

BIOGRAPHY

DIRECTOR HOU HSIAO-HSIEN

Taiwan's premium director and winner of numerous film prizes all over the world, Hou Hsiao Hsien established himself as a leading figure of Taiwan New Wave in the last decade.

He was born in China and moved to Taiwan in 1948. He spent his childhood in southern Taiwan. Upon completing his military service in 1969, Hou went to study filmmaking at the National Taiwan Academy of Arts. He graduated in 1972 and took various jobs before switching to films. He was an assistant director to veteran directors Li Hsing and Lai Cheng-Ying. He later formed partnership with cinematographer Chen Kun-Hou and took turns directing.

He made his directorial debut with the film *CUTE GIRLS* in 1980. By his third film, *GREEN, GREEN GRASS OF HOME* (1981), he was nominated for a Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan's equivalent to the Oscars. Since, he has helped shape a whole new cinema consciousness in Taiwan.

Hou captured international attention with *THE BOYS FROM FENGGUEI* (1983) and *A SUMMER AT GRANDPA'S* (1984), both a winner at Festival des 3 Continents, Nantes, France. His autobiographical film *A TIME TO LIVE, A TIME TO DIE* (1985), took home an international critics' award from Berlin in 1985 and was named the best film outside of Europe and America by the Rotterdam Film Festival. He then continued to make critically acclaimed films, *DUST IN THE WIND* (1986) and *DAUGHTER OF THE NILE* (1987), and was gradually known as one of the most innovative filmmakers of the world. In 1989, his *A CITY OF SADNESS* won the coveted Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival. In 1993, his masterpiece *THE PUPPETMASTER* won jury prize in Cannes. His next four films *GOOD MEN, GOOD WOMEN* (1995), the energetic *GOODGYE SOUTH, GOODBYE* (1996), *FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI* (1998) and *MILLENNIUM MAMBO* (2001) *CAFE LUMIERE* (2004) selected in competition of Venice Film Festival were hailed by critics at the competition at the Cannes Film Festival.

As a producer, Hou has helped bring about classics as Edward Yang's *TAIPEI STORY*, Zhang Yimou's *RAISE THE RED LANTERN*, Hsu Hsiao-Ming's *DUST OF ANGELS*, *HEARTBREAK ISLAND*, Wu Nien-Jen's *A BORROWED LIFE* and Chen Kuo-Fu's *TREASURE ISLAND*. He also took the lead acting role in *TAIPEI STORY*.

FILMOGRAPHY OF DIRECTOR HOU HSIAO HSIEN

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| 1980 | CUTE GIRLS |
| 1981 | CHEERFUL WIND |
| 1982 | GREEN, GREEN GRASS OF HOME |
| 1983 | THE SANDWICH MAN
(THE SANDWICH MAN segment);
THE BOYS FROM FENGKUEI
(Best Film, Festival des 3 Continents, Nantes, France) |
| 1984 | A SUMMER AT GRANDPA'S
(Best Film, Festival des 3 Continents, Nantes, France) |
| 1985 | A TIME TO LIVE, A TIME TO DIE
(International Critics' Award, Berlin Film Festival;
Best Film Outside Europe and America, Rotterdam Film Festival) |
| 1986 | DUST IN THE WIND
(Best Cinematography and Best Editing, Festival des 3 Continents, Nantes, France) |
| 1987 | DAUGHTER OF THE NILE
(Quinzaine, Cannes; Special Jury Award, Toronto Film Festival) |
| 1989 | A CITY OF SADNESS
(Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival) |
| 1993 | THE PUPPETMASTER
(Special Jury Award, Cannes) |
| 1995 | GOOD MEN, GOOD WOMEN
(Best Film, Hawaii Film Festival;
FIPRESCI prize, Singapore Film Festival) |
| 1996 | GOODBYE SOUTH, GOODBYE |
| 1998 | FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI |
| 2001 | MILLENNIUM MAMBO |
| 2004 | CAFE LUMIERE |

BIOGRAPHIES

Chen Kuan-Hsing is Professor in the Center for Asia-Pacific/Cultural Studies, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan, and is currently a visiting senior research fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. He has published extensively in both Chinese and English, including edited volumes in English: *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (1996) and *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (1998); and in Chinese: *Cultural Studies in Taiwan* (2000) and *The Partha Chatterjee Seminar--Locating Political Society: Modernity, State Violence and Postcolonial Democracies* (2000). His own books include *Media/Cultural Criticism: A Popular-Democratic Line of Flight* (1992, in Chinese), and *The Imperialist Eye* (2003, in Korean). A core member of the *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, he is a co-executive editor of the journal and books series of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements*.

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Chua Beng Huat, a Singaporean, obtained his PhD from York University, Toronto, Canada. He has held visiting professorships at universities in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Germany, Australia and the US. During his recent Distinguished Visiting Scholar Fellowship at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, he delivered the Inaugural Lecture of the Carolina Asia Center. He has published widely in urban planning and public housing, comparative politics in Southeast Asia and the emerging consumerism across Asia: *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) and *Political Legitimacy and Housing: Stakeholding in Singapore* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). He has edited, *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). His most recent book is *Life is Not Complete without Shopping* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003). A new book of which he is the contributing editor will be in print in March, 2004, entitled *Communitarian Politics in Asia* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon). In addition to being on the editorial board of many international social science and cultural studies journals, he is currently founding co-executive editor of the journal, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge).

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Shigehiko Hasumi is an internationally known film theorist and critic. He was former President of the Tokyo University.

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Philip Holden is Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore. His publications include *Orienting Masculinity, Orienting Nation: W. Somerset Maugham's Exotic Fiction* (Greenwood 1996), *Modern Subjects / Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of Literature in the Straits Settlements, 1895-1907* (ELT 2000), and, with Richard Ruppel, *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature* (U of Minnesota P, 2003). In the last three years, he has been working on a research project on national autobiography in the postcolonial world, and has a co-edited collection on Chinese Transnationalisms forthcoming from Hong Kong University Press.

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Meaghan Morris is Chair Professor of Cultural Studies and Coordinator of the Kwan Fong Cultural Research and Development Programme at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. Her books include *'Race' Panic and the Memory of Migration* (co-edited with Brett de Bary, 2001); *Too Soon, Too Late: History in Popular Culture* (1998); *Australian Cultural Studies: A reader* (co-edited with John Frow) and *The Pirate's Fiancée: feminism, reading, postmodernism* (1988). She is Senior Editor of *Traces: a Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory and Translation*, and in 2004 was elected Chair of the international Association for Cultural Studies. Her latest book, *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (co-edited with Stephen Chan and Siu-leung Li), is forthcoming from Hong Kong University Press.

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Quah Sy Ren is Assistant Professor with the Division of Chinese at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Gao Xingjian and Transcultural Chinese Theater* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). His research interests include modern Chinese theatre, Singapore theatre and performance. He is also General Editor of *The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun* (10 vols., forthcoming) and the author of six collections of essays and plays.

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Srinivas V. Singavarapu is a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore and a Visiting Fellow at the Asia Research Institute. He has spent the better part of the past decade studying popular Telugu cinema, a cinema that is virtually unknown outside India. He is currently working on a booklength comparative study of Hong Kong and Indian cinemas. The books has as its starting point Hong Kong action film's journey down the distribution and exhibition chains in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and its encounters with a variety of locals--from provincial distributors and exhibitors to audience groups and Telugu films.

Hou Hsiao-Hsien: The Point of Measurement for Taiwan Cinema

侯孝賢--台灣電影的刻度

Wen Tien-Hsiang 聞天祥

Film Critic, Taiwan

The performance of popular singers, the screwball comedy, the commercial melodrama, the period of the rise of Taiwan New Cinema, the attack or defense on Hou Hsiao-Hsien, the internationally recognized director, the representative figure of Taiwanese cinema.... Through these events and contexts of Hou's films, this essay systematically traces the trans/formations of Hour's cinematic styles, and the relations to the wider movements of Taiwanese cinemas and history.

Wen Tien-Hsiang is a film critic, and program director of Taipei Film Festival. He also teaches at Fu Jen Catholic University and National Taiwan University of Arts. Publications: The First Course of Moviegoers, The Study of Tsai Ming-Liang, Hatch an Egg of Movie, A Treasure Map for Movie Fans, Farewell to the Masters—Foreign Movies 1990-1996, Movie Cameras and Meat Grinders—Chinese Movies 1990-1996, Writing about Taiwan Movies, Cafeteria for Film Buffs.

**Home Soil, Family-Country and the World:
A Preliminary Reading of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Work**

Dai Jinhua
Peking University, Beijing, China

Reading Hou Hsiao-Hsien's work chronologically, this essay discusses the formation and transformation of narratives, visual images and meanings in his films. Through close readings and bringing out inter-textual relations, the essay focuses discussion on the direct or indirect representation and displacement between Taiwan New Cinema and the social changes in the past 20 years. The essay will further address Hou's impact on, as well as interaction with, the Fifth Generation mainland director in terms of the complexity of social drives for such interactions and modes of readings and misreadings.

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Dai Jinhua was born in Beijing, in 1959. She graduated from the Department of Chinese Literature, the Peking University, in 1982 and then taught in the Literature Department of the Peking Academy of Cinema. She is currently Professor in the Institute of Comparative Literature and Culture, Peking University, and Professor of the East Asian Department of the Ohio State University. She has been visiting Professor in the U.S., Europe, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Her work has been in the history of cinema, women's literature and popular culture. Her books include: *Guide for Film Theory and Criticism* 《电影理论与批评手册》, *Screen and Popular Myth* 《镜与世俗神话——影片精读十八例》, *Breaking out of the Screen Castle* 《镜城突围》, *Invisible Writings: Chinese Cultural Studies in the 90's* 《隐形书写——90年代中国文化研究》, *Inside the Screen: Interviews with Dai Jinhua* 《犹在镜中——戴锦华访谈录》, *Scenery in the Fog: Chinese Cinema Culture, 1978-1998* 《雾中风景: 中国电影文化1978—1998》, *Chinese Women's Writing and Culture in the New Era* 《涉渡之舟: 新时期中国女性写作与女性文化》, *Cinema and Desire: A Feminist Marxism and Cultral Politics in Dai Jinhua's works*.

The Art of Seduction in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Films

Wong Ainling

Hong Kong Film Archive

Hou Hsiao-hsien has never hesitated to touch on male sexuality in his early works, but seldom borders on the realm of erotism as such. His more recent works revealed that he could be very sensuous, as in *THE PUPPETMASTER* and *FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI*. The presentation tries to explore the art of seduction in Hou's films.

Wong Ainling, Former programmer at Hong Kong Arts Centre and the Hong Kong International Film Festival. Now Research Officer at Hong Kong Film Archive. Publications: 《戲緣》(2000), 《詩人導演－費穆》(ed., 1998), "理想的年代－長城、鳳凰的日子／An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days" (ed., 2001), "國泰故事／The Cathay Story" (ed., 2002), "邵氏初探／The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study" (ed., 2003), and "李晨風評論·導演筆記／The Cinema of Lee Sun-fung" (ed., 2004).

The Use of Allegory in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Poetics

Lin Wenchi

National Central University, Taiwan

This paper argues that allegory is a significant mode of Hou Hsiao-hsien's cinematic poetics. As stunningly demonstrated in *City of Sadness*, many of Hou's films are both stories of individuals and allegories of the society or the nation of Taiwan at the same time. While much of the critical attention is drawn to Hou's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* and the "Taiwan Trilogy" to read them as national allegory, this paper intends to read Hou's other films as social allegories of Taiwan. Films to be discussed include *Cute Girl, Boys of Fenguei, Sunday at Grandpa's, Dust of Wind, Daughter of the Nile, Goodbye South, Goodbye, and Millennium Mambo*. It is also the paper's attention to find out how the allegorical meanings of these films are constructed by Hou's depiction of the city space.

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Lin Wenchi teaches at the English Department at National Central University, Taiwan, where he chairs the Film Studies Center and helps run a movie theater. He is one of the three editors of *Passionate Detachment: Essays on Hou Hsiao-hsien's Films* (Xilian Rensheng: Hou Hsiao-hsien Dianying Yanjiou), a collection of essays on Hou Hsiao-hsien's films. He is currently the chairperson of the editorial board of the scholarly section of *Film Appreciation Quarterly* (Dianying Xinshang Jikan). He writes mainly on Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese films. His recent interest lies in the representation of city in these films.

**"What's Happening? Modernist Mise En Scène,
Image and Sound in Hou's Teen Movies"**

Adrian Martin
Film Critic, Australia

This paper will concentrate on Hou's portrayals of modern youth, and the ways he represents the 'splintered' experience of youth using modernist techniques of texture, distracted perception, etc. Special attention will be paid to the under-discussed area of Hou's innovations in sound design as part of his overall strategies of image-sound fusion. Key films discussed will include MILLENNIUM MABO, GOOD MEN GOOD WOMEN and GOODBYE SOUTH GOODBYE, and some comparison will be made with related evocations of youth in the contemporaneous films of Wong Kar-wai and Olivier Assayas.

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Adrian Martin is film critic for *The Age* (Melbourne), and author of *Raúl Ruiz: Sublimes Obsesiones* (Altamira, 2004), *The Mad Max Movies* (Currency, 2003), *Once Upon a Time in America* (BFI, 1998) and *Phantasms* (Penguin, 1994). He has won the Australian Film Institute Byron Kennedy Award (1994) and the Pascall Prize for Critical Writing (1997). He is Co-Editor of *Movie Mutations* (BFI, 2003), *Raúl Ruiz: Images of Passage* (Rouge Press/Rotterdam Film Festival, 2004) and the Internet film journal *Rouge* (www.rouge.com.au). His forthcoming books are on Terrence Malick (BFI) and Brian De Palma (Illinois University Press).

**The Idea of In-betweenness in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Café Lumière*
and other Films**

Chen Ru-Shou Robert

National Taiwan University of Arts, Taiwan

Café Lumière is shot to honor the centennial anniversary of Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu. In the film Hou strives to pay homage to Ozu by adopting themes and styles lovingly found in Ozu's films, such as relationship between a daughter and her aging parents, the marriage plan of a grown daughter, and the coming and going of trains. Stylistically, both the tatami-shot and blocking composition of the frame in *Café*

Lumière are reminiscent of Ozu's films like *Late Spring*, *Tokyo Twilight*, *An Autumn Afternoon*, and many others.

Even so, the film is definitely Hou Hsiao-Hsien's own. Since from his early films, *Boys from Feng-kuei*, for example, Hou has adopted the long-take, frame device within a shot, still camera position, as his master signature. In addition, some subject matters—family issues, generation conflicts, individual and national identities, etc., keep on recurring in Hou's films.

This paper would like to propose that the idea of in-betweenness can best represent Hou's inheritance from Ozu and his own filmmaking style in terms of thematic and stylistic expression. It will begin with *Café Lumière* and trace back Hou's other 15 movies to exemplify this point.

Robert Chen Ru-Shou, currently Associate Professor and the Director of the Graduate School of Applied Media Arts, National Taiwan University of Arts. His recent publications include: translation of *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (by Paolo Cherchi Usai) and *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Plays of Shadows* (by Vicky Lebeau), and some Chinese articles published in *Film Appreciation Magazine*.

**How Did Hou Hsiao-Hsien Change Taiwan Cinema?:
A Critical Reassessment**

Ti Wei

Tamkang University, Taiwan

Hou Hsiao-Hsien has been one of the centre members of New Taiwan Cinema (NTC) since its rise in the early 1980s. His winning of Golden Lion Award in Venice Film Festival in 1989 further confirmed his prominent status in the international as well as domestic film communities. Hou then gradually became the leading figure in Taiwan cinema. His route of success has become a model that successors of Taiwan cinema like to follow. Not only his film aesthetics has been imitated by young Taiwanese film creators, he has also been recognized as one of the most influential persons in the processes of film policy-making and of the allocation of related resources. The other side of the story of Taiwan cinema, nevertheless, is that the film industry diminished dramatically during the same period. What was actually the role Hou played in the recent transformation of Taiwan film industry? How important was he within Taiwan film industry and how did he change it? The article attempts to answer these questions not by exploring the aesthetic and artistic aspects of Hou's masterpieces, but by examining the social significance of Hou's intervention in the field of Taiwan cinema in the past twenty years. To avoid an instrumentalist and individualist explanation, the theoretical perspective of critical political economy of communication and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' are used to analyze the dynamic interactions between Hou and the structural factors related to the broader transformation of Taiwan film industry.

Ti Wei is Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication at Tamkang University, Taiwan. He received his PhD from the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, England, in 2002 with a thesis entitled '*Global Processes, National Responses: Chinese Film Cultures in Transition*'. His most recent article 'Generational / Cultural Contradiction and Global Incorporation: Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman*' was published in *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After* (edited by Chris Berry and Feii Lu, 2005).

The Reception of Hou Hsiao-Hsien Films in Europe from 1980 to Date

Valentina Vitali

Ulster University, Northern Ireland, UK

In 1989 Hou was awarded the Leone d'Oro at the Venice Film Festival, which was followed by the Prix de la Jurie at Cannes four years later. In spite of this, still no monograph has appeared in English to date, nor is Hou's work studied with any regularity in British film studies departments.

The hypothesis underpinning the paper is that the academic study of cinema in any one country responds – critically or not - to the changing needs of the domestic film industry. However, since the film industry, like any other industry, is located at the intersection of national and global pressures, discrepancies and delays inevitably occur between, on the one hand, what is deemed worthy of academic study and, on the other, the films given to be seen in the cinema. This hypothesis is tested by way of an exploration of the connections between the emergence of the category of 'Asian Cinema' in film studies in British universities and the ways in which the work of Taiwanese filmmaker and *auteur* Hou Hsiao-hsien was distributed and received in Europe since 1980.

The paper first looks at the channels through which Hou's films were distributed prior to, and after, the Venice and Cannes festival awards. How did these channels change as the filmmaker gradually acquired visibility in the European film market? How were the films categorised in the reviews that accompanied their circulation? Finally, how does the circulation and reception of Hou's films during the last two decades compare to the circulation and reception of other Asian films in European cinemas and magazines?

By way of a comparative analysis between the emergence of 'Asian Cinema' as an academic category and the slowly increasing visibility of Hou's work in Europe, the question raised is: how to theorise the relation between state-regulated education and the dynamics which shape an industrial sector in order to account for the parallels and discrepancies between these two phenomena? Which factors have contributed to the academic formulation of an 'Asian cinema' that appears to overlook the work Hou as a Taiwanese *auteur*?

International Conference on Asia's Hou Hsiao-Hsien: Cinema, History and Culture,
organized by Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore &
the Singapore History Museum,
29-30 April 2005, Singapore

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Valentina Vitali teaches Comparative Film Studies at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. Her work has appeared in *Framework*, *Kinema*, *Women: A Cultural Review*, *Southern Review* and *Boundary 2*. She is co-editor, with Paul Willemen, of 'Theorizing National Cinema' (BFI forthcoming).

Scenes of Comparison: Cinema of Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Im Kwon-Taek

Kim Soyoung

Korean National University of Arts, Korea

In an effort to continue Inter-Asia Comparative film studies, the essay will throw two representative 'national' filmmakers of Taiwan and South Korea into a relief. Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Im Kwon-taek have been similarly dealing with historical traumas resulting from colonization, dictatorship and the cold war. The essay will focus particularly on Hou's *Good Man and Good Woman* (1995) and Im's *Kaepyok* (*The Cataclysmic*, 1991).

Kim Soyoung teaches at cinema studies department at Korean National University of Arts. Has published books on the issues of modernity and gender in Korean cinema and has recently produced two dvd set of "Women's History Trilogy" documentary.

**Ordinary Hero(In)Es: Personal Memory and Sociopolitical History in
Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Good Men, Good Women* and Ann Hui's *Ordinary Heroes***

**Daisy Ng and Lin Pei-yin
National University of Singapore**

The feminist adage, "the personal is the political" offers a fitting description of the intricate relationship between the remembrances of individuals and socio-political discourse in the two films we discuss in this paper: *Good Men, Good Women* (1995) by Taiwan director Hou Hsiao-hsien and *Ordinary Heroes* (1999) by Hong Kong director Ann Hui. Both films are ambitious attempts to write the epic of an earlier era through the personal memory of a woman character.

In *Good Men, Good Women*, the dramatization of Jiang Biyu's life story by Liang Jing, an actress, evokes a picture of the lives of a group of Taiwanese left-wing patriots who sailed to mainland China to participate in the resistance against Japanese invasion of China in the early 1940s. The story of Jiang and her compatriots is intertwined with fragments from Liang's own diary, which has fallen into the hands of an unknown person who faxes it to her home page by page everyday. The mysterious incoming fax of her own diary not only disturbs Liang's life by posing a murky threat but also forces her to recall bittersweet memories of her past with a former boyfriend who was murdered. The fear lurking in Liang's everyday life resonances with the white terror under which the patriots lived in the 1950s. Liang's aimless existence and as a contemporary woman also provides a contrast to the unreserved dedication of Jiang and other female patriots from the earlier era. The interplay between past and present, personal narrative and public history, weaves manifold layers of Taiwan's sociopolitical reality with a focus on her ordinary citizens.

Like *Good Men, Good Women*, *Ordinary Heroes* also uses a love relationship as a foil to the political discourse. The film tells the history of social movements in Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 80s through two narrative strands. On the one hand, a storyteller narrates the history of leftist social movements in Hong Kong through the life of a real figure, the late Ng Chun Yin; on the other hand, the student and labor movements of the 70s and 80s are dramatized through the personal remembrances of a fictional woman character, Su Feng, who was amnesic at the beginning of the film. The storytelling narrative and Su's gradual recovery of memory crisscross to bring out the motif of forgetting and remembering, with

clear and strong resonances of Hong Kong people's mourning of the June Fourth Incident. Su's amnesia caused by the trauma of rape by her politician-ex-lover in his office and her being subsequently hit by an automobile is unequivocally symbolic of the trauma in the collective psyche of Hong Kong people after the Crackdown at Tiananmen Square. By the end of the film, Su has regained her memory through the help of a young man who has been more or less an unwilling witness to both Su's personal tragedy and the local social movements. The last scene shows this young man and a child lighting candles at the June Fourth Memorial. The film is thus a commemoration of ordinary people who have sacrificed their lives for a larger cause.

Good Men, Good Women and *Ordinary Heroes* are remarkable attempts to write the history of ordinary heroes and heroines through multiple points-of-view and polyphonic voices. Common to both films is the use of fragmented memories and hysterical voice of a suffering woman to augment and contest the presumably objective, rational and monolithic discourse of official histories.

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Daisy Ng 伍湘璇 is Assistant Professor at the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore. Her research interests include modern and contemporary Chinese literature, Hong Kong cinema, gender studies and cultural studies. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University. Her doctoral dissertation was on the cultural politics of nostalgia in contemporary Hong Kong film and memoirs, which she is revising into a manuscript. Currently she is co-editing with Lisa Law a collection on Foodscapes: the Cultural Politics of Food in Asia to be published with the HKU Press.

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Lin Pei-Yin is an assistant professor in the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore where she teaches courses on modern Chinese literature. She received a PhD from SOAS, University of London, and was a post-doctoral fellow and part-time teacher at SOAS before joining NUS in early 2004. Her research interests include 20th century literature in Chinese, Taiwanese literature and films, cultural and post-colonial studies, and comparative literature. At present she is working on a book about Taiwanese literature during the Japanese occupation period.

Reconsidering Asian Melodrama: A Presentation for Hou Hsiao- Hsien

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

Center for the Study of Culture and Society, India

Sitting where we are, and amid the body of work we are meant to respond to, it can be a strange and slightly uncanny feeling to re-read classic Euro-American texts about the making and social circulation of the celluloid moving image.

I am thinking here about a seminal work driven by concerns about the public circulation of film and successor technologies, Kluge and Negt's *Public Sphere and Experience*, set alongside Alexander Kluge's own *The Power of Emotions (Die Macht der Gefühle, 1983)*. The uncanniness of reading/viewing these texts from 'here' (i.e. from a Grand Asian Imaginary) lies, for me, in the way they slip in and slip out of relevance: make sense one moment and become completely elusive the next.

What would happen, I want to ask, if we were to revisit the question of the public location of making and seeing films from, say, Hou-Hsiao Hsien's perspective? Clearly a very strong political 'counterpublic', along lines very similar to Negt/Kluge, exists in India and, going by Kuan-Hsing Chen's recent work, in Taiwan as well, and yet there are significant differences. First and foremost, much of this Asian counterpublic is not a proletariat – certainly not in the full Marxist sense – and therefore the 'social wealth' that is supposedly created by them may not easily yield the axis of sociality – cooperation – freedom – awareness – universality - wealth of needs and of subjective human sensuality' so central to the book and to Kluge's film. Infinitely more complex, the sort of tangibility of **experience** through the process of the commodification of emotion (Kluge's film again), allowing for what he and Negt call a 'solidarity that can be grasped with the senses', is not easily to be found given, as we shall see, the **programmatic elusiveness of such solidarity**, certainly in Indian (and arguably all Asian) counterpublics. The link between history and commodification, yielding what Negt/Kluge call a *specificity of experience* – 'all experiences of the proletariat are specific' – that permits, first, a form of spectatorial enunciation, and second, a narrative structure, is often precisely absent in the narrative structures of Asian filmmaking.

This presentation will try to see the consequences of an age-old Asian variant of a European politics: the replacement of the industrial proletariat with a peasantry, as providing the

historical sites of publicness. It will further propose an investigation into *melodrama*, as a specific kind of narrative production, reworking into public intelligibility the 'rational consciousness' of the state and its realist imperative. It would have, I think, to acknowledge and work with a particular *political edge* that a tradition of Asian film to which Hou belongs brings to an important debate within film studies about subjectivity in the cinema. One way of foregrounding the intrinsic elusiveness of the 'peasant' spectatorial subject is to map the debate onto a different political history, and to take the question into the dense thicket of theory which maps the speech of the subaltern. This history must begin with Ranajit Guha's famous early formulations that posit a distinct form of consciousness to the non-elites of history: a 'negative' consciousness that expresses itself through certain kinds of action, defines its domain in ways that include those of 'analogy' and 'transference'. The articulation of subaltern history is at once *present* in all elite discourse (such as for instance colonial records, where one can 'read the presence of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element'), and at the same time *elusive* to that discourse.

This argument will explore the formal consequences of a cinema addressing political contexts that do act, often with violence, but in ways that tend to confound any analyst trying to figure out how their actions can further their political self-interest: in ways that tend to be evasive to coherent political representation. The further claim that *any* kind of apparently progressive representation 'on behalf of' the peasantry ends up only charging old feudal formations with new social responsibilities clearly has this virtue that, regardless of whether it is true or false, it points up to the political but also *formal* pressures to which the practice of representation is itself subject.

In her well known commentaries on Guha's work, Gayatri Spivak has revealed, via Marx, the possibility of *two* distinct forms of representation being involved. One is chaotic, typically resisting a speaking source. And a second, involving the political representative of the subaltern as much as it does the historian of this phenomenon, functions as the site of representation: the representative *standing in* for the representation, as a substitute, or slippage. The famous instance in Marx, where he speaks of the French peasant's belief that 'a miracle would occur, that a man named Napoleon would restore all their glory' substituting for the failure of that community to *behave as a class which can represent its interests politically* (i.e. to behave as a proletariat). The small peasant proprietors 'cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted government power...'.

Can such a construct of the elusive 'Asian' subaltern figure throw light on our equally elusive subject? In speculating on the elusiveness of spectatorial rights to legal definition, let us see how the necessary prior articulation of *re-presentation* works in the cinema of Hou. I would like to bring out is the difficulty, the *anxiety*, that such a 'consciousness' imposes upon whatever is mandated to speak for or represent it.

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Hou Hsiao-Hsien: Paradoxes of Individuation in History

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The paper will explore the paradox of individuated looking inscribed in the spatio-temporal processes of cinema. Because of cinema's foundational indexicality (that is, its necessary relation to what is in front of the camera), it cannot but register the process of history as a configuration of temporal rhythms that exceed individuated subjectivity; similarly, the individuated look is always embedded in the history of a particular subjective constellation, that is to say, in the biography of a person. Hou's films focus on the encounter between these two paradoxical processes: an individual present lodged in biographical time (with its ever-changing awareness of different pasts and futures) sustaining a look at a historical present that is also inhabited or haunted by the pasts and futures. By focusing on and exploring these two indexical dimensions of cinema (the agency that looks and the world registered in the moving image), Hou's films explore cinema's very capacity to convey the forces that produce, simultaneously, the historical and the subjective worlds. Some of his films, such as *Café Lumière* (2004), can be seen as extended metaphors for the join between history and subjectivity, usually the province of different disciplines, psychology and historiography.

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