THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC FORUM

MEDIASIA
FILMASIA 2016

ART CENTER KOBE, JAPAN

"To Open Minds, To Educate Intelligence, To Inform Decisions"

The International Academic Forum provides new perspectives to the thought-leaders and decision-makers of today and tomorrow by offering constructive environments for dialogue and interchange at the intersections of nation, culture, and discipline. Headquartered in Nagoya, Japan, and registered as a Non-Profit Organization (一般社団法人) , IAFOR is an independent think tank committed to the deeper understanding of contemporary geo-political transformation, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERCULTURAL

INTERDISCIPLINARY

iafor

The Asian Conference on Film & Documentary 2016

Official Conference Proceedings

ISSN: 2187-5294

Table of Contents

From the Nightmarish to a Dreamy State of Being: The Troubling Present in Thai Independent Cinema after the 2014 Coup d'état

Sopawan Boonnimitra, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Abstract

From Apichatpong Weerasethakul's debut film, *Mysterious Objects at Noon*, to *Blissfully Yours* and on to *Tropical Malady*, the subjects, forms, and modes of visual presentation reflect the evolution of a unique style of filmmaking that deals intimately with themes such as desire and sexual ambiguity which are rarely explored in mainstream cinema. Weerasethakul paved the way for a second group of Thai independent filmmakers that followed in the 2000s, in particular during the period of political protests which led to the coups d'état of 2006 and 2014, when the independent cinema flourished both domestically and internationally. Their films have created a discourse on independent films, or nang indie, that offers an alternative mode of filmmaking as well as an alternative discourse from the mainstream cinema. For this paper, I would like to take a closer look at some of independent films made after the 2014 coups d'état, in the period where military regime has attempted to impose its ideological values through films and other mediums. I will look through three particular films, *The Blue Hour* (Anucha Boonyawatana, 2015), *Snap* (Kongdej Jaturanrasmee, 2015) and *Cemetery of Splendour* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2015), and how they offer a vision from the nightmarish to a dreamy state of being that perhaps give us a glimpse into the undercurrents embedded in the mentality of Thai independent filmmakers at the present time.

Keywords: Thai Independent Cinema, coups d'état, cinema and politics

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

This paper examines Thai independent cinema since the coup d'état in 2014, particularly through three films: *The Blue Hour* (Anucha Boonyawatana, 2015), *Snap* (Kongdej Jaturanrasmee, 2015), and *Cemetery of Splendour* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2015). While mainstream cinema produced by film studios, for instance GTH and Sahamongkol, continues to produce mainly teen and horror films as well as nationalistic historical films, such as *May Who* (GTH, 2015), *Fanday* (GDH, 2016), *King Naresuan 6* (Sahamongkol, 2015), the independent sector has become an alternative space to explore the unspoken and challenging issues. My argument is that the films *The Blue Hour*, *Snap* and *Cemetery of Splendour* have offered an alternative discourse to the mainstream films and revealed the undercurrents of Thai society after the 2014 coup d'état, the thirteenth in the past 80 years.

In an attempt to examine the above argument, in the following section I will look firstly at the way in which independent films in Thailand have occupied an alternative space to that of the official history often seen in mainstream cinema. I will then argue that the use of memory in these films has played an important role in constructing the narrative of the films, offering a vision from the nightmarish to a dreamy state of being, and what this suggests with reference to the political crises and the current situation in Thailand.

Thai Cinema and Politics: A Testament of Personal Memory

The development of the Thai film industry has always proceeded hand in hand with the exercise of power through censorship to keep the three institutions, namely: nation, Buddhism and the monarchy, above criticism. The first film censorship legislation was put in place in 1930, before its replacement by the Film and Video Act 2008, passed by the coup-appointed National Legislative Assembly and centred around a controversial rating system, as the Censorship Board Committee can ban any film deemed inappropriate to be screened in the kingdom. The major criteria are the lèse majesté law and any contents which are deemed detrimental to religion or endanger national security. Under the strict censorship rules, it has therefore been difficult for Thai filmmakers to choose the subjects of their films freely, particularly any that might be considered to endanger the pillars of the nationhood, including political content which is rarely seen in Thai cinema. Since the coup d'état, in particular, the censorship has become more rigid.

While the focus of the censorship is more on issues that come under the lèse majesté law, there is more openness on some other subjects, such as homosexual relationships, in an increasing number of films. The gradual blooming of independent films has also become evident since the 2006 coup d'état, and they have gained increasing visibility both at international film festivals and with domestic audiences. Weerasethakul led the way, making his debut in 1997 and inspiring new generations of independent filmmakers in the 2000s. With films being made outside big film companies and mainly catering to international film festivals, as many films were funded overseas, the independent filmmakers have gained more freedom in terms of subject and content as well as aesthetics and stylistics. They have produced films that

have come to challenge what Adadol Ingawanij (2007) called "the narcissistic mode of patriotic spectatorship that accounts for the public prestige of heritage films" (p. 260) which proliferated from the 1997 economic breakdown onwards. Moreover, according to Malinee Khumsupa and Sudarat Musikawong (2016), the recurrence of the coup d'état − referring to 2014 − "elicits a *déjà-vu* experience that has unfortunately not triggered resistance within the Bangkok bourgeois public sphere, where we see a strengthening of grand narratives saturated in national security and the maintenance of social order". They argue that while the mainstream media seem to imply that Thais accept military rule, independent cinema functions as a counter-public, offering opposition through political ambiguity (Khumsupa and Musikawong, 2016). Not only do they function as an alternative discourse on Thainess at international as well as local venues, but they offer a space for negotiation and reconciliation at times of crisis such as during coups d'état. As observed by David Streckfuss (2011), with the censorship "history has not been served well in Thai movies" (p. 278) and independent films have become, in a way, a testament of an otherwise forgotten history. As Streckfuss writes (2011):

> History is the victim of defamation for it de-peoples the past, making the past void of names, attributions, and responsibility. The bad past becomes personal, with no names….Defamation-based law drives the hard history of Thailand into darkened streets….There are sometimes signs that critical commentary may appear, but if it does, it is always in a coded language (p. 279).

Many independent filmmakers−three of whom: Boonyawattana, Jaturanrassamee and Weerasethakul being used as exemplars here − have, in one way or another, gone through the process of self-censoring during the making of their films. They use different strategies and stylistics in dealing with censored subjects, with their depictions ranging from the nightmarish to dreamy states of being, which I will explore further in the next section. The degree to which they refer to political events and censored subjects also differs among these filmmakers.

Despite their different strategies, they all emphasise personal memory and how memories of the past may resurface in the present, disrupting what seems to be a harmonious present and questioning the future. They have all used personal memory as a way of bringing the subject of politics to the personal level. As many traumatic political events of the past have been forgotten and possibly erased from the mainstream media, alternative public spaces such as social media and independent films have become personal sites for re-thinking the past. In many ways, cinema has represented history by way of embodying and preserving our personal memories, as these films do here. However, as Marla Morris (2009) writes:

> Personal memories, perhaps, effect historians' renderings, but personal memories are different from historical renderings because they are not constrained in the same ways. Psychological interferences such as repression, resistance, denial, projection, introjection, and transference shape memory and therefore may determine, to a certain extent, the ways in which historians select, imagine, deconstruct, and reconstruct documents (p. 8).

A personal memory contains what may be censored out of the official history. For example, as Streckfuss (2011) suggests, "Thai history and the writing of that history (historiography) are constrained by the law protecting the monarchy" (p. 315). Moreover, Patrick Jory (2003), referring to Nidhi Eoseewong, a Thai historical scholar, writes that "Thai historiography as it has been produced over the last two centuries originates out of a desire on the part of the Thai elite to define a Thai self that is periodically threatened by outsiders". Therefore, the independent cinema, which predominantly employs personal memories in their films, has played an important role in constructing and possibly de-constructing the official history. The films offer an opposing discourse to the official one, relying on personal memories and subjectively challenging the Thai identity as defined by the state.

Ozan Tekin (2014), referring to Pierre Nora, suggests that "history and memory are opposed terms in perceiving the past and points out that memory is embodied in living societies" (p. 29). For him, memory is rooted in the concrete, such as space, image and object. These elements are used effectively in independent films. In these films, space is intertwined with various layers of historical context as well as becoming a site of negotiation between different forces vying to control meaning. As Tekin (2014) writes:

> ….in order for memory to be something other than a fantasy, what we remember must have taken place somewhere. Places matter as cinematic products have the power to essentially transform or change our mnemonic perceptions of particular places converting them into sites of memory and forgetting (p. 25).

By looking into the spaces of these films, I hope to reveal them as bearers of different meanings over the years. As Chris Berry (1994, 14) further points out, not only do we need to understand these changing spaces but also the way in which we position ourselves in them in order to understand the ever-changing identities and landscapes.

Moreover, for me, independent films played a key role during the period described by Ackbar Abbas (1997) as the "space of disappearance", referring to the state of Hong Kong at the time of the 1997 handover, when its people were searching for lost identities and cultures. It is a process of displacement and reversal "when an 'older' but still operative politics of national legitimacy and geophysical boundaries comes into conflict with a 'newer' politics of global flows, information, and the devalorisation of physical boundaries" (Abbas, 1997, p. 4). Thailand is now at the crossroads with the end of the beloved King Bhumipol's reign and the new still unknown. In this case, nostalgia is no longer triggered by objects but by the absence of the object or the space of disappearance (Abbas, 1997). The filmic images have become a testament of what we may or will lose, a space of nostalgia in which we can imagine what may disappear and become invisible, or what we might refuse to see in the past. Abbas (1997) explains the culture of disappearance, arguing that the imminence of the disappearance is what precipitates an intense and unprecedented interest in the present.

Making Memory Instead of History: from Nightmare to a Dream State

The three films I have chosen here, *The Blue Hour*, *Snap* and *Cemetery of Splendour*, were selected for being made after 2014 and for its variety of aesthetics and stylistics. Although these films may not directly address the political situation and do not represent the direct aftermath of the coup d'état, their meaning is implicit without much need for coded language. As they say something different from the mainstream cinema, they could also be considered political films, particularly at a time, as Thongchai Winichakul (2014) points out, when the political crisis may escalate with the end of King Bhumibol's era (p. 81). The Thai monarchy, which has been the country's bedrock and provided stability, now looks to become the cause of increasing instability. According to Winichakul (2014), as he explains the Thai political conflicts over the past 10 years that led to the coups d'état, there are two major factors he likens to elephants in the room. The first is the monarchy, which has been a major political actor throughout the country's history but, as suggested above, this cannot be expressed directly. Secondly, therefore, the critics and sceptics of royalism are the other elephant in the room of Thai politics. Some independent films, including the three films here, are threading along these invisible elements that rarely become public subjects, indirectly pointing to fears about the imminent future. In the following section, I will look at how the memories in these films are being made to construct an alternative discourse.

Memory, Ghosts and Other Worldly Subjects:

Thai cinema has long been associated with ghost stories, a staple of mainstream films. According to Adam Knee (2005) writing about the popularity of Thai horror films at the beginning of the 2000s following the economic breakdown, "Thai traditions and history are thus multiply engaged in many of these texts, which make a return of the past tradition as a source for narratives explicitly dealing with the return of the past in supernatural form" (p. 142). He further points out that this relates most specifically to the subject of women's oppression. Two of the independent films in focus here, *The Blue Hour* and *Cemetery of Splendour*, also employ popular ghost stories, though with rather different implications from the ones in the early 2000s. Bliss Cua Lim (2001) suggests that "the ghost narrative opens the possibility of a radicalised concept of non-contemporaneity; haunting as ghostly return precisely refuses the idea that things are just 'left behind,' that the past is inert and the present uniform" (p. 288). Not only are the ghosts being used here to disrupt the boundaries between past, present and future, but also to collapse memory, reality, and wishful thinking into the same plane. This is exemplified in *The Blue Hour*, centred on the relationship between two boys: Tam, a loner who is constantly bullied at school and at home by his brother and father for being homosexual, and Phum, who lives alone without a family. We gradually learn that they are victims of serial abuse, particularly Tam who is subject to abuse both at school and at home by his brother and unseen father. They frequently meet at a deserted swimming pool, where Phum tells a story of a haunting ghost that has led many people to drown in the pool. He tells Tam that "*phii bang ta*" (literally: "the ghost covers your eyes"), signifying that the ghost will blind us and we will not be able to see a particular person or particular things, which could lead to our death. The ghost story seems to register in Tam's mind. From then on, their encounters become like a nightmare where the haunting of ghosts overshadows their

lives and corpses can pop up anywhere, down to their plan to kill Tam's whole family. The ghost here is nowhere to be seen in the film but does disrupt the boundaries between the memories, reality and wishful thinking of the characters, so that we are no longer certain where one begins or ends and we are left only with one long nightmare.

Figure 1. A deserted swimming pool in *The Blue Hour* (2015)

Citing the term "negative hallucination", employed by Sigmund Freud in his essay on Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*, Abbas (1997) further suggests, with reference to the "space of disappearance", that "if hallucination means seeing ghosts and apparitions, that is, something that is not there, reverse hallucination means not seeing what is there" (p. 6). *The Blue Hour* uses "*phii bang ta*" to create a world of denial, an excuse to refuse to see what is there, as if the characters refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions and the violence they might commit. Although the film may focus on the relationship between two boys and their marginal place in society, and suggests the new generation's dark psyche, haunted by a ghost that has either blinded them or rendered them invisible to others, the director's intention of also alluding to an absent father figure is apparent. Although he is absent, his existence can be determined from his influence over every character's life through his rules, his pistol and his uniform. At one point, Tam says to Phum that his father is not a soldier but he likes to wear a uniform. Towards the end, after the gunman kills the whole family, Tam looks at his lifeless father lying face down on the floor with his soldier's T-shirt on. The ghost here may be implied by the absence of the father figure, which has affected us all and blinded us to reality at the time of the coup d'état.

Ghosts are also used regularly in Weerasethakul's films, which according to Aparna Sharma (2015) "dwell extensively on marginal spaces as containers of absent figures, ghosts and communal memories, those that get suppressed in mainstream narratives of history" (p. 160). In *Cemetery of Splendour*, the ghost is used in a more direct political way as the film was funded by international sources as well as aiming for international audiences. Weerasethakul made the decision not to screen within the country, though the film is still filled with symbolism and allegory, as so often in his other films. The film's original title before its release, *Cemetery of Kings*, makes clear the director's intention.

Figure 2. The old elementary school-turned temporary hospital *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015)

With the recent passing of the beloved King Bhumipol, this question has become even more pertinent. With the soldiers lying unconscious in the old elementary school-turned temporary hospital, being treated by variously coloured neon-lit tubes, the film re-creates the dream state of both the film's characters and the audience. Their symptoms are explained as deep sleep with no discernible medical causes. Jen, an ageing volunteers to take care of one of the soldiers. She then discovers the reason for the deep sleep from the two Laos princesses at the shrine she frequently visits with offerings and to make her wishes. The princesses tell her that underneath the elementary school is the site of an ancient kingdom's graveyard and that, while asleep, the soldiers were enlisted to fight in a battle as the king's army. They add that the soldiers will never get better as their energy has been taken. The close ties between king and soldiers have undeniably been at the heart of the nation's stability for centuries, and still are today, as with the recent coup d'état's aim to stabilise the country at a critical time of the reign. The kings and the soldiers are spellbound by each other. Weerasethakul seems to suggest that all Thais are like living ghosts, as when the soldiers wake up and go through their daily routines and then return to their deep-sleep condition. He further criticises the system where the king has limited constitutional powers through the governing bodies but his invisible power has its effect on the Thai people's collective psyche. This effect is expressed through the atmospherics of the film, which is like a dream where the past intertwines with the present and the dead with the living. Moreover, as in *The Blue Hour*, in *Cemetery of Splendour* there is also an absent figure of authority, but the underlying narrative of past kings, to whom most Thais would refer as father figures, dominates the whole narrative.

Making Memory through Photographs and Places:

"To photograph disappearance is not to defamiliarise, only that a sense of the unfamiliar grows out of forms that remain stubbornly familiar. Like the uncanny."

Ackbar Abbas (1997, 106)

Instead of being devoid of a political agenda, as in *The Blue Hour*, *Snap* uses the 2014 coup d'état as a backdrop to a romantic love story. And although the director may frame it as a backdrop, politics creeps into each individual and relationship. The film centres on the reunion between a bride-to-be and her past high-school love during the coup d'état of 2014. The film uses the two coups d'état of 2006 and 2014 as marks of the lovers' separation and reunion. Instagram posting is sporadically used in these times of political instability where identity is in crisis and where a personal memory is a social-media snapshot attempt to build a public persona. Pueng, a 26-year-old, is about to marry a military officer who is occasionally on call during the coup d'état, and she continues to post happy photos of her life while having serious doubts about the marriage after reuniting with Boy, her high-school lover, at a friend's wedding in the eastern province of Chantaburi, where they went to school together and where Boy's family live. Pueng and Boy share a brief moment in which their mutual feelings re-emerge. She asks him his reason for not turning up to their supposedly last rendezvous before her family had to move to Bangkok following her soldier father being called up on duty. Boy does not explain the reason to her, but as the audience we learn that Boy's father, in an attempt to take his son to see Pueng on that day, suffered an accident that has affected his health ever since. It is probably also Boy's feeling of guilt that has made him keep his distance from his father before the latter passes away at the end of the film. In a similar way to the other two films, the father figures, both Pueng's and Boy's, may not be the main focus of the film but both of them instigated the separation, as Pueng's father was ordered to move to Bangkok during the 2006 coup d'état and Boy's father was the reason Boy missed his last reunion with Pueng. With the personal losses − the separation of the lovers and the loss of the father − marking the two coups d'état, *Snap* may be referring to the eight-year timeframe between them, where the relationship became frozen as if stuck in the same loop of political crises, seemingly with no way out.

A nostalgic and melancholic feeling permeates the film throughout, giving it a rather dreamy quality as if the present time had already passed. When she revisits her high school and tries to find the spots where her memories with Boy were made, Pueng asks, "How come nothing is good as it used to be?". In a way, she represents many members of the Thai middle class who greet coups d'état with numbness, or some even with welcoming arms, at times when one needs something stable to hold on to and when the future is unclear, while lamenting the passing of good things that will never return. The easy way out for the middle class is to resolve the political conflicts through the outer selves they put up through the social media. The politics, while seemingly unobtrusive, permeates through personal relationships as well as the construction of the self. Photographs are used here as a means of seeing and preserving, but the act of preserving what is past creates a rather uncanny feeling. Pueng needs photographs to reaffirm her life and identity in the most concrete way, as seen in her Instagram and pre-wedding photographs. The meaning of photographs for her evokes Heike Jenss's (2015) comments on new social media such as Instagram: the experiences of time and memory have been integrated into consumer culture:

> This kind of ersatz nostalgia does not generate a connection with one's own lived and memorized experience of the past; …but rather fosters a feeling of desire or longing for an imagined past; one that can be directly translated or channeled into consumer desires (p. 145).

The Instagram photographs have simply been reduced to consumer desires which are the opposite of a real nostalgia based on the experience of loss (Jenss, 2015). For the new generation like Pueng's, photographs may be used as a mask for the loss of a real feeling of nostalgia. Boy, meanwhile, is a photographer who uses photographs as way to remember and possibly preserve what is now gone or on the brink of disappearing, as when he snaps what turns out to be the last picture of his father at work. Photographing disappearance creates "the mixed, heterogenous space of the uncanny, where the unfamiliar arises out of the familiar and is a dimension of it: not another space but a space of otherness" (Abbas, 1997, p. 50). As Boy takes pictures of Pueng and their friends dressed in their high-school uniforms, trying to recreate the past, the photographs are more than a memory of the past but create a rather uncanny feeling, unlike the return of the ghost which creates a separation between the otherworld and the living.

Figure 3. Snap (2015)

Eight years have gone by but the past has not remained the past: it becomes a source of anxiety as seen in their situation and in Boy's photographs. As Sigmund Freud (1997) describes it, "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression…the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (p. 217). In *Cemetery of Splendour*, the photograph is also used to create a similar meaning. Weerasethakul uses a photograph, hanging in a canteen, of General Sarit Thanarat, who was in power from 1958 to 1963 through the use of martial law. His regime, during the time of the rise of communism, is remembered as repressive and authoritarian and is one of those periods fast left behind in the official history of the country.

As suggested by Teki (2014), a space is where a memory has been created. The space plays an important role in all three films, and they are similar in terms of their reinterpretation and reappropriation of the space to use in their political messages. For example, the deserted swimming pool in *The Blue Hour*, a luxury usually associated with a particular class, is now neglected, full of polluted water, and haunted by a ghost. It becomes a space occupied by homosexuality, present on the margins of society. It is a space that we may not relate directly to politics but is undeniably embedded in everyday politics, similar to the school in *Cemetery of*

Splendour. The school is being used as a hospital while still being haunted by the remains of what was once a place upholding rules and regulations, as confirmed by the picture of General Sarit Thanarat. Weerasethakul suggestively employs a school as a site of repression which helps to sustain the dictatorship's repressive regime. It is also a place where Thai textbooks and official history, a blend of royalism and nationalism, have been taught and cultivated (Meyer, 2014, p. 135).

More importantly, in the film *Cemetery of Splendour*, Weerasethakul uses his hometown Khon Kaen, in northeastern Thailand, as the main location, where the local tales and historical setting provide a significant context in this and other of his films. The town of Khon Kaen, and overall the northeastern region of the country, have been involved in many political events in the past. For example, it was a sensitive area at the time of the spread of communism and the later involvement of the U.S. The area is, according to George Modelski (2015), "poor, underdeveloped and traditionally neglected – has been a prolific source of opposition politicians and is potentially a fertile ground for guerrilla warfare" (p. 200). The communists used the area to campaign for separation of the northeast and reunification with Laos. Moreover, both Weerasethakul actress playing his main character, Jen, who frequently appears in his films, grew up in the area and have close ties to Laos, which used to form part of the same territory before the separation of two countries. This remembrance of forgotten history is relived in the town of Khon Kaen where the past has become more significant to the present, in the same way as the story of the cemetery of kings underlies the main narrative of the relationship between Jen and the soldier.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to demonstrate the ways in which the independent cinema has functioned as an alternative discourse at a time of crisis after the coup d'état, through three films: *The Blue Hour*, *Snap*, and *Cemetery of Splendour*. In the first part I attempt to conceptualise the way in which personal memories, the key tool used in the three films as well as in other independent films, enable the construction of an alternative discourse that differs from official history despite the censorship. Moreover, these films have played an important role, through the use of personal memories, in making their appearance in what seems to be a space of disappearance at the time of the coup d'état and the end of King Bhumipol's reign. They are all critical of the past in different ways. In *The Blue Hour*, the past may be embodied by violence and hauntings as in a nightmare; in *Snap*, the past is an unreachable space of nostalgia that produces a rather uncanny feeling; and in *Cemetery of Splendour* Weerasethakul is most critical of a past which can only be represented through dreams or something not visible within the narrative layers. In order to move on to the future, it is important to come to terms with the memory of the past. The uncertain future is already here while the Thais are more than ever attempting to search for and preserve a nostalgic past. It remains to be seen how independent cinema will respond to such phenomena at this challenging time.

References

Abbas, A. (1997). *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance.* MN: University of Minnesota.

Berry, C. (1994). *A Bit on the Side: East-West Topographies of Desire.* Australia: Empress.

Cua, L. B. (2001). Spectral Times: The Ghost Film as Historical Allegory. *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critiques, Volume. 9* (2), 287-239. doi: 10/1215/10679847-9-2-287

Ferrari, M.P. (2012). Primitive Gazing: Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Sensational Inaction Cinema. In: L. Khatib (Ed.) "*Storytelling in World Cinemas Volume 1 – Forms*" (pp. 165-176). New York: Columbia University Press.

Freud, S. (1997). *Writing on Art and Literature*. W. Hamacher & D. E. Wellbery (Eds.). California: Stanford University Press.

Ingawanij, A. (2007). *Hyperbolic Heritage: Bourgeois Spectatorship and Contemporary Thai Cinema* (Doctoral Dissertation). London Consortium, University of London.

Jenss, H. (2015). *Fashioning Memory: Vintage Style and Youth Culture.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Jory, P. (March 2003). Problems in Contemporary Thai Nationalist Historiography, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* (Issue 3). Retrieved from https://kyotoreview.org/issue-3-nations-and-stories/problems-in-contemporary-thai-nationalist-historiography/

Khumsupa, M. & Musikawong, S. (September 2016). Counter-memory: Replaying Political Violence in Thai Digital Cinema. *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* (Issue 20). Retrieved from https://kyotoreview.org/issue-20/counter-memory-replaying-political-violence-in-thai-digital-cinema/

Knee, A. (2005). Thailand Haunted: The Power of the Past in the Contemporary Thai Horror Film. In S. Jay Schneider and Tony Williams (Eds.) "*Horror International*" (pp. 141-162). Michigan: Wayne State University Press.

Meyer, M. J. (2014). The *Thawiphop* Phenomenon: Reimagining Nationalism in a Contemporary Thai Novel and Its Stage and Screen Adaptations. In P. Liamputtong

(Ed.) "*Contemporary Socio-Cultural and Political Perspectives in Thailand*" (pp. 125-140). New York: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg.

Modelski, G. (2015). The Viet Minh Complex. In C.E. Black and T.P. Thornton (Eds.) "*Communism and Revolution: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence*" (pp. 185-214). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Morris, M. (2009). *Curriculum and the Holocaust: Competing Sites or Memory and Representation*.   London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.

Ockey, J. (2005). Creating the Thai Middle Class. In: M. Pinches. "*Culture and Privilege in Capitalist Asia*" (pp. 231-251). London: Routledge.

Sharma, A. (2015). *Documentary Films in India: Critical Aesthetics at Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Streckfuss, D. (2011). *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, treason, and lèse majesté*. London: Routledge.

Tekin, O. (2014). *Factory of Memory: Cinematic Representations of the 12th September Military Coup*. Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing.

Winichakul, T. (2014). The Monarchy and Anti-Monarchy: Two Elephants in the Room of Thai Politics and the State of Denial. In P. Chachavalpongpun (Ed.) *"Good Coup" Gone Bad: Thailand's Political Developments since Thaksin's Downfall*" (pp. 79-108). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

From" Morning Sun" to" Though I Was Dead": The Image of Song Binbin in the "August Fifth Incident"

Wei-li Wu, Taipei College of Maritime Technology, Taiwan

Abstract

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

On August 5, 1966, Bian Zhongyun, the deputy principal at the girls High School Attached to Beijing Normal University, was beaten to death by the students struggling against her. She was the first teacher killed in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution and her death had established the "violence" nature of the Cultural Revolution.

After the Cultural Revolution, the reminiscences, papers, and comments related to the "August Fifth Incident" were gradually introduced, but with all blames pointing to the student leader of that school, Song Binbin – the one who had pinned a red band on Mao Zedong's arm. It was not until 2003 when the American director, Carma Hinton filmed the *Morning Sun* that Song Binbin broke her silence to defend herself.

However, voices of attacks came hot on the heels of her defense.

In 2006, in *Though I Am Gone*, a documentary filmed by the Chinese director Hu Jie, the responsibility was once again laid on Song Binbin through the use of images.

Due to the differences in perception between the two sides, this paper subjects these two documentaries to textual analysis, supplementing it with relevant literature and other information, to objectively outline the two different images of Song Binbin in the "August Fifth Incident" as perceived by people and their justice.

Keywords: Cultural Revolution,Morning Sun,Though I Was Dead,Song Binbin,Bian Zhongyun

I.   Introduction – Initial Violence in the Cultural Revolution

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

On August 5, 1966, Bian Zhongyun, vice-principal of the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University in Beijing, was beaten to death by the students struggling against her. She was the first teacher killed in the Cultural Revolution in Beijing. Her death had established the "violence" nature of the Cultural Revolution, and the initial "violence" had started in the school campus.

The unfolding of the "violence" in the Cultural Revolution did not come about in a single step, but was rather step by step beguiled by the rulers, who then ignited it within a few months' time. In the seventeen years before the Cultural Revolution (1949-1966) as a result of the encouragement of various political movements and the guidance of the policies of "proletarian politics" as well as "class struggle," the direction of education had moved toward the "education of revolutionary hate" of the "theory of class origin," which adequately prepared the first generation of children of the People's Republic (those born after 1949) mentally under its imperceptible influence. What then was needed was only a spark.

From the end of 1965 to early 1966, the bombardment on the literary works of the *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (Wu Han,1961), the *Notes from the Three- Family Village*(Yao Wenyuan,1966), and the *Evening Chat at Yanshan* (Deng Tuo, 1961) intensified, which was the fuse of the Cultural Revolution lit by the literary front. On May 7, 1966, in a letter to Lin Biao (this was also the "May 7 Directive," part of which content was published in the People's Daily on August 1) Mao Zedong stated that "education has to be revolutionized, and the phenomenon of the rule of our schools by bourgeois intellectuals must not go on any more."[1] Mao resorted to using school campuses as the opening to launch the Cultural Revolution. Before long, on May 16, the "Circular from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" (May 16 Circular) was issued, and this heavy "programmatic" bomb ultimately exploded, formally sounding the horn of the Cultural Revolution.

All poisonous weeds, all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; our struggle against them can only be one of life-and-death struggle; destruction means criticism; it means revolution; hold high the great banner of the proletarian Cultural Revolution, thoroughly expose the reactionary bourgeois stand of those so-called 'academic authorities' who oppose the party and socialism." [2]

Although this "circular," for all its combativeness, was initially not made public, informed officiallings who gathered in the capital had very early grasped the direction of the movement. On May 25, seven teachers and students from the Beijing

---

[1] "The Whole Country Should Become a Great School in Mao Tse-tung's Thought – In Commemoration of the 39th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Liberation Army" (1966) *People's Daily*, in Song Yongyi, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (CD) (2002).

[2] "Circular from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," (1966) issued by the Central (66) no.267, *op. cit.* footnote 1.

University posted a big-character poster criticizing the president and the municipal party committee, which immediately created a commotion in various universities and middle schools, facilitating the creation of the "Red Guards." On June 1, Mao ordered all radios, newspapers and periodicals of the whole country to publish that big-character poster in order to break open this "reactionary fortress" of the Beijing University. On June 1 and 2, the *People's Daily* published two editorials respectively, "Sweep Away All Monsters and Demons" and "Hailing the First Big-character Poster of the Beijing University," claiming that:

> *Those clowns who vainly attempt to resist the currents of the Cultural Revolution can hardly escape the fate of being wiped out.* [3]

This series of montage-style rhythms sped up the development of the Cultural Revolution and conferred adequate "legitimacy" on the unfolding of violence.

Campuses were in great chaos. The Central Committee under Liu Shaoqi followed a very standardized way of employing established practices, dispatching to all schools "work groups" to replace the "school party committees" and formulating the Eight Directives in order to keep the Cultural Revolution within manageable limit. However, such moves soon met with strong opposition from radical students. The Red Guards of the High School Attached to Qinghua University put up a big-character poster, saying that "We wield our golden rods, display our supernatural powers and use our magic to turn the old world upside down, smash it to pieces, pulverize it, create chaos and make a tremendous mess, the bigger the better! We must do this to the present revisionist middle school attached to the Qinghua University, make rebellion in a big way, rebel to the end!"[4] Mao also in his talk pointed out that "the revolution is in a quiet and desultory state" , "All those who suppressed the student movement will come to no good." As a result, on July 28, the central committee withdrew the work group from the universities and high schools, going all out to mobilize the masses to liberate themselves. In this way, anarchy reigned in the campuses, and a storm was looming on the horizon.

On August 1, Mao in his letter to the Red Guards of the High School Attached to Qinghua University expressed his enthusiastic support. Such a move was no less than a booster to the students. What was originally sporadic violence against those teachers and students designated as "black gangs" during the work group period had now also become the norm. On August 5, Bian Zhongyun, vice-principal of the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University in which children of senior party cadres gathered, died in the torture in a series of "struggles" and "labor reform;" she became the first teacher to be beaten to death in the Cultural Revolution.[5] Henceforth, just in the two months of August and September, a total of 1,772 people were killed in

---

[3] "Hailing the First Big-character Poster of the Beijing University" (1966) *People's Daily*; Editorial Group of the Renmin University of China, *Long Live the Victory of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (1966) p.337.

[4] "Long Live the Revolutionary and Rebellious Spirit of the Proletariat," (1966) , Red Guards of the Middle School Attached to the Quinghua University, o*p. cit.* footnote 1

[5] Wang Youqin,*,Victims of the Cultural Revolution – A True Record of the Search for the Oppressed, Imprisoned and Killed* (2004) p.33.

Beijing.[6]

From what has been described above, it can be seen that the death of Bian Zhongyun, vice-principal of the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University, marked the entering of the Cultural Revolution into the phase of "red terror." However, this "incident" (called "August 5 Incident" as it happened on August 5) is missing in the important official historical materials of the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution, the reminiscences, papers, and comments related to the "August Fifth Incident" were gradually introduced, but with all blames pointing to the student leader of that school, Song Binbin – the one who had pinned a red band on Mao Zedong's arm. It was not until 2003 when the American director, Carma Hinton filmed the *Morning Sun*(Carma Hinton,2003) that Song Binbin broke her silence to defend herself. owever, voices of attacks came hot on the heels of her defense.

In 2006, in *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011), a documentary filmed by the Chinese director Hu Jie, the responsibility was once again laid on Song Binbin through the use of images.

Due to the differences in perception between the two sides, this paper subjects these two documentaries to textual analysis, supplementing it with relevant literature and other information, to objectively outline the two different images of Song Binbin in the "August Fifth Incident" as perceived by people and their justice.

II.   Images of Song Binbin in the Morning Sun and the Though I Am Gone

As said above, the violence of the Cultural Revolution commenced in campuses, and the first death from violence in Beijing campuses occurred in the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University on August 5, 1966. After the Cultural Revolution, certain works that touched upon the "August 5 Incident" targeted at a twelfth grader of the then Girls' High School attached to the Beijing Normal University – Song Binbin.

Song Binbin was the daughter of Song Renqiong, one of the Eight Elders, founders of the People's Republic of China. In early June, 1966, at a time when the campus was in chaos, she jointly put up a big-character poster with other schoolmates criticizing the school authorities. After the work group stationed in the school, she became the assistant director of the Revolutionary Teachers and Students Committee, leading the Cultural Revolution in the school. On August 18, following the "August 5 Incident", Mao Zedong for the first time reviewed a million strong army of Red Guards in the Tiananmen Square, during which Song pinned a red band on his arm, while Mao made fun of Song's name, saying "Be martial (yaowu)!" Two days later, an onymous essay titled "I Pinned a Red Band on Chairman Mao's Arm" in the name of Song Yaowu (Song Binbin) was published in the *Guang Ming Daily*. Thenceforth, "Song Yaowu" appeared on the stage of history, was turned into a "symbol" that became the idol of Red Guards, and was also "reasonably" connected with the "August 5 Incident" to become the representative of "killers."

---

[6] *A Chronicle of the Major Events of the Cultural Revolution in Beijing 1966-1967*, p.26; R. Macfarquhar and M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (2009) p.139.

After the Cultural Revolution, the image of Song Binbin in related articles or monographs has one-sidedly been portrayed as a bloodthirsty devil. For example, in the *All Sorts of Rebellions* by the Cultural Revolution researcher Xu Youyu, Song is described as killing 7 to 9 people personally after encouraged by Mao to "be martial."[7]

In 2003, the documentary, *Morning Sun*, produced by Carma Hinton(2003), the American director having close relationship with China, and her crew was released. The name of the film was excerpted from a passage of Mao Zedong,

> "*The world is yours, and ours as well, but in the final analysis, it is yours. You young people are full of vigor and energy and on the rise like the morning sun. We place our hope in you.*"[8]

As the name suggests, this film investigated the effects of that movement that touched upon people's souls of that generation from the perspective of the Red Guards. These interviewees, then Red Guards of that time, were now in their fifties and sixties. They came from families of different class backgrounds, including counter-revolutionaries, rightists and revolutionary cadres. Among them, the one who is most remarkable and has caused most ripples is Song Binbin.

This was the first time Song Binbin offered her explanation in response to the castigation over the years from all circles through the mass media. On the screen, Song hid herself in the shadow, with only her silhouette seen and relating in a low voice:

> "*I at that time was still very naïve, regarding the saying of the Chairman as casual conversation. Yet the newspapers very quickly published an essay, titled "I Pinned a Red Band on Chairman Mao." The whole essay employed the first person, and also used a signature I did not know – Song Yaowu (Song Binbin.) I really could not have imagined that for the sake of propaganda, newspapers could even make up such a name for me, and published the essay in my name. By then, I thought I could no longer use my original name.*" "*[Destroying] the four olds, confiscating people's property, all these not even once I had taken part in. Yet, rumors about me abounded everywhere, saying that the Song Yaowu who pinned a red band on Chairman Mao's arm beat up people in such and such way. I felt especially aggrieved because I had always objected to beating people, to armed struggle. At that time, some Red Guards from many other schools came to our school to see me, but they were very disappointed and asked why I was such a person that in no way match with their imagination of me; this seemed to mean that you were not in any sense revolutionary. I then felt that I was completely deprived of this name and image of mine, and I did not have any slight degree of control and was particularly angry. At the same time, I was extremely grieved to find that so many people suffered because of this name. Our original intention was to criticize the capitalist-revisionist line of the cultural and educational circles; the Cultural Revolution now was already miles apart from what we*

---

[7] Xu Youyu, *All Sorts of Rebellions: Formation and Transformation of the Red Guards' Spirit* (1999) p.64.

[8] People's Liberation Army General Political Department, *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (1966) p.249.

thought when we took part in it." *"After the Up to the Mountain and Down to the Countryside Movement commenced, rumors were spreading even before I arrived. These rumors had it that Song Yaowu had committed killings and arson, raped women, and done all kinds of evils; as a result, the old villagers dared not take me without serious thought. However, through my diligent labor and getting along with them, they in the end also accepted me and treated me very kindly. When my father named me as "Binbin," he had the hope that I would become a gentle girl with elegant manners; in fact, my character was true to my name, and had it not been for such a name, the Chairman would not have said "be martial," and also would not have given rise to the series of rumors following from it. 'Song Yaowu' has gone against my moral principles, and I consider that the whole affair has become a historical misunderstanding and tragedy."* (Carma Hinton, 2003)

That this film had given rise to much controversy afterwards was to a substantial degree due to the manner in which Song Binbin appeared in the film as well as the above content of her own account. For a long time, in the cognition of many people, Song, as she said in her own account, was an "evildoer," and at least should be held responsible for the "August 5 Incident." However, after emerging from a long period of silence through the image media, her concealed appearance in the form of "physically present without showing her face" contrasted so sharply with her radiance on the Tiananmen Rostrum. Director Carma explained that Song did not wish to show her real face as she did not wish to evoke the history of that period in people's mind when they saw her real face.[9] With respect to Song's recounting, it came as no surprise that she voiced out her defense after having been rebuked for so many years. However, the focus dwelt on her denial of being "Song Yaowu" without giving any explanation and clarification of the "August 5 Incident."

By and large, Song Binbin presented in the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) an obscure image of "self-defense." Although "self-defense" was not a cause for criticism, and the director also wanted to give Song an opportunity to clarify (or even whitewash herself?), as what was involved was a controversial historical event, and as the controversial person involved presented a controversial image through this controversial manner, the result would only be more controversies.

In 2006, China's independent documentary film maker, Hu Jie, filmed a long documentary, *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011), in response to the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003). This film focuses on Wang Jingyao, husband of the victim of the incident, vice-principal Bian Zhongyun. After the incident, Wang bought a camera, and took photos of the remains of Bian, the blood-stained clothes, and the big character posters that spread all over his home; the images were recorded on the negatives that were to become the eternal marks. These photographs span the whole film; this silent indictment at that time has now transformed into animated images, telling the stories of the how the victims of the Cultural Revolution met their death.

---

[9] Zeng Huiyan, "Why the "sun" did not set – The *Morning Sun* Records the Journey of the Mind of the Cultural Revolution Generation." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from
http://www.edubridge.com/erxiantang/l2/morningsun_zenghuiyan.htm

Although the content of the *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011) involved the "August 5 Incident", there was no interviews of the people involved in it throughout the whole film, (which the director explained that no one was willing to be interviewed.)[10] Rather it makes a low-key and non-sensational accusation from the perspective of the victims. For example, Mr. Wang took out an original document signed by seven people of the then Revolutionary Teachers and Students Committee to show that it was signed by the members attending the Committee on the night of the incident. Here, it is already evident that the responsibility for the incident should be shouldered by these seven people, and the signature on the far left was exactly "Song Binbin." At about the middle part of the film, as Wang was relating a series of red terror, the newsreel of Mao reviewing the Red Guards on August 18, 1966 cut in. Song Binbin was on the joyous Tiananmen Rostrum, jubilantly pinning a red band on Mao's arm, with the narrator excitedly saying that "the Red Guard from the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University pinned a red band on Chiarman Mao's arm. Chairman Mao asked for her name, to which she replied Song Binbin. Chairman asked if it was the "bin (meaning gentle and elegant" in "wenzhi binbin (meaning gentle and elegant in manners)," to which she replied yes. Chairman Mao followed by saying: Be martial." This 18 second footage completely presents the interaction between Song and Mao, and is the only part of the film in which the image of the student involved appeared. Here the targeted person is crystal clear. With the remains of vice-principal Bian scarcely cold, the main student leader of the school jubilantly stood with Mao and then published an essay in the name of "Song Yaowu." This is why many people found it hard to forgive in later years. So when this was connected with the list in the first part of the film, the "list" being the "August 5 Incident" while "Song pinned a red band on Mao's arm" being the "August 18 Review," the combined effect of the two was that Song Binbin in this film was treated as the main "inflictor" in the "August 5 Incident" and as the "face" linked to the violence in the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University. Even from the standpoint of the families of the victims, though Song might not have participated in beating up people, she was in their company[11] and was on the side of the "evil." So, the result of the connection between the "August 5 Incident" and the "August 18 Review" was the formation of the "Song Binbin symbol," which has become the politically correct cognition of this incident after the Cultural Revolution.

---

[10] "An Exclusive Interview with Documentary Driector Hu Jie: Reflections on the Cultural Revolution That we Still Have Not Emerged from Its Shadow." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://zhangjieping.blogspot.tw/2008/02/blog-post.html

[11] Feng Xiang, "Wang Jingyao on the Death of Bian Zhongyun: I Have Not Forgotten History."

Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.infzm.com/content/98889

Figure 2. "August 5 Incident" and the "August 18 Review" was the formation of the "Song Binbin symbol."

Based on the above discussion, the images of Song Binbin in the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) and the *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011) are enumerated and compared in the table below:

Table 1
Images of Song Binbin in the Morning Sun and the Though I Am Gone

Images of Song Binbin in the *Morning Sun* and the *Though I Am Gone*		
	***Morning Sun*(Carma Hinton, 2003)**	***Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011)**
Manner of Presentation	Attending interview in person, but concealing her appearance in shadow, and showing only her silhouette; speaking but not showing up	Selecting the newsreel of Mao reviewing the Red Guards in 1966; completely presenting the footage of the interaction between Song Binbin, then 17, and Mao.
Speech	Defending herself in the controversy; denying having published an essay in the name of "Song "Yaowu;" considering all rumors as misunderstanding without however mentioning the "August 5 Incident."	The narrator relating the dialogue between Song and Mao regarding "Binbin" and "Yaowu."
Overall image	Concealing the appearance gives people a negative feeling of being not open and candid, and of being obscure and ambiguous. Her whole "self-defense" to absolve herself seemed not to have first faced squarely the history of the controversy, displaying a magnanimous stance. The original intention of clarification, as a result of the above backfired moves, generated more controversies afterwards.	By linking up the "August 5 Incident" with the "August 18 Review" through the images of the Song-Mao interaction, the "Song Binbin symbol" naturally came into being, presenting the "classic" image of Song.

III. The Controversy of Song Binbin

The *Morning Sun*(Carma Hinton, 2003) interviewed several high school students (Red Guards) during the Cultural Revolution in order to investigate the relationship between the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards. However, after it was released, the issues that it intended to explore seemed to be no longer relevant, as the audience focus their attention on the speech of Song Binbin and the manner of presenting her. The various disputes that came in the wake are listed in the table below:

Table 2
The Controversy over Song Binbin in the Morning Sun

The Controversy over Song Binbin in the *Morning Sun*(Carma Hinton, 2003)	
Topic of Controversy	**Content of Controversy**
Presentation in the form of concealing the appearance	Song's "speaking but not showing up" can be regarded as "only coming out after repeated calls, and reluctantly presenting herself on the screen while still hiding her face."[12] As a result of the notoriety of the old Red Guards in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, Song, under pressure, did not show up. However, Song had already been a public figure in the Cultural Revolution, and together with the video record, such a reason seemed far-fetched.[13] Also, under this protective umbrella, she could freely "defend herself," claiming that she had never beaten people up. Yet people in general would find it hard to accept such defense immediately.[14]
Speech in the film	"Song Yaowu" was the "conferred name" by the "greater leader" and should be something about which one should be happy and extremely flattered. Yet Song said that she knew nothing of this "made-up" name. This kind of "resisting the great leader" did not fit in with the thinking logic during the Cultural Revolution.[15] Moreover, she later issued a statement and intervened in the Wuhan Incident. Additionally, Song said she "had always objected to beating people up and armed struggle," but when the school authorities were under violent attack, Song as the then student leader had not been seen to step in to stop it, which led to the escalation of the violence.[16]

[12] Hua Xinmin, "To Begin with the Sun that Did Not Show Up – Watching the Film, *Morning Sun*," Retrieved November 20, 2016, from
http://www.edubridge.com/erxiantang/l2/morningsun_huaxinmin.htm

[13] *Op. cit,*. footnote 9.

[14] Hu Ping, "A Review of the *Morning Sun.*" Retrieved November 20, 2016, from
http://www.huping.net/works/counthead/counthead-2/counthead-2-3.htm

[15] *Op. cit,*. footnote 9.

[16] *Op. cit,*. footnote 14.

As a result of the interview with Song Binbin, the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) had aroused a great controversy. Then, the *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011) appeared. It accused the tragedy of the "August 5 Incident" from the perspective of the victims, and through the organization of images placed the responsibility on Song Binbin. Similarly, it aroused the people holding a different stand, whose arguments are shown in the table below:

Table 3
The Controversy over Song Binbin in the Morning Sun

The Controversy over Song Binbin in the *Though I Am Gone*(Hu Jie, 2011)	
Topic of Controversy	**Content of Controversy**
Was Song Binbin a "Red Guard"?	Prior to August 5, as a result of the withdrawal of the work group from the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University, the legitimacy of the "Revolutionary Teachers and Students Committee" that originally supported the work group was weakened and its authority seriously eroded. This also undermined Song's position as the then "student leader." So the school at that time was in "a state of power vacuum" and there was no actual "Red Guard organization."[17]
Did Song Binbin beat people up?	There were no witnesses to Song's taking part in beating people.[18]
Why Song Binbin did not stop the Red Guards from beating people?	Members of the "Revolutionary Teachers and Students Committee" had no foreknowledge of the struggle of August 5, but even if they knew of it, they could only support it,[19] for "beating people" was seen at that time as "revolutionary behavior," which hence should in no way be criticized.[20]
The 7-people list of that appeared in the film	Clarifying that this list was a list of guarantee co-signed by the teachers and students of the Revolutionary Teachers and Students Committee when they sent Bian to the hospital for treatment. It was to show that the seven people were to jointly shoulder the responsibility so that the hospital would save Bian.[21] They then were not the culprits of the incident.

The images of Song Binbin in the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) and the *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011) are diametrically different, which rendered people of different standpoints to have different opinions and comments on these presentations. However, as long as the historical truth remains buried, it can be believed that such controversy will never disappear.

---

[17] Ye Weili, "The Death of Bian Zhongyun," Qi Zhi (ed.,) *Stories Are Not History – Documentaries and Writings on the Cultural Revolutiion* (Taipei: Showwe Information, April 2004,) p.30-35.

[18] *Op. cit.,* footnote 17, p.47.
[19] Op. cit., footnote 17, p.59.
[20] *Op. cit.,* footnote 17, p.37.
[21] *Op. cit.,* footnote 19, p.61.

IV. Conclusion

During the Cultural Revolution, all sorts of movements had caused the unnatural death of a massive number of people. Though the differences over the number of deaths remain unsettled, what can be certain is that the violence and death in the Cultural Revolution commenced in the campuses that should be places where the sound of reading aloud is heard.

On August 5, 1966, the students of the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University beat the vice-principal, Bian Zhongyun, to death. Such an incident had become the indicator. After that, under the passive handling and secretly instigation by the authorities, the green light was given to violent behavior; "killing" became a "revolutionary action," which was not a dinner party, and could not be that gentle, kind, courteous, restrained and moderate.

After the Cultural Revolution, this incident has been included in the subject matter of some writings, all of which however pinned the responsibility on the student leader, Song Binbin. The logic behind is that she pinned a red band on Mao's arm, and accepted the conferred name "Song Yaowu," which was the symbol of "violence." So tracing back from this, the "August 5 Incident" could hardly be separated from Song's violence.

In 2003, Song defended herself through the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) in the manner of "speaking but not showing up." What was originally a superb opportunity for open and honest clarification generated instead more controversies as a result of her being unforthcoming and pretentious, and the image of overly "self-defensive" in her speech. In 2006, the documentary, *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011), on the other hand discoursed from the perspective of the victims of the incident, linking up the "August 5 Incident" with the "August 18 Review" to reinvent the "classic" "Song Binbin symbol."

The documentaries ended, but the controversy has not gone with it. In 2007, Song Binbin was selected as the honorary alumna of the Experimental High School attached to Beijing Normal University (originally the Girls' High School attached to Beijing Normal University), which naturally caused great reverberations; in 2014, Song publicly offered her apology to the victims of that time. Despite it being a positive act, this move still led to opposing views. Mr. Wang Jingyao, husband of vice-principal Bian, also refused to accept this apology.

From what has been said above, for reason of the obscurity of historical truth, the image and stand of Song Binbin in the "August 5 Incident" haven been shaped from different angles in the perspectives of people holding different views; however, historical facts must not be molded. What this paper has done is simply to treat the two documentaries, the *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003) and the *Though I Am Gone* (Hu Jie, 2011), as its texts, and analyze the images of and controversy over Song Binbin presented in them. This Incident still has much more development and academic issues, which await follow-up mining and research.

References

Song Yongyi, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (CD) (2002).

"Hailing the First Big-character Poster of the Beijing University" (1966) *People's Daily*; Editorial Group of the Renmin University of China, *Long Live the Victory of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (1966)

Wang Youqin,,*Victims of the Cultural Revolution – A True Record of the Search for the Oppressed, Imprisoned and Killed* (2004)

A Chronicle of the Major Events of the Cultural Revolution in Beijing 1966-1967, p.26; R. Macfarquhar and M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (2009)

Xu Youyu, *All Sorts of Rebellions: Formation and Transformation of the Red Guards' Spirit* (1999)

People's Liberation Army General Political Department, *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (1966)

Zeng Huiyan, "Why the "sun" did not set – The *Morning Sun* Records the Journey of the Mind of the Cultural Revolution Generation." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.edubridge.com/erxiantang/l2/morningsun_zenghuiyan.htm

"An Exclusive Interview with Documentary Driector Hu Jie: Reflections on the Cultural Revolution That we Still Have Not Emerged from Its Shadow." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://zhangjieping.blogspot.tw/2008/02/blog-post.html

Feng Xiang, "Wang Jingyao on the Death of Bian Zhongyun: I Have Not Forgotten History." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.infzm.com/content/98889

Hua Xinmin, "To Begin with the Sun that Did Not Show Up – Watching the Film, *Morning Sun*," Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.edubridge.com/erxiantang/l2/morningsun_huaxinmin.htm

Hu Ping, "A Review of the *Morning Sun*." Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.huping.net/works/counthead/counthead-2/counthead-2-3.htm

Ye Weili, "The Death of Bian Zhongyun," Qi Zhi (ed.,) *Stories Are Not History – Documentaries and Writings on the Cultural Revolutiion* (Taipei: Showwe Information, April 2004,)

Contact email: tiga39@gmail.com

Multi-Layered Structure of Documentary Narration and The Blurring Lines

Nihan Gider Isikman, Baskent University, Turkey

The Asian Conference on Film & Documentary 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

"Reality" has always been on the focus within the documentary narration and in order to come closer to reality, search for the new techniques and forms has continued throughout the history of documentary cinema. Reality, within the framework of multi-layered structure of the documentary narration, consists of a reference to the documentary. So, documentaries should be considered as a dynamic field, where a number of look or perspectives intersect. This intersection point, creating a complex and multi-dimensional object, allows exploring and understanding different identities of them all, the documentarist, the subject and the audience. As the narrative styles of documentaries are transforming continuously with the effects of social, cultural, political and technological changes, the aim of this work is to crystallize the narrative layers of documentarist, subject and audience through the exemplification and analysis of one of the most recent and strong films. "*Wedding: A Film*" (Dir. Mohammadreza Farzad, 2015) is a poetic film essay about the director himself, on the verge of divorce, deciding to re-watch his wedding footages with the possible mission of tracing back the break up to the happy ceremony. He begins to make a film about the poetics of wedding films, with his ex-wife as the editor, to revise and re-edit their broken marriage. With the analysis of this film, it will be possible to see that as it is blurring who the filmmaker, subject or the audience is, the film reaches a sincerer point in the search of reality in the documentary narration.

Keywords: Documentary Narration, Narrative Forms, Reality, Self-Representation

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

According to Protagoras " Man is the measure of all things…The wind is cold to the one who feels cold, but not cold to the one who does not feel cold… Two contrary statements can be uttered on every subject." (as cited in Kranz, 1994, p.194). Therefore, one of the two statements is true or false in accordance with its compliance with the reality. Reality, in its general sense as a philosophical concept, means something that exists in thought or something that exists contrary to the things which were thought, which means something existing out of what was formerly thought (Akarsu, 1975). Image, the core means of expression of cinema, is regarded as a reality which is perceived without requiring words. The difference between verbal and visual expression is that image makes the illusion more effectual due to the presence of the natural power of reality and evidentiality in it. "We are all used to making judgment on 'the real' forms of objects and we do it so unthinkingly that we start to believe we can really see the real forms. In practice, however, when we want to draw a painting, as we all should learn, a specific thing appears in different ways to all points of views."   (Russell, 200, p.12). Hence, what seems is not real. A motion picture generates a representation of the reality like other expressions and mass communication tools do. All motion pictures are edited, therefore they hold a qualification that cannot reflect the reality faithfully.

"Exaggeration is inevitable in art" suggests Dostoyevski (as cited in Jakobson, 1995, p.84-93). To him, it is necessary to deform the earlier appearance of the object in order to reveal it just like the pieces to be examined under the microscope are stained. Thus, the object is given a different color so that it would be more sensitive, visible and real. Cinema has been regarded as a mechanical tool that regenerates the reality since its early years that start with actuality films. What is accomplished by the act of cinema is uttering a word, narrating a story or sharing a message either it is a nonfiction or a fiction; namely it could be either a documentary filmed in real time and life, or shooting in a fictional universe that is created. Whereas Christian Metz, (1982, p.44) suggests that every film is fiction, Bill Nichols (2001, p.1) suggests that every film is a documentary. In this regard, it is possible to handle every shot as a fiction. While each shot takes sections from time and space, it conveys visuals and/or sounds of everything, such as the people, the use of place, events and things resulting from the presence of camera there at that moment. Therefore, it is clear that there are certain recces, decisions taken behind every shot, such as technical choices made, and the items that are chosen to be in the representation of that social-historical place.

Roy Armes defines cinema's approach to the reality in three ways. The first cinematic approach is the one that is based upon the reality, the second is the one that imitates the reality and the last is the one that questions the reality. What the filmmaker does in the first approach is to display the subject, people and objects in their own natural environments and the filmmaker demonstrates the world as he/she sees it. Fiction is in the least level. The second approach attempts to achieve generating an imitation of life and reality instead of one-to-one relation with the reality as in the first approach. Therefore, the level of fiction is higher. The third approach questions the ostensible reality's meaning that is somewhere deeper. While the second and third approaches can be seen at the fictional cinema, the first one corresponds to the approach of the documentaries (Armes, 1974, p.10).

The Documentary Reality; Whose Reality Is It?

The key features of documentaries that differ from other types of films, especially fictional films, can be handled under five basic categories. These are; their subjects, objectives, points of view and their approaches, structures and features of production, and finally what they have to offer to the audience. In terms of their subjects, it can be concluded that documentary films have abandoned the general things concerning people, especially individual acts, relations and emotions to the fictional films. Therefore, within the framework of the subjects, points of view and approaches that the documentary films handle, their objectives come to the forefront as forming an attitude in the audience by means of recording and conveying what is in front of the camera in order to impress the audience. At that point, they undertake a social responsibility, which requires the structure of the documentary films depend upon what already exists rather than forming the content or constituting it. Within this structural scope, production features that contain real people, and real time and place shots, and natural lighting, editing far from transforming the meaning becomes something inevitable. In this regard of main features, what it has to present to the audience is a social experience that extends to getting into action (Ellis, 2005, p.1-3).

Bill Nichols (1991, p.167) defines the relation between the documentary and reality in terms of not only a form but also a professional code, an ethics and a ritual. Thus, documentary and reality relation makes the understanding of documentary ethics significant. The audience's pre-acceptance that the documentary narrates the reality makes the ethical approach in documentary a must. While John Grierson defines the documentary as "the creative production of the reality" (as cited in Renov, 1993, p.33), Patricia Aufderheide (2007, p.2) suggests that documentaries are windows opening to the reality from the eyes of the documentarist using real life as an ingredient. Within the scope of the multidimensionality of reality in documentaries, it can also be suggested that the real world is a reference for the documentaries. As the first phase of reality, it is exposed to the mediation of the documentarist. Which culture's with what characteristics will be presented in what types of correlations are all within the initiative of the documentarist. As for the second phase, the mediation which is caused by how the people that are the subjects of the documentary see themselves, and how they would like to appear in the film, should be considered. Thirdly, the audience gives meaning to the reality that is presented again in the film according to their references in their own lives. Three different worlds of the documentarist, subject and the audience emerge as three different dimensions in the documentary film reality.

The documentarist and his/her documentary are subjective and the documentarist expresses his/her own reality. The world and how it will be presented depends directly upon how the documentarist feels it. His/her perception covers the things he/she sees and what he/she sees as significant. The documentarist approaches his/her subject as a material to analyze and gives the meaning to it by the help of the things it contains within himself/herself. Although the process looks like the information is being transferred or translocated from the people who are the subjects in the film towards the audience, a documentary film, as a product, is also a tool that asks the questions who the documentarist is and what she/he believes, and gives answers.

To the documentarist, there are two different realities in question; the first is what there is in the visor and the second is the images in the film. During the shooting, the documentarist breathes the same air with his/her subject and is surrounded by the same objects and sounds with them. Their expectations are the same – a door's being opened, an unexpected arrival or a farewell, the nightfall. In such moments, the reality of the subject and that of the documentarist are woven tightly with each other. This reality affects the visuals in the film but it is however different than that as it is edited and fictionalized with other images.

The witnessing of the person behind the camera to the moment, the representation of the time and space that are formed cannot be thought unattached from the audience watching the record. Upon the reception of the audience, it gains a continuity along with the time and space in which he/she lives. On the one hand, during the production process, a film is made thinking within the perspective of its own epoch's conditions, therefore it is necessary to analyze and evaluate the films reception taking these factors into consideration as well. Furthermore, the interpretation of the reality that is formed by means of these features also starts its evolution along with the scope of the conditions of the time and space, and keeps on evolving endlessly from one individual to another, from one period of time to another in such a way that it can gain various other meanings and prominence in one's life (Öncel, 2005, p.81).

When we attempt to adapt Barthes' (1977, p.19) comment on photograph to the documentary, a documentary is not only something to be seen and perceived but also something to be read; the audience who consume it associate it with their own backgrounds. Each individual watches the film with his/her own personal, cultural and political background and fields of interest, and what the individual understands from the film can be something totally else than the message the documentarist primarily plans to convey. While mentioning the position of the audience who are not only consumers but also producers, it is also necessary to think of the conditions, in which the watching is fulfilled, can shape their opinions. During the production process of the film, however its own epoch and related political, economic, social, scientific, intellectual, cultural, legal, administrative, artistic and technological conditions and rules affect the structure that is formed, the meanings gained from the film by watching it are similarly affected.

While discussing the mediation of the people who are the subjects of the film, the multidimensional structure, in which the person who self-exists, the person who is structuralized due to his/her relation with the documentarist, and the person who is structuralized due to his/her relation with the audience, should also be taken into consideration (MacDougall, 1999, p.249). The presence of the documentarist and camera raise people's self-awareness, by way of which they become alienated to themselves and one of the fractures in reality emerges. The individual hides his/her own reality, and along with the social, personal, psychological factors and so forth, he/she presents a different reality which he/she is expected or which he/she thinks he/she is expected. Apart from the relation of the person, who is the subject of the documentary, with the documentarist, what sort of a relation he/she establishes with the audience is also efficacious upon the multidimensional structure. The closer the world of the person in the documentary to that of the audience's, the higher rate of perception is observed depending on the level of the affiliation.

Reality Through An Open Subjectivity

Michael Rabiger suggests that "While defining documentary, it is not possible to set certain rules, but it is possible to mention a search on where you will draw the line within the scope of your common understanding with your audience." (as cited in Aufderheide, 2007, p.3). The first-person narration style can be evaluated as the result of these searches. Just like literature, painting and performing arts, narrating oneself or narrating the world from the point of his/her own self dates back to art forms of the remote past. Specifically speaking of the examples in various art forms, it can be suggested that the reality which the autobiographic narrations reveal is an intrinsic reality rather than an extrinsic one; therefore, thinking in terms of cinema, it is expressive that Lebow (2012, p.2) claims all films are in the style of the first-person narration. Because, in the world of images, people gain their identities by means of not only what they do but also how they display themselves and the world, as Renov (2008, p.48) also states. When the construction of identity is considered as an overall addition of reflection of social relations, and variable, multiple identities clashing with one other, it can be claimed that the "I" in the first-person narration actually reflects a "We", which in fact confirms that every film can be regarded as the first-person narration.

When the first-person documentaries, as providing the formation of the people that are the subjects of the film and their representation is within their own control, are handled from the point of the audience, the relation between the documentary and reality is drawn into a less problematic area because it is known that real people narrate their own stories with their own interpretation rather than someone else doing it on behalf of them. However, it will still be incomplete to interpret these as an ideal method from the point of presentation, because it should always be kept in mind that the documentarist might awaringly or unawaringly apply self-censorship on his self-presentation. Thus, the essential thing is the narrator's associating the audience with his/her witnessing in person, not the first-person's participation in the narration. In general, an argument is not directly put forward, but the audience is expected to realize the narrator's reality and embrace his/hers with those of theirs. As Aufderheide (1997, p.16) also emphasizes as the borders among the private and public spheres are becoming ambiguous, individual experiences gain a social context.

Essay films as another result of the searches in the documentary narration should also be examined that Alter (2007, p.52) defines that if in art, the audio-visual essay emerges from an attempt to fuse the genre of the documentary with avant-garde or experimental film, in cinema the audio-visual essay develops from the attempt to combine the documentary and the fictional or feature film genres. So as a hybrid form that crosses boundaries and rests somewhere in between fiction and nonfiction cinema "an essay is neither fiction nor fact, but a personal investigation involving both the passion and intellect of the author." (Giannetti, 1975, p.26).

As a style, the essay film, which allows the imagination and creativity live at their peak with all the artistic potential it bears, can be traced back to Dziga Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) and can date back to 1920's in the history of the cinema (Alter, 2007, p.49). To Vertov (2007, p.82), we have low vision and can see little. Therefore, humans invented the microscope to see the objects that cannot be viewed by the naked eye, and the telescope to see further and discover unknown worlds. As

for the camera, it was invented to infiltrate more deeply into the visible world and to save and analyze the visual phenomena. Thus, the Kino-Glaz (Cine-Eye) takes the benefits of any shooting techniques possible: Fast or slow motion, extreme close shot, reverse motion, animation, camera moves, zoom in or out unexpectedly, use of the hidden camera and so forth. Vertov sees them not as visual effects but as normal techniques to utilise fully. To exemplify this, he interprets the slow motion as an opportunity "which can see the invisible, make the ambiguous clearer, which can make a scene look like it was shot without the cast, make the unreal real, in other words *kinopravda* (in this case, *the reality* that can only be reached by the slow motion with cinematic tools).

An analysis of the film *Wedding: A Film* (Dir. Mohammadreza Farzad, 2015)*,* which was defined as an essay film by its own director, within the scope of reflectivity and subjectivity as the basic features of essay films and as a first-person documentary, makes it possible to see that as it is blurring who is the filmmaker, subject or the audience, film becomes to a sincerer point in the search of reality in documentary narration.

Wedding; So Personal, Too Common

Thanks to the technological advancements in the audio-visual recording and processing equipment after the 1970's, more easily affordable and accessible cameras have become a part of daily lives. A privilege, once belonging only to some specific people in terms of expertness earlier; the audio-visual recording is so common and a mostly used tool for documentation purposes in social life, family life and private sphere today. While the borders among the studying, entertaining, working or resting are getting vaguer with internet, everyone becomes not only a consumer but also a content provider with the use of smartphones, tablets, pcs that are always on and online. A birthday party, the moment a gift box being opened or a family dinner can be viewed by the rest of the world. The driving motivational force in these records is the fact that those moments can never be repeated or witnessed again in course of time. In this sense, wedding ceremonies are such a special and worldwide event as well. Handling the social forms of the video, Roy Armes (1988, p.100) emphasizes that a wedding ceremony that is not recorded or viewed is poorly regarded as a real wedding. These videos as important memory records for wedding owners, also serve as significant documents of the wedding rituals of the culture it belongs. Therefore, even if it is an amateur shooting, in terms of a historical study, the audial visual information it bears cannot be ignored even it might not be accepted as the reality or the history itself.

"Wedding: A Film" (Dir. Mohammadreza Farzad, 2015), which bases on the marriage, a universal concept, upon such an audio-visual material, is a personal, poetic essay, in which Farzad tries to understand the institution and concept of marriage. Farzad does a survey playing his own wedding video over and over again looking for early signs of unhappiness in his marriage and his divorce. He looks at other people's wedding videos to investigate whether a happy wedding means, and is, synonymous with a happy marriage. The hunt for answers goes from the personal and empties into the issues of marriage function in society.

The rich material, which contains different footages both from the director's own wedding and other weddings, documents the Iranian wedding rituals such as the henna night, honey eating, wedding cake and rings. Being not only a cultural documentation, the recordings have a deeper meaning, which emerges when the director asks such questions as; "Why are we getting married in front of others? Why do we need the witnesses and signatures? Why are we recording our wedding but not our divorce?". The camera witnesses the moments just like the guests do and forms a memory. While watching the video of his wedding ceremony with his ex-wife as the editor, Farzad underlines that he remembers nothing about his wedding ceremony and that video is the only thing left from that day.

Along with the use of the first-person narration, the editing of the film carries the beauty and intelligence of words parallel with the visuals used. The collage of personal archives, found footage, scenes from fiction films, shootings of the fictive bride and groom, newsreels of the royal wedding or from the wedding of Queen Farah Pahlavi produces juxtaposition between the past tense of archival images and the present tense of the commentary. Besides, agreeing with Vertov, who benefits from all sorts of effects that a camera and edit has to offer, and sees camera as a tool, which is used to infiltrate more deeply into the visible world and save images of it to analyze, Farzad slows, pauses, rewinds and replays the scene of himself leaving the florist one after another, and he watches and makes his wife watch it on and on. Here the film becomes a physical and metaphoric interface on which the director himself as the commentator engages a radical shift in the expressions of the self. Within its whole reflectivity and subjectivity, neither fiction nor fact, the film turns out to become a personal investigation involving both the passion and intellect of the director. Beyond its story, the director questions the documentary form of the film within this subjectivity, and he also questions the production of the film by going out of the production at times. In his commentary, he expresses that he is well-aware that he might be applying self-censorship as the film has become too personal and he cannot collect his thoughts or feel comfortable. He discusses the self-censorship and self-presentation in the first-person documentaries, which can be applied by the documentarist himself/herself intentionally or unintentionally, in person. Farzad uses the term *image repertoire* by Barthes in order to explain what he tries to grasp in the way he looks at himself. According to Barthes (1996, p.27), the "I", who is in front of the four image repertoires and the lens, is at the same time; what I think I am, what I want others to think I am, what the photographer thinks I am and what I use to reveal the art of the photographer.

Farzad, as the authorial figure, is very direct, for instance by making himself visible and using his voice. This subjective position of the director, who is also the subject of the film and the audience, makes the three different dimensions of the documentary film reality clearly visible along with Barthes' (1977, p.19) aforementioned opinion, which brings self-background of the audience to the fore. Each spectator, as an individual gets into a dialogical relationship with the director and becomes active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the film as a narration using both visual and verbal language. Questions that are directly addressed to the spectator within the text of the film are also attempts to establish this dialogue, such as; "Am I taking revenge on my ex-wife by making her watch the video again and again?", "What am I looking for in this film?", or just after showing the Hollywood style video productions for couples, he asks "Do marriages evolve into a film production as

well?" The audience, who take an active position in the relation established by means of the questions asked them, gain a self-searching authorial presence.

Conclusion

A must of the ethics in editing a documentary, namely in re-interpreting the reality and presenting it again, is that the documentarist should approach his/her subject with objectivity; or as in the essay film and the first-person documentary, he/she should make his stand and subjectivity clear. Not until the documentarist states his/her subjectivity explicitly, can the documentaries reach beyond answering the questions of who, what, when, where and why, and convey not only the information but also the comment of the documentarist. If it is a film with a singular message that is being made and this is openly expressed to the audience, then it is an ethical approach that is shown. As it blurres with the narrative style of essay films and the first-person documentaries, the filmmaker, subject or the audience, the film reaches a much sincerer point in the search of the reality in documentaries.

In order to draw the relation of documentary and reality into a less problematic ground and show an ethical approach, the documentarist has three questions to ask himself/herself. The first one is what his/her film is about, the second one is why he/she wants to do it, in other words; what is it that takes his/her attention in that specific project, and lastly; does he/she have any thoughts which might even slightly influence his/her objectivity while processing the subject. Nothing is absolutely objective, however, the documentarist can make a more realistic film and show an ethical approach only if he/she undertakes the responsibility of the point of view that is adopted in handling the subject (Swindells, 2007, p.433).

When the variability of the reality and objectives and functions of the documentary are considered, the documentarist and audience should accept that a documentary, as being something further than just "a source of information", is actually a step forward in the path of the search for the reality, which leads to "questioning and investigating, and the information". Considering the analysis of the documentaries as important efforts to resist the disappearance of individual experiences, as seen in the example, the individual experiences should be transferred so that they can gain publicity. Experiences can be free from individualism only after joining the social life, and thus it is possible that they can touch the different lives. Every new documentary inspires new films and makes the society think about the different meanings of the life experiences by making the individuals take a look at their own families and reveal their secrets. Hearing unique individuals' little stories that remained within the family can start something be discussed in the real sense. The cinema is becoming a more effectual tool with its search in its narration and its ability to make the small voices be perceptible.

References

Akarsu, B. (1975). *Felsefe Terimleri Sözlüğü*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları.

Alter, N. M. (2007). Translating The Essay into Film and Installation. *Journal of Visual Culture*, *6*(1), p.44-57.

Armes, R. (1974). *Film and Reality, A Historical Survey*, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Armes, R. (1998). *On Video*. London: Routledge.

Aufderheide, P. (1997). "Public Intimacy: The Development of First-person Documentary". *Afterimage*, 25 (1).

Aufderheide, P. (2007). *Documentary Film, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Barthes, R. (1977). "The Photographic Message" in *Image-Music-Text*, Translated by S. Heath, Glasgow: Fontana.

Barthes, R. (1996). *Camera Lucida: Fotoğraf Üzerine Düşünceler*. Translated by Reha Akçakaya, İstanbul: Altıkırkbeş.

Ellis, J. C., B. A. McLane. (2005). *A New History of Documentary Film*. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Giannetti, L. D. (1975). *Godard and Others: Essays on Film Form*, Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Jakobson, R. (1995). "Sanatta Gerçekçilik Üstüne" in *Yazın Kuramı, Rus Biçimcilerinin Metinleri*, Tzvetan Todorov (Ed.), Translated by Mehmet Rifat, Sema Rifat, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p.84-93.

Kranz, W.(1994). *Antik Felsefe*. Translated by Suad Y. Baydur, İstanbul: Sosyal Yay., 1994.

Lebow, A. (2012). *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary*. Columbia University Press.

MacDougall, D. (1999). *Transcultural Cinema*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Metz, C. (1982). *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, London:The Mc Millan Press.

Nichols, B. (1991). *Representing Reality; Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Nichols, B. (2001). *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Öcel, N. (2005). *Belgesel Film Üstüne Yazılar*. Ankara: Babil Yay.

Renov, M. (1993). *Theorizing Documentary*. Routledge.

Renov, M. (2008). "First-person Films. Some Theses on Self-inscription." in *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices*, Thomas Austin, Wilma de Jong(Ed.) Maidenhead/New York: McGraw Hill, p.39-50.

Russell, B. (2000). *Felsefe Sorunları*. Translated by Vehbi Hacıkadiroğlu, İstanbul: Kabalcı Yay.

Swindells, J. (2007). "Ruhun Peşinde" in *Belgesel Film Yapım Sanatı*, Michael Tobias (Ed.), İstanbul: Kolaj Kitaplığı, p.427-434.

Vertov, D.(2007). *Sine-Göz*, Translated by A. Ergenç, İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.

Origin, Transformation and Era Significance of the Traditional Photography Studio of Taiwan: A Documentary Study of the John Photography Studio

Chien-Yuan Tseng, Department of Motion Pictures and Video & Graduate School of Media Arts, Kun Shan University, Taiwan
Hsien-Cheng Liu, Department of Motion Pictures and Video & Graduate School of Media Arts, Kun Shan University, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Film & Documentary 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract
The first landscape photograph of Taiwan might be taken by Saint-Julien Edwards in 1865. In early 1870s, Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay and missionaries used the technology of photography to capture many photos of Taiwan. After the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, Japan took control of Taiwan due to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, so Japanese photography studio entered Taiwan. In 1901, the Lin Photography Studio and Er-Wo Photography Studio were the earliest Taiwanese photography studios. During the Japanese colonial period, Taiwanese learned the technology of photography to operate photography studios. The most remarkable studios were operated by many Taiwanese charcoal portrait artists who learned photography.
The reasons for choosing John Photography Studio as a documentary theme are: 1. John Chang's aunt, Ms. Chang Cong-Ming, was Dr. Mackay's wife. 2. Mr. Chang, originally a charcoal portrait artist, learned photography from Japanese photographer. 3. The Photography studio, founded in 1934, changed little. 4. John Photography Studio is currently operated by John's son, so it's easy to get John's works. 5. It did not transform into wedding photography studio and fast print shop. 6. During the development of digital photography, John Photography Studio continues to take film and digital portrait.
For the documentary of John Photography Studio, there are three questions: What were the roles of photography studios, when the cameras were not common? What are the fates of traditional industries when confronted with urban transition? How did digital process deconstruct the traditional industries?

Keywords: documentary, Taiwanese photography studio, charcoal portrait artist

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Due to the prevalence of the Internet and image digitalization, the way people seeing photos has been transformed in which photos are not printed anymore. They instead are stored in digital memory devices as "spirit," and are summoned onto the screen when needed. Photos are undergoing a period of transition. However, photos of family members hung up high in the living rooms and photos kept in albums are still treasures of people. Traditional photography studios left in modern cities are where photos are produced, and they keep the appearance and memories of an era for us. In the epoch of digitalization of photography, traditional photography studios hidden in the cities are like historical remains, exuding exotic atmosphere. In terms of filming a documentary, a traditional photography studio bearing history is seemingly a novel topic to hunt for. According to Sontag (1977), "*The justification is still the same, that picture-taking serves a high purpose: uncovering a hidden truth, conserving a vanishing past.*"

Determining the traditional photography studio in Taiwan as a topic of documentary is out of hunting for novelty, or conserving a vanishing past, we are unable to justify. Nevertheless, when focusing on photography by means of traditional photography studio, our interest is obviously triggered, especially in present period when hardcopy photos move towards digital devices as spirit. Think about the reasons for realizing photography in Taiwan through photography studio: timeline is a core element. We are thus in need of a historic photography studio, hoping that it enable us to see the origin of photography in Taiwan, the transformation and significance.

Literature Review

To date, there isn't yet any official book concerning the history of photography in Taiwan, which is still been sorted and discussed dispersedly. Take publication as an example, Wu (1993) separated Taiwanese photography history into seven periods in earlier stage. Huang (1996) then in Introduction to Taiwanese Photography began to explore the time and the photographer of the very first photo taken in Taiwan. One Hundred Years of Taiwan Photography, Annual of Photography in Taiwan, published in 1998, is a development report of Taiwanese photography as well, narrating the looks from Japanese Colonial Period to Government of the Republic of China in Taiwan (Chang, 1998). During the conference, A Retrospective of One Hundred Years of Taiwan Photography, taking place in Taiwan in 2003, Aalsvoort (2003) specifically pointed out that the first photo in Taiwan was taken by St. Jullen Hugh Edwards at Tainan Sugar Factory between 1865 and 1871. In 2010, the book "In sight-Tracing the Photography Studio Images of the Japanese Period in Taiwan" arranges origins and evolution of Taiwanese photography studios under Qing Dynasty Rule and Japanese Colonial Period.

Overviewing the discussions and viewpoints above regarding Taiwanese photography history, three main periods could be summarized: Qing Dynasty Rule prior to 1895, when Japanese occupied Taiwan, then Japanese Colonial Period after 1895, and lastly, Government of the Republic of China after 1945. In other words, now that Taiwanese Photography History timeline is divided into three simple subunits, the core of this article is how we span the history of these periods with one photography studio.

Methods

There are three phases divided in research methods. Phase one, information was collected and analyzed. During phase two, in order to pick a photography studio that could connect Taiwanese photography history and progress, a census of traditional photography studios was conducted. Visits to photography studios that may be ideal for the documentary were planned according to reference materials. During visits, this research focused on interviews and comparative conditions analyses. Phase three was filming the documentary of the photography studio. Interview records, from photographers and characters in the photos, were the research method of this stage, in which analyzing the significance of the works was also emphasized.

Results

The results can be separated into two main parts. One is about materials and brief Taiwanese photography history. The other shows that John Photography Studio as part of the documentary.

1. A chronicle of Photography in Taiwan

Regarding materials and brief history of photography in Taiwan, we established a graph to simply explain the chronicle relationship between photography materials and Taiwanese photography history. (Figure 1)
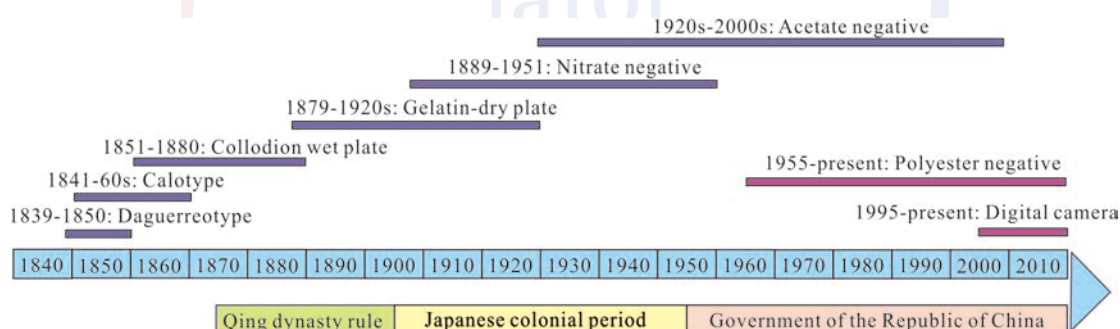

Figure 1. Timeline of photography materials and history of Taiwan. Historical evolution of photography materials is referred to Chien (2010a) and Newhall (1982).

This research divided the photography history in Taiwan into three parts: (1) Taiwan under Qing Dynasty Rule, (2) Japanese Colonial Period, (3) Government of the Republic of China, in the order of time.

(1) Taiwan under Qing Dynasty Rule

Between 1865 and 1871, Saint-Julien Edward, a Spanish consular secretary accredited to Maccau, came to Taiwan and took landscape photos, becoming the earliest images of Taiwan (Aslsvoort, 2003). Then in 1871, Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay and missionaries introduced photographic process into Taiwan as they came to preach (Wang, 2010). John Thompson, in 1871, shot a number of photos regarding landscapes, portrait and customs with collodion wet plate process (Chien, 2010b). Afterwards, during Mudan Incident in 1874, Japanese troops were sent to Taiwan

along with the photographers who reported the collision with photos. One year later, in 1875, after Mudan Incident, the first magistrate of Hengchun Zhou, You-Ji took up the official post. He might be the very first Han Chinese photographer in Taiwan, according to Michael Beazeley, a member of Royal Geographical Society, who claimed to have seen photos taken by Zhou (Kao, 2010).

(2) Japanese Colonial Period

During Yi-Wei war in 1895, Japanese troops invaded Taiwan. Photos taken by the accompanying photographer were published by Endo Shashinkan (photography studio in Japanese) in 1896 (Chien, 2010b). In the same year, the Japanese started to open Shashinkan in Taiwan. Nakajima Shashinkan in Taipei and Endo Shashinkan were the examples. Later in 1896-1899, Ryuzo Torii has come to Taiwan for four times in total for anthropology investigation of aboriginals (Chen, 1996). Then, Er-Wo Photography Studio established by Shi, Qiang and Lin Photography Studio established by Lin, Cao, in 1901, were the earliest photography studios owned by Taiwanese people (Chien, 2010b). According to the data from Colonial Production Department of Taiwan Governor-General Office, in 1911, there were thirty-five photography studio in Taiwan, six of which owned by Taiwanese people (Chien, 2010b).

Peng, Rui-Lin, graduated from Tokyo College of Photography and ranked at the top of his class in 1931, opened Apollo Photography Studio after returning Taiwan (Chien, 2010b). Another example is that in 1934, charcoal portrait artist Chang, John acquired photography process through Japanese photographers and self-studying. In fact, 1935-1945 was the heyday when charcoal portrait artists transformed into photographers (Chien, 2010b). Finally in 1945, Pacific War (World War II) terminated in which Japan was defeated. Japanese returned to their country, whose photography studios in Taiwan were closed. Meanwhile, Taiwanese people who specialized in photography in Japan came back to Taiwan to open new studios.

(3) Government of the Republic of China

After Taiwan Retrocession in 1945, Nationalist government of R.O.C. took over Taiwan and Peng-Hu Islands from Empire of Japan. Business registrations of Shashinkan (photography studios) were then invalid. Instead, photography studios needed to apply for new business registration. Then in 1949, the government of R.O.C. retreated to Taiwan from Mainland China. Photographers came along with the government and open business in Taiwan. They primarily operated around military dependents' village and military bases such as Zuo-Ying and Gang-Shan, marine and air-force base respectively. Photographic Society of China was founded in 1953. Pictorial photography and Salon became the trend of photography and the mainstreams were in pursuit of beauty and conception.

In late-1960, color-photograph was introduced from Japan and the U.S.A. into Taiwan and in 1970s, color-photograph has become a product of fashion while black-and-white photograph faced tremendous challenges. At the same time, departments of art design, advertisement, industrial design, craftwork and printing were founded in vocational schools, polytechnic schools and art institute (Wu, 2003). Courses regarding photography were taught in education systems. Moreover, "portrait photographer," which used to stand for professional photographer was replaced with

"commercial photographer." Also since large flashlight appeared to the world, changes came in both portrait and commercial photography accordingly. High speed shutter opportunity enabled the possibility of capturing more movements in motion. Commercial competition increased since traditional photography studios were transformed into wedding ones (Wu, 2003; Lee, 2004).

Due to vast alterations in photographic techniques throughout 1980s, a portion of traditional photography studios were changed into wedding photography studios or color-photo printing stores (Lee, 2004). From 1995, Kodak released DC40, a consumer digital camera, marking the inception of the digital camera being operated by the mass. With the progress of digital technique and internet application, photography has merged into lives, becoming the necessity among social networks and smart phones.

2. John Photography Studio

John's photography studio is located at No.118, Chung-Shan Rd., Qi-Shan District, Kaohsiung City, southern area of Taiwan (Figure 2).
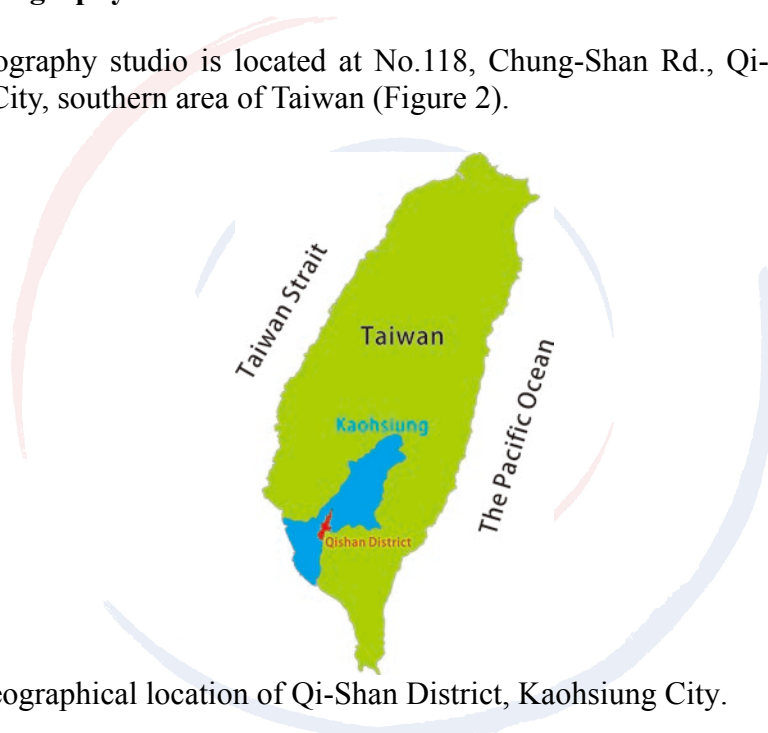

Figure 2. Geographical location of Qi-Shan District, Kaohsiung City.

(1) Introduction of John Photography Studio

Mr. Chang, John (1909-1995), named after one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, was born in Wu-Gu Township, Taipei County. His religion of Christianity originated from his aunt Chang, Cong-Ming, spouse of Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay. Influenced by Dr. Mackay, brothers of John were all named after figures in Bible.

John was a charcoal portrait artist. He was once greatly attracted by the Japanese photography studio operating next door, realizing that the immediacy and simulation of photographing was incomparable to portrait paintings. John then opened a photography studio to keep up with the trend in 1934 after acquiring photography process through self-studying and a Japanese photographer working in sugar refinery.

Owing to his professional background in portrait painting, John was capable of capturing the lighting and emotion of the portrait, making the portrait in photography

aesthetic and charming. John therefore gained a huge success and was able to have a foothold in Qi-Shan area. Mr. Chang, John relocated the studio on Chung-Shan Rd. (Figure 3), the current site, after having earned some reputation. He then got married with Mrs. Chang, Cai-Hu. Their eldest son Chang, En-Ci and Chang, Shou-Dao, the second son as well as the present owner of John photography studio, were both born here. John passed away in 1995. A number of beautiful portraits he left for Qi-Shan residents in 1930-1990 became a memory (Figure 4).

Figure 3. The storefront of John's photography studio has remained mostly identical to when it started. The couplet at the front door of John photography studio, saying inviting ladies to take elegant photos on the right and shooting photos of truth for gentlemen in the academy, left. The horizontal scroll says "as though genuine appearance of Mt. Lushan." This set of couplet was presented to John photography studio by Mr. Tseng, Dan-Chun from Qi-Shan Agricultural and Industrial Vocational Senior High School.

Figure 4. The glass panel that John photography studio used in the earlier period.

Mr. Chang, Shou-Dao started to learn photography from his father full time when he finished military service. He stayed at John studio thereafter, assisting in taking and developing photos. At the age of 37 (1974), he officially took over the studio from John till today (Figure 5).

Figure 5: In September 2016, Chang, Shou-Dao still took wedding photos with negative film. The background scenery is hand-painted. Photo provided by Chang, Jia-Xing.

(2) Works of John Photography Studio and their significance

In earlier period, family photos were positioned in the order of seniority (Lai, 2009). The host (or whoever with the highest hierarchy) was usually positioned in the middle. The second eldest in hierarchy order was beside the eldest. Usually female family members were seated and male stood in the next row behind them. Young children were usually seated in the front row and babies carried by females.

In Taiwan, Han Chinese prefers to take photos of whole clan in Lunar New Year. Photography studios usually aren't close during Lunar New Year. Instead, they're very busy. Arrangement in the photo was according to seniority, different from the past: male standing backwards and female seated forwards. Family host, however, located in the front-middle could still be identified easily. Seated on the right of the host are sons or sons-in-law and daughters or daughters-in-law on the left. The two new-year family photos of Huang, Wan-De and Huang, Jing-Xin, taken in 1982 and 2012 respectively bear significance of inheritance of the clan (Figure 6).

Figure 6: On the left is a family photo of five generations on the 91st birthday of Huang, Wan-De, taken by Chang, Shou-Dao from John Photography Studio in 1982. On the right is a family photo of five generation on the 94th birthday of Huang, Jing-Xin, the eldest son of Huang, Wan-de. It was taken by Chang, Shou-Dao in 2012. Both were copied in the living room of Huang, Jing-Xin's. Photo size 12*16 inches.

Commemorative photo of the clan was one of the important events during the wedding. The photo was usually taken in front of their own house, (ancestral) shrine or temple in order to show solemnity. During Japanese Colonial Period, Peng, Rui-Lin has once petitioned for the rights to take wedding photos in front of (Shinto) Shrine (Figure 7). This wedding photo was taken right in front of the Guo's ancestral shrine, in the center of which sat the couple (Figure 8). Parents and the elders were beside the couple. Female family members were positioned behind the couple and male further behind. Children were in the very front as usual. The arrangements according to seniority in both wedding and family photos were similar.

Figure 7. A Taiwanese wedding photo during Japanese Colonial Period in front of a Shinto Shrine. Provided by Zeng, Mei-Zen. Photo size 8*10 inches. Photographer unknown. Taken in around 1940s.

Figure 8. The wedding photo of Guo, An-Cun and Liang, Xiu-Ying, taken in front of the Guo's ancestral shrine in Xi-Zhou, Qi-Shan District in 1969. By Chang, Shou-Dao. Original size 6*8 inches. Contact print in 2016.

Discussions

1. The Significance of John Photography Studio as a Documentary

The history of photography in Taiwan can roughly be divided into three main periods, under Qing Dynasty Rule, Japanese Colonization and Nationalist Government of R.O.C.. Being able to elaborate the history that covers all three phases from a single studio appears to be a key factor of choosing John photography studio. Even though the studio opened during Japanese Colonial Period, John's aunt, Chang, Cong-Ming, is the wife of Dr. Mackay. Both of them had left many images during Qing Dynasty Rule, which could be used to tell part of the history of photography in Taiwan.

Mr. Chang, John was a charcoal portrait artist who acquired photography process through self-studying and Japanese photographers, the same way for most Taiwanese artists transforming into photographers. The studio started in 1934 and the site as well as the building was barely remodeled, which can be studied for the building pattern of photography studios. John photography studio is kept by Chang, Shou-Dao, John's son. This gives us an easier access to John's photographic works. John photography studio has remained as the traditional photography studio but not transformed into wedding photography studios or chromo-photo printing store. In the progress of digitalization, John photography studio still operates with digital portrait photos and negative wedding photography.

2. The Epochal Characteristic of Traditional Taiwanese Photography Studio

John photography studio started in 1934, recording and taking photos of people, families, varieties of groups, e.g. classmates and comrades, in Qi-Shan area. Many of earlier images of Qi-Shan area were from John photography studio. Image is exactly the fundamental assets of local culture as well as common memory of the group. Without memory in common, there is hardly any link in between. From 1896 of Japanese Colonial Period, there have been increasing photography studios opening. Just like what John photography studio does in Qi-Shan District, all images of each place in Taiwan bring together memories in common of the Taiwanese.

Conclusions

Choosing John Photography Studio, which was established in 1934, as the topic of the documentary is to narrate the development of Taiwanese photography history. The studio is a stage of time, being able to explain the origin, progress and contemporary meaning of Taiwanese photography history. Photographs from the traditional photography studios are databases for history, which store memories of the past. Traditional photography studios from all over Taiwan has been going through time just like John photography studio and commemorating the history of Taiwan.

Acknowledgements

References

Aslsvoort, L. V. (2003). The Quest for Taiwan's Earliest Photographs. In Editorial Board of National Museum of History (Eds.) *A retrospective of one Hundred Years of Taiwan Photography*. (pp. 76-85). Taipei: National Museum of History.

Chang, C. T. (1998). Shadows and footprints- the development of Taiwan photography. In S. Q. Lin (Eds.), *One hundred years of Taiwan photography, Annual of photography in Taiwan*. (pp. 1-64). Taipei: Yuan Yi Art Space.

Chen, J. X. (1996). *The Development of Photography under the Government of Japan in Formosa* (Master's thesis). Department of Mass Communications, Fu Jen Catholic University.

Chien, Y. P. (2010a). Transformation of photography processing and material usage along the timeline. In Y. P. Chien (Eds.), *In Sight- Tracing the Photography Studio Images of the Japanese Period in Taiwan*. (pp. 314-316). Taipei: Sunnygate Corp.

Chine, Y. P. (2010b). Dialogue with the Mirror Image Allegory. In Y. P. Chine (Eds.), *In Sight- Tracing the Photography Studio Images of the Japanese Period in Taiwan*. (pp. 6-29). Taipei: Sunnygate Corp.

Huang, M. C. (1996). Introduction to Taiwanese Photography. *Taiwan historical materials studies, 7*, 3-18. (in Chinese)

Kao, J. (2010). Photography Pioneers of 19th Century Taiwan. In Y. P. Chien (Eds.), *In Sight- Tracing the Photography Studio Images of the Japanese Period in Taiwan*. (pp. 32-45). Taipei: Sunnygate Corp.

Lai, P. C. (2009). *A study of Taiwan Family Photographs* (Master's thesis). Western Art History, Department of Fine Arts, National Taiwan Normal University.

Lee, Y. Y. (2004). The Bride Maker: The Formation and Development of the Bridal Industry in Taiwan. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8, 183-217. (in Chinese with English abstract)

Newhall, B. (1982). *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Santag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. New York: Picador.

Wang, Y. L. (2010). The Photography History of Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay during his Misson in Taiwan from 1872 to the Early Period of Japanese Rule. In Y. P. Chien (Eds.), *In Sight- Tracing the Photography Studio Images of the Japanese Period in Taiwan*. (pp. 46-64). Taipei: Sunnygate Corp.

Wu, J. B. (1993). *A Brief History of Photography in Taiwan*. Conference on Photography from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Arts Center. (in Chinese)

Wu, J. B. (2003). Unique visual performance of Taiwanese wedding photography and its historical development. In Editorial Board of National Museum of History (Eds.) *A retrospective of one Hundred Years of Taiwan Photography*. (pp. 11-28). Taipei: National Museum of History.

Contact email: chienyuan.tseng@gmail.com

The Perspective of a Student Film: Using Experimental Techniques to Edit Frames in a Repeated Array

Szu-Hsin Lee, Kun Shan University, Department of Motion Pictures and Video, Taiwan

Hui-Ching Tseng, Kun Shan University, Department of Visual Communication Design, Taiwan

Pin-Ru Chen, Kun Shan University, Department of Motion Pictures and Video, Taiwan

Abstract

This article discusses a story of heartbreak, produced from the perspective of a student film, inspired by philosopher Barthes Roland's book "A Lover's Discourse". Much like a prince choosing a favorite consort, or a jacket seeking its model, it takes same sex love and dialect, putting on the appearance of jealousy, soliloquy, yearning, and attachment in succession. Just like in love, relationships go through a repeated cycle of dialectical validation; using experimental techniques to edit frames in a repeated array, and conveying mood through monologue and repetition of words, this film is distinct from the typical storytelling methods employed by college film students. Repetition is a very important subject in human ideology; the relationship between one person to another is like that of the galaxies; perhaps yesterday he was your sun, your moon, yet one day in the future, you may grow out of reach from one another other's orbit, like the lonely and faraway Pluto. Thus, this film's name is: Calling Pluto- Echo Each Other.

Keywords: Experimental Film, Student Film, Repetition, Dialectic

Introduction

Most of the students' work from researchers' university and other relevant departments of film and media are scripting writing film and narrative story as it is more attractive to the majority of the audience. And the reason that students do not choose to make experimental film is that it is difficult to get the recognition from their professors. However, the researchers, the film-making team, find that the communication between people is constantly and randomly arranged and it is difficult to get a complete story. Just like our film, we repeatedly arrange the video clips through an experimental approach. We edit the clip and rearrange it and to make use of the waste material of the image to reconstruct the film. There is no conventional story plot but an experiment of audio and visual language. We adopted an unconventional approach with rhythmic jumping editing style and camera panning to film the movie as well as placing emphasis on the subjectivity of the characters to present the idea of the movie. Repetition is a very important subject in human ideology; which is also a very important theme in this film. The relationship between the two main characters in this film is like that of the galaxies; perhaps yesterday he was your sun, your moon, yet one day in the future, you may grow out of reach from one another other's orbit, like the lonely and faraway Pluto. Thus, this film's name is: Calling Pluto- Echo Each Other (Figure 1. Still of the film).

Figure 1: Still of the film.

Literature Review and Background of the Study

According to relevant local and overseas researches, they show that the type of movie poses great impact on box office, which implies that the movie genre is one of the important factors to audience. In the book of the scholar, Livingstone(1994) integrates the film classification by different scholars and divides the film genres into 14 categories: action-adventure, biopic, comedy, detective films, gangster films, suspense thrillers, epics and spectacles, horror, science fiction, musicals, social problem films, teen pics, war films, westerns, in which these genres are based on conventional narrative story. As stated in the previous chapter, out team produce an anti-plot romance story in the eyes of students to present different ways of interaction between a couple. Different response will create different results. When these things happen, how should the couple response? Two essential elements adopted in the movie are "repetition" and "dialectic".

" Repetition " is an important issue in in Western Philosophy and Humanistic Thought. In the books of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, 2000), he treats repetition as a single filed to study. While in the book of Nietzsche, Eternal return, he states repetition as a profound reflection. He thinks that no matter how you experience the same thing endlessly, the start and the end will not be the same because each repetition is not manufacturing a template and applying the same but to have some variations in every time of repetition. This movie makes use of scattered clips to show repeated scenes in repeated interpretation. Though the repeated scenes look like the same or similar, but each time the performed scene is unique without duplication (or duplication does not exist in the word). When emotion and romance come in life for the first time, and if we perform the scene with our own thought in mind, this may reflect your emotion to your ex-lover and show your repeated dialectic to anger, or this can be the repetition and practice to your life. Every rehearsal is dialectic and it helps us to move forward.

The word "dialectic" comes from classical philosophy. It represents a state of development with continued debate. For example, someone consider an issue with an "affirmative" view, and the opposite side confronts to it, they need to seek a commonly agreed point from both distinctive sides in the debating process in order to solve the contradiction. The commonly agreed point will become the idea of affirmative side; therefore, the truth is obtained at different time. In this film, there is no start or end with continued and repeated communication and proof to present the mental state of emotion.

The story is the critical element to a movie success, and the source of content worth our attention. There are lots of screenplay come from adaptation in the commercial market, and so do the students' work. We hope that student production can get rid of the industry burden to make use of their innovation to film the original movie, that's why our team creates the unique screenplay. Making a film with experimental approach to jump and repeat and rearrange the images and clips to present the mental state of people may not be the mainstream, the followings are the basic information of the movie.

Background of the Study

Genre: Experimental film

Subject of the film: To present the mental state of emotion, there is no start or end with continued and repeated communication and proof.

Film restrictions: Student production, it does not consider the budget or the commercial box office. Perhaps it is difficult to attract audience.

Convey objects: The people who have break-up experience, during and after break-up. The people (who are born in late-70s) who have resonance to late-90s culture.

Photography and Editing Style:

> The transition process will use match cut, each clip will show an independent and complete idea, for example to present a movement, a relevant relationship or an underlying meaning, etc. It is a complete narration, to edit under the basis of a similar or same character or object or movement. It can also be in different kinds of movements with similar movement, or it can be the same movement but they appear twice in different time (Figure 2. References of Photography and Editing Style).

Figure 2. References of Photography and Editing Style.

Synopsis:

> The short film depicts a pair of homosexual lovers who communicate using sign language. Though they cannot speak but they love and conflicts are much stronger than anyone else. The film abandoned the coherence of time and use fragmented structure to construct the story. The two actresses always have conflicts in daily little things. They are confused, pushing, and they fight, have silent cry, hold sign language and throw items. The reason of abandoning speaking dialogue and to use sign language and body language to communicate is to give an experience of silence communication to audience. The story bases on a separated couple who have conflict, debate and kiss every day. The relationship between human as if the galaxy. He might be your Sun and Moon yesterday, but in one day, he becomes the far-away and lonely Pluto that keeps a couple apart. But now the distant Pluto is proved to have the organic molecules for life on Earth. The time sets in 1999, the scattered mumbling starts the film.
>
> Meng, with long hair, is chatting randomly in supermarket. She walks through the aisles, pick some products and put them back. She is wearing a tight shirt with a pair of ripped jeans and walking causally. It seems that she is telling the world that she is the cool girl of 90s with that unique style of clothes. Just like

the repeated dialectic in romance and relationship. When two separate, they become the Pluto of each other. They toss and turn and to have debate in their minds and hope there is a day that they can find the route back to their Pluto of each other. Meng comes back from the outside world and meets Meiqi when she is about to leave. Since then Meng begins to think about the time she got along with Meiqi. The memory with her is just like a fine dust that make people allergic to. The rehearsal begins in different setting, sometime in bed, in the kitchen, in the toilet, in the ballroom; sometimes they are having quarrel, chatting, speechless, jealous and suspicious to each other, sometimes it is real and sometimes it is fake. Meng is immersed into her spiritual world, thinking the scenes of breaking-up with different Meiqi, get back to her, debating and reconciliation. Just like the repeated arrangement of electronic music, it is rearranged to another new song occasionally. All in all, she just wants to find a clue in the chaos. It applies the same when we face the relationship, we need to face it without hesitation to understand it and tolerate it. In a relationship, every one regardless the gender and age, they have a soul that is lonely and unique and we are all find own planet (Figure 3. The characters-Meng and Meiqi, Figure 4. Still of the film).

Figure 3: The characters-Meng and Meiqi.

Figure 4: Still of the film

Music Style:	The movie them song adopts the big beat.disco electronic dance music before 2000 BC to match the background of the film in 1999. The song arrangement will include more dream pop materials to present the concept of self-discussion in mind, just like in dream. And the major instruments are synthesizers and electronic drum.

Conclusion

When the world is still appreciating and struggling on the homosexual issues, our short video adopts Lovelorn - Philosophy - Experimental image to display the fractured memory between a pair of homosexual couple who have already broken up. They start to deconstruct the time that they used to be together repeatedly, endlessly rehearsing the plots of conflicts, hugging, kissing and waiting. They both used to be the Sun, Moon, Mars and Mercury in the galaxy to each other, but one has left so soon out of expectation. They look forward to one day that they can find the lonely track to re-start the relationship. Or just to left some words saying "I think I have to go." Digital video is the most relevant media with the public in this era. And also with this media that we have abundant of visual arts and works to appreciate and enjoy, which is the fun of learning film and media (French and Pooie, 2011). The graduation production not only is a collective memory, but also a chance to show your work to the world and present your ideas to the movie industry. The name of this experimental film is "Calling Pluto". It presents the free and unique creation of a student without affecting by the industry or the norm, focusing on semiotics to rearrange the clips with an experimental approach, and to express emotion through monologue and repeated words. We hope that this kind of non-mainstream can arouse noise from student production, while at the time of making experimental movie; we have to embrace the center idea of the film.

The content credits to all of the laboratory members from Digital Content and Cultural Research Center, Kun Shan University. The photos are sourced from the crew.

References

French, L. and Pooie, M. (2011). Passionate amateurs: The experimental film and television fund and modernist film practice in Australia, Studies in Australasian Cinema, 5(2), pp.171-184.

Kierkegaard, S. (2000). The Essential Kierkegaard, Princeton University Press.

Livingstone, S. M. (1994). The rise and fall of audience research: an old story with a new ending'. In Mark R Levy & Michael Gurevitch (Eds.) Defining Media Studies: Reflectiions on the Future of the Field. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 247-254.

Sochay, S. （1994）. Predicting the performance of motion pictures. Journal of Media Economics, Vol. 7（4）, pp.1-20.

Contact email: ivy@mail.ksu.edu.tw

The Dialectic between Onscreen and Offscreen Spaces in Andrei Tarkovsky's Films

Hsin-Yi Wu, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan
Wen-Shu Lai, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan (Corresponding author)

The Asian Conference on Film & Documentary 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract
Two of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's works, namely, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *Andrei Rublev* (1966), are both set in the background of battles and turbulent periods in Russia. Instead of the traditional discourse on war heroes, Tarkovsky examines an individual's internality with a humanistic perspective. When there is violence, suffering becomes unavoidable. Tarkovsky believes that a certain force within a human being supports him/her consistently to restore the belief in the world and recognize that life is a journey to seek meanings. This work argues that Tarkovsky uses three methods to approach the significances: (1) using the offscreen space to progress the narrative; (2) using the collapse of diegetic space to interpret the indifference between outside surroundings and inner psyche; (3) condensing one's life-long sufferings and experiences into images of figures and faces. The three methods, which not only enhance the dramatic aspect of film but also reveal the individual's unspoken dilemmas and sufferings, are Tarkovsky's specific approaches.

Keywords: Andrei Tarkovsky, Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev, onscreen and offscreen spaces, diegetic space

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

This work discusses Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's two major films, namely, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *Andrei Rublev* (1966). Both films are set in the turbulent periods in Russia. However, Tarkovsky is interested not in the military honors but in the characters' inner reality and their unspoken dilemmas. In *Ivan's Childhood*, the young boy loses out on the "bright and natural world of childhood"[1] and faces the inevitable tragedy of the horrors of war. As Sartre wrote to his friend, "*Ivan's Childhood* reminded us…not that these proud and tough pioneers died but that, on the contrary, their childhood had been shattered by the war and its consequences."[2] *Andrei Rublev* tells the story of Russian medieval icon painter Rublev and his experiences during the Tartar invasion of Russia. Despite Rublev being a painter by profession, Tarkovsky makes no attempt to depict how Rublev worked or any of his sketches. Instead, the most artistic aspect for Tarkovsky is Rublev's inner state. Rublev is undoubtedly a gifted artist. However, from Tarkovsky's perspective, Rublev is a world historical artist not for his skills as an artist but because he has been through "the circle of suffering"[3] and experienced faith, love, and brotherhood after emerging from it. When Rublev and his colleagues leave the monastery, Rublev realizes that he has limited knowledge of life outside the walls of the monastery and encounters the reality of the faithlessness of the medieval period, and then is appalled by such reality. Rublev confronts life with faith; despite going through faithlessness, he regains his faith eventually, which is the theme of the film. Thus, these two films are neither propaganda nor an agitation for an ideal nation. Tarkovsky's style is more concerned about an individual's psychic state and inner growth, stemming from his belief in a higher humanity within human beings.

Tarkovsky grows up in the Soviet Union. However, his concerns are related to an individual's inner aspects instead of the Communist collectivization. Tarkovsky was fortunate to have studied at the film school Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) between 1954 and 1961 after the death of Stalin in 1953. In contrast to Stalin's severe repressive regime, his successor Nikita Khrushchev initiated a political and cultural "Thaw," which allowed a limited foreign art films to the Soviet and provided a humanistic ground for Tarkovsky and his contemporary Soviet directors. Despite the openness of the Thaw, Tarkovsky's images are exceptionally unusual even from a present-day perspective. His films are unique owing to his not only humanistic way of storytelling but also outstanding film skills. Tarkovsky follows the early Soviet director Alexander Dovzhenko's idea, particularly on the use of offscreen space; however, Tarkovsky depicts more profound dialectics among the multi-spaces. This analysis is based on the use of screen space. On the one hand, Tarkovsky is aware of the power of offscreen space, which shows how he enhances the dramatic elements during the progression of narrative. On the other hand, since the two films are related to wars, the analysis represents how Tarkovsky rejects the traditional narrative of war films and touches on morality, spirituality, and humanity.

---

[1] Turovskaya 1989: 32.
[2] Sartre 1963.
[3] Tarkovsky 2012: 90.

The Two Spaces, Onscreen and Offscreen[4]

The offscreen space indicates two kinds of meanings. First, the fundamental film skill that reminds the audience of the hidden physical space lying outside of the frame. Tarkovsky mentioned the scene of murder in Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930), where the character is shot and killed by the Kulak, to show the dialectic between onscreen and offscreen spaces. Given its attribution of silent film and the required image of sounds of gunshot, Dovzhenko's camera captures the nearby horse raising its head and then goes back to the character who falls down on the ground. For the audience, the raised head of the horse represents the gunshot ringing out.[5] In this way, Dovzhenko creates the offscreen dramatic intensity through the horse's action. The audience can immediately imagine the offscreen space where the character is attacked. As Tarkovsky's noted, Dovzhenko invented a brilliant shots of intercutting in the silent cinema.

Second, for those considerate directors, the harnessing of onscreen and offscreen spaces is to disclose the hidden truth. As a continuation of the discussion on *Earth*, the film narrative is based on two deaths: the natural death of the grandfather and the political death of the grandson. For Dovzhenko, the significance of revolution is to not only glorify the political triumph but also represent its unavoidable suffering and deaths of individuals. Gilberto Perez noticed that Dovzhenko focuses on "the spatial fragmentation"[6] and integrates "plenty of close-ups"[7] into a symbolic relation. Instead of simply emphasizing the details, Dovzhenko's close-ups ask the audience "to keep something else in mind while we look at the detail."[8] These discontinuous close-ups are linked by their "inner arrangement"[9] and united in agreement toward the other new world. The ideal new world for Dovzhenko is never represented onscreen and similar to the last shot in *Earth*. When members of the crowd raise their heads and look up to the sky, their action suggests that an airplane is flying above their head at that moment. Although the airplane symbolizes the new world, Dovzhenko retains the airplane and its related new world in the offscreen space; they never appear onscreen, showing the early Soviet belief that the new world is nearly coming but has not yet arrived. Dovzhenko assembled the onscreen and offscreen spaces successfully through the heads of characters twisting from the visual perception to the symbolic level. Burch similarly pointed out: "any film…employs movements into and out of frame; any film…suggests an opposition between screen space and offscreen space through the use of such devices as offscreen glances, the shot and the reverse shot, partially out-of-frame actors, and so on. Yet…only very few directors (the greatest ones) have used this implicit dialectic as an explicit means of structuring a whole film."[10] Dovzhenko, considered one of the greatest directors and greatly admired by

---

[4] Burch, in his *Theory of Film Practice*, discussed Renoir's *Nana* (1926) and proposed the disposition between onscreen and offscreen spaces as the Two Kinds of Space. This work borrows Burch's term to describe the possibilities of screen space.

[5] Tarkovsky 2012: 70. In this murder scene, there is only one startled horse nearby, but Tarkovsky mentioned the plurality of horses, which may be a false impression on his part. However, what Tarkovsky depicts in the series of action in this murder scene is truthful to Dovzhenko's images.

[6] Perez 1998: 167, 172.

[7] Perez 1998: 168.

[8] Perez 1998: 168.

[9] Perez 1998: 176.

[10] Burch 1981: 23–24.

Tarkovsky, is aware particularly of the function of offscreen space.

In Tarkovsky's images, numerous cases indicate the use of offscreen space. For him, the treatment of offscreen space is a film skill to intensify drama. In Ivan's flying sequence of *Ivan's Childhood*, the camera captures a close-up shot of Ivan's face and his shoulders in which most of Ivan's body is out of the screen. When the camera captures only the character's face, the audience can easily imagine the rest of his body and the possible flying vehicle (or no vehicle) that complements the offscreen space. The audience believes that either the rest of the body or the flying vehicle is only unseen at that moment. Ivan's flying is a fragment of one of his dreams. When Ivan wakes up in the battlefront, the joyful flying he has experienced in his dreams and the cruel scene of the war in front of him highlight a vivid contrast. In the offscreen space of the flying scene, the invisible force contains not only the flying vehicle but also the motive of flying, which could be Ivan's internality or the reality of Ivan's surrounding world. The hidden reality is that Ivan is a twelve-year-old boy who confronts the brutality of war; only in his dreams can he recall his lost childhood.

This method used by Tarkovsky to conceal partially the film imagery to reveal the hidden truth is similar to one of the final scenes in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979). In the scene where the Stalker and his family are walking alongside a river and his disabled daughter is placed on his shoulders, the daughter is first shot at a close distance, leaving the Stalker in the offscreen space. At first glance, the audience cannot understand how the daughter is able to move forward as if she moves independently. When the camera slowly draws back and frames the entire landscape including how the Stalker carries his daughter on his shoulders, the truth is revealed finally. Tarkovsky could have established a full-scale shot directly at the beginning of the scene, but he did not so that the audience has to think through the limited film imagery for nearly a minute before knowing the answer.

On cinematic images, even when the camera offers a bird's eye view of the landscape, the shot is still only one aspect of the world. In other words, as Merleau-Ponty observed, "a painter…knows from experience that no technique of perspective provides an exact solution, and that there is no projection of the existing world which respects it in all aspects."[11] According to Merleau-Ponty, when significance is implied by the limits of perspective or the offscreen space, meanings flow between the seen and unseen spaces. The film's hidden message is in favor of the invisible force over all.

In Tarkovsky's images, the truth is concealed by the false perception, and unconcealed by re-framing or re-establishing a larger landscape to bring the offscreen space to screen. The audience's awareness has been rendered through the series of dialectic shots, although it does not mean that the false perception is unnecessary. As a result of the earlier false perception, the subsequent camera movement can modify the perception in a certain way where the truth is revealed and the significance is accumulating in the scenes.

---

[11] Merleau-Ponty 1964: 174.

The Collapse of Diegetic Space

In considering the spatial structures, Tarkovsky further collapses the spaces, showing one's exterior surroundings and inner psyche are both destroyed by the war. In *Ivan's Childhood,* the scene of Ivan and the old man is an example of the use of offscreen to express an individual's internal situation. When Ivan walks alone to a destroyed village, he comes to an old man's house. At the beginning of the scene, the camera captures skillfully the wooden door along with the screen frame. Not until the old man's invitation, the camera follows Ivan's steps into the house. Suddenly, the audience realizes that the door is nothing but simply a piece of segment for the old man to distinguish the house's exterior and interior. The protected walls and the covered roof are demolished as a result of the war. What the old man considers as his "home" has only one roaster, the abovementioned wood door, one stove, and a tomb-like chimney. Skakov[12] discussed this scene and proposed that the old man's broken house is "any-space-whatever" according to Deleuze's term. In the postwar period, there were many abandoned warehouses, desolate fields, and dismal spaces and cities that were either left dilapidated or under reconstruction. The severity of the war caused people to be incapable of responding to and describing the situation.[13] People become passive "seers,"[14] who were depressed upon learning of the situation. As Skakov noted, "Ivan and the old man both try to escape the present spatial desolation through leaps to another time."[15] The improbable time leaping only happens in a "dream or hallucination",[16] where characters can leave the miserable world temporally.

The intention in the scene above is similar to that in the sequence of the conversation between Rublev and his master, the Greek Theophanes in *Andrei Rublev.* In the sequence, Rublev and the surviving villagers are gathered in the church after Tartar's invasion, and Theophanes appears as a ghost talking with Rublev. In the film, Theophanes and Rublev have two significant talks. The first occurs as the two debate on the purpose of icon paintings. Theophanes mentions passively that today's people praise the icon paintings, but then destroy them tomorrow. Theophanes thinks his paintings are serving God and not the people. However, Rublev has an opposite point of view. Rublev believes that the icon painters should not be disappointed with people and regards Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross for people as a significant event. The second occurs after Tartar's invasion of the village when Rublev changes his opinion and recognizes Theophanes's viewpoint as correct. Rublev becomes unwilling to paint since he has come to believe that his paintings can not bring any peace to people. Theophanes regrets his earlier words and reminds Rublev of an artist's mission, that is, he/she should not lose his/her passion only as a result of destroyed works. Theophanes mentions that although many of his paintings are burned, destroyed, or disappeared, it does not disrupt his belief. At the end of that scene, both Theophanes and Rublev raise their heads as the beginning of this scene shows that the church is broken and its inside starts snowing. The exterior and interior spaces are linked as one space.

---

12 Skakov 2012: 27.
13 Deleuze 1989: xi, 5.
14 Deleuze 1989: xi.
15 Skakov 2012: 27.
16 Skakov 2012: 27.

In this scene, Tarkovsky copes with the complicated concepts of spaces, including onscreen and offscreen, dream and reality, and virtuality and actuality, among others. When the dead Theophanes appears as a ghost onscreen, the church turns to the co-existence space of virtuality and actuality; this scene is close to Deleuze's concept of a "crystal image." That is to say, the ghost of Theophanes represents Rublev's dream or hallucination. However, Tarkovsky does not provide any clue immediately before or after the scene to indicate that the ghost is Rublev's hallucination. The audience can only assume that the scene is improbably real as it is Theophanes's ghost onscreen; the scene is also not absolutely virtual. Nevertheless, Rublev, the holy fool, the surviving villagers and their temporal inhabitations are depicted accurately to exhibit unfortunate situations. The church becomes a crystal space, and the dream and the reality constitute "the smallest internal circuit."[17] The two aspects, the virtual and the actual, shift continuously one after the other. Between the two distinct sides, the boundary is vague and always in the "indiscernibility."[18] The gentle snowfall inside the church suggests that the church's roof is broken and loses its function as a protection and shelter of people and their souls. The diegetic state of church is similar to the old man's house in *Ivan's Childhood*. The severely damaged spaces manifest the cruelty of war and the inability of people to respond to the violence. People's worldviews are replaced literally by the discontinuous consciousness through the fragments of the ruins and wreck or the pieces of trivialities. The actual aspect of the present and the virtual aspect of the past and the future meet at the point of indiscernibility. The result is between the actual and the virtual, the dream and the reality; such result produces a new mode of image. The two sides are neither hierarchy nor suppression, but in a relation "as reciprocal presupposition, or reversibility."[19]

Tarkovsky is well-known for his functionless houses. Aside from the old man's house and the church discussed above, his following works also include many damaged and aberrant houses, which constitute "the crystal space" in a certain way. For instance, the leaking house at the final scene of *Solaris* (1972); the collapsed house and the leaky roof while the young mother is washing her hair in *Mirror* (1975); and Domenico's leaking house in *Nostalghia* (1983). In the same respect, the functionless houses does not only create a difference between outside and inside but also reflect the diversity in the characters' internality. These characters no longer have the chance to return to their earlier lives, but they also realize that the diverse states within them are the new wholeness. They are fated to face life's challenges.

Thus, the ruins in *Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev, Solaris, Mirror*, and *Nostalghia* not only reflect the unspoken diversity and distorted temporality within the characters but also represent the significances of "the crystal space." The two separated sides in Tarkovsky's images are united at the point of crystal, but the frontier between the two sides is indiscernible or undefined.

---

[17] Deleuze 1989: 70.
[18] Deleuze 1989: 71.
[19] Deleuze 1989: 69.

Body, Face and the Essence of Space

Ivan's Childhood and *Andrei Rublev* both depict the characters as having been through great sufferings caused by the violence of war. Tarkovsky not only focuses on the ruins to reflect the characters' unspoken dilemma as discussed above but also uses the images of characters' bodies or faces to reveal their inner psych. Bazin regarded a character's face as a kind of spatial space onscreen. For him, the essence of space is not given by a full landscape but the partial human body being framed in close-up shots, such as the eyes, tears, sweat, wrinkles, hair, and mole or spots on the face. These details "hold…the reconversion into a window onto the world of a space oriented toward an interior dimension only."[20]

In *Ivan's Childhood*, Tarkovsky captures plenty of close-up shots of Ivan's face to express the different degree of emotions, such as Ivan's happiness in the nostalgic dream and Ivan's strong agitation toward the young Russian's revenge message while in the bunker. However, the most impressive image of a shot is Ivan's extremely thin figure. At the beginning of the film, as Ivan takes off his clothes and prepares for a bath, the extremely thin figure is framed in the shot, making the audience aware of the crudity of war.[21] In another scene of the buffoon and peasants gathering in the barn in *Andrei Rublev*, the camera not only follows the buffoon along a 360-degree track but also captures the peasants' faces while the camera moves. From the camera movement, the audience can read the peasants' facial expressions, which show their sufferings and hopelessness amid the immorality of the medieval period.

Tarkovsky uses the images of faces and figures to represent the reality as visible. Moreover, for Tarkovsky, the divine is visible within people's surrounding world. Put in another way, the divine in Tarkovsky's image is neither separated from offscreen nor given a gold ring above the character's head as the cliché symbol of blissful tidings. In *Andrei Rublev*, Tarkovsky first tells the audience of Rublev's interaction with others and his surroundings, and then depicts the beauty of Rublev's icon paintings. Thus, as seen in Rublev's paintings at the final scene of the film, the saint is neither the Oneness nor the Son of God but as "a man who knows and suffers deeply, who has experienced life in all its richness and vicissitudes."[22] Tarkovsky uses the images of figures and faces, such as Ivan's thin figure, the peasants' faces and the saints' faces with Rublev's vision, as "windows"[23] toward the characters' internality. In a certain degree, the facial and figure expressions are the parts of the camera's movement, but the details of figure and face reveal the essence of man's life and emerge the filmic substance toward the audience.

Tarkovsky condenses one's lifespan sufferings and experiences into the images of figures and faces. Since these images lack the shot and its reverse shot, they do not belong to any subject's perspective or objective, but they go beyond the two sides,

---

[20] Bazin 2005: 111.

[21] According to Nikolai Burlyaev, the actor who portrayed the character of Ivan, he remembers during the days of shooting *Ivan's Childhood* that Tarkovsky once pleaded to Burlyaev's mother to not give the young Burlyaev too much food, as he has to be like "a boy from a concentration camp." See Burlyaev 1990: 74.

[22] Sen 1994: 108.

[23] Bazin 2005: 111.

which is a specific perspective, "a pure Form which sets itself up as an autonomous vision of the content," [24] the same as what Deleuze suggested. Tarkovsky uses the images of figures and faces skillfully to discourse the essence, the actual aspect of man's life. Meanwhile, the divine, spiritualty, humanity, reality, and truth are mostly concealed by lie, forger or any other falsity as the real world does. Thus, for Tarkovsky, the action of revealing is important. Only with the unconcealment, the reality, humanity, and spiritualty are no longer hidden from the audience's sight, and represent themselves in an intimate relationship in a certain degree.

Conclusion

This work attempts to analyze onscreen and offscreen spaces in Tarkovsky's images, and focuses on the relation between space and its meanings. Tarkovsky has been inspired by the early Soviet director, such as Dovzhenko, who he admires. Dovzhenko uses the offscreen space to progress the narrative. Tarkovsky bases his skill on the use of the power of offscreen and further investigates the multi-spatial concepts. For Tarkovsky, the two films not only accuse the brutality of battle but, more importantly, represent the inherent willing within human, which could consistently search for the value of being. From here, one can also tell the difference between Dovzhenko and Tarkovsky. Dovzhenko's ideal new world is located offscreen, an unseen space; whereas the essence of life that Tarkovsky aims to reveal is nowhere but within the characters and is onscreen. For Tarkovsky, the truth is connected to offscreen space as its status is used to be concealed by the false perception. The truth in the film, similar to the real world, needs time to disclose it literally.

Although this work discusses the visual disposition of image, it does not attempt to watch Tarkovsky's images as silent film. After all, Tarkovsky deals with sound films, for example, the sounds is an important element in *Andrei Rublev*. Rublev uses the power of silent vow. During the Tartar invasion, Rublev kills a soldier who is attacking an innocent, mute girl. Since then, Rublev stops painting and vows to silence. It is not clear whether Rublev's silence is a meaningful redemption or a passive objection to the world. However, almost at the last scene in the film, Boris, the son of a bell-maker, tells the Prince's soldiers that he is the only person who knows the secret of bell casting, although in fact he does not know how to do it. Since Boris's father is dead in the plague and a rampage of death pervades the village, Boris is the only survivor in his family. He volunteers to do it himself at first only to escape from the plague. However, he casts the bell successfully, and he begins to sob on the ground in relief on completing his task. Rublev finds and comforts him. Rublev starts speaking again, and encourages Boris to work with him, saying that Boris will cast bells and Rublev will start painting icons again. Through the action of silence, Rublev is seeking self-redemption not only for his guilt but also for doubting the existence of God. From normal speech to vowing to silence and speaking again, Rublev's silence is related to "spoken" action. When Rublev re-speaks after the long silence and is ready to paint again, it indicates a meaningful action that re-links one to the world. Meanwhile, Rublev's silent vow is compared to the chaos in his medieval time.

---

[24] Deleuze 1986: 74.

As the above discussion, these multi-spaces, such as onscreen and offscreen, virtuality and actuality, dream and reality, are no longer separated but are mutual to each other as a crystal space. Tarkovsky uses the collapse of diegetic space as a signifier to indicate the character's surrounding world and destroyed inner psyche. In *Ivan's Childhood*, the film tells the story of a young boy who loses his childhood as a result of the war. In *Andrei Rublev,* Tarkovsky depicts a message of how an individual confronts a dilemma and regains faith, which has been lost earlier. The offscreen space does not distract from the meaning of the narrative. Rather, the unseen, uncertainty of offscreen space makes the films more dynamic and reveals the characters' inner reality or unspoken dilemmas; this is typical of Tarkovsky's film skills. Thus, the two films not merely portray the crudity of war but also invite the audience to think the significances of life through the characters' sufferings, finding faith in passion, and recognizing that life is a journey to seek meanings.

References

Bazin, A. (2005). *What is Cinema? Vol. 1.* Hugh Gray (Trans.). CA: University of California Press.

Burch, N. (1981). *Theory of Film Practice.* Helen R. Lane (Trans.). NJ: Princeton University Press.

Burlyaev, N. (1990). One Out of All-for All-against All! Paula Garb (Trans.), Marina Tarkovskaya (Eds.), *About Andrei Tarkovsky* (pp. 70-88). Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). Eye and Mind. Carleton Dallery (Trans.), James M. Edie (Eds.), *The Primacy of Perception* (pp. 159-190). IL: Northwestern University Press.

Perez, G. (1998). *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Sartre, Jean Paul. (1963). A Letter to Alicata L'Unita. Madan Gopal Singh (Trans.), http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/Sartre.html 。 Accessed on Jan. 17, 2016.

Sen, Geeti. (1994). "Epiphany: Recreating the Scared," *India International Center Quarterly*, *Vol. 21, No. 2/3*, The Russian Enigma, 87–111.

Skakov, N. (2012). *The Cinema of Tarkovsky: Labyrinths of Space and Time*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co., Ltd.

Tarkovsky, A. (2012). *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Trans.). Texas: University of Texas Press.

Turovskaya, M. (1989). *Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry*. Natasha Ward (Trans.). London: Farber and Farber Ltd..