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電影形式與媒介共生：一九八零年代台灣的城市與電影

Medial Dwelling: Urban Materiality and Cinema in 1980s Taiwan

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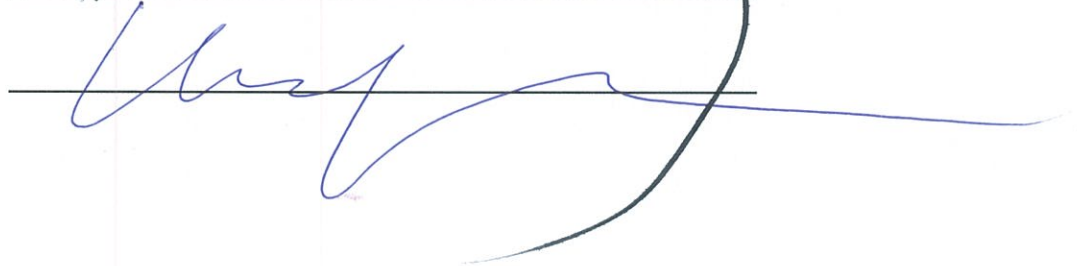# 口試委員會審定書

電影形式與媒介共生：一九八零年代台灣的城市與電影

Medial Dwelling: Urban Materiality and Cinema
in 1980s Taiwan

　　本論文係鄧紹宏君（R03122019）在國立臺灣大學外國語文學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 106 年 6 月 20 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明

口試委員：

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（指導教授）

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I thank Professor Chun-yen Chen for initiating me into the field of media studies. Our discussions both during and after the defense have helped to plant intellectual seeds I will continue to cultivate in the next stage of my study.
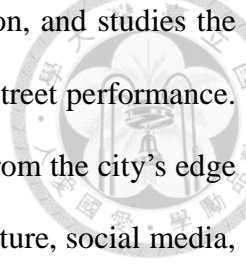
The process of writing this thesis would not have been meaningful had it not been for my family's unconditional support and tolerance. I thank Yen-fu Lai for sharing with me every bit of pain and joy, in addition to our many disputes and debates, along the way. I can't thank my parents enough for their encouragement and unfailing trust, and my sister and brother for their humor and salubrious outlook.

Two persons passed away as I struggled to complete the degree: YH, a young talented writer, who sublimated her personal demons into words and images that have become ever inspiring and haunting; my grandfather Yu-wen Teng, who, an NTU graduate himself, envisioned this moment for me more than I ever had. I hope this thesis constitutes a humble memorial to them.

Abstract

Ever since its burgeoning in the early 1980s, Taiwan New Cinema has given rise to a productive scholarship that examines on the one hand social issues New Cinema works help focalize, and on the other the self-conscious constitution of form this cinematic movement potently stages. Yet in the study of urban films, a particular subgenre this cinema brings forth, the question of form is often subsumed under more urgent social critique adopting universal, and increasingly reified, parlance, thereby bypassing the material and reflexive nature of form. In response, this thesis proposes a new look into the formal aspect of these films, trying not only to thicken it with the material conditions experienced in social reality, but to recognize its agency in attuning the diegesis to such a material ambience. I coin the notion of "dwelling cinema" to depict how film form can be deployed as a mediational process, through which urban films of the 1980s learn to adapt to and dwell with the contingency of their material surroundings.

To illustrate the coadaptation of form and its material environment, I identify architectural spaces and the emergent media technologies as two crucial players that help carry out film form's material-medial vitality. Collectively, architecture and media initiate these films into a formal interplay between transparency and opacity, the twin effects of remediation whose impacts also bear upon the urban space and its living subjects. Chapter Two features transparency as a visual, spatial, and mediational regime, studying how Hou Hsiao-hsien's and Edward Yang's early works collaborate with architecture and media technologies to devise a porous dwelling space onscreen. I argue that the effects of transparency conveyed in these films are achieved by involving a multitude of medial objects, whose material underpinnings exposed by the cinematic machine belie an illusion of immediacy underlying the seemingly fluid and interactive ways of dwelling. Chapter Three posits the

underprivileged citizens' opaque bodies as the focus of interrogation, and studies the interrelations between a New Cinema film, a video artwork, and a street performance. In these works, the body is cast as a mediatized entity transported from the city's edge to the center. Tracing its mediated trajectories in and out of architecture, social media, and urban spaces, I argue for a reconsideration of urban space less as represented or blueprinted than as brought together by intermedial nexuses. The body, in a similar vein, invites an imagination of its distributive mediation, which paradoxically consolidates its tenacious opacity that could be deployed for political counteractions. The conclusion foregrounds the indelible existence of "fissures" in the mediation of architecture, things, and film form. Taking artist Chen Shun-Chu's installation art as a case in point, this section reconsiders dwelling cinema in light of its irreconciliable form rife with narrative, memorial, and technical dislocations, dislocations that can be further evoked as ethical gestures of dwelling in the age of hypermediation.

摘要

本論文結合物質及媒介的觀點，重新探究台灣新電影的美學與形式問題。新電影自一九八零年代初崛起以來，一方面揭露諸多迫切的社會文化議題，促使人文學界發展在地批判，另方面亦引導電影學者關注音像文本具強烈自主意識的構成。然而在都會片此一新電影次類型的討論中，形式的討論時常需服膺於文化研究視野下的社會批判而嫁接上普世的論述語彙，由此忽視了形式內含的物質及反身性格。相對於此種以文本「反映」外在真實的思維，本論文嘗試從物質環境的外圍觀點出發，肯認物質在敘事與風格的建構過程中扮演的居中傳介角色。我以「居住電影」的概念，描繪新電影就地取材的工法如何觸發一系列的傳介過程，使得電影形式及瞬變的物質環境得以互為接壤、媒合、與共生。

在形式和環境共同適應（coadaptation）的過程中，我聚焦於建築和新興媒介科技兩者之於敘事傳介及形式轉換的功能；論文並試著在建築與媒介科技重新媒介電影形式的過程中，開展出「透明」與「不透明」此雙重主體效應與空間佈署模式。第二章將「透明」視做為一視覺、空間與傳介機制，透視侯孝賢和楊德昌早期作品如何運用建築形式與媒介科技，形塑出銀幕上通透的居住空間。我主張藉由玻璃建築與媒介物件生成的透明效果，實則弔詭地揭櫫了電影操作的觀影機制，並彰顯了媒介科技標舉立即性（immediacy）的表象底下所殘餘的物質基底。第三章以底層市民的「不透明」身體為考察節點，連結新電影、錄像藝術及前衛表演藝術於八零年代都市空間的跨媒介實踐。在這些作品中，遭棄斥的身體藉由媒介科技自城市邊緣返還至中心；我透過追蹤身體在建築與社會媒體之間的傳介路徑，演示如何將都市空間視做跨媒介運動下的關係鏈結，以超越傳統的空間再現觀。而身體在此分配式的傳介過程中，亦強化其模糊、不為主流認知吸納的特性，形成有力的政治抵抗場域。在論文尾聲，我進一步強調「裂隙」在建築、物質與電影形式媒介過程中的無所不在。本節以藝術家陳順築的攝影裝置為例，重思居住電影的形式本質如何充斥著敘事、記憶與科技的錯置和斷裂，以此回應城市居住與媒介使用的倫理問題。

關鍵字：台灣新電影、電影形式、建築、媒介科技、透明、不透明、都市空間

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Chapter One

Introduction

Cinema and the City: Beyond the Reflectionist Paradigm

A glance at the titles released by Taiwan's film industry reveals that Taipei, the capital city, has remained a constant thematic concern. During the *taiyupian* (Taiwanese-dialect film) era, in films such as *Taibei fa de zaoche* (*Early Train from Taipei*, 1964) and *Kang Ding yuo Taibei* (*Kang Ding Walks Taipei*, 1969), the city figured as a place of opportunities, where characters arrived from the countryside with the hope of overturning their destitute living condition. The city, however, was also a hub of corrupting forces and temptations, sending innocent country lads and lasses down the irreversible path of fate, a predicament *Early Train from Taipei*'s ending woefully depicted.[1] In roughly the same period, when healthy realism (*jiankang xieshi zhuyi*) came to dictate Mandarin film production by the state-funded Central Motion Pictures Corporation (CMPC), Taipei was purged of all its negative imagings there. In Bai Jingrui's *Jia zai Taibei* (*Home Sweet Home*, 1970), for example, Taipei became a capital city waiting overseas professionals to return, and to construct a promised land that would continue to glorify the traditional values of Chinese culture.[2] Beginning at the turn of the 1980s, as the first postwar generation matured, young directors felt the need to reinvent film vocabulary to better approach the

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[1] For a discussion of *taiyupian* and *Early Train from Taipei*, see Chapter Two of Hong Guo-juin's *Taiwan Cinema*. Wang Chun-Chi also offers an incisive feminist reading of the film in "A Feminist Reading of Taiwanese-dialect Films before the Mid-1960s." See also Shen Shiao-Ying's study of the film in terms of city-country relations and the weakened male protagonist in "Misplaced Taipei Youth: A Look at Weak Men in Three *Taiyu Pian* of the 1960s."

[2] See Shiao-Ying Shen's articles on Bai Jingrui, in which she probes Bai's aesthetic articulation of the urban and his uneasy relationship with CMPC and healthy realism. Shen, "Stylistic Innovations and the Emergence of the Urban in Taiwan Cinema: A Study of Bai Jingrui's Early Films" and "*A Morning in Taipei*: Bai Jingrui's Frustrated Debut."

transforming city, which they subjected to the camera's cold dissection and rigorous means of exposure. This then brought forth the ascent of Taiwan New Cinema, a local film movement that turned into overnight festival darling globally. In both Edward Yang's *Qingmei zhuma* (*Taipei Story*, 1985) and Yu Kan-Ping's *Taibei shenhua* (*Taipei Legend*, 1985), the camera lens focused intently on the conflicts intrinsic to the city, whose irresolvable tensions created a final state of impasse. No longer posited on one side of the city-country binary, nor figuring as abstract cultural and national codes, the city became a subject in and of itself.

This cinematic history of Taipei has been chronicled diligently. In 1995, the Golden Horse Film Festival organized a symposium on the representation of Taipei in Taiwan cinema. The event resulted in a volume of essays detailing the history of "Taipei films." Entitled *Focus on Taipei through Cinema 1950–1990*, this anthology features topics ranging from *taiyupian* to the then still exhilarating cinema of Tsai Ming-liang. In these articles, scholars developed issues concerning the construction of Taipei's city image (Lee "Guopian"), its representative strategies in different historical phases (Lin 1995 "Taiwan"), its historical transformation (Wang 1995 "Zouchu"), social and economic structures (Duan ""Yinmu"), and its elusive landscape of desire (Chang and Wang "Taibei"). For the first time in Taiwan film studies, a systematic set of approaches to the city's screen representation could be detected. Given the fact that most articles in the anthology include the works of Taiwan New Cinema of the 1980s as their analytical focus, one can also observe how the film movement effectively triggered discussions of urban space on the one hand, and initiated the study of Taiwan cinema into the serious setting of academia on the other.[3] My thesis looks

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[3] Besides the 1995 Golden Horse anthology, pioneering scholarly works include *The Death of New Cinema: From* Saving Everything for Tomorrow *to* A City of Sadness (Ed. Mi Zou and Liang Xinhua, 1991), which mounted several attacks at the problematic ideologies upheld by the New Cinema directors, and a subsequent anthology in defense of the movement, *Passionate Detachment: Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien* (Ed. Wenchi Lin, Jerome Li, and Shiao-Ying Shen, 2000). On the critical genealogy

both into a body of work from early-1980s Taiwan to study how these films grapple with an emerging urban environment, and into the critical practices that surround these films.
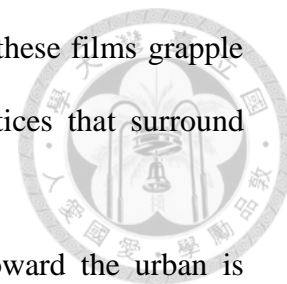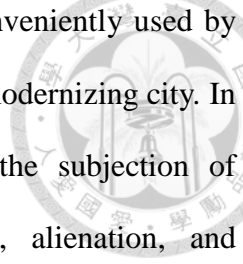
From a disciplinary point of view, the academic move toward the urban is possible because of the "spatial turn" taking place in the humanities (mainly cultural studies) since the last two decades of the twentieth century. Not only did scholars start to incorporate spatial theories into their analysis of literary and cultural texts, but theorists themselves, not the least of whom include Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio, and Fredric Jameson, drew on film works and mass media to contemplate on the forms of social space. In the case of Taiwan, the address of the spatial is also a phenomenon responsive to the economic structural transformation the island had undergone since the 1970s. What resulted was the large-scale spatial restructuring and redistribution of major cities, causing many urbanites to become estranged from their homeland, some even forced to abandon their own homes. The seismic changes brought forth by modernization, urbanization, and global capitalism in turn led New Cinema filmmakers to turn their camera to the aleatory dwelling environment, often with sharp criticisms tinged with stylistic appeal. Well informed by the emerging spatial theories and by the change of local film culture, scholars soon followed up on these trends to usher in new perspectives that recast film works in a more critical light.[4]

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from *The Death of New Cinema* to *Passionate Detachment*, see Shie (14-20). Abé Mark Nornes and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh also collaborated in a series of articles on Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *A City of Sadness*, which they originally circulated through the Internet in 1994. Their pioneer work in the English world has recently been republished in hard copies, see *Staging Memories: Hou Hsiao-hsien's* City of Sadness (2015).

[4] By spatial theories, I chiefly mean those adopted by cultural studies in the 1990s in Taiwan. The formulation of these theories coincides roughly with the 1968 social movement in Paris (such as those of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Guy Debord), and with the emerging sway of late capitalism and globalization of the contemporary age (Frederic Jameson for one). The spatial turn in fact has much broader implications today as the proliferation of digital media begins to transform our perception of both cinema and the city. On this scholarship, see Paul Virilio's "The Overexposed City" and Gillian Rose's "Rethinking the Geographies of Cultural 'Objects' through Digital Technologies: Interface, Network and Friction." In his article, Virilio famously stated that in the age of cyperspace, which has led to an erosion of the physical, "[t]he screen abruptly became the city square, the
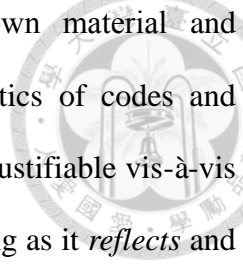
The critical thrust provided by spatial theories was thus conveniently used by film and cultural scholars to address social problems plaguing the modernizing city. In effect, it has helped foreground the issue of minoritization—the subjection of urbanites to a living condition of displacement, deprivation, alienation, and boredom—as the main theme of contemporary city-dwelling. Important notions such as Jameson's "cognitive mapping" further equipped scholars with a leftist class consciousness, through which they evaluate film works in light of the fact that, while the flow and accumulation of capital has been marked geographically and smoothly navigated by some, others, including the elder mainlanders, the youths, and the outlaws, were left dislodged and disoriented from their own web of social relations.[5] In their depiction and criticism of modern city's dehumanizing tendency, scholars and filmmakers thus gave the thematization of urban minorities an acute humanist hue. Yet while much of the scholarship on cinema and the city is the fine products of spatial theories and their attendant agenda of social criticism, as these theories were grafted onto the Taiwanese film scene, they have also become increasingly reified. Following this critical vein, film texts are often read as symptoms and signs, from which larger social afflictions could be diagnosed. In most analyses in *Focus on Taipei through Cinema 1950–1990*, textual phenomenon could be readily explained via references to the rapid urbanization Taiwan underwent since the 1970s. Through close readings of the films' narratological patterns and discursive formation, a larger set of truths could be claimed about the reality of an extra-diegetic world.

While these analyses have inspired several important studies that, via intricate readings of form and content, demonstrate astute observations about Taiwan's urban
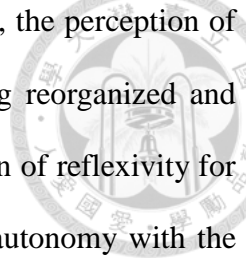
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crossroads of all mass media" (367). See also Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's chapter on mediated spaces in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (168-83).

[5] For such an analytical aspect, see, for example, Chen-Ya Li's "Memories and Imagination: Fading of the City Landscape in Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films" (1998).

condition in historical terms, questions regarding cinema's own material and technological nature seem to be lost on them. In the hermeneutics of codes and patterns, content and form become meaningful as long as they are justifiable vis-à-vis a larger social reality. In other words, a film work is effective as long as it *reflects* and deepens our understanding of the external world or the psychological state it represents. This reflectionist perspective gives rise to two interrelated assumptions. First, it presupposes a stable referentiality between fact and fiction, inside and outside, drawing a neat distinction paralleling the movie screen, which puts one side at the mercy of the other. Second, it loses sight of the rich materiality claimed both by the cinematic technology and by the substances presented on screen, as they are often subjected to metaphorical or symbolic readings that all too quickly neglect the self-referentiality of things themselves. Here Geoffrey Nowell-Smith might help us address the problem, as he states, "[the cities] are there before they signify, and they signify because they are there; they are not there merely in order to be bearers of signification. The fact of being able to work with real materials, which retain their original quality however much they are artistically transformed, is a privilege which filmmakers neglect at their peril" (107).

With cinema's technicity and the city's materiality in view, I would like to add another dimension—mediatization—to current discussions of neoliberal urbanism and urban minorities of the 1980s Taiwan cinema. For this era also saw the proliferation of entertainment media and communications technologies at an unprecedented speed and scale. Besides the rise of New Cinema, which introduced the material plenitude of society to the profilmic world, there also emerged the avant-garde theater, street performances, local rock-and-roll music, music videos and the MTV channel, portable Betacams, VHS, not to mention the popularization of cable TVs and telephones. These media fundamentally change urban lives to such an extent that mediatization
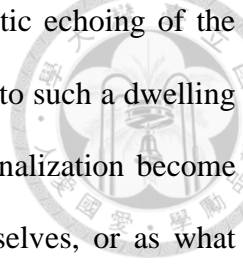
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becomes an integral experience of urbanization itself; subsequently, the perception of time and, more important to my thesis, urban space is also being reorganized and rewired. In addition, large-scale mediatization brings in the question of reflexivity for cinema, a medium that gains awareness of its own technological autonomy with the emerging aesthetic codes on the one hand, and reaches out to measure its relative positioning amongst a vibrant media culture on the other. A mediatized view on both cinema and the city can hence retune us to issues of materiality, technology, and film form, which are largely bypassed by the thick description of social malaise and psychic alienation.

Positing minoritization and mediatization as the two dominant forces that characterize urbanization in the 1980s in Taiwan, I then ask in this thesis: how does cinema incorporate these two forces and stage their dynamic interplay? How does Taiwan New Cinema's formalist—as well as cinema's own material and technological—consciousness respond to the minoritization of urbanites and the mediatization of urban space? How can we consider minoritization beyond the constraint of humanist critique, and to further attune it to the material and medial environment of the city? Can we develop a type of film knowledge not by projecting outward what is represented onscreen to fit socio-historical realities, but by allowing socio-historical environments and their material constituents *into* the film? These questions lead me to developing the notion of "dwelling cinema."

Dwelling in Things: From Heidegger to Latour

In minoritizing the urban subjects, New Cinema often foregrounds the crisis of dwelling that began to loom large as the city experienced its transitional throes at the turn of the 1980s. Situations including the demolition of veteran mainlanders' villages, migration from country to city, and claustrophobic living in apartment units were

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constantly treated in films of this period. Yet beyond mere thematic echoing of the social problem, I am mainly interested in how cinema relates itself to such a dwelling predicament. That is, how does the pressing issue of urban marginalization become mediatized in cinema? How do varying issues of dwelling themselves, or as what Bruno Latour calls "matters of concern" ("Why Has Critique" 231), *dwell in* cinema?

My evocation of dwelling owes its origins to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. In his later work, the philosopher embarked on a series of musings that verged on poetry and mysticism. In the article "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger recasts the question of Being by relating it to the mutually constitutive acts of building (*bauen* in German) and dwelling (*buan* in Old High German), with dwelling being both the goal and the materializing process of building. For Heidegger, the essence of dwelling lies in the preservation of the fourfold—his mystic invocation of the earth, sky, divinities, and mortals (351).[6] The inexplicable origins of the fourfold notwithstanding, Heidegger does make it clear that the fourfold is preserved by the act of gathering, or *Versammlung*, the word that originally means "thing" in Old German (354-55). It then follows that through the act of gathering, a thing (Heidegger's prime example being a bridge) does its essential work in carrying out the gist of dwelling—in dwelling, "a thing things," to borrow the words of Jennifer Bay and Thomas Rickert (120). Heidegger's notion of dwelling asks us to reimagine living not as masterful appropriation of surroundings or construction of buildings. Rather, dwelling relies on the dynamic activities of "things." Recognizing that things of the world take on real agency, Heidegger construes that in dwelling, subjects do not

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[6] Unlike most scholarship on Heidegger, which often leaves the fourfold unexplored because of its whimsical tendency, Thomas Rickert insists on the interpretive validity of this concept. See Chapter 7, "Ambient Dwelling: Heidegger, Latour, and the Fourfold Thing," of Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric*. For conceptual expansion on Heidegger's dwelling in the field of cultural geography and urban planning, see Paul Harrison, "The Space between Us: Opening Remarks on the Concept of Dwelling" and Colin McFarlance, "The City as Assemblage: Dwelling and Urban Space."

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so much gather things as they are gathered across them, such as the case where a wide overhanging shingle roof, a fireplace, and a stove gather a way of life in the winter days of the Black Forest.
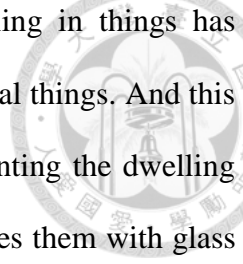
By "things," Heidegger usually refers to those endowed with a respectful attribute of nature, art, or craftsmanship, such as a handmade jug, a bridge, or a reclusive house in the Black Forest. But can we continue to speak of "things," rather than reified "objects" Heidegger so resolutely dismisses out of hand, in contemporary urban setting? And if so, how do they gather in a "dwelling cinema," a cinema I specifically associate with Taiwan in the 1980s? Here I turn to Bruno Latour's engagement with and extension of the Heideggerian notion in the new millennium. Latour approaches "things" from two different but related stances: one concerns social critique's decaying validity in our age, and the other addresses the possibility of assembling a new type of democracy for post-9/11 political exigency on a global scale. In a polemical article titled "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern" (2004), Latour sets out to attack the habitual gesture of critique, which, in debunking a given fact as constructed and ideologically conditioned in nature, moves away from really engaging with the conditions enabling such a fact (231). He proposes instead that we devise a "powerful descriptive tool" that "*adds* reality to matters of fact and not *subtract* reality" (232, emphasis in the original). In Latour's proposed paradigmatic shift to a realist attitude toward facts, things figure prominently. For him, a thing denotes at once "an object out there" and, more crucial to his descriptive tactic, "an *issue* very much *in* there, at any rate, a *gathering*" (233, emphasis in the original). In Latour's mind, the critic should be "the one who assembles. . . . [,] the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather" (246). With the surfacing of an assembly of things, whether human or non-human, matters of fact, in a manner of association and multiplication, should also

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register as realistic and ethical consideration of matters of concern.

Later in a chapter titled "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik" (2005), Latour offers a more politically-charged account of "things." Tracing the word's etymology in a Heideggerian spirit, Latour reveals that in Nordic and German languages, "Thing" or "Ding" originally designated an archaic type of assembly, in which congressmen or "thingmen" gather to discuss political issues (22-23). He then goes on to contemplate the nature of representation, the mechanism employed by political bodies to maintain their democratic order with efficiency. For him, contemporary politics mistakenly pursues a system of representation based on demands of transparency, immediacy, and accuracy. This pursuit, however, only assumes a "representation *without* any *re*-presentation" (26, emphasis in the original). In effect, the space of representation and the trajectories it traces are by no means a vacuum; rather, they are teeming with "opaque layers of translations, transmissions, betrayals" (26), which invite an eloquence that is "much more indirect, distorted, and inconclusive" (30). Such a notion of *re*-presentation does not so much rely on the efficacies of personal will, reasoning, or unity as function as an assembly of mediators that cohere, collide, and contradict. By alerting our attention to "the masses of intermediaries" necessarily involved in representing anything (29), Latour seeks to shift mere political facts (or pseudo-neutral statements) to complicated entanglements that ultimately register larger matters of concern.
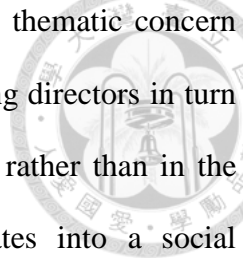
A synthesis of Heidegger's and Latour's theoretical insights, dwelling cinema toils with the middle ground of *re*-presentation, where things and mediators—instead of codes or signs—abound. To further accommodate dwelling as matters of concern, it is also crucial to view the verb "dwell" as always "dwelling *in*" or "dwelling *with*," intransitive forms that integrate other matters to join the assembly of dwelling on the one hand, and mark a vital layer of mediation in between on the other. To be more

specific, starting in the 1980s in Taiwan, the question of dwelling in things has increasingly become that of dwelling among media, or among medial things. And this is exactly the point that New Cinema helps drive home. By presenting the dwelling predicament faced by its protagonists, New Cinema famously frames them with glass curtain walls, window sills, corridors, isolated apartment spaces, veterans' village composites, and (dis)connects them with telephone calls, TV screens, novel writing, and rock music. These things populating New Cinema screens are often endowed with a medial character; together they comprise an intermedial terrain that interweaves across each character's life events, transmits social meanings, and participates in the relay of the diegesis. It is also through these mediating techniques that cinema gains a self-reflexive ground to reflect upon its own dwelling in the city. With the focus laid on these medial things, one can begin to observe that for a film like Edward Yang's *Kongbu fenzi* (*The Terrorizers*, 1986), the fragmented storylines are as much cohered as they are severed and disrupted by random prank calls, one of the protagonists' convoluted novel plotting, and snippets of photos. Increasingly, the form of a film coincides with its own dwelling among medial things; film form becomes doubled with a medial-mechanical consciousness.

The Reflexive Film Form

Throughout the thesis, the applications of dwelling cinema are threefold. I use dwelling cinema to first describe a group of films which, made in the 1980s, began to turn their viewfinder toward the changing urban environment. In these films, issues such as demolition and evacuation, zoning, and ghettoization are explicitly addressed, with the attendant effects of exploitation, estrangement, violence, and death haunting beyond the narrative register. What binds these works together is the topos contouring the encompassing effect of minoritization, a dwelling crisis afflicting not only

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underclass citizens but also well-to-do bourgeois families. Such a thematic concern demands a rigorously realistic approach to the subject matter; young directors in turn came to work with scenes and situations open to external factors rather than in the controlled sets in the studio.[7] Subsequently, as cinema migrates into a social ambience, it learns to dwell among a material milieu that blurs the distinction between artifactuality and factuality. And as the material milieu soaks into the diegesis, the latter begins to pulse with forces and agencies anew. This second dimension invites one to consider film texts as lively populated by things and matters prior to its being treated as systems of codes or as discursive sites. On this material end, cinema exceeds the thin and illusionist surface of the silver screen, and gains a thick base upon which it can begin to dwell.
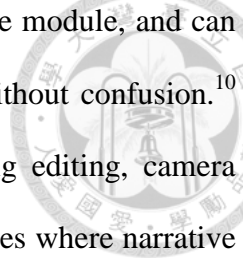
Between the thematic and material dimensions of dwelling, which mark respectively cinema's self-conception and its storage of raw materials for realizing concepts, I insert a third ground of mediation. This middle ground marks a site where theme and material interface, out of which the question of *film form* arises. While the term *film form* can be traced to Sergei Eisenstein's theoretical writings on dialectical montage,[8] it is David Bordwell that revitalized the concept in his neoformalist studies in the 1980s. In devising form as an approach, Bordwell examines closely the intricate technical designs constituting a film work, and regards these designs as where the film's meanings ultimately lie.[9] As his by now canonical study of classical Hollywood cinema suggests, Bordwell tends to locate form in an enclosed narrative

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[7] For a brief account of the relation between Bazinian realism and Taiwan New Cinema, see Ru-Shou Robert Chen, "Bazin at Work: The Concept of Realism in Chinese-language Films."

[8] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (1949/1969).

[9] For a classic Bordwellian study of film form, along with lucid methodological illustrations, see Kristin Thompson's *Breaking the Glass Armour: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (1988). Bordwell would later engage in the study of East-Asian cinema with his neoformalist method. Besides the important work on Ozu Yasujirō, he dedicates a chapter to the early works of Hou Hsiao-hsien (rarely studied then) in *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (2005).
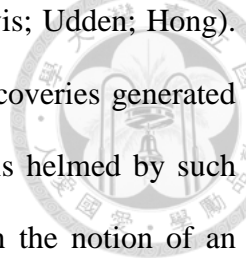
system, which speaks directly to the spectators' hardwired cognitive module, and can be subsequently processed and absorbed into sense perceptions without confusion.[10] Although I follow Bordwell's stern neoformalist approach, taking editing, camera movement, structure, composition, and mise-en-scène as prolific sites where narrative and social meanings are generated, I also go beyond the closed circuit between screen and mind to reserve a certain degree of adaptability—or plasticity—for the discussion of form. As cinema learns to dwell with a sea of changes in its material surroundings, its social adaptation is, I argue, inscribed in its form. I take film form as charged with agency of its own, and in tracing the source of such an agency, the vital force of things comes to the fore. That is, the form becomes plastic and shapeable as it opens toward its material site of embedment, from which things—architecture, media technologies, human bodies—enter to participate in the engineering of form. Simply put, dwelling cinema does not just reflect the change the city undergoes; it undergoes "filmformic" change along with the city's transformation. The task for a project on dwelling cinema, therefore, is to depict how film form can be deployed as a mediational process, through which Taiwanese urban films of the 1980s learn to adapt to and to be "structurally coupled" with the contingency of their material surroundings.

To charge the formal aspect of a film work with the force of things is to intervene in the auteurist paradigm dominant in the study of Taiwan New Cinema. Much of the scholarship on this cinema features directors' style, a heritage bequeathed from the French Nouvelle Vague, and situates the question of form in the coherent

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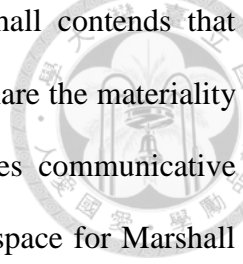
[10] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (1985); Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells it: Story and Styles in Modern Movies* (2006). From a historical and transnational perspective, Miriam Hansen mounted a major attack at Bordwell's naïve appropriation of cognitive psychology in her "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism." For a latest discussion of formalism and its distancing from Bordwell's textbook pedagogy, see Scott C. Richmond's "The Persistence of Formalism."

oeuvre of the idiosyncratic auteur (Lin, Li, and Shen; Yeh and Davis; Udden; Hong). Indeed, it is certainly not feasible to resist the often insightful discoveries generated by auteurist study, especially when Taiwan cinema of the 1980s is helmed by such towering stylists as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang. But with the notion of an adaptable and plastic film form, I also hope to engage the auteur-oriented study of Taiwan New Cinema with two complications. First, the analysis of form in fact affords a broader vision than its usual association with arthouse, auteurist fare. As Chapter Three of this thesis shows, a film deemed as wanting in personal style yet nevertheless gaining tremendous population among audiences can be subject to a detailed analysis of form, one that also acknowledges film form's effective mediation of its immediate social milieu. Second, while a keen sense of a director's style holds up a necessary compass for the study of Taiwan New Cinema, it is crucial to note that the auteur is often the one who understands how cinema can powerfully dwell, who yields properly to the shaping forces of things, to allow things to play out on the filmed location. From place-specific architecture to medial objects including TV sets, phones, frames, doors, New Cinema at times makes us feel it is the things that mobilize the auteur.

Echoing Latour's appeal to engaging directly with the "intermediaries" teeming over a transparent illusion of representation, I identify the force of things mainly with their mediating power. In the chapters, I rely specifically on media technologies and architectural components to expound on this mediating power. My understanding of "media architectures" here is indebted to literary scholar Kate Marshall's study of infrastructural architecture represented in twentieth-century American modernist fiction. Resisting traditional readings à la Bachelard, which take literary architecture metaphorically or as reflecting the characters' psychic state, Marshall portrays architectural objects as first and foremost self-referential and medial. Combining
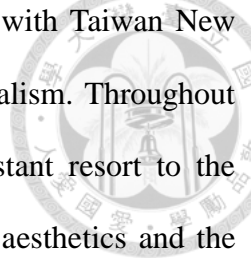
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Luhmannian systems theory and Kittlerian media studies, Marshall contends that architecture, technologies, and communication systems in novels share the materiality and mediality they own in real social space. Once she literalizes communicative process in physical spaces and systems (the primary architectural space for Marshall is corridor) represented in the novel, Marshall can well begin to document how these spaces or systems mediate social relations in the novel and help transmit the novel's narrative. Media as such become literal things but also more than just things; as a networked system, they turn into a processing machine endowed with social meanings and characters.

Sharing my interest in form, Marshall also points out that a "new formalism," a renewed interest in "form and its materialities" (21), might arise as one attends "to the processes and structures of mediation" (Levinson qtd. in Marshall 21).[11] With their self-referring capacity, medial objects thus not merely double back on themselves; they also embody the formal processing of the artwork, passing from representational devices to self-reflexive commentary upon the artwork's transmissive mechanism. This doubled referentiality in relation both to the thing itself and to the formal aspect of the text constitutes the dominant method I take with media technologies and architectural space discussed throughout the chapters. In their doubly-charged consciousness, medial objects allow cinema to contemplate its dwelling in the city, enabling cinema to carve out a space for its own consciousness to emerge. Film texts in this regard should be viewed as a heterogeneous composite of imbricated spaces, with some absorbed deep into the diegetic register, while others surfacing from that narrative depth to claim a meta-narrative enclave embodying cinema's own dwelling consciousness.

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[11] Here Marshall quotes Romantic literary scholar Marjorie Levinson's article "What is New Formalism?" in *PMLA* 122.3 (2007): 558-69.

Ultimately, to connect the issue of form, media, and things with Taiwan New Cinema is to complicate the dichotomy between realism and formalism. Throughout the history of film theory, this opposition is entrenched by constant resort to the essential divergence between Bazin and Eisenstein, the long take aesthetics and the montage school, Italian neorealism and cine-modernism. To a certain extent, this binary is also grafted onto Taiwan's film scene, settled between Hou Hsiao-hsien's penchant for deep-focus long-take long shot, and Edward Yang's use of associational editing, respectively.[12] Yet as one adopts a view on the open-ended, rather than the representational, nature between text and reality, with a material-packed middle ground that is the form, this binary could be approached in a more dialectical manner. For realism is never the pale reflection or mimetic portrait of an external social reality; realism is itself a style whose effects rely on the mediation of things, which forges a cinematic form via the rich expressions of human bodies, material flow, architectural layouts, etc.[13] Likewise, while formalist artwork maintains a high degree of autonomy in itself, such an autonomous form of immanence, to follow the teachings of Adorno, cannot but draw its source from reality, thus retaining a connection with the material-historical condition of the society. As some of Edward Yang's experimental use of telephones and glass panels will demonstrate, in devising a formal, intrinsic law of a film's own, an artwork also enlists from reality the force of

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[12] Edward Yang might not be easily identified with the montage school, but one does often resist from associating him with Bazinian realism—for example, in his delineation of Bazin's legacy inherited by Taiwan New Cinema, Ru-Shou Robert Chen opts to analyze the works of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang but not Yang. As I also touch upon in Chapter Two, besides the radically fragmented ending of *The Terrorizers*, Yang's conceptual use of media technology can somehow be compared to the work of Dziga Vertov and Eisenstein.

[13] A cinematic history of realism necessarily harks back to Italian neorealism, amongst which a particular brand of "urban realism" is most related to my inquiry of Taiwan New Cinema. However, I choose to maintain some distance from such a labeling given the term's contemporary status as a universal (and cosmopolitan) and thus homogenizing parlance. Instead, by realism I tend more towards the recent formulation of "speculative realism," which aims at prying open the correlation of thinking and being while allocating more attention to a deeper underlying reality buried in the latter.
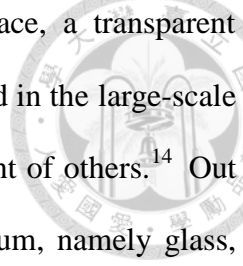
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things to play along.
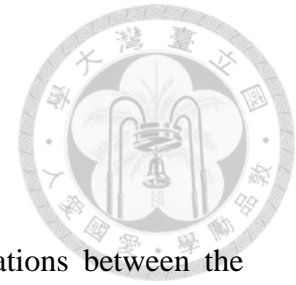
Transparency and Opacity

With the notion of dwelling cinema, I complicate the relations between the representational screen and the material world external to the screen. I allow things to enter as they are into the representational system, turning mimetic signs into material things gathered and transmitted in a communicative circuit. Furthermore, by retooling things as medial, and as able to relay social meanings on their own, I consider how films are populated by these self-conscious "thinking machines," how film form is mobilized in collaboration with these medial things.

Against this theoretical backdrop, the main issue I probe in the chapters is the changing nature of urban space in the time of Taiwan's structural transition, and how these spatial changes bear upon the urbanites' dwelling body. To this end, one needs to adopt a flexible view on both sides of the body-city relation. As I illustrate, as both urban space and the body have experienced an increased degree of mediation when media technology became more and more popularized in Taiwan, this relation is mainly mobilized by the twin operation of transparency and opacity. In their pioneering study, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin identify immediacy and hypermediacy as the double logic of remediation. As new media engage in the remediation of older media, they often seek to render themselves invisible, producing embodied perceptual effects for the users, while at the same time involving more media to achieve such effects. Along this line, Bolter and Grusin feature transparency and opacity as accompanying the operation of immediacy and hypermediacy, respectively.

Beyond treating transparency and opacity merely as mediating effects, I study them as *dispositifs* that organize a system of relations to regulate or undermine the
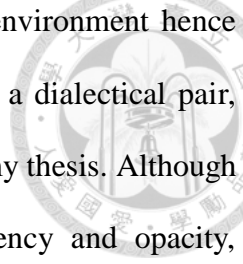
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formation of urban spaces and the body. In terms of urban space, a transparent governing logic arrives when the intense urban regeneration resulted in the large-scale application of certain building materials as well as the displacement of others.[14] Out of this architectural transition emerges a particular material medium, namely glass, upon which the interior and the exterior both border and collapse, thus calling forth a redefinition of inside and outside, public and private, identity and subjecthood. Accompanying the rising regime of transparency are the appearances of certain technologies such as the surveillance camera and TV. These technologies help cohere disparate social spaces into representable entities, invoking contemporary urban imagination of spaces as contiguous, homogeneous, and controllable, while at the same time making those unrepresented even more opaque and unfathomable.

On the other hand, the bodies of the urban subjects are rendered transmissible and pervasive as they gain the opportunity to enter the media circuit; there their bodies are made pliable and replicable by varied media forms, such as the screen, sound recordings, and bodily performances. Within a broadcast network opened onto the public, they assume a transparency with which different gazes and visualities can see through, hence putting these bodies under intense social regulation. Yet against transparency as a visual, spatial, and media regime, the recalcitrant bodies of the youths and the marginal also empower themselves with an excessive tendency toward embodiment along the process of mediation. In their strategic use of the body, they often put up another counter-regime of opacity and anonymity, of a "body too much" that resists the penetration of political-economic forces.

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[14] This material shift in architecture is especially palpable at the turn of the 1980s, when national and municipal policies were enacted to dismantle veterans' villages (*juancun*), the makeshift composites housing the soldiers and their dependents who accompanied the exiled Nationalist regime to Taiwan in the aftermath of the 1949 civil war. While these horizontally crawling structures, deemed "urban tumors" plaguing the cities' developing prospect, were cleared up, new sets of high-rise buildings were also put up in a spree, henceforth launching a fresh round of vertical construction of the cityscape. I will discuss this issue in Chapter Three.

The interplay between the body and the mediatized urban environment hence often stages itself along the axes of transparency and opacity. As a dialectical pair, they become the medial *dispositifs* that organize the main body of my thesis. Although I structure the chapters along the distinction between transparency and opacity, dedicating one chapter to each topos, it is important to note that they are but two sides of the same coin, thus requiring our effort to discern their inherent affinities and tensions.

In Chapter Two, I revisit a few films made in the 1980s by Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang to chart the emergence of a dwelling transparency in different urban settings. I first trace the rural youths' migration to the city in Hou's *Fengguei lai de ren* (*The Boys from Fengkuei*, 1983). Along with the teenage boys, the camera settles into a country-style apartment complex, whose pervious layout allows both humans and machine to maintain an exuberance nurtured by their hometown and to try out their capacity in adapting to the ways of the city. By analyzing the frames, windows, screens, and walls that pervade Yang's films, I subsequently discuss the emergence of an interior space (most notably the apartment and office buildings) self-reflexively renovated as a film space. This space is a heterogeneous one interconnected by telecommunications and media technologies that both define our conception of modern interiority, and forge a transparency that enables the outside—the more formidable aspect of the city—to infiltrate. I focus on *Taipei Story* and *The Terrorizers* to see how Edward Yang, himself regarded by some as an urban architect,[15] allows TV screens, telephone lines, tiled walls, and the ubiquitous glass curtain walls to participate in the construction of his gloomy urban stories. As much as his intricate plots that express the existential angst against an estranged urban setting, these medial

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[15] See Leo Chanjen Chen's "The Frustrated Architect: The Cinema of Edward Yang."

objects themselves constitute the form and meaning of Yang's city films. In the glass city that Yang ingeniously constructs, the indelible materiality revealed in the process of mediation betokens the lurking threats of opacity and obstruction beneath the transparent surface.
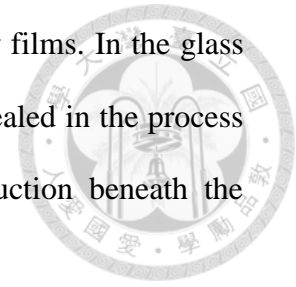
Chapter Three considers urban spaces less as represented in a single film movement than as brought together by intermedial nexuses and collaborations. The chapter studies three disparate media works—a video art work, some key scenes from *Da cuo che* (*Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*, 1983), and a street performance—to expound on their relations. These media works all dramatize the opacity of human bodies, and trace their transport from the city's edge to the center, making them not only mediated but mediatized along the way. Positing bodies at the intersecting point that channels the convergence of media and urban space, these works urge us to consider the body by other means. On the one hand, via a close reading of the forms of mediation, I discuss the elastic bodies in *Papa*'s outdoor dancing scenes. These bodies, I argue, are key to bridging the film's seemingly incongruent and much faulted structures. On the other hand, via video artist Chen Chieh-jen's video work and art event, I shift to a political mode of interrogation, and consider the social efficacy ventured by Chen once the bodies are equipped with what Édouard Glissant called "the right to opacity" (94). I borrow Glissant's notion to explore the body as a site of resistance, against the oppressive state regime that seeks to pin its subjects down to a criminal identity. The issues of identity, criminality, and opacity, as I show, congeal upon the displaced mainlanders. An intermedial study subsequently demonstrates how this precarious identity is gathered, gains social attention, and becomes a medium that mediates much social affect and unrealizable aspirations.

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Chapter Two

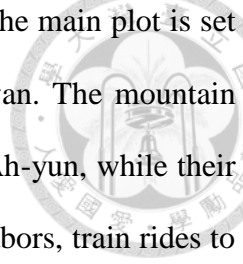**New Cinema's Transparent Media House**

Taiwan New Cinema in the hands of the young directors is known for creating memorable dwelling places for its petty yet lively characters. Walking away from the film studios where tireless outputs of *wuxia pian* (swordplay films), Qiong Yao *pian* (romance and family melodramas), and *junjiao pian* (patriotic military education films) that defined 1970s film history had stopped to attract box-office returns, young directors sought to relocate their cinema to the outdoor scenes, where a realistic style can be pursued with sufficient natural lighting, ambient sounds, actual architecture, living people, as well as local histories and stories. The result of this stylistic and thematic awareness is the appearance of a variety of film spaces seldom presented on the silver screen.

For example, in Wan Jen's *Chaoji shimin* (*Super Citizen*, 1985), the protagonist leaves his hometown in the south for Taipei to look for his missing sister. He settles into a shabby veterans' village (*juancun*), where he is introduced to his neighbors, whose lives are promptly exposed to him as the walls separating them are thin. He encounters a dysfunctional family of alcoholic husband, snappy wife, and playful children, a lunatic poet, and a small-time hooligan living right next to him. By the end of the film, he decides to not board the train bound for his southern home, and is happily joined by the hooligan friend, with whom he develops a quasi-familial tie.[16]

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[16] The illegal *juancun* has already appeared in "Pingguo de ziwei" ("The Taste of Apples"), a segment Wan Jen directed for the portmanteau film *Erzi de dawan'ou* (*The Sandwich Man*, 1983), commonly recognized as one of the works that launched Taiwan New Cinema. In this segment, an American soldier, having wounded (non-fatally) a local in a car accident, walks through the inner bowels of a *juancun* composite to visit the impoverished family of the injured father. The village's cramped and untidy layout introduced the local audiences to an aspect of the city little known to them, causing the Information Office to order several cuts to the filmstrips, for fear that the "unhealthy"
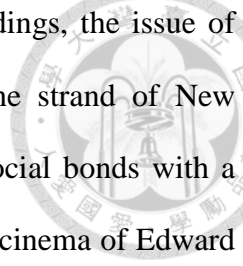
In Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Lianlian fengchen* (*Dust in the Wind*, 1986), the main plot is set in a coal village in the mountainous region of north-eastern Taiwan. The mountain village nurtures the budding love between teenaged Ah-yuan and Ah-yun, while their families are attuned to a life marked rhythmically by coal mining labors, train rides to and from the city, potato cultivation, and outdoor film viewing. And in Edward Yang's *Haitan de yitian* (*That Day, on the Beach*, 1983) and Hou's *Dongdong de jiachi* (*A Summer at Grandpa's*, 1984), the characters gather in Japanese-style country houses, each presided over by a stern patriarch specializing in medicine. These imposing houses are constructed in their entirety by quality wood and are meticulously maintained, suggesting also the demand of order and familial norms imposed upon their inhabitants. In all these residences, the characters share life events that appear mutually constitutive. The formation and layout of their dwellings enable a degree of transparency, with which the films can convene disparate yet interconnected plotlines with a holistic material bearing. Breaking free from the artifactual design of the sound stage, Taiwan cinema in the early 1980s begins to migrate into history-specific environs of the local, thereby emitting a new sense of settlement.

Yet while these residences are invariably set at a remove from the city's everyday bustle, they are not likely immune to capitalist-industrial factors characteristic of the city. This fact is evidenced by the montage sequences of urban crowds and high-rises that bookend *Super Citizen*, by Ah-yuan's frustrated pursuit of career in the city and the penetration of rail tracks into the rural village in *Dust in the Wind*, and by the mother character who receives medical treatment in an urban hospital in *A Summer at Grandpa's*. These instances suggest that while cinema has

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representation of the ghetto would harm the national image. This famous anecdote is known as the "apple-peeling incident" (*xiao pingguo shijian*). For a brief explanation of its history, see Yeh and Davis (62). See also Chen Ping-hao's analysis of "The Taste of Apples" in his master's thesis (9-21).

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acquired a state of settlement in accord with its material surroundings, the issue of mobility and displacement is also looming large. And while one strand of New Cinema shown above enjoys a reputation for depicting organic social bonds with a humanistic touch, another forceful branch, witnessed mainly in the cinema of Edward Yang, and of Tsai Ming-liang later in the 1990s, probes the increasingly reified social relations against the transforming cityscape with no less precision and rigor.

In this chapter, I study how New Cinema directors employ the notion of dwelling transparency to weld a distinct form for their work. Transparency, as their work shows, is deployed as a double-edged *dispositif* linking cinematic form with a larger material environment upon which social relations congeal. Transparency facilitated by ready-made architecture affords the self-conscious exercise of camera movement and other cinematic skills. On the one hand, these skills present characters in intimate relation to each other, framing them in a mise-en-scène of unobstructed flow within a sensually porous space. Yet on the other hand, they also demonstrate transparency's function as a governing technique that hinders characters from real emotional exchange, thus reducing the latter to a state of isolation while making them readily exposable to power manipulation. Both aspects are bolstered by the proliferation of media technologies in the early 1980s, which enhance the possibilities of message transmission, unexpected collision of individuals, identity traceability, and cinema's own formal experimentation. It is also by frequently enlisting the force of these medial objects that cinema activates an ontological reflection upon its own dwelling in the contemporary age. In what follows, I briefly touch upon Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Fengguei lai de ren* (*The Boys from Fengkuei*, 1983) to illustrate how a transparent mode of human-environment relation manages to sustain itself as the characters migrate from the countryside to the city, mainly by way of the distinct form of an apartment complex deftly appropriated by the camera. I then shift to Edward

Yang's urban films, in which cinema, doubling the medial-material effect of windows, frames and tiles, carves out a dwelling space to negotiate its terms with the external sides—the city. I chart the emergence of such a "medial space" in cinema's self-reflexive moments, in which a transparent visual regime could be more dialectically probed as constructed, disjointed, and opaque in nature. Consequently, the issue of transparency calls for a recognition of "mediated immediacy," a notion that alerts media users (including cinema itself) to the indelible existence of a material infrastructure which the illusion of transparency ultimately refers to.
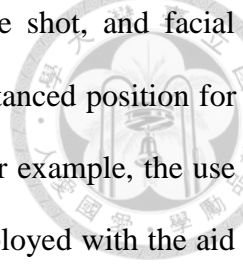
From Country to City

In the beginning thirty minutes of Hou Hsiao-hsien's *The Boys from Fengkuei*, the four carefree teenagers are seen idling away their time, waiting to be conscripted in their hometown in one of the isles of Penghu, situated off the west coast of Taiwan in the middle of the Taiwan Strait. In their happy-go-lucky meanderings, they are constantly caught in between sets of walls laid out of concrete and the indigenous coral stones (*laogu shi*).[17] These walls prove especially useful as the boys are involved in fights with gangs of an opposite faction, enabling them to act instantly in hiding, fleeing, pursuing, and attacking their rivals. At the same time, the camera also learns to adapt to these walls, using them as material elements to aid its own composition and movement.

For many film scholars, *The Boys from Fengkuei* marks the turning point in Hou's career, allowing him to develop a personal style later acclaimed as quintessentially his. It is a time when Hou refrains consciously from classical editing

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[17] The term *laogu* 咾咕, or *gulao* 咕咾 for the elder locals, is in fact a transliteration of "coral" in the Hokkien topolect. These *laogu* stones originally constituted the coral reefs under the ocean, and were moved ashore to build the locals' residences for the sake of convenience, as building materials during the time were still insufficient. I will return to the topic of *laogu shi* again in my conclusion when I discuss artist Chen Shun-Chu's installation art set in Penghu.
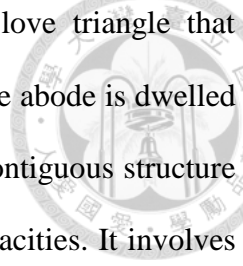
and framing techniques, including continuity editing, shot/reverse shot, and facial close-ups that heighten the characters' emotions, and opts for a distanced position for objectively observing his filmed subjects. In the Penghu scenes, for example, the use of the long take and the long shot is already remarkable, some employed with the aid of the walls. In one famous fighting scene, the camera simply stays still at a distance, watching the boys carrying on their fight through a vista vision created by walls and objects on both sides.[18] Exactly by preventing an omniscient view of the boys, who constantly move in and out of the screen, the walls and the distant camera manage to engage the audience's attention as to the outcome of the combat. The materiality of the walls thus enables a type of film vocabulary that helps establish a particular mode of address. Such a deliberately distanced tactic, however, is not the whole story. In other times, the camera tracks along the walls, zooming in and out to capture the unfolding schemes and pastimes of the restless boys.

In James Udden's account, while Hou is later known for the stillness of his camera, a good forty-five percent of the shots in *The Boys from Fengkuei* contain camera movements (63-64). The camera maintains its agility even after the boys arrive in the crowded Kaohsiung, where their stretching space becomes increasingly constricted. Part of the reason for this camera vitality is that, rather than dwelling in the concrete jungle, the boys settle into an old-styled apartment complex, much like the traditional Chinese quadrangle that maintains a high degree of autonomy in itself. The complex is furnished with a spacious balcony, see-through windows, open corridor, and a yard in the middle. There the boys are introduced to their neighbors, Ah-ho and his girlfriend Hsiao-hsiang, who live kitty-corner to them. One of the boys, Ah-chin, falls secretly in love with Hsiao-hsiang, and the story ensues between the

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[18] See Wu Pei-ci's article (1999), in which she studies this scene in terms of temporality, movement, and the long take.

boisterous ways of the boys on the one hand, and an elusive love triangle that eventually amounts to nothing on the other. At times, it feels that the abode is dwelled as much by the teenagers as by the camera itself, for the house's contiguous structure provides an ideal ground for the camera to try out its technical capacities. It involves zooming, tilting, craning, and panning—cinematic acts that create spatial continuum to record the characters' interactions both horizontally and vertically. A number of point-of-view shots are also used, first to reveal the boys' curious peeking at their female neighbor, and then to mimic Ah-chin's silent observation of the dying affection between Ah-ho and Hsiao-hsiang. Interestingly, following these POV shots, the film sometimes cuts to Hsiao-hsiang, who unflinchingly returns the gaze, showing her mixed feelings of interest, forlornness, and detachment. Here the apartment's compound structure enables the exchange of gazes, life events, and emotional undercurrents, offering a space for the characters to reinscribe their mutual bonding beyond mere chance encounters. It further affords a cinematic style that can express formally a distinct mode of dwelling characterized by fluidity, reciprocity, and transparency inside the architecture. Cinema, in this sense, embodies the boys' city-dwelling with its own representational schemes.

Technically speaking, however, while set in Kaohsiung, this dwelling space is simply not "urban" enough. For some, it bespeaks Hou's nostalgic sentiment toward the pastoral, and his lack of command in representing the urban and the contemporary.[19] Nevertheless, the country-style complex does emit a sense of the contemporary in a brief moment when the soundtrack overrules the visual. Having just moved in, the boys play Luo Dayou's latest rock-and-roll hit "Lugang Village"

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[19] Wenchi Lin studies Hou's tendency to represent the city by way of rural images in his early films in "*Xiangcun chengshi*" ("City as County," 2012). For Shiao-Ying Shen, it is not until *Nanguo zaijian nanguo* (*Goodbye South, Goodbye*, 1996) that Hou develops a style with which he can confidently approach the contemporary. See Shen, "*Nanguo*".

(*Lugang xiaozhen*) at full volume, using the song's explicit denial of the neon-lit Taipei as one's home as the defining theme of their urban story.[20] With the song's deafening sonority, the house is turned into a realm of reverberation in tune with the younger generation's urban angst. Thus for a moment the half-reclusive house is channeled to the social reality facing the city's newcomers; the very existence of the radio signals the house's possible transformation into a medial space, prone to the external stimuli pervading the city. It is with this fleeting reference to media technologies that I turn to Edward Yang's urban films, in which the emergence of the medial space could be registered with more definitive quality.

The Emergence of a Medial Space

In current studies, a few critics and scholars have noticed, and elaborated to a certain extent, the significance of media that populate Edward Yang's films. For example, writing on *Kongbu fenzi* (*The Terrorizers*, 1986), Edmond Wong (Huang Jianye) points out that the film's multiple narrative threads are implicitly "enmeshed by medial objects," leading to "a structure both sober and precise" (140). Wong deems these medial objects as enabling "an introspective meta-perspective," offering filmmakers a space to reflect on the social aftermaths caused unintentionally by their use of media (140). The reflexivity that Wong touches upon here, however, concerns media users' humanistic consideration for the well-being of the population on the receiving end of their technology, rather than the ontological meditation on the film medium itself in relation to a larger media environment. Although Wong rightly perceives the connection between media and the film's structure, he fails to further unpack the relations between "the enmeshment of medial objects" and the film's

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[20] I discuss Luo Dayou's music of the early 1980s in greater detail in Chapter Three.
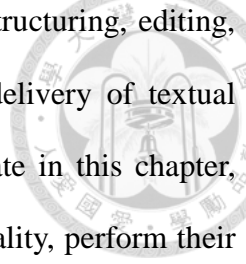
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"sober and precise structure," which prevents him from conducting a closer analysis of the film's intricate formal design.

In a more recent article, Ling-Ching Chiang studies the photography, surveillance camera, computer games, and glass curtain walls that pervade the textual space of *Yiyi* (2000), discussing how the film, with a firm belief in the image, enlists the force of media to construct the reality of urban life. This observation of the mediatized cityscape complicates André Bazin's binary formulation of the faith in reality and that in the image, with the theorist's unswerving endorsement of the former half a century ago. Yet as the boundary between the contemporary city and the image becomes increasingly blurred, today the belief in reality entails that in the image in the first place.[21] And now that "media become the reality," Chiang further contends, "they are no longer used as spectacles that mobilize narrative development" but are merged into everyday urban scenery (185). She identifies the media technologies in *The Terrorizers* as functioning in service of the plot, employed to mainly build upon dramatic effects. It is not until *Yiyi* that media for the first time "shift from the narrative level to the level of the image" (185), a shift that reactivates "the plasticity of images" on the one hand, and expresses the film's attitude toward urban reality via its image aesthetics on the other (180).

While Chiang's recasting of urban reality with respect to its intrinsic media ubiquity is inspiring, the emphasis on plasticity over narrativity is not entirely feasible. As Edward Yang operates solely in the field of fiction films, the proliferating media in his work cannot but take on textual significance in propelling narrative progression. Furthermore, in the act of narrative transmission, media technology can also partake

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[21] On the increasingly indistinct boundary between the city and the image, especially in the context of the East Asian metropolises today, Chiang relies heavily on the Introduction by James Tweedie and Yomi Braester, from their coedited book *Cinema at the City's Edge*. See Tweedie and Braester, "Introduction: The City's Edge" (1-16).
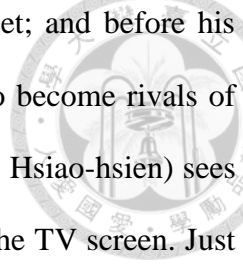
in the sculpturing of the film's plasticity, engaging in aspects of structuring, editing, framing, composition, etc., which are all inseparable from the delivery of textual meanings. Thus a more effective analytic method, as I demonstrate in this chapter, would be inquiring into how media, with a degree of self-referentiality, perform their capacity in narrating the story, and how they reinforce their materiality to embody the plasticity of film forms. With this in mind, the emphasis on image plasticity in correspondence to a reality located in the external world would run the risk of repeating the reflectionist paradigm, missing the chance to engage more actively with the complex configuration of media and form immanent to the work itself.

The issue of material culture and film form comes to the fore in James Tweedie's seminal study of the global new waves. Tweedie attributes the creative source of the French Nouvelle Vague, and the attendant use of location shooting to mobilize its versatile mise-en-scène, to the advent of American popular culture and the ceaseless flow of commodities and currency in the postwar era. Turning his viewfinder to the rich material displays and the circulation of merchandise, Tweedie specifies objects such as cars, plastic, and glass as indicative of the material interchange between cinema and the urban milieu. Sporadically discussed in the book, these materials embody to varying degrees cinema's consciousness of mechanization, mobility, plasticity, transparency, and reflexivity.[22]

When analyzing Edward Yang's *Qingmei zhuma* (*Taipei Story*, 1985), Tweedie pays special attention to the role played by TV, which is made of glass and plastic and is a medial object at once. Toward the end of the film, a TV set that belongs to the

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[22] The discussions of cars, plastic, and glass may not constitute the book's overarching argument, but they can be located in quite a few places throughout the chapters. For example, in the discussion of automobile and editing in Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (*À bout de soufflé*, 1960) (103-06); in the discussion of petrochemical factories and the spatial expanse of widescreens by way of Alain Resnais's early short *The Song of the Styrene* (*Le chant du Styrène*, 1958) (117-18); and in the discussion of glass, TV screens, and urban space in the works of Jacques Tati and Edward Yang (138-40; 189-91).

domestic space is discarded among a pile of furniture on the street; and before his death from an abdominal injury inflicted by a hooligan, as the two become rivals of the same love interest, the male protagonist A-lung (played by Hou Hsiao-hsien) sees his most cherished childhood memory flashing in front of him on the TV screen. Just as the line that separates the urban interior from the exterior is no longer distinct, the contents of an urban subject are also infiltrated by media technology, to the extent that they spill over to congeal on the medial interface (Tweedie 190-91). With the climactic TV scene, the realistic pacing of *Taipei Story* is jolted, and a fleeting moment of black-and-white, signal noises, and displaced temporality is ushered in. This uncanny moment reminds one of Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Dust in the Wind*, in which Ah-yuan's surrealistic nightmare is also invoked by a segment of a documentary series aired on TV.[23] Thus in both cases, TV functions as the agent of change that triggers stylistic mutations with the film's shift of mediational mode. In what follows, I continue the analysis of these medial objects—telephone, photography, glass panels—in Edward Yang's urban films. Focusing on the opening sequence of *Taipei Story* as well as *The Terrorizers*, I explore what meanings are transmitted by media therein, and what film forms are forged, as the city transforms under an emerging regime of connectivity and transparency.

Edward Yang's acute sensibility toward media technology is already palpable in the TV set that feeds the family with world news in "Zhiwang" ("Expectations"), a segment he made for the omnibus film *Guangyin de gushi* (*In Our Time*) in 1982. But it is not until perhaps *Taipei Story* that an effective integration of media, the urban, and the cinematic is secured. *Taipei Story* opens with a two shot in which Ah-lung and

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[23] According to Sing Song-yong, this segment on mining labor is taken from an episode "Journey of Mine" (*Kuang zhilü*, 1980) among the documentary series *Yinxiang zhilü* (*Journey of Impressions*), collaborated by a cohort of artists including photographer Chang Chao-Tang, writer Lei Xiang, cinematographer Christopher Doyle, and photographer Juan I-jong. See Sing, "Taiwan xindianying de youling zhilü."

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Ah-chen, the titular couple of the Chinese title,[24] stand in the living room of a newly-acquired apartment, with their backs to the camera, and faces toward the floor-to-ceiling windows opening onto the city outside. The room is empty, and the rectangular windows frame the couple right in the middle. Given the stark contrast between the dark interior and the bright exterior defined by the window frames, it is as if the couple is watching a film, in which the city looms as the main character (Figure 2.1). Yet curiously, the world outside the windows is nothing but another set of apartment buildings resembling the couple's. Thus what they are watching can also be said to be their own story. The final shot of this sequence is an empty shot from the same angle and distance after the couple leaves. The Chinese title then appears on the screen. Character by character, it is located exactly within the rectangular frame outlined by the windows. What the couple just watched, this opening sequence seems to finally confirm, was a film about themselves that will now unfold before us (Figure 2.2).

At least three observations can be made about this empty apartment sequence. Together, they constitute the visual motifs that will continue to foreground a zone of liminality in the urban spaces of Yang's oeuvre.

First, with the installment of this frame-within-a-frame composition, the film develops a meta-relation to itself. Besides being a space contained within the diegesis, this interior space also simulates a cinematic site for watching. Situated between the window that communicates the spectators on the one side and the windows that connect the urban exterior on the other, this "interspace" is often about how films, via varied forms of mediation, negotiate their terms with the city—the true Other for

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[24] *Qingmei zhuma*—literally, green plum and bamboo horse—refers to sustained romantic relationship developed among childhood playmates. In Yang's work, it is only sensible to say that the title is used ironically to chronicle the faltering relationship between Ah-lung and Ah-chen.

Yang's cinematic contemplation.[25]

Second, the film's protagonists are always "on the watch." This gesture of watching can be readily sighted both in Yang's oeuvre and in the entire body of the New Cinema works. In Chang Shih-lun's words, the recurring images of the frame in New Cinema reveal "concerns for exhibiting the 'watching' gesture as a key consciousness of the films" (86). In Yang's films, "watching" usually comes as a privilege reserved for career women. Through watching, these bourgeois females gain a self-awareness, often with unceasing melancholy, about the city's relentless assault on their life patterns and interpersonal relations.

Third, glass surfaces, with the dual affordances of transparency and reflexivity, play a crucial role in transmitting images and shaping frame-within-the-frame compositions. In the empty apartment sequence, Ah-Chen briefly goes to the bathroom to look into the mirror (Figure 2.3). After she leaves, the camera stays and faces the mirror alone. The mirror now reflects the living room scene with the floor-to-ceiling windows in it, presenting a complex view composed of multiple frame-within-the-frames, dividing the image into at least three planes (Figure 2.4). This image of the *mise en abyme* is the result of a series of media relay mobilized by glass: first the reflexive property of the mirror surface, the visual transparency of the glass windows, and then the camera lens that takes in whatever appears within its field of vision. It is as if the camera is caught in a moment of meditation, pondering over the transmission of images, the distributive agencies of visualization shared among disparate media, and the experiment with spatial compression and expansion. This reflexive moment by way of the mirror might not be as radical as Jean-Luc

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[25] This medial interspace reminds one of the famous scene in *The Boys from Fengkuei*, in which the young and inexperienced urban newcomers are tricked into watching a "color, big-screen movie" in a building under construction. What greets them instead is a huge concrete frame through which they obtain a panoramic view of Kaohsiung.

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Godard and Oshima Nagisa in their deconstruction of the images, but it is indeed "a return to the ontology of the image, a philosophical intent on thinking 'what is cinema,'" which, according to Chang Shih-lun, is what the New Cinema generally lacks (86).
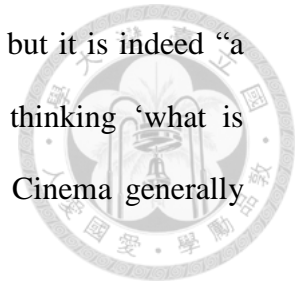
Figures 2.1—2.4

The opening sequence of *Taipei Story* showcases the emergence of an interior space that is simultaneously rendered as a medial space. From this sequence, one begins to learn better of Yang's ingenuity in putting on a drama of bourgeois interiority. For the director, the question of how to design this interior space is that of how to construct his cinematic space. Such a space is not entirely shielded from what lies beyond its confines; rather, mediated in all sorts of ways, it is put adjacent to a borderline, where the interior verges on the exterior, where situations of unkind natures happen—marital discords, imposture, betrayal, murder, and the dissemination of pernicious affect—and expose the dangers and unrests underlying everyday urban life. The medial space first seen in *Taipei Story*'s opening sequence becomes the blueprint for Yang's subsequent creations; his later works all stage their bourgeois

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tales with variation in such an invariant medial space.

But how exactly does Yang design his vacant interior? How does he allow the space to present its own medial awareness? The first line of *Taipei Story* has Ah-chen address Ah-lung: "look, we can arrange a tier of low cabinets here, and above them you can place audio recorder, VHS recorder, stereo, and TV, so you can watch tapes in the bed." The VHS recorder, VHS cassettes, and the TV set all play critical narrating roles as the plot unfolds. They thus connect the living room, the anchoring scene of the film, outward to the subplots whose traces outreach and then land in an elsewhere.[26] To further foreground the place of these media devices, the film ushers in a brief montage, exhibiting the result of the interior decoration after the credit sequence. This montage sequence does not so much report the comfort of the renovated apartment as reveal the prominent place of media technology in this space. The empty living room is shown first and foremost mediated by a set of technological devices, constituting an infrastructural network that enables the metropolitan life to sustain. In addition, *Taipei Story* also puts emphasis on the role of telecommunications—telephone in this case—in relation to its characters. The montage sequence is followed by the scene in which a mechanic visits for telephone installment. This scene of ensuring connectivity is shown in contrast to Ah-chen's being home alone, as Ah-lung is away for scouting business prospects in the US. Later, when Ah-chen meets Ah-lung upon the latter's return, the first words she utters are: "the new phone is installed," as if the means of communication takes precedence over the exchange of greetings and feelings. Likewise, in Ah-chen's interaction with her potential lover (the architect) and with her boss Ms. Mei, as well as her verbal

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[26] Ah-lung's trip to the US as well as his stealthy visit of his old flame in Japan are all recorded by the VHS tapes, which he uses to copy baseball games aired on TV. Soon after he returns home, the tapes reveal his secret trip, leading to irrevocable fissures in the relationship between him and Ah-chen. Towards its end, and by way of remediation, the film employs the TV set to close the case of Ah-lung's predestined downfall. See Tweedie's analysis mentioned above.

references to, physical acts of, and failed attempt at making a call, the phone weaves a technical web through which her emotional loss and isolation is rendered all the more critical. In *Taipei Story*, technological media for the first time function as the adhesive glue that affords Yang's favored use of multi-plot narration. But a more conceptual and self-reflexive treatment of the phone in cinema's technological terms would not be fully realized until the director takes up more radical experiments with fragmented plotlines in *The Terrorizers*.
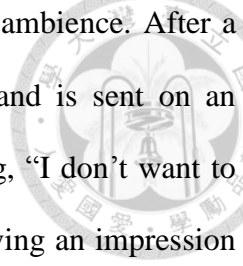
According to Edward Yang, his creation of *The Terrorizers* began with the White Chick's[27] prank call, which then rippled outward to involve other characters as its victims, witnesses, or accomplices (Qu 98). With this design, the main plot is fractured toward several strands, which are at the same time hinged by the phone. Compared to the gas tank that has drawn much scholarly attention since Jameson, which however does not go beyond a symbolic gesture of reading, the telephone lines wired across the expanse of the city perhaps serve as a better vehicle for elements of contingency, anonymity, and potential terror. *The Terrorizers* frequently presents scenes in which characters make phone calls, in addition to a few close-ups and mise-en-scène involving the phone.[28] In these scenes, the phone not merely associates disparate spaces and characters and prompts narrative progression, but also cues the film's editing, jostling unrelated diegetic universes into proximity via cinematic acts.

The phone especially activates a technical dissociation of sound and image, and effectively dislodges audio sources from their embedment in visual tracks. In the scene in which the young photographer's girlfriend stands on her balcony and overlooks the photographer walking away after their breakup, a telephone is heard
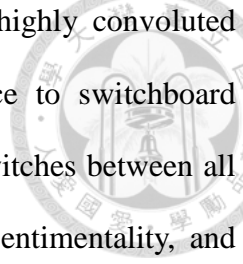
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[27] The White Chick is the Eurasian girl involved in many petty crimes in the film. Her mixed background is the result of her mother's relationship with an American soldier who used to be stationed in Taiwan, an incident that invokes Taiwan's US-aid history of the 1950s and 1960s.

[28] By my own count, there are at least twenty scenes that involve the telephone as props.

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ringing, which gives an impression that it happens in the diegetic ambience. After a few scenes, we learn that the girlfriend has committed suicide and is sent on an ambulance. The ambulance scene is paired with a voice confessing, "I don't want to live anymore. . . . I have taken a bottle of sleeping pills," again giving an impression that this is the girl's suicidal note. But both the phone rings and the suicidal confession are revealed to be non-diegetic sources coming from another space—in the next scene, we realize these sounds and voices are from the White Chick's room, where she is having fun making prank calls. Throughout the sequence's deliberately desynchronized aural mise-en-scène, the phone rings trigger a split of sound and image, creating two parallel spaces with the insertion of extra-diegetic sounds. A few scenes later, the phone works again as artificial glue that commands another cut of image to cement the divided visual and aural tracks. Combining the transmitting power of media technology and the film's intricate audiovisual editing, the phone thus serves as the film's screen double that duplicates the mechanism of editing, marking a site where the film's technological consciousness surfaces, and where the film shows a reflexive understanding of its highly fractured formal arrangement.

Interestingly, in a recent article titled "Terror in the Wind, 1986," which half-imaginatively documents the simultaneous postproduction of *The Terrorizers* and Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Dust in the Wind* in editor Liao Ching-Song's studio, Chen Shen draws an analogy between the busy editor and a telephone operator, who for about ten days "switched between different lines, picking up, holding, and transferring them and was able to complete all the tasks with efficiency" (77). This vivid association of the film editor with the switchboard operator can be traced back to Dziga Vertov's famous *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929). In the film, Vertov not only shows an editor gluing filmstrips, but constructs a flamboyant montage sequence halfway through the film, intercutting between the steel factory, the

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assembly line, the typewriter, door bells, and the piano with a highly convoluted

manner. All these images are linked with a sustained reference to switchboard

operators, who figure as the film's own editing mechanism that switches between all

forms of labor.[29] Though *The Terrorizers* lacks Vertov's leftist sentimentality, and

shares nothing with Vertov's fascination with mechanic kinetics and rhythms, it does

tend toward adopting a disjunctive form, experimenting with cinema's own

associative capacity. They both rely on media technology, using the telephone as

cinema's self-metaphorization onscreen—or what Kate Marshall calls "reflexively

doubled material metaphor"[30]—to constitute a reference to film form itself. And more

than self-referential metaphors, these technological media engage their own

transmitting power to participate in the engineering of both films' fractured form.

Back to Chen Shen's documentation, when Liao Ching-Song completed editing *The*

Terrorizers and *Dust in the Wind*, the former ended up with 455 shots, while the latter

merely with 197. Upon closer analysis, it is revealed that the relatively plentiful cuts

in *The Terrorizers* are largely reliant upon the mediating effects of telephone calls,

photos, TV, and the opening and closing of doors and windows.
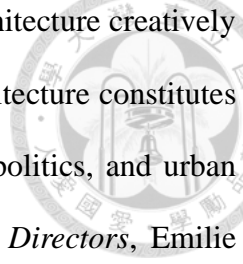
Tiles, Glass, and the Darkroom

    In addition to what are conventionally recognized as media technologies—TV,

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[29] On how Vertov experiments with cinema's editing and associative potential, and how he welds art with machines so as to mold new human experience for further revolutionary kinetics, see Seth Feldman, "'Peace between Machine and Man: Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera.*'" In Taiwan cinema, the operator and the switchboard also appear in Bai Jingrui's *Taibei zhi chen* (*A Morning in Taipei*, 1964). For a succinct comparison between *Man with a Movie Camera* and *A Morning in Taipei*, see Shiao-Ying Shen, "*A Morning in Taipei*: Bai Jingrui's Furstrated Debut."

[30] As a theoretical notion, "material metaphor" was first proposed by N. Katherine Hayles. Literary scholar Kate Marshall appropriates and expands the notion to become "reflexively doubled material metaphor," which she uses to explore the architectural components—corridors, ducts, sewers, furnaces etc.—that not only reiterate their functionality (rather than their symbolic or foiling properties) but also double back on the novels' ability to transmit meanings in a given social context (Marshall 28-29). I borrow Marshall's term to explicate the doubly self-conscious media technologies commonly seen in Edward Yang's films.

telephone, photography—I also try to consider the mediality of architecture creatively employed by the New Cinema films. In Edward Yang's work, architecture constitutes a particular means of mediation through which issues of history, politics, and urban life can be further addressed. For example, in their *Taiwan Film Directors*, Emilie Yue-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis derive a visual motif of "tunnel vision" from their close analysis of composition in *Gulingjie shaonian sharen shijian* (*A Brighter Summer Day*, 1991). In scenes taking place in vestibules, arched passageways, stair flights, and the pool hall, a concave composition in depth is invariably created, giving rise to a "focalization" effect with a narrowing field of light extending deep into the background. To Yeh and Davis, this "telescoping" effect resembles the film's intention to shed light on the macroscopic status of state autocracy by way of observing the educational pressure and regimentation the film's pubertal characters experience (104).[31]

If historical depth is what *A Brighter Summer Day* drives us to glimpse at, then the modern-day setting of *The Terrorizers* allows the mise-en-scène of surfaces and interfaces to foreground the ubiquitous mediation of the city's components. In his recent study, Lawrence Zi-Qiao Yang discusses the affinity between the technical forms of tiling and the protagonists' surviving tasks in *The Terrorizers*. According to his analysis, the male protagonist Li Li-chung is deeply entrapped in tiled grids. These smothering grids, used as traditional household décor that has become increasingly outmoded, accompany Li in his compulsive handwashings, his request for promotion that ultimately fails, and his final suicide in the bathhouse. In contrast, his wife Chou Yu-fen, though suffering a writer's block, is able to "retool" tiles into glass grids that

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[31] Understood in this light, the flashlight that keeps appearing in the film (and frequently associated with the teenager protagonist Xiao Si) takes on more profound meanings. The same could be said about the light bulb that opens the film.
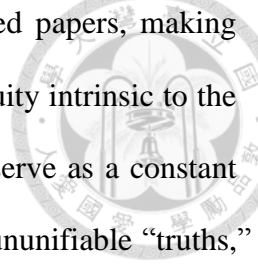
assist her upward mobility in the high-rise buildings.[32] For Yang, the tiles animate the urban environment lived by the characters, providing an opportunity for them to "mobilize, connect, and reconstruct . . . the compartmentalized urban realities" (199). At times, however, it seems that Yang's reading of tiles falls back to symbolic decryptions that treat the tiles as betokening and contrasting the characters' differing fates. Plagued by opaque jargons, it is also not clear how exactly the characters, as Yang claims, "use" these tiles (199). More crucially, in corresponding different types of tiling to certain characters, Yang fails to explore how tiles are also used reflexively by the film medium—itself an intimately grained surface.

Broadly speaking, tiling also appears in the apartment rented by the young photographer. Originally housing a horde of criminals, this space, called "the murder room" by Jameson despite the fact that murder never happens there, is among the first interior spaces shown in the film, and is further associated with the domineering gas tank, which can be readily glimpsed from the apartment windows. The apartment is thus imagined as an archetypal space of interiority that sets the generic tone—petty crime with unexpected violent bursts—for the film. It also recycles the motif of the medial space seen in *Taipei Story*, as it will soon be renovated by the photographer after the police cracks down on the resistant outlaws. Step by step, the photographer reinvents the empty room into a darkroom, tiling pieces of paper sheets over a wall to create a surface of images (Figure 2.5).

The tiled image is later revealed to be a magnified "mugshot" of the White Chick caught unawares when hiding from the police, an image that Jameson considers to be "an allegory of film itself" (141). Later when the darkroom is discarded by the

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[32] Here Yang offers a fantastic reading of Chou and her glass surroundings. By way of an intellectual montage, the film edits together images of Chou gazing outside the high-rise window, a window-cleaner hung in midair to work on a glass curtain wall, and the Chinese-style gridline papers. This way, the film hints at Chou's upward mobility in relation to her profession, as the labor of writing is also referred to as *pagezi*—climbing compartments—in Chinese (Yang 201-02).

photographer, the wind blowing into the room partly lifts the tiled papers, making them flutter and flap randomly, which in turn reveals the discontinuity intrinsic to the composition of image itself. Thus the film's tiled image surfaces serve as a constant reminder that what they represent are but fractured, fictitious, and ununifiable "truths," much in the way that the film's forking narrative threads lead to anything but a coherent closure in the end. This way the tiled image in the darkroom also resembles the form of "puzzle games," which Edward Yang tirelessly refers to when asked in his interviews to comment on the film's unsettling and irresolvable denouement (Chen, "The Frustrated Architect" 118; Wong, *Yang Dechang* 226).

While paper tiling in the darkroom reveals the constitutive nature of image and narrative making, other traces could be further located that corroborate this space's meta-discursive reflexivity. After the photographer's tiling scene, a shot of an optical machine, most possibly a camera or a projector used by the photographer, is briefly inserted (Figure 2.6). The machine's close-up body is rendered incredibly large; in its self-assured occupation of the screen, it is as if the machine is itself animate. On the one hand, the machine can be associated with the photographer's idle life, as he searches and collects criminal elements in the city with the otherwise aimless camera lens. Once he detects crimes, as he does from his balcony in the film's opening scenes, the camera is instantly drawn to the spot and becomes an impassioned witness, a gesture that betokens the film's impulse toward its own generic codification.[33] Yet on the other hand, the voyeuristic camera cannot merely pose itself as an outsider who casts detachable sights. For the machine's close-up profile caught in the darkroom also appears as a gun that has taken its aim. Assuming the place of the former criminal

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[33] Although *The Terrorizers* is chiefly recognized as a (post)modernist arthouse piece, as Emilie Yeh and Darrel Davis also point out, the facts that the film was well-received among the audiences during its release and that the film was jointly produced by the highly commercialized Golden Harvest of Hong Kong attest to the film's flexible absorption of genre elements, including crime, thriller, and bourgeois melodrama (Yeh and Davis 94-95).

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tenants, one of whom is shown pointing a gun from within the apartment earlier, this

"photographic gun"[34] continues to target the next possible victim, whom, as the film

cuts to the next shot, is revealed to be the hand-washing Li Li-chung (Figure 2.7).[35]
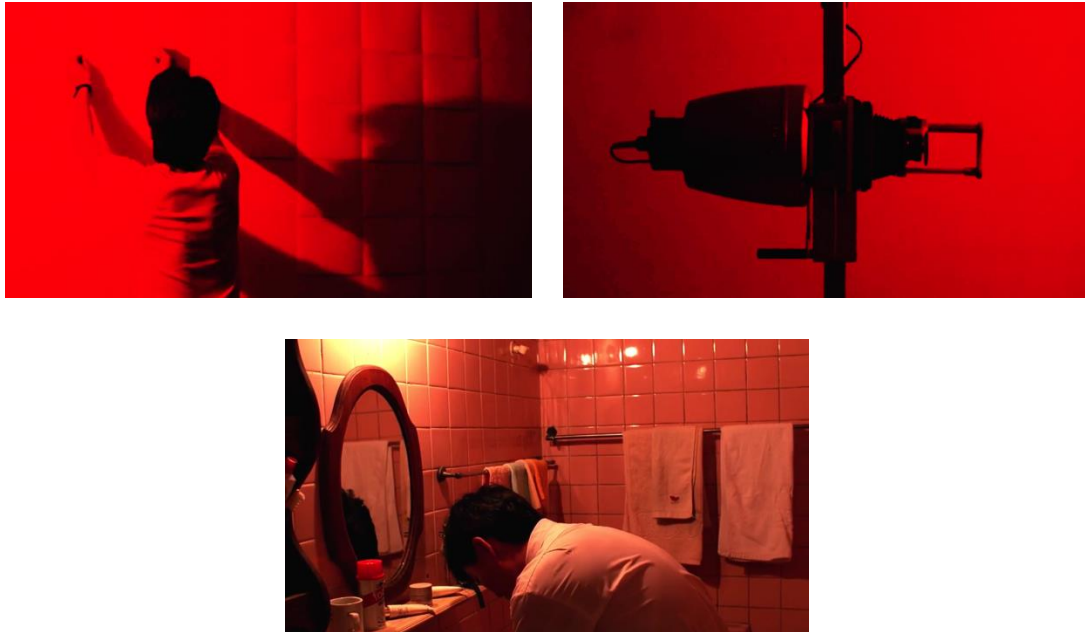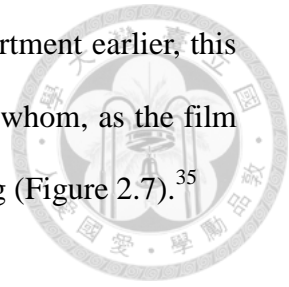
Figures 2.5—2.7
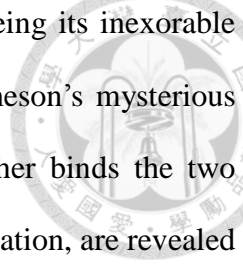
One is prompted to ask: why juxtaposing the scenes of the photographer and Li,

while inserting the optical machine in between? First, the most salient feature shared

by these three shots is the reddish hue that seems contagious from one scene to the

next. Just one shot prior to the photographer's paper-tiling scene, a light bulb is turned

on. Glowing in red, it is identified as the light source in the darkroom. This ominously

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[34] Photographic devices in its early invention did once resemble the form of a gun. In 1882, French scientist Étienne-Jules Marey invented his chronophotographer with a revolving cylinder containing photographic plates, with which he could take aim and shoot at the speed of twelve frames a second. For more details see Marta Braun's *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey*. See also Friedrich Kittler's discussion on this topic in the film section of his *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*.

[35] Certainly, given that the While Chick is this camera machine's object of desire, and that the machine resembles a solid, erect, almost phallus-like shape, the darkroom motif could also be considered in light of films including *Peeping Tom* (1960) and *Blow-up* (1966), with the established reading that associates the male photographer's camera with sex, orgasm, violence and death.

lurid color hints at a bloody revelation that is to come, with Li being its inexorable victim and, as it turns out, executor. This might help explain Jameson's mysterious dubbing of "the murder room." The diffusive luminescence further binds the two interior spaces into proximity, which, when put under closer examination, are revealed to share more similarities. Both scenes hinged by the optical machine are drenched in a gory hue, densely tiled in the background, and presented in medium shots, each with one man occupying the foreground, their backs to the camera. With this interchangeable composition, these scenes create a sense of the double. In this double etching of two similar scenes, the photographer can be said to be helping prepare for a film set, and once the camera is in place, the now furnished set is ready for further dramatic actions to transpire. As such, the darkroom in which the light source, the camera, and the cinematographer coexist can be reimagined as the film's production space. The insertion of the optical machine then functions as an artificial marker that distinguishes the preparation from the exercise of shooting, reality from fiction, studio from diegesis, media materiality from projected illusion, while also triggering the smooth transition between two different layers of narration. Here the optical machine also helps bear out the technical operation inherent in dwelling cinema: the structural coupling of the diegesis with a material outside, with the technical baring of form (abrupt editing in this case) being the trigger and reminder of such an adaptive process.

In making visible the operations in the backstage, the darkroom also serves as an interface between the narrative events and the off-screen audience. Reenacting the motifs of liminal space and interior renovation in *Taipei Story*, the darkroom in *The Terrorizers* is both steeped in the narrative universe, and surfacing as a metaspace that manages to wrench itself away from the diegetic pull. With such a state of in-betweenness, the darkroom not only carves out an enclave for reflecting on the
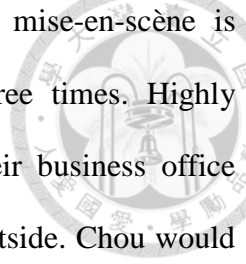
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mechanism of representation, but forms a surface tension that prevents it from sinking entirely into deep narrative entanglements. Of particular note, those who can enter the darkroom at will—the photographer and the White Chick—are defined first and foremost by their handling of technological gadgets. Rather than probing the motives of their (mis)conducts, it seems more feasible to consider them as "surface effects," as media's embodiment onscreen, to the extent that their psychological depths are sacrificed for the equivalence between characters and media.[36]

What this darkroom sequence helps bring forth is also a transparent porosity, through which one space morphs into another by traversing a thin wall made of mediational technology. Glass is, in this regard, the crucial material that enables the imagination of such a spatial transparency. In *The Terrorizers*, as Lawrence Yang aptly observes, glass is made the most polymorphous when associated with Chou the novelist.[37] But instead of probing how the character mobilizes glass to actively pursue her social mobility, which risks unnecessary entrenchment of a single identity and its subjective agency, it is more effective to analyze how the glass *effaces* such subjectivity, and in turn proposes a more nuanced view of city-dwelling vis-à-vis the city. Throughout the scenes in the business building where Chou and her coworker

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[36] According to this observation, it becomes curious to note that Chou does arrive at the apartment but refrains from entering it. Is she so absorbed in the diegetic space that she is barred from entering the metaspace? As a creator herself, does she see through the schemes behind the drama and decide not to disclose them? To adopt an extreme reading, if the whole film is but the storylines of Chou's novel, or a nightmare she eventually wakes up to, then is her creation reign even higher above the darkroom?

[37] The association of female characters (most of whom are independent career women) with glass curtain walls can be observed in *Taipei Story*, *The Terrorizers*, and *Yiyi*. Taiwanese film scholar Wu Pei-tzu probably offers the most intriguing analysis of glass interface in her insightful work on *Yiyi*. Wu notices a scene in which the mother character Min-min stands in front of a glass window, which half manifests the character's silhouette in her office and half reflects the night view outside the building. Very skillfully, the glittering red traffic light outside is superimposed onto where Min-min's heart is, creating an effect of an externalized heart beating steadily with cadence. Via the mediation of the glass, this image constructs a vibrant system of exchange, which "strengthens the metonymic relation between the body and the city, in which the city is formulated as a simulation of the body, and the body is in turn 'urbanized'" (Wu 97). See Wu Pei-tzu, "Ningshi beimian—shitan Yang Dechang *Yiyi* de xüshi jiegou yu kengjian biaoshu tixi."

(who becomes her lover later) constantly meet, one particular mise-en-scène is reiterated, with a frequency of appearance of no less than three times. Highly compartmentalized by wooden strips and lucid glass panels, their business office foregrounds a set of glass surfaces that glaringly reflect the city outside. Chou would constantly walk past these panels, where her body would, for a moment, dissolve into the reflected city image and becomes translucent, or ghostly even (Figure 2.8). Read symbolically, the superimposition of Chou and the city pronounces her a kin of the urban species. In the double annulment—hence mutual merge and embedment—of the physical boundaries between the city and Chou, the former becomes a resourceful storehouse which could easily be of use to the latter. Chou can thus immerse herself in the protean urban environment effortlessly, seeking chances for upward mobility.

Yet from the point of view of mediation, this striking scene recasts the paradox suggested by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, for whom remediation is understood in terms of the double logic of immediacy and hypermediacy. On the one hand, new media strive to become transparent and unperceivable, as users are made to feel the unmediated presence of the mediated objects. On the other, the immediate transmission of sensorial experience aimed by new media cannot but expose their heavily mediated nature.[38] In Chou's case, while media's excessive materiality is laid bare, the mediated object (herself) is rendered almost impalpable. What surfaces through mediation instead is the immediately close, all-encompassing city. Here the reflective glass panels function as a magical "tell-all mirror,"[39] via which the passer-by's interior essence is frankly exposed. The glass mediation reveals the interiority of a hollowed Chou to contain nothing but the city itself. Ultimately she is

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[38] The distinction between immediacy and hypermediacy assumed by Bolter and Grusin are not unproblematic. For a succinct critique of their theory, see Chun-yen Chen, "Cong xinmeiti yenjiu kan wenxue yu chuanjie wenti."

[39] *Zhaoyaojing*, used in Chinese folklore to expose the real identity of ghosts or animal spirits, who often disguise as seductive females or benign mankind.

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but an aggregate of signs, whose contents collapse onto glass surfaces, which only the successful manage to navigate smoothly.
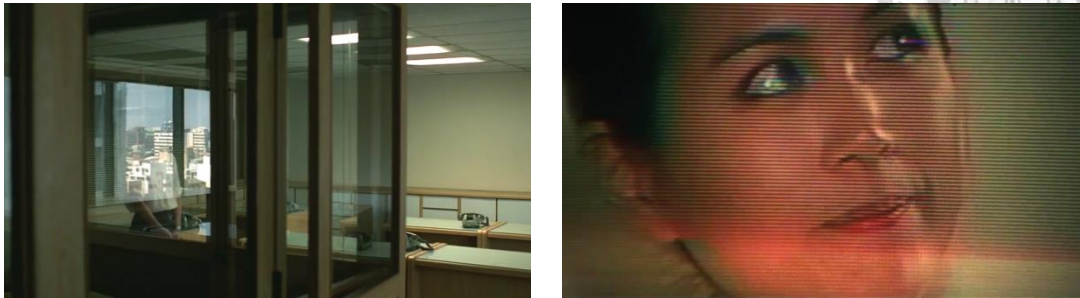
Figures 2.8 and 2.9

Unsurprisingly, it is behind the same set of glass panels that Chou later learns of her winning a major literary prize. Now that she becomes an acclaimed novelist, the glass surface, in the form of TV screens, takes her onto a journey that circulates the entire city (Figure 2.9). With her close-up appearing on TV, Chou literally becomes a social icon whose value lies largely in her faciality. This time, however, the TV does not present her as a disembodied phantasm; instead, it pins her opaque physicality down to a fixed identity. The TV also allows numerous scansion lines to appear onscreen, as if to assert the forceful presence of the media. Rather than presenting the novelist as the writing subject, the mediation of the TV seems to treat her as the *subject matter* repeatedly written, inscribed, and produced by media coverage. Entrapped behind the screen, Chou becomes an inescapable object of surveillance and isolation victimized by the same transparent regime. Paradoxically, the transparency previously assumed by Chou as well as the glass panels now circles back to confront its own material opacity.

Hence what *The Terrorizers* constructs through mediational technics is a self-contradicting glass city. On the one hand, media technologies have helped build a transparent house in which messages, both visual and aural, photographic and telephonic, are able to circulate across a porous space free of obstacles. On the other

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hand, messages loaded with terrifying contents, such as those spread by the White Chick, resist the illusion of a space open to borderless mediation, and point instead to the existence of an enclosed media circuit in which characters collide and confront each other, and the rippling effects eventually culminate in an explosive manner. As Chou's TV screen hints, the glass city enframes its demographic in an inescapable conumdrum, and repeatedly rewrites, reflects, and reproduces their unsatiable desires, which essentially come from the same, unfulfilled lack. It is a paradox that finds a most bleak manifestion in Li Li-chung's coveted promotion, which can be assigned to one and then quickly replaced by another, and the bourgeois wife, who constantly searchs for change, but can only invariably locate her opportunities *within* the city.[40]
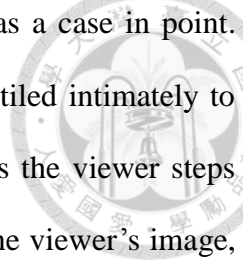
Looking at the Medium

In their *Windows and Mirrors*, Jay David Bolter and Diane Gromala bring up a crucial point for media users. While media today are chiefly imagined as transparent, as enabling one to "look through" the interface to sensually grasp the objects represented with immediacy, this "window" model also encounters a counterpart based on an imagination of media as "miorror." Instead of pursuing the effect of transparency or virtuality, the mirror affords users a chance to "look at" the medium[41] as well as the users themselves (Bolter and Gromala 56). Bolter and Gromala then cite

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[40] To echo again the Soviet film tradition cited earlier, this close-circuited image of the glass city recalls Eisenstein's uncompleted Glass House project. In the 20-minute short "The Glass House" (2015) artist Zoe Beloff created based on Eisenstein's notes and drawings, one segment is evoked to satirize the blindness and hypocrisy of the glass-trapped bourgeoisie. The film further pairs this segment with a befuddled Charlie Chaplin in *The Circus* (1928), who accidentally walks into a maze comprising several mirrors and keeps bumping his way to eventually get out. See also Beloff's book *A World Redrawn: Eisenstein and Brecht in Hollywood* (2016).

[41] Here I adjust what Bolter and Gromala mean by media to become medium. In so doing, I follow art historian Rosalind E Krauss's strategic distinction between media and medium. While "medium" specifically denotes the material underpinning of both artworks and media technologies, "media" more generally connotes mass communications, their institutions, and technologies involved. In this case, the plural form for "medium" should be "mediums." See Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium" and *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium* (57).

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Daniel Rozin's interactive installation art *Wooden Mirror* (1999) as a case in point. *Wooden Mirror* is made of hundreds of polished pieces of wood, tiled intimately to form a surface of a large square shape. In the exhibition scene, as the viewer steps near the mirror, he will activate a hidden camera, which captures the viewer's image, digitizes it, and sends the signals to a computer. Based on the signals, the computer then adjusts the wooden pieces to tilt toward or away from the light source, and the intricate angle variations produced thereof will create different amounts of light and shadows that resemble the observer's facial image (Figure 2.10). Crucially, *Wooden Mirror* blurs the distinction between analog and digital images by turning polished wood pieces into mechanical pixels, and replacing the reflective surface usually assumed by video technology with a tactile—and tiled—mirror. By highlighting the materiality of the media, *Wooden Mirror* demystifies digital media's disembodied virtuality, and reveals its imaging artificiality to the viewers.

Wooden Mirror's opaquely reflective surface strikingly resembles the White Chick's enlarged photographic portrait in the darkroom (Figure 2.11). Both employ the technics of tiling to expose the material composition of medium and images alike. And in *The Terrorizers*, as mentioned earlier, the puzzle-like image enshrined in the film's meta-film space is endowed with a material-metaphorical property, its very constitution bespeaking the impossibility of fitting the film's fractured narrative pieces into a seamless cohesion. Contrary to the self-exposing manner of the tiled image, the White Chick remains elusive and ungraspable, as is evident in her hiding from the police, escaping from the mother, and disguising behind the telephone receiver. As such, she embodies all contemporary media's desire for both concealment and ubiquity at once. Yet in her moment of "mirror encounter," the White Chick's physical traces are forcefully betrayed, so much so that she is soon overwhelmed. The magical tell-all mirror then again draws attention to itself, powerfully asserting its

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"to-be-looked-at-ness." Once mediums are looked at, their transparent pretensions are belied; opacity in turn dominates in the form of the White Chick's temporarily debilitated body.
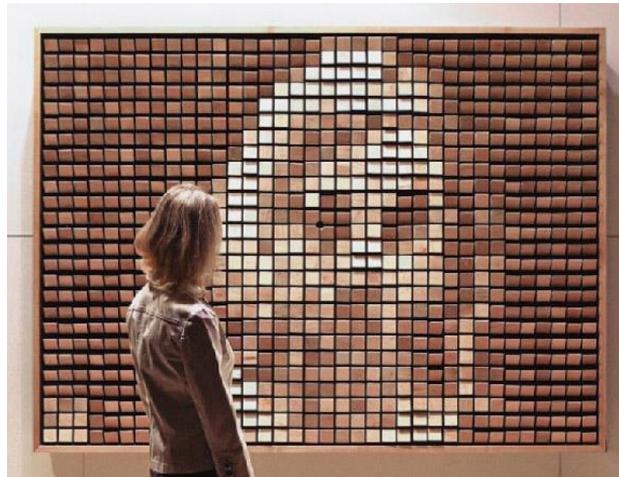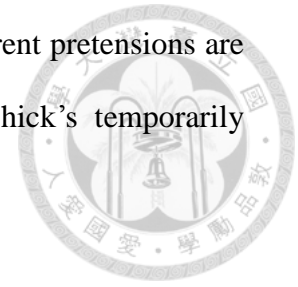
Figures 2.10 and 2.11

Throughout its course, *The Terrorizers* tirelessly presents media technologies and surfaces onscreen, aiming to lay bare the productive mechanism underlying the transparent regime of the city, to dialectically recover opacity out of the myth of transparency. To drive itself toward the insights of opacity, as well as media's material remnants, the film does not hesitate in presenting violent acts of defacement. Such an act takes place first in the proto-media space (later renovated as the darkroom) as the police fire incessantly at the translucent window panels, trying to hunt down the

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criminals hiding behind. Later in his killing frenzy, Li Li-chung seems to become aware of his dilemma, of his being excluded from the competing logic of the glass city, yet absorbed into and victimized by its encompassing regime all the same. Soon after he executes his wife's lover, Li shoots through a glass vase as well as a mirror, as if refusing to either look through or look at the medium. But the radical annulment of medium brings him nowhere. Ultimately, once the dialectic of transparency and opacity is forced to a halt, nothing—the city, urban subjects, or cinema itself—can continue to exist. And so Li is left with no choice but to eradicate himself in the absolute opacity of the tiled bath house.
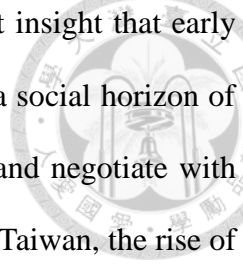
Chapter Three

Transporting the Opaque Body

Taiwan in the early 1980s is not merely known for having nurtured the creative energy of the New Cinema. It is also a time when the nation went through a sea of changes in all aspects of the society, not the least of which include the mediatization and minoritization of the urban regions. On the one hand, this period witnessed a burgeoning media culture, one that resounded across the clamorous debuts of local rock music, entertainment media, video art production, and the avant-garde theater movement. On the other hand, the era also saw the launching of a series of urban restructuring projects, with a new material environment forming to mediate new types of social relations. In consequence, a multitude of underclass citizens were pitted against the irresistible tide of regeneration, left to witness the forced demolition of their own residences.

This chapter argues that urban space in the early-1980s Taiwan is not merely the result of municipal design and its implementation. Rather, it should be understood as a topography whose contours and meanings are shaped by the synergistic work of a media network. I draw upon the notion of intermediality to address the implications of this variably mediated space. As the prefix "inter-" illustrates, different media have the ability to cross, enter, and perhaps change the boundaries between each other. This view recognizes not only the agency of media themselves, but a distributive quality at that, as intermedial practices usually transmit information, perception, and emotions in a collective and relaying fashion. The prefix's geographical connotations also allow us to imagine media border-crossing as actively weaving and bringing social spaces together, making space not so much a physical-objective category as an effect of

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intermedial technics. Here I also recall Miriam Hansen's important insight that early Hollywood cinema could function as an alternative public sphere, a social horizo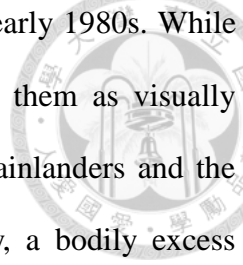n of sensorial reverberations with which spectators could reflect upon and negotiate with the jarring experience of modernity.[42] In the urban scenes of 1980s Taiwan, the rise of such a public sphere depended ever more on intermedial interactions to foster a collective citizenship that acutely reflected on the issue of urban dwelling.

In describing space as mediatized and media as spatialized, a third factor also inevitably emerges—the body. As I show in this chapter, once the urban environment experienced radical transformation, assuming thereafter a certain degree of elasticity and ephemerality owing to municipal constructing decrees and media's large-scale transmission, an alternative imagination of the body began to arise. Faced with the city's ruthless demand to adapt, the body, rather than becoming inactive or eradicable, underwent a double transformation. With the help of the city's intermedial circuit, it gained circulation quickly throughout the urban space and beyond. This line of circuitry, while endowing the body with a virtual, omnipresent quality, however, did not render it entirely disembodied. Instead, as the media works I study in this chapter suggest, the body gets to insist on a material resilience that can in turn be propagated as an aesthetic of opacity. The notion of opacity originally comes from Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant, who advocates that we must "clamor for the right to opacity for everyone" (194). In artist Zach Blas's recent appropriation, opacity passes from its postcolonial specificity to a more general artistic tactic, through which one can effectively "[expose] the limits of schemas of visibility, representation, and identity" (149). In my own work, I associate opacity with the mainlanders in Taiwan,
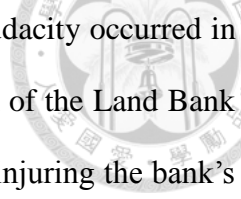
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[42] Hansen's notion of the public sphere follows and expands upon the thinking of Siegfried Kracauer, Oskar Negt, and Alexander Kluge. It is extensively discussed in her *Babel and Babylon*, especially Chapter Three.

whose marginal existence was made ever more perceptible in the early 1980s. While the government systematically dismantled their homes, exposing them as visually penetrable and socially controllable as a labeled subgroup, the mainlanders and the young second generation also assumed a non-conformist opacity, a bodily excess enabled by the conglomerate state of the mass media. Their bodies were often themselves deployed as a site crisscrossed by different media forces, as a thick middle ground that helped transmit their dwelling experience at the city's edge.

Consequently, the intermedial perspective leads us to revisit early 1980s Taiwan, whose historical value goes beyond the auteurist visions subsumed under a single film movement. While I lodge my main discussion within a "quasi-New Cinema" film (to be elaborated below) that addresses housing problems in explicit terms, I also distance myself from conventional aesthetic interpretations with two major moves. First, I posit this particular film in relation to two other social events, whose significance cannot be properly reckoned without recourse to their reliance on broadcasting media and avant-garde bodily practice. Together, these three "media events" chart an intermedial horizon, with which they stage the transporting of human bodies from the city's edge to the center, rendering these bodies mediated and mediatized throughout the process. Secondly, I treat the filmic space more than as a textual one populated by signs and references. I consider it as constituted by media entities whose agencies are as vital as those of human characters, and whose materiality crosses from the outside world to actively shape the inner diegetic space. These two moves deliberately remain inattentive to concerns of medium specificity and representational strategies. They cancel out the demarcation of different media, and that between texts and the alluded external world, with the hope of building an intermedial sphere that fuses disparate spaces into an affective and commotional continuum.

The Li Shi-ke Incident

On the afternoon of April 14, 1982, a crime of unheard-of audacity occurred in broad daylight in Taipei. A man forced his way into a major branch of the Land Bank of Taiwan, where he robbed five million New Taiwan dollars after injuring the bank's deputy manager with a revolver. The robber had managed to flee before the police arrived at the scene, leaving no traces except for the blurred images of his fully disguised figure captured by the surveillance camera installed inside the bank. Identified as Taiwan's first ever bank robbery, this incident immediately made a splash, and received wide coverage by the media. After a month's painstaking search, the police finally hunted down the culprit with the help of a tip-off phone call. He turned out to be a retired soldier named Li Shi-ke, who had accompanied the Nationalist regime's (a.k.a. Kuomintang) relocation in Taiwan in 1949, and ended up leading a meager life after being forced out of the army due to physical illness. In a personal interview with a journalist, Li declared the cause of his extreme violations: he had long planned to rob a bank as he witnessed the rapidly rising number of upstarts and financial crimes, the twin phenomena that begot each other during Taiwan's economic boom. He was equally upset by the immense stagnant debts resulting from the public money loaned exclusively to the privileged class.

The Li Shi-ke Incident spread through the broadcasting media authorized by the Nationalist Party, producing widely circulated images first of Li's transgressive conduct, and then of his docile, handcuffed figure. These images cast Li in an intermedial circuit, coursing from the bank's surveillance camera through newspapers and television reports to the receiving end in the local houses. Two years later, when video artist Chen Chieh-jen created his first video work, he recalled the experience of gazing at the robbing scene repeatedly showing on TV. The gun Li Shi-ke held made him think of the photographic gun once used in the late nineteenth century to capture

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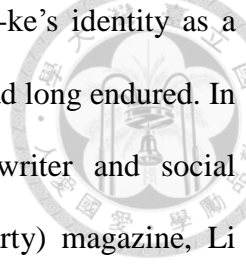
moving objects in consecutive frames (Chen 82). He was then inspired to record with his Betacam a veiled man shot through by an invisible gun, combining the effects of surveillance camera's grainy quality and TV's flashing scan lines (Figure 3.1). Framed and caged in the middle of the screen, the man resembled a palimpsest written and rewritten by multiple media means; as the gun remained invisible from the screen, it was as if the body was penetrated, or "written off," by some mysterious media force. While Chen's work could hint at broadcasting media's share of violence in Li's final execution by the state, it also conveyed messages other than the fatedness it explicitly triggered. In the exhibition context, the shooting scene was edited into an hour-long cycle, with the body being shot but quickly restored. It seemed that while media conspired against the man, the bad object called for eradication, they also sustained his body's eternal return.[43] In real life, although Li was executed within a month of his apprehension, he was soon enshrined in a folk temple in suburban Taipei. Regarded as a righteous robber and many practicing thieves' patron saint, his body became a divine medium itself, mediating the social idealism and outlawed chivalry unrealizable in our own time.

Figure 3.1

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[43] Originally lost, Chen's video work was discovered amongst a pile of old DV cassettes. Re-entitled *Shanguang* (*Flashlight*), it was exhibited at the 2015 "REWIND_Video Art in Taiwan 1983-1999," which chronicled Taiwan's video art history since its genesis in 1983. For more details on Chen's video work, see Sing Song-Yong's recent article.

Meanwhile, also cast under the social spotlight was Li Shi-ke's identity as a mainland émigré and the living conditions this group of residents had long endured. In "A Vindication of Li Shi-ke," a famous article penned by writer and social commentator Li Ao and published in a *dangwai* (outside-the-party) magazine, Li Shi-ke was portrayed as beloved by his neighbors, who occasionally benefited from his deeds of kindness. At a remove from the neighbors' affectionate gaze, however, Li 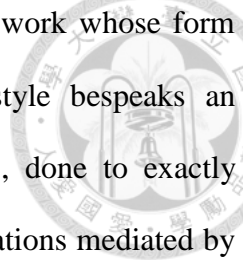lived alone inside a shabby space, where almost every piece of his furniture was tattered. Li Ao then criticized the government's disregard of the mainlanders, whose solitary figures now occupied the margins of the city after they spent the prime of their lives defending the country (5-9). Li's dwelling predicament called forth the overall difficulty mainlanders faced at the time, when many of their illegal residences, officially known as *feilieguan juancun* (non-regulated veterans' villages), became an obstacle to the city's modernizing plan. As the central government passed an article in 1977 that legalized the appropriation of the *juancun* to offer more space for public housing (Lin and Kao 31), and as Taipei entered a gentrification phase that initiated it into several construction sprees since the 1980s (Lin, *Dushi* 60-61), many *juancun* sites were scheduled for wholesale demolition as some occupied the prime locations in the downtown area.

The concerns for media and dwelling spaces invoked respectively by Chen Chieh-jen and Li Ao and brought together by Li's incident complicate our understanding of these two terms. On the one hand, Chen's artwork highlights the presence of a close-circuited space created by the surveillance camera, in which the man is rendered in stark frontality and violently dealt with. From the perspective of video installation, however, the man is also framed by a TV screen, its frontal position directly addressing the viewers on the exhibition scene. The TV set further implies a potential outreach to its installation in homes and public spaces, which facilitates the

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collective viewing of this incarcerated body. Chen thus created a work whose form resembles the mechanism of media itself: its stripped-down style bespeaks an intentional abstraction of media from their social embeddedness, done to exactly disclose how media, as an institution, forge and engineer social relations mediated by asymmetrical viewing habits. On the other hand, the collaboration of communications media, Li Ao's polemical article included, actively welded a spatial continuum that linked Li's decrepit home with the robbed bank, symbol of the country's financial order and prosperity, and with many *juancun* houses where mainlanders faced the enforcement of eviction, all of which channeled into the tuned households. Condemnation aired via the state media notwithstanding, Li's incident solicited along this line much heroic imagination, agential worship, and identificatory empathy extended to other mainlanders. These two instances, one artistic and conceptual, the other social and empirical, then prompt us to recognize both an intermedial network endowed with social characters and a social space that is diffusely mediated. They further involve a third vector—the body—as a site crisscrossed by the mutual trafficking of media and space, thus should also be construed as multiply mediated and spatially dispersed. Paradoxically, while the figure in Chen's video art is openly displayed, its veiled and pitch-dark torso also suggests an unknowable opacity, resembling a material lump that resists any form of identification.

As Li Shi-ke's incident forcefully reminded the society of the neglected mainlanders and their vanishing homes, stories exclusive to this identity and its living environment soon crossed over to the silver screen, appearing in a group of films emerging along with the New Cinema.[44] Among them, *Da cuo che* (*Papa, Can You*

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[44] See Chapter Five of Yomi Braester's *Painting the City Red* for a thorough analysis of these films. According to Braester, the filmic presentation of urban construction in fact predates the emergence of New Cinema, one prominent example being Bai Jingrui's 1970 *Jiazai Taibei* (*Home Sweet Home*).

Hear Me Sing?, dir. Yu Kan-Ping) is the first to engage with the issue of housing evacuation and demolition. The film created a cinematic surrogate for millions of veteran mainlanders on the island, introducing the screen persona of Sun Yue, himself a mainlander actor who had until then appeared mostly as leading antagonists in films from the previous period. Sun would go on to reprise the role of the weathered yet affable mainlander in his post-*Papa* career, which eventually brought him to portray Li Shi-ke in 1988's *Lao Ke de zuihou yige qiutian* (*Old Ke's Last Autumn*).[45]

Technology of Displacement

Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing? revolves around the story of Uncle Mute (played by Sun Yue), a mute veteran mainlander who comes to settle in one of Taipei's *juancun* villages following the 1949 exodus. Retired and aged, he ekes out a living by recycling used glass bottles. Although life remains tough, he manages to get by with the support of communal bonds shared in the neighborhood. The bitter-sweet, self-sustaining life in the veterans' community gives the impression of Taiwan's earlier healthy realistic films, invoking classics such as Lee Hsing's *Jietou xiangwei* (*Our Neighbors*, 1963). But such a wholesome quality soon expires as these neighbors realize they are to be dislocated again, this time in the name of urban renewal. As the situation worsens, most of the characters belonging to the community die either accidentally or of illness, with the exception of two women—Uncle Mute's adopted daughter Ah-mei, who eventually becomes an acclaimed singer busy with concert tours and who can spare no time for her father even as he lies dying in the hospital; and the Taiwanese widowed neighbor who takes care of Uncle Mute after surviving

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[45] It was reported that in 1988 two film companies competed for the production right of Li's legendary life, resulting in two feature films—*Old Ke's Last Autumn* and *Dadao Li Shi-ke* (*Li Shi-ke the Bandit*)—released in that very year.
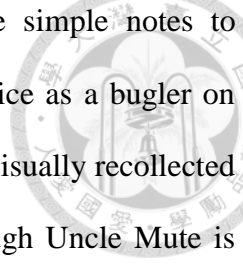
her husband, brother, and son, the latter dying in a fight with the government officials arriving to dismantle their house. As a result, all the male characters from the *juancun*'s old society are effaced from the narrative, with their diegetic presence displaced onto Ah-mei's commodified singing and the Taiwanese mother's wailings and bemoaning.

The Chinese title of *Papa*—*Da cuo che*, which literally means getting on the wrong car, bus, or train—led to some discussion during its release. Some critics questioned the title's relevance to the story ("Sincerity"), while one outside-the-party periodical fittingly attempted a political reading, appropriating it to mean the misfortune of those who boarded the ship with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's exiled Nationalist regime (Cheng et al).[46] Taking the cue from the title, I suggest that *Papa* relies on the mechanism of *cuo*, or mistake, to relay its narrative, which I read as a series of displacement (*cuozhi*) taking place in the textual space. On the thematic level, the film tells of the dispossessed life of the mainlanders and their dependents at a time of seismic urban transformation. Yet in view of the cinematic medium employed to carry out this subject matter, the mechanism of displacement, I argue, cannot be fully unpacked without a synchronous nod to the role media technology plays in *Papa*, a work that is for the most part remembered as a commercially successful musical in Taiwan's film history. As a musical film, *Papa* activates and shapes its audio mise-en-scène by means of Uncle Mute's mutism, which warrants further analysis.[47] Despite his inability to speak, Uncle Mute is associated with a

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[46] According to Raymond Wong (Huang Baiming), producer and co-founder of Hong Kong's Cinema City, the film initially built upon the farcical plot of a group of people who took the wrong train from Taipei to Kaohsiung, but the blasé script was soon scrapped. Since they couldn't come up with a better title, Wong and his colleagues decided to keep the original one even as the plot had been largely revised, now becoming a family ethical melodrama (Wong, *Xin yi cheng*).

[47] Characters portrayed as mute are not uncommon in films of this period. The most famous example is the deaf-mute photographer played by Tony Leung Chiu-wai in *Beiqing chengshi* (*A City of Sadness*, 1989), a role that has yielded much interpretation with regard to the repressed nature of history under the rule of Kuomintang. In "Pingguo de ziwei" ("The Taste of Apples"), the third and
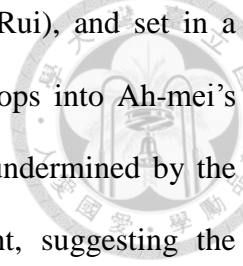
musical instrument, the trumpet, with which he would produce simple notes to accompany his recycling labor. The trumpet invokes his past service as a bugler on the frontline, as an intense warring scene with him fighting in it is visually recollected during his solo performance in front of the villagers. Thus although Uncle Mute is deprived of a human voice, he is supplemented with further technical aid—a vocal prosthesis—that forms a bodily relationship with his physical toiling and his personal, ineffable memory concerning the nation's traumatic past.

It is also with Uncle Mute's trumpet that the film's acoustic leitmotif is first sounded. Containing a few single notes, the tune serves more as lyrical accompaniment than as narrative device in its early appearances. Later, as Ah-mei embarks on her international touring, and as the *juancun* complexes are razed to the ground, the forlorn and dislocated Uncle Mute is heard playing the tune by Ah-mei's composer boyfriend, thanks to whom the rhythm gets rendered into a full song, "Any Wine Bottles for Sale." Following Uncle Mute's tragic death, it is the song's performance by a grief-stricken Ah-mei that ceremoniously ends the film. Now filled in with lyrics, the song becomes Ah-mei's first-person remembering of her father, with the refrain chanted recurringly in the Hokkien topolect, "Any Wine Bottles for Sale" (*Tsiú-kan thang buē--bô*), a phrase her schoolmates once made up to mock the father's lower occupation, thus also marking the singer's belated affirmation of her humble descent.[48] Ah-mei's final performance of "Wine Bottles" is rearranged with

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final part of the omnibus film *Erzi de dawanou* (*The Sandwich Man*, 1983), we also come across a speech handicapped child coming from an impoverished *juancun* family. By the end of the story, this child is settled for an education in the US, where she will learn the civilized language of the West.

[48] Another implication of this humble descent has to do with Ah-mei's songstress-orphan identity. This identity harks back to the tradition of singsong movies in early Shanghai and Hong Kong cinema, where orphans and foundlings abound. Early on in a public screening scene in *Papa*, the villagers gather to watch *Lan yu hei* (*The Blue and the Black*), Shaw Brothers' 1966 epic of a wartime romance, and they listen to Linda Lin Dai's character—an orphan adopted and raised by a forbidding matriarch—sing in a cabaret. For a thorough tracing of the songstress movies from 1930s Shanghai to post-war Hong Kong, see Jean Ma's recent book *Sounding the Modern Woman*. On the orphan motif in post-war Sinophone cinema, see Zhang Zhen's study "Ling Bo" and Ma (151-53).
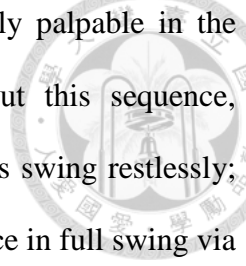
heavy metallic beats, synchronized by rock singer Julie Su (Su Rui), and set in a full-house stadium space. While Uncle Mute's simple tune develops into Ah-mei's intense emotional release, the pathos this supposedly triggers is undermined by the camera's constant cuts to the audience, who appear nonchalant, suggesting the commercial prowess the song creates on the one hand, and that something true to the context of love and alienation is irrevocably lost in transmission on the other. Indeed, "Any Wine Bottles for Sale," along with another number from the film, "The Never Changing Moonlight" (*Yiyang de yueguang*), soon became the two most popular hits both in Taiwan and in the broader diasporic context.[49] Newspapers reported that *Papa* was enthusiastically embraced by audiences in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong mainly because the musical numbers hooked the local audiences almost immediately. It was only later that they piqued these listeners' curiosity about how the music could be appreciated narrative-wise ("Dingzhe yueyang"; Gao). The songs' travel circuit within the Sinophone communities thus often escapes their original sites of embedment: it participates in a chain effect of displacement that abstracts Uncle Mute's life story and the socio-historical specifics that qualify his experiences, turning them into profitable entertainment on a transnational scale. Consequently, even Ah-mei's glaring performing body cannot be exempted from this displacing process.

In *Papa*, Ah-mei's stage performance and her singing voice are technically dissociated, if not rendered utterly incompatible. This design is made evident by the complaint about actress Liu Shui-chi's (who plays Ah-mei) stiff dancing steps and her

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[49] Although "Any Wine Bottles for Sale" became an instant hit, it was soon banned by the government owing to the fact that its composer Hou Te-Chien "fled" to the mainland, an act considered high treason then (*tougong*). This anecdote, however, did not prevent the song from entering the public sphere. During the film's post-screening discussion on July 31, 2015 at Treasure Hill (*Baozangyan*), Taipei, director Yu Kan-Ping stated that exactly because the song was removed from the records, it became highly profitable for street vendors, whose pirated cassettes sold like hot cakes. This is yet another example of displacement surrounding the film's sonic circulation, which exceeds beyond the film proper to involve the governing technology of the state as well as a counter media sphere formed among the public.

awkward lip-sync (Si 26). The failed synchronization is especially palpable in the final performance of "Any Wine Bottles for Sale." Throughout this sequence, Liu/Ah-mei's body gets trapped in a small square space. Her limbs swing restlessly; her lips fall out of sync with the lyrics, which now unleash their force in full swing via Julie Su's resounding voice. Here the body/voice split reinforces Alan Williams's observation on the recorded numbers in musical films, which rely on close miking as the paradigm of sound recording, creating a sense of "spacelessness" regardless of camera movement and the distance variation it creates (151). It is exactly this spaceless illusion that enables the rock hit to exceed the diegetic space and its material milieu, to assert an independent life in the smooth space of the Pan-Asian record market. With the help of recording technology, the music goes everywhere and nowhere at once. Superseded by Julie Su's disembodied voice, Ah-mei's exhausted body becomes the material leftover on screen. It belies cinema's pretension to be a coherent time-space construct, while also embodying it as a composite reliant on artificial synchronization, through which integral times and spaces often find themselves at odds with each other.

The motif of displacement thus operates not merely on a representational or thematic level. It is immanent to the technology of representation itself, driven by cinema's mediation that colludes in excluding Uncle Mute's voicing space, hence muting him for a second time. Such a view on the technics of displacement focuses not upon what is told but upon *how* it is mediated; it construes cinematic technology as self-reflexively mediating, and acquiring, its social characters. It further goads us to take heed of the heterogeneous constitution of a single film work, opening up an intermedial terrain that involves the contention between the mute vocal cords, the trumpet, popular music, dancing bodies, and more. Apart from a relation based on competition that ultimately taps into a frictionless space easily lent to commercial

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operation, more details revealed through the intermedial processing in *Papa* requests a rethinking of the textual space, wherein media serve both as active entities and as underlying infrastructures.
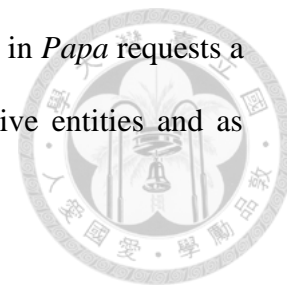
The Transparent *Juancun*

Released in 1983, the year that saw the budding of Taiwan New Cinema, *Papa* is often regarded as among this New Cinema lineup. It shares many features that characterize this group of works: the enlisting of a young promising director, the address of social issues involving everyday struggles of the lower-class citizens, and the allegorical property that informs Taiwan's agonizing grappling with its socio-economic transformation. Yet *Papa*'s place as a New Cinema film is more equivocal than it seems. Produced by the Hong Kong-based and commercially oriented Cinema City (Xin yi cheng),[50] the film draws heavily on popular music to relate its tragic theme, which is cast in an emotionally excessive mode à la Hollywood melodrama. The musical-melodramatic staple triggered enthusiastic response from the audience, leading the film to hit the big screen eight times within five months. Naturally, *Papa* became the best-selling Chinese-language film of 1983 in Taiwan, an

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[50] It would be useful to elaborate slightly on the "Hong Kong factor" in relation to the film industry in early 1980s Taiwan. While Hong Kong's New Wave is often cited as an important source of inspiration for Taiwan New Cinema, a more specific impact comes from the independent production strategies adopted by the emerging filmmakers, including Ann Hui, Tsui Hark, and the executive group at Cinema City. Unlike previous studios, the independent production system, spearheaded by Cinema City, is adept at matching and soliciting investors and distributors, building and strengthening its audience base, and developing more creative leeway for the directors. It soon motivated filmmakers in Taiwan to establish their own studios, although the Taiwan counterparts were more focused on stylistic exploration and less attentive to managerial efficiency and public taste (Lu 284-89). I would further identify Sylvia Chang (Chang Ai-chia) as the key figure in making the Hong Kong factor realizable in Taiwan. Appointed as the director of Cinema City's Taiwan branch, Chang participated in the initiation and production of such films as Edward Yang's *Haitan de yitian* (*That Day, on the Beach*, 1983), Yu Kan-Ping's *Da cuo che*, Lin Ching-jie's *Taishang taixia* (*Cabaret Tears/ Send in the Clowns*, 1983), and Ko Yi-Chen's *Daijian de xiaohai* (*Kidnapped*, 1983), in all of which except *Papa* she also played the leading role. These directors associated with Cinema City often went on to set up their own film studios. See also Ji Er's article on Cinema City's commercial operation in its beginning five years.
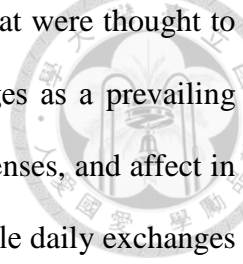
honor that rarely graced its New Cinema counterparts.[51]

Papa's precarious state both as a New Cinema film and as a commercial attraction can be further detected in its incongruous structural design, as many critics have so noted and criticized (Zheng 55; Si 26). Whereas in the first half of the film Uncle Mute dominates as the central figure who accompanies Ah-mei's growth, and has her surrounded by loving elders and joyful playmates despite the mishaps that constantly befall them, the second half turns to Ah-mei's rising stardom, and plots Uncle Mute's increasing retreat and his final death. Just as the first narrative strand is cut short by the *juancun* community's inexorable dissolution, the realistic mode also gets "tainted" by Ah-mei's ensuing musical performances, whose artificial spectacles glut the screen no less than four times in the latter part. However, given the socio-historical changes Taiwan underwent at the turn of the 1980s, I consider this stylistic incongruity less as the director's lack of mastery than as the film's reflexive incorporation of the historical juncture itself. Such a structural break subsequently materializes into the displacement of an old medium by a new one, displacement that functions both in the film's textual and textural spaces.

In the first half, Uncle Mute's village, though shuttered from the outside world, maintains a high degree of intercommunication and transparency by itself. Together the villagers live the lives of their neighbors, experiencing a plethora of emotional fluctuations—the festive reunion during the lunar New Year, the attentiveness to a fierce row taking place next door, the grief over a neighbor dying in a devouring fire and another by drowning. With its imbricated layout and ubiquitous porosity, which

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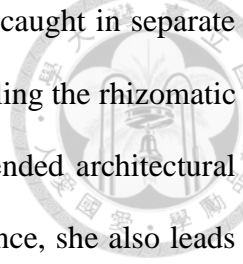
[51] In *Taiwan New Cinema*, an anthology edited by Hsiung-ping Chiao when the movement seemed to have run through its course, *Papa*'s director Yu Kan-Ping is included as a New Cinema member, but the only review of the film collected in the book, written by veteran critic Edmond Wong, accuses the film of "never showing heartfelt concern for its characters and their social surroundings" (373). It is suspicious, then, that Chiao's book counts *Papa* as a TNC film only to *negatively* prescribe what the movement should be like.

largely derive from the makeshift materials chosen to construct what were thought to be temporary abodes, the *juancun*'s labyrinthine composite emerges as a prevailing form of mediation that sustains the traffic of bodies, information, senses, and affect in the village life. Not only does the *juancun*'s architectural form enable daily exchanges between residents of similar social background, thus functioning as a social writing pad on which a collective identity is reinscribed, it also binds them into an affective coalescence, positing architectural mediation as the very basis of this emotionally charged melodrama.

If a mediated perspective of the *juancun* architecture invokes a paradoxical sense of material connectedness and instant emotional involvement, the joining of the *juancun* architecture with the mobile movie camera further produces a sense of intermedial immediacy. This effect finds vivid depiction in Taiwanese writer Chu Tien-hsin's short story, "Xiang wuo juancun de xundimen" ("Reminiscence of My Fellow Brothers in the Military Dependents' Village," 1992), in which she reminisces about the good old days growing up in the *juancun*. Towards the end of the story, the narrator asks her readers to assume a pair of camera eyes before inviting them onto a journey along the path of which she has dolly tracks paved. These tracks wind their ways into the back alleys of an imaginary *juancun* composite, teemingly populated by middle- and low-ranking soldiers and their families. In the form of a long tracking shot, the narrator guides us past these concatenated spaces of interiority, introducing each of the young faces we pass by behind the invisible walls—it is obvious that they will all grow into celebrities whom Taiwanese will become familiar with (among them is Lee Li-chun, famous actor who plays a tragic second-generation mainlander in *Papa*) (Chu 96-98). Through the intermediation and interpenetration of architecture and cinema, the walls built to define each housing unit are cancelled, hence doubling the effect of transparency and movability. With the compartmentalized structure now

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suspended, the journey proves to be unending. Snippets of images caught in separate domestic spaces turn into an endless flow of mise-en-scène, resembling the rhizomatic sprawl of memory that eventually merges with the *juancun*'s extended architectural layout. As Chu steers her readers along their journey of remembrance, she also leads them to tread on a land of intermediation, with memory deriving its distinctive form from the intermingling of cinematic apparatus and architectural materiality.

In *Papa*, one peculiar mise-en-scène that figures architecture and cinema's intermediation can be found in the glass walls circumscribing Uncle Mute's home. Fancily designed in a way that seems unusual for a poor mainlander family, the walls are made of used wine bottles Uncle Mute has collected. Not so much an ostentatious decoration (as some critics find) as a porous interface, these walls betoken the fluid and interdependent lifestyle the mainlanders' community shares. They foreground architecture's role in affording, amassing, and shuttling everyday occurrences involving those living within a stone's throw. They also resemble the cinematic mode of address, mirroring the reciprocal exchange between the enframed fictive world and audiences' prompt emotional response to it, both to be mediated by the translucent silver screen. With this self-referring capacity, the glass walls assume what literary scholar Kate Marshall terms "corridoricity" in her study of infrastructural architecture in modernist American fictions, a notion that suggests an open-ended relation between social constructions and their textual representation. "Within a fictional form saturated with self-conscious, self-reflexive self-descriptions," Marshall writes, "corridor stands out as an image of the transport mechanisms of communicative sociality" (24). In a similar manner, the glass walls stand as the mutual transaction and molding of experiences, senses, and social relations intrinsic to both *juancun* dwelling and cinematic viewing. The wall's transparency embodies the effect of "mediated immediacy," which is doubled by *juancun* and cinema's superimposition. It thus
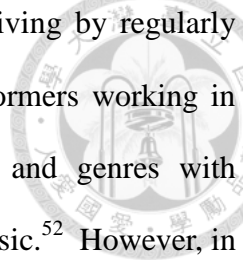
comes as no surprise that when the bulldozer arrives to dismantle the village, it is first depicted as violently tearing down the glass walls, a gesture toward the historical coming down of a society and its transparent way of living. With the *juancun* community's disintegration, a new mode of film viewing—and, emphatically, *listening*—also suggests itself to the screen.

Ambient Attunement

As the fate of demolition befalls the *juancun* community, Ah-mei's newly acquired apartment matter-of-factly moves in. However, rather than shifting the diegetic space to the apartment unit, whose obstructiveness and anonymity prevail over the films of Edward Yang and Tsai Ming-liang in the last two decades of the twentieth century, *Papa* ushers in a new medium that asserts its power by way of the film's popular numbers. Adapting a rock-and-roll format, these numbers introduced the Taiwanese audience to the legendary stardom of Julie Su, whose titular album *Da cuo che*, also her first Mandarin one, was released a few months prior to *Papa*'s premiere and is often credited for the film's success. The facts that these hits caused a great sensation and that they changed Taiwan's popular soundscape calls for a brief review of the emergence of rock music in Taiwan.

In the early 1980s, the mention of rock music might not strike as something new, given the island's exposure to American pop culture in the previous era known as the US Aid (*meiyuan*, 1951-65). According to Shin Hyunjoon and Ho Tung-Hung, the American popular culture first took hold via a "clustering" effect, materializing near the Zhongshan North Road of Taipei, where the headquarters of the American army stood (94). In this area and a few more others across the island, numerous pubs and clubs mushroomed in the service of pleasure-seeking American soldiers. It was also in these spaces that some Taiwanese singers learned and honed their trade—for

instance, before rising to nationwide fame, Julie Su earned her living by regularly performing soul music in a military club in Taichung. Most performers working in these clubs trained themselves to impersonate various singers and genres with adeptness, but they seldom went beyond that to create their own music.[52] However, in 1982, one year before *Papa*'s release, things changed decisively. The still young Luo Dayou released his debut album *Zhi hu zhe ye*, whose arrival signaled a new brand of rock music in the making. According to Luo, many of the songs in the album were composed after he first arrived in Taipei, where he had the strong impression of how the city was transformed by the Ten Major Construction Projects, launched during the 1970s to strengthen the nation's infrastructural service (Xiao and Zhou).[53] This experience led him to write the legendary "Lugang Village" (*Lugang xiaozhen*), in which the singer contrasts Lugang, a religious center and historical port village in central Taiwan, with modern Taipei, and famously chants "Taipei is not my home, where neon lights do not exist" in a distressed tone. Luo's distinct fusion of the younger generation's urban outcry with the rock format bequeathed from the Americans soon brought about the generic turn in the music industry. The pressing issue of urbanization now vibrated through Taiwanese popular music just as it pervaded New Cinema work. Songs released in the wake of Luo's album, such as Julie Su's "The Never Changing Moonlight" (composed by former folk singer Lee Shou-Chuan, lyrics written by Wu Nien-jen and Luo himself) and Lee Shou-Chuan's

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[52] During this era, rock music also enjoyed limited receptions among more privileged *juancun* families, providing second-generation mainlanders with a rich subcultural space to compensate for their double alienation from the parents' motherland and from native Taiwanese society. The reception of American rock among rebellious *juancun* youths finds its most gripping expression in Edward Yang's *Gulingjie shaonian sharen shijian* (*A Brighter Summer Day*, 1991), which Yueh-yu Yeh regards as representing Taiwan's "postcolonial rock" phase. See Yeh, *Gesheng* (155-76).

[53] Instead of in Taipei, most of the Ten Major Construction Projects were launched in suburban or rural areas, such as the construction of the nuclear power plants, the first national highway, the port of Taichung and Suao, and the international airport in Taoyuan. I take Luo's statement here to mean the changes caused by urbanization he acutely felt when arriving afresh in the city.

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"Future of Future" (*Weilai de weilai*) were effectively used in films that proffered some last sights at Taipei's illegal ghettos.[54] No longer confined to the clustering of American clubs, rock music in Taiwan came to register a social ambience that fostered a public sensorium keen on the worsened condition of city-dwelling.
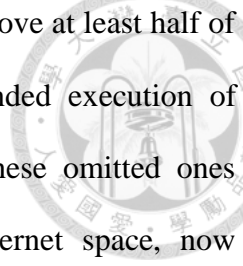
Here I link the idea of ambience to the musical notion of attunement, which, as Thomas Rickert suggests, can be defined as "wakefulness to ambience" (8). In his elucidation, musical expression helps sound out the centrality of local environs in fusing a "worldly affect-ability" that brings musical elements in accord with their embedded environment. Drawing on a rock hit of an African-American funk band of the 1970s, which confronts the problem of ghettoization menacing young black lives, Rickert discusses how the song goes beyond mere accusation of social injustices to awaken "the need for a deeper, richer, more inclusive sense of home," as the song's title "The World is a Ghetto" poignantly suggests (242).[55]

In *Papa*, the adoption of Julie Su's "The Never Changing Moonlight" exemplifies how places can be worked into an urban ambience, and how this musical film suggests a way of tuning in to the world. The number marks one of the film's most elaborate song-and-dance sequences, which shows Ah-mei and a cohort of young dancers bobbing and shaking their bodies in several outdoor spaces. However, not all of these scenes survived the final cut. In a recent post-screening discussion, director Yu Kan-Ping suspected that those at the helm at Cinema City didn't want the

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[54] The tune of Lee's "Future of Future" rises at the end of Wan Jen's *Chaoji shimin* (*Super Citizen*, 1985). Winning a Golden Horse award for Best Film Song, it later went into Lee's classic album *8 1/2* (1986). See also Lee's recollection of creating "The Never Changing Moonlight" for *Papa* in his interview with Lan Zu-wei.

[55] My evocation of Rickert might risk abstraction and disregard of context, but I consider his notion helpful as I go on to illustrate how a musical number works out an urban ambience by intermedial means in *Papa*. Besides, music remains a central theme in Rickert's notion of ambience (see his book's Introduction 28-33), and in the chapter titled "Ambient Dwelling," Rickert relies specifically on Anglo-American rock hits, treating them as a medium through which dwelling can be intricately channeled into the materialities of its immediate surroundings.

film to last too long for commercial reasons, so they decided to remove at least half of the song from the edited print.[56] While the possible heavy-handed execution of displacement has severed some crucial scenes from the film, these omitted ones remain otherwise undisturbed and relatively unseen in the Internet space, now accompanying the complete music video that lasts five odd minutes. These dislodged dances include those set at the Longshan Temple, on a skywalk near Taipei Main Station (which no longer exists), and a messy construction site. Together with the scenes featuring a traditional market, a major commuting bridge, and the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, which all remain embedded in the film, they form the complete montage sequence that comprises the music video of "Moonlight."

It is with these recovered scenes that a sense of ambient attunement can be registered in the filmic space. Throughout these scenes, the camera assumes several angles, shifts between different distances, and seems to feel most comfortable when observing its subjects from high above, thereby dwarfing Ah-mei and the dancers to allow the city to preside over them. During the bridge section of the song, the dancers are literally put on a bridge—a skywalk—and dance. The skywalk dancing is swiftly intercut with empty shots of the city and with scenes of dancers waving and swaying amidst the passersby alongside the busy traffic. The collaboration of editing and mise-en-scène effectively bridge the choreographic spectacles with the lively scenario of everyday bustle, blurring the line between artificiality and the natural flux of materials and bodies. It prepares the audience for subsequent dances at the construction site, where the city looms large through more sharp and canted angles and complex lines of composition. The construction site dancing also concurs with Julie Su's singing of "high-rise buildings are everywhere to be seen." There the

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[56] This is the director's own guess, cited from his post-screening talk on July 31, 2015 at Taipei's Treasure Hill.

dancers are staged variably atop, inside, between, and before the buildings under construction, which engages the entangled scaffolds, architectural contours, and the uneven skyline as part of the city's messy mise-en-scène (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). While the cinematic language dramatizes the grandiose constructing plan of the city, the fictive world to which Ah-mei belong is woven into thick particularities of everydayness, composing a symphony of attunement between fiction and reality, between staged physical craft and the urban ambience. With the intricate coordination among varying camera angles, editing techniques, and a contrapuntal relation with lyrics and music, the sequence contrives its urban ambience with an intermedial approach; ambience is itself a forged effect of verbal, visual, sonic, and somatic expressions, which relies on the synergistic capacity of media technologies to sound out its attunement.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3

While the outdoor dances trigger strong kinesthesis in the city's public realms, their embodying and empowering capacity is transmitted with the emergence of a distinct media environment. The dancing sequence is at once a rock number, a dance performance, a music video, and a segment of the film, the latter being the parasitic body that accommodates all of the others. As the sequence ends, its final scene is remediated via a television screen, which is then cut to Uncle Mute and the neighbors,

who watch it with excitement in their *juancun* residence (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). At this moment, music video disjoins itself from the cinematic screen; its appearance on TV allows us a look into the construction of a layered mediation and its full circuiting space. In this circuiting space, the *juancun* house is jolted into proximity with the urban center, while the dancing bodies draw on music video and cable TV's popularization to transport the embodied effects across both spaces. The layered mediation further complicates the binary of embodiment and disembodiment, for among the entangled media technoculture, the experience of embodiment can begin to claim a widely mediated and "disembodied" life of its own without being tied to the presence of an essentialist body.[57]
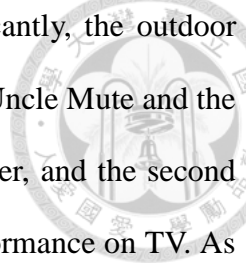
Figures 3.4 and 3.5

The media layering sighted in the TV scene also suggests a dual relation between mediation and urban spaces. On the one hand, throughout the "Moonlight" dances' diffusive mediation, media gain a distributive agency that convenes different sites together, while embodiment assumes polylocality, extending its reach from the

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[57] Or, in media scholar Bernadette Wegenstein's words, "embodiment always outlives the body" (11); it morphs into the process of mediation, revealing "mediality as corporeality" (36). On the affinities between body and media as foregrounded in contemporary advertisement culture, art installations and architectural designs, see Wegenstein's book. See also Mark Hansen's incisive introduction to the book, in which he explains the important breakthrough for humanities thinking once embodiment is conceptually differentiated from the body.
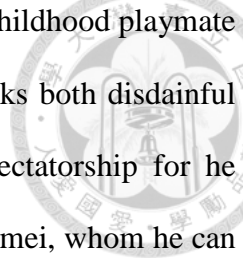
original dancing spots to the home broadcasting scene.[58] Significantly, the outdoor dances are situated between two *juancun* scenes, the first showing Uncle Mute and the neighbors disputing the negative impacts of Ah-mei's soaring career, and the second presenting the same set of people who now hail Ah-mei's live performance on TV. As they also come through as the film's first song-and-dance sequence, the outdoor dances can be said to stand at a structural nodal point that cuts the film into halves, as well as at the generic intersection that hinges the realistic and the musical mode of expression. Yet while the dances mark the rupture where the architectural mediation of *juancun* increasingly gives way to the musical mediation of rock hits, their intermedial and polylocal constitution defies such a clear-cut textuality. By linking Ah-mei's live dances with her TV audience, and by tracing the radiation of the city's construction enterprise from the center to the very corner affected by it, the intermedial nexus maps out an adhesive topography alive with "worldly affect-ability."

On the other hand, the manifold mediation of the "Moonlight" dances also exposes the construction of urban spaces to be uneven and disjointed. Whereas in the context of commercial filmmaking, polylocal dances are likely induced as an attraction of postmodern collage,[59] the intermedial trajectory carved out by "Moonlight" reenacts a power distribution that is asymmetrical by nature. The layering and framing of media suggest modernity and modernization as neither homogeneous nor synchronous, but unequally disseminated and multiply mediated. This is made visible when after showing Uncle Mute and the neighbors cheerfully

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[58] I borrow the term "polylocality" from Yingjin Zhang, but my sense of the word differs from his in that I wish to highlight the intermedial constitution intrinsic to any trans-locale cinematic activities.

[59] Scholars have associated the fad of music videos and the MTV phenomenon with the postmodern culture of simulation, collage, and commodification. See, for example, E. Ann Kaplan's pioneering study in the late 1980s.

applaud Ah-mei's performance, the film cuts independently to her childhood playmate and admirer, the second-generation cab-driving Ah-ming, who looks both disdainful and frustrated. Ah-ming refuses to be absorbed into a naïve spectatorship for he understands all too well the unbridgeable gap between him and Ah-mei, whom he can only reach via technological mediation now. With this fleeting yet explicit cut to Ah-ming, the film alludes to a possible crack and a reflexive moment that could lead to as many noises, dissonances, and disturbances as it anticipates a smoother process of intermedial attunement. Later on, Ah-ming will fiercely protest against the demolition of his home and engage in a fight with an executing official, an act that eventually claims his own life.

Political Dissonances

By way of the outdoor dances, *Papa* casts an enamored last sight at the *juancun* residence while shifting resolutely to a youthful topography, with the younger generation now occupying public spaces to act out their pent-up urban angst, producing kinetic momentum that also circles back to their birth origins via the film's function of editing. One question that remains unaddressed is whether the aesthetic representation of intermediation and the porting of embodied effects depicted in the film have any social validity.[60] In this last segment, I briefly touch upon an occupation event carried out by Chen Chieh-jen and his friends, which was staged on the renowned movie street (Wuchang Street) in Taipei's Ximending area in October 1983, exactly where and when *Papa* was released. In citing this event, I hope to illustrate how bodies, like those in *Papa*'s outdoor dances, can be exploited as a portable medium that transports dwelling experience to another body of audience,

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[60] I thank Professor Hoyt Long for pointing out this question when I presented part of this paper at "Vernacular Practices across East Asia" at the University of Chicago in October 2016.

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which, in Chen's case, further created crevices among the veil of close supervision that shrouded the island during its martial law period.

As a child, Chen Chieh-jen grew up in one of the *juancun* villages in the southern part of Taipei, right across the nation's Judge Advocates Bureau, where the Kuomintang imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes executed political criminals. The artist remembered witnessing "blood and bodies" near where he lived (Li, "Lian" 451), which drove him to reckon the material presence of a state machine that had subjected many to violence and annihilation (Lin, "Yingxiang" 31). This awareness persisted during his service in the military, where his body suffered extreme training and regulation, and he began to play with the idea of claiming back his own body, of "placing [himself] at the brink of breaking the martial law, having a head-on collision with the institution" (Lo et al. 150). This idea materialized into a street performance titled *Jineng sangshi disanhao* (*Dysfunction No. 3*), which took place at Ximending's movie street, one of Taipei's most visited entertainment spots, at a time when neither assembly nor parade was legally allowed. On the scheduled date, Chen summoned a couple of friends, all dressed to appear as political criminals—masked and fettered like the Li Shi-ke figure in the video work he went on to create the following year—and then embarked on a silent procession along the street. All of a sudden these paraders burst into fits of screaming, roaring, beating and convulsions, triggering various reactions from the onlookers, some wondering whether it was communist spies that were arrested (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). Surprisingly, police and garrison agents, who were planted aplenty among the crowd, disguising as plainclothes, only identified themselves later, and did not arrest any of Chen's people after questioning the cause of their conduct.
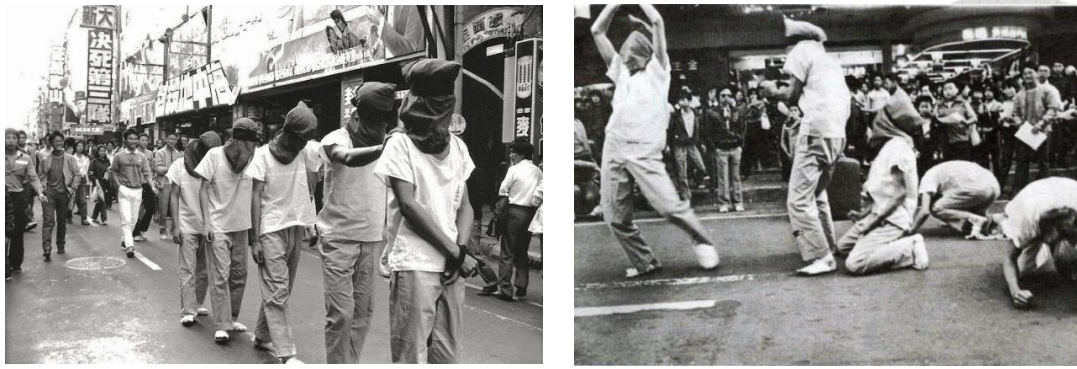
Figures 3.6 and 3.7

Dysfunction No. 3 was regarded by theater critic Wang Mo-Lin as among Taiwan's first street performances, which he also considered to be the vanguard of the Little Theater Movement. Prospering in the mid-1980s, the Little Theater Movement crucially shifted traditional theater from the proscenium stage to flexible and intimate spatial relationships with the audience, from being script-centered to on-the-spot improvisation, and from treating human bodies as signs and realization of acting methods to using them as a medium that actively negotiates its terms with the environment (Wang, *Dushi* 146-54). [61] Especially palpable in Chen's street performance is how the human body is plunged into a rich pool of external stimuli, demanding its instant response to police investigation under high political pressure on the one hand, and the visual consumption of the spectators of the film street on the other. This responsive mode of body training, while not yet systematically adopted until the mid-1980s, might have also witnessed its early practice in *Papa*'s outdoor dances. It is of particular note that Lin Lee-chen, the choreographer who designed all the dances for *Papa*, was also associated with the theater movement during the

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[61] Besides Wang Mo-lin's pioneering study, see also Weihong Bao's illuminating article on the appropriation of Meyerhold's biomechanical acting and Grotowski's paratheatrical practice by the Little Theater Movement. In the article, Bao also traces the eerie body performances she observes in Tsai Ming-liang's *Tianbian yiduoyun* (*The Wayward Cloud*, 2005) to the auteur's apprenticeship during the theatrical movement.
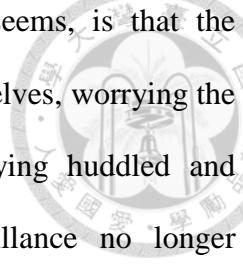
period.[62] In 1985, she collaborated with director Zhuo Ming to produce Lanlin Theatre's adaptation of Qu Yuan's *Jiu Ge* (*Nine Songs*). Partly an archaic ritual practice, partly a modern-day "musical opera," their rendition simulated an imagined environment alive with nature's primordial forces, only to be hollowed out later by the contemporary pursuit of material indulgence.[63] The modern part's distinct blend of rock music (performed live by the late Simon Hsueh) and potently expressive bodies resembles *Papa*'s outdoor dances in that both employ heavy metal beats to condition the dancers' body movements, rendered mechanical and hyperbolic at once in response to the experience of modernity. Along with *Dysfunction No. 3*, they all stage the body as a conduit through which the external stimuli are processed and negotiated, fulfilling the avant-garde notion of the theater situated between the aleatory environment and the performer's body.

For Wang Mo-lin, it was not until the police intervened that the real performance of *Dysfunction No. 3* began. There the boundary between political interrogation and artistic exhibition became blurred, with one collapsing into the other (Wang, *Dushi* 153-54). And just as the police enacted their roles as real-life police, the surrounding viewers grew even more curious and restless, causing more and more of them to join the crowd. In his recent recollection of the event, Chen pondered seriously why the police refrained from arresting them, who obviously violated the

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[62] Lin Lee-chen is perhaps known to the younger generation because of a recent documentary *Xing zhe* (*The Walkers*, dir. Singing Chen, 2014), which chronicles a decade's creative outputs of the artist's Legend Lin Dance Theatre. Also included in the film is an excerpt that shows Lin coaching the dancers on the set of *Kidnapped*, a New Cinema film directed by Ko I-Chen in 1983. Very different from her ritual theater embracing Taiwanese folk cultures today, Lin mainly engaged in modernist choreography in the early 1980s (for example, her existentialist solo performance *Wo shi shei?* [*Who Am I?*] of 1982). I have yet to locate the literature on Lin's early career that can allow me comparative insights into her choreography in *Papa*.

[63] This moralistic critique is paraphrased from the performance description on the website of Electronic Theater Intermix in Taiwan, where an 18-minute video recording of Lanlin's production of *Nine Songs* is archived. Vignettes of the performance can also be found in the documentary *Lanlin jufang* (*Lanlin Theatre Troupe*, dir. Lee Chung, 2012), together with a few interviews with Zhou Ming himself and other participants.

Assembly and Parade Act. The most sensible explanation, it seems, is that the onlookers have unintentionally formed into a large assembly themselves, worrying the police that they might turn into uncontrollable mobs. By staying huddled and watching ardently, they also made the police's secret surveillance no longer maintainable. Thus for a moment, the closely watched street malfunctioned, with the supervising subjects forced into a position of non-action, of being looked at, and with the space of controlled entertainment morphing into an impromptu site of aggregation and, for that matter, an improvised theater (Lo et al. 151-52). In this live theatrical space, visual hierarchy and direct governance were bent and vexed by an audience who stood in-between, who were "opaque, sight-blocking, and anti-visual" (Guo 66) in shielding the performers from direct power penetration—who functioned as a medium. Unlike in Chen's 1984 video work where the Li Shi-ke figure was put under transparent gazing and then literally penetrated by an invisible gun, the 1983 street occupation staged bodies as thick and dense, as capable of disrupting the police's efficient mediation of martial law decrees, thus creating "a head-on collision" not with the institution per se but between different forms of mediation.

Eventually, these commotional bodies refer back to their scene of origin, to Chen's experience of dwelling at the city's edge—both in the *juancun*'s marginalized settlement and at a symbolic frontier where he came so close to sighting the naked operation of state power. The suturing of ideological tenets with their material underpinnings is exposed as seamy and incommensurable at the city's edge, where traces of remnants, excesses, ambiguity, and contradiction abound. These lingering traces bear upon the inhabitants of the periphery, producing bodies with overloaded bodiliness and identities as doubled—both criminal and exploited mainlander, adoptee and pop idol, disciplined subject of an invisible jurisdiction and its firsthand witness. These identities are not so much signified or represented as mediated by flesh, whose

embodied affect is carried over to the center, transfiguring ordinary urban scenes into an intermedial force field. Just as intermedial practice welds a spatial continuum of affect, social effects, and action, it is necessary for the technology of intermediation to reveal our dwelling space as inherently fissured, jointed, and haunted.
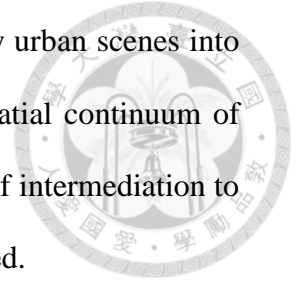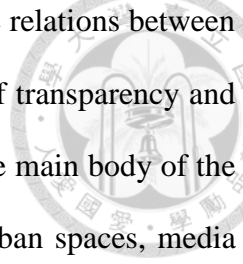
Coda

Of Fissures and Stones
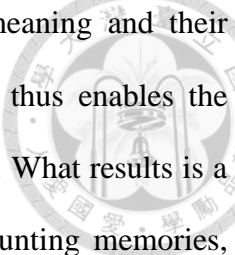
This thesis has named a type of cinema whose contents and forms are subject to the protean living environment of Taiwan in the 1980s, of which I call dwelling cinema. It is a cinema born out of the everyday afflictions suffered by the films' protagonists, who strive to adapt to the many troubling urban scenarios. But beyond addressing the issues of dwelling on the thematic level, ranging from country-to-city migration, demolition and relocation, ghettoization, fragmentation, to subjective alienation, dwelling cinema also undergoes stylistic changes along the tides and currents of urban restructuration. Building on this latter point, I have specifically located the agency of cinema's dwelling within its distinctive form, a trait that remains most marked in the oeuvre of Taiwan New Cinema, while also going beyond this body of work to involve those with less style and more commercial intent. In my account, film form is not merely a simple reflection of what is happening outside the text, nor a set of self-enclosed patterns overarching the narrative space; rather, it is thick mediatory ground into which things settle. Highlighting its share of the agency of narration and plasticity with architecture and media technology, I devise form as embodying city people's dwelling amidst the transient, and increasingly mediatized urban environment. Film form, then, should be construed as a process of adaptation, a gesture of approaching, incorporating, weaving, and mediating the real-life substances necessary for constructing the diegetic universe. As a densely-populated zone charged with the lively force of things, form enunciates film's practice of dwelling; consequently, to formalize is to dwell.

The thickened middle ground of form resembles what Latour calls the assembly

of intermediaries. It is a messy field that comes forth to mediate the relations between humans and nonhumans, giving rise to the twin mediated effects of transparency and opacity, which I identify as dwelling cinema's two variations. In the main body of the thesis, I study transparency and opacity as *dispositifs* that bind urban spaces, media and material cultures, and the body into networks of power relations, which enable both the efficient governance of the urban subjects and the counteracts carried out by the minoritized citizens. Chapter Two first depicts an organic and transparent dwelling style extended directly from the rural setting and enabled by the special architectural layout, which allows cinema to try out its buoyant camerawork when first arriving in the city. Transparent dwelling becomes increasingly reified and obstructive once glass panels and communications technology are introduced as narrative and compositional materials, evidenced by the efficiently connected yet dangerously fractured plotlines of *The Terrorizers*. Underlying the regime of visual, spatial, and medial transparency, the film pressingly reveals, is the excessive existence of materials, media, and the innumerable interstices left between them. Material opacity and medial disconnection, as it turns out, conditions our everyday living as much as transparency would have us believe it does.

The sense of audiovisual transparency achieved by the telephone, radio, and glass windows in Hou Hsiao-hsien's and Edward Yang's early works expands into an intermedial network that traverses both the urban margins and the centers in Chapter Three. Paradoxically, this chapter probes the concepts of opacity and disconnection against the backdrop of media confluence and its transparent circuits, focusing specifically on the mainlander veterans' vanishing homes and their (as well as the second generation's) recalcitrant bodies. In the intermedial transportation of images and bodies, the abandoned relics of the *juancun* residences and the masked figures of the transgressive mainlander and the young activists insist on an unknowable property,

a gesture of refusing to yield to media's investment of social meaning and their empowerment of the gaze. The intermedial annexation of spaces thus enables the transference of the material leftovers from the margins to the center. What results is a cityscape marked with unbalanced developments, lost but still haunting memories, frustrated desires, along with many failed attempts at ideological suturing, producing even more unbridgeable fissures and crevices. Likewise, dwelling cinema's formal embodiment of its living environment does not imply a homogeneous configuration. Throughout the thesis, I have demonstrated how cinema's forms of dwelling are rather ruptured and discordant: the abrupt insertion of the optical machine in *The Terrorizers* bespeaks cinema's dwelling as a technological imbrication of different material layers, with the transitional points intentionally exposed; the incongruous genres contained in *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?*, on the other hand, mark cinema's conflicted dwelling in a trying period of both urban reconstruction and cinema's stylistic renovation.

Gaps and fissures thus become a crucial aspect intrinsic to both technological mediation and dwelling cinema. They manifest an ethical dimension implicit in inter- and transmediation, which aims at a smooth and immediate effect of connection, and an efficient integration and ironing of disparate times and spaces. Fissures mark where intermedial networking fails, where unexpected and unwanted materials well up, where meanings cannot be packed into a single, transparent conveyance, where connection disintegrates into a state of disconnection and limitation. In this regard, fissures, much like Glissant's poetics of opacity, require not a knowledge system's epistemological grasp, but an ontological speculation of their implied meanings on both aesthetical and ethical levels.

As an unavoidable result of technological mediation, fissures and opacity are fascinatingly presented in late Taiwanese artist Chen Shun-Chu's installation arts since the 1990s, which I would like to imagine as embodying one of dwelling

cinema's various afterlives. A native of Penghu, or Pescadores, an archipelago of islands and islets lying off the west coast of Taiwan, Chen Shun-Chu often articulates his personal memory of family and childhood with objects and items gathered from the everyday life of his people. While old portraits featuring his family members are the most commonly used material, Chen also seeks to interrupt the two-dimensional nature of these photos. He would often resettle these photos into some outdoor locales of particular significance to him, or apply extra objects to create a stirring "third space" on the image surface.

In his installation series *Journeys in Time* (*Siji youzong*, 2003), for example, Chen exhibits many black-and-white photos recording his family's trips, gatherings, and festive events. In each of these photos, the artist invariably inserts one image made of ceramic tiles, which at times evokes a lost family member dear to him (fig. 4.1). These reproduced tile images resemble traditional portraits of the deceased often found on Taiwanese-style gravestones. By directly representing the dead, they betray a melancholic sense of loss, while also holding out a paradoxical play with the notion of presence, which only corroborates the reality of forever absence. The fissures cutting across the tiled image further implies the constructed and fictional nature of memory, revealing memory itself as an artificial technics not unlike that of tiling. While in *The Terrorizers*, tiling is effectively employed as a means to debunk the White Chick's intentional hiding of her medium body, in Chen Shun-Chu's image installation, tiling is invoked to only discover the spectrality of the represented subject, whose material existence has long dissipated. And while in *Papa*'s ending sequence, Ah-mei's remembrance of her demised father is uprooted from her personal memory and then transplanted onto the transnational consumption of pop songs, Chen's memorial ritual of his family members performs a similar act of displacement to allow memory to further materialize, to congeal upon a technically tiled surface.

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Figure 4.1 *Journeys in Time: Family Reunion*. 2003. B/w photo, imaged ceramic tiles, galvanized iron. 103x155x6cm.

Chen Shun-Chu's memorial project takes on a greater scale and significance when brought to dwell with his native land, Penghu. Earlier in his 1995 installation work, Chen prepared hundreds of black-and-white photos of nine family members, carefully encased these photos with half-hollowed floral frames, and orderly arranged them on the walls of an idled house once used to store fishing equipment (fig. 4.2). Because of this project, Chen made a name for himself as the pioneer of photography installation, a genre still underexplored by then in Taiwan. He then went on to create similar works in places like Taiwan's Ruifang, Japan's Fukuoka, New York, and Prague, although those set in Penghu remain the most iconic for many viewers today. Titled *Assembly, Family Parade* (*Jihui, jiating youxing*), the series expressed the artist's desire to gather his family, some already passing away, some living apart from him, and have them reunite, and ideally fixated, in a memorable scene in a landmark fashion. Although for Chen the concerns of his art are mainly with his loved ones, thus chiefly human-centered, the word *Assembly* of the title also calls to mind Latour's ideal for a "*re*-presentation," a means by which non-human entities enter into a "parliament of things" to help articulate humans' activities in the realms of politics, science, and art. In the Penghu setting, it is hard not to notice how the scene is thriving with things. And among these things, the architectural materials indigenous to

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the region—the *laogu* stones—assert an indelible presence, in the forms of a deserted house, bare walls, and a large composite heap.

Figure 4.2 *Assembly: Family Parade—Penghu House I*. 1995. Landscape installation/color photo. 122x122cm

The term *laogu* 咾咕, or *gulao* 咕咾 for the elder locals, is in fact a transliteration of "coral" in the Hokkien topolect. These *laogu* stones originally constituted the coral reefs deep down the ocean. They were later moved ashore to build the locals' residences for the sake of convenience, as building materials during the time were still scant.[64] Earlier when writing on *The Boys from Fengkuei*, I have briefly depicted how the walls made of the *laogu* stones guide the teenagers' fighting and the camera's movement and its composition, thus demonstrating for the youths and the camera a way of dwelling. Here in Chen's installation art, *laogu* stones are

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[64] The retrospective exhibition held in memory of Chen Shun-Chu in 2015 at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum is also titled *Laoguo Shan* 咾咕山 (*Coral Stone Mountain*). The museum's website page for the exhibition describes the *laogu* stones thus: "Using their wisdom of local materials, settlers who arrived in Penghu several hundred years ago gathered light and porous coral stones from the ocean to construct walls and houses to withstand the powerful winds that frequently lashed the islands. These structures still stand today, protecting descendants of those first ancestors from Penghu's cold winds and burning sun."

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doi:10.6342/NTU201702015

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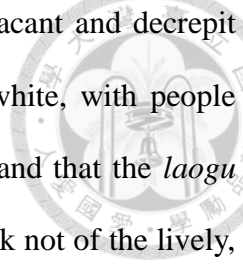

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once again summoned in the image of a house, although it is a vacant and decrepit one. Indeed, given that Chen's photos were made in black and white, with people arranged in frontal shots, resembling the portrait of the deceased, and that the *laogu* stones are in fact *dead* coral reefs, it is perhaps more proper to speak not of the lively, but the *deadly*, force of things, a trope seldom used by both new and vital materialists. The deadly things most clearly manifest themselves in the huge mound of stones in front of the abandoned house—a mound, having first died as the lively creatures under the sea, now suffers a second death from the originally erected form of a building. Having been exhausted of any uses and meanings, the pile of *laogu* stones hence embodies a sheer opacity, left solely in its ontological insistence of being.

This ontological being also resides in the many cracks and rifts that stretch all over the *laogu* stones. These cracks and rifts were appropriated by Chen Shun-Chu to build the walls made of his well-framed, formally standardized photos. Echoing the tiled images he later came to apply to old family photos, here Chen meticulously "tiled" the images of his family members onto the *laogu* walls, as if wishing to recover the organic intermingling of architecture and family lives. Yet once superimposed onto the architectural façade, these photos were marked not so much by their image content as by the fact that they remained separate from one another, left with unbridgeable fissures and cracks in between them. Thus while Chen sought to reunite his family members in an abode constructed out of the material intimate to their everyday life, what he ultimately evoked were snippets of images which, except for their forced standardization, remained irreconcilable to one another. The fissures disjoining the photos open up a field of tensions caught between life and death, posing the very question of the photographic ontology: on the one hand, in line of Bazin's thinking, these photos embalm the state of life grasped from the linear flow of time; on the other, such a drive to dissociate life from the march of time only serves as a

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death warrant to the photographed subjects, who are eventually invited to dwell in the ghostly and fissured house composed of the artist's disjointed memorial traces.[65]

Cinema has never been Chen Shun-Chu's medium. But through his work, we can think back on dwelling cinema as a combination of architecture and media, as teeming with fissures and bedrocks. As a medium composed of still, disconnected frames, whose motion effect is but an illusion on the part of the audience, cinema embodies these fissures in its very form. Like what Chen Shun-Chu did to the images of his endeared family, dwelling cinema devises a ground for these split images, not to ease out their rifts but to further articulate and *re*-present them. It brings its subjects of concern—an assortment of characters, life stories, lived spaces, dwelling experiences and memories—to settle upon a material bedrock that welds a distinctive abode for these subjects to dwell. Aptly titled, Chen's *Assembly: Family Parade* then becomes an allegory for dwelling cinema, which convenes an assembly of fissures and stones, of cinema and its dwelling materials.

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[65] The ontology of photography as caught between the dialectic of life and death is in fact well explored in Taiwan New Cinema, most notably in Hou's *A City of Sadness*, which also adds other layers to complicate this life-death dynamic: the medium interplay between cinema and photography, between freeze-frame and the long take, and between the historical narrative of political persecution and that of memory, witness, and survival. See Jean Ma's excellent contemplation on this topic in "Photography's Absent Times" in *Melancholy Drift*.

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