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Branded City Living: Taipei becoming-Paris in *Yi ye Taipei /Au Revoir Taipei* (2010).**KEYWORDS**

Au Revoir Taipei, branded city, film tourism, becoming-Paris, time-image, Gilles Deleuze

ABSTRACT

This article analyses Yi ye Taipei/Au Revoir Taipei (Chen, 2010). Due to its status as a coproduction (with talent drawn from across borders, its various international funding sources and its deliberate appeal to global audiences through the festival circuit), the film is seen to provide a transnational perspective on Taipei. In this the film's relationship with a film tourism agenda, a branding process pursued by the Taipei authorities, is stressed. Au Revoir Taipei's consideration of life in Taipei, as a 'branded city', is analysed in terms of its three becomings (becoming-Paris, becoming-imperceptible, becoming-dance), in relation to Gilles Deleuze's idea of the time-image (a striking example of which concludes the film) and its intertextual referencing of several "world" or "art" cinema classics, including Jean-Luc Godard's Bande à Part (1964). The film's transnational view of life in the branded city is thus understood to emerge at the conjunction of global production and distribution realities for filmmaking, and contemporary work and lifestyle opportunities in Taipei, the convergence of which create a cinematic construction of Taipei city that can be deciphered using Deleuze's concepts.

INTRODUCTION

This article analyses *Yi ye Taipei/Au Revoir Taipei* (Chen, 2010). Due to its status as a coproduction (with talent drawn from across borders, its various international funding sources and its deliberate appeal to global audiences through the festival circuit), the film is seen to provide a transnational perspective on Taipei. In this the film's relationship with a film tourism agenda, a branding process pursued by the Taipei authorities, is stressed. *Au Revoir Taipei*'s consideration of life in Taipei, as a 'branded city', is analysed in terms of its three becomings (becoming-Paris, becoming-imperceptible, becoming-dance), in relation to Gilles Deleuze's idea of the time-image (a striking example of which concludes the film) and its intertextual referencing of several "world" or "art" cinema classics, including Jean-Luc Godard's *Bande à Part* (1964). The article concludes by contextualising *Au Revoir Taipei* in relation to comparable contemporary Taiwanese films which also reference the French *nouvelle vague* with a transnational emphasis (in terms of aesthetic) and ambition (in terms of audience reach).

This research is positioned at the convergence of work on the transnational nature of film production and distribution, film tourism and city branding, and Gilles Deleuze's ideas regarding time and movement. The last of these provides a philosophical dimension which is increasingly useful for scholars of Asian cinemas (e.g. Abbas, 1997; Marchetti, 2007; Herzog, 2008; Ma, 2010; Martin-Jones, 2011; Martin-Jones and Brown, 2012).

ESLITE BOOK STORE TIME-IMAGE

Au Revoir Taipei centres on Kai (Jack Yao), a young man moping around Taipei after the departure of his girlfriend, Faye, for Paris. Kai does not have the money to travel to France.

He works in his parents' noodle bar and learns French from a book in the Eslite 24 hour bookstore. There he encounters Susie, played by Mandopop star, Amber Kuo. Kai makes a deal with a local gangster, Brother Bao (popstar Frankie Gao), who will pay for Kai to visit Paris if Kai will take a mystery package with him.

The night before he leaves, Kai and his friend, Gao (Paul Chiang), who works in a local convenience store, visit the Shida night market. They bump into Susie and all three become embroiled in a night of kidnaps and police chases, as Brother Bao plots to escape from Taipei to retire, whilst his nephew Hong (Lawrence Ko) seeks adventure and fortune. The night ends with Kai intent on departure, Susie disappointed, and Gao back in the convenience store, still too shy to ask out fellow worker Peach (Vera Yen). Hong is arrested for kidnap by local cop Ji Yong (Joseph Chang Hsiao-chuan), who spent the night chasing Kai and Susie. The film ends, however, with Kai returning from Paris, and reunited with Susie in the book store. The final scene is a dance, a Deleuzian time-image, in which Kai and Suzie's movements are suddenly synchronous with those of the other Eslite bookstore customers.

In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze discusses dancing in musicals as part of his formulation of pure optical and sound situations, the first indicators of the emergence of the time-image. For Deleuze, movement-image cinemas (such as classical Hollywood) are characterised by forms of montage in which sensory-motor connections remain unbroken. As a result, connections between situations and the actions of characters in them remain unbroken. By contrast, time-image cinemas such as the post-war European new waves are characterised by discontinuous edits which visualise the virtual movements of time around characters.

Deleuze considers musical moments to indicate how, once the sensory-motor schema which dominates the movement-image is interrupted, a 'movement of world' takes over. For

Deleuze:

Musical comedy is the supreme depersonalised and pronominalised movement, the dance which outlines a dreamlike world as it goes. ... [T]he dancer or couple retain an individuality as creative source of movement. But what counts is the way in which the dancer's individual genius, his subjectivity, moves from a personal motivity to a supra-personal element, to a movement of world that the dance will outline. (58)

In time-image cinemas, with characters lacking the ability to react to or influence their surroundings, perception no longer extends into action, but instead becomes linked to recollection, dream, fantasy, and memory: 'it is no longer the character who reacts to the optical-sound situation, it is a movement of world which supplements the faltering movement of the character.' (1985: 56) As a consequence, the world moves around characters of its own accord, as in the films of Federico Fellini or Alain Resnais.

In *Au Revoir Taipei*'s conclusion, the movement of world commences as Kai and Susie walk in parallel, mirroring each other, the book shelves between them. Slow motion cinematography and the gradually building music indicate the arrival of the movement of world that will sweep them up in dance. Then, as they are suddenly revealed, dancing together in the centre of the shot, the bookstore customers synchronise with them, in front and behind, to express the supra-personal aspect of their dance, the greater movement of world that Kai and Suzie's dance outlines.

This particular dance, however, only emerges due to the experiences of the young protagonists during their night of adventure in Taipei. Thus the time-image has a specific function in the film. It is the culmination, the reward, for having learned to move in time with Taipei's various rhythms and flows. The time-image signals that Kai and Suzie have learned how to live in tempo with the other citizens of Taipei, as is indicated by their sudden synchronous dancing with the bookstore workers and customers. The time-image asserts a

certain idea about life in Taipei, that it is necessary to accommodate oneself to the rhythms and flows of the city, and hence to become the centre of the world that moves around you.

Au Revoir Taipei uses its time-image conclusion to answer the kinds of questions posed by Stefanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack in *Tourism and the Branded City* (2007), in which they deliberate upon the part played by cultural representations in how people experience branded cities (cities packaged and sold in the manner of other marketed brands, like clothes, electronics, food, and so on). Donald and Gammack ask: ‘how do residents and visitors experience cities, and what part might cultural representations play in that experience? Do the concept and practice of branding have political dimensions? What does branding contribute to a city’s imaginary structure, or, more simply perhaps, how does one live in a branded city?’ (1) In this way, Donald and Gammack investigate how, as cities are packaged and sold – for locals and tourists alike – everyday locations are rebranded with an identity that speaks to their use value within the branded space, whether as heritage tourism location, cultural quarter, property investment opportunity, financial hub, commercial centre, and so on. Thus cinematic city branding determines how ‘people imagine their cities’ and how ‘they understand the place in which they live.’ (3) Like advertising, Donald and Gammack demonstrate, films can influence how we ‘experience a product or place through ... affective use of narrative and image.’ (3)

Au Revoir Taipei imagines the city via a temporal form of engagement with place, as seen in the becomings of its young protagonists as they grapple with their desire to leave Taiwan (the ease of global interconnectivity it offers), against the pull of Taipei as a welcoming city of leisure (synchronised dances in its parks), fresh cuisine (night markets), real estate investment opportunities (Bao’s business), culture (bookstore), security (the reassuring and non-violent presence of the police), everyday office work (the be-suited bookstore customers), efficient public transport (scenes of effortless movement through the metro system) and romance akin

to that found in a Parisian film (Kai and Suzie). Thus *Au Revoir Taipei*'s time-image conclusion provides the culminating vision of life in a branded city, emblemizing a transnational perspective on Taipei which is informed by director Arvin Chen's border crossing training and diasporic gaze, in a film manufactured for the festival circuit with both international talent and finance, and the support of local and national Government agencies intent on selling the city as a tourist destination. To begin to understand the role of the time-image in this form of branding I first turn to the film's transnational production history, and its impact on its aesthetic.

GLOBAL COPRODUCTION MEETS LOCAL CITY BRANDING AGENDA

Au Revoir Taipei is a transnational coproduction, perhaps best understood as a "festival film", in line with an understanding of the festival circuit as both a producer of films and a distribution platform for which some films are 'made to measure' (Elsaesser, 2005: 88; Jordanova, 2009: 24-8; Ross, 2011). It is a coproduction between Greensky Films of Germany (operating out of both Cologne and LA), where the project began its life, and Taiwan's Atom Cinema who joined much later. Greensky is a German-based firm that specialises in international coproductions and German films (Beta Cinema, 2010: 16). The Korean-German film producer, Lee In-Ah, one of the founders of Greensky, was impressed by Arvin Chen's short film *Mei* (2006), which won the Silver Bear for Best Short Film at the Berlin International Film Festival. *Au Revoir Taipei* develops upon *Mei*, in particular in its night market setting.

Lee presented the project at film festival financing markets, to attract funding, including the Pusan Promotion Plan (since 2011, renamed as the Asian Project Market) in 2007, and l'Atelier at Cannes in 2008 (Beta Cinema, 2010: 8). Taiwan's Atom Cinema then joined the

project as producer. Founded in 2005, Atom is primarily a boutique distributor of independent films (mostly from Europe and the USA) within Taiwan. It moved into film production in the late 2000s. *Au Revoir Taipei* was made with the support of Taiwan's Government Information Office (it received the GIO film production subsidy (Beta Cinema, 2010: 16)), the Taipei Film Commission, and the Department of Cultural Affairs Taipei City Government, who provided a NT\$3.5m (US\$113,000) grant because the film featured the city (Her, 2012).

Au Revoir Taipei was distributed by the German company, Beta Cinema, which mostly specialises in German films, such as *Der Untergang/Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004) and *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* (Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006), and other successful European films, like the Cannes Jury Prize winning *Il Divo* from Italy/France (Sorrentino, 2008) (Beta Cinema Website). Unsurprisingly, considering its pedigree, *Au Revoir Taipei* screened at numerous festivals including Hong Kong, Pusan, Deauville (France), Stockholm, Toronto, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Berlin. It won the Netpac Award (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) at Berlin in 2010.

Thus, although aesthetically very different to the art films of Taiwanese directors like Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang which have been lauded internationally, *Au Revoir Taipei* also aims for international markets. This, even if it was also commercially successful in Taiwan, which one might not expect of Hou (for Jean Ma, Hou is more popular internationally than nationally (2010: 9)), or Tsai (who, according to Michael Curtin is likely to sell more tickets in Paris and New York than Taipei (2007: 97)). After all, Taiwan as a domestic market is relatively small (23 million inhabitants), and even if some home grown films are able to achieve domestic box office success, such as *Ji pai ying xiong/Night Market Hero* (Yeh, 2011), reaching audiences further afield will assist in recouping costs for films like *Au Revoir Taipei*.

The film also reveals its transnational credentials in other ways. Firstly, creative personnel. Director Arvin Chen is US born to Taiwanese parents and spent his formative years living in California. June Yip's description of younger generations of Taiwanese people as 'hybrid creatures who no longer fit into conventional cultural moulds ... [who are] continually shaped and reshaped not only by traditional Chinese values and beliefs but also by a wide and unpredictable variety of cultural influences, both local and global' (2004: 235) could equally apply to Chen. This even if he is a director who seems the antithesis of countryman Ang Lee, in that Chen's trajectory is from the diaspora inwards (the inverse of Lee's journey from Taiwan to the USA for *Tui show/Pushing Hands* (1992)). Inspired by Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* (2000), Chen spent two years working with Yang, as art director for his animation studio, script editor and translator. However, he then attended Film School at the University of Southern California and his debut short *Mei*, whilst shot in Taipei, was made with several of his USC classmates, including the lead actor in both *Mei* and *Au Revoir Taipei*, Jack Yao, another Taiwanese-American. Chen's background and training, then, are transnational.

In addition, alongside Korean-German producer Lee is Oi Leng Lui, a Singaporean producer based in London; the director of photography, Michael Fimognari, is American (and also schooled at USC); and the score is by American-Chinese jazz composer, Hsu Wen (Elley: 2010). In addition, *Au Revoir Taipei* was supported by German auteur Wim Wenders, as Executive Producer, giving Chen advice, (Elley: 2010) Wenders' name appearing in conjunction with the film to add gravitas to its festival credentials.

In front of the camera, the casting of the two well-known pop stars furthered appeal in pan-Asian markets, especially on mainland China. Frankie Gao Ling-feng (a.k.a. "The Frog Prince"), has been known for many decades throughout Asia for his singing, and as a TV variety show host. Amber Kuo brought further international appeal through her background as singer (her albums with Warner Records have circulated widely), model (including on the

cover of *Vogue*), and appearances on several TV shows. We can add to this the recognisable face of Lawrence Ko (as Hong) from Ang Lee's internationally famous *Se, jie/Lust, Caution* (2007), etc.

In summary, in addition to local Taiwanese talent, such as producer Mei Ching Huang, in terms of funding and personnel this Taipei based film is extremely transnational. With its origins in the USA and Europe it offers a different kind of transnationalism to those categories identified by Song Hwee Lim in relation to contemporary East Asian cinemas: 'transpacific remakes' (e.g. *The Departed* (Scorsese, 2006)); 'intra-Asian re-imaginings' (e.g. *Katakuri-ke no kôfuku/Happiness of the Katakuris* (Miike, 2001)); 'translingual filmmaking' (e.g. *Kôhî jikô/Café Lumière* (Hou, 2003)); and 'intra-Asian intertextuality' (e.g. *Ruang rak noi nid mahasan/Last Life in the Universe* (Ratanaruang, 2003)) (2011: 17). By contrast, *Au Revoir Taipei's* "identity" is less easy to pinpoint than some pan-Asian films. It's funding from Germany, with an eye to the festival market could make it seem a runaway production (a "European" film made more cheaply on location elsewhere). Such a reading is complicated, however, by the presence of US trained, or perhaps more accurately, Pacific Rim talent, working alongside the European/festivals influence. The film is thus closer to Mette Hjort's category of opportunistic transnationalism, which is defined as 'responding to available economic opportunities at a given moment in time' (2009: 19-20). Yet this opportunism enables Chen to give a considered (transnational) view on Taipei – drawing on his perspective as an outsider with strong diasporic links – in contrast to the perhaps critical value judgement on financial gain that often attaches to the word 'opportunistic'.

This evidence of the film's transnational origin is important for understanding its temporal manner of branding Taipei for viewers situated around the world. Beyond transnationalism in terms of funding and creative personnel, is the film's transnational aesthetic. As noted above, this is not an art film in the style of a film by Hou or Tsai. Even so, *Au Revoir Taipei* can

easily be compared with any number of films, those in particular which follow an aesthetics often associated with the US “independent” film – from John Cassavettes through Martin Scorsese to Wes Anderson. Viewers watching *Au Revoir Taipei* might be reminded, for instance, of other films shot during one night in a large city, such as *After Hours* (Scorsese, 1985) or *Night on Earth* (Jarmusch, 1991), or slacker movies like *Clerks* (Smith, 1994), or mumblecore films like *Quiet City* (Katz, 2007). Whereas, from outside the USA, in part influenced by the success of the Dogme 95 movement, from locations as diverse as Scotland and Uruguay a similar type of “independent” movie with transnationally oriented aesthetic is deliberately made to target the festival circuit (Martin-Jones and Montañez, 2013). *Au Revoir Taipei*, similarly, has a narrative that drifts along, taking place in what are – especially to viewers who do not know Taipei – seemingly anonymous urban settings (convenience stores, parks, subways, markets, cafes, neighbourhoods at night), shot with tightly framed cinematography and a very limited deployment of nationally-specific landmarks. This aesthetic renders Taipei as an almost “anywhere”, an unspecified or anonymous urban location, to ensure the globally applicable nature of its narrative to viewers internationally.

Several scholars have made this point about other contemporary Taiwanese movies. Darrell William Davis discusses *Lan se da men/Blue Gate Crossing* (Yee, 2002) (part of Arc Light’s ‘Tales of Three Cities’ series) as a film which constructs a ‘generic urbanity’ likely to appeal across East Asia (2007: 151). His description of *Blue Gate Crossing*’s rendering of Taipei as coyly personifying ‘quirky idiosyncratic charm’, a ‘seductive mixture of third-world street life and contemporary modcons’ (150) could equally apply to *Au Revoir Taipei*. This is perhaps not surprising, considering the similarities in their production backgrounds. *Blue Gate Crossing*’s director Yee Chih-yen is also a UCLA graduate, Yee’s film received funding from Taiwan and France, and whilst the subject matter and aesthetic treatment are also quite different from Taiwanese art films of Hou or Tsai, *Blue Gate Crossing* also aimed to appeal

to both domestic audiences and to international festival viewers (Martin: 132-3). Arc Light's French coproduction partner, Pyramide Productions have made a number of influential art films since the 1990s, including several Asian films (Arc Light's *Ai ni ai wo/Betelnut Beauty* (Lin, 2001) and *Shiqi sui de dan che/Beijing Bicycle* (Wang, 2001)), but also Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* mentioned above. It is tempting, then, to place *Au Revoir Taipei* in the same category with the Taiwanese films that Fran Martin discusses when describing the transnational nature of contemporary filmmaking, *Blue Gate Crossing, 20:30:40* (Chang, 2004) and so on (Martin: 132-3).

Yet despite what can be considered the "anonymity" of *Au Revoir Taipei* as it reaches out to international audiences, it also does much to "sell" Taipei to foreign audiences. This is a phenomenon commonly referred to as film tourism, discussion of which typically references the "*Braveheart* effect", the first instance of statistical proof of the impact of film on tourism provided by Scotland (Martin-Jones, 2009: 14). In the broader context of Asia this phenomenon is discussed by Donald and Gammack in terms of the deliberate cinematic branding of cities like Shanghai and Hong Kong in ways which will attract visitors. This research can further inform this discussion of the transnational view of Taipei on offer in *Au Revoir Taipei*.

The opening shot of *Au Revoir Taipei* is immediately preceded by a title stating: 'In Association with Government Information Office, R.O.C. With the Support of Department of Culture Affairs, Taipei City Government. Taipei Film Commission.' This is followed by a montage of establishing shots of the city, commencing with a cityscape at night, in which Taipei 101 is prominent. The montage serves a diegetic function, establishing several of the major scenes of the film, including the dancers in Da An Forest Park who feature later. Yet what is noticeable about this montage is the manner in which it established Taipei as a modern, developed city at once colourful (the neon lights signifying a vibrant urban

environment) and yet containing a gentle park life and sophisticated public transport system. This is clearly an advert for Taipei, designed to promote tourism and further inward investment.

The GIO was keen to sell Taipei as a tourist destination off the back of *Au Revoir Taipei*. In March 2010, *Taiwan Today* reported GIO Minister Johnny Chi-chen Chang, following a screening of *Au Revoir Taipei*, stating that: ‘the movie gives one a feeling of the beauty of Taiwan, and presents a different view of the capital city. The inclusion of “Taipei” in the film’s title has also brought international attention to the city.’ (Taiwan Today, 31/03/2010) As well as calling on ‘local moviegoers’ to support films like *Au Revoir Taipei*, *Hái-kak chhit-ho/Cape No 7* (Wei, 2008) and *Monga* (Niu, 2010) at the domestic box office, to increase confidence for investors in Taiwanese films, (Taiwan Today, 31/03/2010), Chang also spoke out to encourage foreign filmmakers to film in the city and thereby enhance tourism:

Taiwan welcomes foreign film makers to produce movies in Taiwan, as wider exposure of Taiwanese films, popular music and television programmes in the international community would help make Taiwan more visible, as well as provide a boost to tourism. (Liu, 2010)

Taiwan Cinema’s promotional materials, and the website of the Cinema Location and Production Guide in Taiwan, contain extensive information relating to GIO ‘Filmmaking Incentives’, from potential expenses write-offs to logistical and bureaucratic support¹ (Taiwan Cinema, 2010: 14). Such information is specifically used to target film producers at international film festivals.

The city of Taipei’s influence was also beneficial. The Taipei City Government’s Department of Cultural Affairs established the Taipei Film Commission in January 2008. Between 2008

and 2010 it assisted with the production of over 180 films, 100 television show, and 126 commercials and music videos (Her, 2012). *Au Revoir Taipei* was the recipient of a substantial Taipei City Government production grant, and also benefited from production assistance. The Taipei Film Commission facilitated shooting in the Eslite 24 hour bookstore, the Shida Night Market and the Mass Rapid Transit (Taipei Film Commission, 20/06/2011), assisted with the obtaining of permission for shooting locations, and so on (Her, 2012). The result of this convergence of international and Taiwanese funding, and tourist boosterism, in a film with a recognisable “independent” aesthetic known to festival film viewers globally, is the film’s transnational view of Taipei.

This transnationally is also evident thematically, a feature which ties this production background to the film’s view on the connection between time and a preferred mode of living in the branded city. The opening shot of the film demonstrates an equation drawn repeatedly throughout the film between Paris and Taipei, in the correlation between Taipei 101 and the Eiffel Tower. This is underscored by the first sound we hear, of a stylus on a record player, the violin notes that follow, along with Kai speaking French on the voiceover as his girlfriend Faye departs for Paris, establishing Taipei as though a Parisian location. The inspiration behind the film was diasporic director Chen’s desire to see if he could ‘capture the feeling of Paris (the western ideal of both city and love) in a film that took place entirely in Taipei, in a world specific only to that city.’ (Beta Cinema, 2010: 6) Chen elaborates: ‘Over the years, I had met a lot of friends that would dream and obsess about leaving Taipei and Taiwan and living overseas ... whether in New York, Paris ... London. I started to think about how that could be the premise of this story: a Taiwanese kid that feels like he has to get to Paris, but finds out that everything Paris means to him ... its already all there in Taipei.’(7) The idea that Taipei is equitable with Paris drives the romantic premise of the film, and also works intertextually as I explore below. But in making this equation it is not only the city of

romance that is evoked, an equation of Taipei with Paris at the level of narrative. Also, Taipei is equated with Paris in the sense of the city's ambition to package itself as just as attractive a touristic destination.

To summarise, and draw together the various strands of the argument to this point. In *Au Revoir Taipei*, Taipei is branded as "Taipei-becoming-Paris" via the pace of life lived and the temporal nature of existence that a certain, synchronised, pace can offer. Thus the film can balance a somewhat anonymous rendering of Taipei with a Taipei-specific branding, as it attempts to appeal alike to both visitors (this place is like many you know globally, but it has a distinctive local flavour) and residents (this local place you know with its distinctive flavour is like many others globally). In *Au Revoir Taipei*, Taipei is both globally cosmopolitan bookstore and exotic local night market. Alternatively, it is everyday local night market and globally interchangeable bookstore, depending on your global/local viewing position. This is not simply a matter of promoting the charms of the Shida night market, the upmarket Dinghao (Eslite book store) and Xinyi (Taipei 101) commercial districts to the East, or the Da An Forest Park, but of rebranding these spaces affectively (to reiterate Donald and Gammack, city branding influences how we 'experience a product or place through ... affective use of narrative and image'), as part of a viewing experience (the becoming-Paris of Taipei which we encounter in Kai and Susie's romance, which culminates in the time-image in which they become the centre of their city/world), which can therefore appeal transnationally due to the global knowledge of Paris and the *nouvelle vague* amongst film lovers worldwide.

A FRENCH PHILOSOPHER IN TAIPEI

At the conjunction of the film's attempt to boost Taipei touristically, and the support given to the film by Taiwan's various authorities, Deleuze's ideas can help us to understand how this

“becoming-Paris of Taipei” leads, ultimately, to the film’s concluding time-image. *Au Revoir Taipei*’s narrative corresponds to what Deleuze describes as a characteristic of the time-image, the trip/ballad or ‘voyage form’. This describes a loose meandering story in which characters drift aimlessly between situations (1985: 34). *Au Revoir Taipei* depicts characters in aimless journeys across Taipei, as they move from home to job to night market to home. There is little purpose to their movements and ends-directed actions rarely have a successful outcome. The trip/ballad form is defined by Deleuze in relation to the more linear, goal-oriented sensory-motor continuity of the movement-image, epitomised by pre-war classical Hollywood cinema. Deleuze gives two historical reasons for this shift in narrative. Firstly the malaise of post-war Europe where characters wander aimlessly in cities in ruins, in Italian neorealist films like – *Germania anno zero/Germany Year Zero* (Rossellini, 1948) and *Ladri di biciclette/Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1948):

[I]n Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe. These were ‘any spaces whatever’, deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction. And in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted, they were seers. (1985: xi)

Secondly, suggesting the different causes for time-images, Deleuze discusses the emergence of the trip/ballad form in US independent cinemas of the 1970s as indicative of a crisis of the American Dream in the 1960s and 1970s, prompted by the Civil Rights movement, the loss in Vietnam, and so on (1985: 214). Indeed, Deleuze goes further, and notes that each context has its own causes: ‘Mutation of Europe after the war, mutation of an Americanized Japan, mutation of France in ’68’ (1985:19). Ultimately we can say that there are as many causes for

the time-image as there are crises or transformations in individual nations (Martin-Jones, 2011).

Yet *Au Revoir Taipei* does not have a loose, wandering trip/ballad narrative due to a historical transformation that has impacted upon Taiwan and its cinematic expressions of time. Whilst such an argument might be made for historically engaged auteurs like Hou or Tsai, *Au Revoir Taipei* invites no such interpretation. Instead, similar to many slacker movies from different parts of the world which focus on disaffected youths living in a post-industrial malaise, it expresses the pace of life experienced by a certain demographic under neoliberal globalization. For these youngsters, time is relatively meaningless, or rather, is something measureable in meaningless, interchangeable shifts. Work is shown to be dull and banal, and time becomes a commodity of little interest, easily interchangeable. These characters are precisely the seers of everyday banality that Deleuze discusses. They work dead-end jobs, with little prospect of economic independence, and only a dream of escape to somewhere like Europe or the USA. The film's concluding time-image is a result of its exploration of what alternatives can be offered to this youthful experience of time.

Au Revoir Taipei's trip/ballad form explores the pace of life in Taiwan through three becomings, suggesting three ways of synchronising differently with the pace of life in Taiwan, if Taipei were becoming-Paris. It does so by exploring what happens when the everyday banality of the lives of these young protagonists suddenly takes on a different pace. When their banal everyday lives are disrupted by chance encounters in the night market, Gao is kidnapped, and Kai and Susie find themselves on the run from the police. Their new pace exemplifies the first of the film's becomings, its becoming-Paris. In line with Chen's desire to equate Taiwan with Paris, the strongest intertextual reference to European art cinema in the film is the *nouvelle vague*, and Jean-Luc Godard's *Bande à part* (1964). Chen notes:

I'm a huge fan of the French New Wave films, and I thought it would be interesting to incorporate some elements of those films ... the silly kids falling in love, the funny gangsters, the dancing ... I could see all these things happening in a film about modern Taipei and still feeling totally authentic to that world.(Beta Cinema, 2010: 7)

In terms of the pace of life, then, it is as though the characters are suddenly plunged from everyday banality into the more frenetic and quirky pace of a *nouvelle vague* film. In this way, *Au Revoir Taipei* references European films without seeming to aspire to emulate them, exactly, nor to suggest that Taiwanese youth should necessarily dream of departing to Paris for a better life. Taipei is not shown to be becoming-Paris as imitation, but as equitable location. In the opening, for instance, along with the violin music and French spoken on the voiceover, as Kai describes how sad he is to have to remain in Taipei, the images contradict him and instead equate the two cities. As Kai describes how sad Taipei is, his parents happily serve customers in their noodle bar, their smiles belying his personal angst. Again, as Kai describes how he imagines being happy with Faye on the streets of Paris, we see him driving through the streets of Taipei, and then in the bookstore with Susie. This contrast suggests that Kai has yet to open his eyes to the Parisian aspect of his life in Taipei. It is not Paris that is the city of romance, but Taipei, as he will discover when he finds a new pace to his life through Susie.

This new pace is recognisably *nouvelle vague* because the prolonged chase evokes the youthful running characters of seminal films like *À bout de souffle/Breathless* (Godard, 1960), and *Jules et Jim/Jules and Jim* (Truffaut, 1962), whilst the concluding eruption of dance echoes the iconic scene in the café in Godard's *Bande à part*. As with the original French examples, in which the expressive movements of youths in the city was a way of challenging various forms of established authority (from the *cinéma du papa* aesthetically, to the May 1968 protests ideologically), in *Au Revoir Taipei* the pace of running indicates a way

of opposing or escaping the controlled nature of everyday lives. For instance, Kai and Susie, who are running away from cop Ji Yong, are forced to slow their movements by a traffic cop in the subway. Humorously, their pursuer also has to slow on encountering the same official. In this moment we see precisely the difference between the usually controlled pace of their everyday lives, with its banal sensory-motor normalities and its trip/ballad journeys without purpose, which contrasts sharply with the different pace offered by *nouvelle vague* lives. This new pace will lead them to the second and third becomings, becoming-imperceptible, and becoming-dance.

When Susie and Kai can run no more, they seek shelter in the midst of a communal dance in Da An Forest Park. Picking up the steps of those older, experienced dancers around them, they attempt to blend in to the synchronised dancing body. In this moment of sensory-motor faltering, as their exhausted bodies journey on the spot, the world shifts around them for the first time. This brings on the becoming-imperceptible of Kai and Susie, which is evident in an obtrusive use of racking focus. The pursuing cop Ji Yong looks for Kai and Susie, who we see from his point of view, clearly visible in the midst of the dancers. Yet he does not see them. When we are given his point of view for the second time, in the reverse shot we can see why not. Ji Yong's focus has shifted to the couple in the distance behind Kai and Suzie. They are his former girlfriend and another man. Here the film takes an unusual turn, branching off to follow a different trajectory from amongst its various interweaving plot lines. Ji Yong pursues his ex-girlfriend instead, leaving Kai and Susie ignored, becoming-imperceptible in the midst of the dance as the world, and the narrative, moves around them.

In this second becoming, the becoming-imperceptible of Kai and Suzie within the communal dance, they are moving towards the film's concluding time-image. In dance, they first encounter the supra-personal movement of world that gives a new pace to their lives. This is a romantic, "Parisian", *nouvelle vague*-inflected youthful excitement that counters everyday

banality, but inflected by their encounter with the city's older, more experienced dancers. The third and final becoming, then, is realised through dance. In the Eslite 24 hour bookstore they and all around them are caught up by the time-image, in a supra-personal movement of world.

Admittedly, *Au Revoir Taipei* does not have anything like the same potentially revolutionary charge of *Bande á part*. The becoming-dance that Kai and Susie enter is one which they learn from a much older generation, and it equally catches up the well-dressed city workers of the book store. This is not a spontaneous pace of life that may destabilize the national status quo (as was that of the *nouvelle vague*), but a more harmonious, multi-generational pace, which can synchronise with and unify bored youths and office workers. Indeed, this is achieved through the realisation of love, and a heterosexual union, as though such an event is the only required solution to the banality and boredom of everyday working conditions under global capitalism. Yet the becomings should not be seen as entirely conformative, nor should Kai and Susie's desire to remain in Taipei, in synchronicity with the city, be considered conservative. Rather, they express a (globally) minor pace in the face of a widespread desire amongst Taiwanese youth (according to Chen's view of his contemporaries and their wish to depart Taiwan), to uphold Europe as an alternative ideal to Taipei. Rather than departing for Paris, they choose to make a minoritarian becoming-Paris of Taipei. Through their dance, then, Kai and Susie brand Taipei, temporally, as a city (where life is a) becoming-Paris.

THE BECOMING-PARIS OF TAIWANESE CINEMA

Finally, the dance in the time-image that appears at the end of *Au Revoir Taipei* can be usefully compared to similar moments in recent Taiwanese films. This indicates something of the proliferation of styles evident in Taiwanese cinema, as it reaches out internationally

through different modes of filmmaking, fuelled by transnational training and funding backgrounds and agendas.

Au Revoir Taipei shares its positive depiction of the city with films like *Di 36 ge gu shi/Taipei Exchanges* (Hsiao, 2010), with its young entrepreneurial protagonists who aspire to international travel, its showcasing of Taipei (from talking heads representing its population's diversity to its illuminated coloured nightscapes) and the tinkly jazz piano accompanying its depiction of a relaxed upscale urban lifestyle. *Au Revoir Taipei* also shares the teen emphasis and diversity of stories taking place in the city in *Ai/L-O-V-E* (Niu, 2009), and the complex intertwining storylines of urban life in Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* (2000), or more recently of films like *20:30:40* (along with their polished aesthetic, exploration of middle class lives, of youth, and in the latter case the tone of celebration of what is bright and colourful about Taipei). Yet two films stand out as obvious comparisons in terms of their corresponding transnational emphasis (Parisian and *nouvelle vague* references) and aims (to appeal to international audiences). These are *Xing Kong/Starry Starry Night* (Lin, 2011), and Tsai's *Ni na bian ji dian/What Time is it There?* (2001).

Atom Cinema also produced *Starry Starry Night*, a coming of age film about two children. Like Chen, the film's director Tom Shu-yu Lin spent many of his formative years in the USA. The film was based on the illustrated children's book by famous Taiwanese writer Jimmy Liao. Due in part to its source material, in part to the casting of the Hong Kong actress Xu Jiao in the lead (and presumably because of the politically neutral story about children), it attracted funding from mainland China. The Huayi Bros, Beijing, boosted the budget to US\$7m, which enabled the addition of CGI to what had been planned as a lower budget art film (Coonan: 2011). The film was made with the assistance of the Taipei Film Commission and the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs (Taipei Film Commission, 26/06/2011). Once again, then, we find an international coproduction with a larger international audience

in mind, both pan-Asia and festival circuit. This is evident in its premiere at Pusan International Film Festival, and the fact that, despite a meagre domestic box office of around US\$7,000, it made over US\$500,000 in Hong Kong alone.²

Starry Starry Night emphasises Paris as an aspirational destination for Taiwanese people. The big difference with *Au Revoir Taipei* is that there is not the same attempt to recuperate Taipei as an equitable location in which to live, and the main characters ultimately leave for Paris where they find happiness. What is strikingly similar, though, is the referencing of the dance from *Bande á part* to suggest that a European influence to one's life can lead to happiness. This reference to the French film is not in Liao's book, and could have been added as a result of the success of *Au Revoir Taipei*. Initially we see Mei (Xu Jiao) and her mother (Rene Liu) dancing the routine in a restaurant, before Mei sits down, ashamed at her drunken mother. Here the dance does not lead to synchronicity with the city, but rather signals the immanent divorce of Mei's parents and the departure of her mother to France. Instead it is when the dance recurs, to bring Mei together with her boyfriend Jie (Lin Hui-min), that this synchronicity is achieved. Although they will part for many years shortly after this scene, they will reunite as young adults in France. What is different is the positive city branding of Taipei that we find in *Au Revoir Taipei*. There is a sense instead that the desire to leave Taipei so keenly felt by Chen's contemporaries is something that many continue to aspire to. The most obvious difference, ultimately, is that *Starry Starry Night* integrates its dance into a narrative which favours Paris over Taipei.

Ironically, although *Starry Starry Night* is more similar formally, the closer film to *Au Revoir Taipei* is *Ni na bian ji dian/What Time is it There?* (Tsai, 2001), which has a narrative that alternates between Taipei and Paris, and includes footage from Francois Truffaut's *nouvelle vague* classic *Les quatre cents coups/The 400 Blows* (1959). Even so, things are different here as well. As Amy Herzog has shown in *Dreams of Difference, Songs of the Same* (2009),

Tsai's films can be usefully explored using a Deleuzian methodology, to uncover how their time-images and becomings function within Tsai's exploration of Taipei's existence within a globalized world. Yet Herzog's reading of Tsai's musical interludes as 'cracked crystals', 'suspended refrains' of the 'durations of the everyday' (201) illustrate how different the relationship is that they offer between characters and the everyday pace of the city to that of *Au Revoir Taipei*. In Tsai's *Dong/The Hole* (1998), for instance, the exploration of how to live in close proximity to others as a form of becoming-cockroach is strikingly different from the celebratory becoming-dance that catches up the respectable consumers of a bookstore in *Au Revoir Taipei*.

Similarly, following Ma we can see the musical interludes in Tsai's films as a part of his exploration of the detritus of popular culture, loosened from its moorings under globalization, and the way modernity is experienced as a melancholy drift. In particular they reference both Hollywood and Hong Kong musicals of the 1950s and 1960s, the latter being considered by Gary Needham to be tied to 'expressing and conceptualising discourses of modernity' (Needham, 2008: 51). Ma considers *What Time is it There?* to use its two locations to explore the tension between global and local experiences of time: 'establishing a provocative tension between the global synchronicity instituted by standardised time and the alienation experienced by the characters with respect to their immediate environments.' (2010: 10) The musical moments, then, are the result of the 'deterritorialization of traditions, memories and histories' (10) created in this process, just as much as the images of Truffaut's film are, in the new global mish-mash of free-floating cultural references that inform disparate lives.

Thus, Tsai's is a different use of the time-image to Chen's, even if both can be said to aim for a becoming-Paris of Taipei. In *What Time is it There?*, developing upon Ma, we find a melancholic exploration of the impact of globalization on our capacity to connect to (prosthetic) cultural memories assimilated from elsewhere. For instance, Truffaut's *Les*

quatre cents coups seems to inform Hsiao Kang's (Lee Kang-sheng) becoming-Parisian identity, in Taiwan as he attempts to set all the city's clocks to Paris-time. In *Au Revoir Taipei* the intertextual references to films like *Bande à part* inform a more celebratory branding of the city. Whilst prosthetic (French) cinematic cultural memories also inform Chen's (diasporic) view of the city, modern Taipei is granted the position of a location that is equivalent to Paris. Kai and Susie do not attach themselves to a borrowed memory from a Parisian past, but use the pace of life found in the *nouvelle vague* to inform their engagement with Taipei.

If in *What Time is it There?* Taipei and Paris are seen to be equivalent due to the impact of a temporality at once global synchronous and locally alienating, in *Au Revoir Taipei*, Taipei is synchronised as a city when its citizens engage with its urban spaces at a certain pace, as opposed to aspiring to depart for Paris. Noticeably in Chen's film, whilst characters do depart for Paris, their lives there are not shown, and Kai swiftly returns to Taipei to resume his life with Susie. This reduces the impact of Paris on the depiction of Taipei, in contrast to the cross-cutting between the two locations which we find in *What Time is it There?*

In both instances Taipei is equivalent to Paris, but in each case the temporal expression of this is slightly different, as is the prevailing mood. Whilst we might argue that *What Time is it There?* creates a crystalline structure that equates Taipei with Paris (as interchangeable virtual and actual sites), in *Au Revoir Taipei* this becoming-Paris of Taipei is structured as a becoming-equal-to-Paris (also in terms of city marketing), in its final time-image. Chen's film creates a moment of spontaneous dance equivalent to that of Godard's, not as homage, but to rebrand Taipei, much as the *nouvelle vague* did Paris.

In conclusion, through an equation with Paris, Chen's film rebrands Taipei as a city that belongs to the world, and Taiwanese films to the world of cinemas. This is a result of his

negotiation of transnational training, funding, marketing and distribution opportunities, which mesh with the outward-facing aims of tourism promotion pursued by city and national authorities. *Au Revoir Taipei* brands Taipei a modern city with a relaxed, colourful, cosmopolitan charm, an urban location equitable with a destination like Paris for romantic possibilities. To live in Taipei is a matter of redirecting an aspiration for personal development that is too often equated with Europe, to one's own locale, thereby becoming a local part of the globalised dance.

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¹ <http://www.taiwancinema.com/EN> (Accessed 17/07/13) and <http://location.taiwancinema.com/mp.asp> (Accessed 17/07/13).

² Box office mojo: <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=starrystarrynight.htm> (Accessed 31/07/12)