora varies circumstantially with the chosen medium and its particular mechanics of representation. In Gilroy’s formulation, the tradition of black music making such as jazz has a principle feature of antiphony (call-and-response) that blurs the separation not only between musicians but between musicians and audiences, and facilitates the incorporation of the living diversity of black diaspora. In this sense, music becomes Gilroy’s powerful tool in illustrating how black vernacular cultures successfully combine aesthetics and politics. In Caribbean cinema, Hall identifies a defining theme of movement and migration. He further suggests that black cinema is not a mimetic reflection of what

is already there but 'a form of representation' by which new subject identities are constituted (1990). Kobena Mercer (1988) explicates how these new subjects emerge cinematically through 'the critical process of dialogism' drawing on Bakhtin's literary theory. New black cinema in England rejects the mimetic representation of some lost origin, or the past 'out there', with an assumed objectivity. Instead, in delivering the collision of cultures and histories, it engages in an open dialogue with the dominant cultural discourse whilst it investigates the internal difference of the diversified black communities. The subject of my thesis, contemporary Taiwanese theatre, considers the diasporic experience of the Taiwanese in the narratives of mapping Taiwan as home that I will analyse later. Examining the extent to which the ambiguous temporality and spatiality of theatrical performance affects the mapping of Taiwan and its home identity, this thesis contributes, in a different way, to understanding the dialectics between diaspora and identity.

The above investigation of black diaspora indicates that diaspora has been deeply entangled in geopolitics for a long time. It portrays an in-between community whose spatiality problematises the essentialist space of nation prescribed by exclusive territory and singular culture. The diasporic subject

constantly transgresses the boundary between nations and cultures and diaspora foregrounds the instability and productivity of social space. To engage questions of diaspora is to focus on the instability of the signs of national cultural identity and the conceptualisation of the homeland, mother country and cultural tradition. The diasporic Taiwanese negotiate identity in between two cultures; cultural tradition from the past in China is continued in the present where it is transformed. In my thesis, I will explicate in Chapter Two how Taiwanese identity is negotiated in contention with the Chinese heritage of Beijing Opera.

Notions of cultural difference and hybridity are integral to Bhabha's 'third space', an anti-essentialist space where the nature of identity is unsettled through negotiation rather than negation or assimilation of cultural difference. Third space in Bhabha's work is elaborated upon the putative space of opposition, the non-hybrid space of third-world nationalism. Although Taiwan is questionably recognised as a third-world country—and keeping in mind that the term 'third-world' itself is controversial—, Taiwanese theatre presents the problematic narration of national space and identity which cannot do justice to the diasporic life experiences, social conflicts marked by class and infracultural tension in relation to Chinese heritage. I will examine in detail how a place-bound Taiwanese national

identity is attempted and ruptured in Chapter Three.

Cultural difference, hybridity and the third space

Investigating the colonial discourse and its construction of the Other, Bhabha amends the binary approach in Said's Orientalism that foregrounds the opposition between the obedient Orient and the dominating West. He focuses on the discursive practice where this oppressive binary is established and argues about the unstable nature of discursive representation. In colonial discourse, the different other is represented in relation to the coloniser through a hierarchical binary of inferior/superior, barbaric/civilised etc. Such binaries are made when the process of cultural signification is brought to a forced closure. Different from Said who exposes the violent power operating behind such binaries, Bhabha interrogates "the system of the discourse by which the 'world' is divided, administered, plundered..."(Said quoted in Bhabha 1984: 93). Drawing on psychoanalysis and de-construction theories, Bhabha sees such oppositional binaries as fundamentally problematic as the self and other leak into each other in the process of cultural representation. He advocates a third space where the dogmatic meaning of cultural representation is destabilised as the signifying process is critically examined under

the scope of negotiating and translating difference.

The de-constructive notion of *différance* underpins Bhabha's third space where post-colonial identity is being articulated. *Différance* is the key concept in Derrida's de-construction project that begins with Saussure's linguistics where the arbitrary relationship between language and parole, and signifier and signified is put in question. The determinative meaning of the sign is decided arbitrarily not by essential properties but by differences that distinguish it from other signs. In the chain process of comparison with other signs, the meaning of signs is deferred indefinitely in the economy of *différance* that is referenced on the French verb and involves a double action: to differ and defer. This doubleness suggests that in the signifying process, there is already the difference installed, which is simultaneously being mediated in the act of producing difference. *Différance* alludes to "this undecidable, nonsynthetic alteration between the perspectives of structure and event" (Jonathan Culler 1998: 97). This understanding of *différance* challenges the conventional notion of identity as self-contained presence via excluding the different and absent other. The binary of self/other and presence/absence employed to construct such identity is dismantled by the unstable force of *différance* inherent in the binary structure. Identity is thus not a natural given or transcendental essence

but the effect of *différance*, constituted in an ongoing process of negotiation instead of negation of difference. Identity is differential as it is being infinitely displaced.

The symbols and narratives via which we live and our identities are located, are forms of cultural representation, whose meaning is gained via an arbitrary closure of the gap between the signifier and the signified. Bhabha breaks open such closure, employing Derridean *différance* in which the meaning is forever delayed in the chain of differentiating signification. He also elaborates his third space of cultural difference via Benjamin's concept of translation. In the post-colonial context where different cultures intermix, *différance* highlights the 'untranslatability' of culture that discredits the authority of cultural origin or the claim to cultural supremacy. In Benjamin's discussion on language, translation is a process that displaces the holistic identity and meaning of the original. The importance assigned to the original over the copy is unhinged precisely because the original is open to translation, an event where difference arises in the repetition of signs. Because of its translatability, the original is never self-complete a priori and thus has no sovereignty over the copy. Hence, the transfer of meaning is never complete in translation via which the 'foreignness' of language comes out. For Bhabha, translation illustrates the performative nature of cultural communication

(1994:228). In cross-cultural space such as that occupied by diaspora and migrants, culture like language when being translated in another cultural text gains an 'after-life'. There is never a full assimilation between cultures. Cultural hybridity describes the condition when cultures meet where their translational differences are set off against each other.

Hybridity, despite its contentious usage in connection with biological degeneration and racial control, suggests the "impossibility of essentialism" whenever it is invoked (Robert Young 1995:27). Bhabha utilises this term in contemporary critical praxis where its internal dynamics of contradiction are prioritised. Cultural hybridity in Bhabha's formulation is posed as the counterpart to cultural diversity (prescribed in the policy of multiculturalism) favoured by traditional liberals. For Bhabha, cultural diversity signals syntheticism under which cultural differences tend to slip into a non-differentiating whole and form an administerable cultural autonomy. All differences are tolerated and accommodated by cultural diversity, "a *containment* of cultural differences", where the pre-given cultural forms are asserted in a non-differentiating notion of plurality. In this way, cultural diversity paradoxically allows the concealment of "ethnocentric norms, values, and interests" inscribed in these pre-given cultural forms (italics mine,

Bhabha 1990c: 208).

Bhabha first applies cultural hybridity in explicating the mutual constitution between cultures and consequently, problematising the stability of cultural identity. Then, hybridity is used to highlight the incommensurable difference in the production of culture. In colonial discourse, the spirit of hybridity is manifest in the tactics such as mimicry and sly civility, which the subaltern employs to negotiate a subject position by imitating the gestures demanded by the coloniser. The subaltern fails to achieve a complete imitation, hybridising the coloniser's gesture with their own difference. The subaltern thus performs a 'resilient' resistance, defying the colonial authority in an 'obedient' way. Such tactics prescribed by hybridity enable us to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves"(Bhabha 1994: 39). Hybridity signals a third space, a site for the enunciation of post-colonial subjectivity via disrupting the enclosure of cultural signification. A hybrid identity evolves from an endless process of translating cultural signs that are differently appropriated.

Bhabha predominantly frames the third space as a 'time-lag', a temporal break in representation between perplexing sign and ordering symbol, event and enunciation (1994). However, time is not possibly conceived and perceived without

taking account of its imbrication in space. This temporal break of third space also designates a concept of spatiality as a “cultural void” to be filled and this is important for the “cultural survival” of the marginalised (M. Keith and S. Pile 1993: 223). Appropriating Barthes’ experience in Tangiers, Bhabha foregrounds a hybrid moment (space) ‘outside the sentence’, when the coloniser’s space becomes disjunctive and the self-other relations are critically dialogical. An inter-subjective realm arises in a displacing moment of reading a social text in its discursive ambivalence when words and concepts are wrested from their proper meaning. In a bar in Tangiers, the clash of ‘music, conversations, chairs, Arabic and French’ dislocates the predicative syntax and the intelligent meaning meanwhile presents a textuality of ‘carnal stereophony’ where ‘the language lined with flesh’. In this realm of otherness where there is ‘eluding resemblance’ of the self and other, this ‘moment’ of ‘spatial’ dislocation opens into a third space, a point of identification for the de-territorialised other in a present prescribed by temporal discontinuity. The post-colonial subject emerges as active agent in social space, an inter-subjective realm that exists outside the normative interpretation of cultural representation that was used to affirm the colonial authority.

The notion of cultural difference and hybridity in Bhabha’s third space is

useful in exploring the cross-cultural phenomenon and the production of culture itself, which is a colossal and continuing act of signification mobilised in difference. Culture is constitutive of an active and present enunciation that is restlessly hybrid and like language, it is never "plainly plenitudinous" (Bhabha 1990c: 210). The originary culture is forever delayed and its holistic identity is never secured. Bhabha seems to suggest that culture is not made or lived as a temporal progress in material space, but as the fluctuation of meaning characterised by the signifier and signified's displacement along the chain of signification. Culture in this formulation of the lapse of temporality makes analogy to the deferral of absolute signification. Since the deferral foretells no end, or at best is circular, culture thus can never have any final fixed meaning.

Migration and its consequent formation of diasporic communities are real social sites testifying to the notion of third space. The diasporic communities located in the interstitial passage between fixed identities, open up "the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (1994: 4). In this in-between space, strategies of new identity, both singular and communal, are articulated. This is especially revealing in terms of diasporic space, theatrically produced in modern Beijing Opera where Chinese and

Taiwanese cultures clash, exemplifying the indeterminate signification of cultural hybridity and identity. Besides the indeterminate nature of culture and identity, I would discuss how Bhabha's post-colonial discourse contends the dominant centralising narrative of the nation to pursue its relevance to the theatrical imagination of a Taiwanese national identity.

“A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle”, says Ernest Renan (1990: 19). This principle is usually legitimised by a glorious past where the ancestors have made what we are and continue to be. The nation is built on cultural autonomy through repeated cultural practices that distinguish one community from its others along with the strategic ‘forgetting’ of the violence that is necessary for the dominant community to found and reproduce itself (Renan *ibid.*). In a double act of ‘forgetting’ the migration history and ‘inscribing’ meaning in the bounded territory, the dominant culture produces a defining narrative that secures both the originary and the present state of its ‘imagined community’. The idea of a unifying past to invoke a collectivity relies on a careful selection from multiple histories. In a pedagogical mode, nation is narrated where differential histories and narratives that deliver the lived diversity of peoples are under erasure. This idea of nation is cohered by an artificial binding of disparate elements into a homogenous time and

abstract space.

Nation, besides its meaning prescribed by the modern nation-state, also refers to “something more ancient and nebulous—the *natio*—a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging” (Timothy Brennan 1990: 45). The concept of nation is integrated into the ideas of home and family, basic units of culture. The polemics of this integration will be examined in Chapter Three where the national space of Taiwan is delivered in a linear time. This temporal linearity in line with the cosmic force of nature, guarantees the continuity of nation originating from the past, through the present into the future. National identity, built on this conceptualisation of nation in an historical continuum of a totalising space, is naturalised. But, such national space and identity is problematised in diaspora discourse where it is fractured by the disruptive temporality and irreconcilable differences of the people distinguished by race, class, and gender. Nation is never a natural given that arrives simply to signal the ultimate stage of political or historical maturity; it is a discursive construct of “the cultural temporality” from which emerges “a “much more transitional social reality” (Bhabha 1990b: 1). Nation is produced from the incessant border crossing between languages, peoples, cultures, times and spaces. Bhabha’s re-inscription of the notion of nation implies that “within the very notion

of the nation there are already other nations” (Nikos Papastergiadis 1996:191).

As stated above, hybridity characterises a new space of identity negotiated between two cultures. In modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan, the symbolic force of Chineseness integrated into the traditional opera formulas is decreasing as elements of Taiwanese and foreign cultures are brought in to modernise this Chinese tradition. Also, to nativise Beijing Opera, opera formulas invoking Chineseness and Taiwanese cultural codes are mixed to enhance a quintessentially Taiwanese identity that is nevertheless fissured by incommensurable cultural difference. I will examine these modern opera performances in the next chapter where the constitution of Taiwanese identity is, in my opinion, prescribed by cultural hybridity as formulated in Bhabha’s post-colonial theory. The operating signifier of Chineseness and its implied Chinese identity in traditional Beijing Opera is displaced by cultural hybridity. An essentially Taiwanese identity fails to congeal in modern Beijing Opera, where Chineseness internalised in aesthetics is challenged by the local content. In text-based theatre, there are also attempts to invoke essentialist Taiwaneseeness via forging a national space where Taiwan as the home-nation is sacralised. This is where I find Bhabha’s critique of national space a useful tool to conduct a critical analysis. As an immigrant society, Taiwan has

internal conflicts such as racial and cultural differences, which risk being homogenised and subsumed into the singular identity attached to national space. In contemporary theatre practice, the cultural mapping of Taiwan presents a complex scenario where the diasporic experience of dislocation contends the integrity of totalising national space.

Bhabha develops his third space in an overarching textuality consisting of selected colonial texts where cultural differences remain unreconciled. I have indicated the resonance of third space and cultural hybridity for contemporary Taiwanese theatre where Taiwanese identity is not only negotiated in contention with a Chinese tradition like Beijing Opera but also mediated in the essentialist construction of Taiwaneseness. To the Taiwanese, Chineseness is not only internal to the cultural heritage of Beijing Opera but also invoked in the personal memories where the past in the homeland in China affects the present perception of home in Taiwan. That history and memory constitute the major sites where Taiwanese identity is constituted will be investigated in my performance analysis in Chapters Four and Five.

To further examine the unsettled nature of Taiwanese identity in contingency with a Chinese past, I next turn to explore Foucault's notion of heterotopia where he

conducts the spatialisation of history. As I will explore below, the notion of heterotopia investigates the dialectical relationship between the real (present) and imaginary (historical) spaces congregated in one single place. Heterotopias have resonance for the in-between space produced in the spatio-temporal disruption between the homeland of past China, its cultural traditions and history and the space of present Taiwan. The mapping of Taiwanese identity in diasporic space can be found in this differential cartography drawn between past and present, there and here, strange and familiar. In the performances analysed in Chapter Four, the past homeland (embodied in the Chinese Empire or an imaginary utopia in classic literature) is estranged by the distance from the familiar home of a present that is also estranged by nostalgia for the past. Between the present home and the past homeland with implied Chinese national identity, Taiwanese identity is located in a heterogeneous space marked by spatio-temporal differences. Heterotopias emerging in the spatio-temporal disruption between past and present will be delineated theatrically in Chapter Four where the Taiwanese fluctuate in disjunctual times and places and their identity is constantly untangled and reformatted.

Bhabha's third space is invoked in the 'time-lag' when conflictual cultural difference is articulated. This temporal lapse in the process of cultural

representation is useful in terms of subverting the colonial authority meanwhile mounting a new subject position for the colonised. In contemporary Taiwanese theatre, the Taiwanese negotiate a new subject position via reconsidering the Chinese past that intervenes in present Taiwan where home and identity are mediated through the dialectical force of time and space. The location of identity here is in an interstitial space prescribed by spatial and temporal discontinuity. I thus turn to Foucault's concept of heterotopia, which addresses the spatio-temporal dialectics in lived social space and the processing of a differential identity.

Heterotopias: post-modern sites of identity

Bhabha's third space pries open the national cultural identity whose organic wholeness disintegrates in the process of cultural signification where differences are in constant play and no stable meaning is identified. The notion of hybridity unsettles the fixity of cultural identity as hybridity results from the lack of a common centre or platform that can hold differences together to fix the meaning of cultural representation. Identity is differential and hybrid as it is formed in the process of articulating cultural difference. This notion of difference/sameness is also the point of departure for Foucault's conceptualisation of heterotopia, which he

uses to describe a discursive space of absolute difference. However, his heterotopia, though containing an epistemological ring, can still be located in concrete social sites, whilst, through appropriating influential colonial texts, Bhabha's third space is located in a transhistorical textuality. Third space as a powerful discursive strategy finds applications mainly in linguistic, cultural and aesthetic arenas.

Compared with Bhabha's temporal stress of his third space, Foucault focuses more on the in-between spatiality of his heterotopia. A heterogeneous space of difference, heterotopia is evidenced in the dialectical dynamics of everyday time and space.

In a posthumous article, "Of Other Spaces" published in 1986, Foucault first discusses the notion of heterotopia. This article is a lecture he gave in 1967 to a group of architecture scholars. There, he pinpoints heterotopias in real social sites like the cemetery, library, prison among others. But in the preface to *The Order of Things* (1974), Foucault's second mention of heterotopias slides to stress the epistemological significance. Heterotopias here signify an absolutely differentiated discursive space; they shatter as well as tangle common names, destroying the syntax where identity is built by holding words and things together. Similar to but also different from Bhabha's third space, Foucault's heterotopias show that differences are socially as well as discursively produced. This distinguishes his

approach on space from Bachelard's poetics of the 'internal' space. Instead of an abstract void or a material container, Foucault's space is composed of a set of relations manifest in the social sites. Foucault sees space as that which "draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs..." (1986:23). His view of space is deeply and intricately historical.

Laughing at the absurd bestiary in Borges' quote of a 'Chinese encyclopaedia', Foucault uses the notion of heterotopia to highlight the problematic task to classify things by difference (1974). Borges' fable divides animals into (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, and so on. No coherent space can accommodate this classifying scheme except in the language itself. Such classification is implausible because of the propinquity between divided things that are named as such. This bestiary can only exist in utopia where differences are homogenised by granting "a common locus" that renders the propinquity of different things (1974:xviii). Situated in contrast to utopia, heterotopia in acknowledging the incommensurable conflicts between different things, maps out a heterogeneous space where the arbitrary link between the name and the named object, signifier and signified is hard to hold together. Heterotopia therefore destroys the syntax that makes meanings possible; it "dissolve(s) our

myths and sterilise(s) the lyricism of our sentences“(ibid. xviii). To be able to name, the basis of division denotes the dogmatism necessary to exclude the different other that is not the named object. Borges’ table of animals shows any attempt of classification is inevitably arbitrary as well as contingent. What is more unnerving is that besides the incongruity between things and names, is the realisation that fragments of other possible orders co-exist in the space of heterotopia, a disordered territory where the different other resides and incommensurable orders are not gelled into an over-arching order.

Heterotopia that contains a cacophony of conflicting discourses and incompatible geographies exceeds the discursive limit. Because of this capability of transcending the discursive limits, the space of heterotopia is appropriated as a sign of literary post-modernism (Brian McHale: 1989). Benjamin Genocchio (1995) holds in doubt the ‘non-critical’ appropriation of the idea of heterotopia such as in post-modern literature and cultural geography. He argues that Foucault’s heterotopia, in establishing an absolutely differentiated space, also presents the limits of actualising this site. Genocchio views it as impossible to locate heterotopias in real places, yet he acknowledges the power of this subversive notion to expose the arbitrary nature of any spatial ordering systems and thus to “produce/

theorise space as transient, contestory...” (ibid. 43). It is impossible to practically move to the otherly site of heterotopia which nevertheless offers an idea to confront the disciplinary power inscribed in social space, affirming the polysemantic nature of our collective spatial experiences in habitual practices and everyday life.

Genocchio in rejecting the ontological existence of heterotopia however admits its subversive force that he sees embodied through an environmental installation set up in a underground station, a place where disciplinary power and social control prevail and dominate (ibid.). Composed of interviews, audio broadcasts, texts etc, this installation at once displaces, and transforms a mundane and familiar space whose fabrication is simultaneously exposed and unravelled.

It is this disruptive confrontation with a totalising space and order in Foucault’s heterotopia that I want to pursue in relation to the problematic of mapping home and identity in contemporary Taiwanese theatre. The Chinese past constitutes a totalising space of Chinese identity that is invoked in juxtaposition with present-day Taiwan. The spatio-temporal continuity of this past is disrupted in the contingent present. In the disruption between past and present emerges the heterotopia, a site of spatio-temporal discontinuity. In “Of Other Spaces”, Foucault posits the quality of contemporary space as sites of divergence, a concept that

replaces the medieval space of emplacement and the Galilean space of extension. He argues that we experience the contemporary world as “a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein” rather than as “a hierarchic ensemble of places” of the medieval “localisation” or as a place like a point in the movement whose stability is maintained by temporal “extension” (22-23).

Foucault's heterotopia therefore privileges relations among different spaces, reconsidering space by analysing its positioning in a network of divergent spaces. The Foucaultian heterotopia offers an illuminating indicator to the juxtaposition of two spaces –historical China and present Taiwan featured in the spatial narratives where Taiwanese identity is mapped. The spatial narratives function like ideological practices in the sense that they attempt to tie an imaginary space to a real space as well as bind people to particular identities of both real and unreal spaces. Heterotopia has the critical value of locating itself simultaneously between two intertwined spaces: the real and the imaginary. In “Of Other Spaces”, Foucault’s heterotopias are located outside the discursive / linguistic arena and designate social places in real geography such as the theatre, the cemetery, the cinema, the brothels among others which can be easily found in almost all cultures. Imbricated in the real world, heterotopias constitute a contingent yet differential space. On the borderline

of the real and the imaginary space, heterotopias illustrate transient spatiality and ambiguous temporality. These qualities are highly relevant to diasporic space. This formulation of heterotopia takes issues with the notion of historicity, where both personal and collective identities are produced. Memory about the past homeland in China, and Chinese cultural history are re-enacted in contemporary Taiwanese theatre. Personal memories together with the Chinese past invoked and reconfigured in the present constitute the historicity wherein Taiwanese identity resides. And this historicity is interwoven into the present geography. I wish to borrow and modify Foucault's concept of heterotopia in making a more precise paradigm of the spatio-temporal dynamics of diasporic space where Taiwanese identity is negotiated.

Foucault sees both the physical and mental aspects of spaces as “abstractions from the more fundamental level of the lived experience” (Stuart Elden 2001:119). For Foucault, our social space consists of sites defined by sets of relations and these sites are ‘irreducible’ to and not ‘superimposable’ on one another. Among these sites, Foucault focuses on two types: utopia and heterotopia. Utopia has no real place and its relationship with real society is as a direct or inverted analogy. Heterotopia is etymologically linked to the more familiar term, ‘utopia’, which

Foucault cites as a counterpart to heterotopia. Both utopia and heterotopia are external sites which “have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (Foucault 1986: 24). Whereas utopias are unreal, fantastic, and perfected spaces, heterotopias—for Foucault—are real places existing “outside of all places” (ibid.) and functioning as “counter-sites”; as such, they simultaneously represent, contest, and invert all other sites (ibid.). The conception of Foucault’s heterotopia is taxonomic. Among the existing spatial formations, he pinpoints those other spaces that do not follow the normative set of relations that define ordinary sites such as an office or a home; even though these heterotopias (prisons, psychiatric hospitals, fairgrounds, cemeteries, etc...) concurrently refer to and are connected with these ordinary sites.

Foucault sees the joint and mixed relationship between utopia and heterotopia manifested in the space of the ‘mirror’. The mirror, as a virtual space enacts a utopia where subjects can see where they are not. Yet, the mirror also functions as a heterotopia because through the same gaze, individuals discover their absence from the place where they are since they see themselves over there. The heterotopia of the mirror makes present space at once real, “connected with all the space that

surrounds it” and also unreal “since in order to be received, it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (Foucault 1986: 24). This gaze into the virtual space is reiterated as “I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am”(ibid.). Hence, according to Foucault, the subject’s presence in one space is fractured when he /she looks into the mirror, and sees her/himself “over there”. Furthermore, the subject’s presence “over there” is also fractured as the returned gaze shows her /his presence over here. Heterotopia problematises the identity of a self-contained present as it is configured in relation to the difference of the spatial other. I would appropriate this notion of mirror to think about history, which is experienced as a virtual point lying in the Chinese past where the Taiwanese are absent. Consequently, this absence from the past space in China makes the Taiwanese return to the present where they re-constitute themselves. The implication of heterotopia for diasporic space is that it allows for a mapping of the present that is not only immersed in the surrounding space but is also mediated by other spaces such as the space of the Chinese past. Mediated by the dislocation experience, the lived space of the Taiwanese constitutes a type of heterotopia where the unreal space of the past and the real space in the present clash in difference.

Foucault delineates the dialectics between heterotopias and utopias, real and unreal spaces merged in the same site of mirror. In Taiwanese theatre under my analytical discussion, the past homeland in China is perceived in the unreal space of memories and dreams. This homeland in an imaginary space is like the other side of a mirror, which reminds the Taiwanese of their absence over here in present Taiwan and thus their identity is re-considered in historicity. For the diasporic Taiwanese, the Chinese past invoked in personal or collective memories constitutes the historicity that they live with in the present. The past of implied Chinese identity is constantly displaced by difference in the local content of the present. The imaginary space in the past and the present space coincide in heterotopia where the original identities of past and present, there and here are both dismantled by spatio-temporal disruption.

Now to further analyse the spatio-temporal dialectics between past and present, here and there, I will give a close look at the general qualities of these counter-sites in Foucault's elaboration. He first identifies heterotopias in two categories: crisis and deviation; the former, he asserts, is being replaced by the latter in modern time. In crisis heterotopias (19th century boarding schools, military service, the honeymoon hotel), individuals experience a personal transformation that takes

place elsewhere, but not at home. In heterotopias of deviation such as prisons and psychiatric hospitals, individuals live at a liminal point between their old social identity and a new monolithic identity (that conforms with the social order). Identity is in process in these transit spaces of heterotopias. The notion of heterotopia contends that social beings are constructed, and regulated by surveillance mechanisms under which all identities are 'corrected' and their differential behaviours re-organised under the sameness of the social norm. Similar discursive operations can be observed in the construction of national cultural identity which is contested in the in-between space of heterotopias.

Foucault then defines his heterotology¹¹ by another five principles that illustrate the various forms that heterotopias can take. The second principle states that heterotopias are made to function differently in various societies. The given example is of the cemetery which was originally located at the centre of town next to the church and since the late 18th century, was subsequently moved to the edge of town. This example may have particular reference to Western society and its religious background. But it also involves a universal fear of the past represented by the dead. In modern times, death is deemed as a contagious illness thus marginalised to the edge, to secure the safety and comfort of the homes located in

the centre of town. For Foucault, death is “ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language” (1986: 25). By excluding death spatially, the past existence is placed out-with ideas of the modern and the present. This link of heterotopias with the past in relation to the idea of death is further explicated from the perspective of heterogeneous temporality. The cemetery is cited again as example when Foucault goes on to the fourth principle of heterotopias’ link to “slices in time”. He suggests that heterotopias begin when people reach an “absolute break” with their “traditional time” (ibid.: 26). The loss of life in the past gains an illusion of eternity in a permanent lot in the cemetery. The present experienced in the heterotopia of cemetery is split, at once disappearing into the past and gaining momentum into the future. In heterotopias, the presupposed chain of past-present-future is disrupted; the present is never safe from the past. The notion of heterotopia blows open the historical continuum and the integrity of space is ruptured by the force of history.

Foucault continues elaborating this heterogeneous temporality of heterotopias via the example of museums. The historical force is gelled in the present in museums where the accumulation of time is felt only in discontinuity. The museum expresses the human desire to enclose in one place disparate times and spaces;

however this place encompassing all, is “outside of time” (1986: 26). This time that is “outside of time” is ousted from the traditional perception of time as the past-present-future sequence is broken up and mixed up in museums. Rather similar to the cemetery where the past (of the dead) owns quasi-eternity, the old objects and books in museums or libraries catch a sense of quasi-eternity from being locked within a spatial enclosure. Heterotopia, a place of all times/spaces is itself outside of time and space. In relation to this timely aspect, Foucault offers another example of holiday villages like the Polynesian villages, the restoration of which compresses the historical time into the single place of ‘indigenous’ hut. This re-enactment of Polynesian life not only ‘accumulates’ the time of history in one place; it also ‘abolishes’ time as the ‘indigenous’ past is not retrievable in the present. To invoke the past in the present simultaneously recovers as well as cancels the past.

The third and fifth principles of heterotopias especially make for an insightful reading of theatre in relation to delineating the diasporic experience of dislocation. First, heterotopias allow for juxtaposition, in a single real place, of several incompatible sites; such an observation identifies the theatre’s power to fabricate divergent dramatic sites on a single stage. This is useful to convey the simultaneous presence of the distant homeland in the past and present Taiwan, both of which

constitute the lived space of the Taiwanese. This layered composition of time and space is one in which juxtaposition of spatio-temporal differences charges the heterotopia of theatre with historical connectivity and cultural symbolism. The fifth principle claims that heterotopias follow "a system of opening and closing" and argues that they both open into the surrounding space and allow themselves to be penetrated (1986: 26). This dialectics of open and closing alludes to the inner penetration and mutual constitution of past and present, there and here in diasporic space. In heterotopias, spatial boundaries are not strictly fixed, as they are simultaneously open as well as closed to the outside world. Therefore, the identity of the inside and the outside is not static but remains in constant negotiation. The final feature of Foucault's heterotopology is heterotopia's illusive and compensational function in relation to all the space that remains. The heterotopias of brothel and colony counteract the real space of utopia whose ill-construction is highlighted as more elusive.

Heterotopia in Foucault's terse metaphor is a boat that traverses different times/places, adjusting to all the changing surroundings meanwhile being self-sustained. It is not a self-enclosed site isolated in a fixed time and place as it opens into the outside of difference. The image of a boat in a state of movement

marks heterotopia as lived space produced through vibration. The heterotopia of the boat, a space outside all places is “a floating piece of space, a place without a place” (1986: 27). This heterogeneous space lacks ontological emplacement since it is constituted by movements with the boat responding to the ‘infinity of sea’.

Heterotopia cultivates a passage linking past and present, here and there that are constantly moving into new positions in accordance with new sets of relations.

Foucault’s heterotopias are sited in different places and they feature differential temporality and spatiality. The final image of the boat introduces movement as an internal dynamic of heterotopia where the spatial wholeness is disrupted and temporal linearity fractured. I would suggest that Foucault’s heterotopia underlines a notion of travel via which the diasporic subject (of pertinence to the dislocation experience) moves, whilst not being bound by any fixed points of time and space.

Heterotopia lays bare the force of history that shapes the lived space, exposing the internal contradictions in totalising space such as those of the abstract nation. This gives resonance to diasporic space negotiated in the spatio-temporal disruption between the space of Chinese past and the present space in Taiwan. Neither space, however, has the privilege of claiming wholeness. The notion of heterotopia exposes the conflictual difference in space, defying essentialist binaries and the

fixed identities that are consequently constructed upon them. By looking into historicity in terms of space and vice versa, the present is mapped as a heterogeneous space of difference. Edward Soja regards Foucault's heterotopias as delineating "the contemporary interplay between the historical and geographical imaginations" (1995:16). In Foucault's own words, we are in the epoch "of simultaneity and juxtaposition, of the near and far, of the side-by-side and of the dispersed" (1986: 22). It is here that the notion of heterotopia is relevant to the mapping of Taiwanese identity in diasporic space between the present locality and the imaginary space in the past prescribed by Chinese heritage. Bhabha's third space contributes to the cross-cultural dimension of diasporic space where cultural differences are negotiated in hybridity. Foucault's heterotopia accentuates the indeterminate geography of diasporic space where identity is also differential, not bound to either here or there, present or past.

Conclusion: from place to space

My analysis of two texts that seek to define the Taiwanese theatre demonstrates the diasporic state of Taiwanese theatre. One focuses on the transitional relationship with the past in China whilst the other stresses local

knowledge. Both, however, lay exclusive claims to a certain cultural origin rooted in either Taiwan or China while the routing of cultural practices characterises the historical development of theatre in Taiwan. The challenging task of defining the Taiwanese theatre calls for a heterogeneous space in consideration of both shared yet changed Chinese cultural traditions and situated knowledge in a Taiwanese context.

Taiwanese identity in process will be examined in the specific context of both operatic and text-based theatres in Taiwan where diasporic space is produced in acknowledging cultural differences that are not simply absorbed into the sameness of unified nationhood and cultural origin but are engaged in antagonistic articulation. The authority of Chineseness internal to Beijing Opera originated from China is confronted by the differences of modern Taiwanese culture. In text-based theatre, I suggest the narration of home developed in conflation with nation tries to advance an essentialist Taiwaneseness whose integrity is problematised by internal differences.

The narrative of home is about mapping Taiwan in its location in a relational position to the other space of China illustrated in the past homeland, Chinese history and cultural traditions like Beijing Opera. The homeland in China lacks the

substance of a real place in the present as it is only reconstructed through imagination inspired by fragmented memories. The home in the present is also presented as a lack in the particular context of Taiwanese text-based theatre. These narratives of home problematise the construction of home as a fixed place that generates belongings and coheres identity by excluding difference of the other space. Diasporic space is mapped in the dialectics between the present locality and the other space such as connoted by the homeland with its histories and cultural burdens. Home mediated in both past and present, there and here is thus not an absolute space like the nation but constituted in the movement between here and there. Home in diasporic space is removed from the essentialist formulation of the home-nation and the homeland both of which are never completely erased from the act of homing for the diasporic Taiwanese.

The identity of the diasporic Taiwanese evolves around home which is thus inscribed in diasporic space, not restricted to ontological places like the homeland of the past and the home in the present. Diasporic space arises in interstitial space where the division between here and there is blurred and the homogenous national space like that invoked by Chinese as well as Taiwanese nationalism is defied. The final note on the post-colonial and post-modern mapping of diasporic space I have

tracked in this chapter will surface through the distinction between space and place. In the narratives of home in Taiwanese text-based theatre I will analyse below, the places that the diasporic Taiwanese live will include the homeland in the past China that is reconstructed in present Taiwan where the signification of the bounded home is destabilised. Reading De Certeau's *Space* (1988) through Marc Augé's *Anthropological Place* (1995), I suggest that diasporic space is discursively mapped by frequenting places whose histories are narrated as spatial practices.

Augé in his elaboration of super-modernity theorises the word, non-place as contrapuntal to anthropological place defined in terms of history, identity and relation. This place is still present in our everyday life and it is also constitutive of non-place. In mapping home in diasporic space, I will look at the engaged yet conflictual relationship between the home in Taiwan and the past homeland in China. The home/homeland is an anthropological place that is never erased from the mapping of home for the Taiwanese. Diasporic space is negotiated in the real place in Taiwan and the imaginary space of China, informed by the dialectics of both real and imaginary places. De Certeau meditates, "space is a practised place" (1988:117). While place carries the implied hierarchy of a spatial binary which maintains the stability of a field delimited by borders, space is a mobile concept that

is produced out of the operations that “make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities” (ibid.). These proximities mark the successive contexts that temporalise space. Space in this context is “a momentary coexistence of trajectories, a configuration of a multiplicity of histories all in the process of being made” (Doreen Massey 2000:229). Space, like the spoken word is enacted in a present contingent on the past. The operation of the spoken word is located in a temporalised context, reminiscent of the similar transformation from place into space.

For De Certeau, space has a narrative form of stories that “traverse and organise places” which are selectively linked to make an itinerary (1988: 115). In declaring that every story is a spatial practice, De Certeau’s contemplation on space is not only material but also discursive. Instead of allocating places on a map that would provide a totalising yet sterile vision, stories unfold the itinerary composed of moments of articulated places. To walk is to lack a ‘proper’ place. I would argue that travel in diasporic space is analogous to the operational function of walking in De Certeau’s metaphorical mobile city, where a space is produced in the movement between places. Travel takes one through places and creates a space prescribed by constant lack of a proper place. The homeland and home-nation constructs would

exemplify such a proper place defined by rigid and delimiting spatial boundary.

This space that travel produces is of a diasporic nature, rendered through the serial displacement of places.

Endnotes

¹ 'The fifth-generation directors', who brought modern Chinese cinema unprecedented international attention (for example, *Red Sorghum* won the Golden Bear award at the 1988 Berlin Film Festival), refers to the 1982 graduating class of the Beijing Film Academy, China's only film school. Their works mark distinctive difference from the previous didactic movies of social realism, in terms of style and subject matter. For more details, please see Chris Berry (1991), Sheila Cornelius (2002), Tony Rayns (1991), Jerome Silbergeld (1999)

² The economy of difference is mobilised in the indeterminate signification of cultural representation where the post-colonial subjectivity is articulated. In signifying, the relation between signifier and signified is unstable, prescribed in a continuing process of differentiation from other signifieds. The meaning and identity of the sign is thus constituted in a weave of relational differences.

³ Taiwan received large-scale immigration from feudal China (1661-1895). There are around 10 million Chinese living outside China: the main settlement area being south-eastern Asia and North America. Also, a small number lives in Latin America, Western Europe and scattered places of the world. For a detailed history of Chinese migration, see Edgar Wickberg (1994).

⁴ Before being made a province of the Qing Dynasty of China in 1887, Taiwan had been partially occupied by the Dutch (1624-1662) and the Spanish (1626-1641) before the Qing Dynasty ceded Taiwan to Japan for a fifty-year colonisation (1895-1945). After the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the defeated Japan returned Taiwan to the then Chinese government, namely the Nationalist regime (of the KMT, Kuomintang Party) in 1945. Four years later, the KMT Nationalists lost the Civil War and withdrew to Taiwan where they have effectively ruled until 2000.

⁵ 'Cultural China' is a term launched by Tu Wei-ming (1994), professor of Chinese history and philosophy at Harvard University, USA. Tu used this term to denote a symbolic universe that decentres the authoritarian centre of geopolitical China via privileging the periphery (specifically referring to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Chinese communities in south-eastern Asia) and to create a modern version of Chineseness. However, Ien Ang argues that in seeking to elevate the global significance of Chineseness, Tu actually invokes "a de-centred centre, whose name is cultural China, but China nevertheless" (2000: 287).

⁶ Taiwan New Cinema was a movement spreading through the 1980s and 90s. It lifted Taiwanese cinema to a new sophisticated level of realism and gave it an international profile. The films involved an examination of the various problems that the Taiwanese have to cope with in an increasingly modernised society. They share an unprecedented concern with the daily lives of local people with respect to native cultures and languages. The most famous directors are Hou Hsiao-hsien and Yang Der-chang. For more about Taiwan New Cinema, see Chiao Hsiung-Ping (1991); and Nick Browne et al (1994).

⁷ Directed by Yang Der-chang who is concerned mainly with the plight of the newly emerging middle-class and the social dynamics of urban society. *Terrorizer* addresses the social and personal problems that confront the urban intellectual and cultural elite in the increasingly industrialised and Westernised Taipei. Yang offers sharp observations on Taiwan's capitalistic and alienated urban life, casting a retrospective look at the impact of the tremendous social changes on the locals.

⁸ 'Spoken drama' is named to highlight its use of spoken language as the major expressive tool that differentiates it from the operatic genre of traditional Chinese theatre that features singing and dancing with few dialogues.

⁹ May Fourth Movement is the first mass movement in modern Chinese history, referring to the social modernization during 1917-1921. It is motivated by the oppression of China by foreign imperialism and the most visible event is the student demonstration in Beijing on the 4th of May 1919, rallying against the Versailles Treaty that gave part of China to Germany. This movement is also directed towards the renovation of society and culture; the tradition of Confucianism was disavowed and replaced by new Western ideologies like liberalism, pragmatism, and democracy. For the cultural impact of this movement, please see Vera Schwarcz (1986).

¹⁰ Tea-opera is developed from the melodies of tea-farmers singing to each other over the hill for amusement and relaxation during their tiring labour work. Hakka-speaking people are the third biggest ethnic group (after the Taiwanese and Mandarin-speaking groups) in Taiwan.

¹¹ The term, heterotopy is used by scholars to refer to the analytical and epistemological topoanalysis of Foucault's otherly space, heterotopia.

Chapter Two

Displacing the Chinese Tradition: The Polemics of Beijing Opera

Introduction

Taiwan, an immigrant society of the Han Chinese with a long colonial history, always holds an open attitude for foreign cultures. Taiwanese theatre has been influenced by both Chinese and Western traditions; cross-cultural exchanges have been eminent in the historical development of Taiwanese theatre. To track the transformation of Taiwanese identity as performed in contemporary theatre practice, I suggest it is best framed in a diasporic context. Nowadays, diaspora is not limited to its ancient applications such as the traumatic expulsion of the Jews, but represents various forms of social displacement. Modern diaspora occupies a borderline space where the subject lives in-between cultures. In Chapter One, I examined the genealogy of diaspora, which exists as a form of alternative sociality to the national identity proposed by the modern nation-state. My analysis of black diaspora discourse shows that the diasporic problematises the essentialist construction of nation, culture and identity. In the anti-essentialist space of diaspora, not only the pre-ordained identity bound by land and ethnicity is disintegrating but

also new modes of affiliation are constantly being produced.

Drawing on post-colonial and post-structuralist theories, I previously listed three phenomena of diasporic space where I suggest Taiwanese identity is negotiated. Such diasporic space will be theatrically illustrated under the thematic discussion of cultural hybridity, spatio-temporal disruption between past and present and homing in travelling. In diasporic space, the essentialist division between cultures is dislodged and cultural differences are negotiated. This phenomenon of cultural hybridity will be examined in the modern performances of Beijing Opera, whose Chineseness has been differentiated by local Taiwanese culture. Many people in Taiwan experience dislocation by virtue of their status as Chinese immigrants themselves or else as their descendants. Thus, they develop nostalgia for their ancestors' homeland in China whilst re-defining their sense of belonging in their adopted homeland in Taiwan. Negotiating their position between here and there, the Taiwanese are not solidly grounded in either place. Before analysing the representation of home—a crucial theme which, in my view, pervades the narratives mapping Taiwanese identity in text-based theatre — I will first explore how Chineseness inherent in the traditions of Beijing Opera is appropriated in an intercultural context in modern Taiwan. Then, accommodating contemporary

cultural discourse and native consciousness in Taiwan, the modern Beijing Opera performances open up a space of negotiating cultural differences. My central concern is to investigate the problematic nature of cultural hybridity and the way in which it constructs Taiwanese identity.

In the diasporic context, it is no longer possible to locate a fixed origin for culture because cultural traditions are displaced as migrants move, and are constantly reconfigured to incorporate the situated knowledge of the place where they travel. Beijing Opera is one such Chinese cultural tradition brought to Taiwan in the early 20th century. Following Taiwan's separation from China after the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalists started a long-term rule in Taiwan and appropriated Beijing Opera as the 'national' theatre of 'Taiwan'. By staking such a claim, the Nationalists hoped to replace Communist China as the 'authentic' representative of 'Chinese' culture. Hence, I propose to discuss the canonisation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan in a comparative context. For whereas native Taiwanese opera, Gezaixi suffered from marginalisation and since the early 1990s, it was promoted as the 'indigenous' Taiwanese theatre that could invoke Taiwanese consciousness.

Beijing Opera has developed a repertoire adapted from Chinese classic

literature and history and a set of performance formulas have been developed, assimilating the cultural values and morals of feudal China. Chineseness is coded into the performance of Beijing Opera, which as I argue, becomes an abstract space representing China as it is collectively imagined. This space of Chineseness, is sustained through a stable repertoire, an audience with cultivated knowledge and a self-sufficient semiotics. Furthermore, it is my contention that this abstract space of Chineseness is gradually differentiated since Beijing Opera in Taiwan is generally thought an outdated cultural tradition in need of renovation. Built in line with feudal Chinese culture, Beijing Opera lost connection with modern life in Taiwan. Many local Beijing Opera practitioners consciously seek to modernise and give this tradition a new life. The modernisation started in the 1980s when opera aesthetics incorporated different methodologies of Western realist theatre. Into the 1990s, three opera productions were staged and were culturally dubbed the project of nativisation. These productions employed operatic formulas to invoke a place-bound Taiwanese identity. Originating from feudal China and absorbing Western influences and Taiwanese culture, the modern Beijing Opera performances in Taiwan demonstrate the hybrid constitution of Taiwanese identity.

Canonisation: Beijing Opera versus Gezaixi

Beijing Opera, which acquired a privileged position from among more than 300 operatic theatres by securing royal patronage during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), is the most renowned genre of Chinese theatre. Beijing Opera was developed from the Kun opera that arose first as a form of high art produced by and for the educated literary class and governmental officers in the southern part of China. Its lyrics of rhymed poetry were not easily understood without a sophisticated knowledge of classical literature—a privilege only enjoyed by the élite in feudal China. The artistry of the Kun opera reached its peak in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It was circulated northward during the Qing Dynasty, where the capital, Beijing, was the political centre of feudal China. The Kun opera became the most popular entertainment among noblemen in Beijing, and many emperors took a strong interest in it. Whilst the Kun opera gained popularity in Beijing and in rich areas in the south, there were many regional operas flourishing all over China.

In the history of Beijing Opera, the most influential event was the visit to Beijing by some Hui-jiu troupes in 1790. Hui-jiu, a regional opera from An-hui in the poorer part of the south, came to Beijing to celebrate the royal birthday. Afterwards, a few opera troupes stayed on and earned huge popularity. Compared

with the literary content of the Kun opera, the Hui-jiu repertoire was bigger and more accessible to the commoners because of its colloquial lyrics and familiar stories. Assimilating the tunes and repertoires of other regional operas that were also playing in Beijing at that time, Hui-jiu developed a set of refined tunes and formulas. It was not until around 1860 that its evolution was completed and the company took on its official title, Beijing Opera, incorporating the name of the city for which it owes its genesis and maturation and whose prosperous economy greatly contributed to its support. Besides the grand opera houses in the royal palace, Beijing Opera was also performed in tea or wine houses where the interaction between the audience and the stage was, in keeping with the social and relaxed atmosphere of these places, rather casual.

The royal family in the Qing Dynasty contributed greatly to promoting Beijing Opera. The Empress Dowager decreed that many episodes of the Kun opera be adopted into Beijing Opera whose repertoire was thus enlarged. The royal family changed their aesthetic preference from the elite Kun to Beijing Opera with its regional background for political reasons. Throughout the Qing Dynasty, various regional revolts proved that the mass could accumulate into a subversive force. The royal family sought to win the public support and reduce its potential threat to the

monarchy via promoting regional operas that affected the socio-political consciousness of the mass. Chinese theatre scholar, Colin Mackerras (1988) argues that the decline of the Kun opera together with the rise of Beijing Opera were factors that reflected the overthrow of the Qing monarchy. Historically, cultural politics has always occupied a prominent role in Chinese theatre and continued to do so as Beijing Opera came to Taiwan where it was canonised as *guo-jiu* (literally national drama). I now examine this canonisation of Beijing Opera in relation to the construction of a cultural identity oriented towards Chineseness.

Many plays in Beijing Opera projected China as a strong and unified nation, fighting against foreign invasion. During the Opium War in the late Qing when China was oppressed by Western imperialism, some scholars wrote new plays to advocate social revolution and nationalism. In 1927, China was temporarily re-united under the Nationalist government, which used Beijing Opera to concretise the notion of national culture. National drama schools were set up and a promotion plan drafted, which was not fully realised because of the second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). Based on historical events, some Beijing Opera troupes produced new patriotic operas to help uplift the fighting spirit against Japanese intrusion. Chiang Kai-shek, a highly influential politician in modern Chinese history, watched these

patriotic operas and recognised the moralising power Beijing Opera could exercise. In 1949, the Nationalists withdrew to Taiwan under Chiang's leadership, and he announced guidelines for sustaining a 'national' culture in which Beijing Opera played an important part. The guidelines dictated the incorporation of Beijing Opera into the academic curriculum as the only drama subject to be taught in arts academies—for free—to attract people to learn and transmit this old tradition, then deemed the 'national' 'treasure' of culture. Seven opera groups were set up in the army and gave performances regularly. The Nationalist regime made huge efforts to preserve the art of Beijing Opera to gain legitimacy for the self-assigned role of Taiwan as representing authentic Chinese culture.

The various names, which Beijing Opera had borne, symbolise its increasing political currency, from *jing-jiu* (literally meaning opera of Beijing, the capital of feudal China for many dynasties), to *guo-jui* (national drama). To eliminate the Japanese influence and tighten the ideological control via a unified language, the Nationalists implemented the policy of promoting Mandarin, the performance language of Beijing Opera. However, this overlooked the fact that, in the 1940s and 50s, most people in Taiwan communicated in Taiwanese and Japanese instead of Mandarin. As *Gezaixi* uses Taiwanese as the performance language, which was,

and still is the biggest language in Taiwan, it was naturally the most popular theatre then. The canonisation of Beijing Opera as the national theatre in Taiwan is questionable not only by virtue of language diversity among the people in Taiwan but also by the fact that long before Beijing Opera was imported from China, various folk theatres, such as puppet theatres and Gezaixi among others, already prospered in Taiwan.

The status of Beijing Opera as the 'national' theatre was challenged by the popularity of Gezaixi which has been promoted by the government since the early 1990s. The maturation of Gezaixi as an independent genre took place in Ilan in north-eastern Taiwan, and was deemed by some local scholars as the 'authentic' theatre that originated in Taiwan (Zeng Yong-yi 1988). But the earliest form of Gezaixi was modelled on some rural entertainment in China like che-gu, a street parade performance originating from Fukien, a southern province of China, brought to Taiwan by early immigrants. In its development, Gezaixi also assimilated tunes and performance formulas from Beijing Opera. Identification of any 'authentic' Taiwanese theatre encounters its polemics because as an immigrant society, the culture in Taiwan was inevitably affected by Chinese influence.

Stylistically, Gezaixi and Beijing Opera are similar in employing singing and

dancing as the mode of expression. But they bear more differences than similarities. In terms of language, Beijing Opera uses Mandarin with a Beijing accent while Gezaixi uses Taiwanese. Beijing Opera evolved from the Kun opera and inherits its elitist quality while Gezaixi comes from a comparatively more popular background. The repertoire of the former is based on classic literature or historical events while the latter mainly consists of legendary love stories and fairy tales written in a colloquial style. One has the tradition of carrying moral messages while the other focuses on theatrical effects to entertain country folk. Beijing Opera enjoyed governmental support from the 1940s to the 1980s, meanwhile Gezaixi had to survive on its own merit. Furthermore, Gezaixi was marginalised and culturally labelled as a vulgar entertainment of regional culture, considered second to the grand Chinese tradition of Beijing Opera.

Since the 1960s, a sense of Taiwanese consciousness started emerging. 'Shiangtu Wenxue', a grass-roots literature movement, advocated that literature should reflect life in Taiwan, instead of pursuing a romantic nostalgia for remote China. This call for Taiwanese consciousness was heightened as the political status of Taiwan became dire in the 1970s. In the late 1980s, the emerging of the pro-Taiwan Democratic Progress Party, a new political force, exercised influence

on the cultural climate that now has become favourable to native folk culture. In the burgeoning of Taiwanese consciousness that stresses situated knowledge, Beijing Opera lost to Gezaixi in terms of the 'authentic' 'Taiwanese' theatre. In 1995, the military-based Beijing Opera troupes were dismissed and elementary schools started teaching Taiwanese in accordance with the 'mother-tongue education program', a language policy implemented in 1996. The art academies that used to provide free training for Beijing Opera performers were combined and reduced to a lesser number in the late 1990s.

Governmental subsidy was subsequently channelled to provide training and education programs on Gezaixi, which gradually replaced Beijing Opera throughout the 1990s as representative of the 'national' theatre of Taiwan—in spite of Gezaixi's promoting of a Taiwanese nationalist ideology similar to the Chinese nationalism implied in Beijing Opera (Chang Huei-yuan 1997). In 2002, the government set up The National Centre of Traditional Arts in Ilan. It is a research centre with rich governmental resources aimed at encouraging projects related to the transmission of Taiwanese culture. This establishment officially elevates the marginal status of such Taiwanese folk theatres as puppet theatres and Gezaixi among others, even though it simultaneously sponsors projects devoted to the

transmission of 'regional' operas like Beijing Opera, the Kun and Cantonese opera etc. This demonstrates that the cultural policy in Taiwan has changed and taken a more balanced position in attending to all extant theatre genres in Taiwan.

The historical investigation indicates that there was a long-term competition between Gezaixi and Beijing Opera, outlining the cultural contention between Taiwanese and Chineseness both of which inform the construction of Taiwanese identity. Next, I wish to examine the modernisation and nativisation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan in an attempt to investigate the manner in which stylised formulas are appropriated to accommodate local culture. My primary focus is on how Chineseness in Beijing Opera is compromised in the process of modernisation; next I analyse how the project of nativisation enacts an ideological intervention to displace Chineseness and allow for the formulation of a place-bound Taiwanese identity whose construction is nevertheless affected by the traditional aesthetics of Beijing Opera.

Before I probe into the transformation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan, I think it is necessary to first evaluate the social contexts and aesthetics of Beijing Opera to illustrate how boundaries are set around this tradition to constitute an abstract space of Chineseness, detached from life in modern Taiwan. Audience reception,

repertoire formation, stylisation of formulas and stage composition of Beijing Opera are all woven into the cultural history of feudal China. Hence, my investigation is undertaken on two planes: firstly I shall examine the relationship between a dis/engaged audience and the moral pedagogy expounded in a social context; secondly I discuss the universal space of China imagined on stage through stylised formulas and regulated staging which form a self-sufficient semiotics.

The dis/engaged audience and moral pedagogy

In the realist tradition of Western theatre, a fourth wall is presumed to maintain the theatrical illusion on stage. Seeing theatre as a problematic form of 'representation' instead of a re-enactment of reality, many theatre theorists like Artaud and Brecht explored different ways to break the fourth wall of the realist tradition. In traditional Chinese theatre, however, there is no need to break a wall that does not exist in the first place. The Beijing Opera audiences always know that the stylised staged performance is an abstract form of real life. Therefore, they are never concerned with interrupting the 'reality' on stage, and grow the habit of expressing their appreciation with loud applause whenever they feel it appropriate.

Beijing Opera is a performer-oriented theatre where audience appreciation

focuses on the performer's virtuosity. Its performance formulas are highly stylised and preserved via a rigid training system. The dramatic content is often loosely organised, mainly used to advance the story line, which is arranged economically to allow more space for demonstrating singing skills, elaborate gestures and acrobatic movements all of which work to delineate the character's moods in a certain circumstance. That is why originally many operas had no written scripts, thus allowing leading roles the space to fully develop and for leading actors to demonstrate their skills. The Beijing Opera audiences applaud when they hear the tunes sung 'correctly' and cheer with exclamations of 'hao' (meaning 'very good'). Generally, once ovations are given, the audiences have a brief exchange of opinions. Through such a vocal exchange, the audiences form an organic community and a sense of solidarity is established through this particular mode of performance appreciation.

This spontaneous and intuitive expression of appreciation has a special historical background. In feudal China when Beijing Opera was performed in teahouses, tea towels were thrown above the stools while skilful demonstrations of tea pouring often interrupted the audio-visual spectacle on stage. In this social context, a festive feeling would pervade whilst the audience conducted affable

conversations with each other. Such a social function of Beijing Opera was distinct in the Qing Dynasty but it has been subdued as opera became more institutionalised. The seemingly 'disengaged' audiences are also simultaneously 'engaged' with the performance, as they remain critical of the technical display on stage. Taiwanese scholar, Zeng Yong-yi's research on the Chinese operatic theatre (1986) indicates that the level of familiarity the audience has with the dramatic content affects its aesthetic appreciation of the performance. Almost all the audiences of traditional Beijing Opera are familiar with the lyrics and stories in the repertoire. This familiarity allows them to mingle socially with other audiences meanwhile to shift focus on the stage when necessary.

The act of theatre going in the Beijing Opera tradition is commonly referred to as 'ting xi' (meaning 'listening to drama') because the audiences often rest their eyes during those parts they are not interested in. If they expect a certain section of singing and acting that is technically challenging, they then resume full attention. Such selective audience involvement is made possible because of a shared pool of knowledge obtained through long-term 'ting xi' experiences. The partial dis/engagement is made possible by the audience's sophisticated engagement with Beijing Opera in everyday life since childhood. The distanciation from the dramatic

progress on stage paradoxically proves the audience as a group of opera experts.

This special group of audience has the artistic sensibility of theatre critics nowadays.

Many learn the tunes and lyrics from repetitive listening; it is common for them to

organise amateur clubs and perform publicly. This self-educated critic-audience

was really only possible in feudal China where the literary and historical knowledge

required for an adequate appreciation of Beijing Opera was widely cultivated

among the public as in an agricultural society, they could afford the time for such

time-consuming cultivation. However, such a community of critic-audience is

losing its constitutive power in Taiwan, a rapidly industrialised and capitalist

society where people preoccupied by work have much less time to invest in

pursuing the cultural knowledge that is essential to appreciate traditional opera.

Most plays of Beijing Opera, due to its close relation with the Kun opera, are revised from early literary texts from the Yuan and Ming dynasties for example.

The repertoire notably delineates the upper class in feudal China and corresponding gestures, movements, make-up and costume are devised for stage performance.

Role types are inspired by social stereotypes, perpetuating social expectations in feudal China with respect to gender, age and class. Therefore, class values are

imbued in the performance formulas of Beijing Opera. Qingyi (the young female

role) has to perform quick and short footwork that matches the elegant demeanour expected of the educated young lady from a rich family. Costume and make-up design is also indicative of the social status of role types. Traditional Beijing Opera is class bound, as social hierarchy is a defining factor not only in the composition of the critic-audience but also in the performance formulas. This 'class' presence of Beijing Opera and its associated feudal values are bound to be challenged in democratic and Westernised Taiwan that has developed different cultural values, moral attitudes, and social hierarchy.

The repertoire of Chinese opera is mostly based on historical events, anecdotes and folklore legends. Chinese opera has a strong connection with the literary tradition and its lyrics are used to express the playwrights' feelings about feudal values or social injustice. The opera functions not only to voice the personal opinions of the literate class but also to reinforce Confucianism among the public. The opera is didactic, played to an audience most of whom are illiterate in rural China. Colin Mackerras's research pinpoints some dominant themes in the opera repertoire, including rebellion against the feudal authority, righting of an injustice through the agency of some upright magistrate, and wars of patriotic resistance to aggression from a foreign power (1981: 79). All these stories have implied but

strong morality of Confucianism, the dominant value system, admired and maintained by the literary class who wrote plays. The morality written into the plays is transmitted through performance formulas like the role type, make-up and costume. The steady and large repertoire of Beijing Opera performed in value-coded formulas is received by either an illiterate public or a specific circle of critic-audience. Though audiences are of different social classes, their appreciation similarly focuses on virtuosity. I suggest that this focus of technical appreciation facilitates the absorption of cultural values internalised in the familiar dramatic content and performance formulas. However, it is difficult to see such consolidation of the cultural values working in Taiwan where the Taiwanese, especially the young generation, have no sophisticated knowledge of Chinese history or classical literature. Furthermore feudal class value is hardly known to the Taiwanese society.

Staging Chineseness

Developed around traditional values and morals, Beijing Opera constitutes a space of Chineseness. I would argue that it is, in fact, an abstract space where the centralising signifier of China is de-historicised and de-spatialised in order to comply with the aesthetic principle of stylisation. Role types and their fixed

gestures and costumes designed by social stereotype mark no dynastic or regional difference. The only consideration for them to be designed as such is whether they are stylised and functional to achieve the required theatrical effects. The stylisation of these performance formulas satisfies fixed stereotypes, which nevertheless reflect the social hierarchy and moral values of feudal China. This Chineseness is maintained not only through a stable and huge repertoire and stylised formulas, but also through the regulated *mise-en-scene*, which almost always follows the tradition.

Besides stylistic formulas, another essential part of Beijing Opera semiotics is the stage setting, which normally consists of the basic minimalist set of 'one table and two chairs' and a few hand props. Sometimes even, it could be a bare stage. The audience thus come to a world where every stage object is abstract and endowed with symbolic meanings; a whip with tassels, for example, could be utilised to signify a horse or an oar for a boat, depending on the performance context. Through rearranging a table and two chairs, the transformation of various times and places in different stories is achieved symbolically. Discussing the relevance of Chinese painting to opera aesthetics, Li Ruru (1999) suggests that Chinese theatre attempts to arouse the audience's imagination to fill in the gaps left in the scenography that

delivers the atmosphere of an event or a circumstance. I suggest however, that this imagination is not running on freewheel but is an elaborate association made by the audience's complicated knowledge of Chinese cultural history. The symbolic scene change on the Beijing Opera stage would not be rightly interpreted without such an informed audience. This knowledge of cultural historical China is not restricted to any specific historical times/places but founded on a universal conceptualisation of Chineseness. For example, the opera costume design mainly based on the Ming Dynasty garments also incorporates the apparel patterns of the Tang, Sung, Yuan and Qing dynasties (Mao Jia-hwa 1995). The costume might misfit the historical period in the story but is nevertheless adopted in order to satisfy 'tradition'. Historical details have no decisive importance in Beijing Opera as long as Confucian virtues such as loyalty to family and nation and social justice are carried out. This abstract space of Chineseness interwoven into the opera aesthetics and its didactic purpose is repetitively enacted in performances, imagined collectively and cohered by a centralising value system.

My analysis above examines how Beijing Opera constitutes an abstract space where feudal China is evoked together with morals, cultural values and class-consciousness. I have demonstrated that the stylised gesture, movement and

regulated mise-en-scene work together in the making of an abstract space of Chineseness. A battle scene is vividly mimed through the use of flags, martial arts and acrobatics. These symbolic formulas require the willing and active participation of an informed audience to complete their communicative meanings. But the cultural meanings of these coded signs are hard to grasp for most people in modern Taiwan. There is a wide and deep cultural gap that motivates the modernisation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan which I investigate to show how this abstract space of Chineseness is fissured.

Modernisation: the intercultural dilemma

In Taiwan, the old generation who appreciated traditional Beijing Opera is gradually declining in number. The young Taiwanese struggle to come to an informed understanding of the world of old China which Beijing Opera delineates; furthermore Beijing-accented Mandarin sounds cacophonous to those whose native tongue is Taiwanese. Beijing Opera in Taiwan urgently needs modernisation to cultivate new audiences. The first opera troupe initiating the modernisation of Beijing Opera is the Little Company of Elegant Voices (Ya Ying Xiao Ji) founded in 1979. At that time, many Western theatre techniques were introduced, which Ya

Ying applied to accentuate the atmosphere that opera formulas aimed to create. One of the Western techniques it incorporated was the use of coloured lighting—in place of white floodlights which was the standard style of lighting for Beijing Opera—to highlight the change of mood. In addition, the symbolic and simple setting gave way to realist props and scenery drops. Moreover, non-traditional colours appeared in the new costume designs. All these improvements helped enhance the theatrical effect, which was not a major concern in traditional opera which focused on depicting the character's feeling and the atmosphere in a certain situation.

In addition, long sections of singing which were traditionally used for elaborating the atmosphere were deleted to speed up the tempo and increase dramatic tension. Consequently, both the dramatic narrative and the presentational style of traditional opera were changed. Ya Ying replaced the outdated identity of Beijing Opera as “the residue of secular entertainment in old times” with “new, modern and refined art”(Wang An-qi 1993: 6). However, in spite of the company's artistic director, Kuo Xiao-zhuang's passionate desire to innovate, she still followed tradition strictly by insisting on perpetuating the moralising function of Beijing Opera (Liu Tian-yi 1980, Wang An-qi 1993). In Kuo's rather extremist

view, Taiwanese society was corrupt because few members of the audience were cultivated by the high morals of traditional opera (Liu Tian-yi *ibid.*). Hence, under her leadership, old plays were revised to proceed quicker with entertaining theatricality but the content still aimed to correct social wrongs and set up role models for the Taiwanese audience.

Ya Ying contributed to elongate the life of Beijing Opera in harsh competition with text-based theatre and new media such as television in Taiwan in the 80s. Young people went to the theatre because they regarded the experience of watching 'traditional' opera as an enhancement of their artistic temperament. However, due to their limited knowledge of classical literature and opera aesthetics, their passion was ignited but did not last. Ya Ying's modernisation was restrained by the old burden of moralising the public through opera. The abstract space of Beijing Opera was challenged only superficially in the mode of presentation. The Contemporary Legend Theatre established in 1986 took the lead after Ya Ying in the modernisation, known for its distinct intercultural approach. The Contemporary Legend advocated revolutionising Beijing Opera via confrontation with foreign cultures. It adapted Western classics such as Shakespeare and Greek tragedy. Its most renowned production was *The Kingdom of Desire* (premiered in 1986) based

on *Macbeth*. The director, Wu Xing-guo, who received traditional opera training, intended to break the restrictions imposed by the stylistic yet rigid formulas. In adapting *Macbeth* into Beijing Opera, Wu hoped to “dissolve the formalism in the opera tradition” through the stimulus of new and foreign elements (Wu Xing-guo 1990).

Taiwanese theatre scholar, Chung Ming-der (1996) praised the “life force” of *The Kingdom of Desire*, which, in his opinion, would make it live on for generations. This “life force” might refer to the force of renovating the old tradition in modern time or the creativity of combining the Western text with traditional operatic formulas. I suggest that it also prescribed a metaphorical conquest of the Shakespearean text by the ‘Chinese’ heritage, a gesture of cultural politics to bring new life into Western classics. Such a nuance became clearer as Chung wilfully stated that *The Kingdom of Desire* became “a cultural product that Taiwan could export” (ibid.). The presumption behind this bold statement was that Taiwan had imported Western theatre aesthetics as it happened in adopted spoken drama; the implication was that Taiwan finally gave something back in return. This something, I suggest, was more ‘Chinese’ than ‘Taiwanese’, since Taiwanese culture had no recognised role in its ‘cultural export’. Furthermore, I argue *The Kingdom of Desire*

was essentially Beijing Opera whose 'Chineseness' was accentuated in the sense that the narrative focused on delivering the character's mood change. Bearing some innovative uses of traditional formulas, new costume designs, and lighting effects, *The Kingdom of Desire* still had a dominating aura of traditional opera. It came as no surprise that critics examined this intercultural production by traditional standards. Zheng Pei-kai (1991) criticised the poor singing of the actor playing the title role, a major criterion for evaluating traditional opera where the performer's virtuosity mattered most.

I have mentioned that in traditional operas, the narrative is often simple, straightforward and familiar to the majority of the audience. The dramatic progress is not the centre of concern and singing, movements and gestures are used to elaborate the mood of the character or the atmosphere in a certain situation. In this particular aspect, *The Kingdom of Desire* paid due respect to the tradition. It omitted the Macduff family, Malcom, Angus and Ross to focus on the interaction between Banquo, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This role cut released the theatrical time and space that was needed to arrange long singing sections for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to delineate their mood changes while they plotted the murder of Duncan.

Macbeth sang and moved according to the tradition although against traditional practice, he used the gestures, movements and singing techniques of three role types. His emotional changes were delivered with subtlety, but his murder action was dealt as an instinctual response to the prediction of the mountain spirit (the witches). The mixed role types might act out the emotional changes of Macbeth but these changes needed more justification from actual deeds. But singing sections, elaborate gestures and movements took much space, leaving insufficient room to develop the supporting plots such as the dire politics of power struggle, which was only brushed over in *The Kingdom of Desire*. A more complex picture of humanity was replaced by innocent fragility when human beings face unknown fortune, a higher will inexplicable and inviolable. Framed in fatalism, his murderous action was punished through self-destruction as fortune commanded. But surely, Macbeth's flawed personality and the changing politics in a bigger context had strong reverberations for this betrayal and murder. Macbeth deprived of this historical force was emotionally too weak to commit the cruel murder.

The Kingdom of Desire broke rigid formulas but in terms of narrative structure, it was saturated in opera aesthetics. I argue that *The Kingdom of Desire* contributed less to renovate the aesthetics of Beijing Opera than to acculturate *Macbeth* in a

pan-Asian philosophy of fatalism, which was conducive to its reception by an international audience. Investigating the narrative adaptation, visual effects and Oriental fatalism implied in *The Kingdom of Desire*, Catherine Diamond (1998) argued that it shared more intimacy with the Japanese filmic version of *Macbeth* (*Throne of Blood* by Kurosawa) than with the original. Distanced from Shakespeare, this “cultural export” from Taiwan, oddly, had more of Japanese and Chinese than Taiwanese penetration. This perhaps underlined the embarrassing fact that in confronting the grandeur of Chinese tradition and Western legacy, there was nothing of equal importance that could be drawn out of the Taiwanese culture. Also, the label of Taiwan might be confusing to the targeted Western audience for Beijing Opera was almost always associated with China only. Both Beijing Opera and Shakespeare were essential selling points of this intercultural production. In *The Kingdom of Desire*, the time/space conflict was translated into the Warring States (475-221 BC) in ancient China but there was no further elaboration of this Chinese historical background. There were though abundant uses of Beijing Opera melodies, gestures, and movement whose codified meanings were combined but kept intact although applied in a foreign narrative and non-traditional mise-en-scene. The psychological complexity of *Macbeth* though was not accounted for fully in *The*

Kingdom of Desire yet it allowed for a re-consideration of the didactic role types divided in binaries of good/bad—with the good always defeating the bad.

The above analysis shows that acted out through mixed formulas of various role types, *Macbeth* still had a flat character as a victim of fate. The appropriation of the Beijing Opera aesthetics deflates rather than enriches the characterisation of the Shakespearean text. I suggest that the more decisive yet understated motivation to use *Macbeth* as the source of adaptation was to mount 'Beijing' opera made in 'Taiwan' on the world stage via a short cut through the Western canon. The touring record of *The Kingdom of Desire* showed that the international showings outnumbered local ones; it was actively promoted to the world, touring to London, Paris and other European cities where it was politely received. Most reviews in England expressed amazement at the exotic martial arts demonstration; some gave ironical comments on the thrilling falsetto of Lady Macbeth. With regard to the intercultural aspect of this production, these reviews questioned whether it made a successful case of transmitting Shakespearean tragedy into the performance context of Beijing Opera.

It seems that the international recognition of this intercultural experiment fell on its exotic Chineseness conveyed in the stylised formulas. Beijing Opera in this

context of international reception offered an indispensable Chineseness to the Shakespearean text. Thus, the opera formulas were used in non-traditional ways, but their connoted Chineseness remained. Inside Taiwan, criticism was concerned with the aesthetic issue of genre. Chung Ming-der (1996) regards *The Kingdom of Desire* as neither Beijing Opera nor spoken drama. Wang An-qi (1996: 26) sees “a new theatre genre” developing out of this mixture of various genres. However, this new genre tentatively assigned new names such as Chinese sing-and-dance drama or New Beijing Opera, lacks value stability as it has been, so far, the only production of such unique aesthetics (Gu Jia-ling 1999). It is thus still debatable whether *The Kingdom of Desire* is justifiably named Beijing Opera or is rather merely a Shakespearean play, performed in an Oriental style. This production motivated by subverting the operatic tradition still did not quite escape the haunting Chineseness coded into the formulas whose application, not the signifying content, was appropriated.

I will now look into the cultural politics operating behind the aesthetic appropriation of Beijing Opera in modern Taiwan. The link between aesthetics and politics is never clearly severed as already testified in the stylisation of Beijing Opera formulas. The Contemporary Legend’s 1994 production, *Medea-The*

Princess of Lolan, adapted from Greek tragedy similarly aimed at innovating Beijing Opera where female roles were limited to virtuous and immaculate women who were judged by the sacrifice they made for keeping a happy marriage and family. To create a new and revengeful female role for Beijing Opera was the director, Lin Xiu-wei's (of modern dance background) original intention. Not unlike its version of *Macbeth*, the Contemporary Legend's *Medea* compressed the original story to focus on delineating a woman tortured by her own passions. Some important threads such as Medea's previous killing of her brother and her past as a priestess were not contextualised. This deliberate negligence failed to address Medea's complex personality, which would have provided the rationale for her decision to kill her own children. Both Taiwanese versions of *Macbeth* and *Medea* claimed no ambition to translate Western classics faithfully. The Western classics were used to justify the modernisation of the old Chinese tradition, illustrating that Beijing Opera aesthetics were ill-equipped when it came to portraying complicated characters as they were limited to a narrow range of role types moulded on social stereotypes in feudal China. However, these two productions set the focus on the delineation of the hero(ine)'s changing mood, disclosing their bond to the traditional operatic aesthetics. These mood changes were delivered without

addressing the cultural and historical forces that initiated these changes. Thus, Macbeth became a victim of fate and Medea, an ordinary love-forsaken woman whose revenge was simplified as “a loss of innocence” (Lin cited in Gu Jia-ling 1999). The use of Western classics here aimed not to produce a more sophisticated interpretation but to displace the Chineseness of Beijing Opera under the seemingly neutral name of creating a new performance genre. I argue that the Contemporary Legend’s search for a new performance genre is closely associated with an exotic flavour drawn separately from the Chineseness of operatic formulas and a multi-cultural imaginary which is ostensibly against a totalising Chineseness.

During rehearsals, Lin found that Medea’s character demanded more than breaking up the role types or simply mixing them up. For her, the falsetto singing of a young female role was high-pitched sharp and breaking easily because it was developed in the oppressive patriarchal system of feudal China (Gu Jia-ling 1999). Lin’s *Lolan* woman set out against the opera aesthetics and its internal moral values. *The Princess of Lolan* subverted the operatic tradition in many ways. The falsetto had to go. The actress playing Medea used her natural voice to express Medea’s deep anger and wild emotions. The Beijing Opera librettos rhymed in accordance with the rules of the classic Chinese writing were replaced by the free-style modern

poetry. The stylised formulas were abandoned for realist acting although some minor characters sporadically used operatic gestures out of their original contexts in traditional opera. The music was a mélange of electronic sounds, Buddhist chanting, ethnic tunes from Mongolia, Tibet etc... The stage design and lighting effects cast a mythic atmosphere of darkness (echoing the dark power of revenge), a contrast to the normal bright stage and harmonious spirit in traditional opera. *The Princess of Lolan* was overtly and completely cut off from the semiotic system of Beijing Opera. It was thus referred to as “Chinese Neo-classic Drama” (Catherine Diamond 1995: 252).

The Princess of Lolan not only presented a polemic in terms of genre but also problematised the purity of Han-Chinese culture that constituted Beijing Opera. The time of *The Princess of Lolan* was located in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220), more than one thousand years earlier than the birth of Beijing Opera. At that time, the busy traffic on the Silk Road brought many cultural exchanges between Europe, Middle Asia and China. The princess of Lolan and Jason originally came from two borderland tribes¹ deemed as barbaric by the Han Chinese. As their love was not accepted by their tribal members, they eloped to Dunhuang² on the western frontline of China, a crucial junction of the Silk Road via which Buddhism from

India came to China. Set in this ancient 'cosmopolitan' world where Han-Chinese culture was not dominant, this production created an intercultural scenography where ethnic clothes of minorities in China, Japan, Victorian England and Bali among others were on display. Besides the tantalising costumes, the use of chorus was also intercultural. The chorus, utilised in a similar manner to Greek tragedy, commented on the plot; it entered the auditorium to initiate the interaction between the performers and the audiences, invoking the aura of environmental theatre. The chorus also functioned as stagehands—a concept adopted from the Japanese Noh theatre tradition—helping actors change costumes on stage. Disguised in the masks similar to those in the Nuo-theatre³, they danced out Medea's pains physically. In *The Princess of Lolan*, the conflicts between realist acting, symbolic set, alienation devices and stylistic gestures defied the principles of abstract beauty and harmonious spirit of the synthetic aesthetics in traditional opera. *The Princess of Lolan* was an intercultural experiment that reserved few traces of Beijing Opera meanwhile accommodating various Asian and Western cultures. It visualised a cosmopolitan landscape hardly distinguished of any specific culture, which I suggest, not only differentiates the pure content of Chineseness to include the borderland culture in ancient China. This cosmopolitan cultural imaginary also

proposes a heterogeneous composition of Chineseness that however was only accessible outside the semiotic system of Beijing Opera.

The intervention of contemporary Taiwanese cultural discourse

Ya Ying Xiao Ji and the Contemporary Legend Theatre started the modernisation of Beijing Opera from the 80s. From the late 90s, besides the efforts in the private sector, two troupes from the public education system, the National Fu-Hsing Chinese Opera Troupe and the Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe, also presented many 'modern' opera performances. Ya Ying though presented operas in a modern style, yet followed strictly the Beijing Opera aesthetics especially in its didacticism. The Contemporary Legend's *Macbeth* and *Medea* by confronting new elements from Western cultures broke the rigidity of operatic formulas. Considered in the international context of reception, its *Macbeth* showed stringent attachment with opera aesthetics. Subversion in *Medea* developed to extremes in that it was almost completely detached from Beijing Opera semiotics. Modernisation by these two private troupes either left the Chineseness in Beijing Opera intact or removed it completely. But, in these modern opera performances no mediation of Taiwanese culture was observed. This changed when Fu-Hsing and Kuo-Kuang, the two

public opera troupes subsidized largely by the government, took modern Beijing Opera back to the operatic. They engaged a new mode of cultural intervention, applying modern interpretations to both traditional and new plays and using Taiwanese history as dramatic materials.

Fu-Hsing was founded in 1965 by private resources while Kuo-Kuang was the first 'national' opera troupe established in 1995. Both were associated with the art academies where many opera performers and musicians were trained, playing an important role in the canonisation of Beijing Opera. Their old mission was to preserve and transmit the national cultural treasure but there is a nuance in their present goal set to renovate on the basis of the opera tradition. Absorbing concepts from modern theatre, Fu-Hsing commissioned new plays that could "reflect the contemporary cultural scene" and "get near to the heart of modern society" (Zheng Rong-xing 1998). Previous intercultural operas sought inspiration from Western cultures to create a new performance language. In comparison, the new plays by Fu-Hsing engaged more with transforming the outdated ideology in Chinese classic texts though there were cases dealing with non-Chinese texts. Fu-Hsing's new plays had a distinctive experimental approach which contrasted with the conservative spirit of Ku-Kuang (Wang An-qi 1998a). The latter eventually

engendered three controversial productions, collectively entitled *The Taiwan Trilogy* with the aim to 'nativise' Beijing Opera. I suggest that both troupes collaborated in their aim to implant Taiwanese consciousness in Beijing Opera, even though they adopted different methodologies.

Fu-Hsing's new plays were inspired by Chinese, Asian and Western literatures. The stories, if based on foreign texts, retained the original referential framework although the impact of the source culture was deliberately reduced and displaced by its implication for the Taiwanese culture. The cross-cultural influence was mainly visible in costume, make-up designs and other aspects of theatrical effects. In terms of performance language, most traditional tunes and stylistic formulas were used, interpolated with folk melodies or expressions and gestures developed in modern Taiwanese society. Also common was a use of realist *mise-en-scene*. In Fu-Hsing's new plays, modern interpretation was induced from their relevance to the Taiwanese culture. One example, *Pan Jin-lian* (premiered in 1994) instilled a new life in a stereotypical unruly woman from Chinese literature. Pan Jin-lian's much-criticised extra-marital affair was re-interpreted and rationalised as a necessary reaction to subvert the chauvinism she suffered from her abusive husband and their arranged marriage against her will, a solid proof of women's

oppression in feudal China. In addition, instead of a loose woman and betrayed wife, Pan Jin-lian was redeemed in her portrayal as a liberating soul who was brave enough to pursue her sexual desires. This liberal interpretation was regarded as the natural outcome of democratic and modern Taiwan where feudal values were not applicable (Liao Xian-hao 1995). Cultural sensibility in Taiwanese society reacted against feudal values in Chinese classic literatures. Fu-Hsing's new plays teased out cultural revelations to contemporary Taiwan whether the sources were classic or modern, Chinese or foreign and in this way, an especially Taiwanese angle of interpretation was launched.

Another example was *Exodus* (premiered in 1999), adapting the Moses story from the Old Testament. In the house program, the director linked Moses to the Taiwanese as sharing a common struggle to come to terms with their identity, a haunting concern for both. His adventure to Mount Sinai was a trip of home return, a search for his Hebrew roots. The longing for a lost homeland had resonance for Taiwan composed of immigrants who experienced dislocation from home. Beijing Opera was used to act out local cultural concerns that responded to the bigger social/political environment in Taiwan. Fu-Hsing's new plays showed that the modernisation of Beijing Opera shifted from aesthetic renovation to ideological

transformation through assimilating important cultural discourses in contemporary Taiwan like gender and identity. Wang An-qi (1999) indicated that Fu-Hsing's modern opera performances broke open the "enclosure and self-sufficiency" of Beijing Opera in order to reflect the cultural and social concerns of Taiwanese society. But, Taiwanese cultural codes juxtaposed with opera formulas produced the tension, which would become the main concern in Kuo-Kuang's project of nativisation where an essentially Taiwanese identity was attempted.

Beijing Opera has been transformed internally in relation to moral pedagogy and externally in terms of performance aesthetics in various phases of modernisation in Taiwan. There were differences between these modern opera performances but one coherent drive was to weaken the Chineseness of Beijing Opera through changing both its form and content. However, as Chineseness was tightly woven into all aspects of opera aesthetics, this task of renovation was highly problematic. Besides the differentiation at the forefront of presentation style, Beijing Opera was challenged on the plane of ideology in relation to the narrative structure and mode of interpretation. Fu-Hsing's new-play productions employed realist *mise-en-scene* and acting together with traditional acting and singing, making a framework that facilitated the processing of modern interpretation.

Fu-Hsing demonstrated how modern Taiwanese culture intervened in the ideology of the classic texts. Placed in the trajectory of modernisation examined above, Fu-Hsing shifted the modernisation focussed on aesthetic innovation to an ideology-oriented intervention of Taiwanese culture. This approach was more explicitly addressed in Kuo-Kuang's *The Taiwan Trilogy*. After becoming the only 'national' Beijing Opera troupe in Taiwan, Kuo-Kuang announced its main premise of 'nativisation' under which the trilogy was the first project. The premise of nativisation suggested that Beijing Opera in Taiwan had to establish a link to the present locality. How Taiwanese materials and cultural codes were integrated into the stylistic formulas of Beijing Opera presented a polemic of cultural difference.

Go and Nativise! *The Taiwan Trilogy*

Ma-Tzu (1998), *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan* (premiered in January 1999), and *Liao Tian-ding* (premiered in October 1999) are the serial titles of *The Taiwan Trilogy* by Kuo-Kuang. *Ma-Tzu*, recounts the story of an ordinary village girl elevated to the goddess of the seafaring safety who is regarded as an all important deity for the islanders living by the sea. Cheng Cheng-kung, a military general of the Ming Dynasty fought the invading Dutchmen in Taiwan. He symbolises another

type of protector figure for the Taiwanese. Unlike General Cheng, Liao Tian-ding exists only in folk legends. Nicknamed 'Taiwanese Robinhood', Liao invokes the image of a civil hero who defies the cruelty of Japanese colonisation. The Beijing Opera repertoire delineates historical figures of feudal China and this operatic imaginary never includes Taiwan within its map. Therefore, using Taiwanese historic figures as dramatic materials may displace the Chineseness embedded in Beijing Opera. The leading figures in this trilogy are chosen because first their life stories are familiar to the Taiwanese just like most Beijing Opera stories are to the Chinese. Secondly, they are highly respected for their devotion to protect Taiwan from foreign oppression or natural disasters. Their personal lives are closely integrated into the collective well-being of Taiwan. In different historical periods, they in common summon a sense of belonging among the Taiwanese.

Ma-Tzu was the most widespread secular belief in Taiwan. In addition, the Ma-Tzu legend has always been a popular subject for Gezaixi and Taiwanese-speaking soap opera where this deity has the established image of 'speaking' Taiwanese. To transfer this deity into the Mandarin-speaking Beijing Opera already transformed the public perception about this particularly 'Taiwanese' god. It seems natural that Chinese historical figures act through stylised formulas

and speak in Mandarin as the Beijing Opera tradition has it. But it would take time to get used to a Ma-Tzu, whose native tongue was Taiwanese, speaking in Beijing-accented Mandarin in *Ma-Tzu*. Legend has it that Ma-Tzu is transcended into a deity from a normal village girl born in the Fukien province in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Ma-Tzu was kind-natured with a strong filial piety; however, her uneventful life was devoted to loving and helping others and generally devoid of dramatic incidences which would inform a stage adaptation, thus the play had to “create something out of nothing” (Li Lian-ju 1998). However, both the director and playwright stressed that they wanted to foreground her humanness instead of producing a eulogy about the already deified Ma-Tzu. Local scholar, Lin Gu-fang (1999) suggested they re-phrase the title as “Prelude of Ma-Tzu,” a more appropriate description of this intended humane focus, as the title of *Ma-Tzu* would immediately incite the audience’s reverence for the most esteemed goddess in Taiwan. Despite the reverent title, her godly quality had such a strong presence in *Ma-Tzu* that it was criticised as encouraging religious superstition and mysticism (Chou Huey-ling 1998). I would argue, however, that this nativising production intends to promote a place-bound Taiwanese identity via portraying a harmonious Taiwanese community and a sanctified figure as its cohering force. Further, I argue

that this Taiwanese identity is hybrid as it is performed through opera aesthetics which invoke Chineseness. I now move to analyse how such a hybrid identity is narrated on the level of both dramaturgy and performance strategies.

Ma-Tzu began with the central figure's youth when she vowed to stay single and devote her life to helping others. The main body of the performance describes how she was endowed with magic powers purported to cure illness, and detail a particular incident when she saved the suffering villagers from an unfortunate flood which had resulted from the misjudgement of the county magistrate in trying to relieve the drought. In spite of managing to save many villagers, Ma-Tzu still lost her own family in the water. Distraught and sorrowful, she was then led to heaven by the Mercy Kuan Shih-Yin, a higher deity in Chinese religion. In this production, it was first suggested that Ma-Tzu inherited the bloodline of the deity, as proved in that she had the magic power to heal the sick. However, her magic disappeared when it came to saving her own family from drowning. The incoherent characterisation exposed the dilemma of whether to depict Ma-Tzu as a holy goddess or an ordinary human being (Ji Huey-ling 1998b). In terms of performance language, Ma-Tzu enjoyed a sacralised image saturated in the noble and grandiose atmosphere of the Mei school of performance (a distinguished style established by

Mei Lan-fang) that employed specific singing techniques. Some critics applauded the work for its authentic revival of the Mei school of performance. In this sense, *Ma-Tzu* followed strictly the Beijing Opera aesthetics, not only in the singing style and tune arrangements but also in the movement design and even the use of drumming as music accompaniment (Wang An-qi 1998b). The pretentious consecration of Ma-Tzu perhaps falls into the irrational and superstitious dimensions of religious belief. I suggest, however that the consecration be viewed as a political gesture to create a larger-than-life figure to counteract the historical heroes often portrayed in traditional Beijing Opera even though the consecration was delivered through the Beijing Opera formulas.

Although mainly performed in the traditional style, there were some references to contemporary Taiwanese culture in *Ma-Tzu*. The slides of houses and temples projected on the backstage screen were typical of the architectures in the southern coast of China, to which Taiwan geologically belonged. The slides meant to link Ma-Tzu's background with Taiwan. But these realist images that brought in a touch of Taiwaneseess were mere decorative, picturesque displays. What dominated was the Chineseness flowing in the singing in Beijing-accented Mandarin and acting in stylised gestures, both of a distinct Mei-school style.

Ma-Tzu was acted according to traditional opera aesthetics where symbolic costumes and make-up indicated a generic culture of no specific historic details and thus an all-time, all-place China was signified. The universal time and space was especially useful for characterising a transcendental figure of deity like *Ma-Tzu* whose costumes showed no historical specificity. Near the end when she ascended into the clouds, her light feather robe was foreign to the traditional costume design. Made of light material in pure white colour, this robe heightened the sublime atmosphere to match her ascendance into Heaven. *Ma-Tzu* was sanctified in an a-historical world. The symbolic significance of *Ma-Tzu*'s status as protector for the Taiwanese was undercut by her acting and singing style which was so defiantly Chinese.

I suggest that Beijing Opera formulas were essential to achieve the consecration of *Ma-Tzu*. But, I want to argue that there was an antagonistic tension between a sacralising narrative that sought to build a place-bound Taiwanese identity and the opera formulas that connoted distinct Chineseness. This production revealed the political intention of raising another totalising signifier of Taiwan to replace that of feudal China in the project of nativising Beijing Opera. But this ideological purpose would not be fulfilled by just using Taiwanese historical

figures as dramatic materials. It took more sophisticated penetration of Taiwanese culture than the simple insertion of slides of architecture typical to Taiwan. A more sophisticated penetration such as a more integrative use of cultural codes and substantial intervention into the Beijing Opera aesthetics was to come in the rest of the trilogy.

Among the leading characters in *The Taiwan Trilogy*, Cheng Cheng-kung is the only one officially acknowledged as a 'national' hero in the textbook of Taiwanese history. He reclaimed Taiwan from Dutch colonisation and was the first 'Chinese' official that cultivated the land in Taiwan. Cheng was originally a general of the Ming Dynasty, which was overthrown by the Manchus. Cheng thus retreated to Taiwan based on the belief that he could fight his way back, wrench the ruling power from the Manchurian Qing Dynasty (whom Cheng looked down on as a barbaric tribe from the north) and return it to the exiled Ming emperor (representing the Han race). This motivated Cheng's passion to construct Taiwan as a military base to retrieve China. However, it would be ironical to stress Cheng's identification with feudal China in this opera production which sought to achieve collective identification with Taiwan. Hence, this important political background was conveniently left out in *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan* where Cheng's defeat

of the oppressive Dutch colonisers and his project to turn Taiwan into a harmonious community was the main concern. Throughout the performance, the image of Cheng's arms raised high with an upward look and a revolutionary spirit appeared repeatedly to highlight his role as the saviour/guardian of the island.

I have argued that the trilogy aimed for a place-bound Taiwanese identity realised through a narrative that sacralised the heroic figures who represented the centralising force behind the Taiwanese community. *Ma-Tzu* elicited the force of religion, which in *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan*, was consolidated in the rebellious spirit against foreign intrusion. What was invoked here was ethnic solidarity. There was a simple dualistic contrast in the representation of good and evil in terms of characterisation. The Dutch oppressed the locals on one side and the aboriginal and Han people worked together under Cheng's spiritual leadership on the other. Cheng was portrayed as a perfect politician obeying high moral principles, as would be appropriate for a historical hero who cultivated Taiwan. The opening episode described the difficulty of Cheng's fleet landing in Taiwan without giving any information about this fleet's progress *en route*. This military action, though encountering some problems, finished like a miracle. As Cheng's ships steered near Taiwan, the crew suffered from food shortage and violent turbulence in the sea.

After Cheng prayed to God and explicated his resolution to save Taiwan from foreign oppression, the turbulence ceased and the tidal wave helped guide his ships ashore. This military landing, staged as such, was executed by God's will. This inaugurated the aura of holiness surrounding Cheng throughout the performance (Ji Huey-ling 1999a).

Defined as an 'epic opera', the narrative only covered the last three months in Cheng's life when he landed in Taiwan where he stayed to cultivate. Taiwan in his rule became prosperous and attracted many low-class poor people from coastal China. After the dramatic landing, the narrative delineated the Dutch invasion and Cheng's ruling policy. One Dutchman, Xiang-Yi rebelled against the idea of colonialism, betrayed his home country and married an aboriginal girl, Yi-Wa. The interaction between the Han people, aborigines and Cheng's army constituted the harmonious community in focus here. Dutch rulers were described as merciless killers of the oppressed Han and aboriginal people who presented a united front of resistance. But history records have quite a different version, indicating that the Dutch applied a rather lenient policy in colonial Taiwan while there was a division of habitation set up between the Han and aboriginal people (Ji Huey-ling 1999a). In addition to the intercultural marriage between the Dutch and aborigines, a black

slave defected the Dutch control, mingled and lived happily in the big international family, a unified community of Taiwan. The highly complicated historical issues of racial prejudice between the Han people (Cheng's soldiers) and the aborigines were not mentioned in this harmonious community where all different races were united under Cheng's rule. Cheng won the hearts of everybody including foreigners for his devotion to cultivating Taiwan. However, in the last episode, it showed that his death had more to do with his love for 'China' than 'Taiwan'. He was first shocked and became ill when he heard about his family's scandals—his son in China was reported to be having an affair with an older nanny, and he learnt that the Manchus had exhumed his ancestors' tombs. The final deadly stroke came when he learnt about the death of the exiled Ming emperor to whom he remained loyal all his life.

In terms of performance style, the opera formulas were applied in characterising the major characters like Cheng, his wife, and Prime Minister who fit in certain role types. The aesthetic polemics arose in delineating the minor characters especially those falling outside the Chinese parameter of role types such as the aborigines and Dutch people. The Dutch ruling class wearing blond wigs sang in the way of Western opera. But the Dutchman, Xiang-Yi acted and sang in the way of Beijing Opera, which I view as a gesture to express his affinity with the

Chinese/Taiwanese. The movement of the Dutch ruling class was naturalist, stiff and minimalist compared with the stylised movements of the Cheng and his multi-racial community. The black slave and the Dutchmen were coloured according to their racial features. The aborigines danced in ethnic clothes and sang to music of the real rituals except for Yi-Wa. She sang in Beijing-accented Mandarin accompanied by stylistic movements. Again, like Xiang-Yi who sang and acted differently from his Dutch countrymen, Yi-Wa's different acting style was necessary as both belonged to the unified Taiwanese community. Hence, this community led by Cheng was distinguished by a unified performance style. The Taiwanese community composed of the aboriginal, the Han people, one Dutchman, and one black as a unit presented acrobatic skills like the familiar scene of military demonstration in traditional Beijing Opera. This military demonstration highlighted the patriotic passion of this multi-racial Taiwanese community to fight away the coloniser.

After *Ma-Tzu* that was highly reminiscent of traditional Beijing Opera, *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan* was deemed as a work to "clean the shame" for Kuo Kuang in the words of its Acting Director (Ji Huey-ling 1998a). This unspecified "shame" referred to the overwhelming dominant and authentic aura of Beijing

Opera in *Ma-Tzu* whose Taiwanese-ness was not accentuated enough to meet the goal of nativisation, to construct an essentially Taiwanese identity. In amendment, Taiwanese cultural codes appeared in abundance in *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan*; for example, the use of Taiwanese folk tunes and the aboriginal ritual performed in ethnic music. However, the realist details of a multi-lingual Taiwan created an internal tension as this same community also had a unified performance style in opera formulas that invoked Chineseness. This contention of cultural difference jeopardised the homogenous constitution of the Taiwanese identity grounded in a community where everybody worked together regardless of racial/ cultural/ linguistic differences. Following *Ma-Tzu*, the nativisation of Beijing Opera in *Cheng Cheng-kung and Taiwan* was expressed through the delineation of a harmonious community under the leadership/ protection of a national hero. But, the construction of this collective identity as highly dependent on the Beijing Opera aesthetics was unsettled by Chineseness internal to the aesthetics. The stylistic formula was the dominant performance vocabulary, supplemented by some colloquial phrases and life-like gestures in the Taiwanese society. In relation to music, the traditional tunes of opera formed the main body of the performance although one particular Taiwanese folk tune was adapted and used as the thematic

song playing before the start of each episode or in the background to provide a local flavour. In between two different sets of cultural codes, the identity thus negotiated was hybrid and was neither purely Taiwanese nor Chinese.

Compared with the high profile of one goddess and one national hero, *Liao Tian-ding* ended *The Taiwan Trilogy* by the legend of an ordinary man from a lower social class. The sanctified image might outpace a low-class figure like Liao who unlike Cheng listed in historical textbooks, exists only in folklore as a self-righteous swordsman. The legend goes that he robs the rich to help the poor while the official (Japanese) records describe him as a sly hooligan who even dares to steal from the armoury. He has a good reputation as he steals for the good of the poor; he also represents the fighting spirit against colonial oppression. Regarding presenting such a folk hero, the director expressed his resistance to create another spiritual symbol for the Taiwanese as so obviously manifested in the other parts of the trilogy (Huang Li-ru 1999). However, I argue that a similar intention of consecrating a Taiwanese commoner could be detected in the characterisation of Liao Tian-ding although he was imaged as more of an ordinary man compared with the other awesome protagonists in the trilogy. Clearly, he was not a hero who had the military power of a general like Cheng to save Taiwan from Dutch rule. But

Liao was heroic in the sense that his life was endangered because of his actions to defend the oppressed Taiwanese.

Liao's image was half-hooligan and half-hero. His class character was expressed in his relaxed attitude about stealing from the rich Taiwanese gentry who made money by following Japanese instructions to exploit their fellow countrymen. Liao's thief image was ameliorated as every penny he stole was used to help the suffering Taiwanese. After killing one important Japanese officer, he was pursued by the Japanese authorities. As a master of disguise, he stayed safe on the run but he revealed his true identity twice in order to save the life of innocent Taiwanese from the Japanese. The dramatic narrative purposely focused on the love triangle of Liao, his Taiwanese lover and the Japanese officer. Such a 'love' focus might be the director's strategy to highlight the humane aspect of Liao Tian-ding, who in the public's wishful thinking exemplified invincible swordsmanship. Ji Huey-ling's review (1999b) suggested that this focus on the love affair was deliberately used to counteract the narrative of sacralisation previously established in the trilogy. However, this focus on Liao's private love life was not in coherence with the overall dramaturgy since from the beginning, Liao was thoroughly involved in public affairs, defying unjust deeds by the Japanese and devoted to helping the Taiwanese.

It was therefore strange to realise that in the final scene of Liao's death, though hinted mildly, he died not for the sake of Taiwan but for saving his lover's life from the revengeful Japanese officer. This offset Liao's previous patriotic image. His death was dealt with in a mythic way. He was seen jumping off the ridge but whether he died or not remained unclear. This would seem to be yet another gesture to disguise the immorality of a folk hero who could invoke a collective belonging of the Taiwanese.

The director stated that he did not create work with the purpose of 'nativising' Beijing Opera but instead wanted to value its innovation. In the rehearsals, applying methodologies from psychological realism, he asked the actors to move out of the fixed tones of speaking and stylised formulas in traditional opera and uncover the internal motive in each action of individual characters (Huang Li-ru 1999). This realistic acting was best illustrated in the role of A-Gou, Liao's apprentice. His performance style was dominantly realistic although his stylistic gestures were devised on the basis of the movement scores for the traditional role of monkey in Beijing Opera (Lin Gu-fang, Lin Her-yi 1999). The realist approach was also observed in the period costume, make-up and use of linguistic complexity. Liao used Taiwanese-accent Mandarin in conversations and Beijing-accented Mandarin

in singing but no Taiwanese, even though he was a native speaker. The Taiwanese gentry spoke Taiwanese-accented Mandarin; the Japanese officials spoke Beijing-accented Mandarin. The three roles in the love triangle had long singing sessions in Beijing-accented Mandarin to delineate their subtle mood changes. Compared with the rest of the trilogy, this production largely reduced the use of stylistic formulas.

The Taiwan Trilogy tackled the task of negotiating native materials that invoke Taiwanese-ness and stylised formulas of Chineseness. All three productions focused on delineating a holy persona, a national hero who cohered a place-bound Taiwanese identity whose construction however was destabilised by the opera formula employed as the main vocabulary of acting. This revealed the political intention of nativising Beijing Opera in Taiwan, reminiscent of the ideological power of Beijing Opera mobilised by the Nationalist regime for justifying a self-assigned role as the authentic representative of Chinese culture. Local theatre scholar, Chou Huey-ling (1998) worriedly disclosed this potential danger in this project of nativising Beijing Opera which she felt could develop another form of essentialist oppression. However, in *The Taiwan Trilogy* traditional Beijing Opera formulas were essential for the consecration of Taiwanese heroes. The conflicting

tensions between these formulas that connote Chineseness and the cultural codes indicative of Taiwanese-ness presents the core polemic that remains unresolved in nativising Beijing Opera in Taiwan. As local opera scholar Lin Her-yi (1999) commented, the due respect paid to the old tradition was the biggest barricade to the establishing of a new mode of Beijing Opera in Taiwan. Because of the incommensurable difference between Taiwanese culture and Beijing Opera formulas saturated with feudal Chinese culture, *The Taiwan Trilogy* though employing local materials as dramatic content, failed to secure an essentially Taiwanese identity. What the trilogy presented was a hybrid identity negotiated between Taiwanese-ness and Chineseness. Taiwanese identity as negotiated in these productions of modernisation and nativisation is not easily settled into a fixed form, or adhered to any single cultural origin. What emerges instead is a new sense of belonging, in the form of cultural hybridity where differences are constantly articulated and re-articulated.

Conclusion

Since the age of Qing Dynasty, Beijing Opera enjoyed the privilege of representing the national theatre and cultural tradition for the Chinese. Its canonical

status was maintained through a large and stable repertoire where morals and cultural values were transmitted. Its stylised formulas and their coded meanings were culturally specific, constituting a self-sufficient semiotics where feudal China was a totalising signifier. Thus, Beijing Opera and its implied national-cultural Chinese identity together with Gezaixi were involved in a competitive context with regard to representing the national theatre of Taiwan. I have suggested that Gezaixi assimilated Chinese influences in its maturity into an independent genre and Beijing Opera in Taiwan also undertook transformation to accommodate Taiwanese culture. During the canonisation of Beijing Opera, the construction of Taiwanese identity was based on Chineseness imagined in traditional Beijing Opera. Such an imposed Chinese identity on the Taiwanese was unsettled in the process of modernisation where the abstract space of Chineseness in Beijing Opera was gradually disintegrated.

Since the 1980s, traditional Beijing Opera was revamped in order to connect with contemporary Taiwan. Ya Ying applied modern theatrical effects but employed the stylistic formulas to accomplish the traditional goal of moral transmission. By a distant detour of Western classics, the Contemporary Legend Theatre encountered difficulties diluting Chineseness tightly woven into the

aesthetics of Beijing Opera. The traditional formulas were appropriated like the mixed use of role types but the connoted Chineseness of these formulas remained adamant in *Macbeth* by the Contemporary Legend Theatre. The adapted *Medea* moved away from the opera tradition to the extent that Chineseness was emptied out. *The Princess of Lolan* abandoned all the recognisably operatic features such as familiar tunes, accented Mandarin and shrill falsetto. The mélange of cultural codes of ethnic minorities in China, other Asian and Western cultures produced a culturally neutral landscape where the space of Chineseness was vacated, replaced by a multi-cultural imaginary grounded in nowhere—neither China nor Taiwan.

The intercultural productions by the Contemporary Legend ruptured the rigidity of fixed formulas and its employment of foreign cultural codes and realist mise-en-scene explored the possibility of a new performance genre, for which Taiwanese culture played no part. To use Beijing Opera as the performance language inevitably engaged its internal Chineseness as shown in *The Princess of Lolan*. How to negotiate both Chineseness and Taiwaneseness was investigated in the new-play productions by the National Fu-Hsing Chinese Opera Troupe. Fu-Hsing's new plays manipulated operatic formulas applied in the dramatic content which substantially transformed the moral value system in traditional opera.

This ideological intervention was made via a new mode of interpretation that reflected cultural discourses in contemporary Taiwan. Examining the above modernisation process, I suggest it shows the consistent negotiation between Chineseness and Taiwanese-ness in relation to constructing Taiwanese identity. This negotiation of cultural differences was most manifested in the project of nativising Beijing Opera by the Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe.

My analysis showed that the underlying political intention of nativisation was clearly indicated through the characterisation of a holy figure in *The Taiwan Trilogy*. The operatic practice of nativisation proved to be complicit with the identity politics in Taiwan. The trilogy produced an image of early Taiwan as a land of prosperity though suffered from natural hardship and foreign oppression. The three leading roles were cast in a certain type or mixed types and their performing style was discernibly operatic. These formulas were utilised to create the myth of a national hero. The characterisation and the dramatic narrative contributed to form an ideological entity, i.e. Taiwanese-ness but whose construction relied on the opera formulas connoting Chineseness.

The codes of Taiwanese culture were used in the trilogy, including aboriginal rituals, Taiwanese folk tunes and historical experience of Dutch and Japanese

colonisation. Some minor characters dressed in traditional opera costumes and make-up mixed the use of different dialectics (Taiwanese, Japanese, Dutch, aboriginal dialects and Mandarin) plus Beijing-accented Mandarin. Taiwanese folk tunes and colloquial expressions were used. These linguistic and multi-cultural differences revealed more of the diasporic quality of Taiwaneseess due to the history of immigration and colonisation.

This nativising project showed that Taiwaneseess is hardly homogenous in composition but constituted as a process of actively hybridising cultural differences Taiwan has been absorbing from its contacts with Chinese, Japanese and Western cultures. Although *The Taiwan Trilogy* raised the awareness of Taiwaneseess, yet it also illustrated the hybrid nature of Taiwanese identity. When Beijing Opera was modernised and nativised, jarring dissonance arose from the confrontations between different cultural elements. The modernisation attempted to absorb modern cultural sensibility and the project of nativisation aimed to claim the legitimacy of 'Beijing' Opera in 'Taiwan'. This chapter shows that the modern Beijing Opera continuously re-capitulates the value system that keeps changing from feudal China to modern Taiwan. Taiwanese identity is hybrid in nature in these above performances, mainly negotiated through a dialectical interaction

between Chineseness and Taiwanese-ness, two essentialist forces of cultural belonging.

The tension between these two forces continues to influence text-based theatre and its historical development. Investigating the narratives of home in text-based theatre, I will continue exploring the polemics of a fixed Taiwanese identity built on place-bound relations. The narratives of home in Taiwanese text-based theatre first seek to make a mythology of Taiwan and invoke nostalgia for a hometown fixed in a past. From operatic to text-based theatre, the life experience of the diasporic Taiwanese in the borderland registers a sense of dislocation, which destabilises the essentialist formulation of identity invoked in self-generating national space.

Endnotes

¹ Lolan and Da Yue (where Jason was from) were two tribes living outside the Western frontier of the Han Dynasty. Different from the agriculture-based Han-Chinese society, these two tribes were hunting people, moving around by seasons for the grass to feed their herds.

² Dunhunag, a rural town in Gansu Province in north-western China, gains its fame for the nearby Mongao cave filled with extensive and exquisite collections of Buddhist paintings and sculptures. It is an important site on the passage of Silk Road via which Indian Buddhism and Inner Asian cultures came to China.

³ Nuo-theatre is an ancient form of masked drama populated around south-western China like Sichuan and Gueizhou, normally enacted by priests as a means of exorcism.

Chapter Three

The Politics of Locating Taiwan: Narrating the Home-Nation

Introduction

In Chapter Two, the inherent Chineseness of Beijing Opera was explored and the processes of modernisation and nativisation which it underwent in order to adjust to Taiwanese culture were underlined. I have shown the process by which the appropriation of the theatrical tradition of Beijing Opera was accomplished, and how this appropriation affected the constitution of a hybrid Taiwanese identity. At first, the modernisation of Beijing Opera in Taiwan aimed at transforming the extent of Chineseness which was internalised through the performance formulas and the moralising messages. Thus, the rigid application of stylised formulas was loosened, and old plays gained new modern interpretations. However, although the self-sufficient semiotics of Beijing Opera was fissured, yet elements of Chineseness still pervaded. As the project of nativisation sought to construct Taiwanese-ness via Beijing Opera, it juxtaposed the stylised formulas with the elements of Taiwanese culture and produced a hybrid identity mediated in both Chineseness and Taiwanese-ness. Modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan presented the processing of cultural hybridity prescribing the Taiwanese identity constructed in contingency with Chinese heritage.

My thesis aims to explore the problematic nature of Taiwanese identity which, as I suggest is negotiated in a diasporic space where the essentialist construction of cultural origin, home/land and nation is unsettled. Chapter Three continues to map

diasporic space in the arena of hua-jiu, spoken drama or text-based theatre 'imported' from the West. The performance of spoken drama first seen in colonial Taiwan has developed into a major genre in contemporary Taiwanese theatre. In this 'modern' genre, I have observed particular instances of attempts at constructing an essentialist Taiwanese identity through narrating national space. Nevertheless, I will argue that such national space fails to address the diasporic reality in Taiwanese society as this totalising space subsumes infra-cultural differences with respect to ethnicity and class.

I will begin by presenting a historical investigation of text-based theatre in Taiwan, in order to illustrate its complicity with identity politics. The concept of text-based theatre—spoken drama—is elaborated in different constitutions of new-drama (shin-jiu) in the colonial period, and anti-Communist drama under the Nationalist regime, followed by the Little Theatre Movement in the 1980s. Both the Japanese and the Nationalist regime used spoken drama for delivering political propaganda of Japanese and Chinese nationalism. It was not until the Little Theatre Movement, that a native consciousness did arise to distinguish Taiwanese text-based theatre from its Western model. From the late 1980s onwards, more mappings of Taiwan emerged, most of which correspond to the socio-political changes. Under the Nationalist regime, the Taiwanese were taught to renounce Communist China and Taiwanese culture was regarded as a continuous part of Chinese culture. The situation changed in the 1970s when international politics denied the 'national' status of Taiwan, and thus ushered in a crisis of identity; as a result, in the 1980s, a distinct Taiwanese consciousness was called upon in order to cope with this crisis. Both *Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui* produced in

the late 1980 narrated a national space where Taiwanese identity was elaborated as based on a natural tie with the land and specified cultural origins. Taiwan was imaged as a self-generating Mother Nature figure and as a utopian hometown preserved in the past.

Mundane Orphan was inundated with private experiences of ordinary Taiwanese in different places and times. The performance began with, and ended in, the symbolic birth and re-birth of Taiwan; what lay in between was a realistic presentation of the actors' family stories. In these semi-autobiographical details, Taiwan was portrayed as a place of crime and corruption where ordinary people were significantly depicted as driven by greed and materialism. Redemption came in the form of a ritualistic ending where social problems and cultural differences that were previously delineated, disappeared into the homogeneous space of the home-nation, equated with nature which purified the decadent Taiwanese. However, the totality of this national space and its implied Taiwanese identity was fractured by the previous delineation of social upheaval and cultural diversity as a consequence of the history of colonisation and modernisation.

Little Town of Tamsui (adapted from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*) appropriated the example of an American town life into a Taiwanese context. The Wooster Group's version of *Our Town* showed Wilder's use of one New England town to substitute for all the other towns in America under the name of universal humanism as problematic. This American myth that Wilder advanced was attainable only at the price of internal difference and social justice since not all the town people were on the same footing regarding appreciating and affirming the noble value of life. In *Little Town of Tamsui*, the respect paid to life was transferred

to the cultural heritage of a hometown whose social stability was maintained by excluding the disadvantaged class. *Little Town of Tamsui* aimed for a collective identification with Tamsui, a perfect hometown whose identity was secured by the transmission of cultural customs and family values. This heritage Tamsui town was the symbolic hometown inciting nostalgia in all the Taiwanese as it signalled a shared good old past. Thus, it constituted a national space to ground a Taiwanese national identity. The realistic life details of this predominantly middle-class town were presented in accordance with the flow of cosmic time based on which a historical continuity was conceived. I would argue that *Little Town of Tamsui* misappropriated Wilder's universal humanism into Taiwanese cultural nationalism based on a specific identification with the past in Taiwan as represented by Tamsui. However, the alienation effect, produced by the omnipresent stage manager and Emily's return from death, undermined the uncritical formulation of historical continuity that was essential to the narration of national space in Tamsui.

Spoken drama: a contested site of cultural identity

Spoken drama was a foreign genre in origin, initially called 'new drama', in contrast to the 'old' sing-and-dance operatic tradition of both Chinese and Taiwanese theatres. The first new drama production in Taipei took place in the colonial period, and was presented by a Japanese group in 1911. This event inspired the later development of spoken drama in Taiwan (Lü Su-shang 1991). In 1921, a new drama company from Shanghai, the Min Xing Club was invited to perform in Taipei and was highly acclaimed. In its following tour around Taiwan, it incited general interest among the public. Local researchers (Lü Su-shang 1991, Ma Shen

1994, Qiou Kun-liang 1992, and Yang Du 1994) also registered the influence of the Spring Willow Society, an amateur new drama group organised by the Taiwanese students in Japan. This Society presented a show in Tokyo in 1919 and had frequent interactions with the new drama practitioners from China. Both China and Japan exercised influences in the beginning of spoken drama in Taiwan.

When new drama first became popular in Taiwan, it confronted the 'old' Taiwanese opera, Gezaixi (Qiou Kun-liang 1992 and Yang Du 1994). In colonial Taiwan when Japanese was the official language, Gezaixi still enjoyed huge popularity. However, it was marginalised and despised as vulgar entertainment by local intellectuals who regarded new drama, in the tradition of Western text-based theatre, as a genre possessing positivist connotations. Such differentiation had, in fact, a historical background. In the late 19th century, feudal China was defeated by Western Imperialism which, to many young Chinese intellectuals, was associated with modernisation, democracy and progress. The literary classes advocated abandoning classic Chinese writing and looking to the West for inspiration in order to achieve cultural renovation. Taiwan at that time was heavily influenced by the cultural climate in China where new drama was praised for its intellectual content of social reformation.

In the mid-1920s, some new drama productions overtly promoted social revolution in Taiwan. These productions were dubbed 'cultural drama', a term which generally delineated the dark side of colonial life and encouraged the liberating spirit against colonial oppression. Naturally, the Japanese were not pleased about the anti-imperialist messages in cultural drama. They set strict rules regarding renting theatre space, issuing actor licenses as well as imposing

ensorship on plays. The Japanese authority also organised theatre groups to tour Taiwan with propaganda plays which promoted Taiwanese loyalty to the Japanese emperor. In 1945 when the Nationalists moved to Taiwan; new drama then still used Taiwanese or Japanese as the performance language. Consequently in 1946, in order to dispel Japanese influence and resurrect Chinese culture, the Nationalist regime abolished the use of Japanese language and designated Mandarin as the official language. But, many Taiwanese only spoke Taiwanese and/or Japanese and most local writers could not write in Mandarin. Thus, theatre practitioners from China who were used to writing and acting in Mandarin dominated the stage. Most theatres in the 1940s and 1950s played anti-Communist drama to serve the ideology of the Nationalist regime. These plays advocated identification with China, which people in Taiwan would have to recover from the Communists.

Spoken drama in colonial Taiwan (adopting names like 'new drama' and 'cultural drama' in different social contexts) first received influence from the Japanese and Chinese theatre practitioners but had a different development (Ma Shen 1994, Qiou Kun-liang 1992). Besides the linguistic difference, Yang Du's research (1994) showed that the repertoire of Min Xing Club from China indicated its commercial intention in providing light entertainment. Meanwhile, the new drama groups in Taiwan adopted local folk legends and stressed themes such as the primacy of family values. In contrast, 'cultural drama' had a clearly political goal to advance "cultural development, conceptual enlightenment and social reformation" in colonial Taiwan. (Yang Du *ibid.*: 53) Cultural drama was first devised by overseas Taiwanese students in Japan and China who had been influenced by both Japanese anarchism and national determination which arose after the first World

War. Unfortunately however, cultural drama appealed only to a few Taiwanese as its focus was too political and its content too intellectual. As the Japanese tightened up their control, cultural drama gradually changed its focus and instead delineated plots which recounted individuals' lives and avoided sensitive socio-political issues. The transition from new drama, cultural drama to anti-Communist drama illustrated the fact that spoken drama, text-based theatre in Taiwan always played an important role in the construction of national cultural identity. The thematic concerns shifted from anti-colonisation under Japanese rule to cultural identification with China in the Nationalist regime.

After the Japanese colonisation, plays written in the 1940s and 1950s were mostly adapted from Chinese historical drama and carried propaganda of anti-Communism. There were relatively few plays that portrayed the reality of life in Taiwan. During the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan's politics and economic outlook were largely influenced by America. In addition, Western aesthetics and literary trends were being introduced through the media especially in art magazines. Some of the most popular literary figures included Ibsen, Chekov, Kafka, and Sartre among others, and major Taiwanese playwrights emulated these so-called 'Western masters' by replicating their themes and writing styles (Ma Shen 1994). American influence was prevalent in the Little Theatre Movement in the 1980s, as theatre practitioners, who had learnt training methodology and acting techniques in the US, brought their newly acquired knowledge to Taiwan. Despite their Western background, they deemed it necessary to establish a modern theatre unique to Taiwan and appropriating Chinese symbols was a significant approach in shaping such a modern theatre (Wu Jing-ji 1984). The Lan-ling Ensemble was the first

text-based theatre that successfully combined classic Chinese texts, operatic formulas, modern theatre technology and aesthetics. The result of combining 'east' and 'West' was *The New Match for Her-zu* (premiered in 1979), a monumental work the success of which encouraged the emergence of more experimental theatres (Chung Ming-der 1999).

According to the four-page section about the theatre in Taiwan in *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (James Brandon 1993: 230-233), *The New Match for Her-zu* comprises a "free adaptation" of Beijing Opera formulas which are used "in hilarious, tongue-in-cheek fashion." I would suggest this particular work and its appropriation of operatic conventions illustrated that in the early phase of the Little Theatre Movement, Chineseness was strategically deployed to fortify an 'Oriental' front that distinguished Taiwan's modern theatre from its original Western model. However, from 1985 onwards, Chinese heritage such as the authoritarian Confucianism undertook a critical evaluation in the experimental works. Also, there were productions that reconsidered Taiwan's colonial history with a subaltern focus and modern urban life and social issues were used as dramatic materials (Chung Ming-der 1999). Overall, the importance of the Little Theatre Movement was manifest in locating the subjectivity of Taiwanese theatre, for it marked the separation from the new drama which developed differently in China, where both content and form of the new drama were largely designed to populate the ideology of Communism (Chung Ming-der 1999, Ma Shen 1994).

The above historical investigation demonstrates that Taiwanese text-based theatre is a contested site of continuous negotiation of Taiwanese identity in different socio-political environments. This historical overview will serve as a

starting point as I outline the narratives of home in contemporary text-based theatre. I will be analysing two theatre productions, *Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui*, which attempted to build a place-bound and non-mediated Taiwanese identity. The principal argument in this thesis is that Taiwanese identity is contested against the grain of essentialist national space where identity is forged through the pre-ordained organic link between land and people. Both productions under investigation depicted the everyday life of the Taiwanese, and sought to forge an abstract national space of the diversified multi-ethnic Taiwanese community and consequently invoke a totalising national identity. This ideal home and its conflation into nation was located either in transcendental nature or in an invariable past. Taiwan was imaged as a self-generating national space in *Mundane Orphan*, and in *Little Town of Tamsui*, nostalgia was incited towards a hometown in the past where identity was formed around traditional values and cultural customs. However, this national space and the attendant essentialist Taiwanese identity was disentangled by the internal differences marked by class and ethnicity existent in the same site of Taiwan.

The home-nation, where the people split

Mundane Orphan premiered in 1987, an important year in Taiwanese history when the 38-year Martial Law was lifted. Media censorship was renounced too, and society was permeated with a relatively liberating atmosphere. The political atmosphere had already started changing since the 1970s. After Taiwan lost the UN seat (replaced by Communist China) in 1971, the 'Chinese' 'national' status that the Nationalist regime had advocated was disclaimed. Also, Japan and America ceased

their diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1972 and 1978. Under such political circumstances, a Taiwan-oriented consciousness was developed in the grass-roots literature movement and this Han-Taiwanese consciousness was being displaced from the 1980s by a more comprehensive formulation of native consciousness that acknowledged multi-ethnic differences within the Taiwanese society (You Sheng-guan 1997). This multi-ethnic perspective was also reflected in *Mundane Orphan*, the theatrical reconstruction of Taiwanese history. This play endeavoured to describe that various cultures and races in Taiwan fostered a unified identification with the land. This invocation of a place-bound Taiwanese identity might explain why this play was commissioned by the National Theatre for a revival, five years after its premiere. My performance analysis is based on the published play of this particular 'national' version.

At the rehearsals, the director, Wang Qi-mei asked the actors to research their family history and improvise on personal stories. According to Wang, *Mundane Orphan* offered "a portrait of Taiwanese families", and hoped to "delineate life and emotions of people outside the political and economic system" (Wang Qi-mei 1993). This production with such a 'personal' focus had a politically charged metaphorical title, designating the orphaned status of the Taiwanese as a direct consequence of colonisation. This title implied the longing of the orphaned Taiwanese for a home to which they would grow attached. I argue that this production, in combining personal stories, historical facts, social events and folk legends, sought to grant the Taiwanese a home to ground a place-bound identity. Home in this context was confined to Taiwan by geography. I further argue that this home was conflated into a national space where the internal conflicts were

homogenised in an attempt to forge an essentialist national identity via the organic link with the land.

Mundane Orphan had an epic scale, narrating the geological evolution, the colonial history as well as the process of social modernisation in Taiwan. Specific performance strategies were utilised in order to cover such an enormous scope of natural and social history. The actors played multiple roles, but their main role was as members of an anonymous mass. There was a deliberate distinction in terms of the narrative structure and the acting style between reporting on history and telling family stories. Historical events were read like news, in alienation, while private life details were acted in the realistic style. Of the twenty episodes, the first nine consisted of listed events without a coherent dramatic line although they were all centred to show how Taiwan came into the present shape geographically, politically, and culturally. Taiwan, according to this account, was conceived as a gift of nature, an island rising out of the sea as a result of spectacular movements of land plates. Born of nature, Taiwan was depicted as developing in a grandiose scale. Then, along with the presence of the aboriginal tribes and the Han-Chinese immigrants, various cultures flourished. Taiwanese history was briefed by the change of regime from feudal China, colonial Japan to the Nationalist regime. The oppressive life in the colonial period and the social problems of modernisation were delineated. Taiwan started as a multi-ethnic community living in harmony with nature but became a fallen state devastated by crimes. This sinful island was eventually cleansed by the healing hand of nature.

The speechless Episode One presented the original ethnoscape of Taiwan. The aborigines, the first group of inhabitants, appeared in ritual movements

accompanied by ethnic music. Episode Two introduced Confucianism and the culture of Han-Chinese immigrants including the Hakka people. Children in small groups were reciting *The Analects* and other classic Chinese literatures in Mandarin as well as in the dialects of Taiwanese and Hakka, illustrating the linguistic variety in Taiwan. In the third episode, based on a modern poem about Taiwan's geography, the actors took turns reading out poetic lines describing the evolution of Taiwan from nothingness into a land of rich resources. Seeds were spread around and a self-sufficient food chain was completed. The constituents of nature worked as a harmonious whole. But as a consequence of industrialisation, nature was exploited and the harmony between people and land and nature was broken. The poem ended on a note that questioned the future of this island that was once blessed with beautiful sunshine.

Politics dominated the next six episodes (four to nine) where Taiwan changed from a province of China to a Japanese colony. Episode Four briefly described Chinese migration into Taiwan since feudal China, and the colonial occupation by the Dutch in the 17th century. These short episodes each contained a list of historical events, simplified as a memo list. But emotions and feelings of the Taiwanese in response to different socio-political changes were expressed through hand gestures and music effects. The instruments of ethnic music like gongs and cymbals produced the tense atmosphere when mentioning the Western invasion into China. The fifth episode stretched the historical scope from the local to the global via a quick read-through of important events in the late 18th century such as the invention of the telephone and the end of the American Civil War. This episode finished with a mention of the 'Treaty of Shimonoseki'¹ by which Taiwan was ceded to Japan.

The sixth episode returned to local history and enumerated dates of key revolts against Japanese colonisation, whilst the seventh shifted to a Western context, as it marked influential events in European cultural history, such as the publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Sigmund Freud's "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" (1916). This interplay of Western and local history was intended to contextualise Taiwan in world history, but despite this objective, the shift was disorientating as the relevance of these Western events to Taiwan was not pursued.

In these episodes above, major anti-Japanese battles in Taiwan were recounted in an alienating acting style, sporadically glittered with some hand gestures to imply emotional turmoil. One example occurred upon the mention of the Treaty of Shimonoseki which impels the actors to cover their faces as an expression of humiliation. Wang aimed to portray the cultural and social aspects of Taiwan through each individual's life experience as a member of family and community. The theatrical space was reserved for private family stories. However, the scope of Taiwanese history as the important background of these stories was so huge that half of the total twenty episodes was dedicated to it. It was not until Episode Ten that the narrative changed to personal and family life during Japanese colonisation. From Episodes Ten to Seventeen, the narrative structure changed and the scenes were longer, involving more developed dialogues and depicting characters in a relatively consistent manner. The acting also changed from the deliberate alienation in historical reports to the realistic portrayal of domestic life. I interpret this change of narrative structure and acting style as expressing the 'political' intention of this production in seeking to construct an essentially Taiwanese identity invoked particularly in the colonial past.

Episode Ten focused on how Taiwanese culture survived oppressive colonialism, and illustrated a strong life force of the Taiwanese. This force was explicitly expressed through the partial re-enaction of a 'real' new drama piece, *The Castrated Rooster*, staged in 1943 during Japanese colonisation (Yang Du 1994). In *The Castrated Rooster*, the Taiwanese characters worked diligently to improve their life of suffering under colonialism. Using only Taiwanese folk tunes, this production, though originally performed in Japanese, was received with excitement by locals; however, it was banned by Japanese authority after its premiere (Qiou Kun-liang 1992: 336). In this Episode, this new drama piece performed in Taiwanese also played the 'real' black-out accident in the premiere in 1943, when the audiences raised their torches to give lighting so the show could finish. Furthermore, Episode Ten delineated the manner in which traditional folk theatres, such as the puppet theatre, coped with the cultural oppression as the Japanese prohibited the performances of folk theatres. For example, one puppet master who began a performance in Taiwanese immediately switched to Japanese once the Japanese policemen were in sight. This episode illustrated a Taiwanese identity was cohered by the common experience of colonial oppression.

Whilst in Episode Ten, the actors 'played' the roles of the oppressed Taiwanese in colonial time, in the next episode, they changed to first-person narration in recounting their family's past. Episode Eleven invoked personal remembrances of tales about their parents or grandparents—whose ethnic backgrounds varied from aboriginal to Han-Chinese—and outlined the struggles the old generation suffered in establishing various businesses in order to support their families. Episode Twelve further reinforced this family tie via the symbolic

ritual of sweeping the ancestor's tomb, a Han-Chinese ritual which would be perpetuated by later generations. The family tie was solidified through enacting this annual ritual. The pre-given natal identity based on consanguinity was differentiated from the Taiwanese cultural identity invoked collectively in the colonial past. Episodes Thirteen and Fourteen focused on the construction of a Taiwanese collectivity in modern time. Different families adapted to the changes from agricultural to industrial society, contributing to Taiwan's economic prosperity through hardwork. These families ran corner shops, butcheries, chemical factories as well as continuing to be involved in farming etc. Here, a good variety of modest businesses were shown as essential to the creation of national economy in Taiwan. These episodes emphasised the hardships these families had to endure in order to sustain themselves and hence formulate a home-bound identity. However, there were substantial experiential differences between these families, which would constitute polemics in the evocation of a totalising Taiwanese identity.

In Episode Fifteen, the family was situated in the larger community where a vivid act of Gezaixi was played in the open space of a village. Out of their individual homes, the actors played the roles of anonymous Taiwanese who had a shared enthusiasm about Gezaixi, the folk theatre that lost its public charm and was replaced by commercialised popular entertainment. This episode finished by delineating the decline of folk culture in modern Taiwan. The next two episodes described the changes brought about by social modernisation, and how these changes devastated the happy families that thrived economically and culturally in previous episodes. Taiwan fell into a place of greed and corruption. The Taiwanese had exhausted all means to make money and many became addicted to the lottery.

However, amid the agitating crowd that was divining the winning lottery number, a girl appeared aloof to all the fuss about money. In flat tones, she recounted the story of the kidnap of her ten-year-old brother which ended on a poignant and pessimistic note as she announced: "The ransom was paid... he got killed nevertheless!" (Wang Qi-mei 1993: 155). The kidnap of this little boy inserted in this money-chasing episode implied that he was a victim to the mad pursuit of materialism which swept over Taiwan. His death seemingly accused Taiwan of becoming a capitalist state of cruelty where money was valued higher than human life.

The next episode sought in vain for the redemption of a morally debased Taiwan. The tiger-killing hero in folk legend, Zhou-chu was invoked, and was embodied on stage by an idealistic young man, dressed in the typical Taiwanese student uniform. Zhou-chu, the character asked about the fierce animals which, according to legend, harm the innocent villagers and which he intends to kill. The speech and mannerism of the actors who played the roles of animals resembled in action and language those of the gangsters in modern Taiwan. However, unlike the legendary hero who succeeds in killing the tiger, the idealistic student Zhou-chu realised his inability to rid Taiwan of its modern-day devils and ran away in madness. Thus, the recourse to a fictional heroic figure proved futile to save present Taiwan whose future was discussed in Episode Nineteen where the actors talked about their family plans for the future. They had split opinions; some were attached to the land and others opted for emigration. The negative connotation of emigration as much as it dismissed Taiwan as a home was compensated by some who wished to stay put and follow the tomb-sweeping custom.

The finale started with a father figure growing trees alone on the stage. He was

revealed to be the father of the above-mentioned kidnapped boy. The act of tree-growing connoted the genesis of life, a symbolic gesture of resurrecting the despondent island which he lost his son to. While the bereaved father counted the trees he was growing, the remaining actors reported the socio-political events that happened when the boy's 'real' father planted trees around Taiwan. They then joined him and enacted the planting of trees, described as blooming and bearing fruits, one after the other. The metaphor of tree as a life-giving force was further conflated into that of a life-protecting nation. One actress explicitly spelt out, "The umbrella-shaped shade of the big green tree covers the Atayal clan, the Bunun clan, the Han..."² (Wang Qi-mei 1993: 186). Tree growing was not simply a gesture seeking reconciliation with nature but also signified the protection of the nation, Taiwan. Here, a personal tragedy was given political significance and the fatherly love was equated to the love of nature-nation where different races were united. This 'national' father continued sowing seeds all over the stage; his action symbolically coerced the Taiwanese into a harmonious whole. The symbolic unification was reinforced aurally and visually as they started singing a Taiwanese folk tune repeatedly. The lyrics were as follows: "If you open your heart, a home is there and you will see the people you love and a dream of youth". The song was sung devoutly, accompanied with synchronous and repeated actions of tree-growing. Meanwhile, the stage platforms were re-arranged to suggest a new order. Then, sign language was added for visual effects as the lines "If you open your heart, you can see the colourful sunshine in spring, your beloved and the homeland that is lost. Home is no longer beyond reach but tangible in your heart" were sung. Subsequently, everybody put on white gloves in a gesture that not only accentuated

the sign language but also produced a holy atmosphere of purification. Finally, all the actors turned to look at the image of trees projected on the backdrop, paying the highest homage to the land in Taiwan.

In *Mundane Orphan*, the constructed nature of this theatrical narration of the home-nation and the Taiwanese national identity was revealed from the very beginning. Upon entering the theatre, the audience was exposed to backstage mechanisms like the lighting stands, whilst props and various elements of the set were scattered around. The audience first witnessed the actors on stage making preparations and heard the stage manager giving the cue “Three minutes before the national anthem”³, after which the ‘actual’ performance began. These alienating strategies highlighted the theatrical illusion, and disrupted the stability of any identity constructed out of the slice-of-life presentation of the actors’ family stories. Furthermore, these alienating devices indicated the artificial and pre-determined temporality of theatre performance and such calculated theatrical temporality jeopardised the ‘naturalness’ of the cyclical time invoked in the ritualistic finale that elevated Taiwan into Mother Nature. The signification of the self-generating nation-Taiwan was disrupted theatrically.

Not only the national space encountered its limit in terms of theatricality but the actors posing as the unified people of the nation were also divided. The actors changed roles in different episodes. Sometimes, they told their own family stories or listened in the background, using gestures to visualise others’ stories which they overheard. They also played stagehands, moving props around. Although they had a specific role as different individuals in the family stories, their biggest part was as one of the ordinary Taiwanese. Such was their role for the nine episodes in the first

half when they read out the historical events in a distant manner. This role marked them as the passive subjects of a unified national history. In contrast, they changed to be the active social agents of history when telling their own family stories. They also moved out of their personal stories addressing the audience as if they were part of them. They took on and shifted between different subject positions in various times and places in this production. Hence, the national space of Taiwan in its theatrical representation was fractured as the notion of unified people of the nation was split between “the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy” and “the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification” in the act of telling family stories (Bhabha 1990a: 297). The national space would not sustain since the people invoked under the name of nation are not a homogeneous whole.

Acknowledging Wang’s work in undertaking the task of constructing the Taiwanese history, local scholar Liu Ji-hui (1997) criticised the monological performance strategy employed to consecrate Taiwan in the making of a collective identity. Taking her criticism further, I suggest that this monological strategy reinforced the imagination of a national space by an enforced elevation of Taiwan to equal Mother Nature. This granted Taiwan a transcendental status of nature, which started and ended these episodes exploring the socio-cultural dynamics in multi-ethnic Taiwanese society. The link between home-nation and nature was imposed as arbitrary to facilitate the abstraction of many lived and different times and places into a homogenous national space. From colonial Taiwan to modern Taipei, many places in both private and public arenas were evoked and the cultural differences produced in these places were presented. This internal differentiation remained and obstructed the integrity of national space forged via the central

allegorical narrative of a holy home in equation to eternal nature. The juxtaposition of the places that accommodated the ethnic minorities—like the Hakka and the aborigines—though it highlighted the image of a melting pot, nevertheless also illustrated cultural differences which fractured the homogeneity of the totalising space of nature, home and nation.

Dedicating this work to “our family, relatives, brothers and sisters who grow up on this land”, the director expressed a strong identification with Taiwan (Wang Qi-mei 1993: 11). In one way, she tried to give the orphaned Taiwanese a solid self-identity tied to a permanent home, the motherland. In another, she hoped to change the domination of Han-Chineseness in the cultural discourse of Taiwanese history as such Chineseness could easily be subsumed under the Han-Chinese nationalism and one-race identity advocated by China under which the cultural differences of Taiwanese history would be overlooked. Wang wanted to replace this monolithic Han-Chineseness with a multi-ethnic subjectivity (Liu Ji-hui 1997). Regretfully, *Mundane Orphan* showed the replacement of one essentialist form of identity by another. The Taiwanese community was presented as one that contained various languages and different cultural customs, yet which were compressed into a national space that was undistinguished from eternal nature as forcefully staged in the ending. This national space was contained in a genealogy of home in Taiwan narrated in linearity from birth, decadence, death, to resurrection. Except for the decadence substantiated with realistic details, the rest was conveyed through the allegorical exchange—such as the plot detailing the little boy’s death and his symbolic rebirth through the act of tree growing. A place-bound Taiwanese national identity was attempted in this genealogy but such identity was grounded nowhere

but in the a-historical space of nature.

Mundane Orphan tried to advance a national space but I suggest that it paradoxically illustrated the impossibility of achieving a unified nationhood in Taiwan, a multi-ethnic society that was internally fissured. In reflecting such heterogeneous sociality, various languages such as the aboriginal dialect, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Hakka, English and Japanese were used. This differential linguistic reality in Taiwan corresponded to the diasporic experiences of migration, colonisation and modernisation. Many peoples, places, languages, cultures were recalled in various socio-political contexts where the internal differences in Taiwan were produced, even though these peoples and cultures occupied the same geographical place. These differences tended to be suppressed by the singular homogeneous formulation of an ideal home-nation. But, during the narrating process of national space, these differences between the Taiwanese were brought out and disrupted the totality of this space. *Mundane Orphan* therefore exposed the problematic construction of totalising national space and homogenous identity in the Taiwanese context. In *Little Town of Tamsui*, a similar national narrative was observed and revealed the temporal polemic of a national past.

Our town in a 'universal' 'national' past

Since its first performance in 1989, *Little Town of Tamsui* by the Godot Theatre Company won huge popularity and was re-staged in 1993, 1996 and 1999. The production of 1993 was the Godot's first entry into the National Theatre. Under the support of Taiwan's highest cultural authority, the Council for Cultural Affairs, *Little Town of Tamsui* toured many Taiwanese towns as well as Vancouver. *Little*

Town of Tamsui mapped the typical Taiwanese town of Tamsui in the pre-industrial period, invoking the nostalgia for a good old past. Local novelist, Ah-sheng (1996) declared that “the continuous flow of dense and heartfelt emotions” in Tamsui could be captured in every other town of Taiwan. Tamsui became a quintessentially Taiwanese town whose life details were generalised to represent all other towns in Taiwan. I would argue that *Little Town of Tamsui* sought to construct a place-bound Taiwanese identity via framing Tamsui as a utopian hometown, a centre of belonging. *Mundane Orphan*, in attempting for a similarly essentialist identity, illustrated ruptures in the narration of national space. Focussing on portraying small-town life instead of the whole Taiwanese society, *Little Town of Tamsui* presented another configuration of national space in particular relation to time. Tamsui was constructed as a heritage town where a collective identity was built into the transmission of local culture. Yet, the transcendental identity invoked in a national past was hard to maintain in the present. This play adapted from *Our Town* which is designed to elicit a universal truth about life, kept the alienating strategies in the original play. And these strategies problematised the linear temporality required to ensure that a national past and its identity continue in the present and extend into the future. Tamsui, a symbolic hometown for all the Taiwanese had the identity bound to a specific time and place. This essentialist identity failed to carry into the present, as its construction was only valid in the empty time of the home-nation wrought in the fictional pastness of theatrical experience.

Our Town is an influential American play whose contemporary significance is still strongly felt. Asserting that *Our Town* is played almost every night in the Western world, Malcolm Cowley (1996) suggests that the audience everywhere can

associate with the life in Grover's Corners with their own due to its 'non-local colour'. Therefore, our town can be your town, too or anybody's town. *Our Town* tells of how people map their lived space and position themselves in the community. The identity of the town people is mediated through the social as well as the natural landscape that provides them with a sense of location. Places such as mountains, lakes and the cemetery and church appear in conversations as points of reference. Both nature and culture help fix the town in place. The repeated mention of milk and newspaper deliveries and the patrolling Constable as well as the symbolism in the piece of advice Dr. Gibbs gives to his son suggest a community is in order and everybody is securely positioned whereas routines and cultural customs are observed.

Act One is a practical scene of daily routines which, nevertheless ends on a spiritual note lifting Grover's Corners off the ground and placing it in "the Mind of God". Here, Wilder drops his first hint about the universal truth lying behind the surface of life. The inner beauty of life that can be found in love and nature unifies individual differences. Love serves the foundation of marriage, family and community; nature is embodied in seemingly insignificant things that people take for granted and tend to ignore. By the principle of love and beauty, there are hardly any scenes of confrontation. The individual suffering of the drunkard is cunningly brushed over. Time proceeds at its 'natural' pace. Serene nature and stable social order dominates the town life until death strikes in the last act. In the cemetery, the dead Emily and her memory is transported back to the past. She is arranged to re-live her life but suffers from living with a knowledge of the future and with an inability to intervene in the blind folly of her beloved family. For Wilder, this is the

moment for 'something eternal', something which is only revealed through the horrible encounter with death. The 'something eternal' belongs to the "the realm of idea and type and universal" where Wilder believes theatre has the power to bring us to (1965: 11). Based on this notion of universality, life in Grover's Corners is assumed to happen at all times and in all places.

The cliché of a New Hampshire town life and its socio-historic specificity is invoked to illustrate the universal application of humanism. Grover's Corners for Wilder exists in a void of time and place but his sentimental invocation of a self-contained town appears to many a highly explicit picture of American life. Though delineating a typical town life that easily incites the audience's identification, Wilder arranges the role of stage manager to mark the distinction between reality and theatre. Beginning as well as ending the play, his omniscient presence co-ordinates the dramatic narrative used to illustrate the universal truth. His role is more distancing than involving; his presence is most prominent when he reflects on such abstract ideas as nature and death. Throughout the play, he cuts in the linear narrative to instil his thoughts about life. Such deliberate interventions obstruct the naturalist flow in an American town life beaded through birth, love and death; these are strategies that prevent the audience's total absorption into the melodrama in Grover's Corners since audience absorption is the least that Wilder wants.

The stage manager keeps moving forward the dramatic time in a small town life until the second act when he rewinds time to the before-marriage scene of love. His manipulation of time is more surreal when he makes the dead Emily revive in her past. However, seemingly in contradiction, he also demonstrates the cosmic

force of linear time, stressing the time order of the past giving way to the present and the future. He starts and stops the clicking time in Grover's Corners. In the end, he narrates the coming of another day when the daily routines will start running as usual. In between the start and the end, he (or Wilder) orchestrates the perception of the dramatic time. Framed in this purposely constructed temporality, Grover's Corners becomes 'a literary conceit' (C.W.E. Bigsby 1982). But meanwhile, just as Wilder's characters are archetypal of the great number, they carry such familiar village folksiness, which invites the audience's sympathy. There is too big a gap between the down-to-earth stereotypes and the transcendental universal truth that Wilder wants to deliver through them. Francis Fergusson argues that Wilder's universal humanism is not "incarnate in the characters and the language" which constitute the "actual texture" of *Our Town* (1996: 66). His timeless ideas without a historical dimension appear grounded in nowhere. Thus, in trying to deliver a transcendental utopia beyond our mundane trivialities, *Our Town* ironically shows its lack and thus presents a dystopia.

Moreover, the substance that constitutes life in Grover's Corners is hardly universal but is informed by the ideology of class, race, and gender as was critically examined in the Wooster Group's adaptation, *Route 1 & 9*, which anatomised this American myth and its middle-class white Protestant values (Arnold Aronson 2000, Nick Kaye 1994, David Savran 1986). *Our Town* searches for the spiritual relevance in everyday life, which in *Route 1 & 9* was a contested site of cultural politics where the boundaries between life and death, black and white, man and woman were consciously blurred. The universal truth in *Our Town* was replaced in *Route 1 & 9* by the incisive understanding that there was no transcendental subject

or pre-given identity as both were socially and discursively constructed and hence also susceptible to de/re/construction. The Taiwanese version, *Little Town of Tamsui* engaged with this problematic identity with respect to a home-nation endowed with cultural origin and historical continuity. I argue that *Little Town of Tamsui* attempted to produce a place-bound Taiwanese identity by framing Tamsui as a self-contained hometown that incited nostalgia for a national past where identity was built on oppressing the internal differences. Wilder's universal humanism applied to all times and places was misappropriated as 'universal' nationalism invoked as the binding force of a typical Taiwanese town and its cultural identity. In this universal framework, the home-bound Tamsui identity was constructed in a national past void of historical momentum. Also, this national past failed to endure through the universal force of nature, i.e. the linear cosmic time that brought in death, which put an end to the culture formed in the past. This finished state of a national past was further exemplified in the theatrical present made manifest through the role of stage manager.

In *Little Town of Tamsui*, Wilder's town was compressed into a tiny and tidy unit of two core families and their carefree life had a more dominant presence than the original. The number of roles was selectively reduced. The social network in Tamsui became smaller and thus inter-personal interaction less. Only one sentence was mentioned about the paper-delivery boy, Joe Crowell, but no conversation engaged him like in the original, not to mention the universal force that caused his unfortunate death. The undertaker (Sam Craig) was deleted and Emily's cousin (Joe Stoddard) who left the small town for better career development and returned for her funeral from the east disappeared, too. This was probably because this cousin

elicited an alienating force that might distract the communal belonging to Tamsui that this production sought to incite. The minimised representation of town people was all stuck to fixed social positions. The milk-delivery routine was omitted.

Although this omission was justifiable, as milk was not essential for Taiwanese diet, yet I suggest that viewed in combination with the deletion of the newspaper boy and the undertaker, this role cut was meant to abolish the presence of the working class that the representation of an idyllic middle-class town could do without. In addition, the Constable was replaced by the chief of the neighbourhood committee. The Constable's patrol reduces the public threat such as that posed by the drunken choirmaster. Besides helping keep the town in order, the chief of the neighbourhood committee had another more important function of lecturing on local culture and customs which he was familiar with as a well-respected senior member of the community. Life in Tamsui was narrowed down to the interaction between the chief, two families and the drunkard's presence remained brief as in the original. In this much smaller social circle, the two middle-class families enjoyed more dominance.

Mr. Webb and Dr. Gibbs kept their jobs as newspaper editor and doctor in Tamsui and their families were well protected from the marginal class like the drunken choirmaster. This social outcast is left uncared for as he simply, in Dr. Gibbs' words, "ain't made for small-town life." (Wilder 1965: 45) The cynical comments of this unhappy character in the cemetery scene suggest that he remains one who does not appreciate life even after death. With a fairly limited presence, this character faced more problems to settle in Tamsui as home. He was cast as a Nationalist veteran who fought the Chinese Civil War and withdrew to Taiwan in the 1940s. Separated from his hometown in China, he was a loner. This might

explain his heavy drinking and habit of wandering on the street, which made him a menace to public order. The destructive force of this marginalised class was carefully withheld so as to maintain the stability of the ideal hometown. Also, there was no room to elaborate his affiliation with China in the portrayal of a typically Taiwanese town.

This minute yet incisive alienation of the Mainlander from the home in Taiwan was purposely downplayed. And the cultural contention between the native Taiwanese and the Mainlanders was also brushed over in the two core families, whose accents in speaking Mandarin revealed their different backgrounds. The Gibbs carried a Mainlander accent and the Webbs had a Taiwanese one. When Mrs. Gibbs expressed her wish to travel to somewhere far from Tamsui like Japan where you 'do not listen, talk and even think in Mandarin'. Mrs. Webb's responded, 'Well, just speak Taiwanese' since for her, a Taiwanese native there was a clear cultural distinction between Taiwanese and Mandarin. Mrs. Gibbs disagreed. She was among those Chinese immigrants who just arrived with the Nationalists in the 1940s. In the 50s when the Nationalist regime advocated that people in Taiwan be identified with China, Mrs. Gibbs would have difficulties in distinguishing the native Taiwanese culture from her home culture in China.

As suggested earlier, *Little Town of Tamsui* was devoted to creating a distinct Taiwanese cultural identity; hence, much space was used to detail the local culture. One episode is particularly interesting in highlighting this point. The scene in *Our Town* when Mr. Webb gives a socio-political report on Grover's Corners where people love nature and know 'a good deal about the birds' was extensively developed. This section was expanded to provide a prolific amount of geographical

and cultural information about Tamsui. In addition to the surrounding landscapes, we were informed of the culture in Tamsui such as its literary tradition, religious belief and historical anecdotes. This ideal hometown contoured by beautiful nature had a long history of rich culture. The Tamsui people had led a refined life since a long time ago when they had recited poetry in Fukienese, the old form of Taiwanese. Mr. Webb in *Our Town* is confronted with questions about 'social injustice' and 'drinking problems' in Grover's Corners. He lets these social troubles pass out in some well-rounded statements noting that every issue has two facets. In contrast, the status of Tamsui as an ideal hometown of refined culture was hardly challenged. The Taiwanese audiences threw questions like a group of tourists interested in where to visit and what to eat in Tamsui. Their questions mostly targeted the problems of 'origin' such as how Tamsui had acquired its name, or what the original composition of the population was, or even the origins of famous snacks and the particular terms for a certain landscape. All answers had the underlined message that the Tamsui people were culturally identified with the land, its tradition, culture and history.

In the wedding scene, many more Taiwanese customs were introduced than in *Our Town*. Tradition had a highly influential role in Tamsui, which was cohered not only by its cultural heritage but also by the identification with the land. The mention of trains, stars and landscapes had its symbolic significance in locating Tamsui in geography. The role of Mother Nature in the original was integrated into that of mother culture. The original titles of three acts are rather 'universal': Daily life, Love and Marriage and Death. In the Taiwanese version, they became Sights and Life in Tamsui, Love and Marriage in the Little Town and Goodbye to Tamsui. This

title change reduced the universal undertone, reinforcing the presence of Tamsui. Wilder had strong objection against the realist bourgeois theatre that claimed it reflected the universal truth (1965: 7-14). For fear that the stage objects would limit the performance to a particular place and time, Wilder's stage was almost bare with few suggestive props. But, the Taiwanese version worked towards the opposite to elicit a distinct local flavour. *Little Town of Tamsui* produced such a naturalist scenario that even invited reviews that criticised the tombstone arrangement in the graveyard scene was not 'right' for local customs (Huang Mei-xiu 1989). As the house curtain drew up, four Tamsui landscape paintings by local artists were in sight. Red scrolls of blessing words rolled down in the wedding scene, creating the atmosphere in Chinese banquets. Local critics observed in *Little Town of Tamsui* "a nativist discourse" that pulled Wilder's transcendental utopia down on the secular plane (Chung Ming-der and Huang Jian-ye 1993:104). I suggest that this native discourse aimed for a Taiwanese cultural identity grounded in a heritage town.

To reinforce the Tamsui-bound identity, nature was also limited to denote physical landscapes and ceased 'pushing' and 'contriving'. Love for life was replaced by love for Tamsui. The past when ordinary Taiwanese families felt they belonged to a harmonious town was retained in order to incite nostalgia for more returns. Banal life routines were supplemented by more sentimental details that explicated the intimacy people had with the land. For example, Emily was named Muo-li (meaning jasmine flower) in memory of the smell of jasmine flowers in the garden where she was born. The universal value of life was hardly explored, while both personal and communal attachment to Tamsui was generously specified. What remained adamant from Grover's Corners to Tamsui was the bourgeois values that

dominated both Taiwanese and American communities. In Tamsui, the domination was more noticeable in a smaller social circle. We saw a smart girl brought up in a newspaper editor's house with a garden, then a wife marrying the most wonderful guy in town. After her happy life ended, she wondered why life was not appreciated. Her wail sounded hollow in the miserable world of drunkards and the working class, out of reach of the fragrant heliotrope in Mrs. Gibbs' garden. Surrounded by such "optimism and happiness of an exceptional scale", the well-protected Emily was deprived of the necessary confrontation with life that maybe can teach her the value of life (Fu Yu-huei 1996).

The original pathos of death and the mythic nature of life was evidently diminished. Whilst, in the very beginning of *Our Town*, the theme of death is insinuated by the stage manager who talks about the earliest tombstones in the cemetery, some of which bear names like the Gibbises and Grovers, "...same names as are around here now." (Wilder 1965: 23) This mention of death comes before any living character appears in the play. The stage manager also foretells the death of Dr. Gibbs and his wife before their first appearance. Death begins before life starts; this, in combination with the stage manager's contemplation on death in the cemetery, loops death and life into a cycle illustrating the universal force of nature and life. Death is perhaps the most important subtext in relation to Wilder's universal humanism. In *Little Town of Tamsui*, death was dealt differently as a destructive force that highlighted the by-gone status of the national past and thus threatened the perpetuation of this place-bound Taiwanese national identity. For Wilder, death serves as a cue to reveal the universal humanity, 'something eternal' that does not come until we are on the edge of losing it. The stage manager's meditative speech

introduces the crucial catchy phrase, 'something eternal', which was cut out as it succinctly sums up the universal humanism, the spiritual continuity which would undermine the material foundation of the Taiwanese national cultural identity as was ostensibly cultivated previously. This 'something' is not named in the original play, arriving with death when memory is gone and identity is, too. This memory was what the Tamsui people wanted most to preserve in order to construct and maintain their place-bound home identity.

In Tamsui, these small yet significant hints about death were deleted; death was no longer an essential part of life but enacted as a melodramatic accident. Emily's return was a strategy to reinforce nostalgia for the good old past, allowing her to express lament over death that destroyed a happy innocent soul in a serene town that all the Taiwanese would aspire to return to. Her temporary return indicated that the past was frozen in 1950s Taiwan and this enclosed national space and its fixed cultural identity failed to resist the force of cosmic time. Emily's return reinforced nostalgia for an ideal past, which was nevertheless taken over by a new start invoked by the stage manager. In the finale, we were back where it all started. The routines would continue in another day; however, life could not stay where/when/how it was in Emily's past. Finally situated in the broader context of a cosmic world, Tamsui failed to remain the ideal town and its invocation of Taiwanese national cultural identity lost its grab on the present.

In *Our Town*, time is of critical importance to illustrate Wilder's universal humanism that seeks mystic revelations from nature and everyday life. Time in both *Our Town* and *Little Town of Tamsui* is essentially part of the cosmic force though its perception was strategically manipulated by the stage manager. The construction

of the home-bound identity in Tamsui as an exclusively middle-class and ideal hometown for the Taiwanese relied on the successive unfolding of everyday events presented in realistic details. In other words, the reification of a national past was dependent on the re-production of slice-of-life reality in Tamsui. But, *Little Town of Tamsui* kept Wilder's metatheatrical frame designed to elicit the universal humanism, which had serious repercussion to the stability of the Taiwanese national identity. Such metatheatrical devices as the stage manager's narrative intervention and Emily's return from death made explicit that the idyllic Tamsui was a fictional construct. Emily's death brought in by the cosmic time turned the perfect past and its associated identity into history when another day begins. Emily's laments over the loss of her life and identity reminded the Taiwanese that a national past and its cultural identity was only available in a by-gone past. Another new day in the theatrical present called out by the stage manager had double meanings. It not only put an end to Emily's past in Tamsui but also signalled the end of the performance, which itself was sent into the past. The temporality in constant transition from the present into the past, a feature internal to theatrical performance problematised the identity grounded in a national past that fails to transcend the theatrical limit of time and space.

Via breaking the illusive fourth-wall of naturalism and revealing the universal truth underlying all human experiences, Wilder seeks to achieve in theatre a narrative art exceeding that of the novel or the epic poem (Rex Burbank 1978). Based on these commonplace experiences without locating them in concrete socio-historical backgrounds, the theatrical representation of Grover's Corners is only a work of rhetoric. In re-framing the extracted scenes of *Our Town* juxtaposed

with selected scenes of American culture, the Wooster Group's version created a new textuality which highlighted the gap between the idyllic town and the contemporary urban reality in the US (Aronson 2000). *Little Town of Tamsui* highlighted another gap. The credibility and sustainability of a deep past, a desired mystic origin for making the home-nation and its assumed cultural identity was destabilized by the nature of theatrical performance which is incapable of re-producing reality or claiming any universal truth.

Conclusion: the spatio-temporal polemic of the home-nation

I have so far tracked the identity construction and transformation in the Taiwanese theatre in two genres: the operatic tradition and text-based theatre. The development of both genres elucidates how an essentialist formation of Taiwanese identity was attempted yet disrupted in the ideological and esthetical context of contemporary theatre practice. Beijing Opera and its symbolic invocation of cultural origin and essentialist Chinese identity was unsettled in the modern opera productions. In text-based theatre, my historical investigation showed that it has always been a site of contesting national cultural identity. As outlined above, Taiwan faced an identity crisis after its Chinese national status was denied by the international society. This may explain why the late 1980s saw the productions of *Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui*, which in narrating the home-nation, intended to advance a place-bound Taiwanese identity that as my analysis demonstrated was destabilised by the internal differences.

Mundane Orphan and *Little Town of Tamsui* marked the national dimension in the narratives of home in contemporary Taiwanese theatre. They indicated the

important roles that history (time) and geography (space) play in the cartography of home (and its conflation with nation) in Taiwan. In these two performances, the nostalgia was incited for an ideal home-nation. But such a home-nation was located in a bygone past and eternal nature, when/ where the historical complexity and cultural conflicts in Taiwanese society were not given full justification. They tried to inscribe a place-bound identity in the homogeneous configuration of home-nation, which failed to be a seamless whole. *Mundane Orphan* sought to resurrect Taiwan from decadence by imposing an allegorical salvation via self-generating Mother Nature. Here, the Taiwanese identity was constructed on the sanctification of land and its organic tie with the people who were nevertheless divided by linguistic and cultural differences that *Mundane Orphan* delineated in accordance with the diasporic reality in Taiwan.

Little Town of Tamsui projected Taiwan through an ideal hometown fixed in an enclosed past. An idyllic town of exclusive middle-class composition, Tamsui was endowed with a cultural identity aspired by all the Taiwanese. The problematic universal humanism achieved via the oppression of internal differences was misappropriated as the coherent drive of a Taiwanese national identity fixed in the past. This identity relied on the transmission of cultural traditions and family values. However, it was difficult to maintain such an identity whose homogeneity was fractured by the internal differences. In addition, cyclical cosmic time in commanding the arrival of a new present after Emily's death, exposed the temporal limit of the enclosed national space and problematised its attendant self-contained identity. The Taiwanese national cultural identity was forced out but it could not account for the internal differences nor sustain in the present.

These two performances attempted a Taiwanese identity grounded in totalising space and continuous linearity of the home-nation, both of which were problematised in the theatrical performance, where the ambiguous nature of representation implies the overlapping as well as the separation of at least two spaces and times. The integrity of this Taiwanese national identity was bound to lose in the theatrical representation of Taiwan, which already failed to address its historical and cultural complexity. I will argue that it is essential to re-evaluate the past in contingency with the present as they are mutually constituted in the diasporic experience and hence both affect the mapping of home for the Taiwanese. As counterpoints to the abstract national space critically analysed in this chapter, the performances in Chapter Four will focus on the dislocation experiences of the Taiwanese with regard to the past on both the personal and the collective planes. To fully explore the entangled multiple facets of Taiwanese identity, sensibility towards both the cultural history of China and the personal memory of the past homeland needs to be located and examined in present Taiwan. Instead of being defined by the homogenous time and space of home-nation, it is my contention that home and identity for the Taiwanese is not a stable and fixed construct, but rather inscribed in a heterogeneous spatiality and temporality negotiated between past and present, there and here.

This chapter gave a utopian sighting of home in Taiwan as well as raised the related spatio-temporal polemic in narrating the home-nation theatrically. The homing desire of the Taiwanese was seized and contested in the problematic construction of home-nation. *Mundane Orphan* illustrated the multi-cultural dynamics of Taiwanese society. *Little Town of Tamsui* highlighted the necessity of

mapping the past in perspective. The spatio-temporal polemic of the Taiwanese national identity bound to a fixed time and space underlines the need to interrogate the impact that migration history and its consequence of dislocation has for the Taiwanese. This requires a mediated space I will explore in Chapter Four where the imaginary space of the past in China constitutes as well as ruptures the geography of a fixed place of home in present Taiwan.

Endnotes

¹ For more details of the Treaty of Shimonoseki that put Taiwan in the colonial state, please see the official white paper published by China, P.R.C. at [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/7\(1\).html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/7(1).html)

² There are eleven aboriginal tribes in Taiwan, each having a distinct language, culture and social structure from that of the Han-Chinese. Their languages belong to the Austronesian language family among the most widely distributed of the world's language families. For further information, please check <http://www.gio.gov.tw> or <http://www.tacp.gov.tw>

³ To play the national anthem before the show used to be the regulation for all theatres in Taiwan. It has now become a usual practice for some venues; Wang's arrangement here is to highlight the official intervention in the performance procedure.

Chapter Four

In-Between Space: Home in Displacement

Introduction

In previous chapters, I have argued that Chineseness played a contentious role in the construction of Taiwanese identity, a point illustrated in the modern Beijing Opera performances. Having dealt with this mediating force of Chineseness, I moved to investigate the essentialist construction of Taiwanese identity as it was processed in two text-based productions. In the late 1980s, *Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui* created a mythology of Taiwan as a fetishised and sacred home. *Mundane Orphan* depicted Taiwan in the grand style of an epic, starting with a geographical genesis of Taiwan, which was heightened to the position of Mother Nature in the finale. Taiwan cast in the image of the orphan took on the search for the motherland. It experienced colonisation, and modernisation, adjusting to various social changes. Many lived social spaces were flattened into the single totalising space of Mother Nature, the eternal homeland for the Taiwanese.

Little Town of Tamsui provided a pre-industrial scenario of the Tamsui town to ground a place-bound Taiwanese identity. This place-bound identity is not only

fixed by a spatio-temporal enclosure but also by class-specific interests. In Tamsui, cultural customs and traditions were passed on, and a smooth transmission was established which cohered the town people around a shared past. The stability of this Taiwanese identity relied on the flow of cosmic time, whose linear continuity was obstructed by the interceptive speeches of the stage manager and the destructive notion of death. These two productions attempted to narrate a national space in order to ground an essentialist Taiwanese identity which, despite this objective, was nevertheless unhinged by the internal dynamics of theatrical representation, which disrupted the self-contained space of home-nation.

I suggest that the first important feature in the cartography of Taiwan in text-based theatre is to forge a fixed identity in abstract national space. I have demonstrated the difficulties of sustaining a totalising Taiwanese identity founded on the essentialist notion of home as a spatio-temporal enclosure, which homogenises the differences in the lived experience of the diasporic Taiwanese. Since the early 1990s, the Performance Workshop and Ping Fong Acting Troupe have accumulated a well-accepted repertoire which they have toured around Taiwan and fostered a steady audience. In their work, the present of Taiwan is mapped in a dialectical time and space relation to the past of China. I will examine

their influential productions where the narratives of 'home' are developed through aesthetic and dramaturgical devices. These include the parody of historical events and the structure of 'a play within a play' where the present locality of home and an imaginary homeland of the past are juxtaposed. A historic or fictional space referenced in a Chinese past is reconstructed in parallel to the present locality. Two narratives unfold simultaneously in these two spaces, sharing similarities in terms of plot and characterisation. Their story lines are separately forwarded but are also placed in constant reference to each other. The space of China remains constitutive of the present of Taiwan where the construction of home and identity is mediated in the difference of the other space.

One central proposition in my thesis is that Taiwanese identity is located in a diasporic space where spatio-temporal disruptions between the present locality and a cultural past are engaged. By breaking down the spatio-temporal division between the homeland there and the home here, the Taiwanese enter an in-between space where the fragmented memory of a past homeland remains haunting in the present. The homeland, only accessible through fractured memories, cannot sustain its integrity in the present locality of home. The past homeland is transformed by the present home whose constitution also undergoes changes. These two spaces are

re-inscribed in each other and a new space is negotiated in between, informed by the dialectics between past and present.

Performance Workshop and Ping Fong Acting Troupe: an introduction

Performance Workshop and Ping-Fong Acting Troupe were selected for detailed evaluation because both were involved in the Little Theatre Movement and have become the only two companies that can put on regular tours in Taiwan. Also, they have rich experiences of international tours (mainly to south-eastern Asia and North America where the overseas Chinese are the targeted audience). Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that they have represented Taiwan to a wider audience. They have enjoyed a firm and continuous support from the public as demonstrated in the steady box office records. Both hire five to ten full-time staff, which is still unusual for Taiwanese theatre, indicating that they are running on a long-term basis. After almost two decades' practice, their works have had a long and wide exposure to the Taiwanese audience. Often inspired by socio-cultural events, their works reflect life in contemporary Taiwan and explore the complex constitution of Taiwanese identity. The cultural power that they exert therefore makes their works worth evaluating.

Stan Lai founded the Performance Workshop in 1984. A second generation Mainlander Taiwanese, he acknowledges that Taiwan's modern theatre was born out of many stimuli, one of which is the search for a new political identity. Seeing the need to "re-define itself" for Taiwanese society as a whole, Lai employs improvisation as the working method to elicit the actors' individual concerns from which a collective concern is precipitated (Stan Lai 1994:34). His most famous work is the 'cross-talk series', a modern version of Quyi, Chinese traditional comic art where one to three actors talk about daily events in an ironical tone. I classify two of Lai's works as the 'nostalgia series': *Love for Peach Blossom Spring* and *The Island and its Other Shore*. A foreign space created in correspondence to the present home initiates the nostalgia in this series. This nostalgic aspiration is targeted at the utopia depicted in classic Chinese literature and a fictitious palace in a martial arts novel. These other spaces intervene in the present reality of the Taiwanese and their family. The protagonists visit these other spaces, the experience of which ruptures their identification with the present home.

Ping Fong Acting Troupe established in 1986 aims to convey the dignity and concerns of the Taiwanese and their love for Taiwan. Hugh Lee is the artistic director who writes, acts, and directs most productions. Insisting on a native

approach that stresses originality, Lee mostly writes comedies inspired by social events. Local critics often regarded the audience's laughter as the proof to accuse Lee of not taking theatre as a serious matter. Lee defends this accusation with the fact that his comedy never has a happy ending, thus expressing his 'seriousness'. His productions do not simply mock social phenomena. Instead, his plays contain "a hidden request" to improve Taiwanese society "where something goes wrong" (Lee Li-hen 1998:125-165). Lee dramatises this hidden request in the role of a pregnant woman that appears in most of his plays (ibid.). She conveys the metaphorical significance of birth that Lee equates with hope and transmission of (new) life as well as of culture. I suggest that 'something wrong' refers to the deep anxiety of the Taiwanese who are unable to locate a fixed place of home. The baby is yet to be born and a home for the Taiwanese has yet to be located. This pregnancy indicates a state of becoming, and I argue this intermediate state, framed in contingency with the transmission of life and culture, is related to diasporic space mediated between the space of a Chinese past and the present space of Taiwan. In this work, the Chinese past and its designated national cultural identity are appropriated in a Taiwanese context where identity developed around a home is displaced.

In what I term the 'quasi-history series' including *Half-Mile Great Wall* and *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, Lee first explores the notion of home in relation to historical China. These two productions are parts of the 'Fong Ping series' about a fictitious amateur troupe named as the reverse of the Ping Fong Acting Troupe. This amateur troupe struggles to survive in the harsh theatre marketplace while its actors fall out badly. There is a constant fear of failing to stage the show as scheduled and such a failure will result in the dismissal of the amateur troupe, an allegory for the site of Taiwan. In the 'quasi-history series', Lee juxtaposes the power struggle of the Chinese Empire and a family-run Beijing Opera troupe with the private rows of the Taiwanese actors via 'a play within a play' structure. *Half-Mile Great Wall* presents a parody of Chinese history through which the private rows among actors are temporarily resolved. In *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, the Chinese past transformed by the present amateur troupe saves the Fong Ping's survival crisis and contributes to the binding of a collectivity among the Taiwanese. Lee re-constructs ancient and modern Chinese history in which the present reality of the amateur Taiwanese troupe is mediated. The series of *Can Three Make It?* makes another important section of Lee's theatre work. This series has five plays (Parts I-V) which I dub the 'city series'. In this series, Lee continues

mapping Taiwan firstly by delineating alienated interpersonal relationships in urbanised Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, and secondly, by examining how the Chinese identity founded on Chinese nationalism is differentiated by overseas Chinese communities, and by investigating the Taiwanese's split views over the status of Taiwan as home.

Utopia re-inscribed: Peach Blossom Spring

Love for Peach Blossom Spring (premiered in 1986) was composed of two 'quite' different stories, *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring*. These two stories are structurally connected as they are being rehearsed by two theatre companies in the same theatre space; they are also thematically connected by the thematic search for an ideal love/utopia. Stylistically, the former is a sentimental melodrama and the latter a farce. Jiang Bing-liu, in *Love*, a Mainland Chinese character came to Taiwan with the Nationalist Army. He conducts a life-long search for his true love, Yun Zhi-fan, whom he met in Shanghai before his move to Taiwan. He assumes she was left behind in China while the fact is that she too has been living in Taiwan since they departed. *Peach Blossom Spring* immediately invokes the most famous Chinese utopia in a classic poem, Peach Blossom Shangri-La (Tao Hua Yuan Ji) by

the Jin Dynasty (265-420) nature poet, Tao Yuan-ming. The original poem describes a fisherman who accidentally discovers Peach Blossom Shangri-La where the villagers' ancestors escaped to avoid the war during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). People in Peach Blossom Shangri-La live a carefree life and have no idea of history. Upon his departure, the fisherman leaves markers but fails to find the perfect place again. A retired scholar, Liu Zi-ji, later hears about this and plans to visit but dies before he finds the Shangri-La. In *Peach Blossom Spring*, Lao Tao is a cuckolded fisherman who, in order to avoid domestic troubles, rows upstream where he discovers a Peach Blossom Spring that is not quite the same as the original.

Jiang and Yun met during the second Sino-Japanese war in Shanghai, a place of transit for both of them as Japan occupied Jiang's homeland in north-eastern China and Yun escaped out of hers in Kunming (south-western China) to avoid the Japanese bombardment. The opening scene is a flashback to the time when Jiang is waiting for Yun before she sets out for Kunming. Humming a tune that describes the search for true love as an experience similar to looking for the eternal light, Jiang's romantic temperament also shows in his feeling that at this moment of separation, everything seems stopped, even the night and the moon. Yun's trip

home incites Jiang's homesickness. She advises him to forget the homeland since forgetting the past is necessary in order to start again. Like most war-time Chinese, this couple shares the dislocation experiences of refugees. Away from their hometowns, they together cast a final look at Shanghai, their temporary home at the time, a futile gesture to freeze a moment that has nevertheless moved on.

This moment of transition is stopped by the moody director of *Love* who shouts that 'something is wrong'. As *Love* is based on his personal story, he demands a replication of his past in its full flavour. During the rehearsal, he is often lost in distant and vague memories. He asks the actor playing Jiang to project how a small individual feels, living through a bigger changing history. This historical force makes the Mainlander Taiwanese, Jiang what he is now. As they resume the rehearsal, the stagehands of *Peach Blossom Spring* creep upstage and move their props into position. Something has obviously gone wrong with the rehearsal timetable of the theatre. When the director of *Love* leaves to talk with the theatre administration, the *Peach Blossom Spring* team starts rehearsing the troubled love between Lao Tao, his wife Hua and her secret lover, Boss Yuan. The cuckolded Lao Tao does not feel at ease in his home where he cannot even pull the stopper off the wine bottle for a drink. He complains that his fish catch is reduced and his wife is

fooling around. Then, Boss Yuan pays a visit, bringing an embroidered duvet, under the cover of which he and Hua's flirting is mimed with exaggeration. Boss Yuan moans that Tao's catch becomes smaller, suggesting that he should row upstream where the fish are bigger but he has to go through some rapids before getting there. All three characters feel embarrassed about the love triangle but none dares clarify the situation. Lao Tao decides to go upstream and end his humiliating life in the rapids. Rowing upstream, he is reciting the classic poem whose pastoral description of Peach Blossom Spring does not match exactly what he actually sees.

Before the Chinese utopia is about to be discovered, the director finds the scenic backdrop of Peach Blossom Spring missing as it was, by mistake, loaded onto a truck heading out of the city. He runs chasing after the cargo. Consequently, the *Love* team takes over the space. At the moment of changeover, a teenaged girl in a chic dress with a silver wig appears. She walks about furtively with confounded looks. Obviously not belonging to these two companies in the rehearsal, this intruder is looking for Liu Zi-ji, the scholar who failed to find Peach Blossom Spring in the original poem. There is nobody by this name on the set, and she is led off by a stagehand. She is an extra character misplaced in this rehearsal space just like the scholar of ancient China she tries to locate in modern Taipei.

The rehearsal of *Love* resumes. Jiang, now hospitalised, places a missing person notice for Yun in the local newspaper. His wife enters and tidies up the ward. There is little communication in their married life since Jiang is described as quiet, always sitting in the study 'thinking things over'. While she talks about family news, the absent-minded Jiang dozes off into another nostalgic dream where he catches a glimpse of Yun who passes by like a ghost. As his wife goes on about the differences between her and Jiang, Jiang following Yun in the dream walks to downstage where they re-enact the opening scene of their separation. The wife, upstage, keeps talking but not being listened to meanwhile Jiang, an old man in a hospital robe, is reunited with Yun downstage, still looking young. Jiang counts the years gone by after their separation but Yun does not respond, and walks away in silence. The director halts the rehearsal 'again', accusing his actors of not performing what is in his mind. But, he could not give more precise directions than asking the actress to play Yun like "a white flower that blooms at night"(Lai II: 147). The actors complain they did not live the director's past in China and thus cannot comprehend and act out the feelings of living in a period of drastic changes. The director, who confuses theatre with actual life, is so distraught by his memories that he decides to give the stage to the *Peach Blossom Spring* team. Again, at this scene

change, the young girl appears, still asking for Liu Zi-ji, a liar who betrayed her love. Liu Zi-ji who failed to find utopia also fails to accomplish the ideal love.

The backdrop of the *Peach Blossom Spring* is now found and set up on stage. But, a blank spot in the shape of a peach tree appears in the middle as the prop master tells the painter to paint like this. The blank spot is compensated for by a three-dimensional peach tree on a mobile cart. The prop master argues that this peach tree popping out of the backdrop creates the feeling of escape that, he thinks, is what the director wants. A stagehand is summoned to patch it up meanwhile they start rehearsing the moment of finding the utopia, represented in a transformed shape with a hole in the middle. Lao Tao has an uncanny feeling about Peach Blossom Spring and wonders if he has been here before. He runs into a lady and a gentleman who look just like Hua and Yuan but they have no idea of the outside world nor its history. Dressed in white robes, they speak calmly and move slowly. Repeating the word 'relax', they mesmerise Lao Tao by their sedate and repetitive movements. At home, Lao Tao is short of words to deal with the adultery, which he openly acknowledges in this distant utopia. He gradually speaks and acts like the couple. At this moment, the *Love* team who have been watching from behind finally interrupt to negotiate for a win-win solution, i.e. a shared divided stage space. The

teenaged girl sneaks on stage for the third time but is hushed off to clear the space for rehearsal.

Because of sharing the space, the actors are disoriented and frequently walk over the dividing line. Their dialogues mix in and some lines are grafted into a different context and the meanings of both dialogues deviate. The two stories clash yet mingle here. Lao Tao in *Peach Blossom Spring* insists on returning home though he is advised not to. Jiang in *Love* demands that his wife leave the hospital. These leave-and-stay dialogues slide out of shape. The director of *Love* decides to give up to let the *Peach Blossom Spring* team finish first. Next, we see Yuan and Hua, now a miserable mother and a losing gambler accusing each other of murdering Lao Tao, who suddenly returns in a white robe. Yuan and Hua are frightened, seeing him as a revengeful spirit. Lao Tao expresses his wish to take Hua to Peach Blossom Spring and invites Yuan to come along. Seeing their bitter argument over trivial things, the disheartened Lao Tao finally departs alone. But, the marks he made have disappeared and he cannot find Peach Blossom Spring again. *Peach Blossom Spring* finishes. Following the disappearance of the utopia, the theatre's security guard shows up, demanding that everybody leave immediately since it is closing time. But, he agrees to give the *Love* team some time

to wrap up. In the hospital, Jiang tells his deathbed wishes that his wife take his ashes back to his hometown in China. At this moment, the 'real' Yun comes in, responding to the newspaper notice. Jiang and Yun name the places they have been since they separated and realise that they both have been living in the same Taipei City since then. Yun, now a grandmother, has to leave as her son is waiting outside. They hold hands, both crying. After Yun leaves, Jiang's wife enters. He first rejects her, then embraces her in tears. After all the rehearsals finish, the teenaged girl is left alone on stage in the flooding white light. The security guard brings in a broom, telling her off. On her way out, she tosses away her robe and wig. Though outside the rehearsal framework, her gesture of taking off costume hints that she also performed a role. This role is, I suggest, that of the Taiwanese who are negotiating a new identity, grounded neither in the utopian homeland nor in the home in present Taiwan.

Most reviews agreed that by addressing Jiang's nostalgia for his past in China, this performance investigated Taiwanese identity positioned in relation to China (Chow C.Y. 1999, Liu G. J. 1986, Liu J. H. 1997, Shen X.Y. 1999, Zhu Y.W. 1993, C. Diamond 2000). The profuse reference to China in *Love for Peach Blossom Spring* prompted many critiques that examined it from a post-colonial angle. Hong Kong

scholar, Zhu Yao-wei (1993) declared that the multiple meanings and potential ambiguities in juxtaposing these two narratives are deliberately silenced by a transcendental signifier, Peach Blossom Spring, which for Zhu refers to China. However, Taiwanese theatre critic, Liu Ji-hui (1997) argued that the oppressive signifier of China is ruptured by the performance strategies such as the use of 'white part'¹. A blank spot left in the painted backdrop of the peach orchard is patched up by an alienated stagehand. The image of the Chinese utopia is also disfigured by the projected slides of streets in Taipei and Jiang's tuberculosis X-ray when two teams shared the stage and rehearsed simultaneously. The utopia construct is never complete nor stable.

It is highly problematic whether this utopia designates Taiwan or China. Also problematised is the transcendental notion of utopia as a perfect elsewhere, completely cut off from the present world. In the house program of its Hong Kong performance (1992), the Performance Workshop officially announced that the Peach Blossom Spring that everybody looks for 'from ancient time until now', is located 'here where one is' but people always search 'elsewhere' to no avail (Zhu Yao-wei 1993). But where one is, is contextualised in where one was. To affirm utopia that is here at the present, the longing for somewhere else in the past as

utopia, also has to be reconsidered. Jiang's past in China constitutes what he is in present Taiwan; Lao Tao's Peach Blossom Spring is reminiscent of his troubles at home. This claim that utopia is where one is, alludes to the idea that Taiwan, where Jiang is now, is the utopia he futilely searches for over there in China that only surfaces in dreams and memories. Jiang's ideal love is integrated into his attachment with the hometown in China. The realisation that his ideal love/homeland is lost forever transforms him, alienated from both his wife and Taiwan, who turns to reconnect with his Taiwanese wife in the end. Though he remains haunted by nostalgia, as he still wants his ashes to be brought back to China, Jiang's home and identity are negotiated in between where he is and where he was; two spaces constituted by each other.

If utopia represents the homeland in China that the Taiwanese like Jiang aspire to, it has a different connotation in *Peach Blossom Spring* though similarly, it cannot be retrieved. For the Mainland Chinese who came to Taiwan after the Civil War, Taiwan is like the utopia in the original poem, which is discovered via the escape from the earlier civil war during the Qin Dynasty. Situated in this reading, Lao Tao in the utopia (Taiwan) still craves to return home for in the perfect yet a-historical utopia, his identity built on the past is lost. Therefore, he returns to

reconnect with his past but only finds his home is not the same old one, as Yuan has already moved in and has a child with Hua. So once again, Lao Tao seeks to return to Peach Blossom Spring, which is not there anymore, either. He is lost in-between. Utopia cannot be pinned down here or there. A colonialist reading would regard Peach Blossom Spring/utopia as China, which all the Taiwanese aspire to be reunited with; thus the Taiwanese are subsumed into the totalising space of Chinese nationalism. This reading is based on a problematic premise of utopia/China as a perfect homeland in the past that is simply grafted in, prior to the present of Taiwan. But this premise underestimates the differentiating force of the dialectical time and space between the past and the present. Jiang finally realises his ideal lover, Yun is not frozen in his past/utopia built in an empty time and space. And finding his utopia, the homeland in China is gone like Yun, he returns to his Taiwanese wife. But he still has a longing for China, which he can only be reunited with in death. Both Jiang and Lao Tao are caught in between here and there, between utopia and dystopia.

The past of both Jiang and Lao Tao constitutes what they are in the present; as utopias framed in the past (whether it is Jiang's homeland in China or Lao Tao's Peach Blossom Spring, signifying Taiwan) are constructed in contingency with

other spaces in the present. Also, their attachment with the home in the present is reconsidered in their surreal encounter with the utopia. Lao Tao's home is shattered in the present yet a new identity is hard to cohere for him in a-historical elsewhere. Jiang feels alienated from the home in present Taiwan, where the historicity of his past fails to be addressed. Lao Tao's past that informs his identity is deflected in Peach Blossom Spring; China and its associated memories offer the rootstock of Jiang's identity, which is still mediated in the present. Peach Blossom Spring (whether Taiwan or China) is not a transcendental utopia where a self-contained identity can be secured. It is never completely detached from the present or the past; rather, it is a heterogeneous space negotiated in between. To situate this problematic utopia in the specific context of Taiwanese identity, both Jiang's past homeland in China and Lao Tao's Peach Blossom Spring prove irretrievable in the present yet are still constitutive of their present identity. The Chinese past is constitutive of the present in Taiwan, which is constituted by the reconstructed past.

Below, I offer a critical analysis of both the narrative structure and performance strategies of this production in order to fully explore the ambiguity underpinning the notion of utopia/homeland in relation to the present locality in between which, I suggest, Taiwanese identity is negotiated. Jiang, though married

to a native Taiwanese, suffers the longing for the homeland/ideal love in China in *Love*, which is looped together with the utopia in *Peach Blossom Spring*. As I argued above, utopia in this production, whether identified with Taiwan or China, remains problematic and the transcendental status of utopia is challenged in both contexts. I would further argue that in this particular production, Taiwanese identity is located in a diasporic space where the spatio-temporal division between the homeland in China and the present home is disrupted and the problematic other space of utopia remains constitutive of, yet constituted by the present space. In similar vein, these two narratives of *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring* disfigured/re-configured by each other in sharing the same performance space are mutually constitutive. Their mutual constitution is most illuminated when the two companies rehearse simultaneously on the same yet divided stage; their narratives incorporate yet also interrupt each other. Here, a new space and a heterogeneous identity is articulated.

In terms of theatrical time, *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring* include each other and together mark a linear line in a day's rehearsal. Jiang and Yun's sweet past in Shanghai starts and their sad reunion in Taipei ends the rehearsal time. The time and space when Jiang and Yun miss each other in Taiwan is not delineated. Situated

within the rehearsal timeline, the elapsed time/space of the *Love* narrative is filled with the episodes of *Peach Blossom Spring* delivering a distorted version of the classic utopia that is located then lost. These two narratives are bound into a whole by the rehearsal structure but they have such contrasting styles that it is impossible for a seamless combination. *Love* portrays the nostalgic feelings of the mentally dislocated Jiang with a tragic ring. In contrast, utopia in *Peach Blossom Spring* is presented in overblown sentimentality and exaggerative gestures. The relationship between these two narratives is ambiguous as they inform as well as counteract each other. The relationship between utopia and the present space is also problematic. Both Lao Tao and Jiang visit the homeland/utopia, which has nothing substantial and is only obtainable in fleeting dreams and memories. However, they fail to attach to the present home as a permanent abode as both still long to return to China and Peach Blossom Spring, which seem lost forever.

Peach Blossom Spring though deviated from the original poem is not detached from Lao Tao's past. On entering this unknown place, Lao Tao subconsciously repeats the original poem only to find differences of geographical detail in what he sees. Also, rowing into Peach Blossom Spring pronounced in Chinese as **Tao (meaning peach) Hua (meaning blossom) Yuan (meaning spring)**, Tao realises

that his escape (**Tao** in Chinese also meaning escape) from his wife, **Hua** who commits adultery with **Yuan** is still pregnant with their presence since in Chinese, Peach Blossom Spring is a word combination of the names of Tao, Hua and Yuan. The deflection is also illustrated in the striking similarities in appearance between Yuan, Hua and the couple in Peach Blossom Spring. This utopia is not a self-contained entity but mediated in the worldliness of the other space Lao Tao comes from. For Jiang, the ideal homeland reserved in the past, is cut off from the present, where it is revealed to be an illusion. After engaging with the spatio-temporal disruption between the present home and the past homeland, both Jiang and Lao Tao are not bound to either end. They are caught in a heterogeneous space as theatrically illustrated when the two narratives are rehearsed in the same space. In this heterogeneous space, not only the original meanings of the two narratives are destabilised but also a new meaning is produced in their mutual penetrations. At this moment, *Love* rehearses that Jiang rejects his wife, asking her to leave him and his past alone while the couple ask Lao Tao who misses home not to leave Peach Blossom Spring. In the mixed dialogues, a hybrid meaning emerges; the couple ask Jiang's wife not to leave and Jiang asks Lao Tao to leave. Utopia is not a detached elsewhere but constituted in contingency with the present space.

Jiang and Lao Tao move in between the past homeland whose utopian connotation is exhausted and the present home, which still incites nostalgia for the past.

This heterogeneous space is embodied also by the intruding teenager who shows up at key moments crossing the spatio-temporal division between the two narratives in the scene changes. Her existence, though independent of the two utopia-searching narratives, is essential to the search for utopia/ideal love. The Chinese scholar she is looking for, Liu Zi-ji, a symbol of the irretrievable utopia also connotes a betrayed love. Her failure to locate Liu in Taiwan highlights the fictionality of utopia and ideal love. Her presence problematises the homeland/utopia that at once is located in China for Jiang. The teenager dismisses the validity of utopia that connects both narratives, yet I suggest that she is also a unifying figure. Taking advantage of the outsider, she moves freely in and out of the rehearsals of both *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring*. Also, she interrupts both narratives with questions about Liu Zi-ji's whereabouts. She is simultaneously engaged in, as well as distanced from, both times and spaces of the two narratives. The force of disruption she conveys opens up an in-between space of a heterogeneous temporality and spatiality. Her ambiguous identity is negotiated in the in-between space when *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring* rehearse

simultaneously on the same stage, where the two narratives are united yet both much deviated from their original. This in-between heterogeneous space contains in the same site, the different spaces and times of the two narratives. It is located in the theatrical present but not detached from the narrative past. Also, coming from outside the rehearsal frame, she is the only 'real' 'non-character' in the performance. When the rehearsal finishes on the disillusionment of utopia, she is the only one left behind. She exists at the liminal point between the narrative past and the theatrical present. Via undressing, she shakes off her 'constructed' identity. This gesture implies that any identity performed in the theatre can not be stabilised, as it is always constructed and therefore susceptible to be de-constructed and re-constructed.

The other shore out of reach

The Island and its Other Shore (premiered in 1989) has a title that describes the relative positions of Taiwan and China in geography.² The island in this play, however, is a fictional place in a martial arts novel created by Shi Zhi-xing, a second-generation Mainlander Taiwanese. This invented island off the other shore occupies a heightened upstage area with an outdoor landscape, in contrast to the

interior setting in the central and downstage area of Shi's parents' house. Like Jiang in *Love for Peach Blossom Spring*, Shi's parents moved to Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War, negotiating their present reality through memories of their past in China. Also, there is a shared stage space between the fictive space of the martial arts novel and the 'real' space of Shi's family residence, as well as between the invented island and its other shore. Taiwanese identity is mapped through spatio-temporal disruptions in between these spaces. Yun-Xia, the swordsman in Shi's novel, though living on the island, has been longing to visit the other shore where he hopes to find the missing half of a sacred tome of martial arts. Similarly, Shi who is distanced from the Chinese past where his parents belong has yet to feel grounded in Taiwan.

The divided half, yet to be unified into one, is a dominating metaphor in this work. Yun-Xia, who holds half of the sacred tome (the Kun Part), longs to visit the mysterious palace on the other shore where the other half (the Qian Part) is said to be kept. The legend goes that once the two parts of the tome are united and completely decoded, the conquest of the Wulin, the Kong Fu world is guaranteed³. And if Qian and Kun fail to become one, nothing prospers. Lai pairs the relationship between the island and the other shore with that of **Kun** and **Qian**, a

similar concept to Yin and Yang which is an analogy of earth and heaven. Yun-Xia restrains his desire to visit the other shore for fear of violating the will of his martial arts master, a father-like figure who raised him in the island. His master suggests he continues practising the Kun part and wait patiently, like the earth mother, for the optimum time to be united with the Qian part in the palace on the other shore, where his native father serves as the chief security officer. Yun-Xia and the other shore are bound by blood kinship as well as the ideal unification of the sacred tome.

On the downstage area in modern Taipei, Shi is suffering from a lack of inspiration in writing a martial arts series for a local newspaper. Exhausted by the relentless nature of writing for a daily newspaper, he also has troubles in his married life. Shi's father, a retired military general, is making preparations for the visit of Shi's half-sister, Yu-hong from China. Both Shi's parents have problems letting go of the past. Shi's father recharges his energy in a room filled with old objects he brought from China. He examines these old objects with strong nostalgic sentiment. For him, a photo of Yu-hong in a school uniform catches the eternal beauty of life. For Shi's mother, the clock seemingly stopped in 1949 before the family moved to Taiwan. She is reluctant to let go of the past. Complaining about the present situation as if she were still the wife of the powerful and rich general, she seems to

believe that she will return to her home in China although so far it has proved impossible. Their old house is being renovated and the plumber finds out that the wooden beams are seriously rotten. From the beginning to the end of the performance, the renovation proceeds slowly and persistently; the derelict house is a consistent reminder of Shi's parents' decayed past whose re-construction in the present is in process.

Shi growing up in Taiwan does not have such a strong attachment to the homeland in China like his parents. He develops an extra-marital affair with a woman writer, Yue, a native Taiwanese who writes about those Taiwanese whose actions of raising native consciousness made them political victims of the Nationalist regime founded on the ideology of Chinese nationalism. Yue therefore despises the Mainlander Taiwanese such as Shi's father who worked for the Nationalists. Her latest publication is simply titled *The Taiwanese*, suggesting her strong identification with Taiwan. In contrast to Taiwan-centred Yue, Shi's wife, Helen is a real estate agent dealing with property in America. She is persuading her Taiwanese clients to buy houses and emigrate to the US. Torn between a mistress devoted to Taiwan and a wife very much detached from Taiwan, Shi's own political position is ambiguous. For Yue, life is all about politics and ideological

manipulations. In a mocking tone, she predicts that a reclusive artist like Shi who is cut off from the social reality will soon be devoured by the fast-changing currents of history. Shi argues against her view of art as isolated from real life, claiming that his novel though fictional, is about “the inter-relationship between real people and their psychological conditions” (Lai III: 106). He even feels that the fictional world of martial arts seems to predict what is happening in his real life (ibid.).

Besides their different political stands, Yue is also stressed by the illegitimate status of this relationship. Resolved to break up, she puts the flat that she and Shi share up for sale. This secret flat is deemed a source of inspiration for Shi, the only place where he feels alive and able to write. This flat, a place outside the home, bound by marriage and bloodline, liberates and energises Shi. Yue regards this flat for Shi as like the other shore for Yun-Xia, somewhere to invest hopes and to escape all the troubles at home. Since Shi can never stay there over night, the other shore/flat is only a temporary shelter although an ideal place for creative writing. The flat where fiction is conceived lacks solid substance, a transitory place where the line between reality and fantasy is blurred though it is also a space of new possibilities. It is in this flat that the fictional swordsman, Yun-Xia crosses the spatio-temporal division and becomes ‘alive’ in Shi’s reality.

While Yue is moving out of the flat, Helen discovers their affair and Shi's life is now in chaos. Meanwhile, Shi's half-sister, Yu-hong, who was left behind in China in 1949 arrives in Taiwan. On arrival, she presents Shi's father with a broken piece of urn, some relics saved from their old hometown that was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. Deeply attached to the homeland, Shi's father leads the whole family to kneel, bowing to this urn placed next to the wooden plaque on which the family ancestors' names are carved.⁴ Shi's father recalls two lines of rhymed poetry hung in his old house in China, which suggest that nature thrives despite season changes. Shi uses these lines in his novel, but he changes them into, "Frost after the fall causes the early falling of leaves" and "Sparse rain before the spring delays flower blossoming"(Lai III: 127). The meaning turns to be different from the original, implying that season changes produce signs of decadence, perhaps indicating that some crisis is approaching along with Yu-hong's visit. After more than forty years of separation, Shi's father is anxious about how Yu-hong receives him. Dressed in red, a symbol of joy and prosperity, he gives a dinner party where the father and daughter cry out, seeing each other. The cruel fact is that after a long-time separation, they soon run out of topics to discuss. When asked about her childhood friends, Yu-hong says that they have all passed away. Shi's parents argue

about the details of these childhood friends since each has different memories about the same people. On the subject of the past in China, Shi's mother strays from the conversation and falls into her own past. She claims that she smells the flowers in the garden and feels the breeze of the fan in some elite club of the 1950s. In the deep of memory, she confuses the two balconies of her houses in China and Taipei; she lives in between now and then but she truly identifies neither as home.

Yun-Xia is similarly rootless. He is tortured by the desire to cross the sea to the other shore to see his father but was dissuaded by his master. The master tells him the other shore is not what he expects, advising him to practice what he has now and stay in the island. Then in a dream, Yun-Xia visits the other shore only to find that a fire already destroyed the sacred tome, though part of it was stolen by a mysterious saint. In the dream, Yun-Xia sees an old man on the other shore and he shows Yun-Xia into the ruins of the palace where all that is left are some vague abstract lines carved on the wall. Yun-Xia is then introduced to Luer, a young girl who has been trying to decode these vague lines for ages. It seems she once succeeded in decoding but the decoded meaning instantly went out of her mind. Also failing in decoding, Yun-Xia falls into fits of delirium where he 'imagines' he finally succeeds. But when he gains consciousness and realises his decoding is only in his

imagination, he becomes so deranged that he slaughters everybody including his possible sister, Luer and possible father by birth, the old man.

After the slaughter, the fictitious Yun-Xia intrudes into Shi's flat, begging him to grant him a new life. We first see Shi pushing the sword through Yun-Xia's body. Then, Shi cancels off this death of Yun-Xia by writing that designates what happened to Yun-Xia on the other shore as just a wild dream. The fictional swordsman after a symbolic death remains alive in the newspaper. In this flat, fiction and reality are no longer clearly separated but converge on the same plane of time and space. When Yun-Xia wakes up from this traumatic dream, it is difficult to forget what happened there. His body stays here in the island while his mind drifts away to the other shore over there. He feels as if his whole life "were already lived through", "finished" and he had to live all over again (Lai III: 171). In order to start his life differently, he decides to take a 'real' trip to the other shore.

The same actor plays all the fatherly figures, the old man, Yun-Xia's master and Shi's father. Symbolically, this links Yun-Xia in fiction and Shi in reality whose identities are both negotiated in the spatio-temporal disruptions between the island (Taiwan) and the other shore (China). Yun-Xia's originary identity grounded in this island is destabilised by his longing for the other shore. In parallel, Shi's 'natural'

identity as the Chinese general's son is also problematised. The chaos begins when Yu-hong reveals her true identity as Yu-hong's best friend and the 'real' Yu-hong died in the Cultural Revolution a long time ago. This fake Yu-hong was asked by the real Yu-hong to visit Taiwan and assure Shi's father that his daughter is alive. Meanwhile, Shi's identity is also cast in doubt as the fake Yu-hong claims that the real Yu-hong said that her brother was born to the first wife of Shi's father left behind in China and not born to his present wife. Shi's status as the legitimate son is further questioned as Shi's present wife discloses that the son by Shi's first wife already died of an illness after arriving in Taiwan and she is infertile. Shi, in fact, was adopted from a Taiwanese housemaid.

These subtexts of identity and home are further developed as the old identities are displaced by the new ones that are being processed. Both Shi and Yu-hong who lost their old faked identities visit the important places in Shi's childhood like schools he attended and the noodle stand where he used to eat. Shi's action of literally walking through the places of his memory is a symbolic gesture to re-claim his past. In his own way, he maps the disrupted past in contingency with the present both of which contain the lived experiences via which his identity is re-constituted. This walking ritual ends in his secret flat, a place where fiction is created and reality

is potentially re-considered. Shi's identity is re-located in the intersection of past and present, permeated with differences. In the last scene about Yun-Xia's 'second' visit to the other shore, he also embarks on a similar journey of self-identification to escape the dream of destruction that remains haunting to his life in the island. Following the memory of his dream, he finds the palace, which is almost burned out apart from some lines carved on the wall. The villagers tell him that a long time ago in the past, a young swordsman tried to decode these lines. He failed and burnt down the palace in his anger, just as happened in Yun-Xia's dream. Here, again, Lai blurs the line between dream and reality, fiction and reality, the island and the other shore. This ambiguous space in between causes fracture in any fixed identity grounded either in the present island or the past on the other shore.

The space in between the past and present is also mapped when Lai depicts the only success of the decoding as a momentary hallucination experienced by Luer. She sees a ray of mysterious light through the rainbow. This surreal sight creates a dreamy atmosphere flickering like a candle in the wind, hard to settle into a stable form. Tantalisingly, the key to the decoding is glimpsed but the moment she seems to grasp it, it is instantly forgotten. Each time she tries to recover the memory of the moment, it crumbles to pieces. Whenever the whole picture is about to come

together, some part is always missing. For Shi, there is a moment of truth that resides in memories yet is always accompanied by forgetting. When Shi writes this 'remember to forget, lose to gain' episode about Luer's decoding moment, he comments, "memory seems destined to be fragmented...and maybe it is near the truth this way..." (Lai III: 148). The truth about the past viewed from the present is inscribed in the irresistible forgetting that inevitably makes memory fragmented. Memory enacted in the present cannot retrieve the originating past as it can only be mapped through fragments. Although the other shore is sacralised as the place where the unity of the sacred tome can be achieved, it turns out that the sacred tome remains incomplete either on this island or the other shore. The vision of a harmonious oneness of the two parts of the sacred tome is not realistic. The constituting truth of Taiwanese identity is that it is located in a diasporic space emerging at the disruption of spatio-temporal divisions between the past and the present and this island and its other shore, a heterogeneous space where remembering and forgetting are both considered.

Framing the above two productions in the structure of 'a play within a play', Lai explores diasporic space mapped between two narratives. The teenaged girl who connotes the demystification of the utopian homeland/ideal love in China has

an ambiguous stage presence that physically embodies the in-between space between the narratives of *Love* and *Peach Blossom Spring*. Another ambiguous figure of disruption is Yun-Xia who invades Shi's flat where he is resurrected from a symbolic death. This fictitious character in the moment of resurrection exists somewhere out of both the island and the other shore. In these integrated narratives, the leading characters like the Mainlander Taiwanese, Jiang Bing-liu and Lao Tao engage the spatio-temporal disruptions between present and past framed as utopia/ideal love that is lost forever. Jiang, Shi and Yun-Xia's bond of kinship with China or the other shore is also disavowed. Like Jiang and Lao Tao, Shi and Yun-Xia move between the real and imaginary geographies. The past homeland and its given identity is mediated in the present island where Jiang and Shi set up a family and Yun-Xia has a surrogate father. Their identities are not static as they are being negotiated in between the homeland in the past and the home in the present. Home for the Taiwanese is inscribed in displacement as a consequence of the spatio-temporal disruptions between the past in China and the present in Taiwan.

I suggest that similar disruptions are also observed in the work by the Ping Fong Acting Troupe whose 'quasi-history series' uses Chinese history as the medium to engage with the present reality in Taiwan. The historical past in feudal

China is strategically reconstructed by the Taiwanese. *Half-Mile Great Wall* is the first in the 'Fong Ping series' where a Taiwanese theatre troupe, the Fong Ping Acting Troupe (played by the Ping Fong Acting Troupe) struggles to upgrade their reputation from amateur to professional. The amateur status provides justification for their poor stage performance where intentional mistakes make possible the theatrical distortion of Chinese history. These mistakes result from the personal conflicts among the actors or simply the technical incompetence of an amateur troupe. These seemingly accidental mistakes deliberately appropriate Chinese history into a Taiwanese context. The tensions among the actors in real life are temporarily reduced as their negative emotions are let out through their action of revenge on stage. In *Half-Mile Great Wall*, the rise of the Chinese Empire is parodied to establish a distance between the past and the present. Parody produces double differentiation, which foregrounds the irreconcilable difference between texts and between the text and the world (Linda Hutcheon 1988). Parody negates the internal coherence of the original narrative, creating an inter-textual space where new meanings are produced. This new space in the 'quasi-history series' is permeated with difference as a result of re-situating the Chinese past in modern Taiwan, which is framed in the metatheatrical narrative of the 'Fong Ping series'.

It is necessary to investigate the metatheatrical narrative as it affects the historical narrative and how the space of China is mapped within it. The metatheatrical narrative has a 'a play within a play' structure in which the Ping Fong Acting Troupe plays the Fong Ping who are rehearsing and performing a historical drama. An inter-textual space is produced in contingency with the relationship between the Chinese text and Taiwan, the world where the text is produced. The historical drama portrays the disintegration crisis in a Chinese past, whose stage representation is mediated by a Taiwanese amateur troupe that faces a similar crisis. The 'Fong Ping series' is self-reflexive as theatre critic Catherine Diamond (2000) expounds, Hugh Lee wants to use this series to reflect the theatre environment in Taiwan where he actually runs the Ping Fong Acting Troupe. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that this series is Lee's contemplation on Taiwanese society, and thus how Taiwan is represented as a collectivity.

I would argue that Lee consciously uses a transformed version of Chinese history to frame his mapping of Taiwan in the 'quasi-history series' that includes *Half-Mile Great Wall* and *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, Parts I and III of the 'Fong Ping series'. Two critical periods in Chinese history are chosen to be juxtaposed with the present reality in Taiwan. They are the start of the Chinese

Empire in *Half-Mile Great Wall* and the splitting moment of Taiwan from Communist China (the historical background for a Beijing Opera troupe which is disintegrating in the wartime hardship) in *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*. The past in China is mapped through a consideration of how a Taiwanese theatre troupe coheres as a collectivity. There is a thematic correspondence between the Chinese past and the present Taiwan (represented by an amateur theatre troupe) as both face a disintegration crisis. In the space of China, the empire, sovereignty and the integrity of nationhood are threatened by ambitious politicians; in the space of Taiwan, the amateur troupe risks falling apart as it lacks cohesive force.

In the 'Fong Ping series', the Fong Ping troupe is expected to perform poorly because of its amateur status as well as being the first in the series. This metatheatrical narrative of the 'Fong Ping series' is developed earlier before the performance starts. The house program introduces the Fong Ping Acting Troupe in a highly satirical tone. This amateur troupe has a pompous goal 'to enrich Chinese culture and advance Taiwanese theatre development'. Also, drawing on Chinese history, its work highlighting the 'ethnic virtues' and 'profound aesthetics of tragedy' aims to realise the moralizing power of drama. This overblown statement of purpose seems better applied to the national theatre in China than an amateur theatre in Taiwan that

has a ridiculous record of presenting two shows in three years, both of which took place in the actors' private residence. Altogether, the Fong Ping Acting Troupe has attracted a 'grand' total number of 'sixty-seven' audiences. Such a preposterous company history writes off its pedagogical mission infatuated with the ideology of Chinese nationalism. The house program also informs the audience that the Ping Fong Acting Troupe is giving the performance, *Half-Mile Great Wall*. This title itself trivialises the historical tragedy played by the Fong Ping Acting Troupe in the title of *The Great Wall*, the most awesome architecture in China. The above metatheatrical devices indicate that *Half-Mile Great Wall* under the grand mission to enrich the Chinese culture, is doomed to failure just as the Chinese symbol, the Great Wall, is sliced in half.

Only the failure of the first in this series guarantees a revengeful comeback on the stage that secures the continuity of the 'Fong Ping series'. It is logical to conclude that such a performed failure is essential to sustain the stage presence of the Fong Ping Acting Troupe. On this note, I suggest Lee's arrangement of this metatheatrical series ending in *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, finishing on a successful delivery of a renovated Beijing Opera episode, is especially significant in relation to the constitution of Taiwanese identity. The old Chinese tradition,

Beijing Opera has to be renovated in order to complete the evolution of a professional theatre in Taiwan just as the history of the Chinese Empire is revised to relieve the tension between the Taiwanese actors and thus sustain the collective identity of the Taiwanese troupe.

The 'Fong Ping series' is literally a work in progress as it is a *mélange* of the rehearsals, stage performances and actors' interactions in real life into one theatre production. Many strategies of alienation are used to reveal the theatrical illusion, for example, the pretentious exposure of stage mechanisms. This use of *mélange* and distancing techniques indicates that this series does not aim to present an authentic version of history but to explore the complicity between theatre and reality, between Chinese history and its implications for the Taiwanese. Below, I will analyse this 'quasi-history series' where the Taiwanese face a crisis that is temporally resolved via a detour in Chinese history that is transformed by incorporating the present reality of Taiwan. The history of feudal China invokes a collective identity based on a shared past of Chinese nationalism. In this sense, it is akin to the notion of homeland in China where the Taiwanese are attached by a bond of kinship as investigated previously by the Performance Workshop. The utopian imagination of home/land in both Taiwan and China proved problematic.

The Taiwanese have problems sustaining a coherent identity built around the home construct in the present that is not safeguarded against the nostalgia for the past homeland. In the 'quasi-history series', the space of China delineates a historical homeland that is represented as well as contested in present Taiwan. This Chinese past and its consequent construction of a unitary Chinese identity is fissured as this historical narrative is differently reconstructed by the Taiwanese. And the reconstruction of Chinese history also affects the constitution of Taiwanese identity.

The Great Wall truncated: a historical parody

In the 'quasi-history series', the fullness and dominance of both past China and present Taiwan are disintegrated and consequently re-integrated into each other. *Half-Mile Great Wall* (premiered in 1989) poses "a challenge to the authority of history" (Hugh Lee in Ma Shen 1991:231). Or rather, I would argue, the director, Hugh Lee problematises the authority of Chineseness in negotiating Taiwanese identity. In the structure of 'a play within a play', the Ping Fong Acting Troupe plays the Fong Ping that is rehearsing and about to present the historical tragedy, *The Great Wall*, which exposes the bloodstained process of establishing the first united Chinese Dynasty. The narrative in *The Great Wall* that is "historical, national,

cultural and political” is unfolded through the “immediate, personal and everyday details” in *Half-Mile Great Wall* (Xie Nie 1996). Chinese history is mediated in the present of the Fong Ping troupe framed in a metatheatrical narrative and the actors on the stage self-consciously disfigure the Chinese history by their amateur rendition. Via these quasi-historical narratives enacted by the Fong Ping Acting Troupe, Lee hopes to identify various phenomena of social disorder in modern Taiwan. I suggest, an allegorical reading of these juxtaposed narratives shows that Taiwanese identity is negotiated in between the two spaces between past China and present Taiwan.

The love affair, money troubles, and power calculations among the actors lead to the accidents that transform the historical tragedy into a situation comedy. *The Great Wall* that invokes the greatness of feudal China is developed around the first emperor in Chinese history, Qin Shi Huang, a heroic figure who unites the Chinese Empire for the first time in history. In the Warring States period (475-221 BC), China was not yet unified, composed of many states occupying different regions. Lu Bu-wei, an opportunist businessman arranged his concubine who was pregnant by him to marry a prince of the Qin state. Lu then persuaded the childless queen mother of the Qin state to name the prince as the heir to the throne. The prince-turned king then appointed Lu as Prime Minister. After the prince's son

(Lu's son), Qin Shi Huang succeeded the throne, he conquered the rest of China and established the first Chinese empire. Qin Shi Huang found out that the queen mother had an affair with Lu and also one of Lu's protégés. Despite his reliance on Lu's skills to administer the empire, he still killed the ambitious Lu, his father by birth.

As the Fong Ping is rehearsing *The Great Wall*, the rows between the actors are exposed and become so serious that the scheduled performance might be called off. The dramatic personae correspond to the individual personalities of the actors. The woman who plays the emperor's domineering grandmother is a bossy wife who does not trust her henpecked husband. The experienced actor playing Lu Bu-wei is in a financial crisis and blamed for trapping his friends in debts, too. His excellent acting threatens the associate director who strives to achieve stardom through a stage performance to impress a movie agent. The associate director is a playboy whose triangular love affair with two actresses affects his acting. The director who lacks the confidence to lead the Fong Ping plays Lu's protégé, a failed type who started a coup to overtake the throne but without success. These actors enact their revenge in their stage actions and through this, their personal troubles are temporarily relieved in a dramatic way. Their intentional 'mistakes' on the stage

jeopardise the progress of the historical narrative. Also, these revenge actions devastate the rehearsals and it is highly difficult for the Fong Ping to perform in public as scheduled. The actor playing Lu Bu-wei is abused physically on stage and disappears one day before the last performance. The director has no choice but to play this abandoned role. One actress drops out, too. But in the final performance, both return without notification. In addition, the actor who plays Lu in his old age enters early. The finale in *Half-Mile Great Wall* thus at one time has three Lu Bu-wei and one extra lady in waiting. This performance by the Fong Ping is so shamefully flawed that the company promises a return to redeem their name.

Chronologically speaking, *Half-Mile Great Wall* begins with the last day of rehearsal and moves forward to cover a week's public performance. But the acts are selectively presented. *The Great Wall* delineates how the emperor who built the Great Wall was crowned through political conspiracy and how the Chinese Empire was maintained through bloodstained power struggles. The 'a play within a play' structure obstructs the linear progress of the historical narrative; therefore, the audience sees the baby emperor even before his birth is announced. And following the portrait of a ruthless emperor at his height, the emperor re-appears on stage as a toddler. This 'play within a play' structure is essential to the distorted image of Qin

Shi Huang as, during the rehearsals, it is evident that something goes wrong with the emperor's appearance. First, the prop master forgets to position the plastic doll that represents the baby emperor. So, when his mother presents the baby to his father, a hot-water bottle drops out of the bundle. When the baby grows into a toddler, it is supposed to be a hand-operated puppet but is replaced by an airy cotton parcel. The images of the emperor are not only disfigured but also multiplied in the final performance when the baby emperor and grown-up Qin Shi Huang appear simultaneously on stage because the latter enters at the wrong cue. To complete the live performance, the actors improvise around the empty parcel and hot-water bottle, trying to sustain the theatrical illusion but only highlight the artificiality of theatre performance as well as history.

The birth of Qin Shi Huang or, to stretch its political significance, the birth of the Chinese Empire is cast in serious doubt. Besides his deformed images, the emperor's birth date is always forgotten by the actress playing his mother as she is emotionally unstable from being involved in a troublesome love triangle. Once, when she forgets it again, the other actor improvises to save her face, saying, "I guess he [the emperor] was born in..." The actress responds instinctively, "Yes, his guess is right" (Hugh Lee 1989:52). The queen mother holding the prop of a

disfigured bundle seriously predicts that this baby in the future may change Chinese history. The queen mother's secret lover, out of jealousy, sarcastically questions "Change history? Him? Such a deformed body?" (ibid.:21). Here, the historical fact about a great emperor is downgraded to an improvising exercise and a game of random guessing. The political icon in Chinese history is mocked as it is appropriated in the present context of a Taiwanese amateur theatre.

I further suggest that this flawed image of the baby emperor should also be evaluated in juxtaposition with the glorious image of the adult Qin Shi Huang, who appears only once. Yet, his appearance is the only scene in the entire performance that runs through without interruption. Also, it is the only scene that has resonance with contemporary politics in Taiwan. A contrast to his downgraded baby image, the awesome Qin Shi Huang supervised the construction of the Great Wall, a historical landmark for the great Chinese Empire. Afraid of the political ambition of Prime Minister Lu, Qin Shi Huang orders him a poisoned drink. After murdering his father with his own hands, he declares his will to live forever just like the long lasting Great Wall. His desire for immortality in a sense symbolises the permanent life of the Chinese Empire he started. After this climactic finale, a group of soldiers come in, waving military flags and parading in celebration of the long life of the

Qin dynasty. But quickly, these soldiers change into the uniform of the Red Guards, an immediate reminder of the power struggle in the Cultural Revolution in Communist China⁵. Meanwhile, an off-stage voice solemnly announces, “Qin Shi Huang has left the Chinese with the grandiose Great Wall. The Great Wall stretches ten thousands miles. The Chinese offspring lasts forever” (Hugh Lee 1989:54). This announcement portrays a strong Chinese Empire that lives forever. Lee uses the abrupt appearance of the Red Guards to link Communist China, the political opponent to Taiwan with the Qin Dynasty and suggest that the brutal power struggle continues from ancient China until now. This pretentious link highlights the lineage of Chinese nationalism which defies the construction of an independent Taiwanese identity. This political insinuation is not developed further as the brief parade of the Red Guards is the ending of *The Great Wall*. Following this, we see two actors drop out when there is still one more show to play. The political reverberation just imposed is dismissed, as the crisis of the Fong Ping troupe is pressing on and how to maintain its collectivity becomes the centre of concern.

The relationship between the two narratives of the Fong Ping Acting Troupe and the Chinese past is engaging yet contested because of the overarching metatheatrical narrative. The Fong Ping relies on a coherent historical narrative that is

acted out without mistakes to clean their stained reputation. But the historical narrative is constantly disrupted as the amateur actors' personal conflicts affect their acting. The actors' personal revenge enacted on stage distorts the narrative of Chinese history and this distortion is necessary for the metatheatrical narrative. The title *Half-Mile Great Wall* already foreshadows the unfinished state of the historical narrative since the other half is required to complete the Great Wall, a signifier of Chinese nationalism. This completion would not be possible in the 'first' play of the 'Fong Ping series' and the historical narrative of *The Great Wall* is bound to stay incomplete in order for the 'Fong Ping series' to continue. Also, in the historical narrative, the Great Wall symbolises the immortality of Qin Shi Huang and the longevity of Chinese Empire. But the wall for the Fong Ping troupe in Taiwan has a quite different connotation. The Fong Ping's troupe manager, trying to resolve without success the rows between the actors, hopes; "Everybody knocks down the invisible wall among us. We got to be unified" (Hugh Lee 1989:58). The wall here has a derogative meaning since it refers to the psychological barrier that prohibits a coherent collectivity among the actors (the Taiwanese) divided by conflicting interests. Such a wall needs to be destroyed so as to give a good performance for the Fong Ping to survive in the theatre market.

Theatre critic, Huang Bi-duan comments that this work succeeds in “mocking the theatrical form”, by the use of ‘a play within a play’ (Huang in Ma Shen 1991:181). In one Act, the real audiences are presented with the back of the scenery set of the Qin palace and watch the preparation backstage where the actors’ private rows become the focus of theatrical attention. Meanwhile, the actors perform to a fictive audience with their back to the real audience who have already seen the same episode twice so far. This metatheatrical device further discredits the Chinese history staged by the Fong Ping troupe. The historical tragedy is strategically turned into a comedy by the consistent exposure of the theatrical illusion via consciously engaging with audience participation. “The audience does not read the play”, says the director of the Fong Ping to justify his decision to delete specific roles as, on one occasion, they do not have enough actors for the roles (Hugh Lee 1989:56). Furthermore, in the supposedly after-show empty auditorium, he plays that he ‘spots’ some fictive/real audience who already knew about the script change. He pleads to them, ‘Hush, hush! Please do not tell others that the script is changed’ (ibid.: 58). History like the play script is open to changes in the present, and in response to the circumstances.

Chinese history is parodied because of the private troubles among the actors of

an amateur theatre framed in the metatheatre, which foresees the inevitable failure of the performance. The amateur troupe in Taiwan is doomed to fail in the metatheatre and so is its representation of the Chinese Empire. Lu Bu-wei and his protégé talk about wars and politics over a table with loosely hinged legs. They discuss the military progress of wars that Qin Shi-Huang raised against other states to unite China and meanwhile try to fix the table that keeps collapsing. This incongruous action of repairing the prop alienates the intense atmosphere of a war that unifies China. The historical space of Chinese nationhood is invoked yet disrupted by incorporating changes made in response to the present situation of the Fong Ping troupe. Lee shows history is as performative as representation is in theatre. Chinese national identity signified in the long-lasting Chinese Empire and the Great Wall is disfigured; the disintegration of the Fong Ping troupe is temporarily stopped. But the Taiwanese actors fail to maintain a cohered collectivity as they are still divided among themselves though the parodied Chinese history ameliorates the contention between them.

Half-Mile Great Wall performs an inter-textual space where the identity built on Chinese nationalism is destabilised but a Taiwanese collectivity still remains to be cohered. Via a distorted Chinese history, the Fong Ping troupe is 'temporarily'

saved from being dismissed and thus able to come back on stage with another historical narrative about a Beijing Opera group in a chaotic period when modern China changed drastically. The Taiwanese see their quarrels and dilemma refracted in the historical narrative whether located in feudal or modern China. The Taiwanese actors disrupt the spatio-temporal division between the past and the present where historical China is disfigured through the medium of theatrical performance. In *Half-Mile Great Wall*, the past of feudal China is self-consciously deconstructed by the Taiwanese. In *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, the Beijing Opera troupe in China and the Fong Ping Acting Troupe in Taiwan both face a crisis of disintegration. *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* delineates the transition period when people in modern China moved to live in Taiwan. Beijing Opera, the Chinese cultural tradition connects people in past China and present Taiwan. Beijing Opera, as I argued in Chapter Two, constituted an abstract space of China that is fractured by modern Taiwanese culture. Here, Lee uses it to elicit a cultural past, which is transformed to incorporate the present where it is re-inscribed.

Farewell to Beijing Opera

The last play in the 'Fong Ping series', *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*

(premiered in 1996) is 'a play within a play within a play'. The Ping Fong Acting Troupe plays the Fong Ping, which plays the Liang Troupe (a Beijing Opera troupe, made up mainly of the Liang family) that is rehearsing and playing an opera episode, *Fishing and Killing Clan*. *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, a semi-autobiographical work also brings in another time and space of the family of Lee, the director of the Ping Fong Acting Troupe (also playing the director of the Fong Ping), as Lee's boot-maker father who worked closely with the Liang Troupe tells Lee its story in his childhood. The performance starts with slides of steps for boot making and ends on a pair of boots hand-made by Lee's elder brother, who inherits the family business. One pair of boots serves as a symbol connecting past and present for Lee's family as well as for the Liang Troupe. Making opera boots, like traditional Beijing Opera, both require diligent practice and whole-hearted devotion. The tradition of Beijing Opera in this production is accredited with high standards in both morality and aesthetics. But as the modern time draws near, the traditional opera is forced to be open to renovation. I suggest *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* aims to map the collective identity of the present Fong Ping troupe through exploring the transformation of the Liang Troupe's collectivity and Lee's family identity in the past. Again, this mapping is mediated in the metatheatre

narrative that blurs the line between illusion and reality, past and present. As usual, the internal conflicts among the actors make it almost impossible to stage the show as planned and consequently, the Fong Ping faces a crisis of dismissal, which also threatens the Liang Troupe.

The Liang Troupe story is set in 1946 when China was at Civil War. The troupe toured around China to avoid the war that spread everywhere and had problems finding enough audiences. The old opera repertory needed renovation to make it more entertaining to attract more audiences. Renovation for Master Liang, the head of the family and the leader of the Liang Troupe was an agonising issue as he regarded traditional Beijing Opera not only as his life-making skill but also moral guideline. At first, he resisted renovation, emphasising that opera was made for a cultivated audience not for ordinary people. But in the wartime, the public went to theatre for light entertainment rather than tedious moral lessons. The Liang Troupe's audience number decreased and a famous virtuoso coming to help boost the box office died accidentally. Crushed by these mishaps, Master Liang finally agreed to renovate, starting to create a new flashy version of an old opera episode, *Fishing and Killing Clan*. However, other troubles came up. The Nationalist Army interrogated Liang on the whereabouts of his first wife who had left the troupe to

work for the Communists. Besides taxing politics, Liang's illegitimate affair with his daughter-in-law was discovered by Ms. Sun, his second wife. Liang whose career and family were both shattered, finally decided to give it all up.

Via the Liang troupe story that reconnects Lee with his family past, Lee investigates Beijing Opera, the Chinese tradition in a modern context where its stylistic formulas also convey nostalgia for a cultural past (Chou Huey-ling 1996). The 'standard opera', the 'renovated' opera created in the Cultural Revolution simplified traditional tunes and lyrics; it was used to dispatch the political propaganda of Communist socialism. While the renovation by China was criticised for being political, the Taiwanese appropriation of this cultural tradition into the Gezaixi formulas was also reproached for misinterpreting the characters. Comparing these two 'modern' versions, Lee seems to advocate that Beijing Opera be freed from ideological intervention and exuberant cultural misappropriation. I further suggest Lee's view of 'modern' Beijing Opera is influenced by his father and Master Liang who see Beijing Opera representing refined culture and a good way of life. And, this good way of life is nourished in the regular public performances of Beijing Opera whose renovation would arrive as the effect of the historical force just as Master Liang had to renovate so that his troupe could survive

the wartime. In response to the spatio-temporal difference between past and present, Beijing Opera undergoes transformation as observed in the final act when *Fishing and Killing Clan* was performed with a new flashy ending. Lee's father trusted that the continuous performance of Beijing Opera would ensure a successful transmission of a good way of life. I argue that Beijing Opera and its cultural implications cohere the collective identity for the Liang Troupe and Lee's family. Furthermore, in making a collective identity of the Fong Ping troupe, it requires that Beijing Opera incorporate the difference of the present.

In the scenes of flashback, Lee returns to his family home where Beijing Opera and fatherly love are tightly interwoven. Through refreshing the memories about his father and a secure home identity, Lee seems to find courage to deal with the chaotic present where he is panicking about his wife's pregnancy and the lack of morale among the Fong Ping actors. Anxious about giving birth, Lee's wife also dives into the past to look for a feeling of security. Recollecting her first visit to Lee's family house, she noticed that a wooden door sliding on the track gave a squeaky noise. To her, this noise like the "sound of the track of time" is "both traditional and delimiting"(Hugh Lee 1996:3). She feels safe listening to it. Lee's family home behind the sliding door is limited by time and space disjointed from

the present but it provides comfort also because of its confinement within the enclosed space. The family past and old home provides security but also limits the present constitution of home and identity for Lee and his wife. The past home needs to be remapped in the present where it is invoked in ambiguous memory, which in any case is the only way to access the past. The past can only be partially retrieved as it is always mediated in the different time and space of the present.

In Lee's recollection, Ms. Sun of the Liang Troupe who has moved to Taiwan visited Lee's father as an old family friend. Although she walked on a stick, she clearly remembered how she managed the Liang Troupe after Master Liang had left. Her Hong Kong friend wrote to tell her that Master Liang died in a denunciation meeting for he refused to perform the standard opera as the Communist Party demanded. When Ms. Sun showed Lee's father her friend's letter, she presented a blank tissue paper instead. For Lee, memory is always receding from the present as he tries to grasp it. He constantly questions whether Ms. Sun or even the Liang Troupe actually existed as their story was recalled from his father's memory. Lee's identity is always negotiated between a past and a present that are mutually constituted; similarly, the present identity crisis of the Fong Ping troupe is considered in contingency with the Liang Troupe in the past.

The performance of *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* covers the rehearsal period and the premiere. The conflicts between the Fong Ping actors, though they occasionally interrupt the rehearsal process, have no transforming impacts on the Liang Troupe narrative associated with Lee's father. The Liang Troupe narrative is rehearsed in linear order, from its struggle to survive the wartime to its dismissal by Master Liang. *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* is the last in the 'Fong Ping series' where the amateur troupe is expected to clear their stained reputation. This requires a successful run-through of the Liang Troupe story, which ends before Master Liang carries out his renovation on Beijing Opera. Before the premiere, many Fong Ping actors with either emotional or financial problems plan to quit. Unable to find them solutions, Lee following Master Liang, announces that he will dismiss the Fong Ping Acting Troupe after the premiere. He also expresses his regrets that the Liang Troupe story ends in the dismissal of the Liang Troupe, which thus fails to finish its renovation of the *Fishing and Killing Clan*. The Fong Ping actors decide to work together to fulfil Lee's wish to stage this episode in its renovated form, through which the now and then theatre troupes' internal conflicts are resolved.

In the premiere, the Fong Ping successfully performs the Liang Troupe story, which ends in the renovated episode that was initiated in the past but finished in the

present. This is a moment when the past narrative is continued in the present with a difference. This moment of ambiguous temporality and spatiality is further developed when Ms. Sun in Lee's memory also moves out of the past to enter the present of the Fong Ping troupe. After watching the premiere, Ms. Sun walks in light-footedly onto the stage and passes a pair of boots to Lee, asking him to return them to his father. Caught in between the past, theatrical illusion, the present, she demands to meet Master Liang. On Lee's hint, the actor playing the master approaches Ms. Sun who asks the actor to make his final decision: whether he would dismiss the Liang Troupe, the same question she asked the real master before. Lee prompts the actor to reply differently. The fake Master Liang promises that he will stay to run the troupe instead of giving everything up. Ms. Sun gives a final cry of relief. A different past is envisioned via the spatio-temporal disruptions between past and present, reality and illusion, here and there. The past mediated in the present of the Fong Ping troupe is reconfigured. Expanding the cultural significance of such mediation in relation to Taiwanese identity, I suggest the Chinese national identity once built on the cultural tradition of Beijing Opera is reconfigured in present Taiwan.

This symbolic inversion of the Liang Troupe narrative seemingly secures a

coherent collectivity for both the Liang Troupe and the Fong Ping. However, after Ms. Sun's miraculous presence on the stage, Lee states that he never saw Ms. Sun again after 1984, long before the Fong Ping started rehearsing the Liang Troupe story. Ms. Sun's subversive intrusion into the present of Fong Ping is deliberately problematised. She lives on the borderline between reality and illusion, not belonging to either end. Simultaneously invoking and problematising the past remapped through memories, Lee breaches the integrity of an immutable past where a fixed home and its singular identity fails to be sustained in the present as the relationship between past and present proves to be dialectically constitutive. Diasporic space arises when the boundary between past and present is disrupted; this differential space of heterogeneous time unhinges the original identity associated with Lee's family and the Liang Troupe; the past is unhinged and reconstituted in the present of Fong Ping. The redemption for the 'Fong Ping series' comes from giving a performance that runs smoothly without the mistakes that amateur troupes make. The Fong Ping's lost grace is saved and it seems to gain a collective identity but Lee already announced the dissolution of the troupe after the premiere. Whether a collective identity for the Taiwanese can be sustained remains in question.

Conclusion: homescape-dialectics between past China and present Taiwan

The protagonists in the above works by the Performance Workshop leave their present home and enter the other space that is supposed to be a utopia but turns out to be a dystopia. In *Love for Peach Blossom Spring*, the myth of perfect love/utopia appears so problematic that it is almost nihilistic. The endeared homeland for the Mainlander Taiwanese is displaced by Lao Tao's Peach Blossom Spring, a satirical replication of the classic utopia. Both Jiang and Lao Tao have aspirations for the other space of homeland/utopia after their encounter with which, they seek to reconnect with home in the present Taiwan. Lai reconsiders the polemics of utopia, illustrating that there is no transcendental utopia as the perfect home/land located in either China or Taiwan and identity developed around such a utopian notion of home is never sustainable. Taiwanese identity is negotiated in between the utopia/homeland in the past and the present home, a space where the past is reconfigured by the present and vice versa.

An in-between diasporic space is again mapped in Lai's *The Island and its Other Shore*, a story about the orphaned Shi and Yun-Xia both of whom conduct a quest for self-identity. Their original identities are affixed to the other shore, the homeland in China and they are not solidly grounded in the island, Taiwan. Both

desire to go elsewhere from their present homes. The other shore/the past homeland with its bond of kinship has a utopian connotation, as it is the place for the unification of the sacred tome. But this myth of unification is problematised as half of the sacred tome is destroyed on the other shore except some vague lines. Yun-Xia's disillusionment with the other shore has resonance for Shi, whose Chinese connection is disavowed as he was born of a native Taiwanese. Shi seems grounded neither in this island nor the other shore. His home and identity are remapped in the journey that goes through old places in his childhood, which nevertheless bear the trace of his old identity as the general's son. This journey ends temporarily in his flat, a transit place dislocated from the parents' past in China as well as from his past with his Taiwan-centred mistress. This is the place where Yun-Xia is created, where real and imaginary geographies converge. There, Yun-Xia as the fictional double of Shi, experiences a symbolic death and loss of identity. In the 'real' visit to the other shore, his past in the dream proves to be neither real nor unreal. Yun-Xia's is not grounded in either the island or its other shore, as both affect the constitution of his identity.

I have been arguing that Taiwanese identity is negotiated in the spatio-temporal disruptions between the present home and the past homeland. In

the 'quasi-history series' by the Ping Fong Acting Troupe, Taiwanese identity is investigated on its collectivity through allegorical reference to the amateur Fong Ping Acting Troupe. In *Half-Mile Great Wall*, the metatheatrical narrative enables the Taiwanese actors to distort Chinese history where a unified Chinese national identity is imbricated. This disfiguring of China as a strong and united nation saves the Fong Ping troupe from falling apart but it still lacks the cohesive force to form a stable collective identity. In *Half-Mile Great Wall*, the historical past is deconstructed in parody to accommodate differences in present Taiwan. The Fong Ping actors bring their personal quarrels onto the stage and consequently distort the mapping of Chinese Empire and identity built on Chinese nationalism. *Half-Mile Great Wall* shows how Chinese history is appropriated in the Taiwanese context. The Great Wall that represents the cohering force of a unitary Chinese identity paradoxically stands as the communication block that prevents the Taiwanese (represented by the Fong Ping troupe) from cohering into a collectivity. This suggests the de/constructive force of the Chinese past in the construction of Taiwanese identity. Though now truncated to half-mile long, the wall still stands between the Taiwanese actors. The Fong Ping still faces the disintegration crisis. And stretching its cultural significance, I suggest that Taiwan is in the crisis of

constructing a coherent collectivity.

Fissuring historical China and its symbolic national identity, Lee continues exploring diasporic space that disrupts the division between the imaginary space in Chinese past and the real space in present Taiwan, two spaces that constitute as well as counteract each other. This in-between space between Chinese history and modern Taiwan is further elaborated in *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*. Complicated by an extra narrative about the director Lee's family life, this performance structured in 'a play within a play within a play' enables Lee to envision a new present-future developing from a different past mediated in the present. The successful premiere ending with the renovated Beijing Opera episode requires that the Fong Ping actors unite as a collectivity. The renovated episode initiated in Chinese past and completed in present Taiwan highlights that the cultural identity internal to traditional Beijing Opera is transformed in modern Taiwan. This past reconfigured in the present continues as Ms Sun subverts her past in the Liang Troupe, whose disintegration crisis is thus saved. A coherent Taiwanese collectivity seems to be coming into shape via this past reconstituted in the difference of the present. But, this collectivity is not solidly grounded as Lee already announced the dismissal of the Fong Ping after the premiere. The collective

identity for the Taiwanese emerges only in a heterogeneous space that incorporates the spatio-temporal differences between Chinese past and present Taiwan.

Stan Lai and Hugh Lee re-consider the historical narratives and cultural memories in the space of Chinese past and their implications for the Taiwanese in the present. Via 'a play within a play' structure, two spaces are simultaneously presented on stage. Their works examine the unsettled construction of Taiwanese identity; home framed in the practice of localisation is destabilised by the utopian nostalgia towards the Chinese past reconsidered in present Taiwan. Their interrogation challenges the 'natural' Taiwanese identity that is geographically determined by the material location of home/homeland here and there. Grappling with the issue of the un/settled nature of home-making, these plays investigate the complex cultural imaginary and present an alternative way of mapping home for the Taiwanese in displacement of the spaces of Chinese past and present Taiwan, the relationship between which is dialectical. Taiwanese identity is located in a space between a reconstructed past and a transformed present, a diasporic space mapped through the spatio-temporal disruptions between past and present. In diasporic space, the static status and fixed identity of home/homeland in both Taiwan and China is dismantled and Taiwanese identity is consequently constantly evolving.

Endnotes

¹ Blank part is a common technique in traditional Chinese painting. It is an area of blank space left for the viewers to fill with imaginative associations.

² Between Taiwan and Mainland China lies the Taiwan Strait. Their relative positions are appropriately termed and commonly referred as the island (Taiwan) and its other shore (China across the Taiwan Strait).

³ The Wulin exists only in fiction, as a term that describes the world of the martial arts where people like Yun-Xia devote their life to perfecting martial skills, fighting for truth and justice. Or, more worldly they seek fame and power. They follow the rules of chivalry in a virtual space in the ancient times, fighting with swords or empty-handed. In a society which valued education over physical abilities, the Wulin represents a Chinese counterculture. The use of force to solve conflicts between the Wulin members and their wandering lifestyle contradict the traditional Confucian way. However (by way of the proliferating Kong Fu films heralded by Bruce Lee and Jackie Chen), the Wulin gains a new meaning in modern time, constituting a cultural imaginary to convey the national pride of a strong China via the invincible Kung Fu figures (Li Siu Leung 2001).

⁴ This kind of wooden plaque is a symbol of paying respect for ancestors and the origin of life, a traditional setting in many Chinese households.

⁵ In the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), under Mao's leadership, the masses participated in the revolutionary struggle to transform society-to do away with classes, inequalities and oppression. In this revolutionary movement, the Red Guard was a prominent figure, with the high school students, aged 12 to 17, in the majority. The Red Guards, with their spontaneity and daring spirit, were relied on as a catalyst to bring millions of workers and peasants into the crucial class struggle to prevent the restoration of capitalism.

Chapter Five

The Empty City and Virtual Travel

Introduction

My thesis has thus far tackled three key issues pertaining to the performance of diasporic space on the Taiwanese stage. Firstly, I investigated the de/constructive force of Chineseness in relation to the construction of Taiwanese identity in modern Beijing Opera. Then, in presenting and critiquing two pedagogical narratives of the home-nation, I proceeded to argue the problematic nature of a place-bound, totalising Taiwanese identity. Taiwan, as I demonstrated was purposefully placed in the utopian frame of Mother Nature, an abstract space where internal cultural differences resulting from Taiwan's migratory history were not accounted for. Also, Taiwanese national identity was dependent upon a heritage hometown where the transmission of cultural traditions and identity framed in the dramatic past, failed to materialize outside the frame and into the present. My contention is that in order to do justice to the complex historicity where Taiwanese identity is produced, it is necessary to reconsider the migration experience in contingency with the present. The performances analysed in Chapter Four delineated a diasporic space negotiated

between present and past, Taiwan and the other space of China recalled in its history and related cultural memory. The spatio-temporal disruption between the past homeland in China and the present home in Taiwan brought about their relationship of mutual constitution, which unsettled the original identities in both spaces. The 'nostalgia series' examined the manner in which the ideas of homeland/utopia were fleshed out through the imagination of 'Peach Blossom Spring' and 'the other shore', and how such imaginary constructs were disintegrated in juxtaposition with the present home, Taiwan. The authenticity of this past homeland and its representation as an illusive utopia were interrogated as differences of the present locality impinged on and effected the reconfigurations of the past. Hence, the space of China was transformed in the present whereas remnants of the past haunted the minds of the Taiwanese whose identity was negotiated as an in-between.

The theme of the past integrated in the present was also crucial in the 'quasi-history series'. *Half-Mile Great Wall* and *Beijing Opera: The Revelation* depicted two critical periods in Chinese history: the first-time unification of feudal China as a nation and the separation of Taiwan from modern China. The political conditions of the first dynasty in China, which faced a crisis of disintegration because of the power struggles between ambitious politicians, were interpolated in

the present crisis of a Taiwanese amateur troupe. The historical past was acted out on stage where the personal rows between the actors were also unfolding. The staged history deviated from the prepared play script as the actors purposefully made technical mistakes, thus acting out personal revenge. This deviated historical narrative relieved the tensions among the quarrelling actors and resolved the immediate crisis of failing to stage the scheduled performances in public. I have suggested that the 'a play within a play' structure blurred the lines between past and present, and confused any distinction between there and here. A heterogeneous space arose in between where the historical past and the present locality were mutually dependent. In *Beijing Opera: The Revelation*, the renovation of traditional Beijing Opera initiated by the Liang Troupe was carried out by the Taiwanese amateur troupe in the present. The success of the renovation of Chinese tradition relied on the unified efforts of the members of the previously disintegrating Taiwanese troupe, a metaphorical site for Taiwan. In a symbolic way, the Taiwanese in working together for renovating the Chinese tradition gained a collective identity. However, in the 'quasi-history series', whether such collective identity remains was unsure as it was not clear whether the Taiwanese amateur troupe was finally dismissed or not.

The movement between the past in China and the present in Taiwan mapped a heterogeneous Taiwanese identity. This chapter will further pursue the discursive and cultural signification of travel, by emphasising the consequences of spatio-temporal displacement, and highlighting its effects on the constitution of Taiwanese identity. I will first analyse the Performance Workshop's innovative work on the Chinese theatrical tradition of cross-talk, which was developed and popularised in the Qing Dynasty. By replacing outdated content, and by drawing on Chinese history and classic literatures, the 'cross-talk series' engages and re-works dis/ re/ location experiences in modern China and Taiwan. My performance analysis will address how these experiences depict a state of home threatened by disappearance, a condition closely corresponding to the disappearance of the Chinese cross-talk tradition in Taiwan. Part I of the 'cross-talk series' portrays the refugee experience during the Sino-Japanese war and the Chinese Civil War. Part II describes the making of home in conflation with nation in Taiwan and China. Part II ends with an episode about an ancient utopia where all the Chinese once lived happily; this utopia however cannot last to the present as it is bound to vanish when the cross-talk performance comes to the end. Part III shifts the focus on present-day Taiwan where Chinese philosophy loses its authenticity as a result of various

adaptations by the locals. The space of China, a sign of oppressive morality is overtaken by alternative thoughts in Taiwan, whose status as safe home is threatened.

The 'city series' of the Ping Fong Acting Troupe focuses more on the details of local life in Taiwan as represented by the capital city Taipei, a Metropolitan centre of culture and economics. Taipei is pictured as a virtual city whose existence is threatened as it is always on the brink of destruction. Living under the shadow of Chinese nationalism, the Taiwanese feel unsure about their future and, due to different backgrounds, they have split opinions in identifying with present-day Taiwan, a place which they see as plagued by crime and pollution. Furthermore, due to 'blood kinship', shared cultural values and the socio-economic interactions between China and overseas Chinese communities, the Chinese conduct frequent trips between Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and as far as Canada. In this Chinese diasporic network, it is hard to apply an overarching Chinese national identity that can reflect socio-cultural differences in various regions. In this series, it is also hard to build a unified Taiwanese identity due to internal cultural friction among the Taiwanese who do not hold a long and firm belonging. Their alienation from Taiwan (Taipei) is poignantly represented on stage in the form of "escapes"

concluding each part in the 'city series'. The actors, reflecting the anguish of the Taiwanese, are depicted as investing their hope in a better home in the future which is supposed to come after their escape. However, this escape provides little relief as it leads to even more escapes. In this chapter, the Taiwanese are portrayed as people travelling towards no definite destination; on one hand, the refugees have left their old homes in China but have not yet secured another home and identity in Taiwan as narrated in the cross-talk episodes. On the other hand, the Taiwanese aspire for a better Taipei that will emerge after the final escape but it never does.

The ambiguity of the other: who talks in the cross-talk?

The 'cross-talk series' includes three parts: *Chinese Comedy in the Late 20th Century*; *Look Who's Cross-talking Tonight*; and *The Complete Version of Chinese Thought (Cross-talk version)*. Cross-talk is a variant of *Quyí*, a popular form of folk art in feudal China. It normally has one to three hosts who chat randomly on subjects that are usually unrelated. Utilising precise and controlled manipulation of phonetics and pragmatics of Mandarin, cross-talk produces entertaining effects but also carries satirical remarks with implied and timely social criticism (Mackerras 1981: 101). In Taiwan, cross-talk was not performed until after the Nationalists

came in the 1940s (Fong Yi-Gang 2000). Traditional cross-talk episodes largely adapt popular subjects of the Beijing Opera repertoire based on historical anecdotes and classical literatures. The heavy referencing within traditional cross-talk of the cultural knowledge of feudal China makes it difficult to appeal to people in modern Taiwan. It is a traditional art that is dying out.

The staging of *Chinese Comedy in the Late 20th Century* in 1987 was a critical and cultural success, as it was definitively 'modern' in both form and content. This success came as a surprise for it was a small production that had no coherent dramatic narrative of the traditional kind, which was still unusual for text-based theatre at that time. Simply, two actors with few props stood on stage and talked uninterrupted for hours. The cross-talk performer/researcher Fong Yi-gang (2000) writes that Lai's 'cross-talk series' retains the flexibility of role-playing and story-telling as his actors improvised on their personal experiences as well as social events. Lai then modified and orchestrated these improvised cross-talk episodes into a play script. In this series, the actors play different characters as well as tell their personal stories. In addition, Lai deliberately framed the cross-talk in the context of the 'beef-show', a commercial show staged in restaurants that was popular in Taipei in the 1980s. The beef-show usually contains sexual jokes, variety

shows with featured strippers dancing to Taiwanese pop music, and provides entertainment and relaxation for Taipei's businessmen. Whilst in quite a different social context, traditional cross-talk that often carries satirical social comments offers relief for the public oppressed by despotism in feudal China. This juxtaposition of the cross-talk episodes and the beef-show routines highlights the gap between a grand Chinese cultural tradition and a low-class entertainment reflecting Taiwanese pop culture.

In the 'cross-talk series', the typical flamboyant and sensational jokes of the beef-show opens and ends the main body of cross-talk episodes. Within the fiction of the beef-show, Lai 'arranges' at least one cross-talk master who is invited from China or some unspecified place and the Taiwanese hosts wish that the quality of the beef-show could be elevated by the Chinese master(s) who embodies great Chinese culture. However, this expected master(s) never shows up throughout the series. The low-class pop culture in Taipei is thus never refined by Chinese heritage whose representative figure, the master(s) has 'mysteriously' gone missing. The search for the Chinese master continues outside the theatre/restaurant and in order to keep the 'live' beef-show running, the host(s) is forced to fake or imitate the absent master. The cross-talk supposedly given by the Chinese master is composed

of episodes improvised by the Taiwanese actors whose original stage identity as the Taiwanese beef-show hosts is problematised in their faking or imitating the Chinese master(s). This ambiguous relationship between the Chinese master(s) and the Taiwanese hosts explicates, in my view, the polemic of Taiwanese identity as mapped in relation to the ambiguous other space of Chinese heritage.

In the 'cross-talk series', each of these seemingly irrelevant episodes is located in a specific time and place and together they constitute the coherent temporality and specific spatiality of the beef-show. In addition, I suggest that there is thematic coherence among these episodes that concerns the mapping of the home-nation for people in Taiwan and China. The cross-talk episodes describe many different places of home/land, which are never solidly grounded in both Taiwan and China, or in an imaginary place where Taiwan and China are hypothetically united. Through investigating the dis/ re/ location experiences of both Chinese and Taiwanese, I argue that the ultimate concern in this 'cross-talk series' is to map Taiwan in relation to the other space of China whose cross-talk tradition is appropriated in the Taiwanese beef-show context. The identity of the Chinese master and its cultural tradition is fissured by the beef-show framework. This other space of China constitutes an internal lack in the beef-show restaurant in present Taiwan, whose

recognised identity is also fractured.

History and memory in the present

The Chinese, devastated by war and natural disasters, form the dominant image in *Chinese Comedy in the Late 20th Century* where the cross-talk is performed in a Taipei beef-show restaurant. Two actors enter in loud coloured, tacky dress that appears appropriate for hosting a beef-show. The unrefined setting of the beef-show restaurant mismatches with the grand cultural values assigned to the cross-talk tradition. After the cliché-ridden opening of slapstick jokes, the hosts call for the cross-talk masters invited from China. They lament the disappearance of the cross-talk tradition in Taiwan, hoping that through the masters' demonstration, they can "learn the importance of the Chinese culture" (Lai I: 297). But, in spite of calling their names several times, no masters show up. Thus, in order to cover up their embarrassment, the hosts begin improvising about the cultural significance of the cross-talk tradition in a desperate attempt to buy more time to try to find the masters. Their improvisation was originally meant to elucidate the noble values of this tradition. However, it appears full of self-contradictory statements, illustrating the shallow knowledge expected of the low-class beef-show hosts. They first claim

cross-talk to be a prominent genre of the performing arts; then they declare it to be nothing but “a pile of jokes”, a fact which they then proceed to demonstrate through a nonsensical joke about three earthworms (Lai I: 300).

While one host continues delivering jokes, the other host searches the backstage where he finds some fragmented notes of traditional cross-talk episodes and some clothes. The two hosts in turns change into the newly procured suits and return to the stage, ‘re-introducing’ themselves as the Chinese masters. Their initial hurdle is to read these notes in Mandarin; they attempt and fail to carry an ‘authentic’ Beijing accent like the ‘real’ masters. They face the problem of making sense of the fragmented notes which then, accidentally, get torn apart. Unable to duplicate the tradition, they decide to do their own cross-talk that starts with a love story based on one of the hosts’ personal experience. The crux of the story entails an incident when the host answered a phone call from a girl devastated by love, but who had dialled the wrong number. Trying to cheer her up, he invites her to a coffee shop associated with memories about her by-gone love. There, he offers her his best joke, after which she mysteriously disappears in the street. The host chasing after her also disappears. One of the actors involved in the creation of this performance recalls that all these episodes are developed around the theme of ‘disappearance’,

which reflects the status of traditional cross-talk in Taiwan (Hou Shu-yi and Tao Xiao-mei 2003, Lee Li-hen 1998). The girl's disappearance after she fails to respond to the host's best joke has the implication that the gist of cross-talk is not simply about jokes but "to transmit something serious in a tone of sadness" (Jiang Shi-fang 2000:13). I suggest that this sadness is oriented towards the disappearance of the home and its status as the powerhouse for a coherent identity. In the following episodes, old homes for the dislocated Chinese/Taiwanese disappear and new homes are yet to be built.

After the first episode, the hosts pull open the backdrop and peep into a space. This space is like an "ancient and huge trunk room" filled with damaged objects of folk art and old broken bits and pieces, all of which constitute "images of the incomplete as shattered in the deep of memory"(Lai I: 321). These objects include the period costumes that match the times and places of the following episodes which, presented in reversed chronological order, track how people manage to make homes during the Sino-Japanese war and after Taiwan separated from China in 1949. Episode Two is about sharing one television set among the Chinese refugees in a Taiwanese village in the 1960s, a time of hardship when people had very few material comforts. New media like television had just come on to the market.

Attracted by this high-tech product, the neighbours gathered in the small living room of the only television owner in the village. The narrative is developed to such an extreme that these villagers literally lived on/by this black box of magic, sharing food between them. This off-scale narrative is so exaggerated as to sound unreal but it registers an odd sense of collectivity. Though delivering an intimate picture of neighbours sharing an object of modern comfort, this episode I suggest, has an underlined tone of sadness. These villagers from different provinces of China had left their old family homes and relocated to Taiwan where they were yet to build a new home, but gathered around a temporary meeting point where a homely object, the television became a centre of belonging.

At the scene change, the hosts fish out in the backstage an antithetical couplet written on two scrolls: “The fragrant flowers smell and birds chirp when spring comes” and “Clear mountains and tranquil waters are there after autumn” (Lai I: 346). In depicting the scenery changes denoting each season, the couplet catches a feeling of liveliness at different times of year. This elicits an atmosphere of hope and survival of the next episode which re-creates and reflects upon the consequences of the air-raids experience during the Sino-Japanese war. In one underground cave in the 1940s, a group of men escaping Japanese bombardment

tried to make their refugee life fun to live. Digging a shelter in the mountain around the corner from their homes, they threw a banquet in the shabby cave which became their temporary home. They managed to cook a meal out of the few scraps of food available and each dish, in spite of its meagre content, had a luxurious name.

Episodes Two and Three both depict the basics of home-making for small people during socially chaotic times in Taiwan and China. These domestic details show that the refugees make temporary homes wherever they move as demanded by the socio-political changes.

Near the end of the banquet in Episode Three, one man fetches a barrel of wine, claiming it has a 400-year history back from the Ming Dynasty and a secret. This home-made wine incites his recollection of family history and memories about his childhood obsession with a toy. The secret of the wine is not told since it is phrased as something that is forgotten. After they finish the wine, the man reveals this secret lies exactly in the emptiness of the barrel and the finished state of wine. Here, Lai seems to be proposing a plebeian view of history composed of mundane events such as drinking wine and watching television. These events constitute a pedestrian memory, wherein lies the secret of history; here history is solidly lived through daily details which are nevertheless forgotten in time. For Lai, such domestic memory

(inevitably contingent on forgetting) however incomplete it may be, is still a constitutive part of history. Similarly, domestic memory informs the history of modern China in the next episode set in the late Qing Dynasty when China was attacked in the Opium War by Western Imperialists. At the scene change, one host searches out a flag marked 'Support the Qing and Kill the Foreigners', a sign reminiscent of the Taiping Rebellion, a regional military force organised by civilians in the late Qing. This flag invokes a unified Chinese identity built in opposition to the Western invasion. The hosts now change into costumes of the patriotic intellectuals in the 1920s just after the Qing was overthrown in 1911. Modern China then was passionate about Westernisation, via which it hoped to enhance its national strength and many students were sent overseas to learn from the West.

One host plays such a student who obtained a Ph.D. from Cambridge, England. His academic merit as a memory expert is discredited by his odd hobby of dream walking, whilst his un-scientific and over-simplified classification of people into three categories according to how much they remember is mocked. As they are about to discuss memory, this expert, who ironically suffers from very poor memory, becomes lost for words. The other host, in contrast, has a long and comprehensive

memory; he can name the exact piece of Beijing Opera at a certain theatre on a day in 1919. Also, he details about how the imperial forces looted his hometown. On the other hand, the forgetful memory expert only remembers the two big days in life, birth and death. The narrative obviously exceeds the limit of human memory and becomes metaphorical. The day the expert was born, he rushed out of the womb with a photo album and a pack of opium, his possessions in the previous life. On the deathbed, his last sentence is a familiar slogan, 'Peace, Combat and Save China', a political motto from Dr. Sun Yat-san, the 'national father' acknowledged by both China and Taiwan. Domestic memory, it seems, is very much imbricated in politics.

Lai plays down the construction of the home-nation as a place of safety and comfort. Not only is the figure of 'national father' trivialised as an opium addict, but the safe hinterland in feudal China is destroyed by an earthquake in the fifth episode titled 'The last stop'. Standing among the costumes and props of the previous episodes spread all over the stage, the hosts speak unusually slowly. The stage becomes "a big garbage dump of culture and history" (Lai I: 393). One host begins talking about his hobby of watching the funeral parade, and recounts a personal incident which happened after the big earthquake. As a consequence of the large number of deceased people, the host became a keen observer of funeral parades. On

one occasion, he joined the funeral parade of a dead man bearing the same name as his. The uncanny experience has a chilling effect as he ponders the possibility of his own death. In reaction to this tale, and in order to stop death approaching further and nearer, the other host interrupts and changes the topic to discuss his hobby of walking birds¹. However, the second host finds himself discussing the very issue he wished to avoid as he invokes the death of the birds which he caused as a result of his erroneous technique of walking birds. He finally decides to leave his last bird in the cage, which still ends up being crushed to death by the collapsing roof in the same earthquake the first host talked about. Death pervades in this last episode.

While the quake hits, the sleeping host dreams that he is doing a cross-talk show on this very stage. He wakes up to find himself lying in a pile of rubble. Unsure whether he is alive or not, he walks out in the dusk onto the street, where he finds the characters from the previous episodes walking by, including the two cross-talk masters that he and the other beef-show host have been expecting as well as impersonating. Standing still and waving his hands at these seemingly 'dead' characters, he "sees time walking away" in front of him and at the same moment, there is "a special tranquillity and loneliness" on the stage (Lai I: 402). This moment of death is a symbolic gesture of bidding farewell to the 'preserved' temporality of

'tradition' and history embodied by the Chinese masters. Then, suddenly the loud disco music and fancy lighting is brought back on and the hosts retrieve the beef-show routines. They deliver thank-you lines and invite the masters out for curtain calls. Receiving no response, the embarrassed hosts struggle between putting on plastic smiles and making jokes. The performance finally ends with their confused stare into the black hole of the side stage which is supposedly inhabited by the 'ghostly' 'Chinese' masters.

I read the overall sadness in this cross-talk performance, as referring to the deep anxiety of the Taiwanese in coming to terms with the cultural tradition of cross-talk, which necessarily engages them in history and memories of China that inform their identity. At first, this modern cross-talk performance seemingly pays homage to cultural tradition. However, a scheme of subverting the tradition is underscored in the episodes discussing the home-nation, history, memory and death. Feudal China is defeated, overthrown and hit by a quake; the 'national father' of China and Taiwan is purposefully defiled. History is formatted through pedestrian memory, and the domestic content in home-making experiences is necessarily left behind in the past. Considered in this context, the notion of national identity grounded in a grand historical narrative in continuity is undermined, while the

fractured private experience of home-making is prioritised. With a focus on the home-making experiences, this cross-talk performance ends with the deadly scene of China in an earthquake. The girl of the Taipei love story, the drinking men in the air-raid shelter and the Chinese masters all walk by light-footedly, each “carrying a lantern whose light is about to be extinguished” (Lai I: 402). The old homes in the space of past China are ruined, and these homeless spirits wander on without a definite concrete home to return to.

Those characters from the previous episodes in different times and places in Taiwan or China, all gather at the same town and in the same time when the quake hits. This spatio-temporal disruption not only underlines the constructive power of history and memory in terms of constructing identity in the present, it also reveals the constructed and ambiguous nature of characters in theatrical representation. This ambiguous temporality, when the present and the past coexist in the same theatre space, facilitates the problematisation of the originary identity of the cross-talk masters from China and that of the beef-show hosts in Taiwan. By playing out the death scene of the two masters, Lai seemingly suggests that there are no such masters except the Taiwanese fakes. But, in making the Taiwanese hosts call out the masters for curtain calls, Lai continues the deliberate blurring of the

division between the Taiwanese hosts and the Chinese masters. Through representing the Chinese masters, the stage presence of the Taiwanese hosts reveals the masters' absence and signals the lack of traditional cross-talk in present-day Taiwan. Meanwhile, their stage incarnation of the masters uncovers the crack in their genuine identity as the beef-show hosts in Taiwan. The invoking of the other space where the Chinese masters belong and its contingent history and memory fails, yet it penetrates into the present space in Taiwan. The two spaces that the cross-talk masters in past China and the beef-show hosts in present Taiwan separately occupy never fall far apart as they merge in the body of the beef-show hosts.

In between the episodes under dim lights, the hosts briefly exchange ideas about the next episode. There, they are identified as the beef-show hosts in a low-class Taipei restaurant. But when the episodes start, they become the cross-talk masters who then impersonate various characters. Sometimes, they merge with the characters without marking the division between their dubious 'master' role and the characters out of which they sometimes move and give comments as the outsider. However, they never publicly announce that they are counterfeits and their original identity as the beef-show hosts seems obscured. However, they illustrate skills in creating the 'modern' version of cross-talk under the 'master' identity, which is

problematised as they fail to prove the presence of cross-talk masters other than themselves in the end. The difference between the cross-talk and the beef-show is smudged as the narrating positions are double yet split, dangling between the Taiwanese hosts and the Chinese masters, who are structurally integrated yet remain distinct.

In the middle of rehearsing this production, Lai went to Japan where he took photos of the wall of an old temple in Kyoto, an old historical city. On the wooden floor were thousands of cracks, which are the work of time. It struck him then that his cross-talk production was to “expose the gap between the traditional and the modern” (Lai I: 412). However, he also realised that these numberless cracks were absorbed into the whole and became a constituting part of the wall. The tradition represented by the past of China and its impact may constitute the crack of the present in Taiwan. These cracks though do not break down the wall, they mark a fissured surface. Cross-talk, a cultural tradition inherited from China is in discord with, yet also constitutive of the beef-show culture in a Taipei restaurant. The ambiguous absence (and presence) of the cross-talk masters is a strategy to highlight the internal lack of this Chinese tradition in modern Taiwan.

The arrival of the cross-talk masters is constantly deferred and their absence is

deliberately poorly disguised in the present. The Chinese masters in the past encounter limits in entering the present and the linear transmission of Chinese cultural tradition, such as cross-talk to Taiwan, fails. The deferral of the Chinese master signals the impossibility of locating a cultural origin and an invariable homeland, which was already destroyed in the quake. Situated within this sequence, the ghastly masters, the destroyed homes and the downgraded national father belong to the same space of a China whose pre-ordained national identity is destabilised. I argue that in invoking this space of Chinese masters that is nearly located in the realm of death, the Taiwanese hosts' identities are mapped in the travel between this other space in China and here in Taiwan.

These cross-talk episodes deliver the dis/ re/ location experiences of people in Taiwan and China that constitute the cultural memory where Taiwanese identity is processed. In these episodes, the home/land is neither firmly grounded nor is it secured as it is first hit by a quake, then attacked by the imperial force and bombarded by the Japanese. In this historical narrative, the unified Chinese national identity linked to the homeland is unsettled. In Taiwan, the home identity can only be developed temporarily around a television set. Like the forever absent reality lying outside theatrical representation, the space of the Chinese master is vaguely

located in the side-stage void where the beef-show hosts cast their final searching look. This other space recalls the impossibility of duplicating a past through theatrical representation; in a similar vein, the cultural tradition in the Chinese past is never fully revived and its presence in present-day Taiwan as staged by the 'absent yet present' masters is bound to be partial, evasive and ambiguous.

Refuge, home, utopia

In Part II of the 'cross-talk series', *Look Who's Cross-talking Tonight?*, Lai continues to elaborate on the ambiguous relationship between the 'beef-show' hosts and 'cross-talk' master(s) predicated on the tension between Taiwanese pop culture and noble Chinese tradition. Taking place in the same Taipei restaurant as in Part I, the beef-show in Part II also has invited a master and his disciple from China to demonstrate their 'authentic' cross-talk skills. The two beef-show hosts express their hope to learn from the Chinese master, Chang Nian-ler, which literally means 'happy all the time'. This master is said to have brought laughter to the Chinese who suffered in the Chinese Civil War and the Cultural Revolution. The hosts expect the master to "guide our pursuit of artistry of the traditional cross-talk art", and "feed our hunger for cultural knowledge" (Lai III: 192). Again, the cross-talk tradition is

granted a superior status with higher cultural values; however, the sleazy hosts' wish to learn from the Chinese master as delivered in the beef-show style is hardly convincing.

Throughout the 'cross-talk series', the Taiwanese hosts always long for the –ambiguously expressed—Chinese cultural heritage. In Part II, one beef-show host passionately sings about the long rich cultural history of China but the stage directions describe the host at that same moment as “in blindfolded passion” and “losing his mind” (Lai III: 190). The hosts claim that the Chinese sense of humour inherent in cross-talk will be illustrated by the Chinese master, who does not show up as his name is called. Instead, his disciple, Bai Tan, whose name literally means ‘pointless and useless talk’, comes on stage. Bai Tan’s idiosyncratic and symbolic name cancels out his authority readily assigned to the cross-talk performers from China. According to Bai Tan, the master has arrived in Taiwan but has gone missing ‘again’. Since only Bai Tan, who bears a self-erasing name, gives the cross-talk throughout the performance, it is legitimate to say that the Chinese master remains absent as in Part I. While one host leaves to check the master’s whereabouts, the other host and Bai Tan start cross-talking to run the live beef-show. The first two episodes tell about the refugees’ relocation stories as the consequences of the

Chinese Civil War after which Taiwan and China were officially divided as each were controlled by two oppositional political parties—the Nationalists and the Communists. During the Civil War, Bai Tan's grandfather, a pawnshop owner exchanged a rare treasure for a ship ticket for his son to go to Taiwan. In the chaotic dock full of refugees, Bai Tan's father jumped on the wrong ship bound for Russia, another Communist country then. This episode depicts the political separation of China and Taiwan via personal incidents, introducing the most recent journey of Chinese migration into Taiwan.

Following this wave of migration, Episode Two moves to delineate the relocation experience in Taiwan and China after the split. Here, home is narrated in conflation with nation. The host starts talking about his father, one such recent immigrant is relocated in a Taiwanese village, which accommodates people from different provinces of China. As these Mainlanders come into Taiwan, the way they relocate themselves spatially becomes reminiscent of the physical arrangement of their native provinces in China. For example, a veteran from Shan-xi (a province in northwestern China) naturally takes the Western corner space in the village. This Taiwanese village thus resembles a mini China where people speak various regional dialects and have communication problems. Nevertheless, they are all involved in

the neighbourhood affairs, bound by their common condition in exile. Bai Tan also tells of his own personal experience of relocation during the Cultural Revolution².

As a university student, he volunteered to leave his home in the city and be relocated in a remote rural area where he would learn from the proletarian class.

Hand in hand, he and many other students supposedly worked for the common goal of a better China. This nationalist spirit urges all the Chinese to increase productivity in both agriculture and industry. Bai Tan and his team-mates allotted to a farm are given the task of increasing the number of sheep by tenfold within a week. This impossible task is fulfilled through cheating; a landscape painting of thousands of sheep is presented from a distance to the commanding officer, who happens to be blind.

In Episode Two, a sense of collective identity emerges to the invoking power of the home-nation designated to either China or Taiwan. But this national identity is not solidly grounded and its stability is problematised. In the Taiwanese village, a movie is playing in the public square for the celebration of the Double Tenth, the National Day for Taiwan. This movie packages patriotic sentiments in a melodramatic romance plot where a couple wish they could contribute to building the nation (Taiwan) after they marry. The screening is not running smoothly as the

images become distorted in the blowing wind and the host, as a mischievous boy, cuts the reel of film and gets beaten up by his father. Meanwhile, one neighbour trying to stop the beating screams, "Nation, nation. No nation, no family" (Lai III: 227). This scene places the domestic row in the context of nationalism. Also rallying, is the national power of China in Bai Tan's story, which exceeds the limit of reality when the blind officer asks to count the sheep, 6,500 in total. A more implausible trick is improvised; Bai Tan and his team stand in a row passing around two big rats, which are touched on the head by the blind officer who by then already detects the cheating but lets it pass for the noble goal of bettering China.

The next episode titled 'The art of language' focuses on how national power manifests through language. Dressed in the fashion of the Nationalist governmental official, the host boldly declares that talking nonsense is essential for a good cross-talk performer. For demonstration, he imitates politicians' often-pointless and well-polished statements that usually contain no solid information but repeated auxiliary words and meaningless words. This link between cross-talk and political talk suggests that cross-talk is mediated in ideology. The host divulges his secret to win the national speech contest which is to repeat irrelevant political slogans regardless of the topic he is discussing. Bai Tan's story about the art of language is

not any less saturated with politics and ideology. In the denunciation meeting common to the Communist Party, he describes how everybody accuses each other simply for the sake of condemnation. In this episode, the art of language features manipulating rhetoric to abolish any oppositional views in both China and Taiwan. In two different social contexts, the art of language is applied similarly to achieve ideological control and political hegemony.

In between episodes, the host, who is out chasing the master, returns to report on the latter's whereabouts. Before Episode Four, he brings in a note, a Qing-style robe and a parcel which contains a statue, The God of Laughter which belongs to the master. The unfinished note speaks of the master's feeling about Taiwan, stating that "When I am in Taiwan, everything is ??? happy. ???. Do not worry about me? Seeing that the Taiwanese leading such a ??? life fills my heart with ???" (Lai III: 259). Significant expressive adjectives or nouns are deleted to make the meaning ambiguous probably because it would not be appropriate for the master representative of high Chinese culture to envy the 'happy' life in Taiwan, a culturally inferior place. Trails of the missing master are tracked but his whereabouts remains unknown. The God of Laughter, a holy object worshipped by traditional cross-talk performers, is then placed on the table down stage, and acts as

a substitute for the absent master. Episode Four starts with a story about the host's father, a Mainlander who, after separating from his family for four decades, decides to return to China for a visit. He is determined to turn the sad family separation into something beautiful. Declining his son's companionship, he conducts this trip of home return all by himself. This impromptu trip brings him home only to discover that his mother died a long time ago. When reunited with his wife, the sweet memory is outdone by the awkward feeling of alienation resulting from their long separation. The host describes his father as a 'tragic hero' who battles against the historical force out of his control. Now realising his past and the homeland in China has been relegated to history, the host's father comments on his home trip as 'beautiful'. According to the host, when the tragic develops into the extreme, it turns into something 'beautiful' (Lai III: 265). I suggest this sensibility of the 'beautiful' is effected through a poetics of home surpassing the boundary of a fixed place in the past but mapped in contingency with lived memories re-inscribed in the present. This homecoming trip confirms that the old grounded home and identity is lost forever, yet it also enables the tragic hero to engage with it 'again' from an alternative perspective in the present.

In the previous episodes, the personal was discussed in its political

implications, and the formulation of home is inscribed in a national context in Taiwan and China. Episode Five explores the hypothetical unification of China and Taiwan into one nation, a sensitive issue in real politics. This unification in a utopian frame however, fails to sustain in real time and space. This episode starts with the host and Bai Tan arguing over the name for this hypothetical entity that unifies China and Taiwan. The different political symbols of both sides, like the national flag, are difficult to be combined into a mutually acceptable sign since both Bai Tan from China and the Taiwanese host insist on the ideological integrity of their individual 'national' symbols. At the beginning of this episode, the other host, who has been out looking for the master, returns on stage secretly. He is standing by The God of Laughter, dressed in the master's Qing-style robe. When the above argument is almost developing into physical fights, this host in the master's dress takes on a self-assigned authority and advises Bai Tan and the host to abandon their prejudices. He suggests that they 'imagine' a utopia together. In this utopia of a pastoral setting, both the Chinese and the Taiwanese would collaborate in labour, sowing, harvesting, cooking and cleaning and form a community of great harmony. In this fictional construct, real socio-political differences between the two sides are purposely ignored. Bai Tan and the host finally propose the blueprint of this utopia

to their individual government but get violently rebutted. Utopia only exists in imagination and is bound to vanish when confronted with reality where politics and ideologies dominate. The utopia of a common future proves unfeasible and the next episode seeks recourse in the past to testify that a particular version of utopia once existed in ancient China.

Episode Six is about excavating ancient tombs that contain valuable Chinese artefacts, a thriving business in China. The God of Laughter was discovered in one such excavation. The two hosts and Bai Tan, wearing safety helmets with headlights, crawl along a narrow passage, which opens into a big space shining in the dark. They reach a ridge under which a mini China of clay is laid on the ground dotted with rivers, plains and mountains, above which shines starlight. They descend to the ground where they find many clay figures in different postures, some working and some playing chess or drinking tea. All share the same bright smile on their faces. On top of the highest mountain lies a coffin, containing nothing but a parcel. 'Shaking the parcel' is cross-talk jargon referring to the process of telling a joke. Laughter drops out when a parcel opens. For this particular parcel, they cannot shake it open because 'it is too old'. This parcel signifying the essence of the cross-talk tradition is sealed closed, resisting opening to the historical force of

modern time. Similarly, this utopia made in clay constitutes a self-contained homeland, a space of unified nationhood that existed only in the past, which is soon to be washed down in history. What happens next is the collapse of the clay-wrought utopia as a sudden rainfall pours into the tomb. The stars dim, the lakes are destroyed and the clay figures powdered. The utopia is dissolved gradually as the modern cross-talk performance is moving forward in time. The two hosts and Bai Tan on the stage gasping in anxiety ask each other whether it is time to stop the cross-talk and maybe thus avoid a total destruction. The unanimous reply is, it is “unstoppable” (Lai III: 315).

Then, the hosts return to the beef-show routines. To express their gratitude, they will give Bai Tan a banner. Two ‘wrong’ banners are presented by mistake; the words on them either suggest that Bai Tan tells lies like a politician or praise the naked bodies of strippers in beef-shows. Finally, the third banner comes, bearing a familiar couplet in a Chinese poem (seven-character-quatrain) but half of it is missing³. The first half goes, “Yet monkeys are still calling on both banks behind me”. The missing half in the original is “To my boat these ten thousand mountains away”. Bai Tan’s stage presence is a reminder of the absent master and reflects the manner in which this first half of couplet recalls the other half. Thus, the ‘missing’

master representative of the Chinese tradition is like the 'missing' boat in the missing half of the poem and his presence is only as fleeting as that light boat passing through the river where water as well as time runs forward constantly. Similarly, the 'once' existence of the ancient utopia is fleeting and quickly fading in the historical current.

So, the master from China stays missing but his presence is never completely erased from the stage. In between episodes, the rumours about his whereabouts are reported but they sound so twisted that they lack credibility. The master's status as inheritor of the traditional culture is desecrated. One rumour purports that some Taiwanese gangsters kidnapped him in order to exploit his professed talent of being able to predict winning lottery numbers. The host brings back the master's note expressing an ambiguous feeling for Taiwan and then, a statue (The God of Laughter) and a Qing-style robe, which he mismatches with a pair of fashionable sunglasses. The master is imitated in distorted appearance. In this dress of mixed time codes, this host adopts the master's authority and acts as an arbitrator when Bai Tan and the other host argue. The absent Chinese master has his presence felt through the two hosts; one pretends to act and the other is dressed like him.

The cross-talk episodes begin with the refugee experience during the Chinese

Civil War that led to Taiwan's separation from China and end in an imaginary utopia that fails to unite China and Taiwan. In between, there are stories about how people in both sides leave their homes and relocate to somewhere else. These relocation experiences are infused with a noble mission of constructing a better home-nation. The families in the Taiwanese village fighting over domestic trivia are not a seamless whole and the strengthening of national economy in the farm in China is the result of bold cheating. The home-nation is not substantialised or firmly secured in either place. Also, utopia is verbally constructed in empty talks that have no validity in real life and even if utopia did once exist, it fails to last through the present. No utopias are accessible to the Taiwanese in either the future or the past. In shifting to examine the present, the host's father's past homeland is re-inscribed in the feeling of tragic beauty in the present. The beauty of home lies in the fact that home is not fixed in place but changes along with the flow of time. The past is washed into history but its memory keeps haunting the present. The past moving away from the present is conveyed through the image of the boat that has already gone down the river and what remains is the haunting noise of the monkey.

The beef-show hosts and the cross-talk master(s) come from different spaces but incorporate each other to complete the modern cross-talk performance. Because

of this mutual constitution, the line between the present and the past, Taiwan and China, is blurred. In comparison with Part I in the 'cross-talk series', the Chinese master in Part II is not faked by the beef-show host. Instead, his absence is notified as his whereabouts are constantly tracked and reported. I view this as a gesture that reveals the constructedness of the space of China, an elsewhere that can only be imagined from the present in Taiwan. This space remains mythic and void of substance. Its representative figure, the master(s) stays absent throughout the performance, signifying the eternal lack of the Chinese past in present Taiwan. In Part II, the master's authority, founded on the cross-talk tradition, is debased as he seems involved in mercenary gambling. In Part III of the 'cross-talk series', the invited master from an unspecified place remains absent and his credibility as the master is still problematic. The ambiguous relationship between the Taiwanese beef-show hosts and the Chinese cross-talk masters, I suggest, reflects the polemical nostalgia of the Taiwanese for the past homeland in China and the associated memories, history and cultural heritage which are being transformed in present Taiwan.

Chinese philosophy in Taiwan

The Complete Version of Chinese Thought (Cross-talk version) investigates the Taiwanese culture through its intriguing relationship with Chinese philosophy. Clearly, Lai does not intend to advance specific philosophical argument but to examine how Chinese philosophy such as Confucianism and Taoism is transmitted or more precisely, appropriated in a Taiwanese context. Therefore, no philosopher gives serious lectures on the stage occupied by the beef-show hosts, Pang Men and Zuo Dao (meaning heresy and heterodox school) and a 'surprise' guest speaker, Wu Huei (meaning no wisdom). Lai moved from delineating the dis/ re/ location experiences of both people in China and Taiwan where the homes constructed in conflation with the nation are not well-established. In Part III, he limits the scenario to present-day Taiwan where the dominant philosophy is the Yin-Yang school pitted against the Chinese tradition of Confucianism. There is still an invited yet absent master, although where he is from is not specified. He is praised as an internationally renowned scholar of Chinese philosophy who the hosts hope, can save Taiwan from further degradation. Like the previous parts in the 'cross-talk series', Taiwan is still placed in a culturally inferior position, waiting to be

enlightened by the grand Chinese philosophy whose representative, the master might well be a local.

In the same beef-show restaurant, the time in Part III is set at “the end of the [20th] century” (Lai IV: 109). This choice of time elicits a feeling of apocalypse, echoed in the announcement that the restaurant is facing a crisis of immediate closure. The power supply is unsteady and there is the battering noise of demolition in the background. Besides the closing crisis, the invited master also fails to show up. The two hosts manage to run the live beef-show as well as save the venue. The master is arranged to appear briefly near the end of the performance, which is problematised as he looks the same as one of the hosts, although there is no positive identification. On his ambiguous show-up, the master is not consulted on Chinese philosophy but is asked to predict the future of Taiwan. Authentic Chinese tradition and philosophy is consistently absent on contemporary Taiwanese stage. In this performance specifically about Chinese philosophy, its absence is not only indicated by the absent master but is also implied prior to the beginning of the performance. Three electronic models in the costumes of ancient wise saints are placed on the centre stage. The stagehands plug in these moral icons each holding a jazz instrument, which then become alive and swing to music playing automatically.

These icons of Chinese culture have the 'right' appearance but no real life as they are powered by electricity. They are artificial props that are used to impose an atmosphere of high culture to match the intellectual subject of Chinese philosophy. But this piece of decor, in highlighting the nature of popular culture internal to the beef-show, stretches the gap between the modern Taiwanese culture and the Chinese tradition. These Chinese moral icons appropriated by Taiwanese pop culture make analogy to the cross-talk tradition framed in the beef-show. These 'lifeless' saints highlight the fact that Chinese philosophy is not transmitted in authenticity but only applied 'superficially' in Taiwan.

In Part III, the beef-show hosts' sensational opening develops into slapstick scenes mocking absurd phenomena in politics and pervasive crime in Taiwanese society. To find a cure for corrupt and chaotic Taiwan, they resort to the master for help. They claim that Master Ma Qian, a world-renowned academic star, "absolutely will show up unlike the guest(s) previously invited in the beef-show" (Lai IV: 116). The hosts fish out of their pockets a name card of Master Ma which advertises the master as running a fortune-telling business and providing predictions of lottery numbers. Hence, the master's 'academic' authority is deliberately heightened whilst being downgraded. As usual, his name is called but

no one shows up. While the hosts continue summoning the master, someone “who just does not look like the master of Chinese philosophy” sneaks on stage (Lai IV: 120). This unexpected character, Wu Huei claims he is the disciple of Master Ma, who has just emailed asking him to do this cross-task gig on his behalf. Wu knows the master through his website—which specialises in analysing the local stock market—and even though they have never met, he declares he senses a telepathic connection between him and the master. Different from the Chinese masters in the previous parts, Master Ma has a rather ‘modern’ life style. According to Wu, before the master appears, the sound of flute will fill in the space. Wu is a history teacher from some Buxiban in Taipei (private institutes in Taiwan for preparing students for public tests like the A-level). He has longed to become a cross-talk performer and self-trained via teaching in the Buxiban where he lectures on ‘Chinese Thought’, a compulsory subject for Taiwanese high school students. An unconventional teacher, Wu advises his students to give up ‘Chinese Thought’ since it is not a popular subject in the test paper. He also adapts the lines of *The Analects* into a rap style to make them easier to remember. Showing little respect for the most-respected Confucius, Wu further belittles his school of disciples as the original model of Buxiban, which has a notorious reputation for its money-oriented management.

From the very beginning, Chinese philosophy is deprived of its status as the treasured reservoir of moral values; instead, it is judged by its utilitarian use in modern Taiwan. Episode One invents a new genealogy of Confucius' school of seventy-two distinguished scholars as Wu claims that his ancestor, Zi-xu (literally meaning 'nothingness') is the seventy-third disciple and the most important one. The rude and inattentive Zi-xu inspires the famous lines in *The Analects* because Confucius wanted to correct his defiant demeanours and capitalist value of life. According to Zi-xu, the great philosopher-educator Confucius is a social outcast, dragging a team of chariots wandering between the states in ancient China where nobody listens to his sound advice regarding how to run the state in good order. For Wu, *The Analects* in their present state, are "completely disordered and meaningless", since the inspiring conversations between Zi-xu and Confucius have been deleted (Lai IV: 136). The moral mottoes in *The Analects* are twisted in malicious and 'depraved' contexts; the cultural significance of Confucius is seriously undermined in this narrative by Zi-xu, nothingness.

As the master still has not arrived, the host and Wu Huei go on cross-talking about Lao Zi, who is deemed as a great figure in the Taoist school. Taking advantage of the fact that the pronunciation of Lao Zi is similar to that of the

intimate name for father in Chinese, the hosts digress to discuss Zuo Dao's father who runs a private library at home. This seemingly echoes the legend that has Lao Zi as the archive keeper at the imperial court. Zuo Dao's '*father*', his '*Lao Zi*' especially encourages people to read his favourite, the Taoist classics, the Tao Teh Ching⁴. But the public is keen on shallow stuff and his home-library soon turns into a dating place for teenagers. The public's ignorance of profound Chinese thoughts, in *Lao Zi*'s view indicates that Taiwan is in decline, as the Taiwanese do not know and learn from Chinese philosophy. The nearby cafeteria owner checks out some of his classics but uses them as the wrapping paper for breakfast. The much disappointed *Lao Zi* adopts the Taoist attitude to 'endeavour to do nothing', i.e. to let things run its natural course. At first, the books are stolen or damaged but the library gradually restores them to good order. But the frustrated *Lao Zi* still decides to leave Taiwan, a culturally and morally debased place in his view. At the airport, he leaves a note adapting the first sentence in the Tao Teh Ching: 'Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao' (Lao Zi 1989). With a few words changed, *Lao Zi* laments, "To leave [Taiwan] is a must; to stay is also an option"(translation mine, Lai IV: 169). The inherent ambiguity of Tao, the formless and unfathomable way of life lies in the fact that the guiding truth cannot be explicated without compromising

its rich meanings. The ambiguity of such cosmic law is misused as equal to *Lao Zi's* ambivalent identification with Taiwan, as it is a place without a binding cultural and moral value system and thus cannot be deemed a home-nation proper. Whether *Lao Zi* leaves Taiwan remains unclear since this is a choice prescribed in cultural politics, which cannot be easily cancelled out by the diversion of religious transcendentalism. In this episode, Lai shows his ambivalent attitude towards Chinese philosophy in terms of its impact on the formation of cultural identity in Taiwan. In one way, he suggests that Chinese philosophy has lost its use value for the modern Taiwanese and in another, Taiwan in the void of Chinese philosophy has not developed another value system of equally binding power to invoke a unified cultural identity.

Facing such a challenging subject, the shallow beef-show hosts, instead of conducting philosophical arguments beyond their capability, illustrate how Chinese philosophy is applied in the daily life of the Taiwanese at the price of distorting its original tenets. Since there is still no sight of the master, Pang Men, at the scene change, decides to 'become' the master by mimicking his appearance. He puts on a Qing-style robe, the standard costume for traditional cross-talk and Wu Hwei on seeing Pang Men in the costume, kneels down in respect as if to the real master.

Pang Men is then officially 're-introduced' as Master Ma Qian in the next episode entitled 'Dong Zhong-shu', the famous scholar who single-handedly made Confucianism canonized as the national ideology of the Han Dynasty where other schools of philosophy were discredited. Since then, Confucianism became the dominant value system for the Chinese. The fake master, Pang Men begins with a bold subversive statement in which he declares that Chinese philosophy reached perfection a long time ago and hence he moves on to a new subject, male chauvinism in Chinese culture. This chauvinism, he goes on to argue, is embodied by a daunting father figure, Dong Zhong-shu hereafter referred to as Uncle Dong Zhong (shu in Chinese also meaning uncle, a title placed after the name), whose daughter the young Pang Men was affectionate with.

Uncle Dong Zhong, who lives in isolation from the outside world, exercises chauvinist oppression in his house. This surreal father-figure has two stone lions on guard at the main entrance, reminiscent of the old house set-up in feudal China. His wife has her feet bound to follow the 'tradition'. His daughter's punishment for being three minutes late coming home is to copy repeatedly some Chinese classic text in calligraphy. Pang Men enters their prison-like house, disguised as the gas delivery boy and helps the daughter escape, only to discover that she is too

conditioned to live otherwise. At nightfall, she returns to her father's house by instinct. This episode seems to suggest that in Taiwan, where authentic Chinese philosophy is absent, patriarchy continues to promote the oppressive spirit of Confucianism.

Whilst the authority of Chinese philosophy is challenged and mocked throughout the cross-talk episodes, the closing crisis of the beef-show restaurant also presses on. The electricity is cut off sporadically and a big hole appears in the back wall. The stagehands start removing the three saints. The hosts and Wu Huei in backstage discuss about the future of the restaurant. Pang Men intends to save the restaurant, leaving to try to negotiate with the authority-in-charge. Zuo Dao plans to give up but Wu Huei demands that they finish the cross-talk together. When the next episode starts, some torches and emergency lighting equipment already lie on the floor, implying an imminent disaster and out of the hole in the back, "rays of strong light and thick mist creep in" (Lai IV: 203). In this eerie background, Wu Huei first throws heavy criticism on the polluted air, chaotic traffic, inefficient government and ugly environment in Taiwan, part of which he sees metaphorically inscribed in the big black hole in the back. The restaurant becomes a metaphor for Taiwan. Zuo Dao refuses to acknowledge Taiwan in crisis, insisting he does not see

such a hole. Confucianism seems defunct, although its impact is felt through patriarchy in Taiwan, where the dominant value system, according to Zuo Dao, is the Yin-Yang school long repressed by Confucianism. Now associated with fortune telling and Fongsui business, the Yin-Yang school is gaining huge popularity because people have no confidence in Taiwan, whose status as the home-nation is denied not only because of threatening Chinese nationalism but also because it is seen as a deteriorating society of crimes and corruption.

Zuo Dao suggests that the Taiwanese who live in uncertainty give up rational thinking and seek hope in divination of the Yin-Yang school. The ancient Chinese system of divination derived from I-Ching used to help people make decisions. An oracle (one of 64 hexagrams each having different meanings) is cast by flipping coins. Contrary to Zuo Dao's suggestion for the Taiwanese to seek recourse from the inhumane and irrational Yin-Yang school, Wu Huei claims that Master Ma 'virtually' helps him out as Ma's homepage advises him to believe in "human values" and that "mutual concerns between one another can save the world" (Lai IV: 214). To save Taiwan, two options are offered here: Confucius's humanism and the Yin-Yang school's divination system. At this critical and decisive moment, a mysterious flute sound flows in, the sign for the master's arrival. What appears,

however, is 'Pang Men' in a modern suit with sunglasses, who surreptitiously walks out of the big hole carrying a tape recorder playing the flute music. Wu Huei again, (mis)identifies 'Pang Men' as Master Ma, who starts running a round of coins casting prophecies about the future of Taiwan. When asked to decode the oracle, the 'master' utters nothing and rushes off with a face of terror. The master's dubious appearance (played by the actor playing Pang Men) offers no solution to save the crisis of the restaurant and Taiwan. The fate of Taiwan is linked with the restaurant that is gradually being knocked down during the cross-talk performance. The present Taiwan faces the imminent destruction and a possibly endangered future.

Finally, the 'real' Pang Men returns from outside and claims that he successfully negotiated the demolition date of the restaurant to be put off for one more day but declares that nothing further was decided. The two hosts now realise that both the 'master' and Wu Huei have left the stage. To wrap up the cross-talk, they conclude that in present-day Taiwan, Chinese thoughts have become merely distracting and trivial; what is left are only Pang Men and Zuo Dao, the unorthodox fakes. The master expected to transmit Chinese philosophy and to redeem Taiwan fails to appear but remains a haunting though mysterious figure in the background. At one scene change, Wu Huei answers a mobile call from the master at some train

station in the Taipei suburbs. He goes to pick him up but returns without him. The master's authority is problematic as he seems identified as some swindler making money through fortune-telling and playing the lottery. The Chinese philosophy he represents is constantly degraded and his stage presence is usurped by Wu Huei and Pang Men. Chinese philosophy is distorted in the modern cross-talk performance in Taiwan, a debased society left in a state of despair though its final destruction is deferred. There is no salvation to be found in either Confucianism or the alternative Yin-Yang school. On the whole, the 'cross-talk series' starts by presuming that Taiwan needs to be elevated by Chinese tradition of cross-talk and philosophy whose authenticity and authority is continuously questioned and appropriated by Taiwanese culture. This series ends by transposing the master from China into the present locality but this 'local' master is yet capable of saving Taiwan where there lacks a distinct centralising cultural value system to cohere a unified identity.

Taiwanese identity is still versed in Chinese tradition transformed by local contents.

In the end of Part III, the hosts stop calling out the master for curtain calls as they probably realise that the cross-talk tradition and Chinese philosophy occupy no real place in present Taiwan, where they constitute the internal lack embodied by the big hole in the wall. They are permanently deferred as suggested by the absent

master(s) whose presence is problematically staged and continually displaced by the beef-show host(s) in the 'cross-talk series'. Part III strikes a piquant note that people in Taiwan that are disconnected from Chinese heritage are denied a totalising Chinese identity, whilst they fail to identify with Taiwan, as it has no binding moral system and culture. The Yin-Yang school is not of much help as it only seemingly 'predicts' the future of Taiwan in unspecified horror and does not offer any solution. However, Taiwan is not completely abandoned as implied in the delay of its final total destruction. Lai renders 'delayed' the final demolition of the restaurant, i.e. Taiwan, yet the status of Taiwan as a secure home of binding culture is resolutely disavowed. I am suggesting that Taiwan as the home is in a state of disappearance, which gives resonance to the destroyed homes/homelands in Parts I and II where people in Taiwan and China fail to secure a unified and fixed home-nation identity.

I would therefore argue that via establishing a space of Chinese heritage in a conflicting relationship with present Taiwan, the 'cross-talk series' not only empties out the signification of China as the cultural origin; a homeland for Taiwan, a space where the cross-talk master(s) belong, is constantly invoked yet also disappearing. Also in this series, the Taiwanese have problems feeling at home in Taiwan, which is depicted as a place void of values, tradition and culture. The

Taiwanese hosts in invoking travel to the other space of China find their present locality is already penetrated by the difference of the other space, which is also appropriated in the present. The past in China and the present in Taiwan, as mutually constituted, disfigure each other's original holistic identity. Unable to ground in either place and secure a stable identity, home and identity for the Taiwanese, I would argue, is constituted in the journey in between past and present, China and Taiwan.

Via the Taiwanese hosts' encounter with the other space of China, the home-nation construction of Taiwan as a self-contained and homogeneous space is fissured by differences of the other space. This mapping of Taiwan in relation to Chinese history and cultural tradition appropriated in modern Taiwan dominates the 'cross-talk series'. The present in Taiwan continues to be mapped in the context of home, a thematic concern in the 'city series' by the Ping Fong Acting Troupe.

The city legend: can the Taiwanese make it?

There have been five plays in the 'city series' up to 1999, under the serial title of *Can Three Make It?* Except for Part I, they all have individual subtitles: *Part II: City Panic*, *Part III: Oh! A Converging Point of Three Diverged Paths*, *Part IV:*

Play Hard and *Part V: Empty City*. This series is motivated by the playwright-director Hugh Lee's desire to "make a comedy for the Taiwanese" (Lee 1993a: 14-16). Parts I and II have only three actors who symbolically stand for all the Taiwanese (Taiwanese). The series takes place mainly in Taipei City where the Taiwanese feel uncertain about whether to stay or leave. It also investigates how overseas Chinese (Parts III and IV) view their community and Taiwan in terms of home. Due to the word limit, I will only briefly describe the first two plays composed of seemingly irrelevant events which are cohered by a feeling of anxiety about living in chaotic Taipei but this anxiety permeates throughout the whole series.

In Part I, the three actors play out different stereotypical characters. For example, they play the white-collar clerks who work in the same office. Everyone is driven mad by the city's mechanical life and develops admiration for each other but, through lack of communication, they fail to articulate it. This ambiguous affectionate relationship is then parodied in a radio drama packed with exaggerated and artificial sentiments. Subsequent to this scene, the audience is presented by another traumatic occurrence as a girl from southern Taiwan dies as a result of a car accident which was witnessed by three people, none of whom confesses to the truth

when questioned. The implication of these scenes is to highlight that interpersonal communication is blocked in the city, whilst economic prosperity produces an extremely stressful lifestyle. Without meaningful communication and concern for each other, these isolated Taiwanese unwind in a disco where they dance frantically until they are exhausted to death, literally. Similar quirky acts of Part II begin with three people intruding into The National Theatre where they ridiculously dance *Swan Lake*, a scene which renders a cynical commentary on Western culture and its domination of the national stage of Taiwan. Then, they join a poetry contest and are asked to write a eulogy for Taipei. Finding nothing to praise about the city, these dispirited Taiwanese go to watch Chaplin's *City Lights*⁵ (1931) which makes them feel sadder as the warm concern between the tramp and the blind girl puts in sharper contrast their lonely indifferent life. Their final consolation lies in escape from the city and in their escape, they make a wish to return after five years to see how Taipei has changed. Compared with the lonely death that ends Part I, the escape here looks a little more optimistic as it implies a possible return to 'live again' in the city.

This escape in Part II forms the beginning of Part III where more characters are introduced from other Chinese cities outside Taiwan. From Part III onwards, the theme of travel becomes more and more appealing. Part III takes the trip that covers

Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Singapore where a Chinese family from these different regions is reunited. In Parts IV and V, the thematic of travel is contextualised in recurrent discussions about and struggles between emigrating out of and staying put in Taiwan. Parts III, IV and V all end with the leading characters' escape from the city. The destination of this chronic escape is never allocated clearly, as it is narrated by a dreamy off-stage voice. Though these characters seemingly run away from the city, they always return to Taipei in the next play of this continuing series. These fleeing Taiwanese are caught in the loop of Taipei and Taipei 'again', which they hope would change after the escape. Travelling as such, the Taiwanese leave the present home without another definitive home to go to. They are engaged in open-ended travel, which enables them to explore further the inner construction of the city.

All the characters in the 'city series' are closely tied by familial relationships and social networks. Various languages like the Beijing, Shanghai and Sichuan dialects of China, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, Cantonese plus Japanese and English are deployed, illustrating the multi-ethnic and international nature of Taiwan due to its history of colonialism and migration and the frequent interactions between the Chinese diasporas. This multilingual scenario constitutes the important

subtext of identity as the use of a specific language or the mixed use of languages bring out the different backgrounds of individual Taiwanese (John Weinstein 2000).

The complex identity constitution of the Taiwanese is not only cultural but also social, reflecting class and generation differences. The high crime rate, money-oriented value and the exploitation of disadvantaged classes like veterans and farmers generate discontent about life in modern Taiwan, which many discard as the centre of belonging.

In the 'city series', Taiwan is represented as a city; a virtual one, too. The subtitles of this series invoke a feeling of uncertainty and emptiness about living in the city. Taiwan is either an old city whose presence is receding as the domestic memory is erased by urban planning (Part III), virtually destroyed in a film script (Part IV) or turned into a state of anarchy by the disadvantaged class (Part V). The content of the home construct in Taiwan is evicted but is replaced by nothing new. The Taiwanese whose home is destroyed have nowhere to go; they are homed in the travel initiated by the escape that takes them away from but also relocates them back in Taipei. The 'city series' has a central figure, Kuo, a successful businessman owning many properties in Taipei. Part III tells how he manages to be re-unified with his younger brother who was left behind in China during the Civil War. The

historical and cultural burden that the old Taiwanese like Kuo is constitutive of his identity. Part IV extends the Kuo family's social network that includes Kuo's friends, neighbours, his other family through marriage and their children. Some emigrate overseas and hold hostile opinions about Taiwan. Some stay in Taiwan but have little attachment to it. Part V depicts Taiwan in the view of the young generation and the disadvantaged classes; Taipei (Taiwan) is a city paralysed by arson attacks and the incompetent police lose control. One crucial and sad question is posed in Part V: what is Taiwan? This is the ultimate concern of the 'city series'.

In the ending of the 'city series', the principal characters make the wish that they would meet again in the future to witness Taipei's change into a better city. The intriguing attachment with the city motivates them to return after a desperately needed escape. However, the series shows that Taipei has been deserted as a safe and stable home. The Taiwanese are homed in the movement between a frustrating present and a better future inscribed in the escape. In Part III, the scenes shift between Taipei, Beijing in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. These (overseas) Chinese communities all seem losing their gripping power as the home-nation since the locals are eager to move out. Part III delineates a cultural landscape haunted by Chinese nationalism but different propositions are raised against a unitary Chinese

identity. In Parts IV and V, the geography is limited to Taiwan where no stable identity is attained either, as Taipei (Taiwan) is plagued with gangster crimes and social disorder. Taipei is imaged as a city near the edge of break down. Though the scenes of destruction are enacted outside the framework of everyday reality, they highlight the disappearing state of Taiwan where a home identity built on a secure fixed place is not accessible.

Critical point: to stay or to go?

The central narrative in *Part III: Oh! A Converging Point of Three Diverged Paths* is about the distant yet close relationship between two brothers who live in China and Taiwan separately. The Taiwanese businessman, Kuo visits Beijing, China to be re-united with his brother, a Communist Party member, Qian Ding-yuan, as the Civil War had forced them apart since childhood. Living in different political systems, they have hostile conversations, saturated with the ideological conflict between Communist China and democratic Taiwan. There is also a language barrier as Kuo's native tongue is Taiwanese while his brother speaks the Beijing dialect. Part III discloses a morbid picture of a Chinese family separated by political force.

Through these two brothers seeking to reconnect, the play examines the life in

Taipei and Beijing, illustrating how urban modernisation affects people's private memory about home grounded in a fixed time and place. Both Beijing and Taipei have been undertaking urban re-construction for the better development of the nation. Kuo sighs over the wreckage of an old business district now replaced by a new shopping mall. In the ruins, there is a memorial plaque of familial ancestors, which represents 'history' for Kuo, as it is an acknowledgement of the past. Kuo regards this destroyed business district as a place to ground affiliations and accumulate memories, which are "the result of the interaction between time and space" (Lee 1993b: 6). Memory of the old city/home also troubles the foster father of Kuo's brother in Beijing, Old Qian, a scholar of Chinese history. The manor house, where Old Qian's family has lived for generations, is soon to be torn down to make way for the construction of a commercial office-building. Sadly, he only wishes that "he can die in his own [manor house] bed" (ibid.:11). Old people show strong attachment with the family home while the next generation welcomes the urbanisation that they deem as necessary to make a better society. The generation difference is also reflected with regard to belonging to the home-nation. Besides Qian Ding-yuan, an Army officer highly loyal to China, Old Qian has another son, Qian Xian-dong, who prefers to be called Paul. More identified with capitalist

values, Paul runs an illegal private business and is eager to make money and move out of China.

Similar lamentation for the old home's disappearance is also felt by Mary, Old Qian's illegitimate daughter who lives in Hong Kong. Hong Kong in 1993 is depicted in this play as a place of apocalyptic anxiety and decadence. As Hong Kong is to be handed over to China soon, Mary, a business development manager for a financial corporation is planning to emigrate to Taiwan meanwhile divorcing her photographer husband, Joseph. She thinks the high-rises in Hong Kong are losing colour, and worries that Hong Kong would lose its life force after it is returned to China. A similar despair is also voiced through Joseph's mistress, Bao-er, a radio show host. In her show, Hong Kong is described as an ideal place for pursuing extreme material comforts, a sign of decadence for a falling city. Besides the discoloured outlook and decadent life style, time is running out for Hong Kong as 1997 is approaching. For Bao-er, time is 'borrowed' for Hong Kong locals and her philosophy of life is thus to enjoy each moment since what remains of the borrowed time is not much and ticking away fast. This Act places China in the terrifying role of the destroying power, capable of eradicating Hong Kong whose existence is only valid in the time and place borrowed from China. It also shows that

in these (overseas) Chinese communities (Taipei, Beijing and Hong Kong), people share similar apprehensions for their present city/home, a city whose transformation is quickly dismissed as an unavoidable consequence of social modernisation or regime change.

The next Act reveals more about how politics interferes in private family life and thus affects the home identity. Mary tries to end her extra-marital affair with Peter, Kuo's son-in-law. In negotiating their 'illegitimate' relationship in a Taipei hotel, they end up arguing about the politics of China and Taiwan and whether to abandon their homes in Hong Kong and Taiwan as both places face the threat of Chinese nationalism. Peter, a native Taiwanese who holds a green card sees Taiwan as having "No history! No culture! Even no future" (Lee 1993b:19). He therefore opts to abandon Taiwan while May decides to stay in Hong Kong, but only verbally since she is also processing immigration to Taiwan. The dramatic climax occurs when Kuo and his daughter, Wan-zhen storm into the hotel. Peter tells his wife that "she [Mary] is like the Kaitak airport in Hong Kong" and he is only a transit passenger there (ibid.: 21). This statement underscores Hong Kong's dubious status as a permanent home since it is only a middle stop where international products circulate, or to stretch its socio-political meanings, where the Chinese, the British

and even the Taiwanese come and go without any long-term obligations or attachment. In Hong Kong, everybody is a passer-by and nobody is firmly or permanently grounded. The position of Hong Kong is elaborated more in the next Act when Paul has a crush on his half-sister, Mary who is visiting Old Qian in Beijing. Paul's impetuous affection for Mary is seemingly based on the calculation that via marrying Mary, a Hong Kong local, he can be granted a visa and get out of China. This political intention is made clearer when in flamboyant manners, Paul claims, "his deep affection for her [Mary] stays unchanged for fifty years", obviously an ironical rephrasing of Deng Xiao-ping (China's leader around the change-over period of Hong Kong) who guarantees that the present status of Hong Kong would remain unchanged for fifty years after 1997. Consequently, Hong Kong is not sustainable as a secure home because of its limited stability of fifty years. Paul's hasty proposal of marriage suggests that the Chinese nationalism that poses a threat to people in Hong Kong and Taiwan is losing its invoking power in China. However, it is not only Paul who wants to get out. His brother-in-law, a private van driver presents Mary with a huge suitcase, proposing to pack himself inside and be brought to Hong Kong as her luggage.

The Kuo family flies to Beijing to visit Qian Ding-yuan but the ideological

antagonism between Taiwan and China sets up a high wall between the siblings and Qian refuses to recognize Kuo as a brother. The angry Kuo hurls abuses in Taiwanese that are incomprehensible to Qian who shouts back in the political slogans of Communism. The verbal abuse grows into physical fights and in the chaos, Old Qian and Kuo's wife pass out in shock. This frantic scene ends in a more outrageous row about whether to drive the sick to the hospital or to find Deng Xiao-ping, the Communist Party leader for maybe he can solve the political contention that prevents the siblings from mutual recognition. Politics exercises a strong impact in the private life of people in both China and Taiwan. Though the Kuo's family reunion fails miserably in China, another one is set up in Singapore, a politically neutral place for both the Taiwanese and the Chinese. In Singapore, Qian now physically out of China acknowledges Kuo as brother and explains earlier in Beijing, he turned Kuo away because blood kinship with the Taiwanese is not to his advantage working for the Communist Party. To avoid the invisible political intervention in this family affair, the Qian family from China and the Kuo family from Taiwan plus Mary and Joseph from Hong Kong all gather in Singapore, a city-state emptied of Chineseness; although it has a seventy percent Chinese population, yet it designates English as its official language. To celebrate the

reunion, they wait for the first Singaporean passer-by to take a group photo but nobody shows up. This no-show deliberately dislodges the Singaporeans from the temporary unifying picture of the Chinese from different regions.

The Kuo family has toured the important (overseas) Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Taiwan is mapped as a place without culture or history. China is a totalitarian regime where people have mixed values and many seek to escape. Hong Kong is a transit place that is good for making money but not for developing long-term affiliation. Singapore seems to contain nothing solid as no Singaporean is represented in this performance and the existence of this city-state is only illustrated by an advertising board bearing a slogan 'Love your country' and the smiling photo of Singapore's Prime Minister. This play shows that the Chinese national identity is hardly sustainable outside China, where different diasporic identities are engraved through everyday life. The Kuo's family reunion in a not-so-Chinese city, Singapore is a strategic decision in consideration of the political conflicts between China and Taiwan. This performance ends with a slide projection that raises a succinct question, "If reunion [*of a Chinese family*] is like this [*taking place in Singapore, a third place of least Chineseness instead of Taiwan or China*], why [*the Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kongese bound by 'Chineseness'*] bother getting together?"

(added words mine, Lee 1993b:56) This Chinese gathering motivated by the blood kinship cannot but take place in Singapore where Chineseness is least observed. I would say that this last question challenges the binding force of a totalising Chinese identity of racial essence, suggesting the diasporic difference be taken into consideration in terms of identity for overseas Chinese like those in Taiwan. The title *A Converging Point of Three Diverged Paths* alludes to the paradoxical relationship between Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. Connected by a shared Chinese cultural history, these places are also separated as this common cultural history is differently appropriated in the local context. This point of convergence is also where these paths divert from each other (Huang Ying-xiung 1993).

Part III in the 'city series' begins by re-staging the ending of Part II when Peter, Mary and Paul walk farther from the city. They shrink into puppets and return to life to make wishes. Peter and Paul wish to make more money while Mary wishes that they could meet again after five years to 'see what this city becomes'. In Part III, these characters meet in different Chinese cities, which all impart a similar sense of insecurity as these cities are deprived of homely qualities as the centre of belonging and stability. The attachment to old Taipei is uprooted in modernisation and Hong Kong is losing itself to a threatening China. The Singaporeans have no stage

presence, represented only by political slogans. Overseas Chinese are imaged as drifting and grounded nowhere. Across the geographical boundaries between China, and these Chinese communities, Part III draws out 'a consciousness of exile' in the overseas Chinese.

At the end of Part III, they leave their cities again and walk towards the sea, 'further and further away from the city'. Mary sadly comments that innocent children are brought to a world that they can do nothing to change. Again, they cast wishes. Peter and Paul's wishes target on politics while Mary in silence mouths her wish that they could meet again and "see what this city, this land and this country becomes" (Lee 1993b: 57). This familiar wish predicts that the city will keep changing. After the wish-making, they mime the "happiness, panic, struggle, and danger they experienced in a dreamland" (ibid.). This seemingly cancels out the reality constructed through the previous events in this performance. Their movement turns violent and they are exhausted like 'three lifeless puppets'. This transformation into puppets implies a ritualistic death. Meanwhile, the stage is gradually overtaken by the larger-than-life puppets in the image of Taiwan's President, Deng Xiao-ping and Queen Elizabeth of Britain. Also, the backstage screen projects the happy faces of children whose innocent smiles counteract the

deceitful smiles of the rubber-made politicians in the front. The next generation of children moves time forward through space that is constantly being reproduced in time. Present Taiwan and its difficult relationship with China is explored, and the future of Taiwan is cast beyond the escape, which brings in another round of travel where history, time, space and people, the major constituents of identity continue to be examined and re-inscribed in their interactions.

Play hard with your life

In Part III, we see that people in Beijing and major overseas Chinese cities in Southeast Asia develop belongings for homes located in different places. Kuo has nostalgia for old Taipei and old Qian is identified with old Beijing. The young generation has varied views regarding where their home is. The native Taiwanese Peter who holds an American green card conducts businesses in Hong Kong and China. The Beijingers, Paul is trying to get out of China via marrying Mary from Hong Kong who is planning to move to Taiwan. All in-and-out traffic between these cities is boiled down in the escape that takes everyone back to Taipei. *Part IV: Play Hard* focuses on how the young Taiwanese try to make a home somewhere to ground identification; buying property in Taipei and emigrating overseas are two

options considered here. Those emigrating overseas and those staying put, both have doubts regarding Taiwan as the home. Using ordinary personal stories, this play expounds the larger political and cultural confusion that people experience in Taiwan, a place prescribed by “crises, turmoil as well as vitality” (Chen Zheng-xi 1997).

Part IV begins with the escape scene that ends Part III, followed by the projections of the Taipei city landscape mixed with a pivotal question, “What kind of place is Taiwan?” A rather discouraging answer is projected, “Don’t panic! We are not gonna die here. Let’s fight a long-term battle with your life” (Lee 1997: 5). These terse sentences imply life in Taiwan is a risky business and you need to fight for survival. This play begins with Kuo at the airport flying to visit his in-laws, Peter’s parents in Canada. He runs into his neighbour, Old Deng, a Mainlander veteran who is flying to China for a visit to his hometown. Kuo in the ‘city series’ represents a native Taiwanese with a strong Taiwanese identity. He prepares a small national flag of Taiwan that he will wave when passing the Canadian Customs. Old Deng is another type, the Mainlander Taiwanese who came with the Nationalists to Taiwan, which became his second home in the late 1940s. He is therefore more identified with the hometown in China, which holds his family past that is now

different from that in his memory. Having different constitutions of identity, Kuo and old Deng are connected as Kuo's littlest daughter is engaged to Deng's son, Little Deng.

Besides the younger brother in China, Kuo has an elder brother in Taiwan, Old Kuo who manifests another dimension of the layered Taiwanese identity. An old-fashioned farmer, Old Kuo has strong nostalgia for the colonial past when he was educated in Japanese. Peter's parents, Kuo's family-in-laws from another background illustrate the complication in processing identity. Bella and Sven who were originally from Shanghai, China came to Taiwan from where they moved to America and then to Canada. Though living in Canada, Bella often cries at thinking of her old house in Taipei. But Sven despises Taiwan where there are rapes, kidnaps, fires and car accidents. He even goes as far as to conclude, "It [Taiwan] is not a place for human beings to live", meanwhile he praises the high quality of life in Canada though where he has to buy guns for self-protection (Lee 1997: 20). The meeting of Sven and Kuo who have contrasting views on Taiwan is not pleasant. Kuo leaves Canada in anger, feeling ashamed as he has failed to defend Taiwan against Sven's abuse. Coming from different backgrounds, the old generation has split views regarding the present Taiwan as home.

As for the young generation, some emigrate while others remain in Taiwan.

Act Two takes place on the construction site of a condominium where a promotion event is being held. In the empty construction site, the property agent, Jerry boasts about the bright prospect of this condominium yet to be built. Jerry's catchphrase is "To love Taiwan is to live here forever" and buying a condominium unit shows one's deep affection for the land (Lee 1997:12). Rather self-contradictory in relation to his love-for-Taiwan, Jerry in fact holds a Canadian residence visa, as he is about to move there soon. He is presently in Taiwan for selling more condominium units so as to make enough commission to cover his future living expenses in Canada.

Taiwan is deemed as a transient money-making place for Jerry where he has little attachment. Under his pretentious though passionate rhetoric of love for Taiwan, a Hakka family is persuaded and places orders on two condominium units. In Jerry's words, the first thing to establish a home is to 'imagine' its existence in the mind.

But seeing the demo unit collapsing is not very helpful for such an imagination of home and discourages the interested buyers such as Little Deng and his fiancée, Kuo Wan-yu. Also, the slogan words, 'We introduce you into a human space' fall off the banner. The image of a secure home, it seems, is as superficial and fragile as the demo unit and the plastic slogan. For Little Deng, a cynical film director-to-be, "In

this empty space [the construction site], they sell nothing but air, a dream and a hope” (ibid.13). Home is delineated here as an empty concept without substance.

It is clear that the young people have problems making a home in Taiwan. And the originally stable identification with either (colonial) Taiwan or China of the old generation is weakening as they feel left out in the Taiwanese society that is changing so fast. Old Kuo sold the family house for money since he thinks, “Rich men enjoy higher respect in present Taiwan” (Lee 1997: 23). However, a credulous old fool like him soon loses all the money in gambling. His neighbour, Old Deng now back in Taiwan, complains that his family graveyard in China has changed so much that he could not recognize it. Crying hard over the urn of his dead wife, he shamefully admits that he has forgotten what she looked like. While these two old men express their frustration about their homes there and here, their bowls of rice get mixed up. In their different native tongues, they argue which bowl is whose but reach no agreement. Kuo asks them to stop making a fuss about finding the right bowl since “Rice in different bowls is the same; it also comes out as the same shit” (ibid. 26). This domestic row points out that the Taiwanese of different backgrounds (a veteran from China and a native Taiwanese identified with colonial Japan) share food and live in the same place, Taiwan.

Both old men express a feeling of nostalgia for the past. China for Old Deng is the homeland which has changed as much as colonial Taiwan has changed for Old Kuo who enjoys reciting the colonial history and singing Japanese military songs in karaoke bars. He collapsed in tears when he learnt about the end of the Sino-Japanese war announced by the Japanese teacher whom he felt attached to. Details of this story about his collapse are changed every time he recites it. On the spur of moment, Old Kuo goes on talking about the 228 Incident where many native Taiwanese were killed by the Nationalist Army in 1947. This event initiates the internal division in Taiwan between the Mainlander Chinese and the native Taiwanese. When Old Kuo is about to talk about this influential Incident, everybody sneaks out of the room as they lack interest in history. Old Kuo is left alone on stage with his colonial past like Old Deng with the old homeland; both belong to a marginalised class clinging to a past forgotten and ignored in present Taiwan.

Sven and Bella fly to Taiwan to visit the Kuo family and all go celebrating in a karaoke restaurant. For the anti-Taiwan Sven, the popularity of karaoke says how stressful life in Taiwan is since in his view, Taiwan is a chaotic society of crimes and under the threat of natural disaster and political uncertainty. But in Kuo's eyes, the widespread karaokes show that the Taiwanese lead a carefree life that they love to

sing about. The young generation holds an indifferent and sometimes spiteful attitude towards Taiwan. For example, Wan-yu, a dancer-choreographer is creating a dance about Taiwan which is symbolically represented by a mountain of garbage, although this dance has an idyllic title 'The Dream of Countryside'. She will also demand the audiences put on gas masks during the dance. Taiwan in her artistic picture becomes a poisonous site and the ideal home only lies elsewhere, the countryside that however is located in the dream. The young generation detached from Taiwan like Wan-yu, is advised to smell the rice in the field where she may gain inspiration for her dance about Taiwan.

The gathering in the karaoke restaurant turns into chaos as there is a false fire alarm followed by the gangsters' shoot-out. These incidents in the karaoke perhaps unhinge Kuo's originally strong identification with Taiwan since he starts processing the emigration of his family despite his wife's disagreement. In the next Act, the patriotic Kuo has already emigrated to Canada, leaving his wife and elder brother in Taiwan, which is then described as being destroyed in a war. Kuo returns and re-unites with his wife and brother in the ruins; the three old people wonder how to start a new life. This tragic scene is then revealed to be imagined in the mind of Little Deng for his movie, *Fireworks* that is yet to be filmed. Thus, this war exists

only in the words of the film script; however the audience is left to ponder the significance of Little Deng's expression: "War is an illusion, an innuendo" (Lee 1997: 51). As this film script is 'coincidentally' finished on the same date when Hong Kong is officially returned to China, this virtual war alludes to the possible attack on Taiwan in 1997 by China. This war is a theatrical preemptive response to China's threat of using military force to retrieve Taiwan. This imagination of war is a reaction not only to the external threat of Chinese nationalism but also to the internal social problems in Taiwan. The idealistic Little Deng who sees Taiwan as corrupt and debased proposes to appraise this war from a 'positive' angle since though it wrecks everything yet it also signals the possibility of a new start. Little Deng believes construction comes only after destruction. By such logic, Taiwan has to disappear first to gain the chance to be born again.

The finale is another scene of escape in which Peter, Little Deng and Wan-yu leave Taipei towards a patch of rice fields, walking further and further away. The projections are photos of fireworks, then images of garbage piled against the background of a blue sky. The opportunist Peter makes the wish to survive by protecting his own interests. Wan-yu, the alienated choreographer declares that she now smells the fragrance of rice, a possible sign of re-connecting with the land,

which the young Taiwanese of her generation have lost. Peter poses the same question asked in the very beginning, "What is it, Taiwan?" "Don't panic. We are not gonna die", Little Deng's answer sounds nonchalant yet carries a sense of powerlessness. There is a spirit to keep fighting despite the previous negative profiling of Taiwanese society. The projections then show Taiwan's famous politicians and finish with the words, 'The End' typed automatically and run repeatedly on the screen accompanied by the clicking typing sound mixed with indistinct gunshots. An eerie feeling of war/ending occupies the stage.

Part IV delivers different possibilities of home-making for both young and old Taiwanese. Kuo, Old Kuo and Old Deng each have a specific homeland whether it be old-time Taipei, Japan or China in the nostalgic past. Kuo shows morbid resentment for the renovation of the business district where he spent his childhood. Old Kuo misses the Japanese rule because he was better received then than now when his old-fashion values clash with those of young Taiwanese. Kuo initially refutes Sven, who holds Taiwan in contempt. But his fidelity is weakened in the virtual war when he escapes overseas. After the virtual war, Kuo returns to Taiwan but the familiar old home is not there anymore. Before we see the rebirth of Taiwan, the fearless Taiwanese conduct another escape from the city and are jettisoned back

again to the city in Part V.

Home in Taiwan is prescribed by uncertainty and danger. The happy singing in the karaoke is interrupted by the gangster fight. Home, in the form of a condominium unit, seems as flimsy as the collapsing demo unit. The destruction of the virtual war brings in hope for a new home that is yet to be built. The content of the new home is left unfulfilled while the escape already moves the Taiwanese to confront once again the city where more incidents weaken the stability of a home-bound Taiwanese identity. I suggest that through an imaginary war, the depraved images of Taipei, the fragile demo home at the construction site, the present home in Taiwan is evacuated of solid substance. Also, the escape sends the Taiwanese into another round of travel without a definite point of arrival. This escape denies the Taiwanese a return to the old home but leads them back to the city whose status of home is further challenged. The arrival of a new home seems forever delayed for the Taiwanese are always involved in another round of escape. Home, delivered through destruction in conjunction with the escape, is never firmly located in any specific place, but rather registered as an in-between space.

Through the travel initiated by the escape, the Taiwanese encounter various times and spaces in the same site of Taipei, where the heterogeneous constitution of

Taiwanese identity is uncovered. The trips have so far examined the social-cultural network between China, Taiwan, and other overseas Chinese cities where the attachment to the city/home is unsettled. There is an urge to abandon the home construct bound by a fixed time and place throughout the series. In Part IV, the family home for the old generation is destroyed in war; the new home for the young generation yet to be built seems only an airy promise. Home in Taiwan, of whatever ontological format, is not holding on.

Into the city, once more

After reactivating the escape, *Part V: Empty City* shows snapshots of the city landscapes mixed with those of governmental buildings. The projection then refers to Part V as “a bubble-like city comedy” (Lee 1999: 1), which highlights the evaporating character of a phantasmagoric city. Part IV demonstrates that Taipei, a hustling metropolis is, in a symbolic way, an empty city where nobody is solidly grounded. In Part V, the alienation from the city is examined from the perspective of the marginalized classes who revolt in order to reclaim their endeared hometown that has become a shameful place to live. They produce public disturbances, like arson, to express their discontent for a malfunctioning social machine. The

vulnerable Taipei faces anarchist arson attacks and a poorly orchestrated kidnap.

However, because they are presented in a playful mode, these social riots I suggest, render the city a place where everything looks suspiciously unreal.

The first Act begins with a news report about an arson attack that just took place somewhere. A man called Hu Ker-you (the pronunciation of which is similar to 'fuck you' in Mandarin) claims responsibility for this arson event, which he declares to be the first wave of an anti-government attack. Some anarchist conspiracy seems to be sizzling. Throughout the city series, more characters are added, expanding the representative spectrum of the Taiwanese and the scope of appraising the multiple facets of their home identity. The first Act introduces Kuo's neighbours each of whom runs into some trouble. Old Shi is a general contractor whose bank savings, property documents and six foreign passports are all stolen by his wife and daughter who need money as both are obsessed with a gigolo from Hong Kong. A-shan, an anti-social postman steals and burns mail. He and his wife from China store petroleum in large quantities, a clue to identify him as the arsonist as he also boldly declares, "Fire pushes the society to move forward" (Lee 1999: 7). Different prohibition signs and fines of various kinds that you may find in Taipei are projected in the beginning of the second Act, predicting a scene of confrontation.

Then, a news item is projected and identifies Hu Ker-you as the leader of the “We want to change the Tou-Jia Party” (ibid.:12), which organizes the anti-government attack. Tou-Jia, meaning ‘boss’ in Taiwanese, is a term often used in political campaigns to refer to the government. Hu Ker-you keeps sending threatening messages updated on the projection screen. Besides Hu Ker-you’s threatening presence, the second Act also presents a group of young people who are not much bothered by the anti-government arson attacks as they are fully absorbed in their individual worries. These young people who are mutually acquainted come from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. They are about to fly away or just arrive at the airport. Communicating in Mandarin with various regional accents, they discuss their future plans and feelings about present Taiwan.

Among them is Kuo’s son, Mao-xung who is trapped in a fraud lawsuit since his boss set him up for the sake of money. The frustrated Mao-xung sees Taipei (Taiwan) as an “empty city”, which has nothing left “once one thing [money] is pumped out” (Lee 1999: 43). He sees no future in Taiwan and decides to immigrate to highly disciplined Singapore. Kuo who by now has already sent his wife and daughter to America, stays in Taiwan for he “eats, shits and will die here [Taiwan]” (ibid.: 45). He still shows residual attachment to Taiwan though all his family has

practically moved out. While the Taiwanese local, Mao-xung is moving out, two men from Hong Kong and Singapore just arrive to seek a career in Taiwan. This gathering at the airport ends with a sign carved in bubble foams, 'No Lorry Unpacking Here', dropping off in the wind. On seeing this sign falling, Mao-xung's Singaporean girlfriend sarcastically asks her Singaporean friend who intends to settle in Taiwan, "Do you really want to work in a country where nothing is for sure?" (ibid.: 17). The young people from Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities are moving between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. They have diverse views about Taiwan (Taipei) as the home where there are opportunities for making money, but people care for nothing but money. Besides, Taiwan is not a safe home, criticised as it has 'typhoons, earthquakes, kidnaps, arsons etc.'

Throughout the play, Hu Ker-you continues committing arsons all over the city. Even the motorbikes parked in front of a police station are burnt. However, the police find no evidence to link this event with the anti-government conspiracy masterminded by Hu Ker-you. Their 'professional' judgment is that the arsonist is 'either a male or a female', a pretentious insult on the malfunctioning social mechanism in Taiwan, which explains for the following anti-government activities. While the motorbikes are burnt, Old Kuo and Old Deng are detained in the police

station after being caught in a hotel room with a teenage girl, Xiao-li. Under the police custody, Old Kuo feels a strong sense of loneliness and describes himself by the title of a pop song, as 'The lonely bird resting on the branch'. Educated in the colonial time, this old man is marginalized in modern Taiwan where he is fined for wearing a farmer's sampan instead of a proper helmet when riding a motorbike. Old Deng, the Mainlander veteran who came with the Nationalists, feels cheated as he was told that the military withdrawal from China to Taiwan was only temporary. It turns out that he has been separated from his family in China for over four decades. To express his discontent for the government in Taiwan, a place full of lies, Old Deng draws a flag with a face that has a tongue sticking out. Old Kuo and Old Deng, the social outcasts aspire to their individual good old past. These two widowed men place their love and attention on Xiao-li, another figure of social alienation, a suicidal delinquent from a broken family. She lies to all including the two old men who support her financially. However, a solid friendship is established among these three solitary souls: a deserted veteran identified with China, a homeless teenager plus an ill old farmer whose values in life are outdated. These three alienated figures find comfort in each other's company.

In this play, Taipei is plagued by criminal acts. With help from A-shan, Old

Shi kidnaps his wife and asks for a ransom from their daughter. Old Kuo is also involved in looking after the kidnapped. When the police visit A-shan's place to check the dubious visa status of his Mainland Chinese wife⁶, all are panicked for fear that the police will discover the kidnap. As the highly nervous Old Kuo pushes aside one policeman, a gunshot is heard. In chaos, all look around to see who got shot and Old Kuo screams out "It is my testicles" (Lee 1999: 40). This outlandish scene ends with all the actors freezing still with their tongues sticking out. This image of protruding tongues marks a sign of communal objection against the authority-in-charge. More absurd lines are projected on the screen, "Panic and chaos spread all over the city. Hu Ker-you angrily declares that it is time for an intermission after which Taiwan will become an empty city" (ibid.). This paradoxically indicates the proximity of the fictional character, Hu Ker-you to the audience; therefore, undermining his 'threatening' presence on the stage.

After the intermission, this empty city is still not empty of 'unusual' crimes. The police still chasing after Hu Ker-you announce, "If we miss him, we'll just wait until the next fire happens", another sarcastic commentary on the appalling social machine in Taiwan (Lee 1999: 54). In one arson site, the police collect a note asking, "Don't you think that we [the Taiwanese] have been living in an anarchist state for

long enough?" (ibid.: 59). This voices the anger of the Taiwanese people and their discontent with a disordered society of pervasive crimes. In addition to the rampant arson, the kidnap develops to the stage of negotiating ransom. Old Shi's daughter haggles the ransom price with her own father to save her mother. While the father and daughter argue over the price for the life of the wife/mother, a fire starts in A-shan's house where the hostage is held. Everybody is then taken to the police station and Old Kuo confesses he caused the fire by accident. Extremely nervous, guilty and hopeless, this old farmer dies suddenly just when A-shan shows up, claiming he is Hu Ker-you and leading everybody to escape in a van. Then, a toy-sized van and police car appear on a model landscape, chasing after each other. The noise of gunshots and the revving of engines are heard. Finally, the van escapes the police car in the chase. These diminutive vehicles in an implausible chase decrease the credibility of what has happened so far.

The escape in the finale has Xiao-li, Kuo and Old Shi standing on a mountain far from the city. The background projections show the city in dawn light; the three talk about Taipei, where everybody lies in Xiao-li's view. Kuo has no faith in the government under which no one is taken care of. Old Shi describes a better city in his dream, where people live happily in a state of anarchy. Kuo takes out the flag of

protruding tongue created by Old Deng, claiming it to be 'Hu Ker-you ('fuck-you') flag', which he then implants on top of the hill overlooking the city. The final projection shows more and more 'fuck-you' flags gradually covering up the entire city. The performance ends in this projection and the image of the three characters freezing still with their tongues sticking out.

The portrayal of Taiwan in Part V is dismal, consistent with the previous parts of the city series. People lose faith and see no future in Taiwan. The old people are ignored and left alone. The young disdain Taiwan and plan to emigrate. The society is attacked by crimes of arson and kidnap while the social machine is incompetent and unable to restore order. The city is destroyed though only symbolically, for the events of social disturbance are narrated in preposterous details and displayed in a diminished scale. The social commotion appears more fantastical than real; it does no substantial damage but does affirm that there is a subversive force forming at the bottom of the Taiwanese society. The take-over of Taipei by the 'fuck-you' flags in the finale illustrates the symbolic victory of anarchism and provides the fallen city with an allegorical salvation, which is attainable only through an escape from the city.

The 'city series' demonstrates how Taipei fails to fulfil the ideology of

home-nation in providing safety, foundation, protection and stability. In this series, Taipei (Taiwan) does not match the above requirements but is a changing city, reacting to hostile politics and internal conflicts. The home-centred Taiwanese identity is not stable in the 'city series'. The important figure, Kuo first advocates passionately for identification with Taiwan. His devotion to Taiwan is compromised in Part IV when he flees in the virtual war. In Part V, he moves his wife and daughter overseas and he also becomes one of those who escape from the city, though such an escape framed in this series is not equal to complete abandonment. From Part III to Part V, Kuo's attachment with Taiwan is gradually eroded. It comes as no surprise that he initiates the action of planting the fuck-you flag on the hill in the final escape.

I think that through the escape, the 'city series' casts a 'double' of Taipei, elaborating an uncanny notion of home, that is granted in a future time yet is constituted of endless returns to the present of Taipei (Taiwan). In envisioning a better post-escape city, our gaze is directed back at the city once more and our imagination is activated towards a home yet to emerge. Travel is not conducted to confirm the privileged locality in the present narrative but to expose its vulnerability when juxtaposed with the other space, the future Taipei, in a different

and better condition. Here, what surfaces in the travel is the illusive double of the city whose existence waits to be substantialised. Travel deviates from the city, meanwhile leading to its double, but travel does not aim to enhance a pre-determined home construct of an ontological status and a stable identity. Rather, travel is a mapping strategy to render a time/space out of the present of the city which is continuously disappearing in the 'city series' that ironically has the city as its subject of concern. In this time/space released out of the present, the historical and imaginary spaces clash into a heterotopia where spatio-temporal differences are re-considered in mapping home and identity for the Taiwanese.

Conclusion: where to escape in a disappearing city?

The narratives of home in Chapter Four teased out a protean space of spatio-temporal ambiguity. The diasporic Taiwanese move in between the present and past, feeling out of place here and there. They re-visit the past homeland in China with its cultural traditions, empire history and blood kinship re-inscribed in present Taiwan where home is a constant displacement of the home/lands of both past and present. Chapter Five further examines the mapping of home in Taiwan, composed of cross-talks and city stories embedded with local cultural sensibility

and everyday incidents. The 'cross-talk series' underlines nostalgia towards the past in China framed in the 'beef-show' context, a performance genre eliciting a distinct Taiwanese-ness. The 'city series' focuses on Taipei where no stable home identity is firmly established. Life in Taipei gives out a strong feeling of homelessness as some Taiwanese are anxious about staying put while some are moving out. With the exception of the old generation who have a residual attachment with the land, everyone else is on the move and this entire series ends in the leading characters' escape from Taipei. However, the destination of the escape is never identified. Taipei (Taiwan) though on the verge of destruction never disappears completely in this city legend.

The modern 'cross-talk series' in Taiwan starts with a story about a love-struck Taipei girl who refuses to laugh. Her melancholy is adorned with historical depth. One host repeatedly claims that he saw this girl 'before' in different periods in feudal China. In the post-script note, Lai elaborates on the symbolic meaning of this *déjà-vue* girl, who initiates the modern cross-talk in Taiwan, representing "some beautiful thing, some tradition, and something in the past..."(Lai I: 411). Thus, this modern cross-talk series investigates the melancholy of a disappearing Chinese cultural tradition. I would argue that this disappearance is considered in terms of the

ambiguous constitution of Taiwanese identity negotiated in contentious contingency with the cultural homeland in China where the cross-talk master(s) belong; figures who are always invoked but never appear. The absent master(s) has a presence that is problematically integrated with that of the beef-show hosts.

With/out the master(s), the beef-show hosts run the live show where authority of the Chinese master is denigrated. The authority of the beef-show hosts is not solidly established either, since they always stand in the shadow of the Chinese master.

In Part I, the masters are almost identified as ghosts then, disguised as The God of Laughter locked within the old parcel buried in history in Part II. Part III presents the master in a modern image as he runs a personal website and uses email for communication. A capitalist opportunist involved in mercantile Fongsui business, the master in Part III is 'almost' identified as one Taiwanese host though it is not finally confirmed. Besides transferring the master from China to Taiwan, Part III also uses the beef-show restaurant as the allegorical site of Taiwan. The big hole in the restaurant signals a constitutive lack of authentic Chinese philosophy in Taiwan. The Taipei restaurant, Taiwan emptied of Chinese thoughts has seen a flourishing Yin-Yang School, which fails to rescue Taiwan from destruction. In the 'cross-talk series', the episodes examine different configurations of home in the refugee and

dis/re/ location experience of people in China and Taiwan. In invoking the Chinese master, the Taiwanese hosts conduct a virtual travel into the other space to locate the Chinese master(s) and a cultural origin, but this travel leads them back to the present in Taiwan, where Chinese heritage constitutes an internal lack.

Via travelling to the past of China, the present in Taiwan is put into perspective on both spatial and temporal planes. China originally positioned as the cultural origin and eternal homeland is deconstructed, but this travelling to the other space also reveals the constitutive lack of present-day Taiwan. Travel slits open both spaces in the past in China and the present in Taiwan which are immersed in each other's difference. Travel enables a glimpse into the utopia hidden inside the ancient tomb and via the collapse of this abode of Chinese ancestors, "modern people [the Taiwanese] find, re-consider and grasp a more real sense of self" (Yan Hong-ya 1996:23). The episodes in the 'cross-talk series' delineate the failure of the Taiwanese to inhabit any fixed places of home. The homes in different formulations are not tied tight to the land: the old homes flattened out by earthquake, the temporary air-raid shelter and the relocation village in Taiwan plus the already changed hometown in China for the Mainlander Taiwanese. Home also depicted in conflation with nation is hardly a seamless whole. Nor is it framed as an imaginary

utopia; the home-nation is not sustainable in either past or present. Furthermore, the beef-show restaurant, Taiwan, is also on the brink of imminent destruction. The homes in the present in Taiwan and the past in China are disappearing.

In the 'city series', the Taiwanese leave the present home and travel into a different future that never arrives. Like in the 'cross-talk series', Taiwan (Taipei) is portrayed in a state of disintegration and is never a solidly grounded home. Also similarly, the Taiwanese beef-show hosts and the Taiwanese via travelling into the past of both China and Taiwan, fail to attain an identity fixed in present Taiwan constituted by the difference of the past. The first two parts of the 'city series' depict a city where people are indifferent to each other. They feel detached and finally opt to run away from the city. This escape leads to Part III, where Kuo's trip of family reunion takes him to Beijing and major overseas Chinese cities which are also losing their homely essence. Hong Kong just before 1997 lives on the favour of China as a leased-out property. Beijing is prescribed by a Chinese nationalism that does not stop the outflows of the Beijing locals. The Kuo family reunion in Singapore presents a scenario of regional differences among the Chinese, implying the difficulties of imposing a totalising Chinese identity on overseas Chinese communities.

The 'city series' writes a genealogy of Taipei (Taiwan) where people live in anxiety. It is constantly changing as modern urbanisation wipes out private memory associated with the land. The young generation either have cynical views about Taiwan or place their hope in emigration. The young Chinese from China, Hong Kong, Singapore gather in Taiwan while the Taiwanese are moving out or are hesitant about settling down in Taiwan. The old people find it a hostile place to live. In Part IV and V, the despair of living in Taipei culminates in the destruction by a virtual war and an anarchist revolt raised by the underprivileged classes although both possibilities are less threatening given their surreal presentation. The finale of the series moves to a hill covered with the signs of protruding tongues expressing disgust and discontent for the city in its present state which the Taiwanese fail to identify with. Nevertheless, they have a consistent longing for a different city. Each of the 'city series' ends with a crisis that leads to escape, which provides another chance to dive into the city again, which hopefully changes to a better place.

In this series, the Taiwanese are always on move to the 'next' journey via the 'ending' 'escape'. Without a destination to arrive at, their escape seems an on-going event. Each escape leads to the next entry into the city. The Taiwanese travel not to affirm the present status of home in Taipei but to witness that 'home' that is

constantly reconfigured escapes boundaries. I propose that the 'city series' empties out the signifier, Taipei City (Taiwan), as the home fixed within boundaries, and its function as the centre of identification. This series exposes a lack of home in Taipei, which provides the motivation to escape from it. A home-bound Taiwanese identity is impossible to sustain in this series and I suggest that the Taiwanese in the journey triggered by the escape, are homed in a diasporic space that is not locatable in any fixed time and place. This diasporic space spans in between the city here in crisis and its double there, which is yet to emerge following the escape, and incorporates the differences of both the present and past of the city. The Taiwanese are homed in displacements of both utopia (a better and different city in the future as aspired in the escape) and the present home in a dystopian state (a bounded home disfigured by serial crises).

The desire to leave this chaotic and depressing city/home is strong enough to motivate the cyclical escape, but the desire to make home is also apparent in the returns of the cycle. In between these escapes, we encounter another disaster-struck city where the home identity is hard to sustain. The wishful utopia, a different Taipei, is constantly expected yet also delayed. This may look like a pessimistic view of Taiwan as home. However, I would argue that by showing that ontological home

constructs are untenable, at the same time showing the permanent deferral of a future utopia, this series refuses the Taiwanese a fixed home place with a totalising and homogenous identity. Such an identity cannot adequately account for the diversified backgrounds of the Taiwanese. But, this series also calls forth an alternative formula of home and identity. Home in this alternative way is an act of inhabiting the different times and places encountered in the travel resulting from escape. Travel starts from leaving the bounded home and giving up the present identity so as to engage in a process that reveals the difference in the other space outside the present time and space. The pre-given identity in the past homeland and the present home is unpacked and re-constituted. Taiwanese Identity is negotiated in a diasporic space mapped by travelling between the past in China and the present in Taiwan as well as between present Taiwan and its different future.

Endnotes

¹ Walking birds is a Chinese custom, referring to an act of taking a caged bird(s) outside for a 'walk'.

² During the Cultural Revolution, millions of urban youth (secondary school graduates and students) were mobilized and relocated to the remote rural areas where they received re-education of the 'correct' ideology provided by the poor peasants. For more information, please refer to Tsou Tang's *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms: a historical perspective*.

³ The original poem, *Through the Yangzi Gorges* is by the great Tang Dynasty poet, Li Bai. A figure of free spirit, he embraces more Taoism than Confucianism favoured by the dominating aristocratic class. The translation of the original poem in the form of quatrain follows the translation of the 300 Tang poems on-line at this University of Virginia site: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/chinese/frame.htm>

From the walls of Baidi high in the coloured dawn
 To Jiangling by night-fall is three hundred miles,
 Yet monkeys are still calling on both banks behind me
 To my boat these ten thousand mountains away

⁴ It is highly suspicious that this book is written by Lao Zi, whose actual existence as a historical person remains uncertain (David Cooper 1996).

⁵ This film is about a tramp falling in love with a beautiful blind girl whose family is in financial trouble. The tramp's on-and-off friendship with a wealthy man allows him to be the girl's benefactor and suitor.

⁶ Marriages between women from China and Taiwanese men are common. Yet due to the still 'hostile' relationship between Taiwan and China, these 'Chinese' wives are not granted a permanent visa as is in the normal legality of many other countries.

Conclusion

A Poetics of Diasporic Space: Homing in Travelling

Moving beyond the past

To bring this work to its conclusion, I will first elaborate on the theoretical grid of diasporic space which was detailed in Chapter One and its theatrical manifestation analysed in Chapters Two to Five. Chapter One offered an analytical examination of diaspora in relation to space and identity. The constitution of diaspora defies the essentialist construction of the nation-state which is closely tied with territory and race. My investigation of the contemporary definition of diaspora, as deployed in sociology and cultural studies, showed that it is historically constituted and engendered in various forms. The classic definition, which derived its meaning from the experience of exile for Jewish communities, has been largely broadened to account for the global and rapid flow of trans-national capital, labour and cross-cultural exchanges. Diaspora, in the present context, signals an alternative geography to the nation-state, whereby a collective identity evolves from the physical and psychological alienation from the home/land—both in the past and present.

Drawing on Bhabha's notion of the "third space" and Foucault's conception of "heterotopias", I explored the cross-cultural momentum and spatio-temporal dynamics that I view as essential components of diasporic space where Taiwanese identity is negotiated. Diasporic space arises when the rigid boundaries between cultures are disrupted and cultural differences are hybridised in antagonistic relations. Hence, the originary and pure content prescribed to the national cultural identity becomes problematic. This effect, I have illustrated, in my analysis of the modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan, where the inherent Chineseness in traditional opera becomes estranged by foreign and Taiwanese cultures. In the performance analysis I have conducted, I demonstrated the manner in which the essentialist definitions of a 'Chinese' as well as a 'Taiwanese' national identity are challenged in a diasporic space working against the grain of an absolute, abstract and homogeneously constituted national space. The home-nation of Taiwan, represented as a sacred place endowed with a cultural heritage, was forged in contention, as my performance analysis in Chapter Three demonstrates.

Furthermore, I have argued that the transcendental signifier of the home-nation becomes enabled through the construction of an imaginary utopia where differences marked by class and race are homogenised. In *Little Town of Tamsui*, time and space

were frozen in the past of Tamsui imaged as an ideal hometown to incite nostalgia for all the Taiwanese. The construction of a totalising home (in conflation with nation) was also observed in *Mundane Orphan* which portrayed Taiwan as a sacralised motherland equivalent to Mother Nature, but also as a multi-ethnic society with discernable internal division. These two performances, in intending to mount a Taiwanese identity bound to totalising and homogenous national space, revealed the spatio-temporal dynamics of such essentialist space.

Furthermore, nationalist discourse, in complicity with the ideas of home, is depicted as restrictive in the sense that it “devalues...ordinary, everyday, subaltern, “non-official” experiences of home” (Rosemary M. George 1996:15). Accordingly, my argument progressed from dealing with the national context to the everyday context and examined how the act of re/articulating the notion of home affects the construction of Taiwanese identity. The premise of this research is to demonstrate that Taiwanese identity is negotiated in diasporic space whose fluid spatiality destabilises the fixed and stable home-nation construct. Living in the confluence of the past homeland and the present home, the diasporic Taiwanese move in between spaces. Consequently, I have posited that the narratives of home examined in Chapter Four juxtaposed the idea of home here in the present with the other space in

the imaginary past. My analysis has furthermore expounded the notion that in this work the borderline is disrupted between here and the other space. On the borderline, as my analysis has shown, a realm of difference is staked out where the diasporic subject dwells. The Taiwanese left the present home saturated with cultural and personal memories via which the past homeland was re-configured. They conducted the virtual movement through novel writing, stage acting and dreaming about the other space in the past embedded with Chinese cultural history. The identity of the present home was destabilised by the difference of the other space where an ideal homeland was imagined and disfigured. The demystification of the past homeland transformed the constitution of home in the contingent present.

I have already argued that Taiwan presents a location of culture where identity is resolutely hybrid. In addition, I have asserted that the notion of home as mapped in diasporic space, is never firmly grounded in a particular place, for it is always mediated in the aspiration and memory for the homeland that designated China in the past, a concept which I thoroughly investigated in Chapter Four. The spatio-temporal disruption between the past homeland in China and the present home in Taiwan registers estrangement not only from China but also from Taiwan

as both places fail to maintain the status of transcendental home by erasing differences of various times and places imbricated in the diasporic experience. As outlined in Chapter One, I have situated the processing of Taiwanese identity in a diasporic space that interrogates the critical terrains of nation, culture and identity. Hence, in Chapters Two to Four, I have argued how Taiwanese identity is negotiated theatrically in a hybrid in-between diasporic space. In my performance analyses, diasporic space, resourced in the dislocation experience is hinged on the ideas of movement and travel. This is further explored in Chapter Five, where every story, I suggest, is treated in De Certeau's words as "a travel story": "a spatial practice" (1988:115).

Travel in these stories not only underlined the displacement in the refugee experience of the Taiwanese but also the mapping of Taiwan as home on its own, as well as in relative positioning to the other, such as China and Chinese diasporas. I suggest that travel is the expedient analytic in mapping diasporic space, a space of porosity and productivity. The construction of home/land by setting up boundaries excluding the spatial other, whose difference fractures the homogeneity of the home, is re-considered in the spatio-temporal dynamics of travel. Home in the diasporic context is, I would argue, contingent on the psychoanalytical notion of home as

representative of the uncanny (unhomely) which counteracts its normative definition as a self-contained bounded place of seclusion like in the essentialist nationalist discourse. The glorious history of feudal China, the past of perfect love and the imaginary other shore, are various places signifying the homeland for the Taiwanese. The Taiwanese re-construct the homeland through fragmented memories invoked in the present. The homeland is an imaginary construct carrying the illusiveness of utopia; consequently it remains a lack in the present. The diasporic Taiwanese travel in between past and present, here and there, whose original spatio-temporal integration is broken. Accordingly, I will continue scrutinising the narratives of home under the conceptual grid of post-modern travel, and I argue that home for the diasporic Taiwanese is mapped in the act of travelling that involves practices of dwelling. "To dwell means to live the traces that past living has left" (J. Macgregor Wise 2000:298). In this chapter, I first investigate various ideas of home and travel in epistemology. Then, I tackle the dialectical relationship between home and travel; for unlike the traditional conception of home/land as fixed in place, home for the diasporic Taiwanese is mapped as indeterminate via travel to the other space. As a result, I suggest that travel in diasporic space requires first leaving the home/land, however it *offers no*

destination. The significance of travel here lies in the rejection of any pre-determined geography where culture, home and identity is contained. Home and identity in diasporic space are constituted by the movement of travel via which the Taiwanese reconsider and re-inscribe history, cultural heritage and the past homeland in China as well as the present home in Taiwan.

Throughout the thesis I have maintained that the nature of Taiwanese identity is problematic as it is negotiated in contentious relation with both the totalising Chinese nationalism and the essentialist Taiwanese-ness. The construction of an essentialist Taiwanese identity has been examined under the scope of cultural hybridity and the ambivalent narration of the home-nation. Beijing Opera is a traditional theatre that evolved from feudal China; it succeeded in imagining and integrating Chinese national identity into its performance aesthetics. However, I have demonstrated that modern Beijing Opera in Taiwan staked out a third space that is neither pure Taiwanese nor Chinese. Since the late 1980s, Beijing Opera in Taiwan underwent modernisation, receiving influences from both foreign and local cultures. Because of such cross-cultural confrontations, the operatic formulas were appropriated in foreign texts and realist techniques of *mise-en-scène* were adopted. Furthermore new interpretations were applied in the old repertoire resulting in the

fragmentation of the holistic semiotics of traditional opera. To further dislodge the inherent Chineseness in Beijing Opera, a project of nativisation, *The Taiwan Trilogy* was raised in the late 1990s. The operatic formulas were used to delineate the life of Taiwanese historic heroes who fought for the territorial sovereignty and wellbeing of Taiwan, represented as a harmonious community united under the heroes' spiritual leadership. However, the stability of this Taiwanese identity was undermined by the irreconcilable differences of Chineseness invoked in the operatic formulas. The codes eliciting Chineseness and Taiwaneseeness were recast in hybridity, through a negotiation of cultural differences that were not eliminated in the combination, but were shown to be mutually constitutive.

In text-based theatre, I observed two distinctive attempts in constructing an essentialist Taiwanese identity via the narration of the home in conflation with nation. *Mundane Orphan* and *Little Town of Tamsui* both tried to make a utopia of Taiwan but failed for two reasons. Firstly, Taiwan was delineated as a multi-ethnic community where diversified identities were pitted against the singular form of national identity. Secondly, the attempt to formulate national space through theatrical representation is doomed to failure as this representation always invokes the other space of lived reality that is absent on stage, and thus any identity

predicated on the pure reproduction of the other space is not possible. Hence, I have suggested that national space cannot be firmly established in theatrical representation which by nature fails to be a simple recollection of the social facts. I have further argued that internal cultural differences and spatio-temporal disruption in history are inherent to the constitution of Taiwanese identity.

In Chapters Four and Five, Taiwanese identity was developed around the displaced home/land. Before I proceed to examine the polemics of home, in order to sum up my argument adequately, I will briefly pursue the relationship between the diasporic experience of spatio-temporal dislocation and theatrical performance, which in part explains why theatre is a charged site where identities are negotiated in contention. My analysis explores the spatio-temporal ambiguity of theatrical representation, which underpins and extends my argument around the alternative formulation of home and identity in contemporary Taiwanese theatre.

The diasporic and the theatrical representation

In the performances of Chapters Four and Five, the totality of the identity bound to the past in China and its cultural history was fractured as the past was invoked in present Taiwan whose differences disfigured this past. Such fracture and

disfiguration are specific features of diasporic space, which I read as a manifestation of the notion of theatricality with regard to the failure of representation in theatrical performance. In the diffuse history where theatricality is developed as concept and discourse, it is used 'uncritically' by many theatre scholars (Janelle Reinelt 2002). For example, Michael Fried's oft-cited 1967¹ article regards theatre as false representation for its nature of mediation (via the audience and the theatrical condition) jeopardises the artistic autonomy which is of utmost importance in Fried's modernist aesthetics. However, it is precisely because of this mediating nature, that 'theatricality' is fleshed out in theatrical performance. Josette Féral (1997) suggests that theatricality signals a virtual space of cleavage where the spectator and the actor engage to create the theatrical via the 'gaze' that marks the distinction between the stage space and the quotidian space. It is thus an experience outside of the everyday or its mimetic representation, emerging from an interplay between "specific symbolic structures" of the theatrical and the "realities of the imaginary" that make theatre (ibid.: 297)². To explore the relationship between the theatrical and the diasporic, I have examined theatricality from the aspect of a fundamentally indeterminate 'time' and 'space' in performance. The former is "both now but past", "unrepeatable but repeated" and the latter is "both

material but imaginary”, “perceived but conceived” (David George 1989: 78).

Theatricality allows both the performing subject and the audience to move from “here” to “elsewhere” in a temporal framework where the forwarding pace of time can be suspended and reversed (Féral 2002b: 98). Inscribed in a ‘different’ time and space from the everyday, theatricality registers a notion of space as transient and time as multi-layered. Theatricality is heterogeneous in terms of time and space represented in theatre, as in my cited example of Foucault’s heterotopia for theatre ‘simultaneously’ opens to the outside as well as constitutes an enclosed unit. The theatrical comes into play in such an open-yet-closed space where the individual semiotic spheres of the staged (dramatic) places intersect and disrupt the original identity of each other. These staged places and times are not only differentiated from the referential sites outside the theatre but also from each other; yet they are forcibly strung together as a unified system in nationalist theatre. However, homogenous national space, where identity is a fixed construct, is inevitably fractured by spatio-temporal differences that theatricality brings out.

Theatricality is an act of representation in an ‘other’ space where the performing subject and the spectator meet face to face. In his discussion of Artaud, Derrida, whilst disclosing that theatre cannot escape representation, argues that

representation has no end as “it has always already begun” (1978:250). This acknowledges a certain displacement and difference that has already happened and continues operating in the process of theatrical representation. Theatrical performance loses its hold on everyday reality the very moment it exists as a form of representation. As the nature of representation demands, the staged ‘reality’, deviated from its referential site in the everyday, also loses the historical constituency where the reality of its referential site is validated. Instead of duplicating reality, theatrical performance actually gains its own life and reality via theatricality, that arrives with a differential temporality and spatiality. The dramatic narrative dictates that a time and space set up on stage; this ‘here and now’ not only references a ‘there and then’ outside the theatre but also remains a distinct and discreet entity on stage. Such spatio-temporal difference is operative with regard to the dramatic time and space as well as to the spatio-temporal coordinates of the audience. It is in these gaps that theatricality arises as an event of differential signification.

In discussing diaspora and cosmopolitanism with particular reference to theatre, Una Chaudhuri argues that the “intrinsic doubleness” of theatre lying in the fact that it re/produces something prior to it resembles the “defining displacements

and ceaseless temporalizations of diasporic experience” (2001:174). Theatre therefore becomes a preferred site for the diasporic subject, as s/he feels most at home on the borderline of various times and spaces. The ‘liveness’ featured in theatrical performance taking place in the immediate present is a pertinent reminder of the pastness of representation on stage, which always directs to what lies beyond the present time and space of the theatrical experience. As such, the performing subject and the spectator are oscillating between the past space and the present space and hence formulate an identity constituted in an in-between. In this thesis, Taiwanese identities attached to the essentialist notion of home and nation as a source of originality proved unsustainable both theatrically and politically. This is not only because the diasporic Taiwanese are constantly moving across the national cultural border as a result of migration. Also, when Taiwanese identities are constructed in theatrical performance, this process of construction is disturbed by the spatio-temporal ambiguity of theatrical representation, which prevents the diasporic Taiwanese and their identities from being fixed in a certain time and space of the home-nation.

As discussed above, the theatrical mode of negotiating meanings is fundamentally bifurcated, torn between something prior and something immediate.

Something prior (such as the script, the rehearsal, and the referential site for the staged place) includes a compositional past, which constitutes a fictional absence in the ephemeral theatrical present, which itself is instantly receding into the past. The shifting space and continuous temporalisation in Taiwanese theatrical performance makes analogy to the cultural imaginary of home that the diasporic Taiwanese negotiated between the past homeland and the present locality. Identity based on the principle of self-sameness would not sustain in theatrical performance where the theatrical present is constantly punctuated by a contingent past on the stage and a referential past outside the theatre, both of which exist in a past that can only be 'discovered' but not 'recovered'. Hence, identity articulated through theatrical representation is contingent and in process rather than a priori and fixed.

Theatricality is produced in the interplay between showing and hiding, and in the slippage when different facets of theatrical signs are in play. It provides a way to confront and contend postulated reality and identity enabled through the enclosure of cultural signification and theatrical representation. This notion of theatricality has implications for diasporic space where identity is not bound to any fixed place of home/land or nation but through mediating the past experience in the present. In re-inscribing the cultural and historical constituencies of theatrical representation,

theatricality is resonant with diasporic space in generating dissonance that perturbs the identity mechanisms working in national cultural contexts. In diasporic space, identity is a constant process of negotiating differences brought out by the spatio-temporal disruptions between present and past and here and there. In theatrical performance, identity for the diasporic subject who experiences and lives through dislocation is rescued at a flicking in-between moment, in the space of theatricality. At the cross-over point, the signification of here and there, the home and the homeland, Taiwan and China or Taiwan and Taiwan in its future is problematised by the difference of the other time and space in juxtaposition. The original signification and identity of each locality in their separate cultural history is put on hold.

To construct identity in relation to time and space in theatre is to invoke a spatio-temporal alterity that is withheld from stage appearance. This alterity points to the lack in theatrical representation, whose identity fails to cohere as a whole. To seek to fill this void is a futile gesture due to the impossibility of reproduction via representation, as such alterity marks an absence in representation and thus remains non-representable. Theatrical representation inspired by and also alienated from the everyday is a process of translation of theatrical signs, which are already immersed

in political and cultural differences. Thus, identities constructed in theatrical performance are not in completed constitution as they are intricately mediated in the differences of theatrical as well as cultural representation. In this thesis, I primarily focussed on analysing the structures of the dramatic narrative, which I think of as a crucial element in contemporary Taiwanese theatre especially in relation to the mapping of home and identity. The notion of theatricality underpinning my performance analyses divulges many slippages and gaps in articulating Taiwanese identity in the framework of dramatic narrative. The spatio-temporal polemics in mapping Taiwanese identity in contingency with the diasporic experience allude to the ambiguity in theatrical representation which highlights the difference between here and there, now and then.

Home in the diasporic context

Diaspora studies challenges the rhetoric of totalisation and homogeneity in nationalist discourse, demanding a consideration of the alternatives to national cultural identities tied to a transcendental origin (along with the essentialist terms tangential on origin like tradition, language and race). These alternative formulations of identity are instituted in linguistic and cultural practices where the

dislocation experience of the diasporic community, the corollary of migration is re-considered. The notion of diasporic space which I have been advancing is constitutive of the myriad ways through which the diasporic Taiwanese inhabit identities outside the confinement of the timeless home-nation and the invariable homeland in the past. In diasporic space where the definitive link with the home-nation is discarded, Taiwanese identity is inscribed in the spatio-temporal dynamics activated through the act of leaving the home/land in both the past of China and the present of Taiwan.

In previous chapters, I investigated the polemics in constructing essentialist Chinese and Taiwanese identity by the universal notion of home/land and nation as transcendental origin endowed with a stable given identity. I have also tackled other stories about home of a different kind. These stories depicted the manner by which the Taiwanese were uprooted from the home/land and relieved from the attendant identity presaged by the organic tie with blood kinship and land. They also revealed an alternative mapping of home that preferred no fixed borders of exclusion but the blurring and disruption of borders between the present home and the past homeland. Home is a highly contentious term for the diasporic subject who lives in a state of dislocation either physically, mentally or both. To return to the homeland is neither a

primary concern nor a feasible project for many people in diasporas. The homeland, now different from what it was in memory is constantly re-constructed, incorporating difference in the present. Home is hence “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination” as well as “...the lived experience of a locality” (Avtar Brah 1996: 192). The double connotations of home in the diasporic context nourish a mixed feeling of belonging to both here and there. In diaspora, home simultaneously incites the past homeland and the present home both of which risk slipping into the homogeneous national space via suppressing spatio-temporal differences resulting from dislocation. This slippage I have analysed in Chapter Three, where in text-based theatres, home in Taiwan was framed as a utopia of nationalist ideology.

Home in its ordinary context is where the subject feels safe in seclusion by setting the boundary and marking a delimiting field. The diasporic Taiwanese have no such bounded place of home as they are alienated from the present home by nostalgia for the past homeland. To address this notion of home in the diasporic context is to problematise the pre-determined origin assigned to the fixed home/land and at the same time to examine the historicity where home/land is produced. Far more than a simple sum of the homeland and the home, mapping

home in the diasporic context is complicated by the dialectics of time and space as a consequence of displacement. Now, I will discuss the signification of home itself in the diasporic context. This I hope will be better illuminated by a comparison of home connoted in three terms of movement: diaspora, exile and the nomad. Then, I will examine the dialectics between home and travel through which the diasporic subject moves away from home and engages the other space of difference.

Diaspora is an 'outer-national' term that registers "the constitutive potency of space, spatiality, distance, travel and itinerancy..." (Gilroy 1994: 207). It identifies various kinds of migrational movement in specific historical contexts. Evaluated by the feature of movement, diaspora denotes a sense of exile and nomadism but is not identical to both. All three terms exercise the decentring force of the dispersed group at the margin. In terms of home, exile denotes a home already there, waiting to be reclaimed and retrieved while for the nomad, home is not as concrete but invested in the self-indulging sensibility of homelessness. For the exile, home more often implies a fixed location whilst the nomad sees in everywhere a possibility for home. The nomad has an unquenchable desire to leave home but expects no return to another ontological home grounded in a certain place. The nomadic identity implies a notion of home that is constructed so radically like a self-centred

subjectivity that is only conceivable in the impossible alibi of others and outside of extant social political forces.

Nomadology as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari has forcefully ruptured the dominant social practice and cultural hegemony in contemporary capitalist societies. The nomad has been widely cited as a mode of 'new' subjectivity in feminist theories and minority literatures. Though Deleuze and Guattari's nomad hero provokes alternative ways to claim new territory, what their nomad occupies is a marginalised space of alterity such as a desert, sea etc. These newly acclaimed spaces are where lines of oppressive power have never reached in the first place (Caren Kaplan 2000). Such alterity is more a theoretical *deus ex machina* than a lived social space. The subversive power of the nomad appears to be one that is imposed by the cultural theorist, who speaks from a position above and outside the margin. Besides, the mobile home of the nomad is premised on his capability to move freely and a strong adaptability to accommodate any changes in the environment, both of which might only be possible if the nomad occupied a materially privileged position to begin with. However, the nomad in post-modern theory is endowed with powerful protocols to produce identities that could subvert the singular and transcendental format of national identity.

Nomadology, where perpetual displacement is favoured, allows no room for developing affiliation in contingency with the dialectics of time and space. A similar critique can be applied to 'critical nomadism' advocated by feminist theorist, Rosi Braidotti. Braidotti's nomadism is in principle a critical self-consciousness, a minority position via which the subject "resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour" (Braidotti 1994: 5). The representation of the real nomad is framed as equal to the abstract thought of the nomadic. Taken out of sociality, the nomad is someone who chooses to be homeless so as to engage a nomadic life style and thinking. This free choice of being nomadic indicates a privileged position over those who become homeless because of forced dispersal like those Mainlander immigrants to Taiwan because of the Chinese Civil War. The freedom of choosing to live in a nomadic way already marks them as differentiated subjects. They have an internal set-up of home that they apply everywhere they go. It is a home of the world, where identity is dissected from the particularity of the places which allow its coming into shape (Sarah Ahmed 2000).

In comparison, diaspora is historically contextualised and generates a social space where a collective identity is negotiated through differences produced from the experience of dislocation from the past homeland and the present home.

Homecoming for the diasporic subject is an act of postponement as it is always mediated in spatio-temporal differences between past and present, there and here. But the state of exile stresses the intention to return home, as if the homecoming journey will be completed without interruption or mediation in the journey. For the exiles, their identities “entail a vertical and primary relationship” with their prior identities in the homeland before the departure and the diasporic subjectivity is more structured in hybridity and multi-sitedness (Hamid Naficy 2001:14). The diasporic subject recognises the necessity to leave home, as well as the impossibility of reaching a destination at the other end. Diaspora hails “the perpetual postponement of homecoming” and “the necessity of living among strange lands and peoples” (John Durham Peters 1999:38). It heightens the importance of not defining home by the singular format of home/land located either here and now or there and then. Leaving the homes here and there, home for the diasporic subject is delivered *in a journey of encounters* with the spatial other.

The migrants’ homeland has now already been separated by the distance from diaspora where it re-emerges. Vijay Mishra in studying Indian diaspora, writes that the mechanisms of “the diasporic imaginary” and displacement, constitute the defining reality of Indian diasporas (1996: 421). Based on the notion of the

imaginary that frames how we would like to appear to ourselves and others, Mishra utilises “the diasporic imaginary” as a mode of imaginary identification with the homeland, from which the diasporic subject suffers a traumatic separation. The absence of homeland signifies a permanent loss in the present diaspora where it is desired, and consequently a fantasy is constructed around its absence, its failure to be fully symbolised. There is no return to the past homeland, which can only be re-configured through the mediation of lived experiences in the present diaspora. As such, the myth of homeland as an immutable origin is untenable as it is transformed by difference in the present. Homecoming hence gains a new perspective other than the pilgrimage to the holy native soil; it signals a journey of disruption and heterogeneity inscribed in secular and contingent geography and history.

As the natural link to the past homeland is disavowed, the diasporic subject develops an uncanny feeling towards both the homeland there and the home here. The ‘uncanny’ in Freud’s psychoanalytic work is revealing when used to explore the contested nature of home/land in the diasporic context. Reviewed in a gendered context, home is linked by Freud with the female organ as it denotes the uncanny feeling of man in his encounter with the ‘strangely familiar’ womb (1919: 245). The

uncanny feeling incorporates the familiarity fostered in the past, as the womb was the original home to all human beings regardless of gender. Home thus invokes a pre-ordained place like the womb that is nevertheless lost forever in the very beginning of life. The paradoxical sensibility towards the original home is the simultaneous invocation of familiarity and estrangement as it has been hidden from sight. This permanent loss generates the incessant longing for a reunification with the womb, or the migrants' homeland whose original plenitude is not validated now. The status of the homeland being forever lost makes it permanently desired. The impossible return to the womb, i.e. "the ultimate goal represented by nostalgia, would constitute a true 'homesickness'" (Anthony Vidler 1994: 55). In the diasporic context, the uncanny feeling is first oriented towards the past homeland that is distanced from, yet engaged in the present construction of home. Consequently, this uncanny feeling gnaws at the familiarity with the home here and now that henceforth is rendered strange. This uncanny home is intrinsic to the dislocation experiences of the diasporic subject for whom home does not designate a core territory immersed in an aura of safety and stability, because it incites both familiarity *and its oppositional feature of estrangement*. In the case of Taiwan, not only does the homeland in China lose its familiarity when re-configured in Taiwan

but also the home in present Taiwan is estranged by nostalgia for the homeland in China. The territorial formulation of home/land is dislodged and home is mediated in the dialectical tension between the past homeland and the present home. The primordial identities of both places are fretted.

The above discussion of home suggests that homecoming is a constantly alienating journey that the diasporic subject has to conduct in order to feel at home somewhere. Diasporic space staked out in the journey is inscribed in the encounter with the spatial other whose difference is mobilised in the dialectics of time-space. It perturbs the full presence of the imaginary homeland in the past as well as the present home. This argument around the notion of home in the diasporic context was explored in Chapters Four and Five. In the 'nostalgia series', nostalgia directed towards the homeland in China did not keep the past intact as immutable but exposed its vulnerability in confronting the present. The longing for the homeland was symbolised by an ideal love or a perfect command of martial arts that were yet to be realised in the other space, which collided with the present home in this island. The past homeland in China as an invariable and pre-determined given was critically denounced. Meanwhile, the present home and identity in Taiwan was also destabilised by the haunting memories of the past and the incessant longing the

other space aroused. The spatial boundary between past and present is disrupted and the centres of belonging located in the past in China or the present in Taiwan are displaced by each other.

History is endlessly appropriated in the diasporic context. Via re-constructing Chinese history, the 'quasi-history series' opened a space between past and present, which was framed in a metatheatrical narrative. The historical past as narrated in the theatrical performance was already alienated from history. It was further removed in an outrageous parody as a result of the personal fights between the actors. The past and the present were interlaced in the constitution of each other. The present in Taiwan was allegorically embodied by the amateur theatre troupe, which the troupe director hoped to sustain although it faced a crisis of disintegration. The other space of China where the Great Wall and the first Chinese Empire invoked a unified Chinese identity was transformed in present Taiwan via the distorted images of the first Chinese emperor. Here, feudal Chinese history and its recognised national identity were strategically problematised to incorporate the differences in the reality of the amateur troupe in present Taiwan. The 'quasi-history series' also examined modern Chinese history in a Taiwanese context via the connective Beijing Opera. Both the Liang Troupe of Beijing Opera and the amateur troupe in Taiwan faced a

crisis of disintegration due to internal splits among the troupe members. The Taiwanese actors temporarily united and the Liang Troupe narrative from the past in China was elongated to present Taiwan via a successful running of the renovated version of a Beijing Opera episode that Master Liang worked on but did not finish before. This operatic renovation stopped the amateur troupe from breaking apart yet whether it was eventually disbanded remained vague. The encounter with the other space of China (where Beijing Opera and the amateur troupe's director, Lee's father belonged) transformed Lee and his troupe in Taiwan and vice versa. Lee returned to the past to retrieve a familiar identity but he also questioned the integrity of the past re-inscribed in deceiving memory, just like Beijing Opera in present Taiwan was already changed from the past. The foundations of a fixed home and identity, spatial totality and temporal continuity, are disrupted.

I have explored how the main population in Taiwan, the Han-Chinese immigrants, theatrically re-inscribed their homeland in China, inevitably affecting the mapping of their present locality in Taiwan. The totalising signifier of China was reified not only through the personal memories about the past homeland but also in Chinese history and cultural traditions like Beijing Opera and cross-talk; in both China is deemed as the origin. This cultural homeland in a Chinese past was

juxtaposed with present Taiwan where home as a safe place and a centre of belonging was questioned and deliberately undermined. This was metaphorically reflected in an amateur theatre troupe that was falling apart in Chapter Four and a beef-show restaurant that was about to be shut down in Chapter Five where the disintegration of the present home in Taiwan was further addressed in the 'city series'.

The concept of diaspora begins with the movement from there to here and is reverberated in the endless movement of returning to and leaving here and there. The diasporic journey is always incomplete for s/he has always already departed from the original homeland as well as the present home where s/he feels dislocated. Between these two points, the main body of travel is substantiated by encounters with the spatial other across real and imaginary borders. The diasporic subject occupies a liminal space where the demarcation between different homes is blurred. The empirical meaning of movement is embedded in the migration and dislocation experience of the diasporic Taiwanese. The present locality in Taiwan has been mapped in dialectical relation to the other space of China, embodied culturally, ideologically or geographically. I would suggest that the notion of travel and movement in epistemology has resonance for mapping home and identity for the

diasporic Taiwanese as travel activates the spatio-temporal disruption between here and there and the in-between movement enables the Taiwanese to inhabit different times and places of both past and present.

The poetics of diasporic space evolved around the figure of travel through which various spatialities are produced by the mobile Taiwanese. The trips included the wartime refugee stories, trips between overseas Chinese communities, immigration and emigration in the 'cross-talk series' and 'city series' where Taiwan (Taipei) was mapped discursively. Travel initiates the movement to and from here and there, shuffling between the present and history, memory and tradition. The diasporic Taiwanese were moving between Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing and Chinese diasporas. An exilic consciousness was ascribed to the Taiwanese who felt out of place in Taiwan and driven to escape home. They left Taipei for some unidentified place hinted in the end of each play in the 'city series'. This unidentified other place was neither the old city they have just evicted themselves from nor another place as the escape seemingly led back to the same site in the city that lacked the substance of a safe home and an assumed identity.

The dialectics of home and travel

Home, when conjured when/where the stranger is kept out, is not a 'natural' or neutral place. The term home country marks home both as a private and a public concern. Nationalist discourse often uses family and community as the foundational unit of nation, an extension of home where people are kept within a bounded territory, the domestic propriety of which is gained by excluding the spatial other. Home country thus constructed, has an identity whose stability relies on the immobility of home fixed in place. Here, home designates a permanent establishment that not only accommodates the past but also the future. Such a home is characterised by spatial totality and temporal continuity. This continuity is often elicited through invoking a glorious past where shared memories are preserved and a future where utopia is imagined as an alternative to the present that is often troubled. Hence home only represents a geographical site, a passive container that however could not account for the lived experiences of dislocation of the diasporic community that intrude on the integrated spatio-temporal regimes of home constructs.

This spatio-temporal dialectics between past and present informs the mapping of home, a prevalent theme in the narrative production of Taiwanese identity in

contemporary theatre. I have already argued that home in the diasporic context is inscribed as an uncanny notion, negotiated in the relative perception of the familiar and the strange. In Chapter Four, the familiarity of the present home was estranged by the other space that contained the past homeland in China and its cultural history. Or, this other space was embodied by imagining a different future of Taiwan in the 'city series' of Chapter Five. In my view, nostalgia for the other space was targeted at a pre-diasporic past before Taiwan was separated from China. Or, it was directed at a post-diasporic Taiwan where there would be no internal differences and social conflicts resulting from diasporic experience. Both are imaginary constructs that denote an originary home as the extension of the primary womb in the psychoanalytical sense and they incite an uncanny feeling generated in the distance from the womb after birth, i.e. the coming into shape of the diasporic community in present Taiwan. The distancing that wears down the familiarity of home has already taken place at the very moment of birth of present Taiwan. The return to the imaginary home (the pre-diasporic Taiwan in the past or post-diasporic Taiwan in the future) is impossible; however, the originary home continues to invoke nostalgia and to be desired by the Taiwanese. Examined in this uncanny context, the past homeland in China or the future in Taiwan is an imaginary home of completed

constitution that never owns a full and originary presence as it is constituted of the traces and differences of the other space, the home in present Taiwan. The present home in Taiwan also has no full presence as it is differentiated *by nostalgia* projected onto the past in China and the future in Taiwan.

For the diasporic Taiwanese, the uncanny feeling towards the originary home and identity is generated in the dialectics of the familiar and the strange in the re-inscription of the past in China and the imagining of the future in Taiwan. This dialectics is operating in contingency with the spatio-temporal differences resulting from travel. Because the past homeland in China was not retrievable in present Taiwan, its familiarity was estranged by its distance from present Taiwan, where it became a constitutive lack. In the 'city series', the Taiwanese escaped present Taiwan for a different Taiwan in the future, which has never materialised. This difference in the future also forms a constitutive lack in present Taiwan. Travel brings present Taiwan to encounter its spatial other (China in the past and Taiwan in the future) whose difference remains a constitutive lack in present Taiwan. A home of originary plenitude and holistic identity is impossible to recuperate for the diasporic Taiwanese.

My thesis moves to interrogate the discursive significance of travel in terms of

a notion of uncanny home in the diasporic context. Internal to the notion of diaspora is the idea of travel and border crossing, agitating against the spatial totality and temporal continuity of national space. For the sake of my argument concerning diasporic space, I advocate the appropriation of the term travel in its widest implications: physical, psychological and discursive in relation to the social, political, linguistic and cultural. The 20th century has seen an enormous interest in travel in its various guises and forms. In disciplines from anthropology, cultural geography to literature and sociology, scholars have engaged with spatial practices such as diaspora and migration that testify to the limits of border and travel. In the interplay of social and textual practices, they have examined the intricate workings of ideologies and cultures in the conflictual encounters that travel provokes (J. Clifford 1997, T. Cresswell, 1997, D. Harvey 1989, M-L. Pratt 1992, E. Soja 1996, J. Urry 1990). The above scholarly works of travel illustrate that it is never a neutral term and in its historical taintedness, its problematic involves gender, class, and race privileges. Travel unrestricted by its literal meaning denotes the spatial practice of leaving, returning, moving through, occupying and mapping, plus notions of encounter and transformation during the journey. James Clifford's notion of "travelling cultures" endorses that most contemporary cultures are more or less in a

hybrid condition. He advocates re-conceiving cultures as “sites of dwelling and travel” (1992: 105). He further elaborates on a contextualised “traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling” when addressing the collective experience of dislocation and localisation as in diaspora (ibid.: 110). In a similar vein, Iain Chambers in studying migrancy in relation to identity, calls for “a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation” (1994:5). The migrants’ travel causes dislocation from the departed homeland, whose memories and cultural history affect the shaping of the newly arrived home. Neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable. Consequently, the migrants’ home identities are not in fixity, but decreed by the way they articulate cultural linguistic differences encountered in the travel. Home, in this context, is “...depending on the context in which it appears”, communicating the concept of “settlement *or* unsettlement” (Trinh Minh-ha 1996:11).

The empirical sense of travel takes one from the familiar home to a strange foreign place, about which a social imaginary is initiated beforehand, through printed material such as tourist brochures. The pre-emptive imagination of the other space affects how it is mapped in the actual travel. In Syed Manzurul Islam’s philosophical meditation on the ethics of travel (1996), the tourist is the ‘sedentary

traveller' who by drawing near the strange other, confirms the strangeness of the spatial other and re-assures the familiarity of home secured within exclusive boundaries. The tourist leaves home to reinforce the extant boundaries of home; both the starting and finishing points are pre-determined for the tourist travels backwards in time and virtually stays within the boundaries of home. The foreign place remains excluded as the strange outside opposed to the home inside. The tourist conducts what Jacque Rancière terms as a 'self-identical travel' in the sense that travel is "giving it [the concept] the body in which we can 'read' it" (1994:32). Travel becomes a metaphor that is utilised to naturalise the artificiality of an abstract idea. Travel thus denotes a metaphysical process to impose essence on the concept, which then replaces the reality that remains invisible and unarticulated. Rancière urges for 'non self-identical travel' that is not about locating an interpretative body to contain the pre-determined concept but mapping the carnal experience that exceeds the concept itself³. It is this type of travel that constitutes diasporic space.

In non self-identical travel, one leaves the familiar environment and engages in an act of estranging oneself. Whether travel familiarises the strange other or estranges the familiar self, depends on how travel is conducted and perceived. The

difference of strange places confronts the original identity built on the naturalised link to the place one comes from. One witnesses the difference of other people and becomes aware of one's own difference among others. The continuity of time and homogeneity of space that makes one feel at home in a particular place is disturbed. Travel in this manner sharpens our sensibility to feel space in its fragments and time in its discontinuity as it momentarily places one in the intersected trajectory of multiple times and spaces. Space is imbricated in time and time passes through spaces. The normative synchronous perception of space and diachronic perception of time is confounded. The spatio-temporal difference between here and there, home and the spatial other produced through travel breaches the home-bound identity, revealing that difference of the spatial other is essential to the constitution of self at home. In the self's encounter with the other, one is "a being-for-other as well as "a being-*with*-other" as "my other self" is unveiled to me (Trinh Minh-ha 1994: 23). Travel thus makes one question the wholeness and full presence of a self-contained home and identity. It is this self/other, same/difference, spatio-temporal dynamic operating in travel that is paradigmatic of home in diasporic space where uncanny sensibility is generated towards both the past in China, the present and the future in Taiwan all of which are mutually constituted.

Travel in the diasporic context is non self-identical for it does not seek to confirm the steadfast status of the home/land in a fixed time and place. Travel signals a time out of the present time and space. In this spatio-temporal distanciation, De Certeau whilst quoting Levi-Strauss poignantly writes about the paradox of travel and asks:

What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by a sort of reversal, “an exploration of the deserted places of my memory,” the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the “discovery” of relics and legends...? (1988: 107)

This is travel of the most basic kind. It activates the temporary evacuation from the home to access the strange (and also familiar) other place outside here and now.

Travel acknowledges in somewhere else what lacks here/there instead of confirming the full presence of a self-contained home in either past or present, there or here. Via the connective lack, travel is a strategic measure to map home as uncanny for travel reveals the lack in both the past homeland in China and the present home in Taiwan, Taiwan in the present and the future. Travel exceeds the limit of the bounded home, where one departs to enter a foreign place (in a distant past) from where one re-inscribes the departing point. The distance turns the

familiar home in the present strange, meanwhile renders the strange place familiar. Both places are put in perspective temporally and spatially via travelling and the original identities of each place are transfigured.

The travels of the diasporic Taiwanese do not lead to a return to an originary home that is lost forever, but rather engender a disruption of the essentialist home/land bound to a certain time and place. The individual, as well as the collective identity delivered in the narratives of home, unfolds as the diasporic subject travels; but this trip is never *completely abandoned or finished*. Thus, each narrative of home in the diasporic context is a journey that deals with homesickness. But the home here has an assumed identity whose full presence is always indented by the spatial other located in different spatio-temporal coordinates. The diasporic Taiwanese are not identified with the home/land either here or there, in the past of China, or the present in Taiwan. They are rather constituted whilst travelling in between, during the journey where they encounter differences of the spatial other. Home is in process in diasporic space and homecoming is forever delayed because the nearby is always sought via a detour of the distant places like the past homeland or future utopia. Travel carves an alternative geography of home as an act of dwelling. In moving through various places and times whose differences are

considered, travel becomes the way to inhabit home in diasporic space where identity is constantly mediated in shifting moments and movements.

Homing in travelling

For the Taiwanese represented in contemporary theatre, homecoming is woven into their experience of dislocation mediated by nostalgia for the homeland and anxiety for the home in the present. Travel is a recurrent motif in such homecoming stories. In the 'nostalgia series', the Mainlander Taiwanese, Jiang took a metaphorical trip to the past to be united with his ideal love but in returning to the present, he found his love lost forever. In the 'quasi-history series', the Taiwanese actors took a time trip into feudal Chinese history and the theatrical distortion of first Chinese Empire affected the formulation of the collective identity among the Taiwanese actors in the present. In the 'cross-talk series' and 'city series', the refugee and migrant's travel causes dislocation and informs the dialectics between homes, places and identities. The trope of travel was explored in stories about the temporary shelter of war-time refugees, the return to the hometown in China and socio-cultural networking between China, Taiwan, and other overseas Chinese communities. The refugees lost their homes of safety and foundation; new homes in

the relocation site were like a temporary gathering point that lacked homely substance. From the disappearing girl in the beginning to the last knock-down of homes in the earthquake, Part I in the 'cross-talk series' introduced the disappearance not only of the Chinese cross-talk tradition but also of the home bounded to a fixed place. The disappearing Chinese tradition, a secure home and a grounded identity had resonance in the ambiguous presence of the Taiwanese beef-show hosts and the Chinese cross-talk masters. The cross-talk masters connoting the Chinese cultural origin were constantly invoked yet also disappearing as their stage presence was disfigured by the corporeality of the Taiwanese hosts who faked them.

In Part II, the missing master from China was imitated in appearance or demeanours by the Taiwanese hosts. The authority of the Chinese master was downgraded as gambler and further questioned in Part III when the master was nearly identified as one of the low-class beef-show hosts. The episodes in Part II reinforced the thematic disappearance of home. In a Taiwanese village, the home for the relocated Mainlanders from China was characterised by clashing regional differences. The homes in both China and Taiwan were enlisted in a nationalist agenda. Part III presented the loss of authentic Chinese philosophy as appropriated

by local difference and the thematic disappearance of home was conveyed via the beef-show restaurant, which in allusion to Taiwan, faced a crisis of immediate destruction that was however indefinitely postponed.

I have suggested that in engaging in the other space of China (represented by Chinese cultural tradition and philosophy), the Taiwanese find the home construct is not substantiated here or there and it is disappearing in both places. Taiwan's future was cast in danger and uncertainty in the 'cross-talk series'. The desolate status of Taiwan as a safe home was explored through everyday details in the 'city series' that posed two questions: what is Taiwan and what is living in Taiwan like? The answers, seemingly suggested in the titles of each play in this series, were shockingly pessimistic as they gave the impression that Taipei (Taiwan) was an empty city where people were not sure whether to leave or stay, and fought to survive. A certain rejection of Taiwan as the home and the centre of belonging was distinct. The mood of anxiety and frustration continued throughout the series, provoking the symbolic escape of the Taipei residents. The city was reviewed from a broad perspective as Taiwan, China and overseas Chinese communities engaged frequent and intense interactions due to familial connections, business networks and common cultural backgrounds. Taipei was evaluated differently by the old and

the young generations. The old generation had split identifications with different places as a consequence of Taiwan's colonial and migration history. The young people were reluctant in committing to Taiwan because of its unstable politics, high crime rates, polluted air and other social problems.

Throughout the series, the city was under constant threat of destruction through phenomena such as war and arson. The government malfunctioned and the police failed to maintain social order. If the motivation of escape in this series was first about the uncertain political status of Taiwan under China's threatening nationalism, it changed as the underprivileged class revolted against the authority-in-charge, revealing internal division in Taiwan. All the destructive actions led the Taiwanese to escape nowhere else but to return and explore further in present Taiwan. The escape created a distance from the familiar home in present Taipei (Taiwan), which was then rendered strange. In the 'city series', the diasporic Taiwanese struggled with the familial bond with relatives in China and memory of the past homeland there, troubled relationship with Japanese colonisation and the anxiety of living in a metropolis. They failed to feel grounded in the city, which was no ideal home. The final escape offered them a way out of the chaotic present and an aspiration for a better future of the city. The most important journey in this series

was the final escape that also led them back to Taipei 'again' to conduct another round of investigation into its internal socio-cultural complexity.

By describing the city in its vulnerable condition, the city series somehow produced a sense of these Taiwanese living outside the very place they occupied. In their movement around and out of the city, these Taiwanese found nowhere to rest and could not identify any roots. In this series, each part began with the escape that concluded the previous part. The Taiwanese hence seemed forever trapped in a never-ending escape, doomed to travel in order to engage with the city once again. Moving away from the city became the only way to access a city that has been changing all the time in various individual journeys. One thing remained unchanged: the unsustainable identity of Taipei (Taiwan) as a fixed and safe home. Travelling activated by escape brought out more stories that interrogated the complex layered constitution of the Taiwanese. The Taiwanese travelled between the home in the future (that would become the present in the next in the series) and the home in the present (that soon turned into the past). Between here and there, now and then, the Taiwanese encountered present Taiwan in various dimensions of difference that disrupted the totalising home identity.

Coda

Taiwan is an immigrant society where China is the abode of ancestors for most people. Cultural heritage from the past is conveyed in the Chineseness internal to, for instance, the Beijing Opera aesthetics. The different socio-political history from China has enabled Taiwan, a location of culture of an essentially diasporic nature. I have argued that Taiwanese identity is prescribed by cultural hybridity in contingency with Chinese heritage as demonstrated in my analysis of modern Beijing Opera. Taiwanese identity is negotiated in a diasporic space that defies the homogenous national space and originary culture such as implicated in Chinese cultural tradition. Not only is this space of Chinese nationalism refuted. The construction of a holistic national space of Taiwan is also problematised in terms of the ambiguous nature of both theatrical performance and the narration of nation. This totalising space is fractured by the internal conflicts of the multi-ethnic Taiwanese community. The stability of such abstract national space is also unsettled by the spatio-temporal limit of theatrical performance, i.e. its immediacy which constantly cancels out the validity of the good old past that houses the nationalist belonging. Thus, the self-contained identity of national space does not sustain outside the theatrical here and now.

Due to the open-ended ambivalent nature of signification in theatrical performance and nationalist narrative, theatre as well as nation cannot effectively remain in a closed time and space. This is especially poignant to the narratives of home in the diasporic context where the subject of migration and its corollary of dislocation is taken up in Chapters Four and Five. Throughout this thesis, various ideas of home have been fleshed out, subverted and re-inscribed. In the confluence of self, home and nation, Taiwanese identity has been articulated contentiously. Home as a place of excluding difference, as cultural origin and territorial core was problematised in the diasporic context where the figure of travel introduced a spatial other. Hence, home was defined in the confrontational instance with the difference of spatial other, an elsewhere whose strangeness is caused by the distance from here and now. Taiwanese identity is prescribed by the spatio-temporal disruption between the Chinese past and the present in Taiwan as a result of the migration history. Such disruption is evidenced in Chapters Four and Five where the mapping of home for the Taiwanese was examined in the dialectical relationship between here and elsewhere. The space of China in the past and its cultural history was decomposed and re-configured in present Taiwan. Also, another facet of Taiwan was posed as different from its present condition. The past in China and the

present in Taiwan are always changing; the Taiwanese are not securely grounded either there or here. Home in diasporic space is mapped in displacement, explored in the trope of travel that addresses both migrational movement and its subsequent dis/relocation. I have investigated the notions of uncanny home and non self-identical travel in the diasporic context, and their connection through constitutive lack. Travel to the other space serves to point to the constitutive lack over both here and there. In the nostalgia and quasi-history series, the past in China was re-situated as a constitutive lack in present Taiwan, whose status as the desired home that provided security and identity was problematised in the cross-talk and city series. The diasporic Taiwanese had nostalgia for the past homeland that had no ontological essence and was an absence in the present due to historical and cultural alienation. Their appropriation of nostalgia affected the configuration of the present home.

Besides the meaning of movement and dislocation, travel also denotes a spatial practice that brought in different places and identities positioned in contingency with Taiwan. In the 'city series', the application of Chinese national identity was resisted in (overseas) Chinese communities. Meanwhile, Taiwan was imaged as a virtual city where life was in the shadow of a constant threat of destruction. The

signification of Taiwan as the safe home with a stable binding identity was emptied out. The Taiwanese abandoned the present home through actual or metaphorical actions (emigrating overseas, imagining a virtual war and symbolic escape). Having left the present home, they have not reached another home of ontological security. What awaited them at the other end was another escape from the city, the next trip into the same yet different city. There was no return to the old home where identity was disfigured, as travel introduced more and more difference inside the Taiwanese community. Here, home instead of being a bounded place to house a singular identity via excluding difference signals an act of dwelling, homing in travelling as a spatial practice of mapping homes in different places and times. Travel discloses the carnal experience of home rather than the reification of a bounded home or the conceptual replacement of one such place by another. The carnal experience in the immigrant and emigrant stories expounds how the Taiwanese map various places and times in their lived experience. It also illustrates how class and generation work as indexes of difference that unsettle the coherence of the Taiwanese identity. Not able to be rooted in either the past in China or the present in Taiwan, the diasporic Taiwanese are homed in-between, in the very process of travelling. Home as constituted in travelling is not a place of homogeneity; it is pursued in the

spatio-temporal dialectics between here and elsewhere, which prohibits the closure of identification that is endlessly deferred in difference.

Ontology privileges the notion of home as being here in a singular possession like my home, not accessible to the diasporic Taiwanese who are refused both the past homeland and the present home to return to since both are changed from the original. The Taiwanese travel without anticipating a fixed point of arrival, acknowledging the necessity of departure from the past homeland as well as from the present home. I have deployed the notion of travel to map home in diasporic space, as it provides a way of encounter with the spatial other and a coming to terms with otherly difference. The poetics of diasporic space entail an alternative mapping of home via travel that pertains to a re-siting of borders between here and elsewhere. The elsewhere is not an ontological substitute for here but a spatial other marked by its exteriority and alterity. In this thesis, this spatial other appeared in forms including the distant homeland in China, the unified Chinese Empire, its history and cultural traditions like Beijing Opera and cross-talk, and finally Taipei in its future.

In this work, the past, the future or the spatial other, and their inassimilable difference are recognised as constitutive of the present over here. The recognition of otherness requires forgetting the protocols used to locate the strange other in the

topography of the familiar time-space of the present locality. Travelling between the present and the past, the diasporic Taiwanese do not feel belonging to a home as a given, nor is the desire of inhabiting either the past homeland or the present home cancelled out. Rather, the feeling of dislocation generates a trip of homecoming that surpasses the fixed borders of pre-determined homes. Such travel includes encounters between those who come, stay, leave and return. Home in diasporic space is a complex dwelling practice composed of various patterns of movement between past and present, the home and its spatial other, the dialectics of which implies the lack of a fixed home of homogeneous composition that carries a given identity. Travel is a process of purging the familiar content of the home/land and its original fabrication of exclusive culture and identity. In re-siting the borders between past, and present, here and elsewhere, the movement of travel is not reducible to a continuous and coherent line but a diverted one that disrupts spatio-temporal orders; in criss-crossing time and space, difference from one point to another is brought out. Travel is the very way the subject inhabits home and identity in diasporic space.

Endnotes

¹ In 1960s America, minimalist theorists like Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg were in search of the 'essence' of art. This echoed back to Artaud's search of theatre in its pure essence via a total rejection of mimetic imitation, traditional narration and characterisation. In Fried's argumentative claims, "theatre and theatricality are at war today" and "[a]rt degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre" (1969:139,141), he expresses disdain for the notion of theatricality as it is foregrounded in the reception conditions of theatre, which are nevertheless essential to its existence. Theatricality opens theatre up to the gaze and interpretation of the other, the spectator and hence in Fried's view, is disruptive to the self-contained, absorbed art work in the modernist project.

² Though scholars (Marvin Carlson 1998 and Philip Auslander 1994 for example) read Féral's 'theatricality' in the 1982 article (originally published in *Modern Drama*, here quoted from the reprint in Murray's *Mimesis, masochism, & mime*) in opposition to performance. Féral disagrees with such opposition, clarifying her view that "any performance remains necessarily inscribed in theatricality"(2002a:5).

³ By stressing on the 'carnal experience', Ranciere's anti-metaphysical notion of travel emphasizes the process, i.e. the journey and the face-to-face encounters on the road. The carnal experience reveals the difference of self among others; hence, it destroys self's wishful thinking of seeing others as the same. Rejecting ungrounded and pre-emptive imagination about other places and people, travel here highlights how home/identity bound to a fixed time and place is unsettled by the difference of the spatial other. This mapping between here and there is "the human way of making flesh with words and sense with flesh" (Ranciere: 30).

Appendix One

Chronology of Chinese Dynasties

The Origins of Chinese Civilisation	2200-221 BC
Xia	2200-1750 BC
Shang	1750-1040 BC
Western Zhou	1100-771 BC
Eastern Zhou (The Spring & Autumn Period and the Warring States)	771-221 BC (771 to 475 BC and 475-221 BC)
The First Empire	221 BC-AD 589
Qin	221-206 BC
Han	206 BC-AD 220
Three Kingdoms	220-280
West & East Jin	265-420
Southern and Northern Dynasties	420-589
The Second Empire	589-1644
Sui	589-618
Tang	618-907
Northern & Southern Song	960-1279
Yuan (Mongol)	1279-1368
Ming	1368-1644
The Late Imperial China	1644-1911
Qing (Manchu)	<p>1839-1842: The Opium War (the Anglo-Chinese War) was the most humiliating defeat China ever suffered. In the early nineteenth century, the British-owned East India Company shipped tons of opium into Canton to trade for goods and tea. Consequently, China was filled with drug addicts. In 1839, Chinese authorities confiscated and burned the opium. In response, the British occupied positions around Canton. In the following war, China was defeated by Britain's superior technology. Unequal treaties were signed with Britain, and other foreign powers; it was a time of unprecedented degradation for China.</p> <p>1850-1864: The Taiping Rebellion is a regional revolt against the Manchus. During the mid-nineteenth century, China had problems of droughts and floods. Economic tensions, defeats by the West, and anti-Manchu sentiments combined to produce widespread unrest, especially in the south.</p> <p>1911: Manchurian Qing was overthrown by the Nationalist revolution. Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, KMT) first under Sun Yat-san and then Chiang Kai-shek fought to unify China and get rid of warlords.</p>

Appendix Two

Taiwan Chronology

Year(s)	Event(s)
	*Information adapted from the website of the Government Information Office of Taiwan (www.gio.gov.tw)
Pre 1600	*Originally, Taiwan was settled by people of Malay-Polynesian descent. During the subsequent settlement by the Dutch and the waves of Han-Chinese settlers, the aborigines retreated to the hills and mountains.
around 1590	*When Portuguese navigators first came upon Taiwan, they exclaimed 'Ilha Formosa' (beautiful island), which became its name for the next four centuries.
1624-1662	*The Dutch arrived and occupied southern Taiwan. Around 1626, the Spanish occupied northern Taiwan but were ousted by the Dutch around 1641.
1662	*The Dutch were defeated by Cheng Cheng-kung, a loyalist of the Ming Dynasty, who was on the run from the newly established Qing Dynasty. The last remnant of the Ming Dynasty was crushed by the Qing troops around 1683.
1887	The Qing Dynasty declared Taiwan to be a 'province' of China.
1895-1945	1894-The Japanese defeated the Manchurian Qing in the first Sino-Japanese War, and Taiwan was ceded to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki. 1937-1945: The second Sino-Japanese War after which Taiwan was returned to the Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists (of the KMT, Kuomintang Party) in China.
1945-1949	The Chinese Civil War after which Taiwan was separated from China. The Nationalists announced rule over Taiwan in 1949 when Martial Law was imposed. 1947 (228 Incident)-The first Nationalist troops sent to Taiwan were undisciplined. High inflation, shortages of daily necessities, unequal treatment by the Nationalists, and unchecked profiteering angered Taiwanese natives. The tension exploded on the 28th February 1947. Crowds rioted across the island, seizing police stations, arms, and radio stations and killing a number of mainlanders. Thousands of people who had demanded government reforms were arrested and executed.
1956	The government promoted 'Combative Literature', which was anticommunist in nature.
1971	Taiwan withdrew from the United Nations. The KMT government faced a huge identity crisis within Taiwanese society.
1976	The argument of 'Shiangtu Wenxue', the grass-roots literature, sprang up, advocating that the literature work shift the previous focus on nostalgia for motherland China to local immediate reality in Taiwan.
1987	Martial Law was lifted; civilian contacts between Taiwan and the mainland were officially allowed.
1996	The first Presidential election announced the independent sovereignty of Taiwan. President Lee Teng-hui of the KMT won the election. The 'mother-language education program' was implanted.
2000	The DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) became the ruling power and Chen Shui-bian, the first president representing the DPP.

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