

EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



ERCCT Online Paper Series:

**The re-affirmation of Taiwanese characteristics
through imagination: The representation of Taipei in
Contemporary Taiwan Cinema**

(Chiang Ling-Ching)

August 2012

EOPS No. 0015

–Young Scholar Workshop 2012 selected collections –

European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan

Eberhard Karls University, Tuebingen

Wilhelmstrasse 133

72074 Tuebingen

Ph.: +49 7071 29 72717

e-mail: ercct@uni-tuebingen.de

The re-affirmation of Taiwanese characteristics through imagination: The representation of Taipei in Contemporary Taiwan Cinema

Ling-ching Chiang, PhD Candidate of History of Art and Film, University of Leicester

Abstract

In this essay, I want to address the role played by urban cinema in recent changes of the local film industry, in which a rising trend of resituating the local culture through various genres, subject matters and film techniques leads to a prosperous industrial environment that Taiwan cinema had lacked for more than two decades. First, I will address various approaches taken by local filmmakers to reconnect with the local audience, and examine how the representation of the city has participated in this process. The process is in fact, complex and slow, before its outburst in 2008 with the biggest box-office hit *Cape No.7* (2008, dir. Wei Te-sheng, ARS Film Production) in Taiwan's film history. Grossing over ten times of its NT\$50 million budget, *Cape No.7* brought even more tourists into its main set Hengchun, a small southern town which has already been tourists' long-term favourite for its coastal landscape, tropical weather and the historical sites built during the Qing Dynasty. While recent scholarship paid attention substantially on *Cape No.7*'s roots-seeking ideology, which is expressed by the rural side of Taiwan, in the second part of this essay, I want to amend the gap by focusing on the neglected importance of urban themes in the revitalization of local consciousness in Taiwan cinema by presenting a close reading of *Orz Boyz* (2008, dir. Yang Ya-che, One Production Film). As a film encompassing various film techniques, different neighbourhoods in Taipei, and a narrative told completely from children's imaginative vision, which is an unique angle that has never been applied to urban cinema in Taiwan's film history before, *Orz Boyz* represents a new representational mode of Taipei that is not limited to the realist mode that have profoundly determined how Taipei looks in Hou, Yang and Tsai's films. *Orz Boyz*'s creative interpretation of Taipei should be considered with other Taipei films, such as *Parking* (2008, dir. Chung Mong-hong, Cream Film Production), *When Love Comes* (2010, dir. Chang Tso-chi, Chang Tso-chi Film Studio), *Taipei Exchanges* (2010, dir. Hsiao Ya-chuan, Atom Cinema) and *Au Revoir Taipei* (2010, dir. Arvin Chen, Atom Cinema). In the end of the essay, I will address the affinity between the rising awareness of Taiwanese identity and these urban cinema, which are made mostly by new talents but remain a strong connection with the aesthetic tradition established by Hou, Yang and Tsai's stylistic representation of Taipei.

Key words: Taiwan cinema, *Cape No.7*, *Orz Boyz*, Taiwanese identity

The city standing at the crossroad of globalization and localization

According to the statistics, local cinema took only 0.40% of domestic box office in 1999, and the percentage fell to 0.10% in 2001.¹ The popular cinema was abandoned, and the government became the biggest and most stable investor of art cinema, which sustains Taiwan's status on the map of world cinema. However, since the early 2000s, some younger filmmakers, either trained during the Taiwan New Cinema period as assistant directors/cinematographers or emerged from television background and started writing film scripts, began a small-scale but stably growing movement to present audience-friendly stories set in Taiwan. Although the annual production numbers are still low,² more and more films seek to speak to a wider audience rather than focusing only on artistic achievements.

The filmmaker's collective awareness of providing local films to the local audience took three directions, which in total demonstrate a drastic change in the recognition of Taiwanese characteristics. The first direction is to repackage the paradigm of genre film with Taiwanese stars and settings, and since it was hard for filmmakers to attract funding in making popular film, they started from the most cost-effective genre: romance, which all locate in Taipei. Examples include *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002, dir. Yee Chih-yen, Arc Light) and *Formula 17* (2004, dir. Chen Yin-Jung, Three Dots), which blend the influence of Japanese trendy drama and a more hybrid visual style catering for young people who grew up watching music videos, commercials in fast rhythm and television programmes. In both films, Taipei is the major background and has rendered into a completely new appearance. However, the new face of cinematic Taipei is a result of compromises. *Blue Gate Crossing* is part of Taiwanese production company Arc Light's "Three Cities" project,³ which is collaborated with the French Pyramide Productions as a transnational series to create a new direction for pan-Asian Chinese-language cinema.⁴ Arc Light is led by the famous film critic and producer Chiao Hsiung-ping, a long-term supporter of the Taiwan New Cinema. It is therefore a company aiming to produce Chinese-language films for Euro-American art-house audiences, a route that the Taiwan New Cinema excelled at. However, unlike Hou, Yang and Tsai's films, which are now considered as counterexamples to the more light-hearted route of "Three Cities",⁵ *Blue Gate Crossing* represents Taipei as a generic East Asian city "visually constructed for the maximum degree of extra-local translatability", as Fran Martin notes.⁶ Director Yee also admits the reason he chooses to use telephoto lens to capture the cityscape is to "blur the undesired colours and shapes in the foreground and background".⁷ On the other hand, Martin also points out how the local audience passionately analysed this film from an emphasis on the local colour of Taipei, despite

the fact that director tries to eliminate undesired colours and shapes of Taipei. The local audience's "re-specifying activity" is thus, in Martin's opinion, no less important than the director's intention of minimizing local characteristics. *Blue Gate Crossing* opens a path for the representation of Taipei, which can on the one hand satisfy the local audience's yearning to see stories happening in places they can recognize, and build an unspecific and global cityscape for overseas audiences on the other. *Formula 17*, a flamboyant gay film taking place only in nightclubs, bars and other westernized locations in Taipei, also applies the same strategy. As Davis concludes, these films apply an ambiguous marketing strategy, which makes them "look and sound like foreign films, but still be Taiwanese".⁸

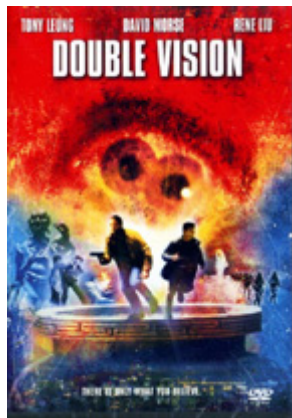


Figure 1: The official poster of *Double Vision*.

Figure 2: The official poster of *Silk*.

The twofold strategy of representing the city becomes a crucial tactic in the early 2000s. The second direction, which is to adapt Hollywood mode of marketing strategies, narrative paradigms and special effects in order to create genre films that are less seen in Taiwan (such as horror and thriller films), is also visually characterized by a de-localized Taipei. Examples include *Double Vision* (2002, dir. Chen Guo-fu), which was financed and produced by Sony Pictures-Columbia-Asia, and *Silk* (2006, dir. Su Chao-bin), which was funded by the local company CMC Entertainment Corporation. *Double Vision* dilutes impressions of Taiwanese-ness so completely that it does not even mention it is a Taiwanese film throughout the English-dubbed trailer.⁹ Plus, none of the two main characters – the FBI agent (played by American actor David Morse) who is sent to Taiwan to investigate a series of bizarre murders, and the Taiwanese police (played by Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Ka-fai) are local. *Double Vision* was shoot entirely in Taipei, using a variety of locations from government institutions, commercial buildings on both West and East side of the city, to the newly developed hi-tech industrial park.¹⁰ However, the city's Taiwanese-ness was reduced to the minimum level in order to construct a pan-Asian

look. Production designer Tim Yip, who won an Academy Award for his work in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, also mentioned how he applied the characteristics of the impression of Taipei on the one hand, but also makes sure any excessive local colour is trimmed off in order to strengthen the film's international appeal.¹¹ As a result, *Double Vision* wanders between Taiwanese movie/non-Taiwanese movie and Taipei/ non-Taipei locational references, and presents an even more blurred locality than *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Formula 17*.

The aforementioned films, whether it is small-budge romance like *The Blue Gate Crossing* or Hollywood funded *Double Vision*, should be placed in the framework of "the new localism", a concept coined by Davis and Yeh when exploring the emerging trends in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and China after 2000. Davis and Yeh argue that the new localism in East Asian areas produce films with local flavours that are possibly accepted by a wider global audience as well, such as Stephen Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* (2001). Films of the 'new localism' focus on "narrative styles specific to the national, regional and local", and combine it with Hollywood mode of marketing strategies and script development.¹²

However, the important of Taipei in these 'new localism' films are highly contradictory, and the twofold strategy should be examined further by evaluating the cost-effective logic, which is the major thing that these films are made for: profits. Davis and Yeh praise *Double Vision* as "a trial that hit the mark" with its NT\$80 million at the domestic box office, and Chen also shares the opinion by complimenting its ability to "open up exciting new prospects for the lethargic Taiwan cinema"¹³; however, what they forget to address is that *Double Vision* failed to present a break-even record in domestic box office with its NT\$200 million production cost, especially when this film struggled to gain widespread theatrical releases outside Southeast Asia.¹⁴

Scholars may dismiss the cost-effective problem in the case of *Double Vision*, but they do notice the danger of over-relying on a de-localized project like this. As Yeh and Davis remind their readers:

Most local producers believe that projects like *Double Vision* and *Crouching Tiger* are migrating birds for which Taiwan is temporary refuge. Only films with Taiwan characteristics can attract the attention of local, popular audiences for entertainment. But local features are insufficient; they must offer higher production values and narrative ingenuity, as well as shiny marketing and packaging. In the post-Crouching Tiger renewal, a fresh but still nascent force is 're-growing' the market for Taiwan pictures.¹⁵

This insightful conclusion is better responded by another direction of the 2000s Taiwan cinema, which re-emphasizes the importance of rural life and nature in constructing Taiwanese identity. The earliest examples are not feature films, but low-budget humanist documentaries *Let it Be* (2004, dir. Yan Lan-quan and Zhuang Yi-zeng) and *Life* (2004, dir. Wu Yi-Feng), which were both theatrically released with rewarding results in box office.¹⁶ *Let it Be* focuses on old peasants and their passion for the land, and *Life* documents people's will of survival after the horrific 921 earthquake destroyed numberless families in 1999. These documentaries also influence another route of feature film, which takes the beautiful landscape in Taiwan as the departure of its plot and as its strategy of targeting on Taiwanese audiences. En Chen, who was the cinematographer of Hou Hsiao-hsien's *City of Sadness*, claims that his directorial debut *Island Etude* (2006, Zoom Hunt International Productions Company Ltd.) is a 'a commemorative album' he made for 23 million Taiwanese people living on the island, a souvenir for everyone to remember what Taiwan looked like in 2006. The 100-minute-long film leads the audience to follow the protagonist's round-Taiwan trip by bike, visiting all types of coastal landscape.¹⁷ Chen Zheng-dao, who combines the style of trendy drama and the picturesque landscape of Hualien in *Eternal Summer* (2006, Three Dots), a story of teenage love taking place on the eastern coast of Taiwan, also claims that his films are all made for the Taiwanese audience, and to make the local audience see his films is the only thing that matters to him.¹⁸ Lin Ching-chieh, another director who focuses on Taiwan's beautiful coastal landscape, also acknowledges his reason to place a sound recording artist in his directorial debut *The Most Distant Course* (2007) is to convey an integral impression of Taiwan through soundscapes.¹⁹ Whether it is a documentary or a feature film, filmmakers who apply this route all consciously address characteristics of Taiwanese culture and landscape, local idioms and references, and more importantly, the passion to make films for the local audience with an unequivocal objective of establishing local characteristics.

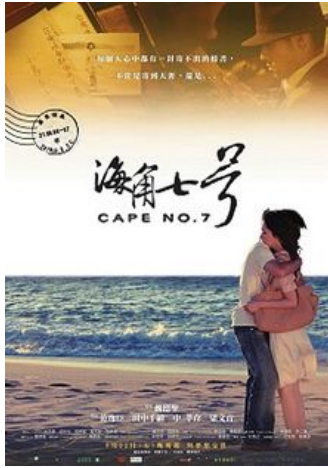


Figure 3: The official poster of *Cape No. 7*.

This route achieved its climax when Wei Te-Sheng's directorial debut *Cape No. 7* took NT\$530 million at the domestic box office (9.5 % of the annual box office earnings in 2008) after meticulous endeavours his marketing team has put on large-scale test screenings and the Internet. Together with other films made around the same time, such as *Winds of September* (2008, dir. Lin Shu-yu), *Orz Boyz* and *Parking*, which are all directorial debuts that received government subsidies in 2006 and made their theatrical releases in 2008,²⁰ *Cape No. 7* leads the vigorous wave of 'Taiwan Post-New Cinema', a word officially coined by the 2008 'Auteurism and Popularity: Taiwan Post-New Cinema' International Symposium held by the Institution of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at Academia Sinica in Taipei. As Dawley notes, the latest progress of scholarship on Taiwanese identity is the emphasis of 'the historical experiences of Taiwan and its residents' and 'the construction of a multi-ethnic Taiwanese consciousness' rather than using them to explore the complexity of Chinese or Japanese history,²¹ and more importantly, to discover "a collective sense of self specific to the island of Taiwan that transcends other group identities".²² Taiwan cinema's recent transformation from experimenting in genre film that aims to seek a global look, to focusing on films that represent the local landscape and culture is a firm response to Dawley's observation. This new wave of Taiwan cinema emphasizes the indispensable status of Taiwanese identity when the increasingly frequent contacts between China and Taiwan urge people on the both sides of the Taiwan Strait to rethink the characteristics of their own cultures and identities.²³

In this post-2008 phenomenon of Taiwan cinema, the emphasis on Taiwanese characteristics is not only practiced in films that aim to represent rural Taiwan, but it is also evidently sharpened by urban-centred cinema in diverse ways. In the next part of the essay, I will present a close reading of *Orz Boyz*. *Orz Boyz*'s rich and creative

interpretation of urban space will help us rethink Braester's argument of "the impossible task of Taipei films", by which he argues that the representation of Taipei has been so forcefully shaped by Yang and Tsai that it leaves little space for younger directors to create another powerful interpretation of urban imagery. Braester also predicts that the future of Taipei films will either be about the disappearing cityscape, or "a sign of the full disappearance of Taipei's daily life under the gloss of the city's gentrification".²⁴ This argument leads to the second strand of existing scholarship that I want to re-examine, which is Hong Guo-juin's implication of the concept of disappearance.²⁵ According to Hong, the disappearance of spatial meanings in Tsai's films refers to the condition of personal memory as well as collective memory, and results in its allegorical interpretation of national cinema.²⁶ I want to argue that Tsai's films, along with these new city films made after 2008, are more about resisting the disappearance and the alternative choices people may have, rather than the disappearance of the cityscape and national cinema. City films from the 1980s to the present have shared a goal with films that represent rural Taiwan, which is to "refract memory and shape perspectives of history that engender a formulation and reading of social space—re-generation processes of spectatorship—and thereby changing a society's cultural vocabulary", as Allan Siegel puts it when defining the task of city film.²⁷ Therefore, in order to gain a deeper insight to the recent changes of Taiwan cinema, urban cinema should be regarded as important as films like *Cape No. 7*.

***Orz Boyz* (2008)**

Orz Boyz's director Yang Ya-che (1971-) provides a good example of how Taiwanese filmmakers survive in a bleak industrial environment and waits for chances to direct feature films. Yang first made his name by co-writing the novel of *Blue Gate Crossing* with director Yee Chih-yen.²⁸ After this experience, Yang did not stay working projects related to feature films, but devoted himself to made-for-television movies, which are all part of Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS)'s special series 'Life Story' (its Chinese title '*rensheng juzhan*' literally means 'an film exhibition of life'). Without worrying about box office, 'Life Story' provides new talents a platform to make and display low-budget films. Inaugurated in 1999, 'Life Story' has accumulated 202 films so far, all made by Taiwanese filmmakers and centred on diverse aspects of Taiwanese life.²⁹ Between 2001 and 2012, Yang has contributed eight works to the huge archive of 'Life Story', including his first film *A Lease to Paradise* (2002), a story about how an old woman from a fishing village turns a ruin into a 'home' for her deceased loved ones. Yang explores Taiwanese people's concepts of death and ancestors, and suggests how tradition can find its

position in the modern era. The film also brought 'Life Story' to American Public Television for the first time and wrote a new page for Taiwanese made-for-television films. On 15th May 2004, *A Lease to Paradise* made its American debut on Public Television Service (PBS)'s West Coast flagship station KCET as part of Taiwanese American Heritage Week, founded by Taiwanese American Heritage Committee in 2002. After spending more than a decade working in television, Yang was invited by first-time producer Lee Lieh, who is also an actress and played in Yang's television series before. The collaboration mode of *Orz Boyz* shows that the talents trained by television works may inaugurate new possibilities for Taiwan cinema.

Originally conceived for 'Life Story', *Orz Boyz* continues Yang's concern for changes in Taiwanese society. The protagonists are two boys 'Liar No.1' and 'Liar No.2', named by their teachers because of their mischievous behaviours in school. These nicknames are so widespread that not only classmates, but also family members and neighbours all call them 'No.1' and 'No.2'. No.1 lives with his father who suffers from mental illness and relies completely on his child for daily chores, and No.2 lives with his grandmother because his parents are too busy to take care of him. Their incomplete families force them to seek outer comforts, including friendship and teasing other classmates by making up stories about ghosts and Martians. One of the biggest stories made up by No.1, which is also the shaft for the whole plot, is the 'hyper-space' which they can reach by passing through the waterslide for a hundred times. According to No.1, the best advantage of living in the hyper-space is that you can skip childhood and becomes an adult without doing any more homework. On the one hand, the belief in hyper-space imbues their life with a brisk, delightful, and amusing ambiance since they constantly transport themselves into their own imagination; on the other hand, the visual articulation of the hyper-space has to be examined carefully from the most realistic issues in both individual and collective consciousness, which construct identity and memory.

As film critic Ryan Cheng Pin-hung accurately points out, *Cape No.7, Winds of September* and *Orz Boyz* all rediscover the core spirit of the Taiwan New Cinema by revealing characters' private journeys of growing up and facing frustrations.³⁰ The thematic similarity is also accompanied by aesthetic principles. Although *Orz Boyz* did not follow Hou, Yang and Tsai's renowned techniques, such as observational realism and long take, director Yang Ya-che inherits many aesthetic principles and creative spirits from these predecessors, especially the resistance to Hollywood's obsession with special effects. As Yang states, he believes that making films from the local perspective is the only way to prevent local filmmakers from being submerged by the wave of globalization.³¹ Yang's choice of subject matter, resistance to Hollywood paradigms and the creative interpretation of the ordinary cityscape all

make *Orz Boyz* echoes with the legacy of Taiwan New Cinema.

Orz Boyz's narrative and formal systems are both grounded on Yang's understanding of memory formation, which is the most important device help us think who we are. As Yang notes:

Our memories of childhood can never be a logical story with a proper start and a proper end; however, the memories that we will repeatedly review are all about emotional impacts and a sense of the surrounding, which are like a fragmented prose written in a casual style. Although the order may be changed, and the ending may be different because every one has their own interpretation, the authentic feeling of the memories should still be the enriched senses that we used to attain. Because of above reasons, *Orz Boyz* becomes a work composed of several short stories implicating with each other, which are wandering between “the fantasy of animation” and “real childhood”.³²

Therefore, Yang's interest in shaping an authentic representational mode of memory, and how this memory is bred and positioned in the Taiwanese framework, determined the representation of the city, which is what Yang means by “a sense of the surrounding”.

On the whole, the distinctiveness of the representation of Taipei in this film is characterized by its emphasis on both local language and space usages, and how these two realms constantly interweave into a localized imagery of the city. From the perspective of language, this film's Taiwanese-ness does not only appear in characters' hybrid usage of language, which constantly blends Mandarin (with various accents), Taiwanese (also known as Hokkien), and sometimes with Japanese and English. The mixed usage of language does not only appear in a single sentence (which is a norm for Taiwanese people to speak), but may refer to a conversation as a whole. For example, No.2 only speaks Mandarin, but his grandmother always talks to him in Taiwanese. However, they can understand each other without any problem and the conversation is always conducted smoothly. Despite the fact that she always speaks Taiwanese, the grandmother pronounces 'No.2' and his classmates' names in Mandarin.

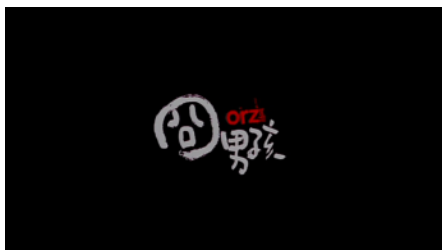


Figure 4

However, to present the hybrid language usage in a true-to-life style has been the norm since the Taiwan New Cinema, and may not enough to manifest the local colours. As a film focusing on shaping a unique local perspective, Yang's efforts do not end here. The English title *Orz*, an Internet emoticon originally from Japan but widely used in Taiwan, is a visualization of a kneeling or bowing person in a comic way. The film's Chinese title applies a Taiwanese version of *Orz*-- the complex Chinese character 冫 (Jiong), which looks like a facial emoticon with frowning eyebrows and an opened mouth. Unlike *Orz*, which stays mainly in the internet sphere, the character *Jiong* has transformed into spoken language and can be heard from daily conversations between friends to talk shows on television in Taiwan. However, its accurate meaning remains as obscure as *Orz*. Either it means sorrow, regret or funniness is never clear until the context of the conversation is revealed.



Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

The local colour of language usage is also extended to Yang's representation of the city, which he endeavours to delineate the specificities of Taiwanese city. The local spatial experiences are depicted by a series of creative visual articulations, linked to the specific perspective – children's vision. The film begins by shifting between a close-up shot of No.2's eyes and his point-of-view shot, revealing some chalk graffiti on a wall (Figure 5-Figure 6). After a few rounds of cutting back and forth between the close-up shots of the boy and the circled image of the graffiti, the film cuts to a medium shot, revealing the boy trying to circle the scenery in front of him with his fingers, and the graffiti is drawn on a wall under a small bridge (Figure 7). The location cannot be less ordinary, but a simple gesture can alternate the mundaneness of this corner. The director inherits Hou, Yang and Tsai's interest in anonymous, neglected and even ugly urban locations, but replaces his predecessors' observational medium shots by smooth shifts between close-up and point-of-view shots. The simple change in perspective suggests that even an ordinary city like Taipei

is worth documenting from various angles.



Figure 8



Figure 9

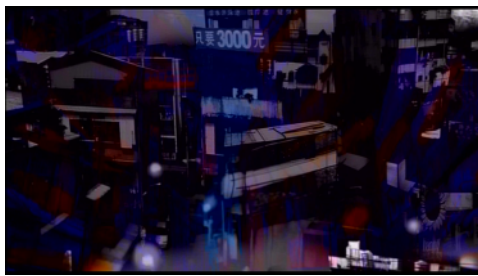


Figure 10



Figure 11

The opening scene is followed by an animation sequence based on *Happy Prince*, accompanied by No.1's narration. Since the director aims to localize all the references of foreign culture, the western story is now transformed into its Taiwanese incarnation and set amid the typical Taiwanese cityscape (Figure 8-Figure 10). Yang and the animator Fish Wang work hard to recreate the Taiwanese-style cityscape, which is "highly recognizable for Taiwanese audiences, although foreigners may not necessarily understand it looks like Taiwan".³³ In order to respond to the local audience's visual memory, the animator meticulously captures representative images from the city, such as the viaduct, traditional markets, shop signs and collages them into an integral background. The animator then transforms the photographic images into hand-drawn watercolour paintings, which would later be digitalized and edited with the filmic sequences. The smooth transition from animation back to filmic reality is bridged by No.1 and No.2's conversation, in which they interpret the story by meaningless jokes, such as old people are mean and do not give children money, and that's why happy prince has to do all the hard work until he has no more to offer. As the volume of their conversation grows louder, the film cuts back to the filmic reality, where they are talking in the school library (Figure 11).

In these first two sequences, the juxtaposition of 'ordinary Taipei' and 'imaginary Taipei' suggest a new representational mode that has never existed in

Taiwan cinema before, which integrates different mediums, cultural references and locations in a single sequence. The most imaginative sequence in previous Taipei films, such as Tsai's musical numbers in *The Hole*, focuses on how imagination can revise and amend the imperfect urban world; Yang Ya-che takes a step further – his close attention in everyday space is not only about showing social reality, but also about how he believes that Taipei is culturally distinctive and inspiring enough to nurture imagination, which in reverse, strengthens people's memory of the place.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

The next example presents this belief in ‘the power of Taipei’s locality’ even more affirmatively. In the middle of the film, a blackout screen is inserted not only as a visual node to separate two sequences, but also to present a black auditorium which will be lighted up in the next scene, welcoming a myriad of animation characters to sit down and watch a show (Figure 12-Figure 14). The show is a black-and-white short film of No.1, No.2 and their classmates playing a Taiwanese comedy version of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, in which *The Maiden's Prayer*, a 19th-century piano music played by the garbage truck is the magical tune that drives rats away (Figure 15-Figure 16). *The Maiden's Prayer* is famous in Taiwan for being used as the ‘theme song’ while the truck is driving through the city and collecting garbage along its way. Since the truck only stays in each collection point for a short period of time, and dropping garbage on the ground is illegal in Taiwan, it is common to see people

chasing the truck in the city – which is also transformed into a comedic detail in this short film (Figure 17). The specificities of local culture are also accentuated by No.1's narration, in which he deliberately speaks Mandarin with a heavy regional accent (spoken by mainlanders who moved to Taiwan around 1949 but only spoke their own dialects before) and mix it with English. The quasi-performance, quasi-animation sequence is not only a childish interpretation of urban life and the hybrid language usage, but also a filmic technique to derive information from 'ordinary Taipei' to construct 'imaginary Taipei'.

Yang's affirmative attitude towards both 'ordinary Taipei' and 'imaginary Taipei' is also accentuated by the choice of animation style. As a country deeply influenced by anime culture from Japan, Taiwan (and most other East Asian countries) has found it difficult to develop its local animation industry. Yang does not dismiss the impact of Japanese cartoons on children; however, he does insist in depicting this phenomenon with local colours. All the animation sequences are centred on 'Kada King', a cartoon figure portrayed as happy prince and other main characters in these animation sequences. Again, Yang presents a Taiwanese version of a foreign cartoon idol by its localized name ('Kada' means 'bicycle' in Taiwanese dialect), localized setting and local animation artist. Although Kada King is described as a foreign cartoon figure in No.1 and No.2's real life (however, its real 'origin' is not revealed throughout the plot), Yang's collaboration with local animator Fish Wang already sends out a hidden message – he believes that made-in-Taiwan animation can compete with foreign works.



Figure 18



Figure 19

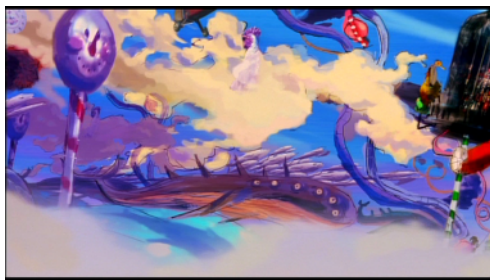


Figure 20

Figure 21

The mixture of ‘ordinary Taipei’ and ‘imaginary Taipei’ not only permeates No.1 and No.2’s mental understanding of the city, but also influences how they explore the city physically. No.1’s home seems to be a completely unrealistic location from the first glimpse with its wooden hut, a swing setting up towards the sea and a balcony decorating with string lights (Figure 18). However, it is soon revealed that the house locations next to a sand bank where debris and garbage piled up, making it impossible to walk barefoot on it (Figure 19). What makes the set more visually striking is a row of modern buildings on the opposite bank, making the wooden hut looks even more isolated from the cityscape. However, this specific location is also the place where animation and reality blends so smoothly that the boundary is completely dissolved. In an animation sequence accompanied by No.1’s narration about hyper-space, the camera moves slowly through an 2D animation image, revealing the realm of fantasy where people are riding elephants and dancing with the clouds (Figure 20). The smooth transition from animation back to the scene on the sand bank is achieved by the blue sky, which looks equally bright and blazing in both animation and filmic reality (Figure 21).



Figure 22

Figure 23



Figure 24

In the sequence where the boys are trying to save money by looking for empty bottles in the street (in exchange for recycling fee) and play music as street artists in front of the MRT station, the film cuts back and forth between their journey in the city and point-of-view shots in a waterslide (Figure 22-Figure 23). The scenes in the street

and the waterslide are paired for No.1's narration about hyper-space, which links two sets of images as an integral world. Even in a sequence where imagination is accentuated to its extreme, Yang does not forget to point out the importance of Taiwan again — the boys use a cardboard box with 'Made In Taiwan (MIT)' printed on it as their makeshift stage when performing in the street (Figure 24).

Above examples not only tell us how *Orz Boyz* interweaves social reality, childish imagination and awareness of foreign culture's influence into an urban text based on local characteristics, but also how this film delineates Taiwan's distinguished status in the global system. Part of Asia, the area providing the largest growth of urban population in the world, Taiwan's urban sprawl has slowed down.³⁴ Taipei is not, and will never be like those megacities on the mainland, which are the best model for Rem Koolhaas's 'the generic city', devoid of cultural and historical specificity and competing with each other not only by distribution of capital, labour and information, but also by well-known architectural landmarks.

In Tweedie and Braester's edited volume *At City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia*, they argue how the rapid growth of East Asian cities and the drastic transitional period has encouraged "a closely observed and precisely catalogued record of urban experience", especially with the advancement of digital dissemination technologies. Therefore, they conclude that East Asia is, "a region marked by audacious experiments in urbanization and its images".³⁵ Taiwan cinema also participates in this process, only the approach is different. Films made after 2008, including the few scenes of Taipei in *Cape No.7* and other Taipei films, rejected the 'world-city craze', 'the proliferation of brandscapes' and 'the tantalizing allure of global capitalism' that have been characterized East Asian cities as Tweedie and Braester argue.³⁶ In *Cape No.7*, *Orz Boyz* and *Au Revoir Taipei*, whether the film is celebrating urban life or questioning it, the only internationally known architectural landmark 'Taipei 101 Building' is always represented merely as a vague background. Although Taiwan cinema had temporarily turned to the strategy of blurred locality in films like *Blue Gate Crossing*, *Formula 17* and *Double Vision*, in which Taipei is expected to look like as global as possible, the recent changes in the local film industry has proved Taiwan cinema now relies more on distinguishing itself from other futuristic East Asian cities. From the 1980s to the present, what filmmakers have continuously shared when it comes to the representation of the city, is the belief in everyday experience, instead of the cinematic imagination provided by grand architectural proposals and urban planning.

Taipei films made after 2008 does not appear abruptly. On the one hand, films like *Orz Boyz* inherits Hou, Yang and Tsai's detailed interest in everyday life hidden under the gloss of urban gentrification and reveal real Taipei. On the other hand, *Orz*

Boyz also shares the grassroots spirit of *Cape No.7*, and even earlier films focusing on the natural landscape in Taiwan, such as *Island Etude* and *The Most Distant Course*. Although *Orz Boyz* applies animation to enrich its visuality, the visual style of animation is not sleek and futuristic, but closer to a hand-drawn texture. These films, whether urban or rural-centred, consolidate grassroots imagination as contemporary Taiwan cinema's narrative backbone and stylistic principle. The city is therefore, represented as a way that everyone may easily experience, rather than specific places (such as the headquarter of some multinational enterprise and the VIP lounge) that only a small amount of people can enter into.

The space that 'everyone may easily experience' is not only the spatial experience in everyday life, but also the narrative space in cinema. Besides grassroots imagination, post-2008 Taiwan cinema shares a tendency of transforming trauma into delightful humours. As Sing Song-yong argues, this transformation does not mean contemporary Taiwan cinema try to get rid of the historical burden of Taiwan New Cinema; on the contrary, these young filmmakers are trying to continue predecessors' gaze at Taiwanese society with alternative strategies, in order to resituate and re-examine collective memory, identity politics and nationhood in Taiwan cinema.³⁷ *Orz Boyz* presents a myriad of examples in terms of this tendency, which is constructed by the mixture of 'ordinary Taipei' and 'imaginary Taipei' based completely on location shooting without the help of animation.



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

For example, a sequence about a funeral is presented with place-based imagination and cinematic humours. The sequence starts from the traditional market, where No.2 lives with his grandmother and is shoot on location in the Shin-fu Market in Wanhua District. Whenever the film cuts to this location, the camera is placed from a certain distance to capture the complete image of the house, stocked with plants and flowers due to the grandmother's business in Chinese herbal medicine (Figure 25). Director usually tilts the camera from up to down, revealing the grandmother chatting with neighbours outside the house, and then moves the camera to reveal No.2 hiding underneath a desk in the living room, checking eggs by a torch—an activity he is obsessed with (Figure 26). In the sequence of the funeral, the camera's habitual route is interrupted by No.2 point-of-view shot, which reveals the grandmother walking into the house and telling him to come out and take something to his classmate Ally Lin, whose mother just passed away (Figure 27). The object she asks him to bring is 'money for dead people', which Taiwanese families prepare for their deceased relatives in the funeral. The camera first depicts No.2 walking away from the old market, submerged by the packed stalls, and then captures him walking along the narrow and dimly lit alley. This specific alley, which appears in the film for numerous times, symbolizes the transition between the traditional market and the modern streets outside. However, the director does not use a long shot to depict how No.2 walks into a visually different world after passing the alley, instead, the film cuts to a point-of-view shot to depict a pair of dolls (with an out-of-focus background) on top of the package of 'money for the dead' (Figure 28). The point-of-view shot is accompanied by No.2's made-up conversation for these two dolls, which he names by the famous western toys—Barbie and Kenny. By changing the camera movement, Yang suggests that urban experience activates place-based imagination so constantly that the differences between the traditional and the modern areas are blurred.



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32

Figure 33

Figure 34

After the point-of-view shot, the film cuts to a typical modern compound. The director applies a high-angle shot to capture No.2, whose figure can be seen from a half-opened window (Figure 29). The visual articulation of applying the architectural component as a frame-within-frame device delivers a sense of confinement, which is continued by a series of point-of-view shots made by a hand-held camera to create No.2's anxiety of walking alone in this enormous modern maze (Figure 30-Figure 31). As soon as No.2 enters the floor, he hears a parrot shouting 'who are you?' in Chinese, which makes him even more nervous. However, this sense of confinement is not meant to criticize modern housing, but presents another possibility of how the city can trigger place-based imagination. During the sequence, his figure is constantly placed in a limited space, such as vacant space on the wall and a Bagua mirror hanging above a door (most Taiwanese believe it can drive bad spirits away and its an important part of exorcism ritual in Taiwan, Figure 32-Figure 33). Besides the Bagus mirror, the director also depicts the funeral by monks' chanting, which fill the modernist-look compound with ghostly atmosphere. However, the funeral is only represented by the endless chanting and a piece of note saying 'funeral in progress' (*chi chung*) on the door, but the door remains shut. The sequence ends in front of the elevator, where a hand reaches from the off-screen space like a floating ghost, patting No.2's back and asking him what he is doing here. The hand turns out to be Ally Lin, whom No.2 always describes as '*zhen zi*' (Chinese translation of Sadako), the ghost character from the famous Japanese horror movie *Ring*. Overridden by his own imagination and the solemn atmosphere of the funeral that he can only hear but not see, No.2 cannot hold his pee any longer and embarrasses himself in front of Lin. He walks away, turning into the stair adjunct to the elevator, and walks downstairs. The composition of this medium shot is divided into two halves, sectioned by the wall between the elevator and the stair (Figure 34). The sequence strongly resonates with Tsai Ming-liang's representation of urban architecture, which is characterized by physical drama arisen

from the interplay between seeing and being seen.

Both sequences in the traditional market and the modern compound respond to Hou, Yang and Tsai's interest in gazing at everyday urban space, but also transform these auteurs' observational approach into a complex combination of visual and audio representation full of cultural references that only Taiwanese may find it funny. The parrot's high-pitched and abrupt noises are contrasted with the monks' low-pitched but consecutive chanting, resonating with each other to fabricate No.2's imagination of ghosts. No.2's imagination is also overlapped with the nickname 'zhen zi' he derives from the Japanese horror film, which is so popular in Taiwan that the name has been interwoven into daily language to mock girls with long hair.

Orz Boyz also explores Taiwan history from a lighthearted perspective, which has been termed by Sing Song-yong as a "fluid imaging" approach. Sing applies this technological term to describe how contemporary Taiwan cinema presents fluidity between the grand history and contemporary stories of Taiwan without constructing a heavy atmosphere. Sing's argument is helpful to unfold further analysis of *Orz Boyz*, in which the question of nationhood has been provided with a contemporary platform – an ordinary campus decorated with an unusual visual motif.



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37

In No.1 and No.2's school, the mixture of reality and imagination is activated by a specific visual motif: the statue standing in the middle of the campus (Figure 35). In Taiwan, statues of famous historical figures, mostly politicians, were erected in schools (from primary schools to universities), government institutions, public parks and plazas, and statues of Chiang Kia-shek are the most common ones spread all over the island. These statues become an important part of the Taiwanese cityscape, which has been avoided in previous city films. During the last decade, especially the year before *Orz Boyz* was released in 2008, the DPP government's de-sinification movement led to a series of controversies about the removal of the statue of Chiang Kia-shek at Kaohsiung Cultural Centre. The removal of statues symbolizes the transformation from the dictatorship of the KMT regime to the rising awareness of Taiwanese identity; however, it also reflects the intensified split between ethnicities in

every election since the late 1990s (Taiwanese vs mainlanders, KMT vs DPP). To respond to this complex situation, Yang Ya-che chooses a humorous approach. In the middle of the film, the statue in the campus disappears abruptly (Figure 36). These children's reaction to the disappearance of the statue is 'the statue feels too tired of standing there and decides to quit', and later they even find it in the warehouse and relocate it to No.1's house as a decoration (Figure 37). The design of the statue also plays a visual pun. Instead of representing a famous politician in an elegant and solemn style, this statue represents a short, chubby and unknown figure. Only Taiwanese audience who are very familiar with contemporary television programs would know his real identity: stand-up comedian Lin Yu-zhi (commonly known as 'Natto', which is also the name shown in the credits) who presents various popular talk shows. By changing the political meaning of the statue and relocating it (instead of destroying it), Yang Ya-che inherits his predecessors' belief in returning the power of interpreting history and identity to common people, instead of imposing any ideology from the authorities.

Overall, *Orz Boyz* participates in post-2008 Taiwan cinema's movement of resituating Taiwanese culture by four major routes. The first route is to provide an urban version of the roots-seeking ideology practiced by other films focusing on representing rural Taiwan. *Orz Boyz* posits a way of thinking, which reminds the audience that the roots of Taiwanese culture can also be found in the city, such as the traditional market where No.2 lives with his grandmother. The second route is to represent Taiwan's hybrid culture by made-in-Taiwan cultural product: the locally produced animation and product design of 'Kada King'. The border-less medium is transformed into a platform for Taiwanese creativity. The third route is to redefine urban space in Taiwan cinema by children's imaginative perspectives. Imbued with colours of western tales, Japanese cinema and cartoon, *Orz Boyz* constructs a series of place-based imagination that resonates with previous predecessors' gaze at everyday space on the one hand, and redefines the symbolic meaning of urban space on the other. The influences of foreign culture are all localized as a site of narrative through Yang's creative usage of urban space (such as the modern compound). The fourth route is to create a contemporary response to Taiwan's past, and delineate the historical specificity by rethinking specific element in the cityscape, such as the statues.

Together these four routes allow *Orz Boyz* to confirm Taiwanese characteristics through urban themes, instead of presenting a city of disappearance and forgetting, as Braester and Hong have argued. What *Orz Boyz* presents is a possibility of local culture's re-emergence, which is an aspect Taiwanese filmmakers are still working on at the moment. This resurgence of local culture will bring cinema and people closer

and closer; however, I would argue that neither domestic box office of a single film or international fame would evaluate these post-2008 films accurately. Some scholars have expressed their ‘worries’ that by over-localizing Taiwanese films, Taiwan cinema will lose the opportunity to shine on international stage. For example, Lee Pei-Ling argues that “the over-emphasis of localization may block the development of local culture due to preventing stimuli from the outside” at the end of her analysis of *Cape No.7*.³⁸ However, I disagree on this because I think the best way to evaluate these films is not from their individual achievements in creating new cultural representations that are specific to Taiwan, but also from the degree of connectivity between these various works. Only when a diverse representation of Taiwan is emerging, can Taiwan cinema responds to local culture with accuracy and encourage discussions from both inside and outside.

Conclusion

Orz Boyz’s fresh representation of Taipei should not be considered as an individual, fortuitous and random case, but part of a collective endeavour in exploring Taiwanese culture through urban themes. *Parking*, another film received the film subsidy in 2006 and released in 2008, is also a directorial debut that examines social reality through focusing on specific part of Taipei. Director Chung Meng-hong constructs the film from a common problem that all Taipei people may have encountered: the difficulty of finding a parking space, and even if you find one, some other car may block your way out. This absurd situation forces the protagonist to come into an old building closest to the street, trying to find out whose car blocking his way. Like Tsai Ming-liang, Chung is capable of gazing at one single urban building and interweaving a story about the whole city.

Another director Chang Tso-chi, who used to be Hou Hsiao-hsien’s assistant director of *City of Sadness*, has consciously explored Taiwanese folk culture and people on the margin of society. As a second-generation mainlander, Chang does not speak any Taiwanese dialects but always make sure he depicts Taiwan’s hybridity through language usage. His most recent film *When Love Comes* (2010) has made he become the third Taiwanese director who won the prestigious National Culture and Arts Award in 2011.³⁹ However, this film is his first film to focus on urban Taipei. Since his first film *Ah-chung* (1996), his focus has been placed on the lower class, multi-ethnic groups of Taiwanese people living in Northern Taiwan, but not in the metropolitan area. *Darkness and Lights* (1999) focuses on a family of blind massagers in Keelung, a port city close to Taipei. *The Best of Times* (2002) depicts young gangster’s journey between Taipei and Yilan. *Soul of a Demon* (2008) was shoot in

the seaside town Nanfangao in Yilan County and also based on the local history there. In these films, Taipei is an obscure subject that his characters only pass by but not stay for long. In *Darkness and Lights*, the local consciousness is even constructed by resisting the imagery of Taipei, when the character compliments a local sky bridge in Keelung and says “this is the most beautiful sky bridge in Keelung, Taipei does not have something like this”.

Therefore, Chang’s shift from the rural areas in Northern Taiwan, such as Keelung and Yilan, to family running a restaurant in urban Taipei in *When Love Comes*, is not only monumental in his own oeuvre, but in Taiwan cinema. As a director who always looks beyond Taipei to seek Taiwanese characteristics, *When Love Comes* denotes his changing attitude in regarding Taipei as an important part of Taiwanese culture. This film suggests that Taipei should be part of Taiwan, instead of an isolated component serving only for the global economic system.

The continuous exploration of Taiwanese characteristics also brought another trend, which is the local government’s active engagement in city film as a genre. Films like *Taipei Exchanges* (2010) and *Au Revoir Taipei* (2010) are packaged as city films and promoted by Taipei City Government, aiming to capture the charm of Taipei and establish a new urban aesthetics to attract tourists. Unlike the blurred locality deliberately placed in *Blue Gate Crossing* and *Double Vision*, these city films aim to manifest Taipei’s own character with an acknowledge to its multicultural and international colours. In *Taipei Exchanges*, the main protagonists are two sisters who open a European-style Café in a quaint neighbourhood in Taipei; in the end of the film, the elder sister exchanges part of her shares of the shop for 36 plane tickets. Similarly, *Au Revoir Taipei* focuses on the night before the protagonist Hsiao-kai leaving Taipei to visit his girlfriend in Paris. Although both films present characters yearning to leave Taipei to see the world, the symbolic meaning of Taipei grow stronger and stronger due to the directors’ attempt to renew the imagery of Taipei by focusing on the most popular areas, such as the Min Sheng Community (*Taipei Exchanges*), Shi-Da night market (*Au Revoir Taipei*) and the 24-hour Elite Bookshop (*Au Revoir Taipei*). For the character from *Taipei Exchanges*, Taipei is inscribed in her identity, accompanying her for the forthcoming world-round trip. For the character from *Au Revoir Taipei*, the adventure in the city makes him realize that he can have what he wants without going abroad; and in the end, he does not say ‘Au Revoir’ to Taipei. Contrary to Braester’s argument of ‘the impossible task of Taipei’, this new representational mode of urban experience embraces both the local and the global, and emphasizes the value of Taipei/Taiwan in characters’ identity formation rather than eliminating it.

To conclude the role played by urban cinema in recent changes of the local film

industry, it is useful to borrow a passage from Iain Chambers:

To go beyond these bleak stories of exile and that grey, rainy country of the anguished soul, is to establish a sense of being at home in the city, and to make of tradition a space of transformation rather than the scene of a cheerless destiny. For this metropolis is not simply the final stage of a poignant narrative, of apocalypse and nostalgia, it is also the site of the ruins and traces continually entwine and recombine in the construction of new horizons.⁴⁰

Contemporary Taipei films certainly respond to Chambers' anticipation of urban themes. However, it is worth noting that the positive attitude cannot be separated from the dialogue between the once failing local film industry and filmmakers' persistence in making films about Taiwan, whether it is art cinema or popular film. It is easy to criticize Hou, Yang and Tsai's achievement in aesthetics and perpetual concern about Taiwanese society as a strategic technique to secure fame and funding in international film circuit; for example, Peng Hsiao-yen applies the success of *Cape No.7* as an example to criticize Hou, Yang and Tsai's auteurism as completely indulgence of individualism and neglect of the importance of narrative.⁴¹ However, I believe this kind of criticism is not only theoretically over simplified, but also underestimates the interconnected connection between different generations of filmmakers, and even the cross-media connection between cinema and other image cultures, such as television, commercial shorts, music video and contemporary film and video art, to name only a few. As a media requires talents from diverse areas, Taiwan cinema leads local cultural production to shape themselves as a potential platform to provide profound observations on the chaotic changes Taiwan have experienced and eventually, become part of the historical elements in Taiwanese culture that no one can banish it away.

Works Cited

- Arc Light. 'Introduction of the Company'. <http://arclightfilmseng.blogspot.co.uk>. Accessed 23 Sep 2012.
- Braester, Yomi. 'The Impossible Task of Taipei Films'. In Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp.51-59.
- Chambers, Iain. *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Chen, De-ling and Chen Hong-yin. 'Shenqing guanzhao yi-zuo daoyu: lianxiqu daoyan Chen Huai-en/Affection for an Island: an Interview with *Island Etude's* Director En Chen'. In Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.),

- Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren/The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers*. Taipei: Shulin, 2010, pp. 19-30.
- Chen, Ru-shou Robert. "This isn't real!" Spatialized Narration and (In)visible Special Effects in "Double Vision". In Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 108-115.
- Cheng, Ryan Pin-hung. 'The Traces of Youth, the Marks of the Time: Issues about Growing up in *Winds of September*, *Cape No.7* and *Orz Boyz*', in *Film Appreciation Journal* 27.1 (2008): pp. 99-103.
- Davis, Darrell William and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries*. London: British Film Institute, 2008.
- Davis, Darrell William. 'Trendy in Taiwan: Problems of Popularity in the Island's cinema'. In Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 147-157.
- Dawley, Evan N. 'The Question of Identity in Recent Scholarship on the History of Taiwan', in *The China Quarterly* 198 (2009), pp. 442-452.
- Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government. 'Population Data since the 1980s'.
<http://www.ca.taipei.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=1071179&ctNode=41896&mp=102001>. Accessed 20 September 2012.
- Hong, Guo-Juin. *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Lee, Pei-Ling, 'Between imagination and reality: a narrative analysis of *Cape No. 7*'. *China Media Research* 6.2 (2010): pp. 47-55.
- Lin, Yu-ru and Ceng Zhi-yun, 'Linghun de gongzhen: zui yaoyuan de juli daoyan Lin Jing-jie/ The Resonance of a Soul: an Interview with *The Most Distant Course*'s director Lin Jing-jie'. In Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.), *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren/The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers*. Taipei: Shulin, 2010, pp.39-48.
- Martin, Fran. 'Taiwan (trans)national Cinema'. In Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 131-145.
- Peng, Hsiao-yen. '*Cape No.7*: Accidental Success? A Review of the Taiwan New Cinema'. *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp. 124-136.
- Siegel, Allan. 'After the Sixties: Changing Paradigms in the Representation of Urban Space'. In Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Screening the City*. London;

- New York : Verso, 2003, pp.137-159.
- Sing, Song-yong. 'The Telepathy in Downgrading History: on the Fluid Imaging of Taiwan's "Post-New Cinema"', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp.137-156.
- Taiwan Cinema Website. 'Collections of box office earnings of first-run theaters in Taipei(1999-2011)'. Jan 16 2012. http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_50896_144. Accessed 14 September 2012.
- The Official Website of Orz Boyz. 'An Interview with Yang Ya-che'. 5th August 2008. <http://www.wretch.cc/blog/orzboyz/249758>. Accessed 23 Sep 2012.
- Ting, Huang. *The Double Vision Research Handbook*. Taipei: Kadokawa-Taiwan, 2002.
- Tweedie, James and Yomi Braester. *At City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010.
- Yang, Hao-jun. 'Yu guji de tongnian daobie: jiong nanhai daoyan Yang Ya-che/ Farewell to the Lonely Childhood: an Interview with Orz Boyz's Director Yang Ya-che'. In Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.), *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren/The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers*. Taipei: Shulin, 2010, pp.105-116.
- You, Ting-jing. 'Qingchun aiqing de kunjing yu chukou: chengxia guangnian daoyan Chen Zheng-dao/ The Predicament and Exit of Teenage Romance: an Interview with *Eternal Summer*'s Director Chen Zheng-dao'. In Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.), *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren/The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers*. Taipei: Shulin, 2010, pp.31-38.

¹ 'Collections of box office earnings of first-run theaters in Taipei (1999-2011)', Taiwan Cinema Website, Jan 16 2012, http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_50896_144. Accessed 14 September 2012.

² The production numbers throughout the 2000s are relatively low compared to the imported films from Hollywood. 21 local films were released in 2002, 14 films in 2003, and the best year during the first half of the 2000s is 2005 – however, 40 local productions still occupied only such a minor part of the market, compared to 309 imported foreign films coming into the market in the same year.

³ The other two films are *Beijing Bicycle* (2001, Wang Xiaoshuai) and *Betelnut Beauty* (2001, dir. Lin Cheng-sheng).

⁴ Fran Martin, 'Taiwan (trans)national Cinema' in Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 138, 144n29. According to the introduction of the company, "Arc Light Films aims to unite talents of

Taiwan, China and Hong Kong with a creative vision that spans across continents and oceans". The online introduction of Arc Light can also be found on its website, <http://arclightfilmseng.blogspot.co.uk>. Accessed 23 Sep 2012.

⁵ Fran Martin argues that *Blue Gate Crossing* removes "any identifiable vestiges of the geographic and architectural particularity of Taipei City" and is therefore, "in sharp contrast to the close attention to the material and affective experience of (post)modern Taipei City in the urban films of Edward Yang or Tsai Ming-liang". See Martin, p. 140; Davis also posits similar argument focusing on the difference between *Blue Gate Crossing* and the Taiwan New Cinema, as he argues that Yee's film "celebrates life in the city, instead of subjecting it to critique", "unlike Edward Yang or Hou Hsiao-hsien". See Davis, 'Trendy in Taiwan: Problems of Popularity in the Island's cinema', in Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, p. 150. The interesting fact is that not until Taipei is represented with de-specification of locality in a film like *Blue Gate Crossing*, that scholars start to notice and emphasize on how much 'Taiwanese-ness' was placed in Hou, Yang and Tsai's urban cinema. In other words, the new trend of Taipei films, which may seem to respond to Braester's argument of "the impossible task of Taipei", is contributing a lot to rethink and rediscover the local colours of Taipei films made before them, and the complex dialectics between these two types of Taipei films is worth probing into.

⁶ Fran Martin, 'Taiwan (trans)national Cinema', p. 140.

⁷ Mike Walsh, 'An Interview with Yee Chih-yen: Directing with an Open Heart', in *Metro* 135 (Winter, 2003). Quoted in Fran Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', p. 140.

⁸ Darrell William Davis, 'Trendy in Taiwan: Problems of Popularity in the Island's cinema', p.154.

⁹ Ru-shou Robert Chen, "'This isn't real!'" Spatialized Narration and (In)visible Special Effects in "Double Vision", in Darrell William Davis, Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds.), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, pp. 108, 111.

¹⁰ The locations include Taipei Zhongzhen Police Office, National Taiwan University Hospital, Nankang Software Industrial Park, Church of Aletheia University, the Chinatrust Commercial Bank Building on Dunhua North Road, and The Gallery Hotel in Wanhua District, which had been demolished afterwards.

¹¹ Huang Ting, *The Double Vision Research Handbook* (Taipei: Kadokawa-Taiwan, 2002), p.42.

¹² Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, 'The New Localism: Alternatives to Blockbuster Benchmarks', in *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2008), p. 38.

¹³ Ru-shou Robert Chen, "'This isn't real!'" Spatialized Narration and (In)visible Special Effects in "Double Vision", p.108.

¹⁴ *Double Vision*'s highest production cost in Taiwan's film history was later changed by *Silk*, which also focuses on a series of investigation led by a foreigner—this time by the famous Japanese actor Yôsuke Eguchi, whom Taiwanese audiences have already known through Japanese trendy drama. The budget was more than NT\$200 million, which made it replaces *Double Vision* as the most costly local production. However, these two costly films did not perform as the companies had expected at the

domestic box office. *Double Vision* grossed less than half of its budget, and *Silk* grossed less than 1/10 of its budget. The failure suggests that the strategy of copying 'Hollywood experience' is not working as well as the producers hoped for. The record of highest budget has now been changed by Wei Te-sheng's epic film *Seediq Bale* (2011), a story based on the conflict between Taiwanese aboriginal people and the Japanese government in 1930. The budget of this film was NT\$700 million, and grossed more than NT\$810 million. Although the result is not as satisfying as Wei's *Cape No.7*, which cost only NT\$50 million but grossed NT\$530 million; however, *Seediq Bale* still proved itself to be a better example than *Double Vision* and *Silk*. At present, local productions accentuating local colours are more popular than local productions with a global look.

¹⁵ Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, 'The New Localism: Alternatives to Blockbuster Benchmarks', p. 63.

¹⁶ *Let it Be* grossed NT\$ 5 million, *Life* grossed over NT\$ 10 million. However, it is worth noting that the production cost of documentary is hard to estimate. Since these filmmakers dedicate their life to assure issues to be heard, there is no boundary between work and life for them, and they usually fund themselves to complete their works.

¹⁷ Chen De-ling and Chen Hong-yin, 'Shenqing guanzhao yi-zuo daoyu: lianxiqu daoyan Chen Huai-en/Affection for an Island: an Interview with *Island Etude*'s Director En Chen', in Lin Wen-chi and Wang Yu-yen (eds.), *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren/The Voice of Taiwan Cinema: Funscreen Weekly vs. Taiwan Filmmakers* (Taipei: Shulin, 2010), p.25.

¹⁸ You Ting-jing, 'Qingchun aiqing de kunjing yu chukou: chengxia guangnian daoyan Chen Zheng-dao/ The Predicament and Exit of Teenage Romance: an Interview with *Eternal Summer*'s Director Chen Zheng-dao', in *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren*, p.38.

¹⁹ Lin Yu-ru and Ceng Zhi-yun, 'Linghun de gongzhen: zui yaoyuan de juli daoyan Lin Jing-jie/ The Resonance of a Soul: an Interview with *The Most Distant Course*'s director Lin Jing-jie', in *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren*, p.45.

²⁰ Since 2003, directors who are making their first film are allowed to apply for the film subsidy for the first time since the subsidy was established in 1990. In 2006, *Winds of September*, *Orz Boyz*, *Parking* and *Cape No.7* all received subsidies of NT\$ 5 million. Another important film *Monga* also received the subsidy in 2006, but it was released much later in 2010. *Monga* grossed over NT\$ 250 million and was the best selling local film in 2010 and continued the '*Cape No.7* phenomenon' with its highly localized outlook and plot, which focuses on the area 'Monga' in Wanhua District, Taipei.

²¹ Evan N. Dawley, 'The Question of Identity in Recent Scholarship on the History of Taiwan', in *The China Quarterly* 198 (2009), p. 442, 444.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 442.

²³ It was not until 2011 that Chinese students are allowed to study in universities in Taiwan. Since then, more and more articles on comparing the difference between the life on the two sides of the Taiwan

Strait have been published on newspapers, social networks and so on. For example, *China Daily News*, one of the biggest newspapers in Taiwan, started a special column for Chinese and Taiwanese to write about what they see on the other side of the strait and what they think about the cultural differences between Taiwanese and Chinese.

²⁴ Yomi Braester, 'The Impossible Task of Taipei Films', in *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, pp.58-59.

²⁵ Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.160.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.162.

²⁷ Allan Siegel, 'After the Sixties: Changing Paradigms in the Representation of Urban Space', in Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Screening the City* (London; New York : Verso, 2003), p.137.

²⁸ Publishing a novel for drama series/film is a marketing strategy Taiwan has learned from Japan. Japanese trendy drama (*dorama*) spans its commercial potential by a systematic collaboration between different kinds of mass media, from novels, records, DVD to related merchandises, such as the brand worn by lead actors and actresses, the specific object they use as the token of love, and so on.

²⁹ For the complete history of 'Life Story', see PTS's official website, <http://web.pts.org.tw/php/mealc/life/>. Accessed 23 Sep 2012.

³⁰ Ryan Cheng Pin-hung, 'The Traces of Youth, the Marks of the Time: Issues about Growing up in *Winds of September*, *Cape No.7* and *Orz Boyz*', in *Film Appreciation Journal* 27.1 (2008): pp. 99-103.

³¹ 'An Interview with Yang Ya-che', The Official Website of Orz Boyz, 5th August 2008. <http://www.wretch.cc/blog/orzboyz/249758>. Accessed 23 Sep 2012.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Yang Hao-jun, 'Yu guji de tongnian daobie: jiong nanhai daoyan Yang Ya-che/ Farewell to the Lonely Childhood: an Interview with *Orz Boyz*'s Director Yang Ya-che', in *Taiwan dianying de shen-gyin: Fangying zhoubao vs. Taiwan yingren*, pp.111-112.

³⁴ In 1987, population in Taiwan first reached 2.6 million, and then reached 2.7 million in 1989. However, the number soon decreased to 2.6 million again in 1992. Since then, the number has remained stable (2.6 million) without any significant growth. On the contrary, slight decrease has been a norm since 1992. To see the population data, check Department of Civil Affairs, Taipei City Government, 'Population Date since the 1980s', <http://www.ca.taipei.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=1071179&ctNode=41896&mp=102001>. Accessed 20 September 2012.

³⁵ James Tweedie and Yomi Braester, 'Introduction: The City's Edge' in *At City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), p.3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

³⁷ Sing Song-yong, 'The Telepathy in Downgrading History: on the Fluid Imaging of Taiwan's "Post-New Cinema"', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp.137-156.

³⁸ Lee Pei-Ling, 'Between imagination and reality: a narrative analysis of *Cape No. 7*', in *China Media*

Research 6.2 (2010): p. 54.

³⁹ Hou Hsiao-hsien won this award in 1995, and another director Wang Tung won it in 1997.

⁴⁰ Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journey in Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.112.

⁴¹ Peng Hsiao-yen, 'Cape No.7: Accidental Success? A Review of the Taiwan New Cinema', in *Film Appreciation Academic Journal* 7.1 (March 2010): pp. 124-136.