

Taipei and Its Discontents:¹ Fin-de-Siècle Mappings of Taipei in *Gudu* and *Taipei 100*

Iping Liang

ABSTRACT

While discontents with Taipei surface in a milieu of massive urban constructions, two cultural productions are noteworthy. One is Chu Tienhsin's *Gudu* (*Ancient Capital*, 1997), a highly complex postmodern narrative about urban memory in Taipei, and the other is *Taipei 100* (1998), literally the "one hundred reasons to live in Taipei," a sort of underground guidebook of Taipei by a group of five authors, whom hereby I will refer to as "the Huangs." Very different in form, the two texts simultaneously express their discontents with Taipei: Chu detests urbanization at the cost of historicity, and the Huangs abhor "unevenness" due to the fact of deficient modernization. Taken together, they offer interesting points of connection and disconnection that would amount to "fin-de-siècle" mappings of Taipei. By "mapping," I have in mind specially the Jamesonian conception of "cognitive mapping," that is, how "people make sense of their urban surroundings." (MacCabe xiv) I would like to interrogate how Chu and the Huangs "make sense of the urban surroundings" of Taipei, and by doing so, to explore the dialectics of modernity and urbanity in *Gudu* and *Taipei 100*.

Taking on Jameson's "Re-mapping Taipei" (1992), I argue that the experiences of modernity and urbanity in Taipei do not and should not be regulated by the kinds of categories that Jameson employs. The sort of non-categorizability of Taipei discloses on the one hand the non-binaristic experiences of the modern and the postmodern in Taipei, and on the other the

non-homogenizing trajectories of the temporal and the spatial aspects of modernity. My arguments will proceed from the temporal dimension of modernity by way of Marshall Berman (1982) and Hayden White (1978), to the spatial dimension as theorized by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Edward Soja (1996). At the end, I will contrast Soja's "Thirdspace" with Jameson's "Third World" and conclude with recourse to Foucault.

KEY WORDS

Chu Tienhsin

Taipei

Urbanity

Berman

Soja

Taipei 100

Gudu

Modernity

memory

Appadurai

Jameson

third space



Discontents with Taipei, do not start with you.

—Chu Tienhsin, *Gudu*

Taipei, capital of a Third World island state

—Chu Tienhsin, *Taipei 100*

While discontents with Taipei surface in a milieu of massive urban constructions, two cultural productions are noteworthy. One is Chu Tienhsin's *Gudu* (*Ancient Capital*, 1997), a highly complex postmodern narrative about urban memory in Taipei, and the other is *Taipei 100* (1998), literally "the one hundred reasons to live in Taipei," a sort of underground guidebook by a group of five authors, whom hereby I will refer to as "the Huangs."² Being different in form, the two texts simultaneously express their discontents with Taipei: Chu detests urbanization at the price of historicity and the Huangs abhor "unevenness" due to deficient modernization. Taken together they offer interesting points of connection and disconnection that would amount to "fin-de-siècle" mappings³ of Taipei. By mapping, I have in mind specially the Jamesonian conception of "cognitive mapping," that is, how "people make sense of their urban surroundings" (MacCabe xiv).⁴ I would like to interrogate how Chu and the Huangs "make sense of the urban surroundings" in Taipei, and by doing so, to disclose the dialectics of modernity and urbanity in *Gudu* and *Taipei 100*.

Frederic Jameson in "Remapping Taipei" (1992) demonstrates a mapping of "Third World" urbanity. Although Jameson eludes the definition of Third World (117, 120), he however comes to a compromise: "but if it affirms something as structural and descriptive as

the non-adherence to what is left of the socialist bloc, coupled with the constitutive distance from one of the three great capital centers of the 'new world order' (Japan, Europe, the USA), then it may be less misleading" (120). What is interesting about Jameson's semi-definition is the non-categorizability of Taipei, somehow equally distanced from Japan, Europe, and the USA. From this angle, Jameson attributes both modern and postmodern traits to Edward Yang's *Terrorizer* (1986). It is modern because the female protagonist is a novelist who writes about the event taking place in the movie, while Jameson reads it against André Gide's modernist novel *Counterfeiter* (1925) and accuses Yang of being "regressive" (121). It is postmodern because the novel never shows up and Jameson takes it as a simulacrum (140). Yang is therefore both modern and postmodern, and Jameson argues that the reason for the "mutually reinforcing suspension" may be attributed to the fact that "both arrive in the field of production with a certain chronological simultaneity in full post-war modernization" (151). Jameson then concludes: "*Terrorizer* thereby enjoys the freedom of a certain distance from both" (151).

Jameson's meticulous reading of *Terrorizer* in the "rifts" of First and Third Worlds leaves behind many questions. In reading *Terrorizer* against *Counterfeiters*, Jameson commits the same sort of "anachronism of Literature" (121) of which he accuses Yang. He seems to take modernity as a "category of historical periodization"⁵ and by doing so homogenizes diverse temporal conceptions. In following a Marxist linearity, Jameson places literature within programmed periodization and commits the mistake of totalization. Besides, while he measures Yang against the historical yardstick of Western modernity and postmodernity, he ignores the very spatial aspect of modernity, what is now being heeded by postmodern geographers like Edward Soja (1989, 1996). Moreover, perhaps unwittingly, he commits what Peter Osborne says about the colonialist intent in the name of "modernity":⁶ "It is the idea of the *non-contemporaneity of geographically diverse but chronologically simultaneous* times which thus develops that, in the context of colonial experience, becomes the basis for 'universal histories with a cos-

mopolitan intent” (32).

No less enmeshed in the rifts between First and Third, I would like to demonstrate in the following a reading of *Gudu* and *Taipei 100* to show that experiences of modernity and urbanity in Taiwan do not correspond to and should not be regulated by the kinds of categories that Jameson employs. The sort of non-categorizability of Taiwan evidences the non-binaristic experiences of modern and postmodern, and the non-homogenizing trajectories of temporal and spatial. My arguments will proceed from the temporal dimension of modernity by way of Marshall Berman (1982) and Hayden White (1978), toward the spatial dimension of modernity as presented by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Edward Soja (1996). At the end, I will contrast Soja's Thirdspace with Jameson's Third World and conclude with recourse to Foucault.

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Gudu once again evidences the complexity of Chu's art in storytelling.⁷ Framed in viscous sentiments of good old days, discontents with Taipei surge through a self-reflexive dialogic narrative from the first person point of view.⁸ The anonymous narrator bemoans the vanishing of familiar landscapes in Taipei, while the skyline of the city is segmented by the newly-constructed Mass Rapid Transits. Against the state of “progress,” what are at stake are the past and memory⁹, and the “meaning” of the text could be approximated in a binary: progress versus past.¹⁰ This binary seemingly leads us toward a “modernistic” time, as the narrator, like Marcel Proust, indulges herself in the “‘memory’ of things past.” It is therefore understood that my reading attempts to approach *Gudu* in relation to the modernist tempo and pathos of nostalgia.¹¹

If the theme of nostalgia is modernistic, the text of reminiscent fragments is impressively postmodern. The structure of memory¹² is woven in a web of intertextuality: Kawabata Yasunari's *Koto* (*The Ancient Capital*, 1961), the story about twin sisters Chieko and Naeko in the ancient capital of Kyoto, and the Chinese parable of ancient

utopia *Taohuayuanji* 桃花源記 by Tao Yuengming 陶淵明, are provoked to contrast with the ethereality of Taipei. In addition to the two major intertexts, numerous other Western and Chinese authors are mentioned to suggest a polyvocal textuality. While Lawrence, Thoreau, Freud, and Frost are highlighted to enhance thematic intertextuality, Han explorers and administrators of Taiwan¹³ are juxtaposed to intensify inter-subjective historicism (177). Employing the historical figures as foils, the narrator seems to diachronize a sense of restlessness: “Discontents with Taipei, do not start with you” (177). In this way, *Gudu* is palimpsestic: multiple layers of history are superimposed one after another to represent a disruptively unified narrative of discontents.

In the triangularized persona of a flâneur, which we will discuss later, a Taiwanese tourist of Kyoto, and a Japanese tourist of Taipei, Chu complicates her storytelling in a three-phase narrative. It starts with the narrator whose strolling of the city (evoking the figure of a flâneur) advances with her memory of Tamsui 淡水,¹⁴ Naihü 內湖, Jiangteng 劍潭, and the Yuanshen 圓山 Playground. The history of each place is tinted with a doubled dose of topography and ethnography. It follows a three-step pattern: first, topographic evocation of the place; second, ethnographic recollections of the place in terms of personal memory; and third, the depressing contrast with the present. In terms of imagery, it is replete with senses of nature: colors of skies, fragrances of flora, and scents of fauna—a recovery of the past through its smells, its colors, and its music.¹⁵ As the “aura” of the past intensifies, the “progress” of the city becomes senseless and unbearable.

The past is further intensified in the narrator’s trip to Kyoto to meet her bosom friend “A” in the second phase of the narrative. Layered in the past are the parallel memories of A and the trips to Kyoto made with the narrator’s daughter. While A signifies the homoerotic sentiment of the youth, her daughter’s memory of Kyoto on the one hand complicates the flow of time¹⁶, and on the other it is registered in two locations: the paper store and the café next to it. In each trip to Kyoto, they would visit the paper store and then her

daughter would hurry to the café to open the paper and start folding it. This routine gets ritualized and intertwined with the ancient temples of Kyoto to signify the imperishability of the place: they are always there.

Placed in the narrative as the symbol of eternity, the city of Kyoto is enriched by the intertext of Kawabata's *Koto*. In dialogic imagination, *Gudu* is interlaced with fragmentary excerpts of *Koto*, as if the tourist/narrator were reading *Koto* simultaneously. As the twin sisters Chieko and Naeko run into each other in Kyoto¹⁷, the narrator is supposed to meet her best friend A there, too. Unlike the commitment between Chieko and Naeko, A breaks her promise and does not show up. A's failure symbolizes the disappearance of the past: A has disappeared from her life just like the changing landscapes of Taipei.

In contrast to her visit to Kyoto, the third part is marked by a reversal: her touring Taipei under the disguise of a Japanese tourist. In this tour-de-force reversal, Chu is able to show how Taipei has changed tremendously from the past of colonial Japan. Holding a colonial map of the city, the "tourist" surveys the change between past and present. The last stop of the city tour is Tamsui, where the narrative starts. Enmeshed in the intertextuality of *Taohuayuanji*, the tourist/narrator is merged with Wulingren 武陵人, who cannot find Taohuayuan when he makes the return trip (226). In her last glance of the Tamsui River, she/he loses traces of Taohuayuan: "Where am I? You cry out loud" (233). Like Wulingren, the narrator loses her Taohuayuan—that is, the Tamsui of the past.

A more profound reversal, however, takes place in time. Under the disguise of a Japanese tourist, she sees Taipei in the eyes of a Japanese colonialist. Her survey of Taipei against the colonial map is significant: during the colonial rule, Taipei was modelled after Kyoto. In other words, it was once the colonial imagination of Japan to mold Taipei into the Kyoto of Taiwan (223). Despite the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, the Kyoto of Taiwan is being torn down, estranged, and alienated, while the Kyoto of Japan remains unchanged and is always there. Discontents are bound to surface between the enduring tourist city and changeable home.

Embedded in Chu's discontents with Taipei, however, is the deeper discontent with a larger issue: the collective identity of the island. Against the carping against Mainlanders and their descendents, Chu refutes the present regime of Taipei (that is, the Democratic Progressive Party between 1995 and 1998): why would they cut off the maple trees which had been here before any of them came (177)? Accusing the Mainlanders of "outsiderism," the islanders ask them to go back, to return, to which Chu refutes, "as if "[we] really had a place to go to, and [we] wouldn't" (169).

Gudu is therefore a political satire. Against the imperishability of Kyoto and the legendary utopia of Taohuayuan, Chu questions the political regime and urban developments of Taipei: *where* are the "Taohuayuan" that Wulingren discovered, the "Ilha Formosa" the Spaniards named, and the places "I" remember? Chu maps Taipei against memory and asks for the right of memory: "[I]f a city does not reserve the traces of the living of its people, isn't it a stranger's city?" (187). In the same spirit, she questions the political motivation of communitarianism: "When there is nothing irreplaceable about the land, the people will only stay here reluctantly" (199). And that is why, Chu contends, the "opposing party does not dare to interrogate the political correctness of the land and the people" (199). What Chu really wants to ask is if Mainlanders are no good for the island, is the DPP any better? She chides the political dissident who returns to the island after thirty years in exile and then approves of the industrialization of the swampy lands after winning the election (181).¹⁸ What she really wants to say is, like the islanders, the Mainlanders are as "native" as they are. They have no "mainland" to go "back" to.

Embedded in the discontents is an irony that strikes at the heart of identity politics: despite historical brutality of colonialism, Chu is willing to cling to the memory of a colonial country on the basis of its "always-being-there." While the paper store and the café are always there, her daughter's kindergarten has changed to "Geese Homeland Diner" (181). Against her memory, Taipei has not become as "hopeful and happy" as the mayoral campaign had promoted (187), even though Taipei is now the capital of an independent political entity.

That Chu's memory stays with Kyoto, the ancient capital of the once colonial regime, would be the strongest discontents with (and most powerful irony of) fin-de-siècle Taipei.¹⁹

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That discontents with Taipei are expressed through the change of urban landscapes requires us to look into the relations between urbanity and modernity. In this way, Marshall Berman (1982), who immortalizes the moment when "all that is solid melts into air" and regards the transition from the old to the new as "modernity" (22), provides a historical context in which to compare the dialectics of urbanity and modernity in the West.

In an autobiographical epical form Berman studies three periods of modernity in Western history and defines the time of Baudelaire as "modernism in the streets."²⁰ His hero is Robert Moses, who for the most part of the Sixties "pounded, blasted, and smashed" (292) the Bronx neighborhood where Berman grew up. It is Moses who teaches Berman that the roads get them out: "as we race through our childhood world, rushing to get out, relieved to see the end in sight, we are not merely spectators but active participants in the process of destruction that tears our hearts. We fight the tears, and step on the gas" (291). It is the doubling of "fighting the tears" (for the loss of the past) and the "stepping on the gas" (for the building of the future) that Berman defines as "modernity" (13). In other words, Berman's idea of modernity is to stand, fight, and survive the whirlwind when "all that is solid melts into air."

This kind of modernity takes place on the streets and, in this sense, Robert Moses is a successor to Baron Haussmann, who blasted Paris in the mid-nineteenth century (294). In his chapter on Charles Baudelaire, Berman demonstrates a reading of nineteenth century Parisian modernism that contains both hope and despair. While in "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire praises the work of Constantin Guys, who painted military parades on the streets (138), in "The Loss of a Halo," Baudelaire becomes sharply aware of the fact

that modernization also means desanctification. He realizes that as the poet is desanctified, poetry will emerge from the streets (159), where a new mobility and a new art would be celebrated. That new sense of mobility (164), according to Berman, gets transformed on the highway in the twentieth century when the man in the car replaces the man on the streets (167). Therefore the streets are the dominant image of modernity. In his 1988 Preface to the Penguin Edition of the book, Berman quotes Lionel Trilling's phrase "modernism in the streets" and announces "I hope that readers of this book will remember that the streets, our streets, are where modernism belongs" (12).

Placing emphasis on the streets, Berman adds a historical dimension to the figure of the flâneur: he is both the spectator and the participant of modernity on the streets—from the time of Baudelaire to that of Robert Moses.²¹ The figure of the flâneur gets monumentalized and perennially modernized in Berman's account. Close to the end of the book, Berman cites Claes Oldenburg, who remarks that the kind of art that he advocates is "an art that helps old ladies across the street" (319). In other words, Berman, like Oldenburg, is for a kind of modernity that is open and accessible to all. Having faith in the idea of progress, Berman is forever forward-looking. And the streets become the venue of this kind of "happening." Berman's reading of Faust, Marx, Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, and Oldenburg attests to the power of the streets in the modernistic imagination (31).

Yet very different from the modern flâneur in the sense that Berman has depicted, Chu's flâneur wanders the streets lamenting the modernization of the City. She bewails how in the past Taipei was marked with a scarcity of "public venues" (152), and therefore "the youth could only wander the streets, walking in all directions" (152). The streets become somehow a symbol of antiquity. That is, the narrator is used to walking around old Taipei before "modernization" takes place. When old Taipei is gradually blasted away, the narrator is left with no streets to walk and therefore no memory to fall back on (187).²² The streets are there, but the flâneur refuses to walk them: "you don't want to pass these unfamiliar streets; thus *you got fewer and fewer streets to walk*" (184).

As the streets are, to cite Berman again, the quintessential metaphor of urban modernity, a flâneur deprived of streets consequently indicates the failure of the modernity (and urbanity). If the Parisian flâneur celebrates the triumph of the Modern City, the Taipei flâneur is deeply disturbed by the progress of the City. Therefore the evocation of the figure of the flâneur indicates a requiem for modernity. From this angle, the long session of street walking in *Gudu* (184-6) is important: it is the flâneur's elegy and protest for a city evaporated from memory. The postmodern flâneur, who mourns the "melting" of streets and the end of the past, quotes Frank Lloyd Wright: "City is the base of banking and prostitution; skyscrapers grow like weeds" (190).

Chu, perhaps unwittingly, opposes the kind of modernity celebrated by Berman. In Berman's terms, the streets are celebratory because they signify *both* destruction *and* reconstruction, which then paves the road for the future. While Taipei is constantly "modernized" and keeps "melting," Chu turns her back on urban modernization. She chooses to cling to memory: she indulges herself in the memory of ancient Kyoto²³ (as intertextualized in *Koto*) and colonial Japan as protest against "modern" Taipei. Chu's sense of history reminds one of Benjamin's "new angel," who turns his back on the future.²⁴

Gudu is the work of a highly individualistic female urban memory. Being able to rewrite history and demonstrate a "will to remember," Chu combines "authentic history" and "radical fiction." Yet, history can only signify in the direction one defines. Very different from Berman, Chu turns to history, and under her interpretation, the colonial past of Japan becomes a history that glitters the patina of imperishable Kyoto. The past Chu projects is nevertheless a subjective and self-wished projection of Kyoto's imperishability. Her choice of Japan as the country of antiquity ignores the fact that Japan is perhaps the Asian country that has enjoyed the highest degree of modernization.²⁵ In this way, Chu demonstrates what Hayden White says about history: "the only important history is what the individual remembers and that the individual remembers only what [she] *wills* to

remember" (39).

It is however important to note that White's comments in reference to Sartre are made in the context of fin-de-siècle artists of the last century, who revolted against history in anticipation of the modern. However, paradoxically, while the fin-de-siècle (of the last century) artists inherited the distrust of history from Nietzsche, "Nietzsche was not alone responsible for the decline of history's authority among *fin de siècle* artists" (White 32). White analyzes how George Eliot, Ibsen, and Gide impersonate history in the figure of a woody historian, who shows the "limitations of a culture which values the past more than the present" (33). Chu in this regard is also different from fin-de-siècle artists of the last century. While they desired to awake from the "nightmare" of history, Chu, at the crossroads of modernity, kneels to the Messiah of history.²⁶

If the narrative is Lyotardian, the subjectivity is not even Habermasian.²⁷ If we follow Berman's model, Chu misses on modernity. If we take into account White's concern, Chu forsakes modernity. She turns to wishful and passionate representations of history. In multiple returns to history, Chu clings to the binary of past versus progress. While I am not assuming that the binary between modernism and postmodernism, however, I would like to stress the individualistic and political purport of *Gudu*. Although Chu holds on to the right of memory on behalf of mainlanders, it should not be held against her. Rather, concerning the politics of inlanderism (*benshenrenchuyi*), *Gudu* serves as an important text to include Mainlanders as inlanders. Under the circumstances, Chu's rhetorical use of ancient Kyoto as an irony to contemporary Taipei is politically plausible.

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The previous sections have demonstrated my reading of *Gudu* as a political satire on urbanism and inlanderism. In terms of mapping, I have shown how temporally *Gudu* pits nineties' Taipei against ancient Kyoto and colonial Taipei to highlight the historical dimension of nostalgia. Spatially it contrasts "modernism on the streets" with the

requiem of the streets to accent the failure of “modernization.” Implicitly I am arguing that *Gudu* exhibits a *temporally vertical axis of regression* to contrast present with past. In the following, I would like to read *Taipei 100* to illustrate a *spatially horizontal axis of transposition* to contrast local with foreign.²⁸ While doing so, I wish to elucidate that “modernity” may not premise on time, but space.

One generation apart, the Huangs experience a Taipei that is as depressing to them as “it is to Chu.” Unlike Chu, the Huangs are more like the “new boys on the block,” the rebels of the X generation. By average ten years junior to Chu, the Huangs represent a generational gap between the Seventies and the Nineties. While Chu situates herself in the tug of war between Kyoto and Taipei, the Huangs locate themselves in the disjuncture between First and Third Worlds. It is the spatial difference between First (Western) and Third Worlds, which flows through the axis of memory of the Nineties.

While Chu laments the loss of old time, the Huangs are haunted by the memory of the Great Cities, although they understand that Taipei is not New York, Paris, London, or Tokyo; nor is Taipei Venice, Cairo, or Istanbul (v).²⁹ Unable to claim home in foreign cities, they want to make Taipei more “homeable.” It is out of the desire of “redemption” that they brave the monstrosity of the city (vi). Moreover, they want to show that Taipei “is.” In nine categories, they itemize the “100 reasons to live in Taipei”: Freaks, Fetishes, Classics, Tips, Locals, Hips, Escapes, Dreams, and Individuals. (These would revolutionize Baedeker, Fyodor, or Michelin; and outsmart “Let’s Go.”) The “100 reasons” characterize, however, the streak of rationality: to find order in chaos, meaning in mess, and pleasure in jumble. *Taipei 100* is therefore driven by the principle of reason: to rationalize Taipei as “my city.”³⁰

The first two categories, “Freaks” and “Fetishes,” seem to map a city tour. Freakish landmarks (for all sorts of idiosyncratic reasons) include, among others, Chiang-Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, Embassy Offices, Taipei American School, and Hsingtiengong (Hsingtien Temple; 行天宮). “Fetishes” provide a kind of shopping manual, illuminating not only the spirit of urban fetishism, but also principles

of smart shopping. Recommended fetish items include Swatches, Mikimoto bookmarks, Kokuyo correction tapes, *Village Voice*, A. Senna T-shirts, million-dollar-equipped Civic's, Jordan memorabilia, etc. The last one lists "individual" reflections on Taipei, some of which include "the sound and the fury" of Taipei; the memory of Taipei; the lack of memory in Taipei; avant-garde artists in Taipei; and how to be "sula" (tacky and spicy; 俗辣) in Taipei. Overall they express discontents with as well as aspirations for Taipei.³¹

It is interesting to note that six of these categories—Classics, Tips, Locals, Hips, Escapes, and Dreams—are conceptualized and organized by the principle of binary opposition. While "classics" define some aesthetically pleasing experiences of Taipei, like geese meat at the Kuanghau 光華 Market, they are contrasted with "tips," which provide remedies to outlive Taipei, such as half-priced designers' brands. If "classics" are indispensable, "tips" are compensatory. Likewise, while fortune telling is as "local" as psychotherapy is in the West, it is contrasted with "hip" pleasures of Blue Note to gleam the glitter of the First World. In other words, if "locals" are authentic Taipei, "hips" are artsy West. The binary opposition is again observable between the "escapes" to forget Taipei and the "dreams" to imagine Taipei. That is, "escapes" are centrifugal and "dreams" are centripetal: the "escapes" to Tamsui and Jiufeng 九份 are therefore contrasted with the "dreams" of citywide subways, live bands, and the Taipei dome.

Collectively, the Huangs' mapping of Taipei opens a landscape towards both modernistic nostalgia and postmodern fetishism. While modernity and postmodernity are neither chronologically nor aesthetically binaristic, so are nostalgia and fetishism not ideologically opposed. Likewise, the Huangs' experiences are not irreplaceably estranged from Chu's. Like her, they lament the skyscrapers that segment the skies of their childhood (176). Likewise, memory is evoked by the scent of tropical vegetation, which brings back the good old days of high school when they rode on wide-open streets (69). Unlike her, nevertheless, it is too late for the Huangs to visit Tamsui. It is old experience remembered and immortalized in movies

like *The Story of Xiaobi* (*Xiaobidegushi*; 小畢的故事) (181). The difference of the experiences of old Tamsui—one in life and the other in cinema—will however shed light on the mapping of modernity through the spatial.

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If Jameson, Berman, and White focus on the temporal dimension of modernity, Arjun Appadurai offers an alternative. In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimension of Globalization* (1996) he explores the question of modernity from the rupture of First and Third Worlds: “Yet the world in which we now live—in which modernity is decisively at large, irregularly self-conscious, and *unevenly* experienced—surely does involve a general break with all sorts of pasts. What sort of break is this, if it is not the one identified by modernization theory?” (3). In other words, Appadurai is interested in offering alternative conceptions of modernity that would deviate from the models presented by either Nietzsche, Berman, White, or Jameson. Moreover, the break would be measured from the geographical unevenness between First and Third Worlds. Recalling his early years in Bombay and subsequent travels between First and Third Worlds, somehow in the steps of Edward Said, Appadurai envisions a theory of “rupture that takes media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics” (3). From the perspective of the rupture, I would like to examine the function of travel in the experiences of “modernity at large.”

It is important to realize how travel plays a crucial role in the memory of the foreign. In the preface to *Taipei 100*, the Huangs explain that the symptoms of “Inadaptation of Taipei” start after travel: “After we return from foreign cities to Taipei, ‘inadaptation of Taipei’ would be felt acutely . . . We would be electrified by TV snapshots, magazine footages, or even bands from that city, and then we would make up our mind to go back to that city. . .” (v). To follow on Appadurai, it is interesting to see how the foreign is represented in the media, such as TV, magazines, music, or, as I will argue in the

lowing, in the “*concession*.”

In the Seventies, the foreign is physically demarcated in the concession. The Chingkuang 晴光 Market is the major concession that showcases the foreign and the bizarre: Fuli 福利 Bakery, Good and Cheap 美而廉, Maichi 美琪 Restaurant, Dream Café, and the Levi’s (166). Concession is also related to nationalism: you are not supposed to enter the concession if you are “really” patriotic.³² In the Seventies when patriotism was ripe, the foreign was somehow bound by the “national” boundaries of the island: the concession was a foreign nation. Chu did not dare to step in the concession, let alone travel to the foreign.³³

Yet in the Nineties, the similar interest in the foreign results in the “*de-nationalization*” of the concession (152). Transnational travels (“migration” in Appadurai’s terms) cross national boundaries and the concession is likened to the “*non-local*,” which is not a specific physical territory, but a “*state*” (chuangtai; 狀態): “which could be international chain restaurants like Tony Romas, T.G.I. Friday’s, Dan Ryan, etc., and international channels like ESPN, CNN, or *Herald Tribune* and *U.S.A. Today*, which are available in major cities worldwide. Even just Häagen-Däzs ice cream, which makes the physical location of the city non-important” (152). The sort of “state” helps “picture yourself in another land” and escape Taipei (182).³⁴ Two changes take place at this juncture: first, the concession is de-nationalized and deterritorialized; second, it is embodied in the form of commodity, such as Häagen-Däzs. And, it is the *consumption* of the “non-local,” which constitutes the “state” of concession, not the “territory.” While the concession becomes a “state” (in contrast with a specific territory), the “non-local” attests to the impact of consumption.

Appadurai speculates from an anthropological point of view the repetition and rituality of consumption, which would help with our theorization of the de-nationalized non-state of consumption. Drawing on Marcel Mauss’s idea of the “techniques of the body,” Appadurai contends that consumption has its basis in the biological make-up of the body. That is, as food feeds on the metabolism of the

body, repeated food consumption is built into the “techniques of the body.” Since repetition is innate, it explains why fetish consumption recycles (66-70).

With an interesting twist, Appadurai applies the idea of repetitive consumption to the study of contemporary consumerism and speculates on the conjecture of “imagined nostalgia”: “such nostalgia . . . does not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers who really lost something can respond. Rather, these forms of mass advertising teach consumers to miss things they have never lost” (77). In other words, one is conditioned by “imagined nostalgia” to desire something, or some *place*, to fulfill the need of repetitive consumption. Under the circumstances, if the Huangs patronize the Friday’s, they have never lost the Friday’s. Rather, imagined nostalgia impels them to consume what they think they have lost, and it is not the commodity that they think they have lost, but the place—e.g., New York City, where the first Friday’s opened.

To return to the earlier example of Tamsui, while Chu remembers Tamsui from her lived experience, the Huangs can only “conceive of” Tamsui in cinematic reproductions. Chu may feel nostalgic about old Tamsui because it has been urbanized, but for the Huangs, that nostalgia is imagined. Their first experience of Tamsui might be fed by the cinematic representation, that is, the “de-placed” state (versus the specific territory of old Tamsui) to then imagine Tamsui, a place they think they have lost. While the Huangs never possess Tamsui, their “imagined nostalgia” urges them to remember Tamsui as if they have lost it. This difference, according to Appadurai, is a major feature of postmodern fetishism (77).

The difference between experiential nostalgia and imagined nostalgia—what Appadurai alternatively refers to as “armchair nostalgia” (78)—not only characterizes the temporal progression from the Seventies to the Nineties, but also changes the axis of memory from the temporal to the spatial. That is, while the vertical axis of regression is non-accessible for the Huangs, they shift to a horizontal axis of spatial transposition to recollect what they think they have lost: the Great Cities.³⁵

While Chu is nostalgic about old Taipei, the Huangs are nostalgic about the First World. Chu visits Kyoto regularly to make it almost home, yet the Huangs consume non-local fetishes to make Taipei like “home.” In this sense, Chu’s frequent trips to Kyoto are no different from the Huangs’: she is, like them, “going home” to a city abroad. It is in consuming foreign fetishes at home that both Chu and the Huangs express their discontents with Taipei.

Both Chu and the Huangs display the sort of “imagined nostalgia” in Appadurai’s terms. In Chu’s case, her routine trips to Kyoto, to be thrown into the patina of the 1500s, are a sort of fetishization of Kyoto for the sake of redundant regression. While the Huangs make frequent escapes to Great Cities in the First World, it is travel in the form of the fetishization of the First World, which moves along a horizontal axis of spatial transposition. The fetish in Chu’s case reproduces *time*, while in the Huangs . . . *space*.

* * *

In the context of spatiality, Edward Soja seems to be the most enthusiastic in promoting a “*thirdspace*” in terms of radical resistance. From *Postmodern Geography* (1989), to *Postmetropolis* (2000), *Thirdspace* (1996), he consistently argues for the category of the “third” as “radical openness.” He states, “as we approach the fin-de-siècle, there is a growing awareness of the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence” (3). He emphasizes that scholars “have begun to think about spatiality of human life” alongside historicity and sociality (2). By way of Lefebvre, he argues that “there is always an-Other term, with *autre/other* capitalized to emphasize its critical importance” (7). He asserts that “understanding the city must involve both views, the micro and the macro, with neither inherently privileged, but only with the accompanying recognition that no city—indeed, no lived space is ever completely knowable” (310).

Soja’s latest project of “postmetropolis” is exactly on the cusp of “geographical recomposition and internationalization” (305) of

such cities as Los Angeles and Taipei. At the core of re-territorialization is the “pervasive industrial restructuring that has come to be described as a trend toward a ‘postfordist regime of flexible accumulation’ in cities and regions throughout the world” (305). Thus the fin-de-siècle is marching toward a “repatting of urbanization and a new dynamic of geographically uneven development” (305).

If we follow Soja right, we may accuse Chu of historiographic fallacy for his preference of time (history) over space. That is, the purpose of old Taipei is for the “preservation” of memory—literally Chu’s personal memory (“the skies when I was seventeen”). *Gudu* in this way evidences what Soja argues against, that is, geography succumbing to history. In this sense, we can argue that *Gudu* is a “nostalgic defense of the 19th century privileges of historicism” (Soja 199).

So, what is wrong with Chu is that she may have missed on the dynamics of urban spatialization, or what Soja calls the trialectics—a way of spatialized history manifested in the sociality of life. She holds up the map of colonial Taipei, and the map is meant to eternalize time, for her, urbanity is overdetermined by history. Taipei should and will not change.³⁶ In this way, Kyoto is a fetishized allegory of imperishability.

But for the Huangs the problem is just the opposite. Taipei is not “home” because Taipei is not modern enough. It does not yet have citywide subways, the baseball dome, enough live bands, let alone racing tracks. Its classic music station is too commercialized. So the Huangs travel to the First World. They are in exile at home, and that is the major reason of being “Third World.” “Third World” is if you don’t feel at home in Taipei.³⁷

Instead of falling prey to the presupposed category of “Third World,” some of the Huangs’ choices of “classics” are definitely what Soja calls the “real-and-imagined cityscape” (310): “by engaging in microgeographies of everyday life and pursuing the local view from the city streets; or by seeing the city as a whole, conceptualizing the urban condition on a more comprehensive regional or macrospatial

scale" (310). Beef Noodle, Prince Noodle, and especially Xidiangmienbao 西點麵包, a culinary mimicry that outsmarts the very conception of "Western bakery," are then the very "thirdspaces" that Soja advocates. One example is the "scallion pun": a pun topped with scallion specks, which is the "supreme model of local ingredients and foreign food" (84). "Western bakery" is therefore authentic Taipei. But the beau ideal of Taiwanese Thirdspace would be *lubianten* (street stands 路邊攤). That the "best cuisine is on the street" not only exhibits street vitality of Taiwan, but also modernizes Berman's notion of "modernism on the streets."³⁸

Therefore Soja's Thirdspace is not Jameson's Third World: Soja's more radical and Third World is exclusionary and hierarchical. Is Chu "Thirdspace"? I do not think so. Chu demonstrates a reactionary anti-modernistic stance in her insistence on the fetishization of old Taipei. How about the Huangs? They are "marginally" Thirdspace. The nine categories evidence a binary rationality, which is not heterotopical or paralogical. They need more "Thirdspaces."

Western urban studies toward the end of the century seems to have been characterized by Soja's project in "postmodern geography," what he calls the "trialectic," the holy trinity of "historicity-sociality-spatiality," the "thirdspace" incorporating bell hooks' "radical openness" on the margin and postcolonial resistance advocated by Homi Bhabha in the "third space," along the way orchestrating and materializing the insights of Lefebvre in terms of trialectics.

This underlying passion for the "third" characterizes a movement against binarism that could be dated back to Charles Pierce.³⁹ Despite the radicalism of the "third," I would call for the delimitation of sequential thinking. Rather, the sort of "radical incommensurability" that Foucault remarks about the "categories" of animals in a certain Chinese encyclopedia in *The Order of Things* is important. While Foucault (and Borges) could be accused of orientalism, that "radical incommensurability"⁴⁰ would neither be sequentialized in Soja's "thirdspace," nor in Bhabha's "third space," nor in Brockman's "third culture."⁴¹ Likewise the anticipation of the third millennium will not consummate the "second coming."⁴² To be true, the sequential and

linearized épistémè of the West is a sort of “imagined nostalgia.” Against that, the “radical incommensurability” of Taipei will not be taken as discontent, but *différance*.

NOTES

¹ The day before I finalized the last draft of the paper, I had the fortune to hit upon, in the dimness of the ninth floor of the Library, Mark Harris's *City of Discontent* (1952), a biography of the poet Vachel Lindsay, which introduced me both to Springfield, Illinois and to Johnny Appleseed. I was utterly thrilled by the serendipity of the spirits of our cities.

² The decision to treat the five authors as the “Huang” is purely for the sake of convenience. The selection of “Huang” is, however, not arbitrary: among the five, Huang Weizong has authored two books: *Traveling is Shopping* (1997) and *Shopping Young* (1997), that are congenial to *Taipei 100*.

³ While “mapping” has become a popular trope in the discourse, it is employed in this paper denoting “charting” or “interrogating.” Susan S. Friedman's *Mappings* (1998) is a good reference. On the trope of the map, please see “Anti-cartography: Rhizomatics in Chinese American Women Writers,” in which I argue against the science of mimetic representation as employed in the field of cartography.

⁴ Colin MacCabe notes in his preface to *Geopolitical Aesthetic* (1992) that Jameson takes this term from geographer Kevin Lynch's work, *The Image of the City* (MIT, 1960) (xiv).

⁵ This is taken from Peter Osborne's definition of modernity. Please see the next note.

⁶ On the various concepts of modernity, please see Peter Osborne, “Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category,” in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Francis Barker, (New York: St. Martin, 1992) 23-45. Osborne's essay is highly recommended.

⁷ Although there is a huge body of criticism on Chu, only limited references are made in this paper, mainly the three pieces included

in the Rye Field edition of *Gudu*.

⁸ The “you” in the text is the narrator herself. The entire narrative is a sort of interior monologue that is self-reflexively addressed to the narrator through the salutation of “you.”

⁹ The novella starts with a self-reflexive question: “Then, does that mean your memory doesn’t count . . .” (151).

¹⁰ I am playing with the binary in order to confine myself within the perimeters I have set up.

¹¹ I am rhetorically evoking Proust to set in the tone of nostalgia which will be further analyzed. Please see Peter Osborne, “Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category,” in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Francis Barker (New York: St. Martin, 1992) 23-45.

¹² Four types of history are provoked: the narrator’s personal history; China’s historical documents about Taiwan; colonial history of Japan; and memories of Kyoto as figured in recollections of her best friend “A,” annual trips to Kyoto with her daughter, and in the text of *Koto* by Kawabata. While the binary structure of progress versus past remains constant, the variation of history provides an interesting case of “eternal return” in the Nietzschean sense.

¹³ These include Yu Yunghe 郁永河, Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元, Shen Baozheng, 沈葆楨 and Lee Hungzhang 李鴻章.

¹⁴ Tamsui bears personal emotion, for I, like Chu, have stored good memory about Tamsui.

¹⁵ The past is also remembered in her body smell (168).

¹⁶ Memory is fractured in binary directions: the memory of past in the reminiscence of A and the memory of future in the anticipation of her daughter’s recollection of the present. If A (that is, the past) disappears, what will her daughter remember about the present?

¹⁷ The narrator inverts the routes that Chieko takes in *Koto* (175).

¹⁸ This does not mean that Chu is one-sided in terms of political judgement. She also questions the legitimacy of the ruling party (214, 217).

¹⁹ This irony is further poignant if we keep in mind that Chu is,

by descent, a mainlander. In other words, that she does not choose China as a model of eternity complicates the politics of cultural imagination.

²⁰ The three periods are respectively: 1500-1789, 1789-1900, and 1900 onwards (27).

²¹ Berman does not pay attention to the issue of gender. Please see Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur," in which she comments on the relationships between gender and the flâneur in urban history.

²² Here Berman's discussion of Le Corbusier is relevant. Lamenting the change of Paris in the early decades of the century, Le Corbusier comments on the change of the streets: "I think back twenty years, to my youth as a student: the road belonged to us then; we sang in it, we argued it, while the horse-bus flowed softly by" (qtd. in Berman 165). Le Corbusier here expresses a sentiment almost identical to Chu's.

²³ On a deeper thought, Kyoto is perennially "present" since nothing seems to change and yet Taipei always gets "modernized." It is doubly ironic in the sense that Japan has been renowned for its success in modernization through the method of transposition, *mitate* in Japanese.

²⁴ Please see the introductory piece to *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity* 1-22.

²⁵ Of course, this may not be Chu's intent. For consideration of *mitate*, please see Augustin Bergue, "Postmodern Space and Japanese Tradition," in *Space and Social Theory: Interpreting Modernity and Postmodernity*, eds. George Benko and Ulf Strohmayer (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997) 336-42.

²⁶ The language of Chu's text is, however, an interesting parataxis of *wenyan* 文言 and *baihuawen* 白話文, which results in a unique charm on the textual level. Her huge reliance on historical documents from Japanese colonialism and from late Ching period, however, reveals a conspiracy with "history": "history" in the sense of "returning" to a certain mode of language and a certain way of "looking." Therefore despite her postmodern form, her ideology is

binary: past versus progress.

²⁷ Here I am referring specifically to Habermas' trs "Modernity—An Incomplete Project."

²⁸ I cling to the binaristic concept of "foreign," for I think the "global" is bound to gulp down the local.

²⁹ The former are renowned for world-class glamour while the latter are distinguished by historical cultures.

³⁰ It is interesting to note that the Huangs are inspired by a Yugoslavian film to identify Taipei as "my city" (vi).

³¹ It should be added that the graphic design of the book is definitely "international": slick, hip, and upbeat, gleaming all the essentials of aesthetic and sensationalism.

³² In Kyoto, the Doutor café is her concession, where memory lingers (220).

³³ It is important to point out, for the sake of my argument, that Chu does not "travel" in the Seventies. In her case, travel does not take place, but as in the Huangs, in the Nineties.

³⁴ Western grocery stores offer another de-nationalized "state," inside which one will find "another world" (115).

³⁵ It is interesting to recall how America plays a central role in "memory" and Chu does not protest against "that" modernity. That Woody Allen becomes part of her memory of Taipei transcends goes beyond narrow-minded nationalism. In *Taipei 100*, Woody Allen is even one of the dreams of Taipei, and in this sense both Woody Allen and Kyoto are fetishized: it makes no difference that one is human, alive, and American, and the other is place, ancient, and Japanese.

³⁶ If we juxtapose Chu and Soja, it will be interesting to note how the writing is similar, for Soja also lists the change of the urban landscapes of LA from 1789 to 1989, alongside Paris (218-28).

³⁷ Commodification is not only the change between the Seventies and the Nineties, but the very difference between the two texts. For their mapping of Taipei, the Huangs have made Taipei into a commodity, which is *Taipei 100*. As Huang says at the end, quoting also Frank Lloyd Wright, "If it sells, it's art" (211). He wants to be "sula" and "good" because sula sells in Taipei. *Taipei 100* is good "sula"

topped with de-nationalized First World hip. It is a fin-de-siècle alternative "Let's Go" of Taipei, slick and smart.

³⁸ But still the sense of the local is primarily registered by food—geese, Taiwanese style porridge, beef noodle, "western bakery," sour plum drink, stinky tofu, prince noodle, etc. How much food will store the memory of a city?

³⁹ I do not have the time and energy to fully develop the connection between Peircean trisemiotics and trialectics in this paper.

⁴⁰ I am indebted to Steven Connor, whose remarks on Foucault helped me to make the connection. Please see Connor 9.

⁴¹ John Brockman in *Third Culture* (1995) pleads for the "[closing] of the communication gap between the literary scholars and the scientists" (8). The merging of literary and scientific studies is then defined as the "third culture," taken however after C. P. Snow's idea first proposed in 1963.

⁴² "The Second Coming" still resonates at our fin-de-siècle, but I am sure it is very belated.

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