

# MELANCHOLY DRIFT

Marking Time  
in  
Chinese Cinema

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## Introduction

An encounter between a man in a crowd and a mysterious woman takes place in the elliptical opening sequence of a Wong Kar-wai film. The sequence unfolds in a crowded bazaar, amid a seemingly endless blur of shops and restaurants joined by labyrinthine walkways. Tracking through the crush of bodies, the camera lingers on a woman garbed in the noirish trappings of a blonde wig, sunglasses, and trench coat and, in another section of the marketplace, a young man with an intent expression on his face. Accompanying these images is a voiceover remarking, “Every day we rub shoulders with other people. Although we may not know one another, we might some day become good friends.” The voice identifies itself as that of the young man, an undercover policeman named He Zhiwu. Then, with the clatter of a physical struggle that rises above the hum of the crowd, He Zhiwu takes off in pursuit of one of the culprits. Along the way, he momentarily collides with the blonde-wigged woman, and as he continues his chase we are told, “At our closest point, we were just a hundredth of a centimeter apart. But fifty-seven hours later, I fell in love with this woman.”

The sequence makes for a compelling prologue for the picture that follows, *Chungking Express* (*Chongqing senling*, 1994), which introduced international audiences to Wong Kar-wai as his first production to receive a commercial theatrical release outside of Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> The film’s Chinese title translates literally as “Chungking Jungle,” a fitting caption for the *mise-en-scène* of contemporary urban life depicted therein, at once widely recognizable in its representation of the crowded cityscape and locally inflected in the unique architectural configuration and ethnic *mélange* that describe the notorious jungle of the Chungking Mansions complex in Kowloon. The perceptually overwhelming qualities of this *mise-en-scène* also register in the instability of the image itself, transformed into a kinetic blur by the use of step-printing. This process — one of Wong’s visual trademarks, developed in collaboration with his editor and production designer William Chang — involves an elimination of twelve contiguous frames on a one-second strip of film and a reduplication of each of the remaining twelve frames.<sup>2</sup> While the manipulation of



Figure 1 Passersby in a crowd, *Chungking Express*, dir. Wong Kar-wai, 1994

narrative time is traditionally attributed to the function of editing, which compresses duration by means of ellipses or expands it by means of overlap and repetition, Wong's signature technique introduces an unusual degree of temporal variability to the profilmic domain of the individual shot, rupturing its correspondence to "real time." What results is a stutter in the unfolding of the image, inducing a sense of discontinuous time as well as a slow-motion effect that paradoxically conveys the accelerated tempo of urban existence.

Wong is often described as a painter of modern life in the global city of the late twentieth century. His filmmaking approach singularly captures Hong Kong's qualities as a place in a process of constant transformation, flux, and erasure, where capitalist modernity's reigning value of speed and an uncertain political future converge to produce a foundational indeterminacy. In Ackbar Abbas's oft-cited formulation, Hong Kong in the period of the handover is defined by a culture of disappearance, of the *déjà disparu*. Abbas turns to a discourse of urbanization founded upon an earlier phase of the modern metropolis as he elaborates the concept of disappearance. Citing Louis Aragon's description of the Paris of his time, comprised of "places that were incomprehensible yesterday, and that tomorrow will never know," Abbas claims that the modes of ephemerality glimpsed in the spaces of Hong Kong at once recall and far surpass earlier accounts of the evanescent cityscape.<sup>3</sup>

A similar historical comparison is suggested by *Chungking Express*'s prologue, which finds an uncanny echo in an accidental encounter described by Charles

Baudelaire in his sonnet “To a Passer-By” and noted by Walter Benjamin in his disquisition on the persistence of the crowd as a “secret presence” throughout Baudelaire’s writings, a cipher of Paris itself.<sup>4</sup> Baudelaire describes a glimpse of a woman passing in a crowd:

A lightning-flash... then night! — O fleeing beauty  
Whose glance all of a sudden gave me new birth,  
Shall I see you again only in eternity?

In Benjamin’s reading, the poem conveys the mystique of Eros in the form of “love at last sight”: the crowd at once delivers a vision of beauty to the poet and intervenes as an insuperable distance in between the two. Moreover, the encounter marks a temporal chiasma where the rapture of the fleeting glimpse is produced in equal part by the poet’s awareness of the “eternity” that must pass before another sighting. As Benjamin notes, “it is a farewell forever which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment” (169). The sense of irrecoverable loss constitutive of the poet’s pleasure finds an echo in the figure of the unknown woman, whom he describes as shrouded in the aspect of “deep mourning,” her allure inseparable from her air of “majestic grief.”

Likewise, the film’s opening scene presents a flash of intimacy and an awakening of sexual interest born from the anonymous swarm of the crowd, whose frisson is heightened by the collision of bodies as well as gazes. The binocular effect of distance and closeness, of a perspective split between the immediacy of the moment and the eternity of its passing, is registered here in the disjunctive relationship of sound and image. The proleptic intrusion of the voice that hails from a meta-visual realm, split off from the body of its possessor, diffuses the immediate present tense of the image in a dual temporality. With this bifurcation of the speaking voice and the silent body, the narrative acquires a temporal density, its objective reality enclosed in the framework of an interior subjectivity and future time. Unlike the poet who can only declare that he “would have loved,” however, the narrator in *Chungking Express* inhabits a moment pregnant with the promise of future love, assured in the powers of chance to bring about a second meeting with the woman in the blonde wig, at a later point in the story that will retrospectively reveal the significance of this cryptic episode.

During Baudelaire’s era of “high capitalism,” lyric poetry was a dying art while cinema was in its infancy, yet Benjamin views the same motifs that distinguish Baudelaire as a modern poet as inherent principles of the new medium.<sup>5</sup> The film practice of the end of the following century, in turn, presents numerous cases of a systematic and formally self-conscious engagement of the cinematic medium’s possibilities for mediating an external environment in flux and human experience in transition. If the poem “To a Passer-By” distills modernity’s disfiguration of traditional

forms of relationality in the peculiar timing of “love at last sight,” then Wong’s films insist even more pointedly upon the transformation of the temporal underpinnings of subjectivity and sociality in the contemporary era.<sup>6</sup> In the century intervening between these two scenes of deferred desire, this process of transformation has only increased in scope and momentum, finding its most powerful expression today in the cinema of the Chinese territories. This book focuses on the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Wong Kar-wai, directors who have not only propelled Chinese cinema into the international spotlight in recent years, but also crafted a distinctive idiom, a cinema of time, across the realms of national and transnational film culture. The following chapters will unfold the significance of this cinema of time as a response to the historical ruptures and political upheavals of modern Chinese history; a representational politics implicating questions of historiography, national identity, gender, and sexuality; and an active engagement with and reinvention of the modernist legacy of art cinema in response to globalization and shifting conceptions of narrativity in a post-classical film culture.

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The fortunes of Chinese cinema in recent decades have elicited much commentary, with critics and scholars turning their attention to movements such as the Fifth Generation in the PRC, the Taiwan New Cinema, the Hong Kong New Wave, and more broadly, the “new Chinese cinemas.”<sup>7</sup> Hou, Tsai, and Wong all figure centrally in the remaking of Chinese cinema in the contemporary moment, contributing to the perception of both a radical break from established forms and traditions in their respective regions, and an induction into the rarefied upper ranks of international art cinema. Hou, for instance, is the most prominent figurehead of the Taiwan New Cinema, or *xin dianying*, which took shape around the work of a new generation of filmmakers and critics in the early 1980s. The awarding of the Golden Lion prize to his *A City of Sadness* (*Beiqing chengshi*, 1989) at the Venice International Film Festival — at that time the most prestigious honor ever bestowed upon a Taiwanese production — heralded Taiwan’s arrival on the international film scene. Tsai stands out among a younger generation of directors working in the aftermath, or perhaps second wave, of the Taiwan New Cinema. One of the few of this generation to have achieved a level of global recognition comparable to that of Hou, Tsai has successfully negotiated between the movement’s increasingly negative reputation at home and the momentum of its enthusiastic reception abroad. Wong is frequently described as Hong Kong’s most widely recognized art film director, with his work sharing some of the attributes of the New Wave that emerged in the late 1970s while also decisively moving away from the movement’s commercial orientation to take a position in the arena of art cinema.

The unprecedented degree of international attention captured by these directors and by the cinemas of their respective regions follows on the heels of a set of compressed transformations that have altered the economic, political, and cultural landscapes of these territories. The Taiwan New Cinema, whose members include Edward Yang (Yang Dechang) and Wu Nien-jen along with Hou, acquired an identity as a cohesive movement while grappling with the fallout of the “economic miracle,” a program of intense industrialization and urbanization that converted the island from an agricultural backwater to one of the world’s largest trade economies during the 1980s. As the first generation of directors to directly confront the legacies of colonialism, war, exile, and state terror in the democratizing climate of the late 1980s and 1990s — a period that witnessed the lifting of a nearly four decade-long period of martial law and the dismantling of the Kuomintang autocracy — these directors signaled the advent of a postcolonial, post-martial cinema in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> The post-martial law era of liberalization also witnessed the emergence of numerous grass-roots activist groups that have made an indelible imprint on the island’s political and cultural spheres, including a vocal gay and lesbian, or *tongzhi*, movement. Tsai figures among a group of artists, writers, and filmmakers whose work embodies a queer cultural turn in contemporary Taiwan.<sup>9</sup> He participates in what Fran Martin has identified as a “transnational mobility” and cosmopolitanism distinguishing Taiwan’s new sexual cultures, constituted by intersections between global flows of culture and dissidence and local practices.<sup>10</sup> And in the case of Hong Kong, the question of regional identity and the political future has loomed large since the ratification of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, providing for the territory’s return to sovereignty on July 1, 1997. The handover constitutes the central preoccupation of Hong Kong cinema in this period, with the work of Wong and numerous other filmmakers frequently read as coded allegories of the hopes and anxieties surrounding the impending return to sovereignty<sup>11</sup> and the end of Hong Kong’s colonial era.

Against this historical background, my description of Chinese cinema as a cinema of time is intended to invoke Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the “time-image,” in response to the provocation set forth in the first chapter of his *Cinema 2*. Deleuze begins by situating the time-image in the disorienting context of the postwar period, in which the act of seeing is split off from the possibility of reacting in a world rendered unrecognizable by drastic change. “In the west as in Japan,” he writes,

they are in the grip of a mutation, they are themselves mutants. On the subject of *Two or Three Things [I Know About Her]*, Godard says that to describe is to observe mutations. Mutation of Europe after the war, mutation of an Americanized Japan, mutation of France in ’68: it is not the cinema that turns away from politics, it becomes completely political, but in another way.<sup>12</sup>



Amidst these serial mutations he locates the birth of the direct time-image and, with it, a modern cinema capable of giving expression to the upheavals of history. The case of Italian neorealism with which Deleuze opens his discussion inflects the relationship of history and cinema in several ways. Neorealism marks, in one respect, the emergence of the idea of national cinema within film history as well as an international stylistic idiom to the extent that the movement has subsequently acquired a modular existence as a shorthand for the idea of a break with tradition and a challenge to mainstream politics. This modular status is apparent in the frequency and facility with which neorealism has been invoked as a point of reference for recent Chinese filmmaking.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, however, in Deleuze's argument neorealism corresponds to a disturbance of perception, knowledge, and representation to which the cinema responds by offering images of a new mental reality. The phenomenological status of the image reshaped by "the demands of new signs which would take it beyond movement" displaces the commonplace sociological view of the motifs running throughout modern cinema as simply reflective of a general surrounding sense of social malaise and crisis.<sup>14</sup>

The links made by Deleuze between cinematic time and historical rupture open onto a set of compelling questions that demand a broadening of our understanding of the connections between politics, aesthetics, and the medium of cinema. While his own examples center upon the milieu of postwar geopolitics, commodity capitalism, and revolutionary yearnings, this challenge becomes all the more pressing in an age when the industrializing, urbanizing, and mediatizing forces of global capitalism have spread well beyond the parameters of the West and Japan. Indeed, perhaps the very naming of such serial mutations underlines the failure of linear, teleological models of time and history, motivating the search for alternative models of temporality grounded in the materialities of cinema. For Deleuze, as D. N. Rodowick notes, "the semiotic history of film is coincident with a century-long transformation wherein we have come to represent and understand ourselves socially through spatial and temporal articulations founded in cinema, if now realized more clearly in the electronic and digital media."<sup>15</sup> Might these articulations then point to new conceptions of the historicity of style and the politics of form, and ways of inhabiting time and negotiating space, tied to alternative possibilities of experience and agency?

These overarching questions guide my approach to the work of these three directors as a cinema of time, under what will take shape in the course of this book as a conceptual rubric, rather than one that relies upon predetermined regional or authorial categories. The goal of this study is not so much to survey contemporary Chinese cinema as to unpack the deep structural interrogation of historicity in the work of this group of filmmakers, and to explore the implications of this interrogation in the expanded field of global art cinema as well as Chinese cinema. In their cinematic articulations of desynchronized time, Hou, Tsai, and

Wong respond to a present moment in which the assurance of continuity between past, present, and future has been all but dispelled by the sheer rapidity of change. The stylistic innovations of these directors, which have elicited the praise of critics around the world, derive in no small part from the atmosphere of uncertainty in which their films are made. Their work captures what Ban Wang describes as “a rupture in the collectively shared sense of time, a lack of consensus ensuring the figuration of past, present, and future.”<sup>16</sup> In this regard contemporary Chinese cinema conveys something fundamental about what it is to exist in the turn of the twenty-first century — to find one’s way in an attenuated present unanchored by the past, and before which a vastly different future looms as an unknown quantity. The impact of these directors resides in their mobilization of cinema’s capacities to lend visible form to the irregular rhythms of historical transition, its cadences of hesitation, delay, interruption, return. The progressive march of modernity, their films suggest, is experienced at the ground level as an unpredictable drift, winding among past remains.

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To survey the topography of recent Chinese art films is to be struck by the consistent degree to which its themes, moods, and structures are informed by a sense of asynchrony and disjointed time. It is a topography of haunted spaces and spectral glimmers, of restive pasts that invade the boundaries of the present, of nostalgic longing and melancholic fixation, inhabited by characters who endure and resist the experiences of loss, mourning, and trauma in idiosyncratic ways. Spatio-temporal unity and linear causality dissipate under the pressure of uncanny doublings and juxtapositions of seemingly unconnected moments and places, flashbacks and digressions that confuse the boundaries among temporal planes, and protracted long takes that impress upon the viewer the strangeness of a present tense in which screen time and real time overlap as “dead” time. Within these intervals of suspended chronology, reality bleeds into inner worlds of fantasy and desire, subjective and objective perspectives commingle, and memory competes with history. Consider, for instance, the dual plot structure of Hou’s *Good Men, Good Women* (*Haonan haonü*, 1995), moving between the civil war era and the 1990s, settings which intersect through the overactive imagination of the main character; the conjoined themes of memory and time travel in Wong’s *2046* (2004), crossing generic boundaries between the nostalgia picture and science fiction; the eerie movie theater in Tsai’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (*Bu san*, 2003), a relic of another time inhabited by spectators who might or might not be living people. Or the spiral of repetition and undying love crafted by Lou Ye’s *Suzhou River* (*Suzhou he*, 2000), in an amalgamation of the traditional Chinese ghost story with Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*; the virtual twin sisters living parallel lives in Beijing unknown to one another in Wang Qunan’s

*Lunar Eclipse* (Yueshi, 1999);<sup>17</sup> and the character Fleur in Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (Yanzhi kou, 1987), a ghost searching for her former lover, under whose sentimental gaze the cityscape of 1980s Hong Kong melts away to reveal its 1930s past.

Discussing *Rouge*'s meticulous resurrection of this bygone era, Rey Chow sets forth nostalgia as "the episteme of Chinese cultural production in the 1980s and 1990s. Nostalgia links together the otherwise diverse intellectual and artistic undertakings of the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong."<sup>18</sup> The significance of Chow's claim merits further elaboration in consideration of both the specificities of style and form in the key works of this nexus, and of a contemporary culture of memory in which the significance of the past is anything but self-evident. Indeed, the idea of nostalgia comes up repeatedly in discussions of late twentieth-century Chinese cultural production. Its imprint on film culture is evident in, for instance, Hong Kong films of the handover period; the polarity of city and preindustrialized country in works of the Taiwan New Cinema; perhaps also in the revival of the historical epic in the new *wuxia pian* in mainland film production.<sup>19</sup> Chow herself has continuously dealt with the irreclaimable gap between past and present figured in nostalgic desire across her writings on Chinese cinema, beginning with the discourse of "primitive passions" in Fifth Generation cinema — constructed upon an obsessive return to a mythic China as fantastical origin — and extending most recently to a sentimental mode, or *wenqing zhuyi*, that governs considerations of sociality, ethics, and private life in Chinese films of the turn of the century.<sup>20</sup>

Nostalgia points to a problematic of temporal dislocation underlying contemporary Chinese cinema, and my own analysis takes up this problematic in order to intercept a discourse of globalization that increasingly frames the reception of this cinema. The crossings of national and international film culture have been the subject of much scrutiny in recent scholarship in the field, as attested by the number of books, articles, and conference papers on transnational Chinese cinema.<sup>21</sup> As critics like Sheldon Lu and Esther Yau have pointed out, Chinese cinema implicitly poses the question of transnationalism by presenting a challenge to the category of nation, given its dispersion across disparate regions, political regimes, and economic systems. This challenge becomes all the more pressing when considering the case of Taiwan and Hong Kong cinema, as does this study, insofar as these regions do not fit neatly within a unitary narrative of Chinese cinema. The productions of directors like Hou, Tsai, and Wong are compelling precisely because they highlight the problem of "Chineseness" and open onto a conception of Chinese cinema that does not presuppose a uniformly shared cultural essence as a ground of commonality. The reflectionist presupposition of a series of direct correspondences among representation, nation, and identity underpinning the concept of national cinema has met a powerful challenge by those who situate Chinese films on a broader horizon where such correspondences are unraveled by the centrifugal forces of globalization.

The question of the transnational thus confronts the stability of Chinese cinema with ungrounded, decentered, and hybrid forms of identity and expression.<sup>22</sup>

These three directors also exemplify the reasons that transnationalism and globalization are seen as particularly relevant to Chinese cinema in the contemporary moment. For the career trajectories of Hou, Tsai, and Wong illustrate both the cresting of the national new wave phenomenon as the primary channel through which Chinese cinemas have made an impact on international film culture, and the ensuing vitiation of the national paradigm in a climate where filmmakers depend upon transnational production and circulation for their survival. Hou stands out as an iconic figure in this respect, paving the way for a younger generation of filmmakers in his transition from figurehead of a national movement to an international star commanding enormous respect among highbrow film circles in Japan, Europe, and North America.<sup>23</sup> This transition can be mapped out across Hou's leaps from the Taiwan film industry to those of Japan and France, with films like *Café Lumière* (*Kôhî jikô*, 2003) — commissioned by Shochiku Studios to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ozu Yasujiro — and *Flight of the Red Balloon* (*Le voyage du ballon rouge*, 2007), a remake of Albert Lamorisse's 1956 French classic *The Red Balloon*. Conversely, within Taiwan, as Yueh-yu Yeh notes, Hou's fame has been of a theoretical rather than actual nature, his name viewed as box office poison and his films only rarely receiving commercial release.<sup>24</sup> Following in his footsteps, Tsai and Wong have relied heavily upon transnational funding sources and an international network of film festivals and arthouse theaters. Moreover, these two directors display a particularly self-conscious sense of their position within a global culture of exile, migration, and travel, as well as within an international film history, freely drawing upon and blending references to Japanese, Latin American, and Western music, literature, and cinema.

Two films frequently cited as evidence of a global turn in recent Chinese cinema are Wong's *Happy Together* (*Chunguang zhaxie*, 1997) and Tsai's *What Time Is It There?* (*Ni nabian jidian*, 2001). *Happy Together* tells the story of two male lovers from Hong Kong, Po-wing and Yiu-fai, who have temporarily taken up residence in Buenos Aires. The couple's trip to Argentina represents an attempt to repair their disintegrating relationship, while the director has attributed his own choice of this locale to a wish to escape from Hong Kong on the eve of the retrocession. The journey taken by Po-wing and Yiu-fai is also associated with their desire to "start over," which relates the temporality of repetition and return structuring their tumultuous relationship to Hong Kong's looming retrocession — as both a return to a prior state of unity and an erasure of an intervening period of colonial subjugation. *What Time Is It There?* emphasizes even more its global mise-en-scène, moving mysteriously back and forth between Taipei and Paris. These parallel urban settings converge upon an exchange between a watch merchant and a woman who,

dissatisfied with his selection of goods, insists upon purchasing the watch he is wearing. Shortly thereafter she leaves for a vacation in Paris, during which she wanders solitarily through the city, while he develops a compulsion to reset every clock that he encounters to Paris time. This compulsion, we are led to understand, has its roots in the death of the man's father, which takes place at the beginning of the story. The film thus weaves together themes of mourning and yearning, a sense of being out of time with being out of place, while establishing a provocative tension between the global synchronicity instituted by standardized time and the alienation experienced by the characters with respect to their immediate environments.

By bringing forward questions of time against this background, however, I wish to call attention to the *temporal* dimensions of dislocation often overlooked in discussions of transnationalism, with their emphasis upon the spatial tropes of border-crossing, migrations, diaspora, travel, and exile. Indeed, the prevalence of diaspora as a framework for the territorial dispersion of cultural China as well as the trans-Pacific migration of Chinese communities often presuppose an origin that re-anchors the national subject. Given that the definition of diaspora refers back to a prior source or center — i.e., the “motherland” — it carries within it the danger of recontaining the very dispersions one is trying to account for within a reified and essentialized conception of identity.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, my discussion shifts focus to the ways in which the causes and phenomena typically aligned with an erosion of boundaries also dissemble and defamiliarize the narratives of selfhood through which identities take shape and reproduce themselves. If the flow of populations, commodities, and information brings about an interpenetration of geographically distinct spaces, so it also entails a deterritorialization of traditions, memories, and histories. As Andreas Huyssen argues, “temporal boundaries have weakened just as the experiential dimension of space has shrunk as a result of modern means of transportation and communication.” Consequently, “rather than moving together, if at different paces, into the future, we have accumulated so many non-synchronicities in our present that a very hybrid structure of temporality seems to be emerging, one that has clearly moved beyond the parameters of two and more centuries of Euro-American modernity.”<sup>26</sup> The globalized world of late modernity brings forth discontinuities of time as well as space; rhythms of crisis, rupture, and repetition; the double threat of amnesia and hypermnnesia. If the interpellation of individuals as social subjects once depended upon a synchronization of the time zones of public and private life, the construction of a shared past as a ground of commonality, we are now confronted with the fracturing of universal narratives of history into a heterogeneous field of temporalities, as these narratives lose their power to suture memory to the empty, homogeneous time of the nation.

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The accumulation of non-synchronicities described above offers an important framework for understanding the nostalgic disposition of contemporary Chinese cinema in connection to a more general proliferation of discourses of the vanishing, in a far-reaching phenomenon where “memory has become a cultural obsession of monumental proportions across the globe.”<sup>27</sup> While national historiography was itself a melancholy enterprise from the very outset, premised upon an aporetic rift that opened up between the past and the present in the eighteenth century, Huyssen argues that today “the form in which we think of the past is increasingly memory without borders rather than national history within borders.”<sup>28</sup> In light of these developments, the displacement of history by cultural expressions of memory signals the formation of a set of strategies for comprehending the past in response to the perceived inadequacies of conventional historiography — even as its expressions vary by location, ranging from the personal to the collective, from the therapeutic to the commemorative. For this reason, memory discourse accrues a particular momentum around specific sites of trauma where the difficulties of testimony and representation have forcefully come to the fore. For instance, the “scar literature” or “wound literature” of mainland China works through the excesses and violence of the revolutionary period in the medium of fiction.<sup>29</sup> In Taiwan, the long silence surrounding the violence of the White Terror has been punctured in numerous works of fiction, biography, and oral history, including Hou’s *A City of Sadness* and *Good Men, Good Women*, as chapter 1 discusses in detail.

The temporal preoccupations of Chinese cinema mark its participation in this growing conversation on memory, and it is with the goal of understanding the significant contribution that these films makes to this conversation that my analysis activates a cluster of questions regarding the poetics of time, history, and memory in relation to discourses of identity. If the title *Melancholy Drift* seems to place a particular emphasis upon the irregularity of these preoccupations — upon their modalities of excess and failure — this choice is motivated by the insights that these films offer regarding the pervasive anxiety of alienation from time that underpins discussions of cultural memory, and the retrospective fixations of these expressions of anxiety, as they repeatedly return to the difficult work of binding together the past and present into a meaningful narrative. The obsession with memory itself paradoxically points to a sense of profound loss as it contemplates a past always on the verge of slipping away beyond the grasp of a perspective that is barely able to discern it. In turn, the threat of loss and dispossession produces the past as an object of ineffable desire and longing. Thus contemporary attitudes toward memory share in the ambivalent structure of melancholy — haunted by the disquiet of absence, unwilling to simply lay the past to rest. The global culture of memory — in all of its varieties of recreation, simulation, re-enactment, and recycling, as discourses

on the past migrate from the realm of proper history to that of mass culture — is symptomatic of the waning of historicity that purportedly distinguishes the age of postmodernity.<sup>30</sup> In Huyssen's concise formulation, the "virus of amnesia" triggers a "mnemonic fever," whose febrile excesses index the disenchantment and re-fetishization of the past amid the ruins of history as a unified discourse.<sup>31</sup>

Some reservation in the face of this mnemonic fever is in order too, given the sheer volume of memory studies in the humanities these days. The diverse and clashing ideologies, values, and political stances underpinning this body of work points to the need to carefully delineate what exactly is at stake in the invocation of memory, whether as a substitute for history or a trope of subjectivity. As Marita Sturken has pointed out, the contemporary obsession with memory has to do with the high level of authenticity with which it is identified, juxtaposed with the inauthenticity of modern life.<sup>32</sup> Given the association of memory with authenticity and immediacy, then, it carries within it the possibility of merely establishing yet another regime of naturalization as an alternative to the verities of history. In this regard, as Kerwin Lee Klein notes, memory "promises to let us have our essentialism and deconstruct it, too."<sup>33</sup> The significance of contemporary Chinese cinema in this context resides in its opening of a different perspective on these debates, pointing to the limitations inherent in certain of its theoretical truisms while also shining a light on new paths of inquiry. These works contribute original and subtle insights on the problem of memory at the turn of the century that challenge, on the one hand, its easy dismissal as a devolution of history into culture industry and, on the other hand, its valorization as a locus of self-evident, experiential truth.

In my analysis, melancholy serves to circumvent the phantasmatic and ideological associations of nostalgia as one of postmodernism's dominant "cultural logics," which tend to blunt its critical edge. The idea of melancholy focalizes other issues at stake in the acute sense of loss that reverberates across the field of Chinese art cinema at the turn of the century — issues that, in turn, cast a different light upon the uses and abuses of nostalgia.<sup>34</sup> Running across the work of Hou, Tsai, and Wong is a fixation on absence, evanescence, and the ghosts of history. In the case of Hou, this fixation takes the form of an introspective gaze at local history early in his career, a gaze aligning with the collective disposition of the Taiwan New Cinema toward "reminiscing about the uncontaminated past," coupled with "a distaste for the present and modern values."<sup>35</sup> While Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao's characterization points to a nostalgic idealism underpinning his work of the New Cinema period, my discussion of Hou turns to a set of films situated at the endpoint of this period. Commonly known as the Taiwan Trilogy, these films mark both a turning point in Hou's corpus and a break with this nostalgic sensibility as they address the casualties of war and state terror. I argue that the trilogy, in its rewriting of Taiwan's recent past, mounts a forceful yet subtle critique of national identity

politics, and participates in the questioning of a state nationalism centered upon an overarching Chinese identity.<sup>36</sup>

Tsai's films display continuities with the work of predecessors like Hou, especially in their distinctive long take aesthetic. But rather than the brutalities of history, the past exerts a presence in Tsai's films through a fascination with its cultural detritus, as critics like Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell Davis have noted.<sup>37</sup> More than a camp recuperation of the outmoded, this retrospective fixation is developed by Tsai into a chronopolitics of sexual identity, which mounts a sharp-edged critique of heteronormativity, the patriarchal family, and the nation even as it eludes a representational politics based on visibility and the legibility of an unambiguous gay sexuality. I elaborate upon this chronopolitics through a close reading of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, a film that takes place entirely in the confines of a decrepit old movie theater, the Fuhe Grand Theater. Its rigorous distensions of real time paradoxically push realism into the realm of the fantastic, as the unity of space and time gives way to an uncanny sense of multiple cohabiting worlds.<sup>38</sup> Tsai's political project, I argue, turns upon a queer temporality and an envisioning of resistant forms of subjectivity through alternative habitations of the present — ones out of sync, anachronistic, spectral. It provokes us to draw connections between marginalized sexualities and other experiences of displacement. And in Wong's films, anxious speculations on the future and nostalgic reinterpretations of the past prompted by the retrocession converge in parallax through the prism of the 1960s, a decade witnessing extreme political unrest within Hong Kong as well as the emergence of an anti-colonial geopolitical consciousness throughout Asia. This double historical vision, in turn, accounts for an intriguing tension that subtends Wong's work. On the one hand, the unlinking of the future from a familiar past finds expression through a narrative approach that turns upon the free play of chance, wherein spontaneity and unpredictability intrude upon the logic of causal determinism. Encapsulating the powers of chance is the motif of the accidental encounter, repeated and developed into an expository principle across Wong's corpus. On the other hand, chance's promise of an escape from order is held in arrest by the determining force of a past that constantly intrudes upon the present; this counter-tendency is conveyed by motifs of compulsive return and the hypertrophy of memory.

Such concerns — the explorations of a violent past in Hou's films, the intertwined fadings of an outmoded film culture and gay subculture in Tsai's, the losses of love suffered by the saturnine figures in Wong's films — point to a melancholy disposition that clings to remainders, that turns away from the closed narratives of mourning to confront the persistence of absence and loss. The drive to make absence present and to remember loss is aimed not at a simple return to a prior state of wholeness, but rather at a search among past traces for clues to alternative futures. What new forms of subjectivity and collectivity will arise amid



the multiplication and collision of these disparate zones of lived time? The radical vision of these directors is to engage this question through a cinematic poetics of time. Navigating a landscape of shifting temporalities and mutating identities, their films eschew the legitimizing assurances of a “search for origins” in order to explore the points of breakage through which leak the ideals of national belonging, collectivity, and progress. The indeterminate circuits of this drift among remainders result in open-ended narrative trajectories that elude conventions of closure and rely upon intervals of arrest, inaction, silence. The plenitude of the image falls under the shadow of absence, taking on a spectral hue.<sup>39</sup>

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In situating this group of filmmakers under the sign of melancholy, I also have in mind a somewhat more idiosyncratic definition of the term, one that exceeds its basis in psychoanalytic theories of unmourned loss and speaks to Hou, Tsai, and Wong’s common reflection on the impact of cinematic technology upon discourses of the past. For theirs is a politics of time bound up with the materiality of the image. As a medium of storage that mechanically captures past time for future contemplation, the cinema generates its own force of dislocation, a temporal gravity that only accelerates as it is conjoined by successive technologies in modern media culture. Like photography, film produces a living likeness, or liveness, that is shadowed by the other time of its inscription; both media, as Mary Ann Doane observes, “produce the sense of a present moment laden with historicity at the same time that they encourage a belief in our access to pure presence, instantaneity.”<sup>40</sup> The disorienting effect of this shadowed time is further amplified by the sheer profusion of images in a media culture that threatens to obliterate the boundaries of the present. Paradoxically, the very ubiquity of images of the past reinforces our feeling of disconnection from its reality. The reign of the simulacrum in this regard calls forth not only the specter of endless copies without originals but also the collapse of schema of progression and succession, as past, present, and future collide within a vortex of multiplying images — a “vertigo of time defeated” in the description of Roland Barthes, or in Siegfried Kracauer’s metaphors of natural disaster, a “blizzard” or “flood” that “sweeps away the dams of memory.”<sup>41</sup> Even while the photochemical image constitutes a vehicle of memory in its archival capacities, it also denatures memory as a firsthand, organic, sensuous mode of recall, as it severs the past from its experiential context in order to circulate it in the form of “prosthetic memories.”<sup>42</sup> Holding forth the promise of overcoming the passage of time by rescuing images from its obliterating currents, the photochemical image nonetheless simultaneously threatens to evacuate time of its meaning by detaching it from the affective groundings of lived time. This duplicity leads Kracauer to draw a direct parallel between the alienating gaze of the camera lens and the attitude of the melancholic who no longer views the world in an

accustomed way, but rather “with a disinterested intensity no longer determined by his previous preferences.”<sup>43</sup> As melancholy media, film and photography usher in an estranged mode of perception that drains the world of its subjective investments of interest, meaning, and memory.

As Kracauer suggests, melancholy involves at once a forgetting of the self — in the shedding of “previous preferences” — and a hypertrophy of the past in the present. My discussion expands upon his conceptualization of melancholy as a break with habitual forms of vision and cognition. It takes up a line of reflection on cinema’s integral position in accounts of modernity’s “culture of time and space,” an agent of the seismic shift marked by the age of technical reproduction, whose reverberations continue to be felt on the terrain of contemporary memory culture.<sup>44</sup> To follow this train of thought is also to engage a longstanding critical discourse on the ontology and phenomenology of cinema as an indexical medium that, in Miriam Hansen’s description, registers “the trace of a material bond with the world represented” at a specific moment in time.<sup>45</sup> This material transfer accounts for the power of the mechanical image to bring about a confrontation with the contingency necessarily eliminated in narratives of history and memory, which endangers the structure of eventfulness in its alliance with meaninglessness and excess.<sup>46</sup>

The convergence of these two aspects of melancholy in the mechanical gaze was perhaps never so apparent as it is at the turn of our century, a moment in which film and photography themselves have been relegated to the status of old media, rendered obsolete in an age defined by the digital rather than the photochemical image.<sup>47</sup> Against this background, contingency acquires a greater urgency and meaning, imbued with a mission of resistance; built into the melancholic gaze is a hesitation and deceleration that thwarts the values of a culture of speed that would race toward the new without looking back. The films discussed in this book turn to indeterminacy as a basis for the disarticulation of processes of identity and social order. To view these works alongside one another is to discern a chronopolitical undercurrent in contemporary Chinese art cinema that investigates the aesthetic and political possibilities of cinematic contingency as a basis for alternative imaginings of identity and narrative. These range from the historiographic and evidentiary uses of the uncanny photographic image (Hou), to the alliance between contingency and a body politics based on excessive corporeality (Tsai), to the deployment of chance as a narrative engine suited to the random flows of life in the globalized city (Wong). As they reflect upon cinema’s reshaping of the perception and experience of time, these films also address the ways in which the media of film and photography both capture past time to place it within reach of the future and create new modes of presence. In turn, these new forms unravel and reconstitute social networks extending from the virtual to the embodied, from private to public.

The indifference of the photochemical image as described by Kracauer transforms what Sigmund Freud views as a dangerous loss of interest in the world

into a more positive condition of “self-estrangement,” a perceptual attitude unclouded by “memories that would captivate them and thus limit their vision.”<sup>48</sup> Mechanical melancholy is thus anti-nostalgic even as it holds fastly to the past, promising an opening of perception beyond its ingrained limits. It “inscribes the image with moments of temporality and contingency that *disfigure* the representation,” in Hansen’s words, opening onto a different view of the past as a source of renewal for the present and for futures otherwise inconceivable.<sup>49</sup> A reevaluation of melancholy’s dystopic connotations of despondency, apathy, and pathology is essential to an understanding of how these directors mine the indeterminate temporalities of the image to explore new possibilities for action and reflection in the interstices of individual remembrance and the public sphere of collectively lived time. Critical responses to Hou, Wong, and Tsai have tended to read their films as disquisitions on social failure, noting the prevalence therein of themes of alienation, isolation, anomie, and the dissolution of social forms such as the couple and the nuclear family. Sadness stands out as their common affective signature, for instance with Hou’s *A City of Sadness* establishing what Meiling Wu calls an “ethos of sadness” for Taiwan’s cinema of that period; with Tsai’s films taking up the iconography of the “sad young man” in the character of Hsiao Kang, as Chris Berry has demonstrated; and with Wong’s films transforming Hong Kong into a place of “eternal sadness,” in the words of Stephen Teo.<sup>50</sup> To focus solely on the negative implications of this sensibility, however, is to overlook the investment of their films in the solace and hope that lie on the other side of a ruined present. Even as these works deny their viewers the easy comforts of fulfilled desire and happy endings, they also demand of us the difficult work of imagining alternative social worlds.

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This keen sense of modern alienation and of having arrived at an endpoint of the current order of things calls to mind the preoccupations of an earlier generation of art films. Indeed the ubiquitous comparisons drawn between these directors and the most venerated names of European art cinema suggest not only a shared thematic and stylistic sensibility, but also the interpellation of Chinese cinema into an international film canon, as the latest addition to a global ripple effect of new wave-ism. Crucial to the visibility of directors like Hou, Tsai, and Wong is a receptive stance built upon the rise of the postwar art film, with its cult of authorship and championing of aesthetic distinctions. Persisting into the present, the figure and function of the auteur are as alive as ever in the arena of international film culture, reified as a marketing and curatorial category, infused with newfound vigor as a transnational and translational concept.<sup>51</sup> Yeh and Davis’s observation on recent Taiwan cinema, “Directors now take precedence over national cinema and the nation-state,” holds equally true for all of Chinese cinema on the global stage.<sup>52</sup> This

becomes all the more apparent with a consideration of those other directors along with Hou, Tsai, and Wong whose works have come to represent Chinese cinema for global audiences despite, paradoxically, being in no way typical of their respective regional industries. Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Edward Yang, and Jia Zhangke stand out as other prominent members within this group.

To some extent an authorial heuristic undergirds the structure of this book, which focuses on multiple works by a smaller set of directors in lieu of offering a compendium of Chinese cinema in the contemporary moment. In thus limiting the scope of the discussion, my aim is to utilize the tension between authorship and national cinema identified by Yeh and Davis as a critical tool, to drive at questions and concerns that do not sit easily within the format of the regional survey, which endures as a dominant methodological framework. Without wholly dispensing with the category of Chinese cinema, it is necessary to invoke this category with a reflexive awareness of its limits and inherent heterogeneity, to interrogate it from within, and to untangle the web of assumptions about Chinese identity imbedded within it. This especially obtains with figures like Hou, Tsai, and Wong, all of whom hail from regions historically marginalized within the grand schema of cultural China. While a fine-tuning of the national framework that substitutes “Taiwan cinema” or “Hong Kong cinema” for “Chinese cinema” offers a partial solution, such a move reinscribes the problem of ghettoization if it leaves us only to choose among the three. The authorial study offers another way out of the determining logic of regional division, as do topical studies framed around specific tendencies and issues within Chinese cinema. This book is situated at the juncture of these two approaches; beyond a series of director portraits, it traces a conceptual problematic of melancholy that binds together the work of these three filmmakers. Such a problematic is not exclusive to their work, nor to those individual films examined at length in these chapters, a point to which I will return in the conclusion. Rather, the case studies contained herein are selected on the conviction that they crystallize the contours and critical stakes of a temporal turn in contemporary Chinese cinema, and that they merit a sustained mode of analysis that attends to their formal complexities. Thus the following chapters each delineate a theoretical facet of melancholy in tandem with the interpretive method of close formal analysis, focusing on particular techniques and structures such as the flashback, freeze-frame, voiceover, the film-within-the-film, and recursive narration.

An exception is chapter 3, which assumes a wider, less formally based perspective in its overview of the history of art cinema. This discussion serves to position Tsai as a filmmaker who not only takes up and operates within the established idiom of the art film, but also pushes this idiom in new directions. It also lays the groundwork for another major argument of this book, that the work of Hou, Tsai, and Wong demands to be weighed against the legacy of the international art film. Not only do they build upon this legacy, but they also modify, transform, and hybridize it. Just

as their films stem from the new wave break with traditions of Chinese cinema, so they also signal the transmutation of art cinema and authorship in a globalized, post-classical film culture in which older hierarchies of center and periphery no longer hold. The comparison of Chinese directors with European predecessors has elicited anxiety in some quarters concerning mimicry and originality — as voiced in the notion that Taiwan New Cinema constitutes “a ‘parrot’ language, imitating and assembling various outside elements.”<sup>53</sup> Such criticisms, however, overlook the ways in which the work of these directors pushes the art film’s investments in reality, subjectivity, and ambiguity in unexpected directions, in combination with local traditions and popular genres, and beyond facile understandings of modernism, realism, or postmodernism. The position of Hou, Tsai, and Wong at the forefront of such changes presents an opportunity to rethink earlier understandings of art cinema and film style in light of the historical nuances of internationalism and new transactions between the global and the local, to reassess global film culture in order to better discern Chinese cinema’s place within it.

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A note on transliteration: This book uses the Hanyu Pinyin system of romanization for most Chinese words and film titles. Exceptions have been made when a different conventional spelling or preference exists, as is the case with many of the proper and personal names cited herein. The spelling of fictive character names in subtitled prints has also been retained, unless otherwise indicated. The Chinese ordering of names (surname followed by given name) is used except in those cases where an Anglicized version is already in circulation.

## Coda

The expansiveness of Wong Kar-wai's approach to intertextuality, citation, and borrowing, along with the dense cross-cultural, cross-medial matrix in which his films are situated suggest another angle on the director's position within the tradition of art cinema. If Wong's films signal the endpoint of the modernist project aligned with this tradition, the destruction of the idea of the auteur imbedded within it, as Sam Rohdie maintains, if they indeed indicate that "in the present conjuncture something new is happening," then what is this something new?<sup>1</sup> Rohdie delineates this displacement chiefly in terms of what is left behind; insofar as Wong's work evinces for him "a condition of melancholy, a sad regret, a sense of mourning and death," this points to the loss of a distinction between image and world, and the ensuing vitiation of the drama of image and referent that long animated modernist art cinema.<sup>2</sup> But mourning in these films has little to do with any desire for an absent or ineffable referent; their fractured fictions do not concern the distance that intervenes between image and reality, but rather the vibration of myriad possibilities within an endless combinatory set. These possibilities (or crossroads, to recall Jean-Marc Lalanne's formulation) subsist in the coexisting alternative trajectories of hypotheticals and what-ifs that shadow the course of events — in, for instance, the story within the story of *2046*, or the imaginary scenarios spun by the two main characters in *In the Mood for Love*. While these devices might call to mind the modernist *mise en abyme*, whose multiple framings insist upon the discursive operations underpinning the fiction, their use by Wong aims less for the puncturing of the diegetic effect commonly associated with the *mise en abyme* than for a dissemination and recursive modulation of the narrative field. The reflexive modernist gesture that situates the referent within an ever-receding horizon of meaning gives way to a metaleptic play across levels, an activation of a virtual dimension of storytelling. In this regard Wong's aesthetic owes as much to the postmodernist novel — with its effects of disordered sequence, recursion, metalepsis, and dispersion — as to modernist cinema.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang also illustrates the reverberations of postmodernism in the arena of art cinema, a development that complicates the view of these directors as realists based on their reliance upon the long take.<sup>4</sup> The significance of strategies linked to postmodernism for Hou's Taiwan Trilogy can be discerned in its representation of the past as a collection of fragments that do not cohere into an overarching gestalt. The discursive proliferation marking the breakdown of a singular historical narrative into the fractured multiplicity of memory in these films does not, as commonly argued, reduce to the impossibility of representation or the breakdown of referentiality. Rather it points to a collagist sensibility that insists on the value of these fragments and locates the ethics of history-writing in the spaces that divide them; while divisions must be noted and differences acknowledged, these films suggest, the difficult task of composing a pluralist national history demands the possibility of connection across these spaces. Tsai's cannibalization of cultural styles from the present and past, from highbrow to lowbrow across his body of work, evokes postmodernism's logics of appropriation. The gesture of tribute and homage is embraced by Tsai, directed at figures like Grace Chang and King Hu, periods like the French New Wave and the 1960s, and genres like the *wuxia pian* and musical. Characterized by an interconnected and open textuality, his films demonstrate an acute consciousness of their place within heterogeneous cultural histories.

It is the very question of cultural history that motivates my mention of postmodernism in this context. While the labeling of these three directors according to any particular aesthetic is endlessly debatable and ultimately not very useful, the discourse of postmodernism nonetheless illuminates their work to the extent that it moves the discussion beyond a modernist framework that has thus far looked to postwar European cinema as a primary point of reference. This nostalgic, mournful gaze to the past and its towering figures overlooks the nuances of contemporary Chinese art cinema — nuances not reducible to matters of style, as this book has argued, but affecting a politics of form. Considerations of form have tended to strand this body of work between a return to realism (often specified in terms of the poetics of the long take) and the revival of a crepuscular modernism (dedicated to “the claims of high modernism in a period in which that aesthetic and its institutional preconditions seem extinct,” to cite Fredric Jameson once again).<sup>5</sup> The notion of a surpassing shift imbedded in the idea of postmodernism exerts a pressure to chart with greater precision the changing contours of film narrative in the present moment, pushed in new directions across the expanding global terrain of art cinema, and developed in dialogue with changing modes of authorship, spectatorship, and textuality.

The idea of a cinema of time finds a further resonance in contemporary Chinese cinema beyond the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Wong Kar-wai. One notable figure who engages a similar problematic of temporal form

and historicity is Jia Zhangke, one of the leading directors of the PRC's Sixth Generation, or "urban generation."<sup>6</sup> Jia's films assume a critical view of the official discourse of progress and market reform shaping China's new era, focusing on those who are left behind by the march of progress or unable to adjust to the rapidly emerging new order. The incommensurabilities plaguing post-socialist China find expression through techniques of temporal distension that insist upon a prolonged gaze at enigmatic ruins of the socialist-industrial past that mingle with signs of the new. The uncertain future taking root within this landscape casts a pall of illegibility upon the present, a shadow over the characters who nonchalantly make their way among the rubble. The duration experienced by the viewer is deprived of its coordinates, infused with the anomie and drift evinced by characters who are unable to orient themselves along the headlong "march into the world." As they melancholically dwell on remainders, Jia's films partake of a politics of time that looks to the past not as an idealized haven from the contradictions of the present, but rather as a source of tension that confronts us with the fullest expression of these contradictions. Jia's observational long take aesthetic exemplifies Hou's influence upon a younger generation of Chinese directors, as well as the prevalence of an "on-the-spot realism" (*jishizhuyi*) in 1990s independent PRC filmmaking.<sup>7</sup> The status of realism, however, is complicated by the uncertainty of a reality territorialized by the regime of global capitalism, increasingly absorbed by the production of spectacle and phantasmagoria, and the commodification of bodies and spaces, as a film like *The World* (*Shijie*, 2004) so powerfully conveys.

*The World* centers on an actually existing theme park in Beijing, World Park, which presents to its visitors a virtual experience of travel with its miniature-scaled replicas of great monuments and sights from around the globe — the Great Pyramid,



Figure 37 The phantasmagoria of everyday life, *The World*, dir. Jia Zhangke, 2004



the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the like. The film's subject could easily serve as a textbook illustration of the simulacrum, and the images of the theme park's grounds joined by a twisting tram might be seen as the counterpart to the imaginary city of *2046*, a dream of futurity collapsed into a nightmare of the present. Yet to simply describe *The World* as an indictment of the reign of the spectacle somewhat misses the point. Although the film pointedly insists upon a behind-the-scenes reality where the hidden costs of the production of such spectacle emerges — on the constricted lives of those whose job is to realize a fantasy of border-crossing for others — its critique of globalization and the commodification of “the world” does not presuppose a detached position from which to draw a clear line between reality and artifice, actual and virtual, that which confines and that which frees. Jia situates his own images in the ambiguous space between these values, giving the image over to the unmappable, asynchronous present with which it grapples. In films like *The World*, the untimely innovations of Chinese art cinema continue to run their course toward an endpoint yet to be seen.

# Notes

## Introduction

1. *Chungking Express* was picked up for U.S. distribution by Rolling Thunder Films, a boutique distributor founded by Quentin Tarantino, whose caché exerted a significant impact on the film's reception.
2. This ratio is adjusted throughout the sequence in order to achieve subtle variations in the decomposed time of the image.
3. Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 8–9. The quote comes from Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*.
4. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 168. In the "hidden figure" of the crowd, he identifies one of the defining conditions of life in the age of modernity, the experience of the self as a part of a mass.
5. In Elissa Marder's reading, the lightning flash of the poem figures the modern medium of photography as the flash of the camera, "precisely not the 'coup de foudre' of love at first sight." *Dead Time*, 82.
6. Miriam Hansen has remarked upon Hong Kong cinema's resonance with "Benjamin's efforts to theorize mass-mediated modernity... Hong Kong films of the last decade, with the clock ticking toward the 1997 handover, reformulate these concerns for an age of digital, gene, and transplant technologies; of accelerated speed, escalated violence, and refined mechanisms of power; of globalized economies and new, at once local and transnational, media publics." "Benjamin and Cinema," 306.
7. Examples include Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong*; Chris Berry and Fei Lu, eds., *Island on the Edge*; Nick Browne et al., eds., *New Chinese Cinemas*; Sheila Cornelius, *New Chinese Cinema*; Kwok-kan Tam and Wimal Dissanayake, *New Chinese Cinema*; Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell W. Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*; and Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms*.
8. My use of the term "postcolonial" in conjunction with post-martial law Taiwan follows the lead of critics like June Yip and Fran Martin, who have pointed out the relevance of postcolonial critiques of modernity and the nation to Taiwanese cultural politics in this period. Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan* and Fran Martin, "The European Undead." The term also usefully highlights the belated confrontation with Taiwan's colonial legacy in the post-martial law era, as part of an ongoing debate around national identity.
9. See Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities* and Guo-juin Hong, "Limits of Visibility." For a regional consideration of queer Asian culture, see Chris Berry et al., eds., *Mobile Cultures*.
10. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 22.

11. While many readings in this vein are plagued by reductive understandings of allegory, two notable exceptions are Ackbar Abbas, “The New Hong Kong Cinema and the *Déjà Disparu*” and Helen Hok-sze Leung, “Queerscapes.”
12. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 19.
13. Two examples that stand out for their subtlety are Abe Mark Nornes and Yueh-yu Yeh, “A City of Sadness” and Xudong Zhang, “Generational Politics,” in *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms*. Zhang grounds his comparison in a delineation of the reception of neorealism and Bazinian criticism in China in the 1980s.
14. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 1. While *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* are clearly written from a philosophical perspective, in such passages we find an incipient historicism entering Deleuze’s discussion, bearing out András Bálint Kovács’s description of these volumes as “a kind of inherent history of form.” In his reading, Deleuze undertakes a history of cinema as a mapping of images, movement, time, correlating to a history of thought. Kovács, “The Film History of Thought,” 160.
15. D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine*, xiii.
16. Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past*, 6.
17. For a discussion of *Suzhou River* and *Lunar Eclipse*, see Zhang Zhen, “Urban Dreamscape, Phantom Sisters, and the Identity of an Emergent Art Cinema.”
18. Rey Chow, “A Souvenir of Love,” 224.
19. On nostalgia in Hong Kong cinema, see Chow, “A Souvenir of Love” and “Nostalgia of the New Wave”; Natalia Chan Sui Hung, “Rewriting History”; and Linda Chiu-han Lai, “Film and Enigmatization.” On nostalgia and Taiwan New Cinema, see William Tay, “The Ideology of Initiation” and Darrell W. Davis, “Borrowing Postcolonial.” Both within and beyond film culture, the topic of revolutionary nostalgia in post-socialist China has been taken up in works such as Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times*; Jinhua Dai, *Cinema and Desire*; Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past* and *The Sublime Figure of History*; and Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever*. On the revival of the *wuxia pian*, see Kenneth Chan, “Goodbye, Dragon Inn.”
20. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 43, and “Introduction,” in *Sentimental Fabulations*.
21. An overview of key works on this topic would include Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, “From National Cinemas to Cinema and the National: Rethinking the National in Transnational Chinese Cinemas”; Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*; Gina Marchetti, *From Tian’anmen to Times Square*; Esther C. M. Yau, *At Full Speed*; Yingjin Zhang, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. In a historical vein, the question of transnationalism has been taken up in discussions of early twentieth-century Chinese cinema’s participation in a global vernacular modernism. See Miriam Hansen, “Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons” and Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*. For a broader discussion of film and transnationalism, see Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*.
22. For discussions in Chinese cultural studies that move beyond the space of the nation, see Kuan-hsing Chen, “Positioning positions” and *Trajectories*; Rey Chow, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies*; Arif Dirlik, ed., *What Is in a Rim?*; Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*; Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, eds., *Ungrounded Empires*; Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific*; Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, *Asia/Pacific*; Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local*. More broadly, these discussions can be related to a critical self-examination taking place within area studies; see Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian, eds., *Learning Places* and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*.
23. Along with Hou, we can also consider the global ascent of directors like Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Edward Yang, Ang Lee, and John Woo, and stars like Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, and Chow Yun-fat.

24. Yueh-yu Yeh, "Politics and Poetics of Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films."
25. For a critique of diaspora, see Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness?" The limitations of diaspora serve as a reminder of the ways in which the terms of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism have historically served to suture the contradictions between the myths of a unified Chinese nation-state and the fact of geographic fragmentation.
26. Andreas Huyssen, *Presents Pasts*, 1 and *Twilight Memories*, 7.
27. Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 16. I borrow the phrase "discourses of the vanishing" from Marilyn Ivy's book of the same title.
28. Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 4. My understanding of melancholy history here draws from Benedict Anderson's discussion of the necessity of forgetting in *Imagined Communities* and *The Spectre of Comparisons*, and from Peter Fritzsche's discussion of the shattering of an ideal of history as a "single, identifiable comprehensive process" in *Stranded in the Present*. See also Robert Young, *White Mythologies* and Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.
29. On this literary genre, see David Der-wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History*, Yomi Braester, *Witness against History*, and Ban Wang, *Illuminations from the Past*.
30. The characterization of the postmodern as *posthistoire* is made by Fredric Jameson in "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Postmodernism*.
31. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 7. See also Jacques Derrida's account of "the archive fever or disorder we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of our modern history and historiography." *Archive Fever*, 90.
32. Marita Sturken, response to "Remembering through Film," a panel presented at "Remembering to Be Chinese: History, Commemoration, and Identity in Greater China," Harvard University, May 15, 2004.
33. Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of *Memory*," 144.
34. While both nostalgia and melancholy describe a condition within modernity whereby, in the words of Peter Fritzsche, "the past turned into a problem of knowledge and became a source of disquiet," my use of melancholy as a critical framework here is also inspired by a growing body of recent scholarship on the politics of loss. Melancholy occupies a central position in this discourse, elaborated by theorists of race, gender, sexuality, and postcolonial national politics. For a useful overview, see David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss*.
35. Hsiung-ping Chiao, "Contrasting Images," 14.
36. Relevant to the question of national identity and Hou's filmmaking is the relationship between Taiwan New Cinema and a populist, regionalist ethos arising in Taiwan around this time. Critics like Yip have emphasized the continuities between the New Cinema and the vernacular movement of *xiangtu wenxue*, or native soil literature, which reclaimed regional difference to counter the mythology of a timeless, overarching Chinese identity propagated by the Kuomintang. See Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, and Yeh and Davis, "Challenges and Controversies of the Taiwan New Cinema," in *Taiwan Film Directors*. The framing of identity in the Taiwan Trilogy is particularly interesting in light of the director's involvement in Taiwan's 2004 election campaign and his cofounding role in the Alliance for Ethnic Equality, an organization critiquing the oppositional Democratic Progressive party's mobilization of an ethnic concept of identity as a national platform. See Hou Hsiao-hsien et al., "Tensions in Taiwan."
37. Yeh and Davis, "Camping Out with Tsai Ming-liang," in *Taiwan Film Directors*.
38. This is in line with what Chris Berry has noted as a fantastical surplus that complicates the purported realism of Tsai's directorial approach, although his analysis turns upon a different film, *What Time Is It There?*. Berry, "Haunted Realism."

39. Esther C. M. Yau and Kyung Hyun Kim take up this idea in a special issue of *positions* on “Asia/Pacific Cinema: Spectral Surfaces.” “The dead,” Yau and Kim write, “have yet to die, and their spiritual remains bend the linear time and spread anxiety and crisis, ushering the Asia/Pacific into a spectral plane” (284).
40. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 104.
41. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 97; Siegfried Kracauer, “Photography,” 58.
42. For an insightful analysis of the implications of technologically mediated prosthetic memories, see Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memories*. On the relationship of cinema and memory, see Dominique Blüher et al., eds., “Memory in Cinema and Films.”
43. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 17.
44. I take the phrase from Stephen Kern’s *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918*.
45. Miriam Hansen, “Introduction,” in *Theory of Film*, viii.
46. My understanding of “contingency” here is informed by Doane’s *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.
47. On the historicity of film and photography with respect to new media, see Karen Beckman and Jean Ma, “Introduction,” in *Still Moving*.
48. Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 15.
49. Hansen, “Introduction,” xxv.
50. Meiling Wu, “Post-Sadness Taiwan Cinema”; Chris Berry, “Happy Alone?”; Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, 141.
51. On authorship in a transnational arena, see Chon A. Noriega, “Introduction,” in *Visible Nations* and Marvin D’Lugo, “Transnational Film Authors and the State of Latin America.”
52. Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 6.
53. Kuan-hsing Chen, “Taiwanese New Cinema,” 561.

## Chapter 1

1. Hou Hsiao-hsien, “Eloge des stupéfiants,” 38 (author’s translation).
2. Hou Hsiao-hsien, “History’s Subtle Shadows,” 8; Alain Masson, “*Good Men, Good Women*: Isolation, Fragmentation,” 45.
3. The director himself refers to these works collectively as the “Taiwan Trilogy,” although he remarks that the idea of making a set of films about the island’s history occurred to him only after the production of *A City of Sadness*.
4. Hou Hsiao-hsien, “Rencontre avec Hou Hsiao-Hsien,” 88.
5. These reforms, known as the “Quiet Revolution,” led to the formation of the oppositional Democratic Progressive Party — the first to challenge the hegemony of the Chinese Nationalist Party — in 1986. Taiwan’s 2000 election resulted in the first victory for the Democratic Progressive Party, with the presidency of Chen Shui-bian. On the Quiet Revolution, see Joseph Bosco, “The Emergence of a Taiwanese Popular Culture”; Thomas B. Gold, “Civil Society and Taiwan’s Quest for Identity”; Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*; Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*; and Edwin A. Winckler, “Cultural Policy on Postwar Taiwan.”
6. The phrase refers to the incident that triggered the rebellion, an altercation between a Taiwanese woman selling black market cigarettes and authorities from the Tobacco and Alcohol Monopoly Bureau, resulting in the beating of the woman by one of the bureau officers and the fatal shooting of a bystander. As news of the incident spread, popular demonstrations and rioting erupted throughout the island. For a comprehensive account of the 2-28 Incident, see Tse-han Lai et al., *A Tragic Beginning*.

7. In addition to the other works cited throughout this chapter, for a close discussion of *A City of Sadness*, see David Bordwell, "Transcultural Spaces." On *The Puppetmaster*, see Nick Browne, "Hou Hsiao Hsien's *The Puppetmaster*." On *Good Men, Good Women*, see Jerome Silbergeld, "The Chinese Heart in Conflict with Itself," in *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face*; and James Udden, "'This Time He Moves!'"
8. Cited in June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 282.
9. For an overview of the reception of *A City of Sadness* in Taiwan, see Tien-hsiang Wen, "Hou Hsiao-Hsien: A Standard for Evaluating Taiwan's Cinema."
10. Lai et al., *A Tragic Beginning*, 3. Christopher Hughes similarly argues that the events surrounding the 2-28 Incident "were to become perhaps the most significant formative experiences in preventing the consolidation of a Chinese national identity for the island over the following decades." *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.
11. Sylvia Li-chun Lin, *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan*, 6. In the wake of *A City of Sadness*, other films have taken up the 2-28 Incident, the most notable of which are *Super Citizen Ko* (*Chaoji da guomin*, Wan Ren, 1995) and *March of Happiness* (*Tianma Chafang*, Lin Cheng-sheng, 1999).
12. Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 69. Lin's and Yip's studies overlap in the questions they take up about historical representation in this period, although they draw very different conclusions about their material, with Yip focusing on the *xiangtu* (nativist) literary movement and taking a more forceful, at times aggrandized stance on the cultural politics of postcolonial Taiwan. Both books provide an indispensable contextual perspective on the Taiwan Trilogy.
13. Bérénice Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, 46. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis note that the character of Wen-ching is based on an actual person, Hou Conghui, whom Hou interviewed prior to the making of the film. *Taiwan Film Directors*, 147.
14. Ping-hui Liao, "Rewriting Taiwanese National History," 284.
15. It must be noted, however, that Liao expresses pessimism about the role for film in this counterpublic sphere. A different position is taken by Wimal Dissanayake, who argues for "the importance of cinema as an oppositional force in the public sphere." "Cinema and the Public Sphere," 153. Both assessments are formulated in response to *A City of Sadness* and its catalyzing role in public discourse. On the concept of the counterpublic sphere and its relation to cinema, see Miriam Hansen, "Foreword," *Public Sphere and Experience*.
16. While the critique of historicism cannot be fully represented in this space, some key works include Walter Benjamin's writings, most notably "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 253–64; Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *The Location of Culture*, 139–70; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*; Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 139–64; Hayden White, *Metahistory*.
17. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 16.
18. Hou Hsiao-hsien, "Entretien" (1990), 8. The musical inspirations for the film are also discussed by Chu T'ien-wen in "*Beiqing chengshi* shisanwen [Thirteen Questions on *A City of Sadness*]," 30.
19. Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, 46.
20. Hou, "History's Subtle Shadows," 4.
21. In this period there were some five hundred performing troupes active in Taiwan. Unlike the leather puppets used in Chinese shadow play or wooden marionettes used in string puppetry — both older forms dating back at least to the tenth century — hand puppets consisted of carved wooden heads mounted on bodies constructed of fabric; hence the name *budai xi*, or "cloth sack drama." Puppet troupes consisted only of men, usually without a formal education

- and from farming backgrounds, and typically included one puppetmaster, one assistant, and four or five musicians. For a general account of Taiwanese hand puppetry, see UCLA Museum of Cultural History, *Asian Puppets*; another useful historical overview can be found in Alvin P. Cohen, “A Taiwanese Puppeteer and His Theatre.”
22. For instance Georgette Wang writes, “To common village people, largely illiterate peasants, laborers, and small businessmen puppet shows introduced the world of literature and history... As one man suggested, watching puppet shows was like taking history lessons.” “Televised Puppetry in Taiwan,” 171.
  23. Hou Hsiao-hsien, “La Mémoire Impressionnée,” 43.
  24. On questions of film, historical representation, and the postmodern history film, see Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film*; Philip Rosen, “Document and Documentary,” in *Change Mummified*; Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past and Revisioning History*; Vivian Sobchack, ed., *The Persistence of History*; Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History*; Marita Sturken, “Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History” and *Tangled Memories*.
  25. Lin, *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan*, 103.
  26. Hou, “Entretien,” (1996), 47.
  27. Rosen, *Change Mummified*, xiv–xv.
  28. Stephen Heath, “Contexts.” The double meaning of *histoire* proves useful for Heath’s discussion.
  29. Robert Chi, “Getting It on Film,” 52. Chi elaborates on the implications of digressiveness, or *liti*, in response to Lu Kuang’s essay “A Digressive Movie?”
  30. Tuo Li, “Narratives of History in the Cinematography of Hou Xiaoxian”; Mark Abe-Nornes and Yueh-yu Yeh, “Narrating National Sadness,” in “*A City of Sadness*.”
  31. Chu, “*Beiqing chengshi shisanwen*,” 30. Chu’s remarks call to mind the resonance between discussions of historical narrative and theorizations of the documentary that deconstruct its truth claims. See, for example, the essays collected in Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary*.
  32. Chi, “Getting It on Film,” 77.
  33. For example, see Chi’s “Getting It on Film” and Lin’s *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan*.
  34. Chris Berry, “A Nation T(w/o)o,” 44. He refers here to Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation?”
  35. Cathy Caruth, “Introduction,” *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 5.
  36. For a detailed elaboration and critique of political modernism, see D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism*.
  37. Claude Lanzmann, “The Obscenity of Understanding,” 205.
  38. Shoshona Felman, “Education and Crisis,” 16–17.
  39. Miriam Hansen, “*Schindler’s List* Is Not *Shoah*,” 302.
  40. In a subsequent analysis of *A City of Sadness*, Robert Chi raises a similar point, asking “how [the assumption that the film is indeed a traumatic film about a traumatic historical event] became naturalized in the first place.” “A World of Sadness?” 66. I also have in mind here recent critiques of history as trauma and the cautionary note sounded by Patricia Yaeger, who points out that “we inhabit an academic world that is busy consuming trauma — busy eating, swallowing, perusing, consuming, exchanging, circulating, creating professional connections — through its stories about the dead.” “Consuming Trauma,” 228. For a trenchant critique of the trauma model in the context of cinematic representations of the Holocaust, see Hansen, “*Schindler’s List* Is Not *Shoah*”; and E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, “Introduction,” in *Trauma and Cinema*. The irony here is that while discourses of memory have generally served to call into question the universalizing effects of history as grand narrative, the heuristic of traumatic memory has itself recently emerged as a universal model of sorts — a voracious discursive

machine, as Yaeger suggests. This development owes partly to the paradoxical emergence of the Holocaust, an event defined in terms of singular horror, as a generalized metaphor for traumatic history. See Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, introduction and chapter 1.

41. Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 230. In a similar vein, Chris Berry argues that *A City of Sadness* “invokes a collectivity that resists cooptation into modern unified national formations.” “From National Cinema to Cinema and the National,” 177.
42. Only later, Maureen Turim observes, is the term “flashback” applied to other aesthetic media and generalized as a way of describing a disruptive experience of memory. *Flashbacks in Film*, 16. For an earlier discussion of the relationship of film flashbacks (or “cutbacks”) and mnemonic processes from the perspective of gestalt psychology, see Hugo Munsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study*, 39–48, 74.
43. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 48.
44. Turim, *Flashbacks in Film*, 2.
45. In discussions of *The Puppetmaster*, the director has emphasized Li Tianlu’s role as a co-author and collaborator; the film’s screenplay was drafted on the basis of Li’s oral autobiography, and the script was supplemented and revised by Li during the production process. See Hou, “History’s Subtle Shadows” for a detailed description. Li’s oral narration was also captured on audiotape by the director and transcribed for publication in a Taiwanese newspaper prior to the release of the film.
46. Hou, “Entretien” (1996), 47.
47. Hou’s fascination with the interweaving of history and communicational technology is further elaborated in *Three Times* (2005), which marks historical continuity and change by juxtaposing the written word with electronic texts, the page with the screen.
48. Hinoe and Hinomi are representative of the native elite that flourished under the colonial regime; the relationship of this elite class with Japanese culture is reflected in the siblings’ adoption of Japanese names, their proficiency in the country’s language and customs, and their close personal relationship with Shizuko’s family.
49. I am grateful to Chika Kinoshita for explaining to me the associations of this song.
50. This is the translation of the poem given in the original release version, cited in Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, 16.
51. Hou’s own description of his approach to the flashback in this film is also suggestive here. As he puts it, “in the editing process, it became unimportant to define what was reality and what was flashback; I like to blur the line between the two.” Cited in Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, 10.
52. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 2.
53. This breakdown is reinforced earlier in the sequence depicting Jiang Biyu’s notification of and reaction to her husband’s death; it is introduced by a sound bridge, the only time in the entire film that diegetic sound bleeds over from Liang Jing’s story into that of Jiang.
54. Such an argument is advanced, for instance, by Tonglin Lu in *Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China*, 115.
55. Zou Mi, “Women Can’t Enter History?” in *The Death of the New Cinema*.
56. June Yip, “Constructing a Nation,” 166.
57. Chu T’ien-wen, “Benshi,” in *Haonan Haonü*, 23. The citation is a slightly modified version of the English translation of this quote in the international press pack distributed for *Good Men, Good Women*, which appears in the program notes accompanying many North American screenings of the film.
58. Lin discusses the figure of the widow in literary representations of the 2-28 Incident in “Engendering Victimhood,” in *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan*. She argues, “In most of the



- current scholarship on and in witness' accounts of 2/28, women are simply called forth to recount the men's stories, with their own stories receding into the background. It is as if the sole significance of their existence is to bear witness to the fact that atrocious acts have been committed, their own victimization obscured" (76–77).
59. This point has been made by many critics. Liao points out that in *A City of Sadness*, "women are... surviving witnesses. The story is assembled from a diary kept by the photographer's wife, whose only public role is the disclosure of her record of her private life." "Rewriting Taiwanese National History," 294. As Chi puts it, "it is Hinomi's literal voice that repeatedly delivers the historical and narrative goods." "Getting It on Film," 52. Rosemary Haddon also discusses how Hinomi's voice is elevated as a framing discourse in her essay "Hou Hsiao Hsien's *A City of Sadness*."
  60. Cited in Reynaud, *A City of Sadness*, 69.
  61. This division evokes the film's opening scene, in which Emperor Hirohito's radio address announcing Japan's surrender competes with the sound of a woman giving birth in her home.
  62. Hou, "Rencontre," 98. The screenplay is adapted from Han Bangqing's 1892 novel *Biographies of Flowers of Shanghai*.
  63. Hou, "Rencontre," 84.
  64. Chu's influence on Hou's filmmaking has generally received little critical acknowledgment; one notable exception can be found in the work of Yeh and Davis, who discuss their collaboration at length in *Taiwan Film Directors* (150–57).
  65. Historically, this goes back to the "ducks and butterfly" literature of Republican China, much of which was adapted for the screen during the 1920s; the intersection of gender and genre here is discussed by Rey Chow in *Woman and Chinese Modernity*. More recently it includes romantic fiction by the prolific female novelist Ch'iung Yao, wildly popular in Taiwan in the 1960s, from whose work more than fifty film adaptations were made. See Robert Ru-shou Chen, "Taiwan Cinema," 53. Such lowbrow escapism can be contrasted with the highbrow escapism of the modernist literary school, and its feminine audience contrasted with the masculine existential angst of the latter. On Taiwanese literary modernism, see Yvonne Sung-sheng Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance* and Leo Ou-fan Lee, "'Modernism' and 'Romanticism' in Taiwan Literature."
  66. Yvonne Sung-sheng Chang, "Chu T'ien-wen and Taiwan's Recent Cultural and Literary Trends," 76. Such apocalypticism inflects Hou's 1987 film *Daughter of the Nile*, adapted from a story of the same title from Chu's collection of short stories *Fin de Siècle Splendor*. At the end of the film, whose screenplay is also co-written by Chu, the voice of the main character states: "In the Bible, the prophet Jeremiah once prophesized that this city would become desolate, a dry desert, a savage wilderness, with no inhabitants, no people, the mysterious capital, Babylon." Such comparisons of Taipei with Babylon are found throughout Chu's corpus.
  67. Chu T'ien-wen, *Notes of a Desolate Man*.
  68. The linkage of communicational technologies with painful absence established here offers a lens for understanding *Three Times*. Here Hou further develops the idea that such technologies do not enable the communion of lovers so much as they index the distance between desiring bodies. Indeed the film suggests that the most moving records of our desire stem from the experience of its frustration.
  69. The mirroring of Jiang Biyu and Liang Jing as survivors suggests that the question of women in history remains a vexed one, Chu T'ien-wen's comments notwithstanding. The insistence on a feminine perspective on history remains in danger of slipping into a transhistorical view of gender in the film's repetition of tragic endings. As Chow cautions, "In Chinese society, it is precisely because women were traditionally barred from the realm of 'public' undertakings

that the problems posed by their existence would lend themselves to being identified in a facile manner, as ‘human’ problems... of a ‘universal’ significance.” *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, 119.

70. Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, 61.
71. The phrase comes from the unnamed female lead of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.
72. Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 135.
73. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 154.

## Chapter 2

1. This cycle consists of *The Boys from Fengkuei* (*Fenggui lai de ren*, 1983), *A Summer at Grandpa's* (*Dongdong de jiaqi*, 1984), *A Time to Live and a Time to Die* (*Tongnian wangshi*, 1985), and *Dust in the Wind* (*Lianlian fengchen*, 1986).
2. As Hou states, “In these four films, I deal with not only my past, but also the history of Taiwan. I [then] wanted to explore this history more deeply.” “Rencontre avec Hou Hsiao-hsien,” 85. On the link between autobiography, biography, and history in Hou’s corpus, see Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell W. Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 146–50.
3. June Yip describes the opening scene as an intertwining of the fates of the individual characters with “the fate of Taiwan as a nation” in *Envisioning Taiwan*, 144. Bérénice Reynaud also remarks on the duality of the “voice of history” represented by the radio broadcast and “voices coming from [a] private, intimate sphere” in *A City of Sadness*, 12.
4. The motif is repeated in the anecdote discussed in the previous chapter about the travails of the small town mayor who is unsure of the proper direction in which to fly the new Chinese flag.
5. Although battery-powered radios were available at this time, they were priced out of the mass market, considered somewhat of a luxury even in an industrialized country like the United States. Additionally, although we often see a radio in one of the rooms of the hospital where Hinomi works, there are no subsequent representations of a radio within the Lin house.
6. The phrase “montage from the ear to the eye” comes from André Bazin’s description of *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1960).
7. For a discussion of examples ranging from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969) to *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), see Garrett Stewart, “Photo-gravure,” in *Between Film and Screen*. On the persistent tension between the still and moving image in the cinema, see also Karen Beckman and Jean Ma, eds., *Still Moving*; Raymond Bellour, “The Pensive Spectator”; Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*; and Vivian Sobchak, “The Scene of the Screen,” in *Carnal Thoughts*.
8. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 78, 89.
9. Stewart, *Between Film and Screen*, 37.
10. *Le Radical* and *La Poste*, December 30, 1895, cited in Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, 20–21. Mary Ann Doane discusses early cinema’s fascination with death, exemplified in the execution film, in “Dead Time,” in *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.
11. Alessia Ricciardi, *The Ends of Mourning*, 13.
12. Ping-hui Liao, “Rewriting Taiwanese National History,” 293–94.
13. Tonglin Lu, *Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China*, 105.
14. For more on the notion of early cinema as universal language, see Miriam Hansen, “Universal Language and Democratic Culture.”
15. Antoine de Baecque, “Le Temps Suspendu,” 26.
16. De Baecque’s reading finds a corroboration in Hou’s deliberately anachronistic use of intertitles in the second part of *Three Times*.

17. Robert Chi confronts this fallacy in his discussion of silence as a space for the interrogation of identity in "Getting It on Film." Chris Berry takes his reading of Wen-ching's muteness in another direction; while also linking it to the issue of cultural-linguistic difference, he understands such difference in terms of a "postnational" hybridity; Wen-ching thus figures "a collective self that is hybridized and riven with difference, a subject that cannot speak, and at least the shadow of a postnational imagined community founded on hybrid space." "A Nation T(w/o)o," 44–45.
18. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 34.
19. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, 9.
20. Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, 10. Hans Belting's discussion of the role of the image in the cult of death is relevant to Bazin's thesis; as he points out, "of the conditions that contributed to the introduction of physical images into human use, the cult of the dead ranks as one of the oldest and most significant." "Image, Medium, Body," 307.
21. Estimates of the casualties of the uprising range from ten to twenty thousand.
22. Mark Abe-Nornes and Yueh-yu Yeh, "A City of Sadness," <http://cinemaspace.berkeley.edu/Papers/CityOfSadness/swpp.html>. Nornes and Yeh address the status of photography in *A City of Sadness*, as part of a systematic breakdown of the film and its position in the Taiwan New Cinema, in this indispensable resource.
23. The poem's evocation of the idea of exile and its fatalistic reference to a return to a lost home finds a parallel in another scene in the film, when a group of Chinese and Taiwanese intellectuals halts a dinner conversation to sing a well-known ballad "The Song of the Exiles": "September 18, September 18. Ever since that fateful day, I've been away from my home, I abandoned boundless treasure and began to wander away from home, I began to wander. In what year or month shall I make my return to my beloved home?" The song was penned by exiles from the region of Manchuria, the date referring to the Mukden Incident of 1931, when the Japanese invaded Manchuria and as a consequence many Chinese intellectuals from the northeast provinces were forced to flee from the area. The collective performance points to the exchanges taking place between mainland and native intellectuals during the postwar transitional period, and to the commingling of Chinese nationalist and anti-Japanese patriotism with native discontent toward the Kuomintang regime. I thank Yvonne Chang for discussing the historical implications of this scene with me.
24. For a reading of Bazin that takes up this paradox, see Philip Rosen, "Subject, Ontology, and Historicity in Bazin," in *Change Mummified*.
25. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92, 93.
26. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96, 97.
27. Or, as Barthes puts it, "Photography may correspond to the intrusion, in our modern society, of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death." *Camera Lucida*, 92.
28. These meditations are prompted by a photograph of Lewis Payne, about to be executed for his attempted assassination of Secretary of State W. H. Seward, but Barthes quickly extends their implications to all "historical" photographs, including a picture of two little anonymous girls in a village. His analysis of the Payne image presents an interesting contrast to his discussion of another photo in *Empire of Signs*, taken on September 13, 1912, of the Japanese general Nogi and his wife, shortly before the couple's ritual suicide. Here, he marvels at the absence of Death within the image, at the viewer's inability to intuit the act that is on the mind of the couple by gazing at their carefully composed expressions. *Empire of Signs*, 94.
29. Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," 59.
30. Miriam Hansen, "Introduction," in *Theory of Film*, xvi. The theory of the double set forth by

Freud in his essay “The Uncanny” also relates to the photograph as a double of reality. He writes, “For the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death,’ as Rank says; and probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body... The same desire led the Ancient Egyptians to develop the art of making images of the dead in lasting materials.” As in photography, however, “the ‘double’ reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death” (Sigmund Freud, *SE* vol. 17, 235).

31. Kracauer, “Photography,” 51, 58.
32. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 91.
33. Kracauer, “Photography,” 61, 62. For a full discussion of the temporality and historical stakes of photography elaborated by Kracauer in both the “Photography” essay and in *Theory of Film*, see Hansen’s introduction to the latter.
34. Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” *SE* vol. 14, 257.
35. Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 17. Notably, it was this very fascination with the “role of melancholy in photographic vision” that troubled Rudolph Arnheim in his review of Kracauer’s book. Arnheim criticized Kracauer from the perspective that “a concern with unshaped matter is a melancholy surrender rather than the recovery of man’s grip on reality. Perhaps, then, we are witnessing the last twitches of an exhausted civilization, whose rarefied concepts no longer reach the world of the senses.” “Melancholy Unshaped,” 297.
36. Cited in Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 14. See also Hansen, “Introduction,” in *Theory of Film*, xxv, for a discussion of this passage. In a different fashion, melancholy frames Barthes’s discussion of photography, which is interwoven with a reflection on the recent death of his mother; his unsuccessful quest for the *eidos* of photography centers upon an absent image, a picture of his mother as a young child, the Winter Garden photo, withheld by Barthes as a testament to his inconsolable grief.
37. Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 15.
38. As Hansen notes, the photograph signifies not only a general deathliness, but also confronts the viewer with her own non-existence, by triggering “a momentary encounter with mortality, an awareness of a history that does not include us.” “Introduction,” xxvi.
39. Stewart, *Between Film and Screen*, 139, 143.
40. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*, 56.
41. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 11. Inasmuch as the tomb of the Unknown Soldier represents a generic type of monument, its relevance to revisionary modes of remembrance can be considered alongside contemporary examples such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the Holocaust Museum, the “Monumento a las victimas del terrorismo de Estado,” and others where monumentality itself is brought into a transformative collision with popular culture, mass media, reproductive technologies, and experiential practices such as reenactment. See Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*; Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*; and Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*.
42. See Anderson’s discussion of Michelet in *Imagined Communities*, 198. Anderson’s comments on death can be compared to Jacques Derrida’s discussion of death and culture in *Aporias*. Here he writes, “culture itself, culture in general, is essentially, before anything, even a priori, the culture of death. Consequently, then, it is a *history of death*. There is no culture without a cult of ancestors, a ritualization of mourning and sacrifice, institutional places and modes of burial” (43). While Anderson describes the production of a bond of commonality through death, however, Derrida elaborates upon the role of death in relation to the foreigner, the other. On the national symbolism of death and absence, also see Marc Redfield, “Imagination,” in *Grounds of Comparison*.

43. Catherine Russell, *Narrative Mortality*, 7.
44. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 204. Notably, these phrases circumscribe the single reference that Anderson makes to photography in *Imagined Communities*; the remainder of the passage emphasizes the photograph's estranging excess to memory and understanding: "How strange it is to need another's help to learn that this naked baby in the yellowed photograph, sprawled happily on rug or cot, is you. The photograph, fine child of the age of mechanical reproduction, is only the most peremptory of a huge modern accumulation of documentary evidence which simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and emphasizes its loss from memory. Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity* (yes, you and that naked baby are identical) which, because it can not be 'remembered,' must be narrated." The encounter with one's picture as an infant — a figure of nationalism's staging of origins — triggers a moment of discognition and irreconcilability between the photographic image that cannot be remembered and internal self-awareness, requiring the intervention of narrative assistance to restore the equilibrium of identity. Notwithstanding photography's alignment with technologies of recording and surveying that contribute to nationalism's "totalizing classificatory grid," it simultaneously introduces an element of indeterminacy that threatens to unravel the grid if left uncontained.
45. Landsberg argues that while in the past memory served to anchor history within an authentic realm of experience, it is now the case that individuals apprehend history itself as "prosthetic memory" — that is, as "a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live." *Prosthetic Memory*, 2.
46. Stewart, *Between Film and Screen*, 18.

### Chapter 3

1. A thorough accounting of the distribution and reception of contemporary Chinese cinema, which is beyond the scope of this essay, would necessarily also consider the role of VHS, DVD, and VCD technology along with the rental and sales markets supported by these media, and alternative screening venues like universities, museums, and other cultural institutions, and private or underground film clubs.
2. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "National/International/Transnational."
3. Tsai describes his childhood memories of watching King Hu's films during his childhood in Malaysia and recalls first seeing *Dragon Gate Inn* at the age of eleven. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 366–67.
4. The idea of a *cinéma de dédramatisation* was set forth in 1966 by Marcel Martin as part of a positive appraisal of the landscape of postwar European films in an essay entitled "Les voies de l'authenticité." Martin's understanding of the modernist art film in terms of attenuated narrativity, which has since become commonplace, has been challenged by Christian Metz in "The Modern Cinema and Narrativity," in *Film Language*. The latter calls for an expanded definition of narrative that can account for the more sophisticated forms and subtle dramaturgical approaches to be found within this realm of film practice.
5. Mark Betz, "The Cinema of Tsai Ming-liang," 162. Other director-actor pairings mentioned by Betz are Michelangelo Antonioni and Monica Vitti, Federico Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni, and Ingmar Bergman and Max von Sydow.
6. Song Hwee Lim, "Positioning Auteur Theory in Chinese Cinemas Studies," 232–33.
7. "I hope Hsiao Kang will never become a 'professional' actor, at least not in my films. When I say this I am referring to the characters in Bresson's films. These people often say very little and have strict features. Their acting skills are never discussed. I find them both persuasive

- and touching in their roles.” Tsai Ming-liang, “Special Features: Director’s Notes,” *What Time Is It There?* DVD.
8. Beckett and Kafka are invoked by Rey Chow in comparison to Tsai in *Sentimental Fabulations*, 183.
  9. Fredric Jameson, “History and Elegy in Sokurov,” 1.
  10. Héctor Rodríguez, “Questions of Chinese Aesthetics,” 77. Rodríguez deftly maps King Hu’s idiom with reference to Chinese art, Eisensteinian montage, the historic avant-garde, and Buddhist spiritual beliefs, dealing with the complex imbrication of premodern and modernist aesthetics in the director’s work.
  11. For a discussion of *The Hole*, see Ban Wang, “Black Holes of Globalization.” On *The Wayward Cloud*, see Weihong Bao, “Biomechanics of Love.”
  12. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 219–20.
  13. The very designation of art cinema as “modern” warrants a more rigorous elaboration, with a consideration of the panorama of film culture’s intersections with modernism and modernity, weighed against, for instance, the project of political modernism detailed by D. N. Rodowick in *The Crisis of Political Modernism*, or the materialist, medium-reflexive understanding of modernism advanced by avant-garde filmmakers.
  14. Steven Neale, “Art Cinema as Institution,” 34. On the imbrication of art cinema and national cinema, see also Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema.” For a comprehensive regional overview of European art cinema, see Mark Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle*.
  15. On the development of American popular cinema as a globalized commodity that could dominate European markets during the studio era, see Victoria de Grazia, “Mass Culture and Sovereignty” and “The Star System” in her *Irresistible Empire*.
  16. David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 228.
  17. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 231.
  18. Neale, “Art Cinema as Institution,” 33.
  19. Neale, “Art Cinema as Institution,” 34.
  20. For examples of the former, see David Overbey’s introduction to *Springtime in Italy* and Eric Rentschler, “American Friends and the New German Cinema.”
  21. Kuan-hsing Chen, “Taiwanese New Cinema,” 561, 558.
  22. The claim of stylistic rupture also requires some qualification, as suggested by scholarship addressing the continuities between the Taiwan New Cinema and its predecessors — for instance, Hou Hsiao-hsien’s frequently overlooked work in the commercial film industry prior to 1983.
  23. Chia-chi Wu offers a concise account of the fortunes of Taiwan New Cinema on the international stage in her essay “Festivals, Criticism and International Reputation of Taiwan New Cinema.”
  24. It is important to add that the question of culture identity is far from neatly settled by the facts of production, textually complicated by the film itself in its multilayered reflection on cross-culturalism, migration, and artistic production and performance. Consider, for example, the Chinese nanny, an aspiring filmmaker, hired by Parisian Suzanne to care for her son, or the interaction between Suzanne, a puppet ventriloquist, and a visiting master of Chinese hand puppet theater, evoking Hou’s earlier film *The Puppetmaster*.
  25. Kuan-hsing Chen, “Taiwanese New Cinema,” 562.
  26. “2000 as seen by...” figures on many levels the contemporary fortunes of cinematic globalization, as what Rosalind Galt describes as “a work of mapping, an attempt to limn its own constellation of cinematic geography: New York, Rio de Janeiro, Mali, Belgium, Taipei.” *The New European Cinema*, 235.

27. In an interview with Shelly Kraicer, Tsai declares, "I don't think much about my own film style, or the relationship between my style and the so-called Taiwan Art Film Style. My films are influenced by my own theater work." He further states that the European films of the 1960s and 1970s that he watched as a student have had "a direct influence" upon his own films. Quoted in Tsai, "Interview with Tsai Ming-liang," by Shelly Kraicer, 583–84. Elsewhere he aligns his work with that of Taiwanese directors who predate the New Cinema generation, insisting that he never counted as part of Taiwan's New Cinema. Michael Berry, "Speaking in Images," 371.
28. Kore-eda has acknowledged Hou's influence on his filmmaking in numerous interviews, and directed a documentary for Japanese television on Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang. Jia Zhangke also refers to Hou as a source of inspiration; in an interview with Michael Berry, for instance, he recalls viewing Hou's *The Boys from Fengkuei* as a "big turning point," even while distancing his approach from the same generation of PRC directors. Michael Berry, "Speaking in Images," 201. Tsai, on the other hand, has resisted such attributions of influence in discussions of his work; in one instance, when asked about his and Hou's common affinity for the long take, he disavows any direct connection between their films. Tsai, Interview by Kraicer, 583–84.
29. David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light*, 230–31.
30. James Udden, "The Future of a Luminescent Cloud."
31. Yoshimoto, "National/International/Transnational," 260. The investigation of a pan-Asian aesthetic operative in the realm of art cinema finds a complement in other lines of inquiry, for instance, the recent emergence of a trans-Asian mass culture rooted in *hanryu*, the craze for Korean popular media, including film, television, and music. The problem of how to define a contemporary European cinema constitutes a parallel question of new formations of transregionalism; on this problem, see Galt, *The New European Cinema*.
32. From an early point in his career, Hou has been repeatedly compared to Ozu and queried on the influence exerted by Ozu upon his filmmaking approach. In Japan he is viewed as the spiritual descendant of this "most Japanese" of all directors and was selected by Shochiku Studios to direct a tribute to Ozu on the 100th anniversary of the latter's birthday; the film, entitled *Café Lumière* (*Coffee Jikou*), was released in 2003. Shot in Japan with a Japanese cast, thematizing the erosion of the Japanese family that so occupied Ozu, *Café Lumière* is effectively a Japanese film that happens to have been made by a Chinese director.
33. Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 19.
34. Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 1. Yvonne Sung-sheng Chang's discussion of the film cogently intercepts and complicates such a reading, beginning with the problematic claim that the film constitutes "a product of 'belated' or derivative' modernism." "The Terrorizer and the Great Divide in Contemporary Taiwan's Cultural Development," 16. For another take on postmodernism in the context of Taiwanese cinema, see Fran Martin's analysis of Tsai in *Situating Sexualities*. She argues that his work "gestures toward an emergent form of (post) modern sexual subject that is enabled by the historical transformations of family and society in 1990s Taiwan" (163).
35. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 64.
36. Noël Carroll, "The Future of Allusion." Carroll somewhat hastily discounts any possible connection between the cinematic practices he describes and postmodernist aesthetics, invoking an insurmountable gap between movies as popular culture and high art.
37. Bordwell even suggests an eventual convergence of the art film and the genre film, or a collapse of the one into the other, by the early 1980s, with the art film reaching an endpoint of development once its procedures are absorbed by Hollywood. *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 232.

38. That fact that Tsai's characters are consistently either nameless or identified solely by the real names of the actors, as in the case of Hsiao Kang, places a further emphasis upon the familiar bodies of these actors.
39. Such intertextuality also binds *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* to the first feature directed by Lee Kang-sheng, *The Missing* (*Bu jian*, 2003). The Chinese titles of the films, respectively *Bu san* and *Bu jian*, constitute two parts of an idiomatic phrase, "no reconnection, no parting." Miao Tien and the young child he accompanies at the end of Tsai's film appear also in *The Missing*.
40. On the significance of water in Tsai's work, see Chow, "The Enigma of Incest and the Staging of Kinship Family Remains," in *Sentimental Fabulations*.
41. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 211.
42. For a discussion of *The Skywalk Is Gone*, see Brian Hu, "Goodbye City, Goodbye Cinema" and Lim, "Positioning Auteur Theory."
43. Carroll, "The Future of Allusion," 56.
44. Lim, "Positioning Auteur Theory," 227.
45. Alexander Kluge, "On Film and the Public Sphere," 209.
46. Song Hwee Lim deals with a similar set of questions concerning authorship and Tsai in his essay "Positioning Auteur Theory," which challenges the auteurist assumptions of discussions of Chinese cinema with a textual approach to meaning production.
47. Tim Corrigan, *A Cinema without Walls*, 103.
48. The phrase comes from the title of chapter 4 of *A Cinema without Walls*. While he cites the director interview as a chief medium of this extra-textual presence, more recent technologically enabled developments like the "director's cut" home-viewing version and the audio commentary by directors included on so many DVD releases further bear out Corrigan's analysis.
49. Marvin D'Lugo, "Transnational Film Authors and the State of Latin American Cinema," 116. While focusing on the case of Argentine cinema, D'Lugo's analysis is highly relevant to a spectrum of non-Western cinemas.
50. Dudley Andrew, personal communication with author, October 2007, and Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 217–19.
51. On this background see Bao, "Biomechanics of Love" and Song Hwee Lim, "Confessing Desire," in *Celluloid Comrades*. The sparse use of spoken dialogue that distinguishes Tsai's films also testifies to the overdetermined physicality of performance. Following Tsai's lead, some critics have attributed the director's affinity for long takes to his theater background, a product of his care for the temporal integrity of performance. See, for instance, Zhang Aizhu, "Imagining Queer Bodies." Related to Tsai's pushing of the boundaries of authorship is his habit of attaching his handwritten signature to the end of his films and the unprecedented cameo appearance he makes in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, which I discuss in the following chapter. On the use of the signature, see Lim, "Positioning Auteur Theory," 237–38.
52. In the scene that most directly expresses his feelings of grief, Hsiao Kang's eyes slowly fill with tears as he is sleeping; he wakes up crying, then sits up and immediately reaches for the remote control and turns on *The 400 Blows*.
53. Fran Martin, "The European Undead."

## Chapter 4

1. While such an approach to the representation of sexuality is motivated in *The Wayward Cloud* by the main characters' employment in the pornography industry, Tsai's remarks on his general approach to the depiction of sex are illuminating in this context. He notes, "The



love scenes I have put into my films have sometimes been very exciting and steamy, but never very rich in emotion... Every time I want to shoot a love scene I have to tell my actors and film crew that I want a very porn-like effect. Yes, I want to imitate that because it's also a part of reality." Tsai [Tsai], "Scouting," in Jean-Pierre Rehm, Olivier Joyard, and Danièle Rivière, *Tsai Ming-liang*, 100.

2. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell Willlliam Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 243.
3. As Yeh and Davis argue, "Camp questions the peculiar depoliticizing of criticism that tiptoes over the gay, queer, bi, and trans in favor of the Aesthetic." *Taiwan Film Directors*, 221.
4. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 385.
5. For an illuminating discussion of Tsai's work in television and theater, see Song Hwee Lim, "Confessing Desire," in *Celluloid Comrades*.
6. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 384.
7. *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* counts as an exception, given the more developed bond that forms between Hsiao Kang and Rawang, the Bangladeshi migrant worker who nurtures him back to health after he has been beaten up by gangsters; Hsiao Kang becomes the central hinge in a love triangle involving Rawang and Shiang-chyi. This love triangle hearkens back to Tsai's earliest films in which, as Yeh and Davis point out, "women mediate unconsummated sexual urges between male protagonists." *Taiwan Film Directors*, 221.
8. An exception to this critical emphasis is Weihong Bao's analysis of *The Wayward Cloud* in "Biomechanics of Love," which locates queerness in modes of performance that sever the links between interiority and exterior expression, desire, and pleasure. To give another example, in discussing *The River* Fran Martin observes that the motif of doorways in Tsai's filmic and theatrical works, associated with "occluded knowledge of homosexuality," suggests queer readings of films like *The Hole* in which homosexual relationships do not figure. *Situating Sexualities*, 178.
9. Lim, *Celluloid Comrades*, 131.
10. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 152.
11. See chapter 3, 88.
12. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 387.
13. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 387–88.
14. Bao describes many of these approaches in "Biomechanics of Love," which situates Tsai's films in relation to his involvement in the Xiaowu Theater group. As Bao demonstrates, Tsai's approach to performance and theatrical space can be linked to practices such as Jerzy Grotowski's environmental theater and Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanical acting.
15. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 387. Tsai recalls approaching the government to preserve the theater, with no success, and even considering converting it into a studio (388).
16. An exception is the film's opening credit scene, which depicts a full audience watching *Dragon Gate Inn*; the relation of this scene to what follows is not fully clarified in terms of the story's realistic continuity.
17. On King Hu and *Dragon Gate Inn*, see David Bordwell, "Richness through Imperfection"; Stephen Teo, "King Hu"; and Yeh and Davis, "Parallel Cinemas," in *Taiwan Film Directors*. Noting the film's emphasis on the decrepit and outmoded aspects of the golden cinematic age that it celebrates, Kenneth Chan sees in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* a critical rejoinder to the nostalgic revivalism that surrounds the *wuxia* film in the current era of the global blockbuster — epitomized in, for instance, the recent work of Zhang Yimou. Tsai, in his reading, "engages a localized politics of place to disrupt the seamless co-optation of nostalgia into the transnational capitalist structures and networks of cultural consumption." "*Goodbye, Dragon Inn*," 90.

18. Chris Berry also notes the “haunting” of realism in Tsai’s films by intimations of the fantastical and supernatural; his main example is *What Time Is It There?* “Haunted Realism,” 47.
19. Andrea Bachner, in “Cinema as Heterochronos,” invokes Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia in connection with Tsai’s work, and the movie theater in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* can certainly be seen as an example of a heterotopic space enfolding disparate temporalities.
20. Jared Rapfogel, “Taiwan’s Poet of Solitude,” 28.
21. Diana Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out*, 3–4. In an essay within the volume introduced by Fuss here, Ellis Hanson asks, “But do gay men have *homes* of their own? If we abide by popular representations, we would have to conclude that a gay man does not live somewhere, he lurks somewhere. He has not home, he has a haunt.” “Undead,” 336.
22. This danger comes clearly into view, for instance, in light of how the losses inflicted upon the gay community by the AIDS epidemic have resulted in a troubling stereotyping of gay men as wasting victims and ghosts marked for death; see Jeff Nunokawa, “All the Sad Young Men.”
23. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 132.
24. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 103. In a similar vein, Chris Berry sees in 1990s Chinese cinema a “local reinvention” of the iconography of the gay male as “sad young man.” He relates Hsiao Kang’s distinctly morose aspect in *Vive L’Amour* to his experience of “homelessness and lack of family,” as well as to the exile status of the generation of mainland Chinese who emigrated to Taiwan in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War. “Happy Alone?” 197.
25. The Fuhe Grand Theater can be seen as one example of the numerous “queerscapes” that riddle the terrain of recent Chinese film; as Helen Leung coins the term, the queerscape is constituted by “the contingent and tangential uses of public space by sexual minorities [and] public acts and expression of desire, eroticism, and sexuality that momentarily disrupt what heterocentric ideology assumes to be an immutable, coherent relation between biological sex, gender, and sexual desire.” “Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema,” 426.
26. Space prevents me from doing justice to this riveting character, who warrants an entire other essay. Suffice it to say that the ticket-seller’s futile attempt to contact the projectionist recalls Shiang-chyi’s search for the watch merchant in *The Skywalk Is Gone*. Her physical disability serves as a warning against conflating the mobile exercise of cruising with sexual liberation, and her missed encounter with the projectionist is the central pivot of the film.
27. Adrian Martin, “Tsai-Fi.”
28. Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space*, 143.
29. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 149.
30. Adrian Martin, “Tsai-Fi.”
31. Rey Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 191.
32. Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 190.
33. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 183. Against such conservative readings and laments, Martin identifies the utopic impulses informing *The River*’s attempt to imagine an intimacy unbound from the strictures of the *jia*, or family form, and to envision what she calls a post-*jia* subjectivity. See “Perverse Utopia,” in *Situating Sexualities*.
34. My intention here is not to claim that the motif of the missed encounter is exclusive to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* or to a particular period of Tsai’s filmmaking; as Angelo Restivo has noted, this motif functions as a “structuring idea” and a central compositional principle in early films like *Vive l’Amour*. *The Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 161.
35. One example can be found in *The River*, when Miao Tien urinates for an improbably long time — a fortunate accident, according to the director, but one that offers a humorous reflexive commentary on real time. As Tsai recalls, “He went on and on and I wanted to laugh, and so did the others, and nobody knew why he was going on so long... the moment he stopped I

- said: ‘Cut,’ and everybody burst out laughing. That’s an example of something both natural and absurd, which turns into humour when I use it in my films.” Rehm et al., *Tsai Ming-liang*, 110.
36. The stall action echoes the queerest moment in *What Time Is It There?*, which takes place in this same lavatory: a man who has been cruising Hsiao Kang in the theater lures him into the lavatory and swings open the door of the stall to expose himself standing inside with his pants down, covered only by a clock whose hands suggestively indicate high noon.
37. Roland Barthes, “Leaving the Movie Theater,” 348.
38. Barthes, “Leaving the Movie Theater,” 349.
39. The watermelon seeds appear in a comedic scene in which Yang Kuei-mei snacks noisily and crawls on the floor searching for her shoe after it falls off her foot, an action that recalls her impersonation of a cockroach in *Vive L’Amour*. The equivalent of popcorn for a particular generation in Taiwan, watermelon seeds stand out as a highly specific marker of local film culture, in Tsai’s words, “a very deep memory for Chinese audiences.” Quoted in Rapfogel, “Taiwan’s Poet of Solitude,” 28.
40. Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, 346.
41. Barthes’s discretion on the matter of his homosexuality has posed a challenge for thinkers grappling with the legacy he offers for queer studies; on this see D. A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes*. My own reading of “Leaving the Movie Theater” is indebted to Pierre Saint-Amand’s intervention in this discussion: “It is possible... to look behind the mechanism of the secret for a particular and marginal (or minority) erotics. And what if the secret itself is no longer aimed merely at conforming to a homophobic text, but succeeded rather in creating a new availability of the body and being?” “The Secretive Body,” 155.
42. This citational strategy echoes Tsai’s use of the score of *The 400 Blows* as non-diegetic accompaniment for the end credits of *What Time Is It There?*
43. Yung Hao Liu, “‘I thought of the times we were in front of the flowers,’” 178.
44. The real event of the screening is actually compressed slightly, as the total running time of *Dragon Gate Inn* exceeds that of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.
45. Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images*, 387–88.
46. While haunting establishes a fantastical interplay across geographical spaces, Taipei and Paris, in *What Time Is It There?*, here it inscribes a temporal reverberation within a singular space; even in this difference, however, we can detect an inverted mirroring of the one film in the other.
47. We see this convention operating in films from Fritz Lang’s *M* (1931) and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (*Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, 1933) to horror films such as *Cat People* (1942) and *Halloween* (1978). Indeed, the paradigmatic ghostliness of the *acousmètre* and the voiceless body has played an important role, as many commentators have observed, in the development of the horror genre. For a discussion of the acoustic uncanny, see Rob Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies*.
48. Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 100.
49. See Mary Ann Doane, “The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space.”
50. In this respect Tsai’s approach to sound design calls to mind Jean Epstein’s idea of the sonic close-up, articulated in a set of essays exploring film’s “basic faculty... of making things and events larger or smaller in space or time.” “The Reality of Fairyland,” 43. Here Epstein establishes a series of analogies that translate and redefine the device of the close-up across the registers of movement, time, and sound. The estranging powers of enlargement and distortion crystallized in this device, so central to his theorization of *photogénie*, find expression through the parallel device of slow-motion, which produces a close-up of time

allowing for the dissection of movement, a transformation of temporal scale that, to use his language, makes the event larger in time. Turning his attention to sound, Epstein weighs the possibilities of “sound in slow motion,” of “creating a kind of sonic close-ups [sic]” that “may enable all beings, and all objects, to speak.” “Sound in Slow Motion,” 44.

51. The analogy of cinema and dream is developed further in a three-minute short made by Tsai in contribution to *To Each His Cinema*, a compilation film commissioned to honor the sixtieth anniversary of the Cannes International Film Festival in 2007. Entitled *It's a Dream*, the short takes place in an old theater, at once evoking the director's childhood memories of going to the movies in Malaysia and reenacting a dream about himself with his father (Lee Kang-sheng) and mother. The trio are joined in the theater by a woman (Pearly Chua, from *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*) who eats pears on a skewer and feeds them to a man sitting behind her (Norman Atun, from the same film). In its movie theater setting, the anonymous eroticism of the exchange between the man and woman, and the anachronistic song that accompanies the images, *It's a Dream* can be seen as a postscript to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.
52. The total length of the shot is five and a half minutes.
53. Describing this shot, Tsai recalls that “I couldn't bring myself to say ‘cut’... [I] wanted to get to this feeling that things are disappearing.” Quoted in Rapfogel, “Taiwan's Poet of Solitude,” 28.
54. The rice cooker is yet another recurring object in Tsai's films, prominently featured as an ubiquitous household accessory; for a discussion of this object see Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 227–28.
55. Yeh and Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors*, 250.
56. Fuss, *Inside/Out*; Lim, *Celluloid Comrades* 16. Tsai's resistance to identitarian political models is also discussed by Carlos Rojas in “‘Nezha Was Here’.”
57. A typical example is to be found in a recent article by an American journalist, Tim Johnson, on the status of homosexuals in the People's Republic of China. Johnson reports that despite the progress made toward greater public acceptance and visibility for gays living in metropolitan areas, which have witnessed the flourishing of subcultural networks and communities in recent years, a seemingly insurmountable barrier eventually presents itself. Gays (by which Johnson seems to mean specifically “gay men”) run up against the pressure to marry and bear offspring in order to carry on the family lineage — a pressure exacerbated by the PRC's one-child policy, and which many gay men find themselves unable to resist. Even many of those who now enjoy the civil and social liberties available to homosexuals, Johnson suggests, have resigned themselves to a future life in the closet. His article, “Attitudes toward Homosexuality Relax in China, but Pressures Remain,” prompted a lively debate on the Modern Chinese Literature and Culture listserve, with many objecting to the cultural prejudices premising Johnson's sweepingly pessimistic portrayal of gay life in China. One discussant, Red Chan, wrote, “Coming out is not the only strategy of assuring gay identity. Indeed it may cause more harm than good. Sometimes the consequence of coming out could be so damaging that on balance, it's better not to desire. Is it personal, is it political? Is it for individual or general good? I am against the projection that when a gay person can't or doesn't come out, that automatically means her or his life is ruined. I'm against the perspective of Tim Johnson's article, that because gay men in China find it difficult to come out, they are doomed. I happen to know gay Chinese who challenge stereotypes in playful, energetic, creative ways.” Modern Chinese Literature and Culture listserve, February 13, 2007.
58. Fran Martin takes up questions of time, development, and postcolonial politics with connection to Tsai in “The European Undead.”
59. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*.

60. Set in New York City, *The Wedding Banquet*'s story involves the subterfuge of a gay Chinese-American man who marries an immigrant woman from the PRC in order to appease his traditional-minded, homophobic parents and to conceal his relationship with his white lover. The film's portrayal of homosexuality has elicited much criticism. For example, see Lim, "The Burden of Representation," in *Celluloid Comrades* and Fran Martin, "Globally Chinese at *The Wedding Banquet*," in *Situating Sexualities*.
61. Andrew Grossman, "Shadows in the Shade"; see also Helen Hok-sze Leung, *Undercurrents* and Chia-chi Wu, "Queering Chinese Language Cinemas." In Taiwan and Hong Kong, queer cinema gathered momentum around 1990 with the establishment of festivals dedicated to gay and lesbian films, while in the PRC the topic of homosexuality has been explored by underground filmmakers since the mid-1990s. For an alternative theorization of queer filmmaking that situates it within the legacy of Third Cinema as a political underground cinema, see Helen Hok-sze Leung, "New Queer Cinema and Third Cinema."
62. See B. Ruby Rich, "New Queer Cinema."
63. Such histories include a longstanding tradition of gender-bending representations — eunuchs, transvestite disguise and role-playing, women warriors — rooted in pre-cinematic forms like literature and the live stage.
64. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 8.
65. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 248. The word *tongzhi* means "comrade." Taken up by Hong Kong gay and lesbian activists in the late 1980s as a gender neutral signifier of homosexuality, *tongzhi* has come into widespread usage across the Chinese territories. Several recent ethnographies of *tongzhi* culture likewise emphasize its global imaginary and embeddedness in transnational gay and lesbian networks; for instance, see Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China* and Scott Simon, "From Hidden Kingdom to Rainbow Community."
66. *The Skywalk Is Gone*, a coda to *What Time Is It There?*, deals with the unstable topography of Taipei.
67. Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 116.
68. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 161–62 (italics in original).
69. Indeed, practically any film by Haynes could be inserted in this list; as Dana Luciano observes, "perverse temporal occupation is the unifying tendency of the gay American director's work." "Coming Around Again: The Queer Momentum of *Far from Heaven*," 250.
70. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 1.
71. While a detailed articulation of these discussions is not possible in this context, some key thinkers listed here are Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Lee Edelman, *No Future*; David L. Eng, "Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas"; a special issue of *GLQ* on "Queer Temporalities," edited by Elizabeth Freeman, in 2007, as well as her articles "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations" and "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography"; Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*; Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Heather Love, *Feeling Backward*; Luciano, "Coming Around Again." As Carla Freccero observes, "Now it seems to me that queer time is everywhere." "Queer Times," 489.

## Chapter 5

1. Tony Rayns, "Poet of Time," 10. A growing body of scholarship on Wong deals with specific facets of his poetics of time. This chapter engages with and builds upon the insights of Yueh-yu Yeh, "A Life of Its Own"; Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*; Jean-Marc Lalanne et al., *Wong Kar-wai*; Rey Chow, "Nostalgia of the New Wave" and "A Souvenir of Love"; Sam Rohdie, "Wong Kar-wei, *l'Auteur*"; Stephen Teo,

- Wong Kar-wai; Wimal Dissanayake, *Ashes of Time*; Helen Hok-sze Leung, “Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema”; and Song Hwee Lim, *Celluloid Comrades*.
2. Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, “Introduction,” in *Chinese-Language Cinemas*, 16.
  3. Janice Tong, “*Chungking Express*,” 47.
  4. Jean-Marc Lalanne, “Images from the Inside,” 19. In Tong’s reading of this image, “the materiality of time is fractured visually, opening itself up to different temporal intensities in the one shot” (51).
  5. Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks*. On the mobile gaze, see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping*.
  6. On this issue see Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.
  7. Allen Cameron uses the phrase “modular narrative” in his book *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*. “Complex narrative” is the term coined by Janet Staiger in an edited special issue of *Film Criticism* of the same title. “Puzzle films” comes from the title of an edited volume by Warren Buckland.
  8. In fact, the future in *2046* is double mediated — a fantasy of the future framed by a past that is itself a nostalgic projection of the time of the film’s making.
  9. Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, 141.
  10. Larry Gross, “Nonchalant Grace,” 9.
  11. Rohdie, “Wong Kar-wei, *l’auteur*,” 110–11.
  12. Rohdie, “Wong Kar-wei, *l’auteur*,” 113.
  13. For example, essays on Wong are included in Staiger’s volume “Complex Narratives” and Buckland’s *Puzzle Films*.
  14. David Denby, “The New Disorder.”
  15. Denby, “The New Disorder.”
  16. *Babel* was nominated for best picture, best director, best screenplay, best editor, and two acting honors.
  17. It would be difficult to imagine Hou Hsiao-hsien or Tsai Ming-liang being commissioned to direct a Hollywood commercial picture, as was the case with Wong’s *My Blueberry Nights* (2007).
  18. The production of *2046* overlapped with that of *In the Mood for Love*, with the latter film taking more than four years to complete, a notorious example of Wong’s extravagant working style.
  19. Wong, “The Numbers Game,” interview with Mark Peranson.
  20. Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, 15. This assessment does not apply evenly across Wong’s work, however, as films such as *Ashes of Time* or *Happy Together* demonstrate.
  21. Wong, “The Numbers Game,” interview with Mark Peranson. Elements from other films appearing in *2046* include the story of the legless bird who cannot land but must keep on flying, which originates in *Days of Being Wild*. The story is told by Loulou, a nightclub hostess played by Carina Lau, whose appearance here reprises her role as Mimi in *Days of Being Wild*. The presence of the character Su Lizhen, played by Maggie Cheung, links *Days of Being Wild*, *In the Mood for Love*, and *2046*. *Ashes of Time*, perhaps Wong’s most daringly experimental work, encapsulates this web of intertextuality in its individual structure, which consists of a network of memories that interlock in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish subjective and objective, inside and outside. For a detailed analysis of this film, see Dissanayake, *Ashes of Time*.
  22. Wong Kar-wai, “Special Features: Interview,” *2046* DVD. This idea is indeed the central point of nearly all of Wong’s films to date.
  23. Wong, “The Numbers Game.”
  24. Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 22.

25. Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 35, 24.
26. Abbas, "The New Hong Kong Cinema and the *Déjà Disparu*," 67. The concept of cinema of speed is developed by Esther C. M. Yau in her introduction to *At Full Speed*, with reference both to the tempo and rhythm of Hong Kong genre cinema and the remarkable pacing of their production and consumption (3–4).
27. Tong, "Chungking Express," 53.
28. Wong moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong at the age of five, part of a thriving Shanghainese community based in the North Point district at that time. Ironically, these films were shot outside of Hong Kong — in Bangkok, a city that more closely approximates an older Hong Kong that no longer exists.
29. Chow, "A Souvenir of Love."
30. Other films noted by Chow are Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1987) and *Center Stage* (aka *Actress*, Ruan Lingyu, 1991), *A Better Tomorrow* (*Yinxiong bense*, John Woo, 1986), and *Song of the Exile* (*Ke tu qiu hen*, Ann Hui, 1990). Chow elaborates on nostalgia in connection with Wong's films in her essays "Nostalgia of the New Wave" and "The Everyday in *The Road Home* and *In the Mood for Love*," both in *Sentimental Fabulations*.
31. Chow, "A Souvenir of Love," 224.
32. On "mnemonic fever" see Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*.
33. To be sure, the consistent melancholy of all of Wong's films tempers any sense of a radical shift. Moreover, *Ashes of Time* (1994), one of Wong's earliest features, anticipates the heavy quality of his post-1997 works in its powerful alignment of a barren landscape of *jianghu* with an affective atmosphere of despair and desperation.
34. The aesthetic mobilization of contingency links together practices like surrealism, with its found objects and automatic processes, with the music of John Cage and serial composers like Pierre Boulez and Karl Stockhausen; the *nouveau roman* with Oulipo's language games; the postmodern novel with the interactive and hypertextual forms of new media. Across these disparate media and movements we can detect, without eliding their obvious differences, an abiding belief in the powers of chance to transform the procedures of artistic production and to reconfigure the relationship of makers and receivers.
35. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 11.
36. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 138.
37. Here Miriam Hansen glosses Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film*, in her "Introduction," xxxi.
38. Hansen, "Introduction," xxxii, xxxiii. An interesting discussion of contingency in relation to cinematic narrative can be found in Cameron, "Projecting the Future," in *Modular Narratives*. The question taken up by Cameron of whether contingency is preempted by film's linear format resonates with longstanding discussions about the extent to which indeterminacy can actually be integrated to the intentional domain of art and whether, indeed, the notion of a pure realm of indeterminacy is not a metaphysical fiction of the first order.
39. Chow, "A Souvenir of Love," 224.
40. Such a formulation of chance and fate reflects traditional Chinese philosophies which maintain that "That which happens without man's causing it to happen is from Fate" (Mencius), or, "What one meets with by chance is called Fate" (*Hsun Tzu*). Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. II, 166. In her parsing of the semantics of chance in the history of Chinese thought, Lisa Raphals points out that a belief in fate neither predicates a deterministic view of life nor negates the idea of chance. "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek."
41. Linda Williams, "Film Bodies."

42. Lalanne, “Images from the Inside,” 11.
43. Audrey Yue develops the notion of the intersection in her essay “*In the Mood for Love*.” For a discussion of the relationship between Liu’s short story and the film, see Thomas Y. T. Luk, “Novels into Film.”
44. Teo deals at length with the influence of Manuel Puig on Wong’s filmmaking, discussing works such as *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth* (1968), *Heartbreak Tango* (1969), and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1979). Teo writes, “Though Wong’s interest in literature is wide — he has also cited authors like Raymond Chandler, Gabriel García Márquez and Osamu Dazai — the one author who seems to have influenced him most deeply is Manuel Puig” (*Wong Kar-wai*, 4).
45. Liu Yichang, “Intersection,” 87.
46. Cortázar, “Table of Instructions,” in *Hopscotch*.
47. Throughout his book Teo catalogs the particular effects that find their way into Wong’s films from postmodern fiction, such as the voiceover monologue, the magnification of interior subjectivity via stream-of-consciousness procedures, and fragmentary story structures.
48. On Wong’s cross-cultural imaginary, see Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, Curtis Tsui, “Subjective Culture and History,” and Allan Cameron, “Trajectories of Identification.”
49. The presence of the Seventh Fleet introduced many Pacific territories like Hong Kong to American mass culture, and its legacy can be traced to the contemporary ubiquity of American commodity culture in the region. On this, see Gina Marchetti, “Buying American, Consuming Hong Kong,” in *From Tian’anmen to Times Square*.

## Coda

1. Sam Rohdie, “Wong Kar-wei, *l’auteur*,” 113.
2. Rohdie, “Wong Kar-wei, *l’auteur*,” 114.
3. Ursula Heise offers a comprehensive definition of postmodern literature, in distinction from modernist modes of narrative fragmentation, in her book *Chronoschisms*. Notably a central figure in Heise’s study is Julio Cortázar.
4. For example, see Chris Berry, “Happy Alone?”; Hsiung-Ping Chiao, “Contrasting Images”; Peggy Chiao, “Aux Sources du Sentiment National”; Haden Guest, “Reflections on the Screen”; Phillip Lopate, “A Deeper Shot”; Mark Abe-Nornes and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, “*A City of Sadness*”; and Yueh-yu Yeh, “Politics and Poetics of Hou Hsiao-hsien’s Films.”
5. Fredric Jameson, “History and Elegy in Sokurov,” 1.
6. The phrase “urban generation” comes from Zhen Zhang, *The Urban Generation*.
7. On *jishizhuyi* see Chris Berry, “Getting Real.” Jason McGrath also discusses Jia’s work in this context in “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke.”



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