

EUROPEAN POSTMODERNITY IN ASIAN FILMS  
-A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION IN TSAI, MING-LIANG'S  
AND KIM, KI-DUCK'S FILMS  
SUBMITTED BY CHA CHIU  
PHD  
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

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## ABSTRACT

The works of Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk, two directors in contemporary Asian cinema, qualify as postmodern films transgressing the hegemonic dominance of classic text, aesthetic and structure manifested in the blockbuster Hollywood films that are overwhelming in Asia.

The characters in Tsai's and Kim's films are social marginal and outcast excluded from main-stream society. They seem to be disengaged from their past and future, simply floating in different presents as a carrier of desire. One difference between is that the major figures in Tsai's films are marginal young men and women presenting a sense of alienation and solitude among the residents of the city, and their intimate behavior is portrayed in enclosed spaces. Kim's films, the major figures are abandoned by and isolated from society, either brutal men or solitary prostitutes.

Tsai and Kim always make ample use of the residual in everydayness in order to produce the incessant different present-becoming. These becoming-presents are constituted by unpredictable contingency without the association of cause and effect between event and event. Therefore, for Tsai and Kim, time depicted in the cinematic temporality is enunciated by the permanently present discourse, which is absent from its past and is still unknown for its future, but only produces the infinite moment. In other words, this temporal prolongation is ahistorical, lacking depth and merely progresses in action linking action. Thus it also becomes a fragmentary and not a linear development for its lack of commencement and an end, being an endless present-becoming.

There is no connection between narrative spatiality in Tsai and Kim's films. This has become detached from its related and logical linkage prescribed in the classical narrative structure, but randomly,

coincidentally and unforeseeably merged together, imbedded with the linguistic system of scission revealing no beginning and end but only providing the characters, Taipei and Seoul residents, like nomadic tribes wandering around without indicating the direction of their coming and going. In other words, these spaces in both post-colonial cities can be regarded as temporary and transitional spaces and create the ephemeral mirage of a playground. Tsai and Kim's cinematizations of the urban spaces of Taipei and Seoul respectively have been constituted by the present discourse, which makes the spatial marking, to which personal memory as well as collective history attaches, vanish.

These are the most salient traits in the postmodern text and structure, which can be viewed from both directors' masterful works among Asian cinema. Moreover, their non-historical discourses, non-moralistic and non-ethical and dehumanized and dystopian text in describing social life as well as non-linear and non-classical narrative structure in constituting cinematic text also make Tsai and Kim's films catch the international gaze. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of a full postmodern exploration of both directors' works. This has motivated me to construct a passage from European postmodernity to Asian postmodern films.

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## PART 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Tsai Ming-Liang

Tsai Ming-Liang's films portray life and absurdities in today's Taiwanese affluent society where cultural norms are no longer clear. Tsai's film, marked by nihilism and an overwhelming despair of self-imposed isolation, are characterized by an inability to communicate. Unlike the representation of sadness of the early trend, Tsai's presentation of the absence of communication does not relate to an identifiable political repression, but to unconscious and instinctive.<sup>1</sup>

The setting of Taipei in Tsai's films is presented as a luxurious and illusionary place in which people dress nicely and houses are lavishly decorated. Tsai's films take an existential and self-reflexive approach to the plight of the urban Taiwanese man and woman who are active participants, dedicating themselves to creating their wealth in this highly consumerist city, yet who are at the same time on the margins of the affluent contemporary society.

Hence, all of Tsai's stories depict about urban alienation and all the characters in his films are depicted as accidentally sharing their living and public spaces, yet they also barely interact or develop long and deep attachments to each other, and only co-enjoy and co-produce ephemeral pleasure and momentary

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<sup>1</sup> Wu, Meiling. Postsadness Taiwan New Cinema. In Sheldon H, Lu and Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh (eds), *Chinese-Language Film*. University of Hawaii Press, 2005.p79.

truth. This temporary warmth produced and interchanged by Tsai's characters does not merely exist between a woman and a man in the conventional social system. For example, a father and a son are depicted as having an anti-Oedipus incestuous love. The accidental encounters in his films go beyond the modern sexual paradigm to a postmodern writing on the familial system, which subverts the conceptualized social relationships between men and women and Confucian family relationships as the accidental encounters in his films. So Chow writes:

Tsai-Ming Liang envisions relationships among men and women in Taiwan as accidental and replaceable. And, precisely because all the sentimental expressions have been suspended or filtered out, the characters' meaningless daily repetitious actions and routines arouse antipathy from the spectators.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, the accidental and temporary relationships between them fulfill their wish for love and this casual sex even generates more needs for desire replacements, which produces a fantastic sequence of momentary truths strung in disconnected time and space in a nonlinear structure. These plots also contain the essential postmodern narrative elements of residual and contingency in creating the eventlessness and sheer boredom of his films.

The characters in Tsai's films, even though they are always marginalized residents of Taipei and also lead a lonely and alienated life replete with an aching void at the heart, never project their anguish cathartically. Instead they adopt a euphoric and self-referential manner playing with their surrounding materials in creating unexplainable momentary pleasure as the real present without considering the essence of those materials. Hence Tweedie writes:

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<sup>2</sup>. Chow, Rey. *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films*. Columbia University Press. 2007. p 188

Tsai's work contains an often-neglected dimension of camp, an element of coarse humor and extravagant performance intimately connected to entertainment traditions and local character types in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup>

All of these social and cultural images are created in the city of Taipei, so Tsai's films become an ongoing attempt to document the development of the modern city. As Tweedie writes:

Each of Tsai's films constructs an allegory around the dynamics of occupation and eviction of encampment and displacement in Taipei.<sup>4</sup>

But this allegory of alienation and solitude also illustrates the waning of a modern conception of the city as a rationalized organization of humanist values of the logical, rational and scientific experience of intellectual life.

As such, Tsai's works possess incisive insight in announcing the failed revolutions of modernity already behind him, which can never be an outgoing social movement in bringing everyday life to a permanent state of progress. Tsai's films always instead search through the aftermath of preceding waves of modernization and of cinema, the night shift undoing the damage of the day shift.

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<sup>3</sup> .Tweedie. James . Morning in the New Metropolis. In Davis, Darrell William and Ru-Shou Robert Chen (eds). *Cinema Taiwan. Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. Routledge. 2007.p121.

<sup>4</sup> .Ibid.



## 1.2 Kim Ki-Duk

The use of physical pain/violence as a metaphor for emotional pain runs through the majority of Kim's films ...where the central characters, all living on the fringe of society (invariably Kim's favourite characters), exist in the shadow.<sup>5</sup>

Kim's characters often live on the lowest possible social scale; they are hoodlums, pimps, beggars, and petty thieves. However, even though they have rejected the core values of mainstream society, they still use their performativity and self-reflexivity in expressing their emotions. In other words, they have been characterized by Kim as postmodern figures whose projected violent, bloody and perverted behaviours always not only problematize the judgemental value of the modern canon but also create the momentary truth that cannot be either analyzed or interpreted from the social and psychoanalytical paradigm of modernity. Hence Kim's films have drawn attention:

His film sparked controversies both in Korea and at international film festivals at the turn of the century. So explicit is the violence (vivid representations of blood, scalping, bruises, and mutilated body parts) and so dramatic are the characters (dialogue and acting deliberately depart from realism) that the male subjectivity constructed by Kim gravitates toward performativity and deviancy.<sup>6</sup>

The most prominent episode driving the controversy in Kim's films is seemingly the character of a misogynist representing masochism to express his masculinity in *The Isle* (2000). However, both psychoanalytical thematic senses of modernity institutionalized by Freud have been transformed by Kim

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<sup>5</sup> . Totaro, Donato „SEOM/THE ISLE. In, Justin Bowyer (ed). *The Cinema of Japan And Korea*. Wallflower Press. 2004. p209

<sup>6</sup> . Kim, Kyung-Hyun. *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*. Duke University Press. 2004. p8

with the postmodern writing, because the momentary truth created by this so called misogynist has transgressed their conceptual contents and manifest a different structural process in producing a bifurcated outcome deviating from the sexual paradigms of modern subjectivity. Hence Kim writes

I question how and why the representations of femininity remained strikingly unchanged while the representation of masculinity underwent various mutations and diversifications in configuring itself to mould a modern subjectivity.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, in a shocking scene in *The Isle*, the female protagonist mutilates herself by hurting her genital organ unexpectedly and suddenly, when she sees the male protagonist leaving her. The next moment, he makes his way back to her, hearing her painful groans. He at once has sex with her, as if to cure her agony and after finishing this “medical treatment”, he just cries bitterly, Freud’s sexual paradigm cannot interpret this postmodern momentary truth as Chow writes:

Deleuze suggests that while sadism is, in accordance with Freud’s Oedipus complex, oriented toward dominating and controlling the other under the father’s law, the origin of masochism lies in the preoedipal phase of infancy, where the goal is function with the mother and mother alone.<sup>8</sup>

This appalling contingency means that the female protagonist does not represent the symbolic castration in heterosexual impulse and the male protagonist does not enjoy his domination of the other.

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<sup>7</sup> . Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> . Rey Chow. *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East*. University of Minnesota Press. 1991, p124.

Not only Kim's films but also those of other recent Korean directors have regarded any psychoanalytical terms as a living instead of a dead language in order to make them different from their original thematic senses. Thus, as with postmodern writing, each term is a germ which will not only have one birth, but will be created with numerous fantastic bifurcations from their institutionalized conceptual contents, which certainly will overthrow the truth embedded in the social and cultural paradigms of modernity. Hence, Kim writes

Korean films have increasingly become westernized. Contemporary South Korean society is no more Confucian than it is capitalist. There is no doubt in my mind that most people in Korea would agree that the present society demands one to express his/her, ego, and personal pride even if this means losing the hope of cultivating oneself into a particular notion of subjectivity.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, being one of the recent Korean film directors. In Kim's films, the characters living on the edge of society particularly express the violence in reflecting their inner void, their helplessness, fear and anger against the canon of modern intellectual life. These themes produced by their self-reflexivity and performativity cannot be interpreted by any foundational knowledge of modernity.

Summarizing this introduction to the films of Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk, we should utilize the different postmodern discourses derived from the characterization in depicting the protagonists' sense of value in facing their lives, the narrative structure in constituting the time and space, the linguistic framework in producing the meaning and search the truth through organizing the narrative elements and the social and cultural images in analyzing the life stance. All of these are involved with the theories of

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<sup>9</sup> . Kim, Kyung-Hyun. *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*. Duke University Press. 2004.  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ( X)

postmodern philosophy, literature, linguistics, art and culture and certainly also repudiate the same fields as institutionalized by modern theory.

As such, in the following sections, I will elucidate the themes of different postmodern theories and also make the comparison with their preceding modern thinking to illustrate the films of Tsai and Kim

## 2. Theory

### 2.1 Before postmodern theory

“The structuralist emphasis on the ‘constructedness’ of human meaning represented a major advance. Meaning was neither a private experience nor a divinely ordained occurrence: it was the product of certain shared systems of signification”<sup>10</sup>

Hence, for structuralism, meaning conveyed the profoundly social and historical content as a mode of analysis of cultural artefacts that originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics. Moreover, Saussure also claimed:

Language is a series of phonetic differences matched with a series of conceptual differences. Concepts, therefore, are purely differential; defined not only their positive content, but rather by their relation with other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the other are not”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>.Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory*. TJ International , Padstow, Cornwall. 1996. p 93.

<sup>11</sup>.Saussure, Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics. Quoted in Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Flitterman, Sandy. *New Vocabularies In Film Semeotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and beyond*. Routledge, 1992, p18.

Therefore for structuralism, each element should be conceptualized by the reference transmitted from its sound-image. Elements constitute each other with self-regulation and binary-opposition in the uniform network to produce the meaning. It is based on the interrelationships between elements connect with each other as a totality.

Nevertheless, the process of how to divert the words from their culturally-determined reference in attempting to represent the logical and reasonable conceptual sense associated with objects as a putative sign rooted in the general concept, furthermore, how to disorient each of these words from the same family systems in attempting to constitute each other to represent the modernist textual grounding in “hermeneutics”<sup>12</sup> has become the conspicuous singularity in the films of the Taiwanese director, Tsai Ming-Liang and the Korean director, Kim Ki-Duk.

They want to produce the textual meaning with differences and impossibilities by erasing the general sense of the words without duplicating their resemblances but betraying their social and cultural signification in their works with their own postmodern thinking. This stands against the common sense, according to Deleuze:

Everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think. The most general form of representation is thus found in the element of common sense understood as an upright nature and a good will”<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, there exists an intertextual traverse and reciprocity between the postmodernist writing and postmodernist film structure, highlighting the unrepeatable individual experience instead of general

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<sup>12</sup>. The word ‘hermeneutics’ was originally confined to the interpretation of sacred scripture; but during the nineteenth century it broadened its scope to encompass the problem of textual interpretation as a whole. Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Flitterman, Sandy. *New Vocabularies In Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Beyond*. Routledge, 1992, p57.

<sup>13</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press, 1994, p131.

experience, which, in contrast to modern writing, is manifest in the cinematic languages of these postmodernist directors. On the other hand, even though film and literature have different expressive contents and forms, their discourses can refer to each other and interweave together to produce a dynamic effect to explore, analyze, exchange and to enrich one another's textual structure and thematic. In other words, the approaches adopted from the postmodernist syntagmatic system must be able to be employed and extended well to make an in-depth analysis of the narrative framework of Tsai and Kim's films.

Moreover, this postmodern writing also acts as a threshold to enter into other fields of the different postmodern discourses, such as postmodern philosophy, culture, aesthetics, society and linguistics. And all of these are actualized in Tsai and Kim's cinematic text. Nevertheless, unfortunately and incredibly, just a few published books and articles on cinema have deployed the postmodernist language system to investigate the masterful works of both of these extremely creative Asian postmodern directors. Therefore, I attempt to bridge this gap between postmodernist texts, writing and cinema in order to explain why both are in opposition to structuralist and modern discourse.

## **2.2 The trace of language**

### **2.2.1 Words as free signifiers with no name**

Postmodern writing has claimed that all the meanings of words cannot merely be either defined or institutionalized in the lexicon or encyclopaedia. Barthes has also claimed:

Topically, connotations are meaning which are neither in the dictionary nor in the grammar of the language in which a text is written (this is, of course, a shaky definition): the dictionary can be expanded, the grammar can be modified".<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, words should be viewed as free signifiers with no origins and are always a process of producing their differences and deferring their meanings. In other words, meaning constructed by words always perpetually slips away from word to word within the open linguistic chain.

Nevertheless, language in modernist times was constituted by each word with its established trace grounded in conventional, institutional and historical interpretations. As a result, language became its own legitimate horizon and acted as an irreversible rule to shape the experiences imbedded in our memories, and was furthermore conceptualized as the reasonable, methodological and logical authorization to manifest its normative usage under a rational, determinate and scientific hierarchical classification. This entirely reflected the purport of modernity:

The positive self-image modern Western culture has most often given to itself, a picture born in the Enlightenment is of a civilization founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value.<sup>15</sup>

Instead, according to postmodern writing, language is a manifestation of culture and praxis of life, produced in a ceaselessly destabilizing state rather than the objective and steady significance of nature. Hence, Foucault has criticized the encyclopaedia and the library, which employ the signs expressed in natural phenomena to name the world in an attempt to constrain the writing in a circle around the privileged knowledge with a fine textual categorization without deviating from this postulated perimeter:

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<sup>14</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell . 1992, p 8.

<sup>15</sup>. Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Blackwell. 2003, p 9 (Introduction).

An Encyclopedia and a Library, and would permit the arrangement of written text according to the forms of adjacency, kinship, analogy, and subordination prescribed by the word itself. But in any case, such an interweaving of language and things, in a space common to both, presupposed an absolute privilege on the part of writing. This privilege dominated the entire Renaissance, and was no doubt one of the great events in Western culture.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, in postmodern writing, words should not be put in an informational reservoir to constitute a unified and transparent text to name and to evidence a granted thing and concept, but should act as a producer of restructuring and inventing a plural and ambiguous text to rewrite and subvert any established knowledge. Truth is a process of ceaseless meaning-generation instead of an effect of consuming a product, where the former is an infinite difference but the latter is an exhausted result. This modernist product has also been criticized by Barthes:

If we base denotations on truth, on objectivity, on law, it is because we are still in awe of the prestige of linguistics, which until today, has been reducing language to the sentence and its lexical and syntactical components; now the endeavor of this hierarchy is a serious one".<sup>17</sup>

However, modernists still employed this systematic methodology to certify the words' true meanings and absolute homogeneities through categorizing their definitions precisely in a lexicon and in encyclopaedias, with the intelligible boundary of hierarchy poisoned according to their family lineages in the linguistic chain.

In other words, this modern linguistic purpose highlighting the institutional and definitional discourse attempted to exercise its patriarchal power over the concepts and rules concerning words embedded

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<sup>16</sup>. Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences*. Routledge, 1991, p38.

<sup>17</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell. 1992, p 7.

within an authorized protocol together to form constituents in accordance with the laws of syntax and grammar, according to Deleuze:

Repetition is not content with multiplying instances of the same concept; it put concept outside itself and causes it to exist in so many instances”<sup>18</sup>.

Thus it repudiates all of these empirical denouements or dogmatic and doctrinal beliefs that have made people become inertial for merely adhering to their given and authorized meanings from words and texts to represent a consequential value without producing the new present and different becoming.

### **2.2.2 A process of producing infinite and different presents**

Postmodern writing also claimed that it does not need to preserve stories are uttered by past personages but, through our own syntagmatic frameworks, they constitute different texts, where truth is the infinite production of a constant present tense, which creates a new personal experience by means of the words overstepping the hierarchical and patriarchal demarcations imposed on their meanings to write our own story. In other words, it is also a process of ceaselessly interweaving the different and ex-centric linguistic components together to produce a permanent deferral as in Barthes’s statement:

It is ultimately undesirable, for the text thereby loses its difference. This difference is not, obviously, some complete, irreducible quality, it is not what designates the individuality of each text, what names, signs, finishes off each work with a

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<sup>18</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press, 1994, p271.

flourish: on the contrary, it is a difference, which does not stop and which is articulated upon the infinity of text, of languages, of systems.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, through erasing the privileged knowledge inscribed from any legitimized and institutionalized record of evidence, the text, constituted by the words with fluid signifiers isolated from their essential and foundational concepts, will just invent the performative, impossible and paradoxical text. This will also make a certain difference working out like a hindrance, blocking the communication between writing and the words' original truths in order to produce the pure presence of the present. In other words, postmodern writing is constituted by means of demolishing the identifiable and judgmental value of general concept in representing the presupposed text:

Here we find the principle which lies behind a confusion disastrous for the entire philosophy of difference: assigning a distinctive concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference within concepts in general- the determination of the concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference in the identity of an undetermined concept.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, this undetermined concept resulting from producing the different texts in opposition to general sense also inspired postmodernist fiction. It reinstated the text through self-reflexivity and individual praxis instead of the established truth in order to execute the productive function and the process of meaning- production by means of re-producing, rewriting and manipulating the established knowledge. And it would claim that there was no kinship and concept among signs to be constituted to complete the meaningful effect of signification to present the resemblance and analogy from the indigenous mould:

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<sup>19</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell, 1992., p 3.

<sup>20</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press, 1994, p32.

Analogy is itself the analogue of identity with judgment, analogy is the essence of judgment, but the analogy within judgment is the analogy of the identity of concepts”.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, words only act as a fluid sign with no any objective opposition, and are absolutely free to make up a random and hallucinatory name given to things and models to invent the magic and impossible meaning. In other words, for postmodernist writers, words possess no essence to produce an uncertain and mobile process of how to integrate each other to create the untiringly provisional composition with no final decipherment to make the infinite differences.

### **2.2.3 Producing instead of representing the reality with the resemblance**

According to Saussure:

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I should call it semiology (from Greek semeion 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes sign, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, Eco has also stated:

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<sup>21</sup>.Ibid., p33.

<sup>22</sup>. Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Flitterman, Sandy. *New Vocabularies In Film Semeotics:Structuralism, Post-structuralism and beyond*. Routledge, 1992, p4.

According to the principle of compositional analysis, a semiotic expression (be it a verbal item or any type of physical utterance) conveys, according to the linguistic conventions, an organized and analyzable content, formed by the aggregation (or hierarchy) of semantic feature.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, referring to semiotics, the totality was integrated through the hierarchical structure, which could be demonstrated by the conventional identity. Thus, all the constituents with similar essences just unify each other as an organic whole to represent the grouping resemblance in the adjacent region. Furthermore, each resemblance just receives a signature as a mark to nominate all the structural elements in the whole and all of these marks also will extend its territory through breaking off the interior similitude of the circle towards the exterior.

Nevertheless, this exterior circle is also the duplication of the interior and is a transformed analogy in emulation sprung from the interior resemblances under a function of convenience based on genesis, with a fluent communication between mark and mark. In other words, all the signatures in this totality bear the same nature and share a sympathy grounded in the same category. Hence, this purported hermeneutics has also become a foundational knowledge in modern language which highlights the homogeneous elements constituted as a totality, described by Foucault:

Hermeneutics let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the sign, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology: the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics and semiology in the form of similitude.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>.Eco,Umberto. *The Role of the Reader Exploration in the Semiotics of Texts*: Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1979, p177.

<sup>24</sup>. Foucault, Michel. *The Order Of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences* Routledge, 1991, p 29.

Therefore, the knowledge of hermeneutics and semiology leads us to search for a principle to bring to light the form of resemblance. To discover the rule governing signs is to find the structural elements that are alike in their signified meanings, so syntagmatic structure should also be constrained to mingle all the constituents with the similar referents together to constitute a homogeneous linguistic family for the sign to represent its signification. Irrefutably, semiology and hermeneutics postulate that only signified resemblance could be a logical and rational cement to solidify the rule of situating the structural components and to make them coexist together to represent the ultimate truth as the sign.

Nevertheless, all the postmodern writings repudiate this postulation of a rooted relationship between the resemble referents of grouping components and the signs, because hermeneutical interpretation should not exercise sovereignty over the sign by giving a signified meaning to the structural components according to the law of the form of similitude in order to produces the paradoxical truth by structuring them, without concerning their essences and transmitted referents.

#### **2.2.4 Decision and scission**

Referring to the temporal movement, Deleuze suggests that time is constituted by different presents with detached beginnings and erased memories. It is a process of producing infinite differences as an incessant series of actions without repeating itself in order to create the ceaseless becoming rather than extending a chains of representation guided by an inaugural past trace as a centre in order to make a grounding circle as a return:

To ground, in this third sense, is to represent the present- in other words, to make present and pass within representation (finite or infinite). The ground then appears as an immemorial Memory or pure, a past which itself was never present by which causes the present to pass, and in relation to which all the present coexist in a circle.<sup>25</sup>

Following this third sense and applying it to explore postmodern writing in the narrative temporality, it can properly be interwoven as the discourse in which each narrative part does not represent its commencement, memory and history but just functions as the scission and ceaselessly constructs each other as the present text in a process of producing the becoming without repeating the past. This scission violently torn down from its indigenous spatio-temporality has also been addressed by Derrida:

It is that very difference, that implacable difference which is the condition for their operation. No thing is complete in itself, and it can only be completed by what it lacks. But what each particular thing is infinite; we cannot know in advance what complement it calls for”.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the decision is a complete and full text as the history; his story and a memory were made and written in terms of past tense, definite there. Instead, the scission is a fragmentarily progressing text, constituting each other to produce the incessant present discourse. This incised text inscribed with the ceaselessly discursive linguistic kinetics interweave all the other divergent scissions leaping from their indigenously sequential structures to produce the incessantly different presence of the presents to manifest neither a beginning nor an ending in the temporal development. Derrida has delineated the import of this cut-off text in postmodern writing

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<sup>25</sup>.Ibid., p275.

<sup>26</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 304.

This scission marks the text's interruption (when the text is interrupted, folds back on itself...) and also marks the arbitrary insertion of the letter-opener by which the reading process is opened indifferently here and there".<sup>27</sup>

Referring to the temporal order in the nexus of scissions, there is no clear transitional and coherent passage from there to here and here to there. The different presents as a new becoming, advance in unceasing movement, lacking the past memory and future predication but is always creating the present, just here and now.

### **2.2.5 Prolonging the permanent present with no origin**

In the postmodern writing, this *I* is me, bearing the erased history and memory and merely behaving as a wanderer or sleepwalker looking for the unforeseeable contingency hidden at every corner, just erecting in front of me, becoming the new present. In other words, these quotation marks of citations, which appear coincidentally from the space and time from which I was absent before, will also be transformed as here and now by my participation in their movements with my enunciation and action.

The self-presence of the present is only capable of averring itself by severing itself from the fullness of a textual departure as a citation in order to link itself with other fragmentary castrations momentarily,

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<sup>27</sup>. Ibid., pp. 300-301

freely and superficially. Hence, while facing these different straying scissions, which just appear haphazardly here in front of me, I will be still carrying on my endlessly rumbling way to produce the various present-becoming via my participation in this unforeseeable adventure. Derrida has also clearly stated the meaning of the present:

If account be taken of what divides it, cuts it up, and folds it back in its very triggering, then the present is no longer simply present. It can no longer be named “present” except through indirect discourse, in the quotation marks of citation, storytelling, fiction. It can only go out into language by a sort of ricochet.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, this mobile progress of creating the incessant presents with the momentary novelty will also express that when taking part in this provisional composition constituted by the different scissions interweaving each other, I also will rebuild myself through hurdling the consequential becoming inherited from my past memory. In other words, I start to make the presence of my present with my personally straying around the fertile soil where scissions coincidentally meet together with my own enunciation in order to make the numerous presents.

## **2.3 Construction and deconstruction**

### **2.3.1 An open syntagmatic system with a heterogeneous constitution**

Structuralism, as the term suggests, is concerned with structures and more particularly with examining the general laws by which they work. Hence, structuralists also tried to utilize the deductive method of science through viewing words with a profound materiality that could be operated and function in a controllably internal organic system.

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<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., p 303.

The constraints of the language system are consequently fixed and given, aspects of language, rather than forces we produce, modify and transform in our actual communication”<sup>29</sup>.

Hence this whole process also possessed an integral and empirical effect manifesting a rational and objective reality instead of producing the impossible truth. In other words, this purport only rendered a concrete progress of how language is to be constructed systematically rather than reflecting the real life. On the other hand, there is a foundational model in the structuralist linguistic unit:

The sign is for Saussure the central fact of language, and the primordial opposition of signifier/signified constitutes the founding principle of structural linguistic. The signifier is the sensible, material, acoustic or visual signal which triggers a mental concept, the signified. The perceptible aspect of the sign is the signifier; the absent mental representation evoked by it is the signified, and the relationship between the two is signification.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the principle of internal logic has also been deployed in the linguistic system to decree the words as a sign, to know how to structure themselves together with knowing their precisely signified positions rooted in the scientific, historical and cultural recognition and symbolization. In other words, it certified its name as a proper noun as a representation from a sound- image given to an object first, a pure, single and transparent sign instead of a plural and paradoxical one. And then it should unite with other constituents possessing similar attributes in categorization as an organic totality and an appropriate syntax system to make a discourse to illustrate the mental concept as the signification. Moreover, there is another interpretation and formulation concerning structuralism:

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<sup>29</sup>. Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory*. TJ International Padstow, Cornwall. 1996 pp99-100.

<sup>30</sup>. Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Flitterman, Sandy. *New Vocabularies In Film Semeotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and beyond*. Routledge, 1992, p8.

With the work of the Prague school, the term 'structuralism' comes more or less to merge with the word 'semiotic'. 'Semiotic', or, 'semiology', means the systematic study of signs, and this is what literary structuralists are really doing. Semiotics also distinguishes between sign as 'denotation', what the sign stands for, and 'connotation', its association with other signs, and between codes (the rule-governed structures which produce meanings).<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the signs for structuralists and semiotics containing iconic, indexical and symbolic referents and the message transmitted through homogeneous signs constituting each other. On the other hand, these signs can also replace one another due to coming from the same class and are also coupled to each other in a chain.

In other words, structuralists' concern is that if we do not have a substantive law for a word or word group functioning syntactically with adequate nouns, it will inevitably create an infinite multiplicity. These words, if not constructed logically and operationally with the comparison, show their lacks and differences based on the binary opposition; they will be unable to represent the signification through the mutational relationship between the units interlinking one another in a sequential chain of syntactic networks.

Therefore these words must have a guideline to know how to find the positions to correlate with other components and to organize the meaning grounded in between each word's and word groups' external connections. Otherwise, they will merely produce disorder in the objects of our learning. Consequently, it will abruptly plunge our ideas concerning discourse into the greatest state of confusion. Nevertheless, according to Currie:

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<sup>31</sup>. Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory*. TJ International , Padstow, Cornwall. 1996..p88.

Deconstruction was always obsessed with absences, with the constitutive role of the other in the identity of anything”<sup>32</sup>.

Therefore, it is necessary to demolish the fence built on the original foundation and hierarchy in this scientific categorization and cultural recognition to renounce the internal logic embedded in the structuralist linguistic conception of binary opposition. In other words, deconstruction should go across the divided demarcation to the heterogeneous fields to interweave with others to create the unprecedented syntagmatic structure and to produce new facts from the different realms. However, the statements below demonstrates how structuralists achieved a rational language system to represent objective reality.

For the structuralist, linguistic terminology was primarily descriptive. The structuralist would stand back from narrative and describe its codes and conventions, its internal structure, its figures and trope from a distance. For the structuralist, linguistic was a metalanguage which could describe narrative, reveal its operation and mechanisms, from a stance of scientific objectivity.<sup>33</sup>

Instead, postmodern writing purports to level the gap blocked in between the different genres of references or texts and to blend them in the new territory of co-existence and juxtaposition. As Derrida put it:

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<sup>32</sup>.Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, MARTIN’S Press. 1998. p 84.

<sup>33</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 47.

Deconstructive inventiveness can consist in opening, uncloseting, destabilizing foreclosure structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other.<sup>34</sup>

This was a manifesto of plurality, regarded as the most prominent symptom of postmodernism which attempts to re-establish the new correlation by mingling the incommensurable units and entities together, and also to broaden the human mind to explore other fields by contacting the differences to view the new world with an open and a free mind. It is also to say that postmodern thought is no longer a binary thought as Lyotard described:

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy.<sup>35</sup>

Through breaking a frontier demarcated by the modernist hierarchical construction, the notion of intertextuality of postmodernism will create a new reality. This inventor's paralogy can be associated with Derrida's concepts of bricolage:

We discover the mythopoetical virtue of bricolage, In fact, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a centre, to a subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, or to an absolute archia.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>.Derrida, Jacques. From *Psyche: Invention Of The Other*. Attridge, Derek (ed). *Jacques Derrida : Acts Of Literature*, Routledge, 1992, p341.

<sup>35</sup>. Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report An Knowledge*. Manchester University Press, 1984, ( Introduction XXV).

<sup>36</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago, 1978, p361.

In other words, this is also a desire for freeing and unleashing the conceptual reference itself in order to interweave each other incommensurably, randomly and arbitrarily, and just comes into play without any longer concerning a centre, a locus of general belief and institutional knowledge in order to create a matter of content, but of some more incongruent mutation both in the object world itself-now become a set of different texts or momentary mirages.

### **2.3.2 Signs without a logocentric matrix and making meaning in the difference**

In postmodern narrative theory, the action of producing the simulacrum with provisional composition effacing any foundational knowledge and truth is also becoming a process of creating the different present-becoming without a final decipherment. This inventive reality will always manifest a mutable face without an ultimate and a determinate meaning like as that defined by modernists, because all the words renounce transmitting their references and given names but suffer amnesia to wait for being supplemented to make bifurcation, a different self and moreover, each of these different selves will also cannibalize each other to actualize the infinite becoming.

This postmodern text is entirely oppositional to the structuralist linguistic purport of hierarchy, which attempts to organize the textual elements as a unified totality and an intelligible and analyzable text to transmit the univocal meaning from a singularly congruent and coherent textual structure. Hence it produces a new cultural image:

What we must now affirm is that it is precisely this whole extraordinarily demoralizing and depressing original new global space which is the “the moment of truth” of postmodernism. What has been called the postmodernist “sublime” is only the moment in which this content has become more explicit”<sup>37</sup>

As such we also can view this creating meaning in difference, disregarding the foundation rooted in words’ origins and centres. On the other hand, Saussure’s sign-function progresses in the signifying chain repudiated in the following passage:

Saussure’s notion of the sign, for Derrida, is also characterized by PHONOCENTRISM, the belief that phonetic sounds can adequately represent meaning that are present in the consciousness of the speaker, while writing constitutes a second-degree mediation of self-present speech” and “the Saussurean privileging of the phonic over graphic signifier is predicated on an implicit distinction between the” inside” of the human thought, expressed in speech, and the “outside” of writing.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, it does not matter that there is a distinction between sound, speech and writing in Saussure’s linguistic discourse. Representing meaning from sound will activate human thought to search for an image as a conceptual model and a matrix to duplicate its resemblance. Therefore, with respect to structuralism, each word is a sign and model that provides the reference as a signifier rooted in the institutionalized and legitimized record achieved by its fixed origin from history or mythology, social beliefs and cultural convention. These had to be constructed in an enclosed language system in order to integrate all signs with the similarly iconic, indexical and symbolic properties from a given perceptible and intelligible concept.

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<sup>37</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press. 1991, p49

<sup>38</sup>. Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Sandy and Flitterman-Lewis. *New Vocabularies In Film Semiotics: Structuralism, post-structuralism and beyond*. Routledge.. 1992. p25.

In other words, this constitutional framework eventually would be aggregated, approaching a definitely straight passage to the realm of signified, since the signifier exists only to provide access to a meaning or transcendental signified in order to strengthen the stability of the sign-function to represent meaning. This linguistic construction has also been described by Ulmer:

The signifier and signified relate as if they were two sides of the same sheet of paper. The tendency of Western philosophy thought its history (logocentrism) to try to pin down and fix a specific signified to a given signifier.<sup>39</sup>

Hence, each sign is a signifier (sound -image), expressing a distinct reference through the impressive vision. But one unit can not make any sense and depends on its connecting with other signs under the constitutional principle of homogeneity and hierarchy, linking to each other as a semantic group in a linear development. Nevertheless, Eco rejected this linguistic hegemony:

A sign is not a fixed physical entity, the physical entity begin at most the concrete occurrence of the expressive pertinent element; a sign is not a fixed semiotic entity but rather the meeting ground for independent elements (coming from two different systems of two different planes and meeting on the basis of a coding correlation).<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, Derrida has also clearly raised the conception of *performativity*, functioning under the arbitrary integration of heterogeneity in order to deny the words being a concrete sign to be organized as a hierarchical and deductive discourse in its assemblage toward a final answer:

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<sup>39</sup>.Ulmer, Gregory L. The object of Post-Criticism. In Foster, Hal (ed). *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essay On Post modern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, p88.

<sup>40</sup>. Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1976, pp48-49.

Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving result in each element –phoneme or grapheme-being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile is the text produced only in the transformation of another text.<sup>41</sup>

These variable textual systems are incommensurable, and always cannibalize each other in motion, dynamically and ceaselessly functioning in a process of creating the new becoming with a permanent present tense. It implies that the meaning of sign somehow transforms those transmitted meanings that precedes it in the sequential development, or passively waits to be supplemented as the different and impossible meaning by those that follow to articulate a sign in this plural context.

## **2.4 Aims and contributions**

### **2.4.1 Postmodern film should be investigated by postmodern theory**

The summary of postmodern discourses above (several stances of postmodern writing extending from the trace of language to construction and deconstruction) will be the key notions applied in the following textual analysis in (Chapter 4, Learning from Tsai Ming-Liang's Films and Chapter 5, Learning from Kim Ki-Duk's Films). In other words, these are also the most conspicuous approaches supporting me in making an in-depth investigation of both directors' films by virtue of the wide range of postmodern theories from philosophy, literature, linguistics, art and culture.

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<sup>41</sup>.Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*, University of Chicago Press, 1981. p25.

Although there is no so-called postmodern film theory, both directors' works also have to be investigated through the different fields of postmodernism in order to navigate how they are structured in the syntagmatic system. We will explore further (1) how the image-words are put into play as a free signifier without being conceptualized to go through a proper passage to its signified in order to produce its infinite difference, present and impossibility incarnated in the cinematic structure; (2) how the temporal narratives are always progressing in the present discourse without positing past and future in the cinematic language system and are always continuously producing the different becoming; (3) how the postmodern cinematic texts are not constituted under a teleological framework in a chronological development to provide a transparent truth as a certain conclusion; (4) how the postmodern plural cinematic texts have subverted the modern organic structure in representing a pure totality with a perfect inner logic; and (5) how the postmodern life in both directors' films show disillusionment with the overoptimistically humanist value of modern social life rooted in morality, science and law.

All of these postmodern discourses from the different realms will be employed and transformed as the various film approaches used to explore and dissect Tsai and Kim's Films in Chapter 4 and 5. As such, the aim of this thesis is not to research films that have been categorized and inscribed into a certain cinema movement and history, or that can depend on some clear, direct and authorized theories that have been employed before to do the textual investigation through focusing on a distinct film genre. I have to research a broad scope of postmodern theories to dissect these cinematic texts without reference to any data related to cinema, but employ and transfer them as my present discourse conforming to postmodernist advocacy and the spirit of daringly inventing the truth to explore the flesh and blood of Tsai and Kim's films.

Unfortunately, there is also a dearth of film critics who explore and analyze these films with a profound grounding in postmodern theory. Rather they merely always use the superficial figurative postmodern terms, such as absurdity, incongruity, imaginary moment, nonlinear structure or fantastic present, as the

single and simple description in touching superficially the postmodern symbols. This is, because they merely mark the manifestation of postmodern plots as a final product without anatomizing how narrative units are constituted in this incongruent approach and how this narrative movement is progressing in a time out of joint, bearing only the erased past memory to produce these new texts.

Thus they fail to reveal how these postmodern writings can be produced based on the whole structure of the postmodern linguistics system to investigate how this inventive process of constituting the heterogeneous narrative elements without origins creates these paradoxical, absurd and humorous cinematic texts, transgressing the modern syntactic system and paradigm.

In other words, in all the parts of this film-analysis I will clearly display a panorama to explore and anatomize how the truth, in postmodern cinematic text becomes a process of incessantly generating meaning and also prolongs it to the infinite differences. Instead, it provides a transparent access to an ultimate truth bound step by step with a teleological progress and how the structural process is constituted by continuous momentums progressing in a fragmentary and disconnected temporality.

On the other hand, the philosophical thought of postmodernity has also led the narrative constituents to produce different presents with signal references of words breaking apart from their historical meanings, logical analogy and representational association in order to create here and now. However, all I have mentioned only very few have been applied to investigate Tsai and Kim's films with a full extent of postmodern sense. And these film critics also really pay much less attention to pursuing the historical sequencing of thinking systems from modern to postmodern discourses by virtue of making the comparison between them in order to dismantle postmodern cinematic text in detail.

## 2.4.2 Postmodern sublime going beyond the modern paradigm

Here, it is useful to state again that Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk are two colossally conspicuous postmodern filmmakers in Asia. Therefore, of course, their films should be analyzed by postmodern theory. On the other hand, I refuse to utilize film articles analyzing Tsai's film like this:

Tsai's films are united by a network of motifs: symbolic images of water, a melancholy atmosphere".<sup>42</sup>

Because I would have to write that water has been produced as a free signifier, without being pinned down with its logocentric name, and has also been created with infinite difference without duplicating sameness in most of Tsai's films.

Moreover, Film critic Vick has written:

Subtle is not a word that would ever be applied to Kim Ki-Duk. His disenchanting view of humanity is expressed repeatedly and forcefully in his film,<sup>43</sup>

Again, I have to delineate why postmodernist claims that the humanist values of modern social life, based on morality, ethics, law and science have waned and actually our everyday's lives have become dehumanized, dystopian and denaturalized in order to analyze Kim's postmodern cinematic text.

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<sup>42</sup>. Vick, Tom. *Asian Cinema*. HarperCollins. 2007, p 211.

<sup>43</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 167.

Unfortunately, and unbelievably, Vick has also told us why Kim's films used be entirely excluded from Korean society:

Kim's films are defended and attacked with equal ardor in Korea, so much so that Kim, in reaction to the vicious criticism directed against him, once publicly announced that he would no longer distribute his films there. (He has since changed his mind.) In a way, the contentiousness surrounding his film is unresolvable. Are his descriptions of woman misogynist or allegories of a misogynist culture? It's ultimately up to the viewer to decide where they stand.<sup>44</sup>

Actually, this is either a misunderstanding or ignorance concerning Korean peoples' thinking. One may ask how it is possible to use the modern concept inscribed with a general sense and a privileged and institutionalized grounding, viewing a misogynist as a man who hates women or believes that men are much better than woman, to describe either Kim or characters in Kim's films, when these plots have been produced as the postmodern paradoxical text by Kim supplementing more meaning to make the difference from this modern psychoanalytic term. Thus female character always use self-mutilation to express her despair causing herself unbearable agony, and simultaneously male character also uses sex as the remedy to redeem each other from their hopeless dilemmas.

In other words, the use of misogyny in plots created by Kim has transgressed the modern psychoanalytic paradigm and it becomes a medicine to rescue each other through a process of producing the postmodern utopian. Hence, postmodern films should be dissected by postmodern theory. However, most Korean people have been educated to use modern principles to judge any dehumanized and dystopian imagery using principle rooted in Confucian teaching of ethical hierarchy.

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<sup>44</sup>. Ibid., p 168.

The films of the talented and honoured international directors Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk are still inaccessible for Taiwanese and Korean people and they are also unsuccessful at domestic box offices. It is argued that this is because modern theories in art, literature and even cultural production have transfused a granted knowledge based on the logical, rational, crystal and teleological structure of thinking in representing an objective truth with the controllable and incontestable bourgeois life stance in both countries. Instead, everyday lives of marginalized peoples in Tsai and Kim's films are so absurd, unpredictable, contradictory, outrageous and violent that they have become far removed from the intellectual life inscribed in the modern psychoanalytic and social paradigm.

Therefore, the aim of my thesis is to apply postmodern theory to probe Tsai and Kim's films using detailed postmodern discourses that have never been used by any film theorists so far. Although, the range of postmodern theories is very wide, I will be in accordance with the traits of these postmodern Asian films, which contain more linguistic thematic in their textual structure, in putting more emphasis on the postmodern writing theory to deconstruct lucidly all of their syntagmatic systems. I will also explore what kind of philosophical thoughts guide us to discover and problematize the truth existing in the postmodern text in order to dissect Tsai and Kim's films in Chapters 4 and 5.

In Asian cinema, Kim and Tsai's films demonstrate this postmodern syntagmatic structure. Unfortunately, so far there has been no film critique applying the full extent of postmodern writing theory to analyze Kim and Tsai's films. Hence, in the following section, I will exemplify both directors' unique postmodern cinematic texts by means of comparing these with the classic cinematic text widespread in films available in Asia.

## 2.5 Hollywood blockbuster films in Asia

### 2.5.1 Hong Kong film

“Few regions’ movies have infiltrated American popular culture as thoroughly as Hong Kong’s have. They’ve been staples in theatres, on television, and on video since the 1970s, influencing everybody from Quentin Tarantino to the Wu Tang Clan. Action stars like Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee are household names, and many other Hong Kong talents have enjoyed Hollywood careers”.<sup>45</sup>

The readerly text; classic text has transmitted the consequential language narrated by linear structure to approach its teleological goal step by step in these Hong Kong-style choreographed fight films far from the postmodern text. In addition, films of this genre have been produced as a massive entertainment machine to please audiences with easily understandable, accessible and representable plots, without requiring them to co-produce the text. On the other hand, even Hong Kong directors attend preview screenings of their movies to know if their works are capable of completely dominating viewers’ moods. They need to apprehend the audiences’ full response from the dramatically-designed effects in order to judge if these films should be edited again to make improvements.

Therefore, even though they have become a product without providing any space for the process of audiences writing their texts, the industry of producing these popularized blockbuster films was at one time the third-largest in the world, trailing only those of the United States and India. This also means that success at the box-office has become a uniform criterion and an irresistible force to standardized Hong Kong movies to cater to mass audience taste just like Hollywood blockbuster films. As a result,

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<sup>45</sup>.Ibid., p 116.

certainly, postmodern writing theory such as non-organic and non-linear structure, truth dwelling in the process of incessantly generating the meaning and present discourse constituted via scission linking scission cannot be applied to Hong Kong movies, because they offend against the foundational principle of classic text.

There are two names persistently associated with Hong Kong cinema, Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. With Lee's sudden death, Jackie Chan emerged to take his place, and has become a worldwide star. Furthermore, his blockbuster films, such as *Rush Hour* (1998) and *Shanghai Noon* (2000), have conquered Hollywood. Hence, following this genre, Hong Kong films came to be identified almost entirely with martial arts and action movies.

Nevertheless, currently its film industry has developed more broadly in its offerings. For example Hui's *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006) mixes whimsy and melancholy to tell the story of a middle-aged woman from the provinces trying to negotiate city life. In other words, its style is not of the action genre, but it reflects the subject of alienation based on the postmodern social life. However, the cinematic structure and text are still bounded with classic narrative, a linear structure constructed by consequential language running with the logic-temporal order. On the other hand, with the current trend of globalization, it can also be said of Hong Kong film-productions:

Framed in the debates of postmodernity, production in late capitalism represents more flexible labor processes and markets, of geographical mobility and rapid shifts in consumption practices.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p 124. Cited in Leung, Wing-Fai. *Infernal Affairs And Kung Fu Hustle: Panacea, Placebo and Hong Kong Cinema*. In Leon and Leung, Wing-Fai (eds). *East Asian Cinemas. Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*. I.B. Tauris, 2008, p 71.

It has also triggered the recent trend in the Asian film industries, especially since the success of “*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*” (Ang Lee, 2000). Hence, Hong Kong film-makers are encouraged to attempt to replicate crossover, co-produced blockbusters such as the transnational action films in order to promote this classic cinematic text melted into multi-national territory. However, even though Hong Kong films will become more and more globalized in presenting heterotopous, multicultural and polyglottic humanist dimensions in films, their texts still have to conform to the ingrained tenet of classic narrative.

### 2.5.2 Chinese film

Referring to films produced in the People’s Republic of China, there are two directors’ names Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou that should be the synonym of standing for China’s movies, due to their announcing the arrival of the fifth generation on the world stage.<sup>47</sup> Both directors would go on to become the two most famous members of the fifth generation. Moreover, they came of age during the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, these personal histories influenced them using the modern grant narration with a strong attempt to criticize and review this miserable and bitter period of Chinese history. In other words, they dare to represent this collective past memory in their subsequent works instead of either producing the truth of the postmodern life in China or constituting their cinematic text with a postmodern historical approach.

*Farewell my Concubine* (1993) brought Chen to the international stage of cinema when it shared the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival with Jane Campion’s *The Piano*. Nevertheless, the narrative structure used to organize the events happening in temporal development in this epic film is utterly bound with

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<sup>47</sup>. China’s directors are roughly grouped into “generation”, based partly on their age and partly on when they graduated from the Beijing Film Academy. Vick, Tom. *Asian Cinema*. HarperCollins, 2007, p8.

the chronological and teleological approach. On the other hand, it also depicted this bitter history completely based on a perspective of official history. Therefore, referring to structure, it still follows the modern narrative, that internal temporality of narrative; the order and frequency of its events have a synchronic orientation constituted as a whole in a linear framework with a logic-temporal order.

According to Derrida, however:

There is not one single history, but rather histories different in their type, rhythm, mode of inscription-intervallic, differentiated histories”.<sup>48</sup>

We should rewrite and criticize the official history with our present discourse as an individual viewpoint in order to refuse to represent history with a general recognition based on the official viewpoint. I do not mean to imply that this film is not a masterful work, but it lacks a postmodern approach in constituting structure and writing the history.

Although Chen once switched his hallmark style of historical film to deal with contemporary subjects, he seems to cater more international audiences. A Western critic wrote:

Indeed, Chen’s style consistently blends Chinese aesthetic tradition with full-blown Hollywood conventions. This is one of the secrets to his films’ appeal. They expose a foreign culture through means that westerners can understand. “*Together*” (2002), for instance, is a solidly made biographical film about a violin prodigy”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 50.

<sup>49</sup>. Vick, Tom. *Asian Cinema*. HarperCollins, 2007, p 10.

Hence, the sense of aesthetic of Hollywood blockbuster films has been revived as the hegemony of beauty and this has forced Chen to change his expressive form and conform to this overwhelming triumph of globalization radiating from Hollywood. Not only cinematic aesthetic, but like the best of classic Hollywood, the content also is dramatically stressed to transmit emotional impact. This has become the typical characterization used to present characters' sensations cathartically and externally.

On the other hand, such self-compromises in the creation of films probably also applies to Zhang Yimou in his recent works, according to Vick that Zhang Yimou may have tamed the rebellious nature that first got him noticed, but he has hardly tempered his artistry. He now makes gorgeous pop art on a grand scale. And yet he is still accused of capitulating-either to Western tastes or to his own government. Zhang's response is:

They say that I 'm trying to kiss either the foreigners' asses or the Chinese government's ass. I always jokingly respond that I'm actually kissing my own ass!"<sup>50</sup>

However, following in the tracks of Ang Lee's global blockbuster *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Zhang directed *Hero* (2002). This martial arts movie does nothing more than explore the essence of heroism from different points of view. The imagery design in battle scenes is extremely spectacular, and light and colour have been enhanced to a supremely fantastic state to reach the aesthetic test of Hollywood blockbusters. As such, the historical figure of Emperor Shi Huangdi is depicted and characterized by Zhang in accordance with the official view of Chinese authority. Zhang seems to have lost the thinking of scepticism and rebellious spirit needed to problematize and criticize the historical recognition and position of this grand emperor.

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<sup>50</sup>. Ibid., p 18.

Referring to heroism in Chinese martial arts films, the brush and blade have become situated at a logocentric position as a cultural code to transcend the swordsmen's external physical level to gain an internal spiritual dimension:

Granted, Zhan Yimou generates swordsmen's quasi-spiritualism on the basis of Chinese calligraphy and wordplay, yet for Western film-makers, this more or less literal 'brush', a system of representation between language and culture shared by Chinese on and off the screen, becomes radically defamiliarizing".<sup>51</sup>

Actually this is a textual interpretation based on the hermeneutical purport to analyze the meaning of "brush and blade" incarnated from the figure of the swordsman inscribed in the legacy of Chinese literature. There is a cultural matrix in defining an authentic swordsman who to be eligible for this status must fulfil two qualifications. One is to have profound knowledge from learning calligraphy and literature, and the other is to have excellent skills in martial arts, because a swordsman's vocation is to execute justice. Thus intelligence is the cornerstone to guide a swordsman to do the lawful thing, even sacrificing his life for justice and righteousness. Thus, martial arts is the physical foundation to enable him to perform his more exalted mission.

Classical Chinese books and paintings are written and drawn by brush; hence the brush is a major tool to present the individual thoughtful and lyrical mind with literal or pictorial calligraphy. The blade is also a primary part in the most commonly used weapon, sword, in Chinese literature, so it has been conceptualized as a sign to execute the obligation bravely at any personal risk with iron willpower. Therefore, the swordsman has been embodied as a cultivated, learned, artistic warrior and these

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<sup>51</sup>. Ma, Sheng-mei. Brush and Blade in East-West Culture. In Hunt, Leon and Leung, Wing-Fai(eds) *East Asian Cinema*. Tauris, 2008, pp 245-246.

monumental and foundational meanings have been coupled by making a one-to-one correspondence between these two signifiers -brush and blade- and their signification rooted in the rich legacy of Chinese literature.

In other words, the syntagmatic system to constitute brush and blade as a means used by Zhang to design plots and to characterize the swordsman is constructed by modern language systems. The meaning of the things, brush and blade, has been extended by regarding the incorrigible cultural code as a grounding. What Zhang does is to enhance and transcend their signification through prolonging the logical extension in representing the resemblance from a logocentric cultural stance to construct the signifiers of brush and blade in a magnificent association with the swordsmen, to produce a mental representation.

### **2.5.3 Taiwanese film**

Among Taiwanese film directors, only Lee Ang has won a world-wide reputation from the most premier international film festivals and global box office success. His classic and modern films can be regarded as Confucianizing Hollywood movies. The late international Taiwanese film director Edward Yang made an incisive statement on Confucianism:

Confucian dogma-including the values of conformity, discipline, obedience, diligence, sacrifice, etc-was employed as a way to question universal standards of value set by Western powers. But these Confucian “virtues” also deny imagination, creativity, and critical thinking. What are the consequences of this denial? Interpersonal suspicion and cynicism. Contradictions precipitated by Confucianism’s utility-conformity and homogeneity-are the keys to Asian wealth and success but, at the same time, prevent Asians from creating new terms of reference for a new era of choice. “What should I do? What

is a good person? How should we live? Are questions my characters are constantly asking, because they now have the luxury to ask them.<sup>52</sup>

Hence, of course, the dehumanized, denaturalized, dystopian and non-moralistic cinematic texts reflected from the postmodern life in Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films are far away from the modern virtues of Confucian principles to guide family relationships more harmoniously and social order more progressively compared with Lee's film.

Lee explores the key Confucian ethic of friendship in his film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Even though the male protagonist, a swordsman, loves the female protagonist, a swordswoman, he has still been constrained by Confucian teaching. He never expresses his love to this beautiful widow, who is his late friend's wife, because in Chinese culture the relationship between a man and his close friend is the same as that to his biological brother. In other words, this woman has also become his sister-in-law culturally. As such, even though he eventually dies in order to save her life, he still represses this pure love. In contrast, in Kim's film *Bad Guy* (2001), the gang boss's friend brutally tries to kill him to own a beautiful prostitute, without considering the fraternal love and faithfulness between them.

In addition, in Lee's film *Wedding Banquet* (1993), after a traditional father learns his son is a homosexual and is going to marry a beautiful girl in a fake wedding, he still pretends to know nothing about his son's sexual preference. His son arranges this deceitful wedding just because Confucian principle tells him to be an obedient son and not to reveal his real sexual orientation to his father; in other words he is bound by filial piety to his father. On the other hand, the father has also been saturated by this traditional doctrine and also conceals everything in his mind without speaking out. He knows that

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<sup>52</sup>.Edward Yang, "Director's Statement," *A Confucian Confusion: Edward Yang's energetic comedy (Duli shidai: yang dechang de huoli xiju)* (Taipei: Variety, 1994), 131-139 (our translation). Cited in Yeh, Emilie Yueh-Yu and Davis, Darrell William. *Taiwan Film Directors*. Columbia University Press, 2005, p 179.

as a father he has the duty to maintain family harmony and the only way he can do that is to feign happiness about his son's marriage to remain a Confucian happy family. Hence, we can call this film a family ethical drama to contrive a happy ending.

However, in Tsai Ming-Liang's film *The River* (1997), his version of family harmony is dysfunctional and also characterizes family members as incapable of communicating with each other, as they try to isolate themselves like separated islands, losing their appropriate positions to play a role to establish a peaceful order in the family. Moreover, Tsai's version of the familial love between a son and a father is outrageously distorted. These twisted family relations are perverted, because incestuous love has taken the place of the affection between father and son. On the other hand, it is not Oedipal affection between boy and mother but anti-Oedipal. Therefore, Tsai daringly subverts the paternal love in the Confucian family ethical system and uses homosexual relations between a father and a son as a displacement of this doctrine of virtuous family kinship.

Moreover, in Kim Ki-Duk's film *Samaritan Girl* (2003), this idealistically related position between a father and a daughter in Confucian thinking has completely waned. The father, who is also a policeman, when he finds his daughter has become a prostitute, should remedy her misconduct with a disciplinary and lawful method to remedy this family disorder. Instead, he behaves like a gangster and adopts the brutally illegal measures of beating and even killing one of his daughter's sexual clients, causing a bloody displacement of family harmony.

In other words, Kim overturns not only a father's appropriate duty rooted in the concept of ethic and morality in Confucian family but also destroys the modern social values based on science, morality and

law. Hence, certainly, his film is not a so-called family ethical film representing a truthful, virtuous and beautiful world based on any conventional and cultural doctrines. At the end of the film, when the father is under arrest sitting in a police car, his daughter is just driving a car and chasing him. Therefore, he has abandoned his daughter and forces her to live independently in this cruel world without fulfilling his fatherly duty.

#### **2.5.4 Conclusion**

With respect to the extent of Asian cinema, it is huge, wide and diversified. Thus it is impossible for me to exemplify the cinematic structures and texts of all Asian countries' films in order to prove that Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films are eligible to be identified as the most brilliant postmodern films in Asia. That subject is beyond the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, if I were to offer a superficial introduction about genre, structure and content with a very comprehensive survey of all Asian cinemas, would certainly be shallow and foreign to other parts of the thesis, where there is a deep exploration of each subject.

Therefore, I firstly use Hong Kong action movies as a sample of the most popular Hollywood blockbuster films in order to express this prevailing classic text in Asia. Even though they have used some plural concepts of postmodernity to fuse different languages, races, geographies and cultures in films, their narrative approaches are still framed in classic realms with consequential language.

Next, I also chose several of the most outstanding Asian film directors' works to explain why modern narrative, characterization, aesthetic, historical viewpoints and humanist values of social progress and of family ethic have gained the textual hegemony winning them international reputations. On the other

hand, it also means that their masterful works reveal a distinct contrast with Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films, which further certifies that both directors' works ought to be categorized as postmodern films.

## 2.6 Structure of the thesis

Film theorists Yeh, Yueh-Yu and Davis, Darrell William offer an authoritative statement of how Tsai's film is unique compared with other Asian films. They evaluate Tsai as a camp artist:

By evoking camp, we hope to illustrate the most intriguing features of Tsai Ming-Liang's creative strategies relating to traditions of Chinese popular culture and cinema",<sup>53</sup> "Camp is rarely discussed in Asian cinema, let alone Taiwan film",<sup>54</sup> and "of course camp is not the same as irony, sarcasm, satire, travesty, and so forth. But the space between characters' imagination and their material circumstances forms a camp site".<sup>55</sup>

Actually, the camp effect, created by Tsai in his films, has overstepped its definitional meaning:

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<sup>53</sup>. Yeh, Emilie Yueh-Yu and Davis, Darrell William. *Taiwan Film Directors*. Columbia University Press, 2005, p223.

<sup>54</sup>. One exception is Julian Stringer, "Problem with the Treatment of Hong Kong Cinema as Camp", *Asian Cinema* 8 ( Winter 1996-97): 44-65. Cited in *ibid.*, p 219.

<sup>55</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 221.

Camp is a critical analysis and at the same time a big joke. Camp takes “something” (normally a social norm, object, phrase, or style), does a very acute analysis of what the “something” is, then takes the “something” and presents it humorously”.<sup>56</sup>

In other words, although Yeh and Davis have delineated this salient camp effect in Tsai’s films within Asian cinema, the definitional meaning of camp has also been transformed and invented as the unexplainable, paradoxical and fantastic simulacrum and postmodern sublime. As such, this is not simply a humorous sense, so-called *black humour*, but an innovative camp effect, with no name to nominate its productive dynamism due to being supplemented with the more impossible meaning in this sense of humour as an absurd and imaginary amusement. In addition, this transformed camp effect has also been manifested in Kim’s films, as a hybrid fusing sexuality and violence together as a multivalent amusement with cruelty and postmodern sublime, a momentary truth.

In the introduction, therefore, I wish to express this very prominent characteristic of postmodernist plurality of creating polyglot meaning by blending humour, redemption, fear and violence together to produce a multifaceted social life with no hierarchical centre in both directors’ film; I will trace back the evolutionary and even revolutionary development of philosophical parameters from modernity to postmodernity to deconstruct and to pursue this base from its extended multivalent realm of humanist stances incarnated in social and cultural edifices. However, I also anchor the sheer discrepancy between modernist and postmodernist linguistic discourses to construct the different postmodern writing approaches. So both major postmodern discourses will be insightfully deployed not only to investigate both directors’ art works in analysis of their films (Chapters 4 and 5), but also to act as a threshold to enter into the other more detailed fields of the different postmodern discourses.

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<sup>56</sup>. Wikipedia [http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Camp+\(style\)](http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Camp+(style)) (Accessed on 18, March 2009)

Hence, in Chapter 1 (How to define postmodernism), I stress the introduction of the developmental progress from modernism to postmodernism in its historical sequence. I show what claims, in this social upheaval, postmodernists have made with a radical skepticism to problematize the institutional and absolute knowledge purported in this bourgeois society of modernity, and how they strongly asserted that social, cultural, political and economic practice should break their hegemonic boundaries so as not to be constituted as a centring notation, ideology and cultural dominance.

Thus postmodernists also repudiate any based knowledge derived from foundationalism and formalism and reclaimed in favour of new principles of chaos, contingency, spontaneity and organism to problematize all beliefs in foundations, absolutes, truth, and objectivity with the radical skepticism. In other words, these advocacies attempt to pursue internal emancipation as a complete self-production to create the provisional truth as a paradoxical text to destabilize the meaning instead of constituting a theological text to concretize a univocal meaning

On the other hand, the ideas reclaimed by modernists, referring to progressive cultural and social life, truth, normative rightness, authenticity and beauty which have been considered as the permanent and solid core values saturated in everyday living have also been attacked by postmodernists. They decry this intellectual life replete with the utopian and humanist values by advocating dystopian and dehumanized life deemed with absurdity, waywardness, indeterminacy and unmanageability to replace the idealistic life stance of modernity.

In (Chapter 2 Postmodern writing), I focus on the analysis of contextual structure to explore how the syntagmatic systems in the postmodern writing are composed of their units, words, by virtue of

emancipating themselves from the confines of structuralism in one-to-one position between a signifier and a signified in order to produce the simulacrum through a provisional combination.

In other words, the sentences used to orchestrate the text can also be bracketed and cited as scissions arbitrarily torn from their histories, memories and origins to become the new trigger. It also means that postmodern narrative structure of interweaving each scission has also become the ceaselessly present discourse in order to produce infinite differences and becoming. To extend this compositional scission without indicating the past and future, it can also be developed as intertextuality. This means that although this plural work is constructed of components coming from various genres, schools and categories, all having their own expressive forms and contents; it also will create a series of fantastic momentums through their reciprocating, permeating and replacing with each other in a new territory.

Therefore, this process of fantastically cannibalizing heterogeneous elements produces a marvellous grafting effect, which allows the reference to become the individual material as the structural elements in avant-garde art with prodigious spontaneity in mixing self with other different selves to produce the impossible truth.

On the other hand, apart from delineating this plural syntagmatic system with the breakdown of the signifying chain, where the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers incarnated in postmodern writing and literature, I also extend this nonorganic structure, a polyglot totality constructed of the divergent components, disengaged from their indigenous centres, to the realms of postmodern aesthetical sense and concept of plural structure elucidated in Chapter 2.

Following that, I discuss how words become free signifiers without being pinned down in the lexical and hermeneutical interpretation to destabilize the truth by virtue of constituting the spontaneous, arbitrary

and provisional composition in writing. Structural elements detach themselves from their historical meaning, cultural recognition and general sense and freely constellate with each other in order to create the new art going far beyond the classification of art history represented in the museum. These textual entities also unfetter themselves from their genres and family systems in order to integrate incommensurably with each other in the non-organic structure as a postmodern totality, which produces the paradoxical and unrepresentable meaning and configuration far transgressing the coherent and pure form and thematic of modern art with the organic structure exhibited in the museum.

In Chapter 2 (Postmodern writing, the museum and art), all the themes mentioned above will also be applied to the structure of Tsai and Kim's films to explore how the cinematic elements are actualized as the postmodern linguistic units in their free integration. And how all the referential meanings transmitted from objects as a sign in milieu have been made different and impossible without extending their metonymic, analogous and hermeneutical prolongation but manifesting the marvellously and incredibly reciprocal effect produced between protagonists and their surrounding things in a schizophrenic linguistic structure still demonstrated in the analysis of their films (Chapters 4 and 5).

In Chapter 3 (postmodern literature and media language), I will explore the pleasure of the postmodern text segregating itself from structuralism without constituting a closed entity equipped with a definite meaning but creating a plural entity constituted by the endless play of signifiers, which can never be pre-conceptualized and categorized as a single centre, essence or meaning but makes a prodigious catastrophe in the signifying system as a schizophrenic language in the postmodern literature.

On the other hand, I also delineate that the taxonomic stratification of literary form and context also can be transgressed in order to reciprocate, permeate and displace with each other to create the new text as

intertextuality, without a name or a concept. This grafting and montage writing constituted in an incongruent structure has also invented the undecipherable and indescribable text which can never be constructed in a harmonious and coherent structure and attributed to a certain category in the postmodern literature.

Referring to media language, I delineate all the compositional components that have effaced their pre-established recognitions and memories as a code situated in a logocentric position. This also can never be a hermeneutical code to analyze and interpret a cultural code to express the social recognition or a semiotic code to reveal the connotation of places and object, and symbolic code to decipher and represent the sexual and psychoanalytic paradigm. In other words, there is no textual unit playing a role as an interpretant as in the semiotic system, where the following unit should be guided to represent the hermeneutical and significant sequence in order to solidify the logocentric position inherited from the former narrative unit.

All of these narrative units have occupied their own centres with an arbitrary decipherment and a fluid meaning as free signifiers. Therefore they just exchange and displace with each other's positions in order to produce the infinite differences and divergences instead of representing and repeating the resemble sequence. This pleasure of the postmodern text will also be exemplified in Chapters 4 and 5 to portray elaborately how all the cinematic components work as free signifiers put into play by the protagonists to produce the provisional mirage and astonishment in order to subvert the past memory through inscribing the new present discourse in space. We will look at, how this process of creating a consecution of new becoming leaps over the temporal order; and how all sorts of media and performing arts break up their taxonomic categories and families to fuse with each other reciprocally as an intertextuality to create the impossible, indiscernible and unprecedented cinematic text.

All of these postmodern textual fields and discourses described from the Introduction to Chapter 3 have also been employed to investigate the cinematic text and structure in Tsai and Kim's films in Chapters 4 and 5. It also means that I attempt to provide the more comprehensive dimensions of postmodern thinking to investigate both directors' works not only by means of linguistic system but by virtue of the depthless and randomly multivalent structural texts displayed in other visual provinces (art, media), which are also incarnated as the profoundly multi-faceted stances of postmodern society without the ontological expression and truth.

Of course, in Chapters 4 and 5, I just apply all of the postmodern discourses stated by me to extend and to analyze Tsai's and Kim's films with these clearly variable postmodern approaches. I adopt postmodern philosophical, cultural, aesthetical, social and linguistic stances and entire postmodern texts described from the Introduction to Chapter 3 to give a clear map of postmodernity. This will aid us to explore how dystopian, inhuman and unethical social lives have announced a waning in the life of bourgeois, to describe how the protagonists become a madman, confused in judging objects with a sense of identity and difference and also interplaying with them arbitrarily and randomly with the schizophrenic experience, disordered in the signifying chain.

All the protagonists' radical and absurd behaviors have been produced with momentary truth detached from the modern psychoanalytical paradigms. The boundaries in visual, plastic and performing arts have been torn down and all of their narrative elements just integrate with and displace each other to create the amazing and dynamic effect of intertextuality with an unexplainable and paradoxical meaning. To express all the cinematic units composed in action linking action they have leaped over the coherently temporal order as a series of different presents.

Eventually, to express the entire cinematic narrative framework constituted by scissions in movement is as if the fragmentarily narrative entities are violently cut off from their indigenous places. Through a process of connecting with each other contingently and incessantly, this dynamically created narrative time will become the untiringly running arrow which has erased its beginning in flying towards an uncertain future. Hence, all of these postmodern philosophical, cultural, aesthetical, social and linguistic approaches have been employed to dissect Tsai and Kim's films in Chapters 4 and 5.

In (Chapter 6, the conclusion), I have formulated that from the past to the present, Tsai and Kim's films can provide a profound cinematic text and structure when investigated by the full extent of postmodern theory, so relatively, postmodern purports can also offer premier multivalent approaches to analyze deeply and navigate both postmodern film directors' masterful works in this postmodern world.

## **PART 2 THE DIMENSION OF POSTMODERNISM**

### **Chapter 1 How to define postmodernism**

#### **1.1 An approach to postmodernism**

##### **1.1.1 The time of the post**

According to the evolution of thinking systems, we are living in the times of the posts, such as postindustrialism, postcapitalism and postmodernism. The term post manifests a historical sequencing in which a preceding state of affairs is replaced and the succeeding one becomes a periodizing term. Thus, postmodern theorists declare that the modern era is over:

There was a turn away from modern discourse of truth, certainty, universality, essence, and system and a rejection of grand historical narratives of liberation and revolution<sup>57</sup>.

In other words, it also manifests the end of the grand narratives of the modern theory as Lyotard wrote:

I will use the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup>.Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997. p 6.

<sup>58</sup>. Lyotard, Jean –Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report An Knowledge*. Manchester University Press. 1984. Introduction (xxiii).

As such, there is a need for new postmodern theories and politics to carry out a subversion of major classical and modern philosophical systems to challenge and problematize the very groundings of modern thought. Hence a group of radical intellectuals and activists announced a decisive break with modern society and culture:

These postmodern theorists believed that significant changes were occurring in history with the advent of new social movements opposing the Vietnam War, imperialism, racism, sexism, and capitalist societies in their entirety, demanding revolution and an entirely new social order.<sup>59</sup>

The term postmodern has become a fashionable, novel, innovative and popular label for something concerning the life and thought of recent decades. It is also an intellectual movement guiding a revolutionary trend of thinking to explore all the aspects of socio-cultural phenomena and to discover and invent the truth with the infinite difference materialized in divergently productive forms with new senses of seeing, exploring and showcasing the real world as the following

The members of the postmodern family not only express conflicting views, but are interested in barely overlapping subject matters: art, communication media, history, economics, politics, ethics, cosmology, theology, methodology, literature, education.<sup>60</sup>

Hence, these thinkers, like Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Deleuze were turning to Nietzsche and Heidegger and appropriating their critical discourses against modern theory and modernity itself. Nevertheless, although some of the most important members of the family refused to be called by the family name, postmodernism, and even rejected any distant relationship with it, postmodernists still hold

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<sup>59</sup> . Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997. p 4.

<sup>60</sup> . In Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003. p1 (Introduction).

the attitude of skepticism to problematize any kind of generalized, totalizing, ultimate and legitimized knowledge and belief. The modernist centralized system of value and thinking strengthening the hierarchical fortress for these intellectuals, an obsolete and suspect value of attempting to create institutionalized validity through a legislative power-system to achieve universal and perpetual law and value.

Therefore, the norms and laws were only decreed and institutionalized by the superiors in order to guide people on how to judge humanist values such as ethics, morality, aesthetics, politics, class, and gender. And only these elites could possess the power to announce this hegemonic discourse as the centring idealistic and foundational notation and ideology and the cultural dominance to organize a harmonious and controllable social system. Modernist intellectuals also attempted to establish general, unified and even universal knowledge ruling over the whole thinking system of social values with a hierarchical division. In other words, all social, cultural (including art), political or economic practices and influences are inaugurated and exerted by a dominant group in modern times.

Nevertheless, postmodernist art and cultural theory have self-consciously acknowledged this ideological positioning in the world and they have incited to do so, not only strongly claiming the localizing narration sprung from all the others existing in the different minor social scales, but also presenting the discourse enunciated from the previously silenced ex-centric, both outside (post-colonial) and within (women, homosexuals).

This society will never only hear the voice, the discourse verbally expressed by speech or writing from the single superior side as a canon and privileged awareness to certify social value and stratify social attribution. And it claims that discourse enunciated from the other marginal sides should be integrated as

a plural text to problematize the totalized social value, and the dominant power incarnated in the authoritative and patriarchal discourse uttered by dominant groups who would monopolize the privilege to speak and write. Hence during the 1960s, the first postmodern theorists declared that a resolute break with the past had taken place:

Most of the major postmodern theorists-Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Guattari, Jameson, Laclau, Mouffée, Harvey, and others participated in, and were deeply influenced by, the tumult of the 1960s, and these experiences of rupture helped produce a readiness, an openness, to the discourse of historical breaks and discontinuities.<sup>61</sup>

Foucault has also stated that modern discourse is only uttered by the superior class owning the power:

Discourse is not a stable continuous entity that can be discussed like a fixed formal text; because it is the site of conjunction of power and knowledge, it will alter its form and significance depending on who is speaking, her/his position of power, and the institutional context in which the speaker happens to be situated.<sup>62</sup>

Hence, the suppression of the enunciative act is always imposed on the ex-centric. The system of power-structure also authorizes some institutional representations to stigmatize the others, where the discourse is both an instrument and an effect of power possessed only by the major group. Nevertheless, referring to the discourse enunciated from ex-centric, peripheral or the different groups, it has been one of the postmodern forces radically working to interrogate the ideology concealed under the dominant

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<sup>61</sup> .Ibid., pp4-5.

<sup>62</sup> .Focault, Michel. Power/Knowledge . Quoted in Hutcheon,, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism* . Routledge, 1988, p 185.

structuring power, which shapes the thinking form of consciousness and unconsciousness as a granted reason-domination, even an intuitive privileged awareness, and an incorrigible social recognition.

In other words, this patriarchal language which exerts its authority not only isolates the others from the social core and also marginalizes them into a secluded position on the rim of society, suppressing their voices and even disgracing their enunciations as heresy and paralogy. Therefore, postmodernists strongly challenge various discourses enunciated by centralized authority in many domains, such as aesthetics, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual preference etc and also allows alternative voices to be heard from the subcultural social group through a diversity of expressive formations in order to make them clash, interweave and coexist with the discourses monumentalized by main stream society to produce a plural text. As such, there is not a centring and single grand and unchallengeable belief in the postmodern discourse, but only a contextualizing plurality consisting of the different enunciations uttered and written from the various localizations of the others

Another branch has shown how the margin is both created by and part of the centre. (Foucault 1973, 10), that the “different” can be made into the “other”. As we have been seeing, postmodernism tends to combat this by asserting the plurality of the “different” and rejecting the binary opposition of the “other”.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, postmodernists claim that the margin and the ex-centric should start radically to challenge and contest this centralized power and discourse under the paternal sovereignty which rules over the whole society, and to become an ultimate place of subversion and transgression against the ideology of the

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<sup>63</sup>. Ibid., pp 195-196.

major power-system. Moreover, all of these postmodern discourses triggered the postmodern emphasis on the margins and differences:

New subjects of revolt are related to 1960s attacks on racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and to attendant opening to new values, voices, and people.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, all the different discourses enunciated by other subdivisions and others should be melted together as part of a centring of voices in the postmodern plural text.

### **1.1.2 The emergence of the post**

Although the Enlightenment thinkers still held the extravagant belief that the arts and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces but also learning about the world and the self, moral progress, the justice of institution, and even the happiness of human beings, the twentieth century shattered this optimism and the beautiful dream. The differentiation of science, morality and art, the autonomy of the segments by the experts to achieve an objective knowledge and rational authenticity through scientific method, came to be interrogated and challenged in 1960s:

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<sup>64</sup> . Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997. p 9.

When philosophers use the word “postmodernism”, they usually mean to refer to a movement that developed in France in the 1960s, which could more precisely be called “post-structuralism” along with subsequent and related developments. They have in mind that this denies the possibility of “realist knowledge”, objective knowledge of the world independent of the knower, “univocal” (single or primary) meaning of words and texts, the unity of the human self, even the very notion of truth, as well as the cogency of the distinctions between rational inquiry and political action, literal and metaphorical meaning, and science and art. Simply put, they regard it as rejecting most of the fundamental intellectual pillars of modern Western civilization. They may further associate this rejection with political movements like multiculturalism, feminism, and the critique of Euro centrism, which regard the rejected notions as the ideology of a privileged sexual, ethnic, cultural and economic group, and aim to subvert their privilege in favor of the disenfranchised.<sup>65</sup>

Hence, the 1960s revealed a discontinuity and rupture with earlier phases of the modern period. This upheaval of trends of thought attempting to eradicate the bourgeois stance of the great modernists It defied the cultural and logical order of the bourgeoisie and false normativity, following the prescriptive rule enacted by specialists in order to canonize the most appropriate and universalized sense of leadership in social progress.

In other words, the postmodernism of rebellion, arising as a radical counter-movement not only to the official culture but also to false normativity, hence the resistant postmodernism, was regarded as a critical deconstruction of tradition with a critique of origins, not a return to them. It was eager to tear down the whole rational stance of the middle class and to resist and create the status quo with free-minded blend and popularization. It also means that social and economic context also required modification and could no longer be monolithically dominated by the modernist privilege. Therefore this

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<sup>65</sup>. In Cahoon (ed) . Lawrence. *From Modernism to Postmodernism :An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003, pp 1-2 (Introduction).

discontinuity aimed to subvert the socio-cultural form, code, idea and method, and characteristics of modern Western culture which are described below

This continuity may cut so deep as to signal the “end” of the modern, or may indicate merely a novel within the modern. Those who affirm that these changes are inescapable facts, or who affirm the implied critique of older principles, are thus in some sense “postmodernist”, adherents of “postmodernism”. In this way, postmodernism is the latest wave in the critique of the Enlightenment, the criticism of the principle characteristic of modern Western society that traces their legacy to the eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

Postmodernists radically criticized the modern discourses in a wide range of spheres and these were also materialized in a number of fields outside of philosophy, such as architecture, plastics art, literature and sociology. Particularly, these postmodern forms and texts always created an unprecedented experience, a sense of aesthetics and knowing for us to review this new world and to contest all of the modern logical, rational, institutional and ideological texts transmitted with the univocal truth, constituted by the unified and organic structure. It is also to say that these texts are always represented in a dead stance with the hegemonic aspects of cultural, literary and art-styled panorama. These strong claims were raised against the modern superior sense in dichotomizing the socio-cultural stance and even the whole world system. According to Foster:

A critique of Western representations and modern supreme fictions, a desire to think in terms sensitive to difference (of others without opposition, of heterogeneity without hierarchy); a skepticism regarding autonomous “spheres” of culture or

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<sup>66</sup>. Ibid., p 2( Introduction).

“separate” field of experts; an imperative to go beyond formal affiliations(of text to text) to trace social affiliation (the institutional density of the text in the world); in short, a will to grasp the present nexus of culture and politics and to affirm a practice resistant both to academic modernism and political reaction.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, the cultural stance expressed in form and thematic will no longer be guided by any privileged knowledge; hence presenting the art will not be monopolized by artists and the massive investigation into nature and the essence of art will never be judged by some perceptible properties or institutional criteria. Thus, this authoritative procedure of being certified as an artwork has also been terminated in postmodern times. As a result, the artworks will never be what the modern artist designates as such, on the basis of some theory about art:

Danto’s point, then, is that the radical improvements of modernist work had by the late 1960s and 1970s found a market, and thence created a demand for art that was innovative and new. But what came next was a mere pluralism—a repetition or refinement of proceeding styles (be they representational or abstract) and a willingness to accept these on their own terms, rather than on a partisan basis of mutual exclusivity.<sup>68</sup>

For postmodernists, the art form can be anonymous, unidentifiable and imperceptible. Text can be paradoxical, unexplainable and abundantly plural, because art has its own unleashed language with infinite difference and divergence in order to produce the indeterminate and unrepresentable self.

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<sup>67</sup>. Foster, Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essay On Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, A Preface XV.

<sup>68</sup>. Crowther, Paul. Post modernism in the Visual Arts: A question of ends. In Docherty, Thomas (ed). *Postmodernism, A Reader*: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 181.

Artworks is entirely detached from an inescapable normative stance imposed by modernists that artworks should be posed in the most naked and unambiguous fashion, bearing the true philosophical form, transmitting the monolithic text and excluding the engagements from others.

With respect to philosophical opinion, the notion that the postmodern family has been exploring in a diversity of spheres deeply divides theorists. For some, it represents the final escape from the legacy of modern European theology, metaphysics, authoritarianism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism and domination. As Jameson said

Postmodernism is not as a style but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, a dominant position possessed by political, cultural, economic, social privilege, being superior to minor, to inferior and marginalized others, is no longer allowed. Owning the power, the dominant group can merely deliver the authoritative discourses to make people get lots of fundamental relationships wrong concerning the conceptual oppositional organization. In other words, under the sovereignty of each major power-centring institution represented in the different classes in the social scale, only the superior class is endowed with the privilege of forming the whole dichotomized entities as a centre versus a part. Hence Hassan has connoted the blending discourse perceived in terms of both continuity and discontinuity:

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<sup>69</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p 4.

Postmodernism, by invoking two divinities at once, engages a double view. Sameness and difference, unity and rupture, foliage and revolt, all must be honoured if we are to attend to history, apprehend (perceive, understand) change both as a spatial, mental structure and as a temporal, physical process, both as pattern and as unique event.<sup>70</sup>

We are unique as inimitable identities, there is no generally-accepted principle, preceding language and common experience, established as a determinate and ultimate value of humanist consciousness, which can guide us to situate ourselves well in the social structures to view and express this world. In other words, there is no legislator among the postmodernists attempting to decree the theological and monolithic doctrine to lead us in how to structure our predications while facing the world through their texts.

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged by according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work.<sup>71</sup>

However, modernists still claimed that each field of erudition should be mastered by specialized experts in order to exert their professional knowledge to judge, legitimize and institutionalize humanist values and tenets to clear up the problems in social life. This incarnation of culture and civilization could be divided into three dimensions, the structures of cognitive–instrumental, of moral-practical and of aesthetic–expressive rationality. On the other hand, in the Enlightenment, scholars also attempted to employ this accumulation of specialized civilization as the enrichment; to imbed the conception of rational organization into everyday social life. Hence, of course, these perspectives had been renounced by the postmodern emphasis on margins, differences and excluded voices.

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<sup>70</sup>.Hassan, Ihab. Toward a Concept of Postmodernism. In Docherty, Thomas(ed), *Postmodernism, A Reader*. Cambridge University Press. 1993. p 149

<sup>71</sup>. Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Post Modern Condition : A Report an Knowledge*. Manchester University Press, 1984, p 81.

## **1.2 Postmodernism as pluralism**

### **1.2.1 Problematizing the knowledge of rationalism, utopianism and foundationalism**

“The term “postmodern”, understood as distinguishing the contemporary scene from the modern, seems first to have been used in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the “nihilism” of twentieth-century Western culture, a theme he took from Friedrich Nietzsche. It was then employed in literary criticism in the 1950s and 1960s, referring to the reaction against literary modernism, and in the 1970s was pressed into analogous use in architecture. Also in the 1970s, it began to be connected with analysis of “post-industrial” society, the increasingly service-or knowledge dominated – economies of the most advanced societies after World War II. In philosophy, it came in the 1980s to refer primarily to French post-structuralist philosophy, and secondarily to a general reaction against modern rationalism, utopianism, and what came to be called “foundationalism”, the traditional philosophical attempt to justify knowledge by rooting it in unchallengeable of

first principle or sense data or both. Eventually, “postmodern” burst into popular usage as a term for everything from rock videos to the demographics of Los Angeles to the whole cultural style and mood of recent decades”.<sup>72</sup>

Despite this historical sequencing among these very different usages of postmodern, there is a core value regarding pluralism and indeterminacy as an incorrigible tenet to discover and produce reality. It entirely renounces the rational and logical system of modernist thought and intellectual hopes for purity, completeness and certainty. It also highlights that realistic truth is not to represent the serious and prejudicial image possessed by the people in a dominant position of the social power-structure but materializes a newly populist image to constitute and juxtapose differences as cultural signs, with a joyful acceptance of play and fictionalization in cultural fields. This productive coexistence of diverse cultures creates realism as Jameson describes:

A third term-absent from the present, but mobilized elsewhere in a related one –may serve to convert this reversible scheme for registering difference into a more productive and portable historical schema. That third term- call it “realism” for the moment and for wants of something better.<sup>73</sup>

This means that realism for the moment only attempts to hold the other elements together incommensurably to produce the provisional performativity, because this internal conflict of the two different elements fusing together will constantly assimilate, replace and even contaminate each other in

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<sup>72</sup>.In Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003, pp 2-3 (Introduction).

<sup>73</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p 65.

creating the new totality. As such, this multivalent totality will also unremittingly interweave with other objects from any heterogeneous system in order to create a plural text with infinite differences and mutations.

Hence, this will activate ceaselessly postponing the final enjoyment without endowing the destined ending with a terminal resolution and realization in the temporal development. In this endlessly interwoven framework, any different textual elements will freely arrive and leave in a process of playfully constituting the provisional truth, disregarding the hierarchical and hermeneutical law in excluding difference. Meaning is produced through the ceaseless process of deviating itself from its given conceptual content and integrating other different itself differed from its general sense as the expression of a provisional mirage. This meaning created through textual referral to other texts has been delineated by Derrida:

In the extent to which what is called “meaning” (to be “expressed”) is already, and thoroughly, constituted by a tissue of differences, in the extent to which there is already a text, a network of textual referrals to other texts, a textual transformation in which each allegedly “simple term” is marked by the trace of another term, the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority. It is always already carried outside itself. It already differs (from itself) before any act of expression.<sup>74</sup>

Therefore, how can postmodernists trust the positive self-image in modern Western culture?

A picture born in the Enlightenment is of a civilization founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. University of Chicago. 1981. p 33.

<sup>75</sup>. In Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003, p 9.

Postmodernists postulate that society is a mutable and complicated plural entity; which will never cease its progression to allow all textual elements to mingle with each other to produce the different and impossible self. Of course, this postmodern nonorganic entity will go beyond the modern signifying system, which cannot be identifiable, interpretable and analyzable as the hermeneutical truth. In other words, this postmodern world is the world of intensity:

A world without identity, without resemblance or equality, It is said of a world the very ground of which is difference, in which everything rests upon disparities, upon differences of differences which reverberate to infinity (the world of intensity)".<sup>76</sup>

Hence, how can these kinds of institutionalized discourses constituted by the dead language, denotative statement, instrumental fact and elites' consensus in exploring a fixed case and sense data through a linear sequence and organic structure catch and formulate the perpetually plural postmodernist world existing in a state of ceaselessly creating difference? Thus, truth is not a conceptualized product which has been completed already, but is a continuous process of making the present-becoming.

### **1.2.2 Transgressing theorization**

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(Introduction).

<sup>76</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994.p 241.

It is very hard to discover or formulate an exact principle and tenet to indicate or prescribe any postmodernist context, because there is no denotative and explicit or connotative and implicit literal interpretation for contextualizing the postmodern thinking. As such, there is no perimeter to circumscribe a functioning progression and trajectory that makes any postmodern case and sense cannot overstep this limit in order not to lose its control and definition. If not, it also means that all structural components constituting the postmodern paradigm in the linguistics system should be inaugurated from the same genetic origins and constituted as an organic structure preventing it from random multiplicity.

In other words language is always regarded as an incarnation of power in order to validate a sense in its interpretative range as a legitimized paradigm and concept to name things, idea or consciousness.

Theory is also this kind of language:

1. A system of rules, procedures, and assumptions used to produce a result.
2. Abstract knowledge or reasoning.
3. A conjectural view or idea.
4. A set of hypotheses related by logical or mathematical arguments to explain a wide variety of connected phenomena in general terms.<sup>77</sup>

This is a definition of theory quoted from the Collins English dictionary, but it is still inadequate to explain the developmental process of the postmodernist condition. Postmodernist text does not need to be elucidated by theory and it has always been functioning in a destabilizing state of momentum, which

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<sup>77</sup>. *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus* . HarperCollins Publishers, Westerhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 2QT, Great Britain, p 1239.

persistently produces the variable presence of the presents with a concatenation of provisional truth, without repeating the sameness or resemblances prolonged from past memory. Hence, this incessant movement of making differences as neither commencement nor ultimate ending to halt a text in a stationary state as a final result.

As such, this tirelessly unrepeatable process of producing divergent meanings is just transgressing the boundary of theory in attempting to render the most accurate interpretation and determined resolution in order to embed any case, sense and text that should either be induced or deduced under a logically developmental procedure within an exactly controllable and coherent extent with a precise and distinctive beginning and ending in order to be accurately defined and identified.

This can be exemplified by avant-garde work where all structuring elements are offered to allow creator to integrate them freely as his own elements without being constrained by their categories, essences and families. There is neither a rule formulating the process of how to identify and constitute them together nor a normative criterion to standardize the ultimate result of how a project should be. This nonorganic entity has been described by Burger as below:

If, in the avant-garde work, the individual element is no longer necessarily subordinate to an organizing principle, the question concerning the place value of the political contents of the work also changes. In the avant-garde work, they are aesthetically legitimate even as individual elements. Their effects are not necessarily mediated through the whole of the work, but to be thought of as standing on their own.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>. Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Manchester University Press. 1984, p 90.

In other words, institutional language only provides one access to the truth. Theory also just tries to certify this stable and systematic progress of constructing the fact step by step with the labour representing this consequential trace inscribed in an enclosed structure of the finite language system. Jameson has also referred to the prestidigitation entailed in postmodern condition:

The provisional act of prestidigitation whereby even this moral judgment is added to the list of pertinent feature, by a theory momentarily able to get outside itself and to include its own external boundaries, scarcely lasts as long as it takes for the "theory" to re-form and serenely to become an example of what the closure it proposes and foretells is supposed to look like.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, Jameson gave this sarcastic analogy of theory as an appropriate statement of postmodernism theory:

Theorization has to be reckoned into the theory as a kind of bad reflexivity that eats its own tail without ever squaring the circle. Postmodernism theory seems indeed to be a ceaseless process of internal rollover in which the position of the observer is turned inside out and tabulation recontinued on some large scale.<sup>80</sup>

In other words, there is no theory that can delineate a systematic process of categorizing and identifying the difference, because it is a progressive term to make the different becoming can never be theorized as

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<sup>79</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p 65.

<sup>80</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 64.

a final result, a conclusion and a well-made product. Therefore, Jameson has rendered this innovative conception stating postmodern condition as follows:

Postmodernism theory can thus finally rise to the level of the system itself as well as its most intimate propagandas, which celebrate the innate freedom of an increasingly absolutely self-production.<sup>81</sup>

Postmodern theoretical discourse is not a search for a monolithic truth but a form of play, indifferent to old-fashioned matters such as logical consistency and corollary. Hence, it is impossible to summarize and explain what the postmodern paradoxical condition exactly means with a univocal decipherment elucidated through a concrete theory mapping out a non-transgressible border and logical system to restrict their innate freedom to make them develop under a controllable system as an interpretable and analyzable text. .

### **1.2.3 Repudiating the utopian humanist value and social life**

Oppositional postmodernism strongly opposes the established society and culture and seeks new forms of critique and opposition. Distancing itself from modern theory and politics, it seeks new form of resistance, struggle, and social changes.<sup>82</sup>

Cahoone has also problematized humanist values in modernist consciousness:

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<sup>81</sup>. Ibid., p 65.

<sup>82</sup>. Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997 , p27.

This combination of science, reason, individuality, freedom, truth, and social progress has, however, been questioned and criticized by many”.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, the utopian modernist consciousness was also utilized to develop autonomous art according to logical and rational inner logic in correspondence with objective science, universal morality and law to represent the intellectual stance of modern life. Furthermore, these rational and logical humanist values had also been extended and utilized by modernists to reflect and enrich social life in different aspects: truth, normative rightness, authenticity and beauty. On the other hand, such an optimistic and ideal incarnation of culture also proposed a stance of formalism, foundationalism or international style as the rational organization represented in everyday life.

Moreover, modernists also attempted to organize around mechanical metaphors, deterministic logic, and individualism and humanist ideals to establish a universal truth and value to trigger social progress. Nevertheless, postmodernists still radically proclaim their discourses to decry and bombard with criticism this modernist utopian purport:

Postmodern paradigm is organized around a family of concepts, shared methodological assumptions, and a general sensibility that attack modern method and concepts as overly totalizing and reductionistic; that decry utopian and humanist values as dystopian and dehumanizing ; that abandon mechanical and deterministic schemes in favor of new principles of chaos, contingency, spontaneity and organism that all beliefs in foundations, absolutes, truth, and objectivity, often to embrace a radical skepticism, relativism and nihilism and that subvert boundaries of all kinds.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> . In Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003. p 9 (Introduction).

<sup>84</sup> . Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997, p19.

It also means as the following passage:

living in a borderland between the modern and the postmodern creates tension, insecurity, confusion, and even panic, as well as excitement and exhilaration, thus producing a cultural and social environment of shifting moods and an open but troubling future.<sup>85</sup>

Hence, a family of concepts constellated by the postmodern paradigm just constitutes a life stance full of risks, indeterminacy and dangers. In other words, this modernist utopian and consummate postulation comprises an ultimately optimistic belief to achieve progress in pursuing and enacting the eternal truth. Activating a movement of history towards a state of human emancipation had also been replaced by the hope of new possibilities and excitements

#### **1.2.4 Postmodern superficial and depthless culture**

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<sup>85</sup> . Ibid., p 31.

Unlike the modernist paradigm bearing permanent and monolithic truth and humanist values to enrich everyday life, postmodernist contexts are not so monumental, thoughtful and significant in attempting to discover and establish a foundational principle and universal value. Postmodernism, merely intend to produce the momentary, illusionary and superficial spectacle with a provisional novelty. On the other hand, superficiality has also become the indispensable doctrine and postmodern slogan<sup>86</sup> to explore and create visual art, architecture, literature, music and social and cultural life.

Superficiality, this compositional characteristic of postmodernity has created an integral and populist image of postmodern culture. It revolts against a dominant cultural logic and hegemonic norm rooted in the incorrigible historical context, because this innovative cultural production should be attenuated from historicity or any textual origin. Furthermore, all of these structural ingredients will be merged with localized temporality and spatiality embedded in the present discourse to bring to light a process of creating the present -becoming rather than representing the past history rooted in memory. Thus, this momentary spectacle with an ahistorical present has become the new cultural stance of postmodernity.

On the other hand, the postmodern paradigm also always embraces marginal enunciations and other contextualization to co-engage in this promiscuous excursion beyond the rules and conventions of normative discourse and practice. It always constitutes the structural fabrics coming from the different loci and genres to highlight their variety, richness and shared features with a cheerful play form to invent

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<sup>86</sup> “Superficial” being, for some postmodernist, a term of praise, if “deep” philosophical claims have been discredited. Nietzsche’s remark that the ancient Greeks were “superficial out of profundity could be a postmodern slogan. In Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism, : An Anthology*. Blackwell Press, 2003, p 9 (Introduction).

momentary novelties. Hence it is also incarnated as the incessant present-becoming in tension, insecurity, confusion, excitement and exhilaration and also as the succession of spontaneously fantastic markers:

The postmodern is, however, the force field in which very different kind of cultural impulses-what Raymond Williams has usually termed” “residual and “emergent” forms of cultural production”-must take their way. If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable.<sup>87</sup>

Although these inventively residual and emergent forms of cultural production lack rich context, deep thought and profound historicity with an eternal and monumental narration, they still project some conceptions of a new style of cultural portrait with the momentary truth. And its productive simulacrum with the provisional mirage without representing past memory aims to catch and reflect more adequately the most effectively creative forms of any postmodernist cultural display. This superficiality is a new depthlessness, portrayed by Jameson as demonstrating this trait in the postmodern cultural exhibition as below:

The exposition will take up in turn the following constitutive features of the postmodern: a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary “theory” and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose

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<sup>87</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p6.

“schizophrenic” structure ( following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone-what I will call “intensities”.<sup>88</sup>

This can also best be grasped by returning to older theories of the sublime, which contains great and elevated spectacle and always inspires awesome and venerable sentiment. However, with the development of technology, it creates the commoditized and fetishistic simulacrum and also transforms this sublime as the astonishment of momentary mirage, through an artificial designation of audition and vision supported by a whole new economic world system. On the other hand, it also produces a sort of postmodernist mutation by means of transmitting the momentarily realist experience detaching from past memory but inventing the new culture of simulacrum, a new depthlessness.

Moreover, this simulacrum also creates new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in writing and art works without being grounded in any foundational and institutional knowledge in order to present a plural world without a conceptual reality. Hence, in this respect, the syntax system should transgress and reproduce the limitations and the narrowness of the conventional conception of textual analysis. On the other hand, this inventive system-construction has also been materialized in postmodern arts. In which all the structuring components are constituted in a nonorganic structure disregarding their categories in order to refuse to be attributed to any art history with a naked essence and coherent structure.

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<sup>88</sup>.Ibid., p 6.

## PART 3 POSTMODERNISM IN CONTEXT

### Chapter 2 The question of writing, museum and art

#### 2.1 The question of writing

##### 2.1.1 Grammatology

Referring to structuralism, the Saussurean model of signifier and signified should function in terms of matched pairs; this means their relation is very close and linear and the passage from driving a signifier to a signified should transmit a profound signification in order to indicate a clear correspondence therein. Eco has also rendered this to map out the role played in sign-function between signifier and signified:

The sign-function is nothing more than the correspondence between a signifier and a signified, or between a sign-vehicle and a meaning: a message is nothing more than such a correspondence as realized during a transmission process.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, Derrida asserted that all words should be interpreted only in terms of their relationships to the various systems in which they participate, so it would not express the congruent and homogeneous

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<sup>89</sup> .Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1975, p 54.

combination rooted in linguistic genealogy but should make a hierarchical erasure to confuse the correspondence between a signifier and a signified. Therefore he raised the notion of a “gram” as a basic unit in his narrative theory of grammatology, as a constituent entity like couplers or couplings- a person or thing that couples or links together

It means that this gram is a plural linguistic text constituted by different elements interweaving and transforming each other’s referential meanings and also entirely takes the position of sign. In other words, it denies the relationship between a signifier and a signified:

Saussure’s model of the sign, according to which the signifier and signified relate as if there were two sides of the same sheet of paper.<sup>90</sup>

Therefore there is no rule that can always bind a signifier and a signified together as if a signified should bear a destiny to produce the signification with the mental representation as a carrier inherited the sensible, acoustic and visual reference from a signifier. The signifier and signified should be continually detached from each other and reattach in a new combinations, so the words will never become a product replete with logocentric meaning to pin down and fix a specific signifier as an incontestable and irrefutable given to a signified and to transmit a correspondent message from their one-to-one position.

Instead, gram is a coupled text and a heterogeneous synthesis already, disregarding its constituents’ origins, essences, foundations and single purity in order randomly and spontaneously to cannibalize itself with heterogeneous others to create different texts with self-multiplicity. In other words, this is a process of making a signifier and a signified in a state of alienation incapable of representing

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<sup>90</sup>.Ulmer, Gregory L. The Object of Post-Criticism. In Foster (ed), Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic:Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, p88.

signification but reconstituting each other in a non-taxonomic structure to make the play of differences, which is also a new stance of writing described as gram or difference by Derrida:

This concept can be called gram or difference. The play of differences supposes, in effect, synthesis and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be present in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present... This interweaving, this textile, is the text produced only in the transformation of another text.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore words always possess a plural or dormant meaning like a fluid and free sign with infinite bifurcation generated in a constant process of producing difference. In other words, there is no normative knowledge as a concept and judgment can situate them in an adequate position to know their identities and differences. And furthermore properly posit themselves as a labor functioning to develop the meaning by paving a direct and transparent passage following the conceptual sense of ingrained model to extend the signification.

As such, unlike structuralism, the concept of gram produces an innovative approach in writing. It directly reckons sign as the heterogeneous plurality, coupling, so it will trigger itself to do the self-production by merging itself with other narrative fabrics from the variable linguistic chains in order to create the new present in a unprecedented syntagmatic open framework. This import of gram to produce a singular approach in writing has been described by Ulmer:

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<sup>91</sup>.Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. University of Chicago, 1981, p26.

In spite of its associated complexities and controversies, Derrida's basic formulation of the nature of language is relatively simple, a formulation which, placed in the context of the collage paradigm, takes on its fullest significance. Grammatology is "poststructuralist" in that it replaces the "sign" (composed of signifier and signified-the most basic unit of meaning according to structuralism) with a still more basic unit-the gram.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, there is no contextualizing element that can produce and organize its meaning without referring to and connecting with another element. This interwoven text is constructed by the different components embedded from any diverse language chains and systems. As such, this is also a collage with the gram principle to make all elements reconstituted in a provisional composition to create the new present. It is also to say there is no longer a proper name to nominate the signifier with a conceptualized meaning; sign-function has also become a process of producing the difference by obliterating the original trace of the words to let them cannibalize other heterogeneous signifiers with no signature. Hence, Derrida has also stated that only writing without giving consciousness to words is a concept of expressing a society:

If writing is no longer understood in the narrow sense of linear and phonetic notation, it should be possible to say that all societies capable of producing, that is to say of obliterating, their proper names, and of bring classificatory difference into play, practice writing in general.<sup>93</sup>

In fact, this performative effect constituted among free signifiers' connections will not be judged as a truth or falsity from its meaning but only produces a fantastic mirage as the new totality in the non-organic structure. This entire semantic framework is constructed by differences to activate fantastically incessant movements without being bridled by any logocentric foundation marked in the cultural code and taxonomical classification.

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<sup>92</sup>. Ulmer, Gregory L. The Object of Post-Criticism. In Foster, Hal (ed). *The Anti-Aesthetic:Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, p88.

<sup>93</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p109

Differences are the effects of transformations, and from its vantage the theme of difference is incompatible with the static, synchronic, taxonomic, ahistoric motifs in the concept of structure.<sup>94</sup>

In other words, this provisional mirage will produce the unprecedented experience enchanted by prestidigitation with numberless successively transient presents that can never be categorized in any foundational knowledge.

### **2.1.2 Montage writing**

In postmodern writing, it is unnecessary to represent the appropriate signification coinciding with what it has to be associated exactly by making an adequate correspondence between a signifier and a signified, because the gram- function is produced in the transformation of another text. For Derrida, there is no preceding and privileged knowledge as a logocentric father to conceptualize the words rooted in their sound-images to tell them how to link all their family members together and represent a pre-established truth. In other words, all writings should produce the plural text with polysemous meaning in the syntagmatic structure constituted by a number of independently fragmentary ingredients, diversely

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<sup>94</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. Published by The University of Chicago, 1981, p27.

incised narrative segments torn down from their indigenous narrations and meeting together to share each other's features with a new interplay.

In this cannibalizing process, all elements will clash, reject, permeate and exchange one another in order to produce the unrepresentable and unexplainable intertextuality without differentiating the textual centre as a non-organic whole. Therefore, this montage writing consists of variable scissions, citations replacing the centre with the same weight, called *graft* in the collection entitled *Dissemination* by Derrida, which is itself couched in the collage style, in a plural decentring text. These incised textual continents function as numbers of progressing discourses by constituting each other to make the infinite difference. Therefore, its theme and structure will be neither univocal nor stable but paradoxical and fluid. Ulmer has also referred to Derrida's idea of collage:

Each cited element breaks the continuity or the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a doubling reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin: that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality. The trick of collage consists also of never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition. Thus the art of collage proves to be one of the most effective strategies in the putting into question of all the illusion of representation.<sup>95</sup>

Hence, for Derrida, collage in literature takes the form of citation and there is no linguistic unit carrying the single and pure text but an extremely high degree of plurality. All these citational grafts have been imbedded as a heterogeneous composition disengaging from the stable horizon of semio-linguistic

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<sup>95</sup>. Cited in Ulmer, Gregory L. The Object of Post-Criticism. In Foster, Hal. (ed) *The Anti- Aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, p88.

communication between a signifier and a signified. In other words, this temporary composition will also become a large formless and nomadic constitution, because the disconnected fragments in the whole erase their previous intrinsic properties, without carrying out its indispensable vocation to duplicate what it was meant before in a classic narrative. It also means that the collage will refuse to serve as an idle text, a readerly text:

Readerly text are committed to the closure system of the West, produced according to the goals of this system, devoted to the law of the Signified, they must have a particular system of meaning, and this meaning is based on connotation.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, in montage writing, each of the cited, incised textual fabrics will be put together just between quotation marks breaking apart from its given in order to engender the infinite difference. As a result, the relations between small or large components are not interconnected by a linear glue towards a transparent truth as a mutual goal, but produced as a temporary permutation to create a process of illusion- generation toward a new dream land. Therefore, Derrida has stated to write the means to graft; it is the same word and also has delineated the thematic of grafted text:

The graft is not something that happens to the properness of the thing. There is no more any thing than there is any original text. Hence all those textual samples provided by numbers do not, as you might have been tempted to believe, serve as “quotation”, “collage”, or even “illustration”. They are not being applied upon the surface or in the interstices of text would already exist without them. And they themselves can only be read within the operation of their reinscription, within the graft.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher. 1992. pp 7-8

<sup>97</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981 , p 355.

Thus, the inventive value of things is restored to its grafted state to relieve from its given concept and to adventure spontaneously along its own present path. In other words, this graft is the incessant process of producing new meaning by mingling different scissions torn down from their rooted text. Therefore, Derrida:

I can take each word of the series (genre, type, mode, form) and decide that it will hold for all the others (all genres of genres, types, modes, forms; all types of types, genres, modes, forms; all forms of forms, etc).<sup>98</sup>

Hence, through this endless extension and ramification functioning in grafted text, there is no given answer and resolution justifying the truth and falsity due to its meaning without being circumscribed in the enclosed extent of finite language system, but only produces the constant kinetic in the progress of creating numberless present-becoming in the open field of infinite language. In other words, although both incised texts are classified in the different realms, they will transform, deform and even contaminate each other's features in order to reclaim a new province, a virgin land replete with simulacrum, a momentary truth.

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<sup>98</sup> . In Attridge, Derek (ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature* . Routledge, 1992, p 228.

### 2.1.3 Present discourse

Postmodernist experience of form has been stated by Jameson as:

I hope, a paradoxical slogan: namely the proposition that “difference relates”. Our own recent criticism, from Macherey on, has been concerned to stress the heterogeneity and profound discontinuities of the work of art, no longer unified or organic”.

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Hence, this process of producing the present discourse rejects the organic structure constituting elements coming from the same family system, which can also be extended to mean that the signifying chain cannot be institutionalized as the principle of Saussurean structuralism that meaning-generation is bound in a one-to-one relationship between a signifier and a signified in order to legitimize the words as a unit of language to represent the signification based on its referent and concept.

Therefore, postmodern linguistics regards meaning generated by the free movement from a signifier to a signifier in order to produce the mirage of signification as entirely breaking down its conceptual content of utterance. In other words, this present discourse is projected through a schizophrenic language system constituted by the spontaneously unrelated signifiers. This waning effect of the signifier in isolation has also been described by Jameson:

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<sup>99</sup>. Fredric, Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University. Press, 1991, p31.

This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand, for Barthes, signifier will never be filled out and can never be in a state of depletion, because it is not a product with a well-established referential concept to serve to be consumed and exhausted, but is a spontaneous organic unit with the empty, all-purpose verb which is eager to activate a process of producing the infinite difference with the endless motion as the permanent present discourse. In other words, it possesses a desire to melt variable fabrics in order to supplement continuously the divergent meaning as a momentary novelty rather than consummating a liability of linking signified to complement its significant meaning. Therefore this is also like the obtuse meaning invented by the present discourse described by Barthes:

Finally, the obtuse meaning can be seen in an accent, the very form of an emergence, of a fold (a crease even) marking the heavy layer of information and significations”<sup>101</sup>.

In other words, this emergence also creates the momentary novelty in the short circuit of combination among signifiers linking signifiers. This provisional amusement is always abruptly activated without cluing its coming. It also will suddenly skip over without indicating its ending, but continuously link other disconnected free textual ingredients to actualize the next new becoming by defaulting on any sequential prolongation in representing the preceding message. As such, it produces a series of dispersed fantastic momentums with successive quantum leaps in constituting the present discourse:

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<sup>100</sup>. Ibid., pp 27-28.

<sup>101</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Hill and Wang, 1997, p 62.

It is at the moment when each (different) hand skips over the next (and not one after the other) that the hole, the gap, is created and carries off the subject of the game –the subject of the text”.<sup>102</sup>

Present discourse is not interested in revealing an ostensible meaning, but prefers to showcase a process of how meaning is being produced constantly and capriciously without approaching a stable state like a product displayed in a cupboard. Therefore Barthes has stated this paradoxical meaning produced by a short circuit of circulation in producing present discourse:

This accent – the simultaneously emphatic and elliptic character of which has already been mentioned- is not directed toward meaning...does not theatricalized...does not even indicate an elsewhere of meaning (another content, added to the obvious meaning); it outplays meaning –subverts not the content but the whole practice of meaning. A new-rare-practice affirmed against a majority practice (that of signification, an expenditure with no exchange).<sup>103</sup>

As such, it inevitably determines quite different analytical segmentations lacking the coherently and directly correlated relationship but which reciprocate and supplement each other to co- produce a fantastic work positing in the paradoxical status. Even though all of them take part in this grouping contextualization, they are not a part of this totality. This obtuse meaning is transmitted from a provisional composition by fusing the different elements together and each of the participants does not sign a contract to be an obligatory member in his group to continue the next team work. This process is set out by Barthes:

A theme with neither variations nor development, the obtuse meaning can only come and go, appearing-disappearing. The play of presence/absence undermines the character, making of it a simple nub of facets; a disjunction expressed in another

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<sup>102</sup> .Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure Of the Text* Hill and Wang. 1975. p12

<sup>103</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Hill and Wang, 1997, p 62.

connection.....What is characteristic is that the different positions of one and the same czar...are given without link between one position and the next.<sup>104</sup>

Although all the components co-produce this momentary effect in the present discourse, each of them is not belonging to this new text due to not possessing membership of this team, so they just leap on , each finishing its temporary work without carrying on working together. In other words, this segmentation is counter-logical and yet true in inventing the momentary hallucination incarnated as the unprecedentedly present discourse instead of representing the readerly text step by step schematically.

#### **2.1.4 Writerly and readerly text**

Barthes has stated that the obtuse meaning is only produced in the writerly text under the mobilization of a polysemous language system. In contrast, it is not represented in a readerly and classic text from a single substitutive chain. Writerly text is constructed with multiple, fluid and supplemented meanings and yet is burnished and smoothed, like the untiring movement in carrying the uncertain truth without reaching vanishing point in its temporal development. Therefore, all narrative progress always has been existing in a mutable state and has also been changing in a process of different elements incessantly interacting and merging one another at each moment toward the permanent difference.

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<sup>104</sup>. Ibid., p63.

Nevertheless, readerly (classic) text is a massive emblem of plenitude and it represents a stable and concrete meaning restricted in an extensive consequence from an original profound patrimony in order to furthermore strengthen its plentiful wealth. Hence, rupture, incoherence, plurality and difference, these kinds of heresies will be reckoned as a catastrophic confusion. And this paralogy also should be fenced off to stop its contaminating the harmonious, coherent and pure order, thematic and mould, and treasury of rational wisdom. The purport of modern readerly text has also been described by Barthes:

We can say that any classic (readerly) text is implicitly an art of Replete Literature: literature that is replete: like a cupboard where meanings are shelved, stacked, safeguarded (in this text nothing is ever lost: meaning recuperate everything); like a pregnant female, replete with signified which criticism will not fail to deliver...like the sun, replete with the glory it sheds over those who write it, or finally, acknowledge as an established and recognized art: institutional. This Replete Literature, readerly literature, can no longer be written.<sup>105</sup>

Therefore, writerly text will never provide a univocal meaning as though having been stored in a cupboard. The text is represented within an enclosed system of language, but will be the plural text with the uncertain decipherment and infinite prolongation of excitement. To read is a labour of finite language, because to read is to find meanings, and to find meaning is to name them and these named meanings are always associated with other names rooted in the hermeneutical contestation, cultural code and dictionary denotation, which always provide a logocentric mould of thought as a dogmatic matrix to construct their systematic. Therefore, writerly text will never provide a univocal meaning having been stored in a cupboard; the text is mark.

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<sup>105</sup> . Roland, Barthes. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher, 1992, pp 200-201.

In other words, to read is also taken to mean to know how to use names to identify and call each other from a linear structure of readerly text, which is a sequential process of representing the equivalence in assembling their grouping for extending further naming. So, readerly text makes us name and rename to find the meaning. Readerly text passes, which is just a nomination in the course of becoming, incarnate well-established experience and knowledge on consequential objects and still transmit the rich similitude derived from the predominant patrimony.

As such, it is only making a tireless approximation, a metonymic and analogous labour, the descendent of logos father rather than creating the self-production and magic existence in producing the unparalleled presence of the present. It also means this presenting of my own expression is self-reflexive subjectivity with no predecessors' or ancestral memory to approach the writerly text. So, the text to be read should be replaced by the text to be written, as described by Barthes:

With regard to the plural text, forgetting a meaning can not therefore be seen as a fault. Forgetting in relation to what? What is the sum of the text? Meanings can indeed be forgotten, but only if we have chosen to bring to bear upon the text a singular scrutiny. Yet reading does not consist in stopping the chain of systems, in establishing a truth, a legality of the text, and consequently in leading its reader into "errors"; it consists in coupling these systems, not according to their finite quantity, but according to their plurality..<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, in the readerly (classic) text, the majority of the utterances are assigned through gaining endorsement from the origin so that we can identify their parentage, the authoritative enunciation. In other words, this readerly text only duplicates what father has spoken and what stories he has told.

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<sup>106</sup>. Ibid., p 11.

Actually, this enunciative power is a dominant consciousness coming from a character, author or culture, doxa, social norm and collective experience (the anonymous ideology, an incontestable voice).

On the contrary, in the writerly text, a plural text constituted by variable decentring segments, each of these independent parts possesses its sovereignty in performing self-praxis with absolutely free action without bearing membership for joining a grouping activity. Therefore its enunciation in the plural text will be as an iridescent exchange carried out by the multiple voices which tear down the textual gap willfully in order to dissolve each other spontaneously. Hence writerly text just can create the texts of pleasure:

Texts of pleasure. Pleasure in pieces; language in pieces; culture in pieces; Such texts are perverse in that they are outside any imaginable finality.<sup>107</sup>

However, depending on the separation of opposites and employing sign to represent the presentable truth, the readerly (classic) text becomes pensive, replete with meaning, depth in thought. It still tries to reserve some ultimate meaning, which has been stratified in an accurately certified and categorized terrain. As Barthes said:

If the classic text has nothing more to say than what it says, at least it attempts to let it be understood that it does say everything.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure Of the Text*. Hill and Wang. 1975. pp51-52

<sup>108</sup>. Roland, Barthes. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher, 1992, p 216.

As such, this narrative precision is coded by pensiveness, which is a full sign of nothing but itself saturated with rich cultural nomination, definitional denotation and hermeneutical reference in order to provide the right path expanding the thoughtful signification, so this readerly text will neither constitute any fabric coming from a deinstitutionalized field nor let its qualitative plenitude be ruined. Nevertheless, Barthes states that the production of meaning is a ceaseless process of melting all differences, betraying an official syntagmatic principle of representing the equivalence based on the guidance of hermeneutics. As a result, this process of creating the differently capricious astonishments will become textual pleasure:

Everyone can testify that the pleasure of the text is not certain: nothing says that this same text will please us a second time; it is a friable pleasure, split by mood, habit, circumstance, a precarious pleasure.<sup>109</sup>

Therefore, only a plural writerly text written with infinite language can create this pleasure through making itself different, without repeating itself, and interweaving itself with other different itself to actualize text in the infinite differences.

### **2.1.5 Schizophrenic language system**

In postmodern writing, the words or signifiers will not abide with the rule corresponding with their signified on a one-to-one base, and an interrelationship linked among them in the syntagmatic network should invent a hallucinatory association in order to renounce the Name of – the Father, paternal authority. The path from a signifier to a signified should be an amazing detour, because these free signifiers will create the illusionary and unprecedented meaning in the spontaneous constellation

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<sup>109</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure Of the Text* . Hill and Wang. 1997. pp52

between signifier linking signifier. Hence, it is also a simulacrum effect projected by the arbitrary combination of signifiers among themselves in order to produce schizophrenic language

Lacan describes schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning.<sup>110</sup>

This means losing the fundamental sensibility and knowledge inherited from the patriarchal sovereignty and hermeneutical prescription in organizing the signifiers to represent the meaning. In this disorienting signifying chain, all the signifiers become orphans and are just interconnected together in play without knowing each other. Hence, it is entirely against Saussurean structuralism to produce the fantastic mirage in the random syntactic system with the perpetual differences. Jameson has also repudiated this paternal language:

Meaning on the new view is generated by the movement from signifier to signifier. What we generally call the signified – the meaning or conceptual content of an utterance-is now rather to be seen as a meaning-effect, as the objective mirage of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves.<sup>111</sup>

In other words, this mirage is also an incarnation of schizophrenia, which is a freewill and incongruent composition orchestrated by the movement of unrelated signifiers linking each other. On the other hand, for Lacan, the experience of temporality, human time, past, present, future, memory, the self praxis always brings personal identity and reflexivity undergoing this temporal progression and manifests the individual unparalleled existential or experiential feeling of time itself.

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<sup>110</sup>.Fredric, Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p26.

<sup>111</sup>. Ibid., p26.

Nevertheless, schizophrenic experience does not articulate its language following a logic-temporal order, but is condensed and enunciated with the present discourse in order to authentically, express the presence of the different presents replete with incessantly various moments with no conceivable past and future on the horizon.

Schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence.<sup>112</sup>

As such, this is an unexampled perception for normally personal identity in our sense, because we are always used to positing and discovering I and me through integrating and referencing history developed in the orderly temporal continuity instead of constituting the differently disconnected fragmentary contingencies happening at several scattered triggering points with quantum leaps bouncing over time as the self-presence of the present. On the other hand, this schizophrenic expression will carry a far more intense continuum with the disparately momentary presents creating a disconnected world, which forces us to lose our consciousness in preserving a sense of personal biographical identity and become enraptured by this given undifferentiated vision of the world with the continuous presents, by no means a pleasant experience.

It is also to say that this schizophrenic text is inscribed through breaking down the temporal continuities and composing different disjoining momentum. In this incommensurable combination, signifiers have also lost their destined duties to associate with the signified in order to be transformed into an inexpressible and unpredictable language. In other words, this unparalleled fantastic experience of

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<sup>112</sup> .Fredric, Jameson. Postmodernism and Consumer Society. In Hal, Foster (ed). *The Anti-Aesthetic.Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press,1983, p 119.

producing the ephemeral present has also become powerfully and overwhelmingly dynamic material, so the world written with the schizophrenic language in heightened intensity will bear an uncanny and oppressive charge of effect and glow with hallucinatory energy. Hence, Jameson has said:

If we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life.<sup>113</sup>

As mentioned above, heterogeneous signifiers melt together as the disjoining signifying chain, schizophrenic language, developed in the temporal discontinuity. Derrida has also stated:

Advent there must be, because the event of an invention, its act of inaugural production, once organized, legitimized, countersign by a social consensus according to system of convention, must be valid for the future.<sup>114</sup>

A schizophrenic language system is a disordering signifying framework without being restricted by any collective belief, which also invents a series of pure and unrelated present-becoming actualized as the incessant and ephemeral momentum in the undivided present time with no past and future but permanent advent.

## 2.2 The question of museum

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<sup>113</sup>. Fredric, Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p27.

<sup>114</sup>. In Attridge, Derek (ed), *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature* . Routledge, 1992, p 316.

The field of postmodernism in context can also be extended to the various visual arts in order to investigate their components and structures. The aesthetic stance of modernism concerning the visual arts included the declaration of art for art's sake in order to pursue individual freedom according to the principle of autonomy and also the claim that the content of individual art works should possess its own value of independent existence disengaged from their ritual uses. However, this autonomous art only represented itself as an incarnation assuming the progressive life in bourgeois society in order to fulfil its economic and social function and also to perform the possible political function of demonstrating the bourgeois rationalization through ideological production with prevalent styles, so furthermore it would be detached from the plural praxis of life.

On the other hand, since this institutional status of art in bourgeois society also displayed the legitimized criteria for the formal determinacy of art, its content and form should have presented in coincidence with the idealistic proposition of a bright future for the purposive and rational organization of bourgeois society. These stances of institutional and autonomous art have been proposed for probing bourgeois art as follows:

Whatever concept of art we have, whatever sense we have of the status of art as autonomous, derives from the social function of art in modern society. Autonomous art has satisfied residual human needs of the bourgeois world by offering the "beautiful appearance /semblance" of a better world, but it has also functioned in society by creating hope through its very existence for the realization of social ideals in the future.<sup>115</sup>

Therefore there was an inescapable responsibility for modernist art to perform its social function in order to present a positive, humanist and harmonious self-image of modern Western culture. It also means, referring to social function, that the images manifested from art should represent a beautiful and idealistic social life, because modernists believed that once civilization grounded in the value of science

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<sup>115</sup>. Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Gard*. Manchester University Press, 1984, xxxviii (FORWARD).

and knowledge has been achieved, the highest evaluation for human life and individual freedom would be established.

As such, they also firmly trusted that such freedom, rationality; and virtuous and self-controlled work would also guide social progress and create a better material, political and intellectual life for all. In other words, this utopian stance just legitimized the institution of art and modernists also overoptimistically believed that it would really reflect daily life. This modern idealism is criticized, for instance by Cahoon:

The combination of science, reason, individuality, freedom, truth, and social progress has, however, been questioned and criticized by many. Some critiques see modernity instead as a movement of ethnic and class domination, European imperialism, anthropocentrism, the destruction of nature, the dissolution of community and tradition, the rise of alienation, the death of individuality in bureaucracy.<sup>116</sup>

On the other hand, the pervasively institutional arts exhibited in museums were also institutionalized by the principles of aesthetic criteria and orientation in order to make their forms and contents conform to a normative canon of modern arts. This means that only those arts representing the scientific, logical and rational stance with a coherently, systematically and homogeneously internal logic not only embedded in style but reflecting the progressive and harmonious life of society will be allowed to be displayed in museums. Nevertheless, postmodern artists still strongly claimed that heterogeneity and plurality should be organized in a non-organic structure to offend against the museum's artifacts and to reject the systematization and homogenization as knowledge they demanded:

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<sup>116</sup> In .Cahoon, Lawrence (ed). *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* , Blackwell Press, 2003. p 9 (Introduction).

The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a non-linguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world.<sup>117</sup>

In other words, these entire rational values cause the museum to become an institutionalized place, which attempts to employ the modern paradigm to represent the deterministic logic, critical reason, individualism and humanist ideals, a search for universal truths and values. This attempt tries to construct unified and comprehensive schemes, knowledge and optimistic belief in progress and inaugurates the movement of history towards the state of human emancipation by all means of exhibiting the taxonomic and homogeneous arts in the museum.

On the other hand, although modern arts completely advocated the Romantic aesthetics associated with existentialism, affirmed passion, instinct and spontaneity over reason, logic, and deliberation in generating many discourses about the complexity, inexhaustibility, infinity of meaning in works of art and also reflecting the concepts related to postmodernism, these aesthetics still insisted on a very clear ideological function :

Complexity never means heterogeneity or plurality of meaning. Quite the opposite. “Complexity” and “unity” go together in the classical-romantic aesthetics.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>. Donato, Eugenio.” The Museum’s France: Notes Toward a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pecuchet”,p.233 . Cited in Crimp, Douglas. On the Museum’s Ruins. In Hal, Foster. (ed) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press, 1983, p 49.

<sup>118</sup>. Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Manchester University Press, 1984, xxxviii (FORWARD).

The essential aesthetic standard of contemplating beauty does not reside in how marvellous it is but in what structure constitutes it. Therefore it does not matter how many elements are constituted in this art, it should be viewed as a pure totality with an organic framework.

In other words, it is not only the pursuit of beauty that has been regarded as the necessary normativity for modern art but also a unified totality constituted with homogenous elements was still viewed as an ideological limits and canon. Therefore, what the museum claimed to represent art currently was to express a rational and harmonious social status quo, which has already been problematized by the practices of postmodernist art.

The cultural portrait of society should be produced through the plural perspectives of variable living dimensions instead of being represented merely as rooted in an idealistic life stance of unified and utopian totality, so the images on the canvas for portraying the praxis of life could not be a uniform totality but a heterogeneous plurality with perpetual difference.

One of the first applications of the term postmodernism to the visual arts occurs in Leo Steinberg's "Other criteria" discussing the transformation of picture surface into what Steinberg calls a "flatbed" for representing cultural portraits. This flatbed picture plane is an altogether new kind of picture surface, one that affects, according to Steinberg, "the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture". That is to say, the flatbed is a surface which can receive a vast and heterogeneous array of cultural image and artifacts that had not been compatible with the pictorial field of either premodernist or modernist painting.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>.Steinebrg, Leo, Other Criteria, in other Criteria, . Cited in Crimp, Douglas. On the Museum's Ruins . In Foster, Hal (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic Essay On Postmodern Culture*. Bay Press. 1983, p44.

Hence, the history of museology is also a history of all various efforts to reject the heterogeneity contaminating the purity of the museum as a homogeneous and totalizing system or series. This is why postmodernists attempted to tear down the hierarchical and institutionalized walls of the museum. When the utopian and idealistic social vision disappeared from the canvas, there was nothing left but bric-a-brac, a heap of residual fragments of objects. Nevertheless, this plural totality of depthlessness also created a multivalent and chaotic social image and became the disoriented metonymic displacement, which was constituted as the heterogeneous and incongruent compositions disregarding the essence of organizing elements in order to decry the internal logic in an organic structure.

### **2.3 The question of art**

Twentieth century modernist art had turned toward a kind of self-interrogation.

In its great philosophical phase, from 1950 to about 1964, modern art undertook a massive investigation into its own nature and essence. It set out to seek a form of itself so pure as art that nothing like what caused it to undertake this investigation in the first place could ever happen to it again.<sup>120</sup>

In other words, modern art becomes energized by an internal logic necessarily progressing towards the revelation of art's real essence, a completely unified totality. This means that the investigation of essence will not allow the structural fabrics coming from the different family systems in order to remain its essence as the institutional disposition that art has declared itself. Therefore, this self-congruent art

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<sup>120</sup> . Danto, Coleman. The state of the Art. Cited in Crowther, Paul. Postmodernism in the Visual Arts: A question of ends. In Docherty, Thomas (ed), *Postmodernism, A Reader*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. p181.

has tried to fence off its organic structure to stop incommensurable constituents from other heterogeneous texts and genres contaminating its ontological purity and to achieve its culmination in art history. But, , as Crowther strongly argued :

After it (art history) there can be nothing new in a distinctively artistic sense. On these terms, in other words, postmodern art is essentially post-historical. Art, in effect, has come to an end.<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, although postmodernism was first introduced as a designation of the rebellion against functionalist, scientifically grounded, rational architecture, it was soon extended and disseminated with this profound stance of new value ostensibly all over another territory of Western art. It claimed many ends to deny and terminate the institutional art which conformed to the foundational value of structure in attempting to convey a transparent and a univocal meaning from its expressive thematic, authorized style, unified aesthetic, intellectual evaluation and hierarchical boundary to retain its pure essence and to fulfill a social mission. Of course, all of these rules and canons related to pure art legitimized by modernist dogma based on scientific, rational and logical system of thinking have been subverted severely by postmodernism:

The postmodern period is distinguished by abandoning the search itself, having convinced itself of its futility. Instead, it tries to reconcile itself to a life under conditions of permanent and incurable uncertainty; a life in the presence of an unlimited quantity of competing forms of life, unable to prove their claims to be grounded in anything more solid and binding than their own historically shaped conventions.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> .Crowther, Paul. Postmodernism in the Visual Arts: A question of ends. In Docherty, Thomas (ed), *Postmodernism, A Reader*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.p 182.

<sup>122</sup>.Bauman, Zygmunt. The Fall of the Legislator. In Docherty, Thomas (ed), *Postmodernism, A Reader*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 135.

In other words, it advocates the abandonment of any institutional grounds that attempt to establish an objective fashion and an intellectual sense of aesthetic to evaluate the entire artistic phenomena. Hence, it also repudiates any rules legitimized to distinguish true art, with the value of unified totality from, non-art or a bad art and furthermore subverts all of these ideas which gestate first embedded in the discourse of artistic culture, dominated in the area of political and social philosophy and assimilated in the canon of modernist civilized life. According to Bauman has in his essay “The Fall of the Legislator”:

Only later did the notion of postmodernism, originally confined to the history of arts, begin to expand. It had opened the eyes of intellectual observer to those features shared by the transformations in contemporary arts and the fascinating shift of attention, anti-traditionalist rebellion, and strikingly heretical new paradigm, competing for domination in philosophy and the philosophically informed social science.<sup>123</sup>

As such, from the postmodern perspective, the episode of modernity appears to have been, more than anything else, the era of certainty. It also strongly proclaims that the philosopher of modern era feels so confident that the objective superiority of Western rationality, logic, morality, aesthetic, cultural precepts , and rules of civilized life that should be assimilated into everybody’s life in order to transform these conceptions of taken-for grantedness to the form and content of art to explore the universal values and truths.

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<sup>123</sup>. Ibid., p134

On the other hand, all of these values of absolute and objective foundation articulated by modernists have been developed as the universal validity and taken-for-granted doctrine in order to posit, judge, hierarchize and dichotomize whole classes into a superior, middle or inferior level, otherness and margin, conforming to the distinctly social scale.

It was evident to everybody except the blind and the ignorant that the West was superior to the East, white to black, civilized to crude, cultured to uneducated, man to woman.... high culture and low culture.<sup>124</sup>

Therefore postmodern art claimed to erase all of these evidences without leaving a single one unchallenged; art should be unleashed from the institutional constraints of art history. In other words, it was eager to produce the momentary simulacrum progressing in a state of infinite uncertainty and refused to present a definite meaning through a coherent and stable syntagmatic structure to create the perpetually fluid name. This infinitely plural context just became an embodiment of continuous and variable ephemerality in motion. And this innovative process always took the position of an exact meaning in the display of art approaching a paradoxical name. On the other hand, the theory of avant-garde also purported:

The development of a concept of the nonorganic work of art is a central task of the theory of the avant-garde. It can be undertaken by starting from Benjamin's concept of allegory. We will see that this concept represents an especially richly articulated category and that it can serve to illuminate certain aspects of the aesthetic effect of avant-gardiste works<sup>125</sup>

This means that it tries to combine two production-aesthetic concepts, one of which relates to the treatment of the material by means of removing elements from a context in order either to make them lose their original references as a functional unit, or to make them deviate from their logical and

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<sup>124</sup>. Ibid., p135.

<sup>125</sup>. Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant- Garde*. Manchester University Press, 1984, p 68.

hierarchical positions in an unified totality, entirely betraying the principle of taxonomy and hermeneutics.

In other words, the constitution of the postmodern work is structured by the joining of heterogeneous fragments. Its positing of meaning is a process of production and reception in order to integrate all the trace-erased elements without life or memory and to situate them in random and incommensurable sites without the given metonymic labor in representing the equivalence with a high fidelity associated with its matrix. As such, it tries to produce the inventive, performative and indescribable truth rather than duplicating the putative reality. Burger made a comparison between organic and nonorganic (avant-gardiste) works of art based on and extended from Benjamin's concept of allegory:

Artists who produce an organic work (in what follows, we shall refer to them as classicists without meaning to introduce a specific concept of what the classical work may be) treat their material as something living. They respect its significance as something that has grown from concrete life situation. For avant-gardistes, on the other hand, material is just that, material. Their activity initially consist in nothing other than in killing "life" of the material, that is, in tearing it out of its functional context that gives it meaning.<sup>126</sup>

Therefore, there is a big discrepancy between the definition and function of material for classicists and avant-gardistes. Classicists recognize and view material as the carrier of meaning, transmitting the stable and obvious reference, posited in a general recognition in life and associated with its logocentric root; the father's name and conceptual content. Instead, avant-gardistes only regard material as an empty sign,

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<sup>126</sup>. Ibid., p70.

an anonymous mark without any given reference that should deviate from any preceding denotation and metonymic and analogous matrix. This enables them to supplement the new meaning on this individual material to constellate these different organic and spontaneous elements as inventive, productive, impossible and hallucinatory plural texts with ephemeral momentum and euphoric moods transgressing the boundary of its given patriarchic language.

On the other hand, classicists' correspondences also treat the material as a living unit coming from an organic whole and the same language family, being embedded in the linear system with strictly hierarchical distinction. Hence, it will be constructed as a collective entirety still interlinking with the paternal sovereignty over referential orientation to conceptual content.

Nevertheless, avant-gardistes tear materials out of the life totality, which become a decentering part to enjoy its self-praxis and to produce its own presence of the present. In other words, they isolate material from its originally referential interpretation grounded in hermeneutics analyzing the sign in order to invent its own unprecedented paradigm and also to make structural component apart from its original genre and text as a disconnected fragment, bearing an impossible meaning and also constituting each other coming from the different systems as a heterogeneous and incommensurable plurality in a nonorganic structure.

Referring to these different elements constituted in a non-organic structure, although all parts participate in this compositional totality, they still remain their irreplaceable singularity without being viewed as an auxiliary object and without possessing membership in the whole. In other words, they may join and fulfil this integral activity but they are still not a part of this group. This example can also be seen from clipping, a diversity of incisions and variable cut-offs violently broken down from their indigenous texts

and also fusing each other promiscuously as a new totality and a bisexual text. This postmodern illustration figures have also been formulated by Derrida as the law:

The trait that marks membership inevitably divides, the boundary of the set comes to form, by imagination, an internal pocket larger than the whole; and the outcome of this division and of this abounding remains as singular as it is limitless.<sup>127</sup>

This law of participation and contamination without having membership is similar to the paradox of the classification in set theory, through grafting various scissions to germinate internal proliferation with an inexpressible truth and to surpass the conceptualizing totality with a singularly unexplainable meaning. With these different attitudes toward the material, it creates the two kinds of constitution of the works, conceptually distant from each other.

Therefore, the classicists produce work by giving an organic portrait of totality constituted by homogeneous parts in order to let them co- fulfil a mutual and concrete goal as a team work. And certainly, classicists will prohibit this representative reality losing its pure form and naked theme and also disallow segments spontaneously going their own way in misguiding the hermeneutical prolongation with a euphoric mood. Instead, avant-gardistes just merge all fragments to carry out their dream plain on a shared play ground, where the meaning will be exchanged and replaced among their joining as an unnamable integral mirage, so art works are no longer created as an organic whole but invented as the momentary fantastic composition via putting the different fragments in a whole in spite of all of them without knowing each other.

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<sup>127</sup>. In Attridge, Derek (ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature*. Routledge. 1992, p 227.

## 2.4 Connection with postmodern films

Referring to grammatology, the meaning produced by the narrative structure can be the plural characters that interact with their surrounding things in the same situational space in film or the plural things that can be bound with a character already as a plural sign. To montage writing, this postmodern concept of plural structure has been extended from a plural sign to plural textual sources constituted in film, which means different performing genre-texts like choreographed drama, opera and footage film can fantastically graft each other in a fiction film in order to create the momentary truth, simulacrum.

Moreover, these divergent textual components that come from different taxonomic categories without knowing one another will incongruently integrated each other in a nonorganic structure, which can also exemplify why postmodern arts used to be fenced off from the modern arts museum. On the other hand, the cultural and social images presented from postmodern films are like what are produced on canvas in postmodern arts, which can never represent the social life with profound humanist values but manifests the chaotic, dystopian and ludicrous life stance without fulfilling its social function.

Continuously, referring to present discourse, the whole structure in post modern films is constituted by successively disconnected momentary contingencies which are like sentences with quotation marks constituted together in postmodern writing. Hence this temporal narrative process will not present the past and during but only produces a concatenation of new becoming as the present discourse. To a schizophrenic language system, a person loses the sense of identifying the things causing the disorder in signifying chain in postmodern writing, which can be embodied as a character seeing all the things with the sameness. Hence, his interplay with things will transgress their conceptual meaning and create the impossible truth in postmodern films.

Eventually, referring to writerly and readerly text, all the approaches of postmodern writing mentioned above will orchestrate the writerly text as the filmic text. Unlike readerly text, the structure in postmodern films is organized by schizophrenic experience as a series of present- becoming progressing in an undivided presence, which will not present an ultimate truth step by step conforming to the logic-temporal order but always creates the paradoxical truth without a final decipherment as an end in order to provide thousands of accesses to the answer.

In other words, postmodern textual structure not only presents its externally plural and heterogeneous framework but also produces the different internally textual features subverting the foundational value grounded in inner logic of narrative process constituted in a systematically temporal order as the organizing, analyzable and monolithic text in revealing an ultimate truth in modern writing. These internal characteristics of postmodern text can also be extended to explore and applied to create the postmodern media language and its fantastic and amphibian textual meaning. Thus they overthrow the semiotic approach in stabilizing the meaning rooted in a conception of focalization by formulating an initial sign in a correspondent relationship to which a second stands as a logical interpretant.

### **Chapter 3 The question of literature and media language**

## 3.1 The question of literature

### 3.1.1 Postmodern textual structure

#### 3.1.1.1 Contradiction

Here we have to give a clear definition to a term “dominant” first, which is quoted by McHale from the 1971 English translation of a lecture of Roman Jakobson:

The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure....a poetic work is a structured system, a regularly ordered hierarchical set of artistic devices.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, postmodernist features are typically structured in oppositions comparing with the characteristics of modernist poetics. David Lodge lists five strategies (contradiction, discontinuity, randomness, excess, short circuit)<sup>129</sup>; and postmodernist writing also employs these new dominants to subvert the modernist approaches of using the poles of metaphoric or metonymic writing in the structured system.

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<sup>128</sup>. Jakobson, Roman. The dominant. Cited in McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 7

<sup>129</sup>. David Lodge lists five strategies (contradiction, discontinuity, randomness, excess, short circuit) by which postmodernist Writing seeks to avoid having to choose either of the pole metaphoric (modernist) or metonymic writing. Ibid.

Contradiction can be revealed in postmodernist fiction by the presence of the postmodernist theme of the multiplicity of the self, dramatized via decomposing the unified monologue as plural discontinuous monologues to make each of them use a different grammatical personal pronoun to enunciate the story. The same story can be enunciated through a one person with multiple personal pronouns. Therefore, a third-person fictional character can be changed to an autobiographical persona, who is sometimes a first-person subject, or sometimes switched to a second-person engaging in self-addressee. The transmitted truth will be destabilized by alternating a subjective with an objective perspective and confused by alternating omniscient with self-praxis knowing.

In other words, enunciated texts from the different grammatical personal pronouns always create the contradiction. Plural enunciators' ideas in interpreting the sequential plots in the same story never provide a univocal answer to judge the true or false but gives a middle answer against a logical and coherent modality in the fictional text. This means that it cannot be either true or false as a possible world but can be neither true nor false as an impossible world. Hence:

Self-contradictory constructs are more like subversive critiques of worlds and world-building, anti-worlds rather than world proper...in which the very notion of self-identity is challenged is just that of producing a sense of logical uneasiness and of narrative discomfort.<sup>130</sup>

As such, this is a tremendous sense of self-contradiction in writing the text, because these three different enunciators with different personal pronouns in expressing the different experiences and vantage points in depicting and judging the sequential events are from the same person. It is also to say, this self-

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<sup>130</sup>. Ibid., p33.

contradiction written in textual structure is not approaching a theological truth but is questioning the absolute value of true and false in this possible world dichotomizing truth and falsehood.

### 3.1.1.2 Discontinuity

Discontinuity is a radical claim against the old world, which builds up the division of the fictional universe into two opposed worlds rooted in the sense of identify and difference. Hence it claims that the unity of fictional ontology has been split; all elements in a system have been emancipated from their categories and hierarchies and, further, these splitting-off from each of their originally dominant structures will also be decomposed to constitute each other incommensurably as a plural world.

In other words, the old world has been deconstructed as multiple centres, therefore, this pluralization also indeed affects mainly narrative structure to dissolve each other with the heterogeneous interconnection into a new collection to start a new beginning. Hence Foucault wrote:

Discontinuity probably begins with erosion from outside, from that space which is, for thought, on the other side, but in which it has never ceased to think from the very beginning.<sup>131</sup>

This is to say that through erasing the division of oppositional sides, these internal differences from the various indigenous families constituted in the whole framework will neither bear any continuous linearity in its structuring development nor remain the inherent purity of ontology in its textual

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<sup>131</sup>. Foucault, Michel, *The Order Of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Science*. Routledge, 1991, p 50.

composition in order to create the infinite beginning in an endlessly melting process and also renounces the normative law of judging the components' essences.

### **3.1.1.3 Randomness**

The strategy of randomness is as Lacan, the poststructuralist psychoanalyst defines schizophrenia, a kind of signifying disorder. This also encourages poststructuralists' tendency to view language as the primary organizing principle to describe truth, so linguistic disorder becomes an inventive way of producing simulacrum. A schizophrenic experiences the loses of his ability to structure language with a logic-temporal order and creates a random massive organization in a signifying system without having a clear sense of temporal sequence.

In other words, poststructuralists disregard the modernist narrative of personal identity by claiming that biographical experience constituted from the consequential messages in linguistic structure should be progressing in a clear temporal unification by linking the past and future with the present. Therefore they prefer writing with the schizophrenic experience to organize a random linguistic chain by virtue of

combining the unrelated signifiers together to create the arbitrary signifying chain. Moreover, this joy-combinational text is also constellated by a series of different presents leaping over the temporal order. Hence, it just becomes a collapse and an obstacle in transmitting a linear and stable meaning in the compressed time but also creates a succession of new becoming. Currie has extended the purport of schizophrenia from Deleuze and Guattari :

Deleuze and Guattari use this principle of the loss of temporal sequence to suggest that the schizophrenic experience is somehow more faithful to the condition of postmodern culture than the normal controlled admission of meanings as an unfolding sentence or narrative. Or, to put it another way, the schizophrenic lives out a poststructuralist perspective on meaning which deconstructs the normal intelligibility of things. The schizophrenic is seen as an interpreter whose disorder is to multiply and destabilize meanings, as an inability to observe the proper boundaries between meanings.<sup>132</sup>

In other words, randomness can be embodied as a signifying system constituted by a narrative sequence of destabilizing the meaning and also lacking the connection in temporal development. This fluid meaning is produced among free and unrelated signifiers' interweaving each other and this text's structure is also disoriented in its chronological order; it just bounces here and there without presenting any identity to time itself. On the other hand, this randomness is also inscribed in the form of wilfully constellating the estranging signifiers in identifying anything with the same resemblance as the schizophrenic language.

#### **3.1.1.4 Excess**

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<sup>132</sup>.Currie, Mark . *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, Martin's Press, 1998, p103.

The characteristic of excess is to create the multivalence of the text instead of the univocality of the text. In other words, this plural text does not provide a linear structure to be analyzed constituted in the finite language and also marks the formless footprints straying from the readerly text, committed to the closure system of the West and produced according to the goals of this system. Its structure should be fragmentary and broken in order to vastly and untiringly dissolve any variable components from different systems as the plural text. Therefore this discontinuous process of producing the different mergence has also become a restless movement to produce the momentary truth as Barthes wrote:

Hence we use code here not in the sense of a list, a paradigm that must be reconstituted. The code is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structure; we know only its departure and returns; the units which have resulted from it (those we inventory) are themselves, always venture out of the text, the mark, the sign, of a virtual digression toward the remainder of a catalogue.<sup>133</sup>

In other words, the meaning produced by excess always transgresses the absolute sense of paradigm from its indigenous catalogue, without either representing the truth grounded in its inaugural act or extending the thematic sense rooted in its conceptual content but inventing the simulacrum as the writerly text with polysemous and indescribable meaning constituted in a mirage of structure in which compositional components are disengaged from their origins and cannibalize each other absurdly. It also means that text produced from excess always supplements the more incongruent meaning on its original matrix recorded in the general recognition in order to create the new paradigm without being institutionalized and categorized in any sense of a list stored in a cupboard of erudition.

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<sup>133</sup> .Barthes, Roland. *S/z*. Blackwell Publisher, 1992, p 20.

### 3.1.1.5 Short circuit

Short circuit can be incarnated as an incessant process of interweaving the different textual units provisionally together to create the momentary astonishment and temporary truth. Deleuze has also stated:

Any hierarchy or pre-eminence is denied in so far as substance is equally designated by all the attributes in accordance with their essence.<sup>134</sup>

Hence, the taxonomical sense in judging and identifying the being or object should be erased in order to let them open up the possibility of difference by means of going outside themselves to produce their different becoming, a momentary mirage.

As such, this division of being or objects can also be extended to genre-text; although the law of genre of modernity implies an institutionalized classification, an enforceable principle of non-contamination and non-contradiction, Derrida also claimed:

A text would not belong to any genre.; every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Published by The Athlone Press. 1994.p 40.

In other words, each text can transgress, permeate and exchange others without any taxonomical boundary to create the reciprocal momentary truth.

As a result, postmodern narrative experience of form and content is always constituted by provisional composition to create momentary exhilaration and profound plurality in literature, art and cultural portrait, whose integrity will be no longer unified and organic. Rather this ultimate intertextuality, standing in relation to each other, must be built up by all means of variable discourses from the disjoined subsystems and localities and by randomly ubiquitous materials cut away from their indigenous entities. Hence, this plural text is organized rooted in differentiation rather than unification in order to produce a fantastic momentum, an ephemeral mirage and simulacrum.

### **3.1.2 Text in destabilizing the truth**

The dominant in postmodernist literature is profound with epistemological uncertainty, because authors will not devise a logical, rational and scientific method to reveal the truth but only render the ambiguous and multiple messages to lead the fact existing in a mutable state. Thus it also produces the ontological plurality or instability without unfolding the ultimate truth. As a result, this is a ideal text not a theological text written to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text to choose his own access to the truth:

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<sup>135</sup>. In Attridge, Derek (ed) . *Derrida, Jacques. Acts Of Literature*. Routledge. 1992. p230.

In this ideal text, the network are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one.<sup>136</sup>

In other words, this indeterminacy aims at producing the process of questioning how and where to discover the ultimate truth through the paradoxical and plural messages transmitted from the nonlinear, multidirectional and reversible text. Therefore, it also will transgress the epistemological domain in discovering the only truth based on the absolute and foundational knowledge in order to provide the variable entrances to the truth.

Nevertheless, this postmodern text is reprehensible from the viewpoint of the modernist philosopher, because its discourse is not integrated as a unified totality developed under a coherent, linear structure and logic-temporal order, but is constructed with the profound schizophrenic language, a terrible confusion in the signifying system. In other words, postmodern text is also a writerly text constituted by putting all free and unrelated signifiers together with euphoria not to represent a meaning rooted in a presupposed concept from a model, but to make signifier different in itself and connect other different itself to create the perpetual present:

The writerly text is not a thing; we would have a hard time finding it in a bookstore. Further, its model being a productive (and no longer a representative)... The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language...; the writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play of the world.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher. 1992.pp5-6.

Therefore, postmodernists disregard epistemology in providing the scientific, rational, logical and empirical knowledge carried by marked sources to find the truth and just create the enjoyment of the thing itself with indeterminacy in its act and in its essence. This is also to say that literature should produce the paradoxical text in which the truth transmitted from words are isolated from their referential meanings and conceptual content in order to overstep the ontological boundary with a joyful practice of writing.

### 3.1.3 Intertextual and paradoxical text

Barthes has made proposals to extend the import of text with a postmodernist conception against modernist textual doctrine:

The text is experienced only in an activity of production; its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works).<sup>138</sup>

This is also a statement of intertextuality; a text is constituted by plural textual works annexed to the intertextual space.

Since the French structuralists' work on intertextuality, to picture literature as a field or, better, a network whose nodes are the actual texts of literature".<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> .Ibid., p5.

<sup>138</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Hill and Wang, 1997, p 157.

<sup>139</sup> . McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 56.

Referring to this account, an intertextual space is a borderless field, and a plural zone reconstitutes the relations among two or more texts quoted and incised from the different narrative systems, or between divided texts coming from the larger different categories such as genre, school. They are melting into each other in this intertextual space replete with the free play of signifiers in a random text's structure. In other words, it is a device of borrowing a character from another text, a transworld identity and a reconstructed interrelationship through transforming and permeating text's narrative elements and properties in order to produce a coexisting and interacting value with the tremendously reciprocal effect.

In other words, postmodern text also offends against the ideal language of modernity through claiming that text does not need to transmit a definite univocality, but produces the unrepresentable transgressing the sense of granted belief and cultural code, so meaning will be constituted and invented with perpetual difference rather than repeating and extending its prior knowledge and presupposed concept as a consequential equivalence with a hermeneutical verification. Therefore, for Barthes:

Which the text is the field is realized not according to an organic progress of maturation or a hermeneutic course of deepening investigation, but, rather according to a serial movement of disconnections, overlapping, and variations. The logic regulating the text is not comprehensive (define what the work means)<sup>140</sup>.

As such, this institutional method, constituting the text through elements' bearing the same genesis and being deployed to decipher the historical, cultural and social codes and to seek some grounding for our universe, has been called to an end by the postmodern paradoxical text. The text's components have lost their ontological given, a widely-taken-for-granted conception in identifying the nature of being.

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<sup>140</sup>. Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, text*. Hill and Wang. 1997, p158.

Postmodernist discourse is precisely the discourse that denies the possibility of ontological grounding.....from my point of view, is the indefinite article: an ontology is a description of a universe, not of the universe <sup>141</sup>

It is also to say that postmodernist discourse is a precisely self-contradictory, reflexive and life-praxis discourse which repudiates the possibility of ontological groundings but constitutes the meaning by self-reference, without letting structural units be presupposed by any definition, and also allowing them to enjoy an innate freedom in a spontaneous action of connecting each other to create the impossible simulacrum. Hence it claims that a universe must be an infinitely and indeterminately plural entity without the possibility of finding truth based on any privileged and foundational knowledge.

Therefore, there is no rule that can prescribe meaning as a product. All textual elements organized in the syntagmatic system should not serve to complement and solidify this incontestable ontological foundation. All discourses are constituted only as a temporal composition with the effect of infinite mutation, because meaning is a process of incessantly producing the fantastic momentums, which have always been waiting to be supplemented in order to maintain its text with the perpetual difference. Postmodernist discourse rejects ontological grounding:

All postmodernists draw on the same repertoire of strategies. A philosophical thematics, specifying the ontology of postmodernist texts, will only tell us there is foregrounding; it will not tell us how this foregrounding has been accomplished, what strategies have been deployed... from my points of view, is the indefinite article: an ontology is a description of a universe not of the universe; that is, it may describe any universe, potentially a plurality of universes. <sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p27.

<sup>142</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 27.

Nevertheless, in classic modernist text, the deployed devices are always functioning to represent epistemological themes; it tries to employ this theory based on studying the nature, methods, limitations and validity of knowledge and belief rooted in taxonomical canon in order to precisely describe a rational and logical text. All structural components are legitimized by the scientific categorization in order to clarify their differences and identities, so it does not have room for tolerating any narrative fallacy.

On the other hand, epistemological themes, these institutional groundings, have also been postulated authentically to reflect and explore all dimensions of human social life to manifest the universal values. On the contrary, for postmodernists, this universe has become a plural totality and all the components have deviated from their hierarchical strata and also cut across to the other fields in order to achieve this inventive, hallucinatory, unrepresentable and multi-folded intertextuality, allowing and welcoming the different elements' participations in this interwoven activity functioning in ceaseless movement. Hence, it is impossible, depending on any ultimate knowledge building up a boundary fence, to confine the text only orchestrated in an enclosed field with the organic framework.

In other words, postmodernist text is constituted by a self-contradictory and random structure with no elaborative schema in transmitting the ultimate and determinate truth, which also violates ontological and hermeneutical principle of giving an absolute fact and interpretation, but raises the middle answer of floating between truth and false.

The device of revealing the definite assertion in sequential narrative sometimes more closely approaches true, but at other times it just suddenly switches closer to false without ceasing its motion. It does this in order to make the right and ultimate confirmation fluid in between true and false poles as the

process of incessantly producing the provisional clarification. This textual claim has been described by McHale as below:

The essential trope of fiction”, writes the postmodernist novelist Ron Sukenick, “is hypothesis, provisional supposition, a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as of disbelief”. This captures informally an intuition about the special logical status of the fictional text, its condition of being in-between, amphibious-neither true nor false, suspended between belief and disbelief.<sup>143</sup>

Therefore, postmodernist text is also the process of untiringly searching for the truth existing in a suspended state of perpetual mutation. It is rather a logic-temporal structure glued by deductive and theological information in order to pave a road to enter the locus of the absolute and ultimate truth as a conclusive ending and final decipherment.

## **3.2 The question of media language**

### **3.2.1 Signs losing a fundamental property in the postmodern visual text**

Postmodernist media language completely repudiates the narrative structure of structuralism as the semiotics of Peirce was seeking insistently to grasp the process of interpretation or semiosis in time, as stated in Jameson’s essay Video Art.<sup>144</sup> Peirce announces the conception of focalization and how it can be viewed as an equivalence of logocentric concept, because its approach and canon are attempting to

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p 33

<sup>144</sup> The semiotics of Peirce, however, which seeks insistently to grasp the process of interpretation-or Semiosis-in time, usually rewrites all these distinctions in terms of an initial sign in relationship to which a second stands as a logical interpretant. Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p87.

rewrite all these distinctions in terms of an initial sign in a correspondent relationship to which a second stands as a logical interpretant.

This contemporary narrative theory finally with its operative distinction between the raw materials of the basic story and the *mise-en-scene* itself, the way in which those materials, as the signs, bear every concept and every thought beyond immediate perception, therefore they require to be organized as a sequential deductive chain, in which the succeeding component should inherit, solidifies and complements more meaning to the message emanated from preceding one in order to clarify the referential content to approach the truth.

This is also postulated as a nature of a habit in the narrative structure, manifesting the real and living logical conclusion achieved by a final logical interpretant. Hence, an interpretant is the labor of bringing and contextualizing a sign approaching its ultimate position of signified to extend the consequential language to let the whole text become readable and comprehensible. As such, it can also be viewed as a path of coupling signifier and signified which also strengthens the superior and centric position to the first sign in the hierarchical structure.

What must be retained from these formulations is the way in which they pose two signs of equal nature and value, only to observe that in their moment of intersection a new hierarchy is at once established in which one sign becomes something like the material on which the other one works, or in which the first sign establishes a content and a centre to which the second is annexed for auxiliary and subordinate functions (the priorities of the hierarchical relationship here seeming reversible).<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>. Ibid., p 87.

Nevertheless, in postmodernist visual text, there is no fundamental property of the stream of signs, which allows them to possess the privilege of taking the position of priority as a major topic of the operation in the whole narrative network, since each of them enjoys the same value and weight as an unleashed signifier playing as the different centres in this random structure with no relation in a group. Therefore, the situation of that succeeding sign function as the interpretant will be extremely transgressing the logical association with its preceding sign and also will produce the indescribably illusionary effect, the fantastic simulacrum in their replacing each other.

In other words, this is a provisional composition and subjects to change without noticing elements' mixing and splitting in this ceaselessly rotating momentum. Jameson has described this linguistic symphony as the following

Two signs occupy each other's positions in a bewildering and well-nigh permanent exchange. This is something like Benjaminian "distraction" to a new and historically original power.<sup>146</sup>

Hence, this is a sequence of interpretants' permeating, reciprocating and transforming one another's features to compose a plural text, which will also produce the postmodern temporality. As such, this unstable provisional effect also will create the diachronic alternation in a much more complex repertoire of interaction, which carries the genetic estrangement against the process of nature and culture, because the syntagmatic system in modern natural and cultural paradigm advocates the representation by virtue of establishing the sign as a logo to enforce its interpretant acting as the representment to extend the signification derived from it. Hence, it will also be structured as the hermeneutical and metaphorical text interpreted from the matrix. Jameson has used video text as an exemplification as the new cultural language:

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<sup>146</sup>. Ibid.,

What we have called the ceaselessly rotating momentum of its provisional constellations of signs depend on effacing them: a proposition and a hypothesis that will lead us on into those matters of interpretation and aesthetic value that we have postponed until this point.<sup>147</sup>

Therefore the questions of priority or unequal influence can now be raised in a new way by the postmodern media language; a second sign does not need to be constrained to develop the meaning as a consequential representment of past trace with the evidently central matter.

### **3.2.2 Plural text written with the infinite language**

In postmodern media language, which has the same purport as that of postmodern literature, there is no austere and dense syntagmatic construction. Here, everything can signify anything through constantly melting different systems of components incommensurably, and it also will be delegated neither to a great final ensemble nor to an ultimate truth. In other words, postmodern media language is profound with contingent activities without a connection with the previous consequence remaining in a fragmentarily and discontinuously moving state.

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<sup>147</sup>. Ibid., p 89.

Therefore, a significant and teleological access to a logocentric model and a conclusion is lacking, but there are a thousand entrances to the truth. This is to say that this entrance is not constituted by a legal and logical structure grounded in the narrative law, but is the inventively incongruent composition integrated by virtue of the different texts and codes fusing each other with the ending in permanent movement. In other words, this continuous mutation written with limitless languages has also been employed in video art:

What characterized this particular video process is a ceaseless rotation of elements such that they change place at every moment, with the result that no single element can occupy the position of interpretant".<sup>148</sup>

This means that there is no primary sign established as logocentric recognition to activate the consequential linguistic system to structure the logical and convincing evidence through a narrative sequence to harden and support the goal founded by a primary sign.

This transmitted referential message is either an adequate passage or correspondence in interlinking the signifier and signified and the preceding and succeeding instant filmic frames and shots, because it does not seem appropriate in functioning as a linear, logical and teleological succession. Therefore, postmodern video text will be constituted under the narrative of short circuit driven by the radically different kinds of mutable logos in creating the incoherent and incommensurable image contents, which is also the activity of exchanging their referential features promiscuously at any moment. In other words, these infinite rotations are replete with different temporary truths, creating a fantastic blockage in the coherent development of narrative approaching the denouement step by step in a logic-temporal order.

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<sup>148</sup> . Ibid., p 90.

On the other hand, these provisional momentums just alter the subject through exchanging one sign or logo to different one in order to reconstitute the mutably temporary centres according to its own internal narrative logic, emitting a thematic message quite inconsistently and instantly. Therefore, the meanings produced by these destabilized momentums are very paradoxical and inexpressible, which cannot be as a thematization.

Thematization is then the moment in which an element, a component, of a text is promoted to the status of official theme, at which point it becomes an candidate for that even higher honor, the work's meaning".<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, postmodern text in media language is thematized to produce the profound plural text to raise a succession of questions to suspect how we can find a fixed meaning in the whole process of media narrative rather than solely reveals the ultimate and determinate meaning through thematizing the all components with a systematic and logical schema to discover the univocal truth and ultimate decipherment step by step with a long circuit of linear narrative to describe a kind of bureaucratic life as Jameson's statement as below:

It seems clear that the postmodernist text-of which we have taken the videotape in question to be a privileged exemplar- is from that perspective defined as a structure or sign flow which resists meaning, whose inner logic is the exclusion of the emergence of themes as such in that sense, and which therefore systematically sets out to short-circuit traditional interpretive temptations (something Susan Sontag prophetically intuited in the appropriately titled *Against Interpretation*, at the very dawn of what was not yet called the postmodern age).<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> . Ibid., p91.

<sup>150</sup> . Ibid., p92.

Therefore, thematic interpretation, functioning in the search for meaning is like a labor of structuralism and hermeneutical operation trying to stabilize the syntagmatic system based on the words' differences and identities, which always excludes otherness from the constitutional participation in order to make text representable and analyzable. In other words, this thematized text will be constructed with a hierarchical structure to manifest the meaning which can be associated with its referential matrix, but it will never be able to unfold the postmodern world of ceaselessly progressing in different presents towards the permanent uncertainty.

### 3.2.3 Alienation between signifier and signified

Referring to postmodern writing, Jameson has raised the concept of *alienation*, to delineate the relationship between meaning and reference conveyed by sign:

Alienation ought not to have any meaning at all in that thematic sense. This is something everyone is free to verify, by self-observation and a little closer attention to precisely those moments in which we briefly feel that disillusionment... the intersection of sign and interpretant seems to produce a fleeting message <sup>151</sup>.

This is to say that alienation is alienation itself whose referential meaning is disconnected from its sign, therefore it is difficult to name the contextualizing subject made from the thematic elements. And it also causes our mental identities concerning the textual resemblance to exist in a state of psychic disorder

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<sup>151</sup>. Ibid., p 90.

lacking the proper sense to differentiate the interconnection between the expansive similitude and its sign.

Hence, postmodernists characterize the current moment with a sense of alienation in order to disengage the kinships of representation from their referential meanings and signs. Jameson has also advanced a discourse of ahistorical referent and realism to repudiate the representation of the equivalence with resemblances:

I have argued for the presence and existence of what seems to me a palpable referent—namely, death and historical fact, which are ultimately not textualizable and tear through the tissues of textual elaboration, of combination and free play (“the Real”, Lacan tells us, “is what resists symbolizations absolutely”). I want to add at once that this is no particularly philosophical victory for some putative realism or other over the various textualizing worldviews.<sup>152</sup>

Therefore the value of the referential meaning is not transmitted from a palpable sign to precisely and satisfactorily demonstrate the logic of linear conjunction and of expansive affinity rooted in its indigenous theme, but its value is offering an self-emancipation from the hermeneutical prolongation and duplication discarding any significant mark to produce the unparalleled emergence of individual theme to enjoy in play of sign via self-praxis, a spontaneous self-action in disjunction with its profoundly historical trace.

Hence, Jameson has rendered the term *assassination*, similar meaning to Derridian patricide, tearing down the incorrigible and original prototypical thought by assuming a resolute and radical adoption of

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<sup>152</sup>. Ibid., p 94.

renouncing the privileged knowledge pre-enunciated by the logo-father. This discourse concerns the nominated and putative protocols and signs imposed on things described by the patriarchal sayings, so this father should be killed in order to let contextualized meaning be produced by a free integration among unbridled referents and signifiers from the different systems in order to create unpredictable fantasies:

On this reading some distant consonance might be invoked between the fantasies and anxieties aroused by the idea of assassination and the global system of media and reproductive technology. The structural analogy between the two seemingly unrelated spheres is secured in the collective unconscious by notions of conspiracy, while the historical juncture between the two was burned into historical memory....such interpretation in terms of auto-referentiality is not its plausibility: one would want to defend the proposition that the deepest subject of all video art, and even of all postmodernism, is very precisely reproductive technology itself.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, this sense demolishes the firm foundational notion that the sign should have an unproblematic relationship with its referent based on the empirical and hermeneutical knowledge in capitalism and middle-class society. Jameson has also proposed the term *reification* to describe the dissociation between the sign and its reference:

Reification, penetrates the sign itself and disjoins the signifier from the signified. Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning, the signified is problematized.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>. Ibid., p 95.

<sup>154</sup>. Ibid., p 96.

This force just tears the traditional referent asunder from its stereotypical sign, which also enters the field of language in disjoining the sign from its referent. Hence this manifestation of sign going astray from its referent indeed confuses the objective world in remaining its external reality. This marvellously immeasurable referential distance from the sign without past putative trace will endow the sign with limitless autonomy. Thus they constitute each other to create the hallucinatory moment, which enables the sign to completely enjoy its free-floating utopian existence and also renounces the affinity with its ingrained referential meaning in representing the consequential equivalence and analogy.

### **3.3 Connection with postmodern films**

Unlike the structure of modern writing, the entirely disconnected and unpredictable incidents lacking the linear correlation of cause and effect constituted in postmodern films are like the scissions composed of the whole text with a schizophrenic language system in postmodern writing. In other words, all of these unrelated contingencies are just strung together very momentarily in order to create the new present-transgressing the emphasis of structural continuity and linearity in modern writing. Moreover, like postmodern writing, postmodern films are integrated by a series of asunder temporary truths, so this narrative structure is disorder in chronological sequence and the ending in this nonlinear framework is always an upsurge of new becoming.

Unlike the theological text of modern writing, postmodern films are the same as postmodern writing in that they are against revealing only one access to the truth through the schematically and logically

narrative structure. But they destabilize truth through the discontinuous and random narrative structure transmitting the self-contradictory messages from cinematic images in order to create multivalent meanings conveyed from the paradoxical text. Moreover, this can be extended as the plural text in postmodern writing, which claims writing is graft and text should go across to another text as intertextuality, so all of the different performing and visual genre-texts can also be integrated in postmodern films as the new totality conveying the momentary truth without the ultimate meaning.

Unlike modern writing, postmodern writing has erased the colossal emphasis on the binary opposition in the dichotomized humanist sense of values about belief and disbelief, evil and good and true and false. Hence, the messages transmitted from a sequence of cinematic narrative in postmodern films always confuse this absolute assertion. In other words, a concatenation of events is triggered by the characters in postmodern films, which never provide stable and coherent evidence to certify the supposition of believing or disbelieving they are evil or good. Eventually, even though Pierce said:

The process of SEMIOSIS, or the production of meaning, for Pierce involves a triad of three entities: the sign, its object and its interpretant. The OBJECT is that for which the sign stands, while the INTERPRETANT is the “mental effect” generated by the relation between sign and object<sup>155</sup>,

However, postmodern visual language repudiates regarding object as a signifier, interpretant as a signified and the process of representing the mental effect as a signification. Hence, object is also accounted as a nomadic sign and is always going out itself without centralizing its position to let its interpretant inherit the prior and superior reference to interpret and extend meaning as a sign- function in postmodern films.

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<sup>155</sup>. Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Sandy and Flitterman-Lewis. *New Vocabularies In Film Semiotics: Structuralism, post-structuralism and beyond*. . Routledge. 1992. p5.

This also means that in a chain of postmodern cinematic images, the message transmitted from the first sign has deviated from its conceptual reference and the second moreover also diverts this impossibly referential meaning to other imaginative directions. Therefore object, signifier and interpretant always exist in a state of alienation in postmodern film language.

As producers of schizophrenic language, characters in postmodern films always lose their capability of identifying the proper referential meaning transmitted from things in their environment as interplaying with them. Hence the meaning produced from this interaction between them and things just creates the momentary truth with colossal euphoria as simulacrum, which has also overstepped the sign- function in the semiotics of film regarding signification in establishing the social consensus.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In the introduction to chapter 3, I explained how all the postmodern discourses I described have a tremendous affinity manifested in their external plural, random and schizophrenic structures and internal momentary truths and simulacrum, which also present t deep connections with the postmodern films.

Hence, I adopt all of these postmodern writing approaches to explore and analyze the films of Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk in the following chapters. I follow a very direct and rigid method in order to let their very different and conspicuous cinematic texts be navigated and dismantled straightforwardly and insightfully by disparate postmodern discourses.

This formulation is an attempt to present vigorously how each of the salient episodes in both directors' movies is absolutely unprecedented in creating its own exclusive present-becoming which cannot be compared or replaced by each other or connected with any other directors' works, since all of these differences just exist in each filmic episode in each of Tsai and Kim's movies.

And, although postmodern discourse always goes beyond the modern paradigm, these unparalleled striking spectacles created by Tsai and Kim are different in the process of each narrative unit integrating one another in generating the meaning embedded in the present space, so one does not need to explore Tsai or Kim's films by referring to any other films to find the similitude.

This is also to say that using the textual essence and property in categorizing its generated meaning is not adequate, because difference can be found by deconstructing the resemblance. As a result, each of the analyzed episodes in both directors' films should be regarded as an incomparable mould instead of in a taxonomical thematic sense. Hence every single episode-mould needs to be anatomized and reconstructed to illustrate their different textual units. These are constituted in different processes progressing in disconnected time and space, producing a fantastic meaning only in this unrepeatable self rather than to be reckoned as a classified product put on a shelf and always to be compared with other similar products shelved in the neighboring attributed place.

Therefore, without being confused and enraptured by this textual final and ensemble textual expression, each of Tsai and Kim's exemplary cinematic episodes is an unprecedented mould which is orchestrated

by the different narrative fabrics functioning in the disparately capricious process in making itself different. As such, each uncontrollable process in making the different unrecognizable, unexplainable and amazing mould in its own right enunciating its presence of the present should be dissected exclusively by the various postmodern approaches, piece by piece, in materializing its unequalled process in making an unparalleled meaning.

## **PART 4 POSTMODERNISM IN ASIAN CINEMA**

### **CHAPTER 4 Learning from Tsai Ming-Liang's Films**

#### **4.1 *Vive L'amour* :1994**

##### **4.1.1 Narrative structure constituted in different centers with the same weight**

Tsai Ming-Liang's film *Vive L'amour* (1994) is a film constructed with the postmodern narrative structure in which there is no hierarchical superiority bestowed on the major storyline driven by a individual female and male leading characters as a dominant central part to compel the others activated as a subordinate storyline to support the main characters in complementing the interconnection to the core components of the narrative to maintain the structural totality.

This also means that there is no minor role in *Vive L'amour* and all the narrative networks are strung together by the three protagonists' presences in the present, a chain of their encounters. With no sovereignty over others in their positions, all of them just create multiple centers as the differences in the whole. In other words, there are three main narrative orbits led by the three equal weights and values of the protagonists without mingling with any subsidiary storyline.

#### **4.1.2 Only present discourse**

The entire narrative structure of *Vive L'amour*, that only produces three main storylines without interweaving the auxiliary one, is also only triggered by three people alienated from society, with a close observation anchored upon their marginalized lives. Tsai dissects the intimate, absurd and paradoxical texture of the urban lives of these three ignored others to delineate their own ex-centric present stories instead of history. Therefore this film is not depicted by a third-person center of consciousness to

transmit the privileged knowledge to recall and foretell their past and future but it is all based on the protagonists' own praxis of their lives as individual enunciation with spontaneous action.

In other words, this *I*, makes the self-presence of the present, a true self-reflexivity to create what I encounter, adventure and react to in the incessantly new becoming with coincidentally and momentarily present discourse without repeating the past memory. This also produces the paramount reality rooted in my unforeseeable everyday life far from the logically and controllably modern life. Hence, Tsai just wants to catch what protagonists promptly activate themselves, while something just arises from the ground and appears in front of them. This definition of the present in postmodern narrative has been clearly stated by Derrida:

What is called present-that which erects itself freely before me, upright, closed at hand, at which is appearing, as a pure upsurge owing to nothing.<sup>156</sup>

In other words, their lives are just expressed by Tsai through the constantly different presents with no connection with past trace but only the here and now replete with their haphazard novel and willy-nilly experiences instead of general experiences. On the other hand, this self-presence of the present is also a combination of various castrations which always exist in a state of the pure present without repeating themselves whose nonfulness comes from the different strings of beginnings and will never unfold an inaugural act of nonscission fused with history.

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<sup>156</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago press, 1981, p 303.

Therefore, at the beginning of the film, a key is inserted in the key hole of an apartment door, and a columbarium salesman just suddenly appears and twists it to open the door and enter this house. It is not revealed how this key came to be left there as an unknown starting point in the story and it also makes this fantastic cut-off directly create the momentary present as a commencement, a new trigger in a temporal development.

Elsewhere, two protagonists, a street vendor and a real-estate broker, just contingently and continuously glance at each other in different places, such as a coffee shop, the sidewalk, and outside the telephone booth. These are also filmed without showing how and why they meet together in the first place, in a coffee shop, and then they still constantly meet one another in various unconnected public places.

In other words, it also becomes a fantastic combination of scissions, a string of fragmentary plots escaping from their beginnings and just leaping over space and time to produce different presents. This self-presence of the present through constituting the disruptive scissions has been enunciated by Derrida:

Scission is necessary because of the fact (or as a consequence of the facts, as you will) that the beginning is piled and multiplied about itself, elusive and divisive; it begins with its own division, its own numerous numbers.<sup>157</sup>

After meeting each other outside the telephone booth, two characters are just having sex in a vacant apartment, which is the other new present and trigger. Referring to this unpredictable becoming, Tsai has never unfolded to us how and why they come here to enjoy this love-making but just structures story via

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<sup>157</sup> . Ibid., p300.

a scission connecting a scission without repeating the past and foretelling the future but only producing t  
incessant presents.

#### **4.1.3 Microscopic narrative progressing in the transitional space of consumption**

Referring to narrative thematic, the remarkably localizing narration of postmodernism is obvious in *Vive L'amour*, because there is no thoughtful narration like the modernist discourse to discover the truth, grounded in a foundational theory, to describe how the external broad socio-economical conditions impose on these three protagonists and cause them to lead their the solitary lives on the edge of Taipei society.

Tsai never tries to explore the story plot with profound thought rooted in the institutional knowledge and theory to describe their encounter academically with the social paradigm of modernity. Instead he relies on the portrayal of microscopic narratives to transform the depthless contingency, immediacy and intimacy taking place in their everyday lives such as working, eating, drinking, voyeurism, urination, seduction, having sex, masturbation. These above residuals happen in the metropolitan city of Taipei as the novel and unparalleled individual presence of the present. Currie has analyzed this economical but beautiful narrative, as follows:

Once again we encounter two characteristic postmodern attitudes to narrative. The first is a collapse of the distinction between narrative and metanarrative, since the universal pretensions of the metanarrative are reduced to being just one narrative among others. The second is an elevation of the particular, fragmentary little narrative as counter-politics of the local.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>. Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, Martin's Press, 1998, p 109.

Hence, these singular and local daily lives are just exemplified the real-estate broker falling asleep in the bathtub, exhausted in body and mind, or going to the distribution center of the news paper to check if flyers have been folded into the news papers at dawn; the columbarium salesman slitting his wrist with knife in a vacant apartment; and the street-vendor always collecting his things in a hurry when the policeman approaches to this area where trading is forbidden. The everydayness of each of these scenes reveals that three protagonists must work hard to satisfy their basic biological needs in this post-capitalist society. In this city of Taipei, people are primarily consumers, and it also drives them inevitably to engage in flourishing economic activity and also work as an ordinary member in this consumerist system to provide resources for consumption.

Therefore, these three protagonists' lives are replete with commercialized behaviors, even committing misdemeanors, such as this real-estate broker illegally crossing the road and hanging an advertising sign on the tree, the columbarium salesman stealing the inserted key from the keyhole of the empty apartment, and street vender conducting his business on the sidewalk, where such trading is forbidden. All of their daily interactions with the consumerist mass and society really manifest to us that commoditization is prevailing over this city. This kind of postmodern condition is also:

The culture –ideology of consumerism proclaims, literally, that the meaning of life is to be found in the things that we possess. To consume, therefore, is to be fully alive, and to remain fully alive we must continuously consume. The notions of men and women as economic or political beings are discarded by global capitalism.<sup>159</sup>

With respect to the structure in all of these episodes of microscopic narrative, the coincidental and performative everydayness of the three protagonists' in *Vive L'amour* also lack the linear continuity

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<sup>159</sup>.Sklair, Leslie. Social Movements and Global Capitalism. In Jameson, Fredric and Miyoshi, Masao (eds). *The Culture of Globalization*. Duke University Press, 1998, p297.

developed in the teleological language. They are neither hooked into a chain of cause and effect nor described with a predictable consequence. They are just connected in a string of fragments, grafting the scattered life- scissions bouncing here and there in the disconnected spatio-temporal development.

In other words, the whole cinematic structure in the film is randomly and independently constituted in a disruptive consequence with separate knots. All of each part is the unprecedented new trigger generating the infinite differences, which will never unveil a determinate starting or an ending to fulfill a certain aim as its developmental progress but only produces action linking action with no vanishing point. Therefore, after the real-estate broker leaves the distribution center of the newspaper, she abruptly appears in front of a food stand and simultaneously and contingently also meets the street vendor there. Then, after they stay for a while waiting for their food to be grilled, without even talking to each other, in the following scene, they are having sex in an empty apartment that is for sale.

There is no either obviously consequential language to foretell their future engagement or intermediary description to build the bridge from a departure space to a arrival space, because Tsai just wants to let the three protagonists enjoy their freedoms. They like free signifiers escaping from the linear narrative system and haphazardly hooking each other on the boundless play ground to produce unpredictable immediacy and momentary present. In other words, their provisional interaction is irrelevant to the past and the future and only creates the prompt astonishment.

A moment, like a word, only comes into being as a structure of exclusion or an undivided presence. A moment can only be present when it is not yet in the past and no longer in the future <sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>. Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST Martin's Press, 1998. pp81-82.

Hence, these three protagonists, just playing as a fluid signifier, wander in Taipei city without showing any motivation and destination in their adventures and also behave in an utterly nihilistic manner. On the other hand, they never tell us where and when they come from as a past reference and where and when they are going as a future indication, but always produce a different present-becoming in an undivided presence. In other words, the film also creates a destabilized trace rambling over the disconnected public and private spheres in the city to produce the mutable momentary truths in the process of remapping Taipei.

#### **4.1.4 Schizophrenic language written in the euphoric displacement**

In modern times, many things according to the variable hierarchical stratifications carry the different signs in the public and private fields. Institutionally and naturally they transmit a taken-for-granted meaning based on the taxonomical category as the principle of certifying their differences and identities, in order to pin down the nomination most appropriate to them.

Nevertheless, this modern paradigm only regards their materiality as an immutable product without considering their different existences should be put into the process of meaning -production to let them go outside themselves to make themselves different. Hence, no fixed and determinate truth is given to them, but it all depends on how the individual paradigm transmutes the ontology and essence of things as an unleashed signifier without an indigenous stance, but with the infinite difference by opening up the field for any heterogeneous free signs constituting each other as an unparalleled syntagmatic system.

Hence, Tsai subverts words as a sign to provide reference with a hierarchical entrenchment used to foreground this impassable homogeneous syntax boundary solidified by organic linguistic structure. He employs writing the image as an autonomously performative signifier, an individual reference losing its signifying function, in order to produce the realist personal intimacy transgressing the modern paradigm in describing the intellectual life of the bourgeoisie. Therefore words used as signs have been invented as the unparalleled present life-praxis and transmuted as the unrepeatable individual use-value, which is as Baudrillard describes:

The sign object only refers to the absence of relation itself and to isolated individual subjects. The sign object is neither given nor exchanged: it is appropriated, withheld and manipulated by individual subjects as a sign, that is, as coded difference. Here lies the object of consumption. And it is always of and from a reified, abolished social relationship that is “signified” in a code.<sup>161</sup>

Therefore, in *Vive La'mour*, the objects have also been put into play by Tsai as a free signifier without taking a sensible passage approaching the signified to constitute a significant meaning. This is like a madman's disorder in the signifying chain, losing the ability to extend a referential meaning to represent the reasonable equivalence and similitude of things. In other words, he is unaware of making the difference among the objects and sees nothing but resemblances. This madman's syntagmatic system has also been incarnated as the personal indiscernible imagination without having a logical association with the object due to his lacking any normal sense in distinguishing the proper analogous meaning extended from the objects. This has also been delineated by Foucault as follows:

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<sup>161</sup>. Baudrillard, Jean. *For A Critique Of The Political Economy Of The Sign*. Telos Press, 1981, p 65.

The madman, understood not as one who is sick but as an established and maintained deviant, as an indispensable cultural function, has become, in Western experience.....he was gradually institutionalized right up to the advent of nineteenth-century psychiatry, is the man who is alienated in analogy. He is the disordered play of the Same and the Other.<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, to summarise the above, the nomination between words and objects can investigate a plot that male protagonist, a columbarium salesman, a solitary, reticent and marginal person. One day, carrying a watermelon, he enters a vacant for-sale apartment. He firstly kisses and licks the watermelon tenderly, and then he uses a knife to pick out four holes on it. Eventually, he rolls it as a bowling ball, smashing against the wall and causing the watermelon to split into several pieces. Later, he picks up one slice of it to eat and uses the leftovers to rub his face as if using moisturizing lotion.

In other words, like the madman's language uttered by this columbarium salesman, these successive performative images have transgressed the jurisdiction of taxonomical category and voice writing, without being embedded in the utilitarian and functional domains in regarding this watermelon as a product with an ontological meaning, an object which can merely quench the thirst. It is also to say, the watermelon has become a nomadic signifier created with an alienated resemblance in correspondence with its matrix. This fruit has been transformed as an object of sexual fantasy; an exciting exercise, bowling, and an impossible product, skin-care lotion, bearing the ridiculous similitude and absurd association drawn out from this watermelon itself.

As such, the salesman's denaturalized utilization of the watermelon is also a process of producing the fantastic simulacrum from postmodern residual and euphoria, which has also become a schizophrenic language:

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<sup>162</sup> .Foucault, Michel. *The Order Of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences*. Routledge, 1991, p 49.

Lacan describes schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning”<sup>163</sup>.

In other words, Tsai never takes watermelon as the name of a fruit into either a taxonomical categorization or hermeneutical extension in the organic linguistic structure but immaterially and madly erases and perplexes all the referential meanings relevant to its past archive, where prototypical model and conceptualized image serve to be prolonged as the equivalent discourse, a modern metalanguage. Instead, he creates a profound supplementarity outside the linear organic structure and lets this signifier of watermelon enjoy its linguistic slippage with different existences through the incessant process of meaning- production, which also creates the inventive reality instead of an objective reality in the modern linguistic system.

Hence, in another scene of *Vive La'mour*, Tsai continues to portray the columbarium salesman facing the mirror and wearing a woman's suit left in the vacant apartment. Superficially, he looks like a pervert, because he not only puts on the woman's clothing but also gesticulates in a provocative pose and soliciting manner, while facing the mirror. In other words, it confuses the identity of gender in this scene and the female clothing worn by a man with a flirtatious appearance expressing not merely the performativity of self-amusement but also reflecting his inner desire in that he is so eager for a girl who will enchant him by offering this sexual flirtation to him.

The female suit is not only a thing itself but a means to please columbarium salesman, himself. Moreover, it is also a new present-becoming, an immediate and performative mirage orchestrated by his spontaneously self-producing the sexual fantasy without depending on any intermediary transmutation from his imaginary and libidinal object. Instead he is, directly performing a realistic and marvellous solo

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<sup>163</sup> .Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodern, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p 26.

live show, a fantastic simulacrum of the self-presence of the present, which is also against the mental process in constituting the unconscious.

Its “contents” (representations of libidinal energy) are only known to us by the distorted, transformed and censored effects which are evident of its work-dreams, neurosis (the result of an internal conflict between a defensive ego and unconscious desire).<sup>164</sup>

The salesman just spontaneously wears the female suit to displace an imaginary girl’s position and substitutes her enacting the sexual seduction to satisfy his own lack with a euphoric mood rather than making the representations of libidinal energy from any distorted and repressed dream and neurosis. On the other hand, the female suit also produces a rich plural and paradoxical text overstepping the thematic sense of gender identity, ego subject and libidinal object situating in the binary opposition in the psychoanalysis paradigm. It is also to say that the salesman’s schizophrenic experience is a process of self-production and he also becomes such:

He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing- machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever.<sup>165</sup>

Hence, the salesman interplaying with the objects just subverts its institutional nature and also creates the unexplainable meaning with the temporary truth. On the other hand, this is also a hallucinatory plural text; a man wears a woman suit, a coupling the combinatory heterogeneity, a hybrid of free play creating

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<sup>164</sup>.Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Sandy and Flitterman-Lewis. *New Vocabularies In Film Semiotics: Structuralism, post-structuralism and beyond*. Published by Routledge.1992.p 126.

<sup>165</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia*. Viking Press, 1977, p 2.

a paradoxical theme and the unrepresentable novelty from the self-multiplicity lacking a determinate meaning as such. Therefore Jameson has also said:

If interpretation is understood, in the thematic way, as the disengagement of a fundamental theme or meaning, then it seems clear that the postmodernist text -...is from the perspective defined as a structure or sign flow which resists meaning, whose fundamental inner logic is the exclusion of the emergence of theme as such in that sense.<sup>166</sup>

In another scene, Tsai also shows this male protagonist selling the columbarium, having to seek the customers to extend his business makes him feel alienated from this apathetic society. But he still exerts his imagination by unleashing words as free signifiers, and defers their meaning into a limitless process of inventing successive illusionary momentums with schizophrenic language creating his intimate life. This salesman tries to self-amuse himself by using a performative and pleasant mood to release his anguish. Jameson has given a vivid description for this euphoria:

The positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity.....What I have been calling schizophrenic disjunction or e'criture, when it becomes generalized as a cultural style, ceases to entertain a necessary relationship to the morbid content we associate with terms like schizophrenia and becomes available for more joyous intensities, for precisely the euphoria which we saw displacing the older affects of anxiety and alienation.<sup>167</sup>

Therefore as watermelon and the female costume, are all enunciated by the schizophrenic language to invent the simulacrum rather than representing a granted and objective truth based on the resembled prolongation, analogical and taxonomical category. In other words, although the salesman's mind is

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<sup>166</sup> .Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodern, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p 91.

<sup>167</sup> . Ibid., pp28-29.

replete with the anguish, he still behaves like a typical character in the postmodernist narrative, without releasing his anxiety by means of crying or shouting in an extremely cathartic way. Instead he completely deploys his spontaneity in interacting with objects with a euphoric mood to produce an indescribable and schizophrenic language, which is the abundant self-production in putting the words into play.

#### **4.1.5 Signifier and signified coupled together as a gram**

Postmodern writing advocates the plural text constituted by the different contextualizing fabrics co-existing in an open totality with profound contradiction and reciprocity. In fact, text itself has already been a unity structured with heterogeneous components and signifier and signified, which will also never be in a one- to- one relationship in the sign-function but produce meaning through self-multiplicity

The sign must be the unity of a heterogeneity, since the signified (sense or thing, noeme or reality) is not in itself a signifier, a trace: in any case is not constituted in its sense by its relationship with a possible trace”<sup>168</sup>

Reality is not only externally represented through interlinking a galaxy of natural and conceptualized single and pure signs together but it will be internally produced as a paradoxical totality through each of the plural signs reciprocating each other. This already coupled sign is also called gram by Derrida, as a basic unit in his narrative theory of grammatology. In other words, it is a plural linguistic text with a combination of the different elements interweaving and transforming each other's features in this hybrid unit, so meaning will be produced by the gram's self-production. It is also a self-proliferation taking

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<sup>168</sup>.Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.1976, p18.

over the central position in the sign-function, without a one- to- one correspondence in order to create a novel experience and to invent a brand-new here and now.

Therefore, in *Vive La 'mour*, when the male protagonist, a street vendor and the female protagonist, a real-estate broker are kissing and caressing each other in for-sale apartment, the salesman is also hiding under the bed. Later, they are enjoying sexual intercourse on the bed and simultaneously this also incites him to masturbate under the bed. This is an interesting and absurd simulacrum, as the love-making on the bed and masturbation under the bed co-exist in the same space in which two heterogeneous narrative elements are juxtaposed together to exchange their features and to constitute this unimaginable plural text.

Hence, through deconstructing this text, we can discover that it has been a coupling of heterogeneous mixtures, and also denies the meaning generated from the correspondent relationship between a signifier and a signified. In other words, meaning has been produced through self-proliferation and transmitted from inside the text itself by virtue of placing two oppositional images side by side at the same moment and space to co-create this unexplainable present with this fantastic novelty.

#### **4.1.6 Writerly text- bisexual or homosexual ?**

Eventually, in the same scene as the above, after the real- estate broker leaves, the street vendor is still sleeping on the bed. The salesman then quietly climbs onto the bed. Initially, he just affectionately looks at the street vendor and finally he tenderly kisses his lips. Meaning in this narrative sequence acts like a mutable signifier, which has been deferred and slipped into the process of producing the infinite

difference, because from the juxtaposition of heterosexual intercourse with self-masturbation to this implicit expression of homosexuality, giving a sweet kiss, the meaning conveyed from these successive images has been destabilized.

If the salesman were a homosexual, he would not masturbate while knowing heterosexual intercourse is taking place on the bed, but if he were a heterosexual, he would be unlikely to kiss this street vendor. Perhaps he is a bisexual. Hence, the truth is not a finished product there, waiting to be unveiled through single access in the inner logic of narrative structure toward a determinate answer. On the other hand, this can also be viewed as a writerly text, written by Tsai that never provides a long sequence of linear narrative towards the same goal was there as a presupposition in order to accumulate a chain of plausible evidences bound in a grounding of cause and effect as single entrance to certify it. According to Barthes:

Its model being a productive (and no longer a reprehensive)...the writerly text would consist only in disseminating it, in dispersing it within the field of infinite difference.<sup>169</sup>

Is the salesman homosexual or bisexual? After masturbating, he climbs on the bed and tenderly and affectionately kisses the street vendor. Actually, this is also an enigma that the writerly text wants to ask. In other words, Tsai has never reckoned himself as a god, providing a theological and monolithic text with only one obvious answer in order to prove and situate the author's sacred position. Tsai invites us to be a co-producer to participate in creating the meaning in his writerly text through envisaging continuous unparalleled and discrete presents lacking the glue of inner logic. Hence, sexual orientation for Tsai is not a fixed paradigm to be contested by providing the evidence, but it is a fluid signifier floating in a process of producing the infinite difference.

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<sup>169</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher, 1992, p 5.

#### 4.1.7 New trigger activated in a process of destabilizing the meaning in time

In the last scene in *Vive La'mour*, after enjoying the sex with street vendor, the female protagonist, the real-estate broker, just aimlessly walks around in an incomplete park. This scene lasts for approximately seven minutes without any dialogue, and during her strolling around, after the first two minutes; she starts to cry and accelerates her steps. Eventually she walks to a bench and sits on it.

On the bench, she never stops her crying, suddenly starts to weep more intensely and seems entirely to release her anguish. Then, after weeping heavily for a few minutes, she gradually lessens her crying and her mood becomes seemingly pacified. After that she takes several slow and slight groans before abruptly bursting into tears again. Nevertheless, this resumed crying lasts less than two seconds and the whole film just ends suddenly with this new beginning.

This is a postmodernist writing process. In the writerly text, the meaning cannot function as a complete product already being made there in order to make the whole narrative process just complement the logically consequential messages approaching a determinate goal already presupposed step by step. On the contrary, this aimless direction developed in the narrative structure is composed of the ceaselessly mutable presents in the writerly text. It allows all the contingencies and variables to take part in the process of inventing the momentary truth, which will also generate different new triggers in the temporal development with no conventional ending as a full stop with an eventual decipherment but makes story keep going, going, and going without a ultimate destination.

#### 4.1.8 A film in writing

We can count how many dialogues there are in *Vive La'mour*, therefore film is not all told by voice, an imprint of direct recognition and concept from the general experience, but it is written by the visual description. However, it not only expresses that urbanization, commercialization and globalization have brought an affluent life to this capital city of Taiwan, but it also portrays a dysfunctional communication in language between Taipei inhabitants.

Hence, in *Vive La'mour*, most of the messages transmitted by the protagonists are delivered through gesticulations and incessant movements taking place on the street; in a for-sale apartment, in the individual residential areas and a park. Without speaking any lines, they never transparently let spoken words release the convincing messages foretelling the predictable consequence as a goal having been waiting there as a presupposition. In other words, Tsai constructs the story with the immediate imagery and with no speech in order to embody the continuous novel presents produced only by non-preceding experience and concept by excluding voice from being involved in representing meaning.

We can also investigate Tsai's cinematic writing text inscribed by image-act using Artaud's stage theory, because the theater of cruelty also expresses text in its action structure and inhibits the production of a theological space; otherwise, the stage would become theological as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech. On the other hand, following the tradition in drama, an author-creator who must be a person arranges the language of speech, and the director will become his or her slave.

Hence, this speech text written by the author-creator just keeps watch over, assembles and regulates the meaning of representation and dictates the director enslave interpreters who are merely allowed to follow the speech text in the play to present the characters primarily through what they say rather than what they are gesticulating, acting and moving now and here with their spontaneities. Therefore, according to Artaud:

This man is merely an artisan, an adapter, a kind of translator eternally devoted to making a dramatic work pass from one language into another. The director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author only so long as there is a tacit agreement that the language of words is superior to others and that the theater admits none other than this one language.<sup>170</sup>

In other words, film scripts cannot act as a pure representation of spoken language as a full text, merely depending on the more obvious and precise expression of speech to transmit the comprehensible message uttered from characters' mouths, and also neglecting the writers' liabilities not only to act as a carrier of words but a producer of vision.

On the other hand, characters can also send out the writing messages through their spontaneous gesticulations and improvising movements, which are organically enveloped with their wandering in the disconnected spaces to create mental and physical rhythms with imaginative language. In other words, as

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<sup>170</sup>.Artaud, Atoconi, *The Theater And Its Double*, Citted in Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 297.

a director and a character, they will no longer be a prompter of dialogue and a speaker but both of them should obtain the autonomy to design the image and to improvise in acting. As long as cinematic text is mostly written in visual description as *Vive La'mour*, the spoken language just will also lose its position of logos.

Hence, if a screenplay does not involve speech, the plot can be developed mainly depending on characters creating their dynamic and spontaneous movements physically and mentally as their improvising actions, without repeating anything. As the protagonists meet an array of new presents, only their immediate self-reflexivity, without being constrained by speech to act as the passive representation of past trace and memory, can produce the real and irreversible momentary becoming.

Thus, Tsai's image-act does not want to be a mere instrument and organ of representing the present, following the phonic concept uttered as speech. On the other hand, this visual language also insists that there is no presupposition which is prior to the protagonists' movements. Their mental and physical improvisations are driven in the moment, while they are meeting each other and facing themselves engulfed in urban milieus, This will also produce the unmatched incessant presence of the present progressing in a string of disconnected and disruptive space and time.

In other words, all of these performative movements do not represent a text already written with speech as a prior knowledge but inscribe an image-story with protagonists' individual unpredictable experiences extemporaneously , while they are aimlessly rambling and adventuring in Taipei city. Derrida has also used the theater of cruelty, wordless performance based on action play, as a brilliant exemplification in order to express the unprecedented present:

The stage, certainly, will no longer present, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, though, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute. The stage will no longer operate as the repetition of present, will no longer re-present a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it.<sup>171</sup>

Hence, concerning cinema and stage, writing must have its autonomy completely emancipated from the words without being subjected to speech merely to be its representation ordered by the author-creator's voice. In other words, visual elements should be returned to their creative and founding freedom. In addition, directors, actors and even spectators cease to be the mechanical instruments and organs of representation to fulfill the idea and will of speech under the tyranny of the text. Artaud also insists upon the productive image and that if it is still ignored on stage there will be no theater to let spectators see the play but only hear it.

On the other hand, not only are there few sentences of dialogue in *Vive La'mour*, but also no music, an already-made sonic product already there, is allowed in the film. The musical score has been replaced with the uncontrollable environmental sound, the realistic present symphony performed by all the surrounding elements randomly improvising the immediate life music, without repeating a music history that has been composed before. In other words, all the narrative components for Tsai are there to produce the irreversible and unparalleled present and, like Artaud, he allows the audience to see the film rather than hear it.

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<sup>171</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 299.

## 4.2 *The River*: 1997

### 4.2.1 An approach to the schizophrenic syntagmatic system

All the narrative structure in *The River* (1997) is constituted by schizophrenic writing with no differentiation of past and future in the temporal development as a biographical identity. It is a disruptive combination constellated by the different progressing scissions blurring their initiations and also connecting each other with a huge temporal gap to create the permanently divergent movement without a terminal destination. In other words, this is a ceaselessly advancing process, which only interweaves the quoted narratives acting as the fragmentary occurrences and sundry presents progressing everywhere together to produce a series of new triggers.

*The River* is narrated with the present discourse. The entire story is constituted by characters' self-praxis, the I, the first- person- pronoun, to produce the deviant presents in their own action and practice without relying on the omniscient third person's viewpoints to provide a history with prior knowledge that connects past and present together in a temporal order to foretell the future. Derrida has described this *I* as follows:

He who says I in the present tense, in the so-called positive event constituted by his discourse, would be capable of only an illusion of mastery. At the very moment he thinks he is directing the operations, his place- the opening toward the present assumed by whoever believes himself capable of saying I, I think, I am, I see, I feel, I say (you, for example, here and now) - is constantly and in spite of him being decided by a throw of dice whose law will subsequently be developed inexorably by chance.<sup>172</sup>

With regard to the schizophrenic language employed by Tsai, structuring *The River* is very obvious in connecting the discrete contingencies together with no sense of differentiation about time and space developed in the consequential language. Hence, in the first scene, there is a perfect combination constituted by the bracketed language through a male protagonist (the son) unexpectedly meeting his female classmate in the outdoor escalator of Shin-Kang department store, a space that has never been introduced to the viewer.

In other words, this plot, at the beginning, has existed in a progressing state; erasing its inaugural act as the active quotation carried by a moving escalator. After the woman asks him whether he has spare time, this scene just ends without identifying the following destination. It directly switches to the next sequence, where the son is riding the motorcycle on the express way with his classmate as passenger, without telling us where they are going as an indication of the future. Hence this narrative movement is also activated in the progressing state, replete with kinetic energy without concerning the knot intercepting the temporal development.

The constitution of the two scenes becomes the advancing present strung by two incisions torn out from its beginning and always showcases a progressing cut-off seamlessly linking another similar cut-off in a

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<sup>172</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 298.

state of action linking action in time and space. Therefore, it carries on making the new becoming by means of leaping over the knots in demarcating the boundary to differentiate the consequential order developed in time and space, and also abruptly connecting the third scene. This is a polluted river, still an unknown place here, a film at shooting here, and an incision without starting from its commencement is just still progressing here. In other words, schizophrenic writing is composed between incisions that will confuse the biographical identity, because it perplexes the chronological sequence in the syntagmatic chain without clearly indicating the connection between past, during and future. Derrida has also given a detailed explanation about incision:

So make some incision, some violent arbitrary cut, after you recall that Number actually prescribes such scissions, and recommends “beginning” with one. It is of course a beginning that is forever fictional, and the scissions, far from being an inaugural act, is dictated by the absence-unless there exists some illusion to discount- of any de-cisive beginning, any pure event that would not divide and repeat and already refer back to some other” beginning”, some other “event”, the singularity of the event being more mythical than ever in the order of discourse.<sup>173</sup>

Hence, most scenes in *The River* connect with each other by means of schizophrenic writing, which is nothing more than a composition of the different presents together without repeating the outset. In other words, each of them is a quotation, cut-off, which has been torn down from its beginning lacking a clear trace from its indigenous start but working as the energetic scission only producing the provisional present, here and now.

#### **4.2.2 Postmodern simulacrum and the expression of inward feeling**

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<sup>173</sup>. Ibid., p 300.

“The emotions of modernism-anxiety, alienation, self-destruction, radical isolation, anomie, private revolt, madness, hysteria, and neurosis –which Jameson (1984b: 63) claims are dead, are still present”,<sup>174</sup>

As a result, in *The River*; we see domestic alienation, one of the images of postmodern society, among family members.

Hence, the postmodern life stance materialized by Tsai’s portrayal of the family appears ultimately dysfunctional and treacherous. In this film, a father, a mother and a son represent a typical nuclear family in Taipei, but none of them communicate well with each other without trying to play their traditional roles in domestic life. Therefore, Tsai also manifests this disintegrated family relationship to suggest the collapse of traditional family values in Taiwan based on Confucian thought in this postmodern era.

Even though they are so isolated from each other and suffer from an inability to communicate, they still choose alternative euphoric ways to please themselves through seeking the outlets to release their mental and physical desire and solace. So, in *The River*, Tsai just depicts these three protagonists, an apathetic couple and their son represent this postmodern family as quoted figures in this incised text without providing any detailed history and cause to introduce their background or explain their lack of communication.

All the events progress in the here and now without hindering all the advancing paths by returning to history. On the other hand, Tsai depicts them as different seeds, which have been disseminated around

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<sup>174</sup> .Denzin, Norman K. *Image of Postmodern Society: Social Theory And Contemporary Cinema* . Sage. 1991, p 54.

already, so it is useless to reiterate and repeat their inaugurations and past memories. Instead he just continues writing how they coincidentally produce their new becoming-present in sundry spaces, different patches of fertile lands with the novel astonishment. Derrida has described this becoming-present:

Our language always takes up this movement in the form of a becoming-present: to become present, a present in the process of becoming, the becoming of present, a reprise of the movement of writing in the tense of “ living speech”: a self – proclaimed traceless present.<sup>175</sup>

Therefore, the father only stays at home to satisfy his basic physical and instinctive needs, eating and sleeping, without generating any interaction with his wife, but always going outside the home to seek his new becoming. Moreover, these incessant fantastic moments will also become the marvelous present seized by the father as his own story with his enunciation and participation.

MacDonalds for the father is not a restaurant offering a modernist fantastic dream of uniform material prosperity and capitalist bliss in the heart of Taipei. Instead, it is a postmodern fertile land letting him become a free signifier, a seed disseminated here in order to blend with unforeseen others to produce the unimaginable present. Hence, the father just triggers off his desire by sitting quietly in a MacDonalds restaurant and letting his eyes rest on a young man lingering outside the window, the other floating signifier and seed. Sometimes, the father even walks outside to seduce a handsome man to fulfill his becoming of present. It is as if even though both of these two unknown signifiers and seeds are floating and disseminated in the same space, it does not mean they will co-create the fantastic momentum but this beautifully unexpected encounter will still generate the dynamic process of pursuing the new becoming-present and unparalleled experience.

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<sup>175</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p310.

On the other hand, father is not only haunting the new becoming of present in MacDonalds, but also in a gay sauna. There too, he acts as an active seed disseminated in this fertile land through his own spontaneous praxis of life to make the practice to create the new present- becoming. The sauna is always dark and built with several separate divisions of compartments. The father is usually behaving like a free signifier, with no prior meaning attached, because he comes here to search for the unpredictable experience to enjoy the fantastic momentum as the traceless present detached from his objective real life.

Moreover, it is not only the father who is acting as an exiled signifier and desiring to interweave another unknown signifier into the process of producing the becoming-present, but other homosexuals in other enclosed, gloomy rooms are also acting as anonymous seeds participating in this process of searching and producing the becoming. In other words, all anonymous men in gay saunas just want to interact with each other coincidentally, to experience ephemeral sexual gratification in order to create the postmodern simulacrum of momentary pleasure.

Therefore, although all the anonymous homosexual people in the gay saunas are unnamed, do not know each other and come from different social scales, they also try to produce their provisional relationships and queer identity according to their own rules and logics. They do not have to sign any social contract to situate themselves under a certain social rule. This same-sex-love has also encroached on the hegemonic value of modernity to enjoy the ephemeral sublime from this marginalized place hidden in Taipei.

On the other hand, the mother also has affair with a man who makes pirated the pornographic videotapes to find solace for her own emotions. Actually, this man does not care very much for her and always

ignores her existence by showing an indifferent attitude, with excuses such as; I have to deliver the goods to reject her advances. But she has never presented her desire and distress by any cathartically external expression, just through very inward acts.

For instance, in a scene in the mother's lover's house, although she offers him some delicious snack, he just lies down on the couch to enjoy a sleep without having any interaction with her. She then just chooses to silently watch the pornographic video duplicated for sale to calm her mood and release her mental anguish.

#### **4.2.3 A chaotic, non-moralistic and dystopian world**

In the eighteenth century, the project of modernity formulated by the philosophers of the Enlightenment purported to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art relying on their inner logic. On the other hand, Enlightenment philosophers attempted to accumulate and enhance these principles as a profound specialized culture to enrich and penetrate into everyday life. All of these fundamental modules of knowledge could also be assimilated into each corner of society becoming the value system of core thought in modern life.

In contrast, the sense of morality and ethic will never be the foundational and inherent virtues in postmodern society, because people seem to regress to become purely sensual animals and their severest anxieties also seem to result from the needs of their physical and mental desire and safety. Hence, in *The River*, the mother watches a pornographic video to console her spiritual and bodily void. The father also likes to seduce young good-looking men in MacDonalds and enjoys the intimate contact in the gay sauna

to bring solace to his mental and physical anguish. Even though human beings are supposedly the most intelligent animal in the world, in this commoditized society, physical relief with great pleasure has also become the most effective medicine to console instinctive needs, far from a more rational remedy.

Marx's alienation was from the commodity; Baudrillard is from the postmodern human condition and the communication procession. Sexuality, passion, and desire are dead, replaced by ecstasy and obscenity.<sup>176</sup>

Therefore, in this cool society saturated with seductive signs, the mother has to watch a pornographic video alone. It is only through communicating with this fictional world, a reproduced unreal imaginary replete with obscenity, that she is able to acquire the replacement to comfort her sense of alienation from familial warmth and love. The father also has to go to the gay sauna to enjoy an adventurous ecstasy to find temporary comfort for his sense of alienation from the same familial warmth and love. In other words, both of them have to find their own delusive channel and place in this obscene hyperreal world to compensate for their lack of love.

#### **4.2.4 Unsolved enigma with no final decipherment in revealing the truth**

With respect to postmodern narrative, the text created by words is the infinitely prolonging process of meaning- generation existing in the state of eternally kinetic mobility. Therefore it only produces a paradoxical and provisional simulacrum instead of a certain and unified meaning. All this syntagmatic structure is a framework of quantum-leap constituting the continuous short circuit of discrete presents. In other words, this disruptive sequence is a free form of narrative rooted in the protagonists' self-

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<sup>176</sup>. Denzin, Norman K. *Image of Postmodern Society: Social Theory And Contemporary Cinema* . Sage. 1991, p 32.

reflexivity to produce what they really feel, see and think as encountering a concatenation of the different presents.

In other words, it is impossible to constitute the whole narrative sequence revealing the contestable passage with the teleological connection merely by relying on the protagonists' limited and present knowing. *The River*, Tsai depicts the protagonists' successive sufferings only entirely by using the different present discourses. Therefore they also become incapable of discovering the exact and convincing cause of this malaise through tracing back to the remote inaugural point with the past tense. On the other hand, neither Tsai nor any of the protagonists is a god, hence they cannot explain the causality of a sequence of events clearly with the omniscient knowing but only can produce their incessantly experiencing in the different presents.

Hence, in the scene of the seriously polluted Tansui River, the son floats on the dirty water as a corpse for the filming. After the shooting, he is stricken with an agonizing pain in his neck and shoulders. Moreover, the following narrative sequence in *The River* is just a series of events as his mother and especially his father take him to see doctors and even visit temples to seek treatment and instruction, a kind of oracle to cure his pain. In this progress of seeking a remedy, Tsai has not provided any obvious evidence for a tenable correlation between the polluted river and the son's annoying pain. Tsai does not transparently unfold a real and original cause to explain the pain or the proper treatment for it. This is a postmodern discourse, as Hutcheon writes:

Postmodern discourses both install and then contest our traditional guarantee of knowledge, by revealing their gaps or circularities. They suggest no privilege access to reality. The real exists (existed), but our understanding of it is always conditioned by discourse, by our different ways of talking about it.<sup>177</sup>

The empirical and rationalist knowledge written by the logical and scientific discourses cannot always be supported as the epistemological source to certify the definite realization and undo the dilemmas in our life. Therefore in the process of resorting to medical care, from Western to Chinese therapy, it eventually becomes futile for the parents to seek the effective treatment to relieve their son's pain. As such, it also problematizes why institutionalized and specialized knowledge has not recorded this malaise, seemingly bred from the polluted river water, from any medical text books or archives, and why there is no empirical discourse that can provide an effective interpretation to resolve this morbid perplexity.

Nevertheless, after all the rational, scientific, empirical and instrumental knowledge legitimized as the modernist core values are still unable to offer a remedy to cure the son's pain, seeking remedy is just lying in a labyrinth, and there is no method to explore its real origin. Thus, using postmodern discourse, Tsai is stressing the diverse process of searching for the cause of the son's infection. He never guarantees that this puzzle could be committed to the enclosed language system, because the truth is not a product but an incessant process of meaning- production driven to the open linguistic system with no end. The piece is written as a writerly text instead of a traditional readerly and classic text, as in Barthes' description below:

The classic narrative is basically subject to the logic-temporal order. Writing "the end" (a phrase which is precisely both temporal and logical) thus posits everything that has been written as having been a tension which "naturally" requires

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<sup>177</sup>. Hutcheon, Linda. *A poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988, p 157.

resolution, a consequence, an end....By participating in the need to set forth the end of every action. (conclusion, interruption, closure, dénouement), the readerly declares itself to be historical.<sup>178</sup>

There is no final resolution for the son's pain; the whole narrative process in the film just manifests that it is still an unsolved enigma. Hence, after failing in relying on the scientific medical devices, according to modernist values, to acquire a remedy for the son's pathological state, the father switches to find a remedy from religion, and takes his son to visit temples around Taiwan. In fact, this is a ridiculous postmodern social stance, because although modern civilization advocates that human beings should be emancipated from theology and gain their autonomy as liberal persons, when there is no remedy to cure the malaise by any rational and scientific methods, seeking religious guidance just becomes the most effective and efficient medicine to heal the son's fear, hopelessness and agony.

Although the father seeks spiritual instruction, it is still in vain; he is not endowed with a clear remedy to lessen his son's unbearable pain. Here, Tsai is also showing skepticism in questioning where the objective truth, institutional knowledge and theological redemption are in the process of discovering a remedy for the son's pain. It causes a powerless and hopeless father and son, eventually depending on the simulacrum, the hyperrealist vision and an indeterminate decipherment to gain an ultimate truth.

Hence, in one scene, the father and son are waiting for and listening to instruction from a spirit in the temple, which has just become an alternative simulacrum made by reproduction. Baudrillard's simulacrum is a continuous process of reproducing the different stages of original references through technology. Tsai's simulacrum is similar, but he posits the shaman as an intermediary, who is reincarnated as a spirit and reproduces his instruction to father and son through his invisible sorcery and communication with this spirit.

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<sup>178</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell . 1992, p 52.

Thus the originally transmitted reference coming from the spirit has been reproduced by the shaman before he gives it to them. On the other hand, this original source, the spirit's instruction, is an enigma that cannot be explored, so probably, there is no spirit reincarnated in the shaman's body and he just simulates the spirit's voice to deceive the wretched father and son. In other words, this simulation is also a reproduction, because its original model is an unseen matrix, a spirit, and truth here has also become a process of meaning- generation without revealing the origin but reproducing the prior reference.

#### **4.2.5 Incest is an ahistorical and non-ethical term transmitting the postmodern**

##### **sublime**

Meaning is neither the extent of the institutional and privileged knowledge, nor a prolongation of the referential resemblance from the epistemological recognition and thematic sense founded in the modern era. Hence, postmodern writing claims to invent the imaginative text by means of making the different repetition through deviating the originally conceptual content from its center in order to create different divergences from its indigenous belief like the different others. In other words, the world can be either finite or infinite, and completed and unlimited, as in Deleuze's term "eternal return" :

Eternal return is the unlimited of the finished itself, the univocal being which is said of difference. With eternal return, chaoterrancy is opposed to the coherence of a representation; it excludes both the coherence of a subject which represents itself and that of an object represented.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press. 1994. p57

In other words, this is a process of creating incessant bifurcations from the place of first birth of the self, even though where the self departs is distinct, where a series of different divergent paths on which the self has always been going will be confused. Hence each confusion is incarnated as a momentary mirage and it will transform the foundational theory as the productive performance without subsequently duplicating and representing but transgressing its original thematic sense.

Therefore, after the father and son find that they have to stay in a hotel one more day to await the spirit's final instruction, feeling impotent and helpless, they, both coincidentally go to the same gay sauna. They go there to abate their anxieties, without being depicted with any related message but just leaping over time and space and bringing the new moment, becoming-present to this sauna. In other words, the seeds are disseminated by Tsai, skipping over the coherent and continuous narrative structure into the discrete knots to this disconnected euphoric and hallucinatory place.

In the last scene in this gay sauna, the son acts like a self-exiled signifier, the pollen in an extremely gloomy room waiting for insemination with other anonymous seed to create the ephemeral pleasure, the postmodern sublime. Hence, after an unknown man eventually enters the room, as the other free signifier, he starts to caress and kiss the son. Both of them act like two hopeless and wounded animals trying to redeem themselves from despair by exchanging their bodily warmth, an instinctively primitive human impulse to pacify each others' anguish instead of enjoying the experience of the homosexual encounter.

In other words, it is the paradoxical and indescribable text just written in the moment without giving the long circuit of theoretical foundation as a consequence of deductive references inscribed in a sense of homosexuality in the modern paradigm. Nevertheless, after the fantastic simulacrum of having sex being

over, the man turns on the light and immediately slaps the son; because he is his father and their provisional mirage is incest, but this just creates the postmodern sublime described by Tsai.

On the other hand, incest is deemed immoral in the general cultural code based on the Oedipus complex, which has been recorded in the historical archive and literature and also dissected in the theory of psychoanalysis. In Freud's work, the possibility is always lurking, especially in the relationship between a mother and a son, hence the prohibition. This fixed incestuous desire has become the paradigmatic case of a repressed desire and must be forbidden and displaced.

Nevertheless, in the last scene in the gay sauna, this ephemeral physical pleasure has overstepped the logos of meaning of incest and also conveys its own rewritten present meaning. Thus this same-sex incest not only re-inscribes the conventional gender system, but also demolishes the kinship family norms of father and son, based on Confucian principles in Taiwan. In other words, Tsai tries to reinvent the granted belief and knowledge towards this word, incest, imbedded in its historical traces, because any discourse is only a text serving to be rewritten based on the self-referential present; the unparalleled individual praxis of life rather than extending its hermeneutical and epistemological paternal tenet. As Derrida wrote:

Sovereignty transgresses the entirety of the history of meaning.... and the project of knowledge...and from the closure of absolute knowledge, having first taken them serious and having them betrayed them by exceeding them, or by simulating them in play....I rather absolve myself of absolute knowledge, putting it back in its place as such, situating it and inscribing it within a space which is no longer dominates.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press 1978, p 341.

Therefore, this incest scene created by Tsai is an ahistorical text, having transgressed its institutionalized paradigm, and does not resemble the prolongation of psychoanalytic theory written with the modern metalanguage. This is to say that Oedipus is always open in a boundless social field, the family-society relationship.

If it is a whole, this is true to the extent that the whole, of the world as of the living being, is always in the process of becoming, developing, coming into being or advancing, and inscribing itself within a temporal dimension that is irreducible and nonclosed.<sup>181</sup>

Hence, this thematic sense of Oedipus has been put in the process of producing the new becoming in the gay sauna and manifests the sexual intercourse between a son and a father as not obscene at all. Rather it, invents the temporary hyperrealist self-salvation as well, as it also takes the god's place to redeem them from their agonizing dilemma through the postmodern sublime, the provisional euphoria.

After coming back to the hotel from the gay sauna, the father tells his son that the spirit in the temple has given them the final instruction to go back to Taipei. He strongly suggests that they continue to go to see the doctor. In other words, the incestuous passion and simulacrum have been blocked and replaced by another different present-becoming. Hence, after listening to this bad news, son just goes outside onto the balcony of the hotel room and there is a gleam of bright shining light casting on his powerless face.

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<sup>181</sup> .Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia* . Viking Press, 1977, p 96.

This is the postmodernist style of the last scene to mean that the entire story just returns to a new starting point, with no concept of classic narratology, giving the end as a terminal resolution conforming to the logic-temporal order. Contrastingly, for Tsai, this order is the perpetual continuity of producing the presents and the new commencement which has also been disseminated as a seed, a fresh trigger. The film is still progressing without either giving a final decipherment to resolve this enigma of son's agonizing pain or an ultimate remedy to resolve their dilemma.

### **4.3 *The Hole*: 1998**

#### **4.3.1 No official statement, but multiple ex-centric enunciations**

At the beginning of *The Hole* (1998) Tsai presents a postmodernist provisional hypothesis embodied as a destructive predictable fable based on playful and self-referential parody. It make a carnival out of a catastrophe, where the whole of Taipei city has become a severe epidemic area, so the government has decided not to collect the rubbish and all of residents are to be evacuated. This is declared through an official statement and transmitted from an uncertain medium, TV or radio. This governmental policy is an announcement coupled with a black screen, without showing any image and it immediately drives a chain of various residents' funny and ironic reactive interviews concerning this fatal issue which are also combined with this black screen.

The official statement seems to stand for unchallengeable authority and to impose the already-made conclusion, a legitimized consensus, on residents. Nevertheless, Tsai carnivalizes this scene by

presenting a variety of residents' different ridiculous enunciations reacting to this governmental policy.

This accord with McHale's statement about postmodernist carnival:

Where the traditional genres of official literature are stylistically homogeneous, carnivalized literature is heterogeneous and flagrantly indecorous; interweaving disparate styles and registers.... carnivalized literature interrupts the text's ontological horizon with a multiplicity of inserted genres.<sup>182</sup>

Therefore, in this first scene, only hearing various men and women's diverse and dramatically complaining utterances with multivalent viewpoints offends against the previous official, patriarchic announcement. It is also trying to subvert the monologic (masculine) authority with the form of postmodernist carnival to demonstrate the polyphony of voices in Taipei.

At the same time, the residents' enunciations are transmitted without any images; therefore, it seems to depend on the audience activating their imagination to picture from where these original sources of utterances emanated? How do these carnivalized enunciations connect together? Which medium records and plays each of- these present voices randomly? Because only a black screen can be seen, all these ironic criticisms against the government seem to be taking place in scattered places. However, they are advanced simultaneously and also actualize the perception of all these unsatisfactory remarks described only by the present discourse leaping over the spatio-temporal gap.

In other words, the governmental administrative device of extinguishing epidemic is formulated from the elite- consensus, a man-made history and a legitimate law compelling the local inhabitants to obey, in order to be written in this monumental social archive as the general recognition and authoritative

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<sup>182</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 172.

discourse. Nevertheless, the linking of the present enunciations, all the individual voices, rejects such a passively historical position and seemingly they rewrite this official statement as their own story with a sense of the self-presence of the present.

In addition, in *The Hole*, Tsai also directly and continuously presents the enunciators uttering their claims without wanting their present refusals to be recorded in this epidemic history. Therefore, in the following scenes, there is just a male and a female protagonists guide two major storylines in the film. They just spontaneously exert their self-reflexivity to write their own disastrous journal isolated from the calling of the social archive. In other words, *The Hole* is a new postmodernist social archival fiction, which does not represent the normative social condition rooted in the centralized official discourse as the modern text. Instead, this postmodern text is inscribed as the performative and unparalleled individual intimate record, coexisting with the external official grand narration in the process of ceaselessly producing their infinite presents.

#### **4.3.2 A personal unparalleled experience exploring intimacy in a world of disaster**

The externally imposed administrative law has been enacted and it has been announced by the government that fatal epidemic emergency is imminent, so it has to cut off the water supply to prevent transmission of the virus, and all residents are requested to evacuate their homes. However one male and female resident (protagonists) still insist on staying in their own apartments and ignoring the whole objective reality incarnated with official power. In other words, they repudiate this legitimate order , neither behaving with the general experience nor obediently representing the natural reaction conforming to the official security standards to become the typical case compiled in the official archives.

On the other hand, this allegory of contamination and quarantine also announces the waning of a modern canon of the city based on a rationalized construction and efficient administration in tackling the crisis in its public culture, because all of the transformative experiences of media technology functioning under these regularized environments cannot resist and deal with this fatal incident and haphazard disaster. In other words, when unexpected and unregulated crisis has become uncontrollable, destroying the system of modern civilization, it forces the media technology to disseminate the most recent information about unbearable and undesirable fear raging through all the public spaces, instead of a bright and harmonious self-image of social progress. Therefore, this apocalyptic story no longer suggests a utopian future perceived momentarily in the present Taipei in order to manifest the decline of modernism in this human debris.

However, even though the empty mail boxes on the first floor of the apartment building indicate all the residents have left already, these two protagonists, two neighbors in the same building, one in an upper-level apartment and the other below, choose silently to face the external grant narration and obstinately opt to continue living in their nasty and leaking apartments.

Tsai characterizes them as not trusting any outside safe asylum. They hide themselves at home to situate themselves in this temporary shelter and to produce their own novel and unimaginable reflexivity and performativity from their intimate lives under this threatening situation. Hence, these utterly present discourses composed by the protagonists' praxis of life offend against succumbing to the official authority in order to invent their fantastically different presents with the personal paradigm and self-reference. The external social survival rule instituted and propagated by the government is remote from the protagonists, because the worst agony for them is not the fear of death resulting from the epidemic, but resides in the anguish of alienation from the estranging relationships among the people in this apathetic metropolis.

Therefore, the leaking from the ceiling just strings together this internal localizing narrative, without externally connecting other external storylines which would seek sovereignty over all the marginalized discourse as a centering hegemony. The text of this localizing agony has been integrated in the random and plural structure written by the both two protagonists' self-multiplicity, in order to express their inner intimacies with the pure presence of the present, which also composes the most extreme events taking place only in this apartment in the film.

Hence, a scene where the female protagonist telephones someone to relieve her solitary anxiety is a quotation of plot, as we neither see her dialing the telephone number as the inaugural act nor the interlocutor's image and voice. This causes the whole scene to look like the simulacrum of monologue, created by this agonized woman conducting an eccentric dialogue with a man out of the scene on the telephone. On the other hand, she is not only expressing her depression and solitude but she is also having phone-sex with her seemingly imaginary lover. Meanwhile, her neighbor living in the apartment above is also stealthily listening to her provocative speech through a hole, the only communicative channel between them.

On the other hand, the woman's fantastic solo self-reflexivity, using the phone as a medium, just transmits the paradoxical text constituted by a signifier with no signified as a correspondence, because it is unknown if she is really talking to her lover or not. Is it an imaginary person? Does the woman create this unreal reality, which is more realistic than the real reality?

The postmodernist's text's self-conscious return to performative process and to the entirety of the enunciative act demands that the reader, the you, not be left out, even in dealing with the question of reference".<sup>183</sup>

Therefore, the transmitted reference from this single enclosed space is insufficient to explain if she really calls her lover or not. This localization of self-reflexivity has created the paradoxical continuum with her enunciating her agony, which has also been written in the writerly text. According to Barthes:

The writerly is the novelistic without the novel, poetry without the poem, the essay without the dissertation, writing without style, production without product, structuration without structure".<sup>184</sup>

Hence it stresses the process of meaning- production approaching the perpetual uncertainty and the anxious woman is also just calling without a receiver and talking without an interlocutor.

### **4.3.3 Words are an anonymous signifier and produce infinite difference**

In *The River*, water is only depicted as a possibly poisonous substance from the polluted Tansui River, causing the protagonist's neck pain. Water, in contrast, plays an important role in *The Hole*. Its meaning has been put into play, in a slippage of deference and also disseminated as a seed to enjoy the contingent insemination, which strays far from its definitional and hermeneutical meaning and carries the plural and continuously momentary truth waiting to be supplemented at any time to produce the infinite present-becoming. In other words, words should not only remain in an informational reservoir to constitute a

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<sup>183</sup>. Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988, p 156.

<sup>184</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*, Blackwell Press, 1992, p 5.

unified and a definite text to interpret and evidence a thing and thematic sense but should act as a producer with their own spontaneities to restructure and invent the plural and paradoxical text to rewrite and subvert any logo father's name. Therefore Derrida has said:

It is always necessary to begin again in order finally to arrive at beginning, and reinvent invention. Let us try, here in the margin of the exergue, to begin".<sup>185</sup>

With this sense of invention, at the beginning of the film, through the official declaration from an unknown medium matched with a black screen, water has been characterized as a deadly material contaminated by virus, so the government decrees that it will block the water supply of the entire city. In other words, this is a meaning of water under an interpretation of governmental consensus at this vital situation. Nevertheless, after switching to the localizing narration, water just becomes an essential material, disturbing or solacing and carries the plural, fluid and provisional meanings constituted by Tsai in the process of ceaselessly producing its destabilizing truth.

Although the government ceases to supply water, outside it has been raining and water leaks into the lonely woman's apartment, seemingly from a hole in the level above. Moreover, this has also started to become a tremendous agony and conundrum, causing her to suffer from a concatenation of annoyances associated with water. Hence it makes her wall –paper peel off the wall, buys a large quantity of toilet papers to absorb the water. She goes to the bathroom and holds up a container to catch the water dripping down from the ceiling. She sleeps wearing a clinical mask to prevent catching the virus transmitted from leaking water, and lies down on the piles of toilet papers during the phone-sex. All these nuisances are likely caused by water-leaking from the upstairs.

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<sup>185</sup> . In Attridge, Derek(ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature*. Routledge, 1992, p 334.

On the other hand, due there being to nowhere to buy food, bottled water becomes the essential material to boil the instant noodles which are the woman's main diet. When she feels panic, she also tries to drink bottled water to tranquilize her mind. The most amazing function for water is that this water-leaking fear catalyzes her to create the self-referential simulacrum as the carnivalized performativity to comfort her alienated agony and mental void.

Moreover, absurdly, although the male protagonist knows that the water-leak may result from the pipe buried under the hole in the floor of his living room, sometimes he also pours water into the hole and even digs the hole more widely to let the leaking become more deteriorative, rather than having it repaired, since he really desires to have some interaction with his only neighbor. As long as the hole is open and water is , he can acquire some temporary communication with the woman. Hence, this uncertain and rich process of a word (water) slipping alone in the variable textual structures to produce the different present- becoming is the same as the purport of seed-dissemination delineated by Derrida:

Structure (the differential) is a necessary condition for the semantic, but the semantic is not itself, in itself, structural. The seminal, on the contrary, disseminates itself without ever having been itself and without coming back to itself. Its very engagement in division, its involvement in its own multiplication, which is always carried out at a loss and unto death, is what constitutes it as such in its living proliferation... The game is no more finite than it is infinite. The number belonging to the concept finite number is an infinite number.<sup>186</sup>

In other words, the bottled water and the leaking water have become the carriers of solace for the lonely man enjoying momentary warmth. Therefore, Tsai deconstructs the meaning of water and disseminates them as seeds and through the process of their self-proliferation. He integrates water itself with other new narrative elements, These are, free signifiers to produce a series of provisional fantasies, which also

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<sup>186</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981,p 351.

exiles the meaning of water to the state of incessant production with no departure or an end but infinite self-proliferation.

Hence, it does not matter how many different narrative structures water engages in to produce the provisional truth as the different coupled textuality, such as rain water, water in the bathroom, water damaging the wall paper, the expiration of sweat, a pipe-leaking water, all of them never repeat water as a same itself. Thus

Difference allows us to pass from one order or repetition to another from one generality to another within the passive synthesis themselves.<sup>187</sup>

In other words, each of the disseminated seeds, water (organized as a different already-coupled textuality), through constituting different itself with other mutable linguistic components rambling around this enclosed desiring space engulfed by alienation as a variety of playful permutations, will create the fantastic and woeful simulacrum. Hence, it also just composes a fluid writing text to produce the ephemeral presents through erasing water itself, a fixed meaning in a single or plural body as such to interweave different itself with other different elements to produce the deviant repetition. As such, there is no certain method provided for water to know how to identify and conceptualize itself first, and then just know how to be composed with other elements, as in Derrida's statement below:

As soon as it comes into being and into language, play erases itself as such. Just as writing must erase itself as such before truth, etc. The point is that there is no as such where writing or play is concerned. Having no essence, introducing difference

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<sup>187</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994, p76.

as the condition for the presence of essence, opening up the possibility of the double, the copy, the imitation, the simulacrum- the game and the graphe are constantly disappearing as they go alone”.<sup>188</sup>

Hence, this series of the presence of the present triggered by water is also created by Tsai by means of soliciting the protagonists to fuse their intimate lives with its coupled textuality to produce the marvelous performativity, without representing its objective truth but only simulacrum.

#### **4.3.4 Transgressing the hierarchic boundary in inventing the unthinkable**

##### **bricolage**

This simulacrum written by water is also constantly produced by Tsai in bricolage. When water becomes the unbearable lightness in this hopeless and solitary woman’s life, she also utilizes this euphoric and joyful writing, a carnivalized hyperrealist choreographed opera, to let her temporarily escape from her secluded realist world.

Therefore, every time water becomes an irresistible agony gnawing at this helpless woman’s bodily and mental vigor, the scene of expressionist dance just acts like a fabulous graft unexpectedly connecting this realist scene and transforms the previous text as the simulacrum with her fantastic self-redemption. However, although this is a postmodern incongruent combination, one is a realist contextualization and the other is an opera genre, both heterogeneous and incommensurable texts just reciprocate each other’s needs and features in order to invent the momentary truth taking place in the new virgin space.

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<sup>188</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp156-157.

In other words, Tsai subverts the coherently and homogeneously inner logic rooted in their hegemonic centers and particularly characterizes this joyful style of opera drama as a mirage by designing a dramatic performativity of dance with lyrical song, disregarding the category of expressive form, genre and thematic. Therefore, even though this intertextual composition of abandoning the organic structure is so imbalanced and incommensurable in this contradictory but astonishing graft, it is only this unimaginable simulacrum knitted by extremely expressionist tempestuous dance coming from the disconnected spatio-temporality as the incised text that can rescue this isolated urban woman's mind and let her enjoy this momentary solace, the postmodern sublime. This hallucinatory collision of graft is described by Derrida:

The graft is not something that happens to the properness of the thing. There is no more anything than there is any original text....It is the sustained, discrete violence of an incision that is not apparent in the thickness of the text, a calculated insemination of the proliferating all gene through which the two texts are transformed, deform each other, contaminate each other's content, tend at times to reject each other, or pass elliptically one into the other and become regenerated in the repetition, along the edges of an overcast seam.<sup>189</sup>

On the other hand, in this choreographed opera, the lonely woman wears a very colorful dress and gracefully sings a *cha cha* dance song with a frisky gesture and a smiling face, which also expresses a rupture from former scenes in form and content. Tsai successively creates this play of constitution to demolish their hierarchical centers and subvert their uniqueness. He does this in order to reclaim a new territory by surprisingly hooking the preceding dramatized realist humdrum, dangerous and angry space with the succeeding opera-like hyperrealist lively, fantastic and happy space together. This is also the phantom and carnivalized embodiment of bricolage, as Derrida has described it:

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<sup>189</sup>. Ibid., p 355.

What appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a center, to a subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, or to an absolute archia.<sup>190</sup>

Therefore, there is no center acting as an uncontested foundation to guide and to organize the organic whole in the syntagmatic system. The center of the structure should unleash its components to play inside the total form without the duty of orienting and balancing the uniform structure. In other words, only the self-reference betraying any center will be able to link with each other to produce the imaginable itself.

#### **4.3.5 An ahistorical and depthless postmodern simulacrum producing the unprecedented present in space**

The spaces in which male protagonist performing her opera drama with the marvelous performativity with other dancers take place in the neon-lit hallways and lobbies of the bland apartment block and the traditional market. On the other hand, in the last scene in *The Hole*, the male and female protagonist also co-dance and sing an old Chinese song together in the male protagonist's living room, after he pulls her up from the hole ends their quarantine. In other words, all of these plots are created with unimaginable simulacra and are also completely disengaged from their prior realistic events without acting as a linear part in its consequential development. Moreover, these quoted choreographed episodes are also performed in these same spaces, the lobbies and the market with no logical connection with what used to happen there before.

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<sup>190</sup> .Ibid., p 361.

It is also to say that even though all the realistic plots have been expressed in the same scenes and narrated with the agonizing and isolating depression, all of these places eventually are also constituted with the fantastic mirage without inheriting the previous depictions and histories that used to happen there or a past to represent their resemblances from an inaugural act. On the other hand, they also subvert the meaning established in the former spaces by supplementing the new momentary phantom at the same spaces to invent the ahistorical continuum, the private and local temporality, to create their own fabulous present, here and now.

Therefore, although the male protagonist has cried helplessly and lay down near the hole for his sorrow, insecurity and void, one day, after lifting the female protagonist through this hole, he is promptly transformed to dance and sing euphorically and dreamily an old classical Chinese song with this solitary woman. This joyful simulacrum has been coupled in the same scene to invent the new present progressing seamlessly in the same space, without repeating its resemblance but activating its new becoming, disregarding the text's difference. This is in accordance with the meaning of simulacra enunciated by Jameson:

In the postmodern, then, the past itself has disappeared (along with the well known "sense of the past" or historicity and collective memory). Where its building still remain, renovation and restoration allow them to be transferred to the present in their entirety as those other, very different and postmodern things called simulacra. Everything is now organized and planned; nature has been triumphantly blotted out.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> . Jameson, Fredric , *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press ,1991, p 309.

Even though indigenously, the spaces of the lobby, the staircase of the apartment, the traditional market and the male protagonist's living room have been contextualized as areas in the grip of an epidemic, disastrous and anguishing places, Tsai just enchants with sorcery to transmute these epidemic-raging spaces into euphoric play-grounds incarnated with the hallucinatory images of a happy woman singing and dancing to an old Chinese song to invent the marvelous simulacrum as the momentarily new present to efface the past and also create the spatial present.

In *The Hole*, although the entire city is endangered by a fatal epidemic, Tsai never designs a great salvation that will rescue all the inhabitants of Taipei using the external structure of narrative step by step with the logic-temporal order in classic text to reach the denouement. In contrast, he sketches the internally localizing narration with infinite language to explore the protagonist's inner intimacy. In other words, although all scenes in *The Hole* are limited and enclosed, Tsai pluralizes the text by seamlessly reconstituting the differently textural references in the same spaces as the present discourse. This invents the phantom momentum. It not only redeems the protagonist's insecurity and void, but also puts the truth of spaces into the process of incessant transformation.

#### **4.4 *What Time Is It There?* : 2001**

##### **4.4.1 Different new beginnings with infinite presents**

In the first scene of *What Time Is It There?* (2001) a father sits in the dining room eating alone without anybody else at home. Then he suddenly puts down his chopsticks and bowl, and walks to living room, calling his son's name, with no answer. Therefore, all references in this scene are congested with everydayness and the residual in reflecting regular domestic life in Taiwan. In other words, there is no signification in the text to transmit the thoughtful content and foretell the following consequences.

In the next scene, a man holds his late father's memorial photograph in his car and says to it, "Dad, we are going through a tunnel". This is the astonishing chronological gap, an amazing quantum leap, which fails to provide a continuous development in explaining the father's death. In other words, the father's first appearance is at the beginning of the film, but his son holding his memorial photograph in the car also conveys a fantastic plural meaning, containing an abrupt end without structuring a sequential temporal order of saying good bye step by step,. Instead it immediately triggers the new beginning without showing how the plot has been progressing here and now, tearing down the hierarchical boundary between the beginning and end. This structure is as Barthes's description:

Now, the notion of structure does not support the separation of foundation and design, insignificant and significant; structure is not a design, a schema, a diagram: everything signifies something. For proof, we have only to examine the basic (and thus seemingly unimportant) proairetics, the usual paradigm of which is something like begin/end, continue/stop.<sup>192</sup>

Therefore, there are two beginnings in the film, but the first one only lasts momentarily with a ceaseless stop and next one just transforms it as the incessant present. In other words, the father's death has become the text provided to his son and his widow to rewrite it as their own story and to continue this present. As a result, it has become history, activating the son and the widow's self-reflexivity through their own performative reaction interplaying with this sudden strike as the present discourse. As in

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<sup>192</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *S/z*. Blackwell Press 1992, p 51.

Barthes's description above, there is no differentiation between continue and stop, because all the narrative structure has been transformed into a progression in an undivided presence. In other words, with the father's death, all the present- becoming is just produced by the son and the widow's spontaneous action confronting this upheaval. .

Hence, the son is troubled by his mother's constant praying for the return of her late husband's spirit. She even does not allow him to kill a cockroach creeping around the living room, because she thinks that it may be her husband's reincarnation. Also, she brings a shaman to chant for the father and prepares some wine for him in belief that if he touches this wine, his spirit has come back home. Therefore, the concatenation of the mother's ridiculous actions makes home like a haunted place , and also make her son not dare to go to the rest room, instead he urinates into an empty bottle in his bed- room and pours it down into the flower bed in the morning.

In other words, Tsai utilizes these postmodern present discourses with absurdity, a camp effect to constitute their intimate lives as a chain of ludicrous actions lacking sensibility but filled with performativity., Tsai never tries to trace back to represent the father's history as a narrative outset to bridge the gap of awareness by complementing the present with more information about the past him to structure a completely chorological sequence from the commencement. Rather he, seamlessly strings all of the disruptively incessant presents as the condensed structure leaping over the lacunas in time.

Narratology has to destroy two of its founding suppositions: the supposition of a pure, undivided origin and the supposition that the ensuing fall into difference was a process of linear consecution whose events could be excluded from the origin itself.<sup>193</sup>

In other words, although the father's death is a cause of sorrow, grief and fear to his family, there is no explanation of how the close relationship is between the father and his family in the past.

The synthesis of time constitutes the present in time. It is not that the present is a dimension of time: the present alone exists".<sup>194</sup>

Thus, Tsai tries to estrange the father's past trace and only constitutes the disconnected but successively pure presents made by the son and the widow's reflexivity in momentarily reflecting on this huge blow of the father's death fencing off the past presence. In addition, the future will also be substituted by the process of producing the incessant present- becoming with no vanishing point.

#### **4.4.2 Transforming the time in time with the inventive presence of the present**

In the scene of over- headed passage to Taipei train station; the son just sells watches here for a living. A few days after his father's death; he meets a young woman who leaves for Paris the very next day. She persuades him to sell her his own watch, which has two dials, so that she can keep Taipei time as well as

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<sup>193</sup>.Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, Martin's Press, 1998, p 83.

<sup>194</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles..*Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press. 1994. p 76

local time on her upcoming trip. Here, the watch seems not only a mark to name a thing that can tell the right time, but it has also become the incarnation of a realist world and an imaginary world co-existing together, which is as if a world cannot be eschewed but the other just stays a mirage, integrated by an incongruent juxtaposition.

In other words, although the beautiful modern dichotomy of physical and mental life always situates at two poles, Tsai tries to set the sign of the watch free to deconstruct the meaning of time, far from its meaning of materiality, and transforms it into a plural text. On the other hand, he also characterizes the son and the widow trying to convert and manipulate the realist world as their imaginary world in their own ways. They are eager to transmute and play the signs to constitute the world as the integration of subject and object and real and unreal world, with no internal division, by their performativity, and utter self-production instead of illusion.

Hence, after selling his watch to the young woman and simultaneously facing intolerable agony due to his mother's concatenation of mental disturbance over his father's spirit at home, this son just takes refuge in the memory of his brief encounter with the young woman, He starts to make great efforts to bridge the miles between them by running around and setting all the watches and clocks in Taipei to Paris time.

From the perspective of modern narratology , we would say that the signs of clocks and watches are similar in their general conceptualizations, because they are devices for showing the time and also possessing the signification as a valuable lifetime in its mental representation. Moreover, they also belong to the same category and index, so clocks are regarded by son as having a resemblance with watches. Nevertheless, Foucault has also said:

From the seventeenth century, one began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified. A question to which the Classical period was to reply by the analysis of representation; and to which modern thought was to reply by the analysis of meaning and signification<sup>195</sup>.

So, Tsai problematizes the reason why a sign has to be linked to what it signified, opening the possibility that a sign may be transformed with a new difference far from its original concept through a constant process of inventing itself with its different present- becoming in this film.

Therefore, clocks and watches for Tsai are not signs to give the correct time to an individual or a number of people to symbolize that time is a priceless material that should be cherished in life, but they are the access to the imaginary world. This means watches and clocks have lost their materiality as a representation of time with the same signification to remind us to pursue the value of life rooted in general sense, but they have been transformed as the displacement of the mental refuge of the son through his self-praxis of life.

In other words, there is neither a correspondent passage from a signifier to a signified and an interpretation to an interpretant in the postmodern linguistic system, nor a profound kinship of language to make a hermeneutical representation and interpretation. Only the words possess the plural signifier to constitute each other as the paradoxical text, the momentary performativity instead of a completed product waiting to be described or analyzed. The words and signs have to be separated from one another and words just will become a free and absolutely vacant signifier to make up the random and hallucinatory meaning.

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<sup>195</sup>.Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Science*. Routledge,1991, p43.

On the other hand, Tsai also designs a comic and camp approach to put the sign into play to transmute its meaning by the protagonists' interplaying their performativities with things to create the joyful emotion wrapped by the woeful aura. Hence, while suffering mental torture from his mother, the son gains unexplainable enchantment from the young woman managing to visit Paris. Paris time has been transformed as his refuge to gain solace as a displacement. In other words, time is not a sign telling and reminding us what have been scheduled in life needing to be fulfilled through transmitting a scientific and objective indication and a significant meaning from clocks and watches. In other words, the son chooses not to accept this natural and rational reality conveyed by a temporal index and tries to modify the present by adjusting all the watches and clocks in Taipei to Paris time.

Thus the son's realist subject and imaginary object combine together through his individual reflexivity, which manipulates the scientific temporal signs as his own fantastically present continuum to create the unparalleled experience of inventing the momentary meaning of time, and to produce his presence of the present instead of general experience. It is like the invention as in Derrida's statement:

All the semantic displacement of the word "invention", this latter remains coming (*venir*), the event of a novelty that must surprise, because at the moment when it comes about, there could be no statute, no status, ready and waiting to reduce it to the same".<sup>196</sup>

In other words, to invent the meaning of time, each time when he makes the great efforts to create his present, he seems to engage in a tentative adventure constituted by the unprecedented and unexpected contingency. Thus, the time enunciated by him is also a process of spontaneously transforming the

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<sup>196</sup>. In Attridge, Derek(ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature*. Routledge, 1992, p 338.

objective truth rather than duplicating it as an instrumental or a hermeneutical truth. That is to say that the random progress of his creating the individual present in Taipei is also the time produced by Tsai in *What Time Is It There ?*

Therefore, after the son manipulates the clock hung on the wall in Taipei to Paris time, to invent his present at home, it also causes his mother to misunderstand the time. She believes it has been changed by the dead father, and she now relies on it to reschedule all the family's life following the father's time. Although the indication conveyed by the clock is wrong, this sign has produced a fluid meaning in its difference. Initially, the modified present is invented by the son, and then it is just switched to the mother's present, as well as eventually becoming the fallacious temporal indication guiding their domestic lives.

Even when he goes to the cinema for some respite, the son still spontaneously takes the clock hung on the wall in the hallway, alters it to the Paris time, and holds it to his breast. He seems to catch and protest his own present, but latter, the member of the audience sitting next to him steals the clock and runs, hiding with it in the rest room. Eventually, the son finds this mischievous person stealing his real time there, but the man just covers his naked pubic region with the clock, which makes the son give up on taking his present back, and he runs away there. This fantastic provisional novelty producing and searching for the present is in accordance with Barthes:

The index has an origin, the sign does not: to shift from index to sign is to abolish the last (or first) limit, the origin, the basis, the prop, to enter into the limitless process of equivalences, representations that nothing will ever stop, orient, fix, sanction.

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So, although time is incarnated by clocks and watches, it is still a free sign, an intimate present and self-material for the son to invent and search for as the fantastic becoming. It can also be said that Tsai really puts time, this sign into play, because the clock time at home, its original locus, has been falsified by son through transplanting this Paris time to Taipei. Later, the widow also invents the father's time to substitute this misleading temporal indication. Eventually this displacement becomes the foundation of their life schedule and makes them live grieving but illusionary life, the simulacrum.

Moreover, this sign-displacement has also been continuously created by the widow spontaneously producing and seeking her own present from this ridiculous locus of sign, Paris time in Taipei. Therefore, she starts to live time in time, the unreal reality. On the other hand, it does not reveal a recollection about the past memory of her being with her late husband. Rather it, all depends on her self-reflexivity to constitute her pure present, such as preparing delicious food for him, using black cloth to block-out the light to make home dark for the father's spirit to come back and wearing her bridle costume while masturbating by rubbing her pubic part with a pillow.

Meanwhile, the son continuously also tries to change Taipei time to Paris time by changing clocks at home, at the cinema, in the subway station, on the outer facade of a department store and in a watch shop. Each episode of his self-reflexivity interacting with clocks is the new presence of the present without repeating the same. In other words, it is a perfect deferral in the meaning of time by his taking

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<sup>197</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Press, 1992, p 40.

these different actions to try to dominate and manipulate a variety of clocks ticking in scattered places in Taipei. Thus, Tsai really puts the sign into play and makes Taipei a huge play-ground.

Moreover, the son also rents a French film, *The 400 Blows*, attempting to use other means to contact the filmic pseudo-time transmitted from this fictional life-action as the displacement of Paris time. Here, the sign, time, without being indicated by any timer but directly showing the other sign-displacement coming into play, becomes a fantastic postmodern metalanguage creating the new present instead of representing the past presence

The film, *The 400 Blows* transforms real Paris time into film time in the text transmitted by the television screen, making the son so enraptured by this man-made reproduced time of Paris that he seems to hope that this cinematic Paris time can displace the real Taipei time, to bring solace to his agony. On the other hand, it is also a fantastic combination of Derrida's grammatology, couplers or couplings- a person or thing that couples or links together, because in this space, three different presents are coupled together as a gram by cinematic time wrapping Paris time and Taipei time, and also wrapping this coupled time from *The 400 Blows*. Thus a signifier and a signifier are linked together in the same space on the same side of the page instead of two sides of a paper in a correspondent position in the sign-function of structuralism. .

In fact, it is not only the sign-displacement of time being transformed into infinite difference in a coupled narrative structure but it is also a plural text in producing the infinite regression, because there are many independent compositional elements exchanging each others' traces with the ontological difference in this "recursively nested narrative:

The specter of infinite regress haunts beyond every recursive structure in which narrative worlds have been “stacked” beyond a certain depth of embedding”.<sup>198</sup>

Therefore, this multi-leveled text is sandwiched in this enclosed space as the trace of Paris time is wrapped in filming time of *The 400 Blows*. The time carried from this film is also wrapped in Taipei time and eventually all the temporal references have been provided as the text reproduced by the son as his presence of the present following the Paris time in Taipei. In other words, time is without origin and essence with a fixed meaning, and has only been produced as the different present-becoming through this recursively nested narrative.

Referring to other aspects from this scene, the son tries to console himself through watching a French film reproducing the Paris space and time; Actually *The 400 Blows* is a hyperreal realm, simulacrum. However, the son also desires to metamorphose it as his fantastic momentary refuge. In other words, this fabulous bilateral reinvention and communication announces the death of the real, but in the postmodern world the unreal reality seems to be realer than the real reality for its power of immediately transmitting incessant images. According to Baudrillard:

Media on the private scale, transmitter and receiver are simply reunited in a single individual: manipulation is, after a fashion, interiorized.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> . McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. University Press, Cambridge. 1987. p 114.

<sup>199</sup>. Baudrillard, Jean. *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Telos Press Ltd, 1981,

p 183.

Hence, in fact, there is no information to tell us if the son really knew the content of *The 400 Blows* before buying it but the cinematic text presented from his television screen, which is quite similar to the dilemma in his life. So, the need for him to buy this film enhances the internalized function of creating the reciprocal communication.

#### 4.4.3 The dissolve of voices from Taipei-Paris with the present discourse

There are three protagonists telling their daily unrepeatable experiences in *What Time Is It There?* : the widow, the son and the young woman. This means not only that the whole structure is decentralized into the three independent narrative lines, but that their entire everydayness has also become the marvelous incarnation of the present discourse, ceaselessly producing the new novelty and inexperienced present without inheriting the prior memory. This is in accordance with Derrida:

A (present) discourse is claiming to go outside the text, to interrupt the (written) tale, through the rectitude of frank speech and the explanation of an accomplice, as if the discourse presently being held owed nothing to anyone in its immediate, frontal discourse, proffering itself of its own accord in all consciousness and without prior history.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> . Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press. 1981, pp 327-328.

Therefore, all of the three protagonists' present discourse in the structural system just significantly parallelize each other, but still remain in a fully autonomous state. In particular, the son and the young woman's storylines are developed in two different cities under a huge time-lag, but Tsai makes the brilliant graft by connecting these two series of story lines progressing from the disruptive spatio-temporality accurately and seamlessly. When they hook each other in the narrative sequence, it also creates a wonderful match without any temporal gap shown between them as an undivided presence.

On the other hand, the isolated and agonizing emotion expressed by the son and the young woman are so similar that it makes these beautiful signals exchange in the borderless imaginary space in which one lives in Taipei but is always enraptured by Paris, a city he has never been to, and one lives in Paris but always feels insecure and isolated without mixing herself in the city. Therefore, it is just this same internal annoying and solitary emotion that makes the fabulously bilateral comparison and reciprocal permeation from both two narrative sessions, erasing the external and material break in time and space.

In other words, this is the transformed simulacrum created by Tsai, as the coherent sensation going across the different countries without giving a sense in their spatio-temporal discrepancies, but seems to melt Paris and Taipei together as a plural city. It lets Paris be wrapped in Taipei and Taipei also be wrapped in Paris.

Therefore this new plural city, Taipei-Paris, Paris-Taipei has become the borderless dream land reclaimed by an unbridled syntagmatic structure for its lacking the past trace and future orientation but only cemented by the disconnected new present of becoming. Tsai just bridges the time-lag for these two cities, enchants this mismatch and constructs the new city.

#### 4.4.4 Producing the new trigger from resemblance

In the last scene in *What Time Is It There?* A fantastic figure resembling the father just appears in a park in Paris, beside a pond and also stands near a bench on which the young woman is lying down. Actually, the father has died; this same actor plays the two roles in film, really generating an unexplainable meaning. Nevertheless, this is the perfect postmodern resemblance, because the knowledge of hermeneutics and semiology just lead us to search for a meaning to bring to light the resemblance.

In other words, to discover the rule organizing the signs is to find things that are alike with hermeneutical replacement, so syntagmatic structure should be constrained to mingle all the similitude together to form a homogeneous linguistic family and to give a conceptual content for the sign to name the things. This resemblance extended from the origin marks things, as enunciated by Foucault:

To define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology: the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics and semiology in the form of similitude”<sup>201</sup>

Nevertheless, the character who appears in the last scene is not the father. Although they have 100 percent similitude, they are the totally different people and come from different sequences of texts. Here, Tsai uses the same actor playing two roles against the theory of hermeneutics and semiology, that resemblance should be inherited and extended from a parental matrix, because this likeness can be generated from the different origins without any affinity with the past as the pure presence of the present.

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<sup>201</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences*. Rutledge, 1991, p 29.

In other words, the sign carried by this person possessing extreme similitude with the father is another free signifier without any relation with father, so this second father is not an interpretant to represent and extend a first sign (the first father) as a preceding sign in a correspondent relationship to which a second stands as a logical interpretant. It is rather an absurd displacement to produce the new meaning torn from its referential meaning without functioning as a representation.

On the other hand, Tsai really sets the signifier into play and uses it to parody the classic text; the father appears in the first scene and, according to the modern internal logic of coherence, the father should be present again as a beautiful symmetrical ending. Hence, Tsai does this, but this is the other father in Paris played by the same actor, bearing a physical resemblance as the first late father in Taipei and, moreover, he also restarts the film in Paris. The historical narration of setting forth the end for every action has been overthrown.

In the park, the young woman just falls asleep on a bench; the father in Paris, acted by the same actor as the one in Taipei, just walks slowly along the park avenue towards the large observation wheel in the distance. Tsai denies the end as the last word in *What Time Is It There?* He makes it so that the story is still progressing in this new plural city, Taipei-Paris.

#### **4.5 *Good Bye Dragon Inn*: 2003**

##### **4.5.1 A film in a film, a seamless graft in a rewritten process of becoming-present**

In the first scene, the wonderful production of postmodern plural text is in progress and also opens up multiple thinking, sources of texts and entrances. Here the sound track is quoted from the beginning of

the film *Dragon Inn* made by King Hu (1967) but it is dubbed with the caption of Tsai's film *Good Bye Dragon Inn*, (2003), as a fantastic heterogeneous combination.

In other words, here, this contemporary film is being presented with another old film's narration; although the historical trace is attributed to the past and there, in the postmodern narrative, previous heritage should not only be viewed as a model requiring to be represented as its archival reality. Also, serving as a text, it has to be written with the present discourse by grafting it onto the present textual components as the unprecedented experience to create here and now. Therefore, Tsai has never regarded *Dragon Inn* as a completed product, an already-made text but heterogeneously fuses it with his film in the process of ceaselessly producing the presents and the infinite difference.

Therefore, from the first scene, both decentralized constituents just interplay and juxtapose each other, although they always maintain a mutable relationship, sometimes one has the heavier position in the composition and sometimes the other. This causes the referential meaning transmitted from both cinematic texts to mingle with each other in an unstable state. They still integrate together seamlessly, producing the active present progression as film-in-film until the end of this plural film.

In Tsai's film, a crumbling movie theater on its final night shows King Hu's martial arts epic *Dragon Inn* before darkening its screen forever. A sparse gaggle of moviegoers gathers, some attending to watch the last film, others attending out of nostalgia. Therefore, Tsai designs and reproduces the whole duration of *Good Bye Dragon Inn* to be the same as *Dragon Inn*, being projected on the screen, to make these two films wrap each other.

Both films not only share identical temporality with their cinematic pseudo- time coupled together running for the same length of time, but they also transform themselves in the process of enunciating the present discourse. Therefore all the elements in the sign-function always interchange, replace and reciprocate each other, and transmit plural and paradoxical messages. In other words, in this overlapping and transgressing process, both films have to absorb each other's nourishment as a co-existing body, an indescribable hybrid, which also invents the new text by erasing the rift of their temporality and textuality in gluing them seamlessly together. Hence there is no law restricting genre-text to taxonomic certainty, but it is the law of overflowing, of excess, the law of participation without membership.

As such, Tsai rewrites *Dragon Inn*, this past memory with his present discourse, as his first writing through projecting the film on the screen and melts it with all the characters performing in the cinema as film in film. All the elements here are also just in the process of creating the becoming present, and each attendant also writes his first time.

#### **4.5.2 Exchanging signs in the intertextual space**

All the events in *Good Bye Dragon Inn* take place within this crumbling theater. The scene is wrapped into two layers of boxes and each of them also contains several small spaces. The location of the inner layer is the cinema auditorium and that of the outer layer are many different marginal spaces attached to it. On the other hand, even though there are various compositional elements scattered in these two layers, they are still mixed with this plural text through their penetrating and reciprocating each other, as both

text's structures have been set up in the same productive process of creating the incessant presents by Tsai.

As a result, it does not matter where the lonely clerk works in the different areas from the outer layers, such as the ticket office, rest room or service hallways, or broom closets. All the characters from the inner layer also have their clandestine, subversive and erotic encounters in these same places in outer layer. The sound track of the film from the auditorium is always being carried into all the spaces in the theater. This means that all the structuring fabrics in the entire areas in these two layers are interwoven to share and exchange each other's features in the mutual present movement undergoing the same temporal duration. Sometimes, these free signifiers incarnated by characters also permeate from the outer layer to the inner layer and vice versa, working as the signal interchange.

Therefore, the ticket clerk has slightly lifted up the exit curtain to watch the film and a Japanese tourist has left for the auditorium for the rest room to tell the other audience members that this nasty theatre is haunted by ghosts. In other words, the two layer worlds have been constituted as one postmodern zone, the intertextual zone, and film in film. All of the structural elements in this theater are ahistorically progressing in the present trace, although they are categorized in the different texts and temporal periods. So *Dragon Inn*, the past trace, has been transformed by *Good Bye Dragon Inn*; rewritten and compressed in the same time and space and swallowed in this Fu-Ho grand theater.

#### **4. 5.3 Transmuting nostalgia as the present- becoming in the intertextual zone**

McHale has quoted Foucault and combined his own viewpoint, giving a clear explanation about intertextual zones:

The disparate worlds that constitute the zone occupy different, incompatible spaces; as Foucault says, it is impossible to find any common locus beneath them all. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the worlds of the zone do, in most cases, occupy the same kind of space. That is, they all belong to the projected space of the fictional universe, the space concretized by readers in the process of reading the text.<sup>202</sup>

Therefore, in this theater's last presentation of the film before its temporary closure, in the auditorium, this inner layer of the box, Tsai builds the intertextual zone, the real and unreal space fused together. There is the projected space of a fictional world on the screen representing the beautiful past memory. Simultaneously there are several audiences attending an elegant and tender valentine to the pleasures of moviegoing, expressing their sorrow for the death of a cinematic age.

On the other hand, each of them remains in the present space and uses their own personal paradigms, spontaneously transforming this archaic remembrance as the present- becoming, the new trigger driven from now and here. They never passively submerge themselves into the past trace with a nostalgic sentiment bringing the entire story to history, past and there, because postmodernist text should be produced in motion toward the ceaseless new present with a marvelous predication to activate this momentary continuum, rather than to start a return to the historical representation.

Hence, one of the audiences, a Japanese tourist is always being disturbed by others; a man putting his feet up beside his face from behind, a young woman continuously eating watermelon seeds behind him,

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<sup>202</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 56.

and a possibly gay man especially choosing to sit next to him. In other words, these audience members, anonymous signifiers, like seeds disseminated from the unknown places with no prior trace, just successively hook this Japanese tourist and create the effect of insemination. Hence, although the film presented on the screen stands for the things already there, the interactions among the audience are always driven in a dynamic movement in order to produce their new present, without inertly being a common audience fascinated only by this old cinema, content with a sheer nostalgia and reminiscence.

Moreover, in the scene of an old man watching the film with tears in his eyes, this really scares the Japanese tourist, because he does look like a young actor in *Dragon Inn*. While watching the film, his expression is so touched and his emotion has also been enraptured by the young swordsman with the uncanny resemblance to him, and this seems to drive him to a beautiful past memory to reconstitute his autobiographical trace.

Nevertheless, Tsai never tells us if the old man really is the actor who played the swordsman. His face always reflects blue light, a scary, unnatural and eccentric light. This is a paradoxical contextualization lacking a transparent decipherment, since the old man is a free signifier with no origin and profile and simply attends to catch his present in the theater. In other words, he is the incarnation of enigma wrapped by this intertextual zone providing many entrances to access the truth of who he is. On the other hand, his attendance does not become a pure nostalgic sentiment buried under the reminiscence narrated with past tense, but creates the simulacrum triggering the present -becoming in search for this answer. McHale has described this transworld identity from between the two films in an intertextual as follows:

An intertextual space is constituted whenever we recognize the relations among two or more texts, or between specific texts and larger categories such as genre, school, and period. There are a number of ways of foregrounding this intertextual space and integrating it in the text's structure, but none is more effective than the device of "borrowing" a character from another text- "transworld identity", Umberto Eco has called this, the transmigration of characters from one fictional universe to another.<sup>203</sup>

Hence, Tsai also creates this intertextual space by depicting the two characters with an amazing resemblance, one coming from a fictional story and other coming from a realistic world or even a ghost story. Therefore this transworld identity of characters has been put in the progress of meaning-production towards the present- becoming in this intertextual space of film in film.

In other words, the characters' transmigration from an old film to a film in progress is based on the unclear origins in these two signifiers; it provides the wide magic space in rewriting it. On the other hand, Tsai has viewed the goal of his film as a writerly text:

The goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text".<sup>204</sup>

Hence, unlike a readerly and classic text, the postmodernist text is utterly plural and paradoxical. It does not want to provide the reader with a theological access to the truth and in a woeful and passive idleness, but spurs the reader to activate spontaneously himself to build up different accesses to the truth.

#### **4.5.4 Signifiers freely generating self-multiplicity with uncertainty and**

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<sup>203</sup>. Ibid., pp56-57.

<sup>204</sup>. Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Press, 1992, p 4.

## bizarreness in the temporal disorder

In these two intertextual spaces, the auditorium and its surroundings, all the characters act like anonymous signifiers with no name and history. Tsai has never revealed where they come from and when and where they go, in order to make these floating germs stand for the many abrupt cut-offs in composing this writerly text. Not only do they attend this last valentine for the death of a cinematic age, but also create their own presence of the present to expand the text to the different present- becoming, the new world built through their own self-multiplicity.

Hence, in the scene of the young woman wearing the outdated suit who watches the film and continuously eats the watermelon seeds, all the signifiers are carried by her only in correspondence with the sound track of *Dragon Inn* as presented on screen progressing in the present time embedded in space.

Here Tsai invents the plural meaning through his wizardry, because this young woman, wearing a set of classic costume and watching a film while enjoying watermelon seeds coupled with the film sound-track, is indeed making a living representation of past memory about thirty-five years ago in the theater in Taiwan.

Nevertheless, concerning the space embedded in the present time with the currently temporal indication in the signifying system, it will confuse the answer about who is viewing *Dragon Inn* in this present time. A ghost ? Or is the young woman just imitating the old –fashioned costume and duplicating the past experience of viewing movies it was at the same period of time as *Dragon Inn* to enjoy her reminiscence? Hence all the synchronically historical auditory and visual signifiers constituted in this inner box, the

auditorium, have been inscribed in the present discourse by Tsai to create the mirage of temporal disorder.

In another scene, an old man watches film, who also has a close resemblance to the one of swordsmen in the film. Unlike the first mentioned old man, his face does not reflect the weird blue light and he just nourishes the common mood with no special expression on his face. He may not be a ghost; he may be an actor in *Dragon Inn*. Or, he may be just a person who looks like the swordsman in the film. Hence he only wants to his mind entirely be taken up with reminiscence of the past beautiful memory. In other words, all of these suppositions are only provided by the self-multiplicity. As such, the final decipherment in the sign-function in film has been displaced with plural answers.

Moreover, when the first old man, who bears the amazing resemblance to the swordsman in *Dragon Inn*, faces himself as a brilliant young man on screen, this historical imprint seemingly drives him back to the remote memory, replete with tears in his eyes. However, this just causes the Japanese tourist to feel scared and in the rest room, he tells other audience members that he is Japanese and there are ghosts here. Nevertheless, they just receive his message without reacting; rather they also behave like ghosts with the emaciated and apathetic expression.

The semiotics of Peirce, however, which seeks insistently to grasp the process of interpretation - or Semiosis - in time, usually rewrites all these distinctions in terms of an initial sign in relationship to which a second stands as a logical interpretant.<sup>205</sup>

Tsai shows this interpretant defaulting on its job of making the logically clear extension inherited from the message transmitted by a prior sign indicate a transparent meaning. On the contrary, this interpretant only supplement more equivocal references on the Japanese tourist's question to solicit the meaning into the untiring process of producing the uncertainty and bizarreness, and also upsets the expectation of

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<sup>205</sup> .Jameson, Fredric, . *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p87.

knowing the truth. Barthes has explained this expectation in writerly text that is non-classic text:

Expectation thus becomes the basic condition for truth: truth, these narratives tell us, is what is at the end of expectation....; it implies a return to order, for expectation is a disorder: disorder is supplementary, it is what is forever added on without solving anything, without finishing anything; order is complementary, it completes, fills up, saturates, and dismiss everything that risks adding on: truth is what completes, what closes.<sup>206</sup>

In other words, referring to postmodern writing, meaning is constituted by the interaction between free signs unshackled from any structural law to destabilize the truth not to reveal a tenably final answer but to disorient a necessary expectation from a full stop.

On the other hand, this uncertainty and bizarreness created by interwoven signs in temporal confusion from the spatial present has been extended in the ticket clerk's office without solving any puzzle, and also defaults on the expectation to know the truth. Here, Tsai characterizes her dealing with everydayness replete with the mechanical episode of life. The meaning transmitted from the sign-function among signs' interaction also never provides a positive and granted truth mostly due to losing a sense of identifying the temporal order in space in the signifying chain.

Hence, it reveals that she has never sold a ticket to any customers and always stays in the ticket office out of boredom, but here several grotesque moviegoers are still enjoying the film at same time. Then, in this ticket office, she opens the lid of a rice cooker and takes out a red peach- bread from inside, which is a kind of Taiwanese food almost only ever used for the ceremony of ancestor worship, not for a regular meal in contemporary Taiwan. On the other hand, there is a magazine on table in her office titled *Start*

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<sup>206</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Press, 1992, p76.

*Ship*, which is also an outdated and unpublished magazine issued about thirty years ago, at the same era as *Dragon Inn*.

In other words, who are the audience in the theater? Moreover, if both signs (the red peach-bread and *Start Ship*) appear in the current time of Taiwan, it will be anachronistic. Or, perhaps this ticket clerk preserves them to satisfy her sense of nostalgia. But she is young, or is she a ghost also? Hence, this galaxy of signs fail to constellate a clear map to represent the past but create the more divergent association into the dynamic movement inscribed in the prominent present time running in the current space without producing the certain truth with the temporal disorder.

It also means that Tsai uses the postmodern metalanguage to depict this scene, because he employs the present discourse to transform the historical signs acting as the representational references to recollect the beautiful past memory described with the past trace as the present living materials to be reconstructed with the contemporary time and space to reduce their historicity and to bring them forward to the new present- becoming, always written through the present discourse.

In the last scene, when the cinematic image shows “Temporarily closed” on the bulletin board of the cinema, the projectionist takes a slip from a fortune-telling machine, and the ticket clerk just leaves the crumbling movie theater and walks in the rain, this just suggests that she may be a normal person too. Nevertheless, some puzzles, are still suspended, because they lack the interpretant as a capable succeeding sign to generate the logical and reasonable interpretation to clarify the message carried from a preceding sign or the signifying chain which has been deprived of the adequate identity of temporal order. Hence, according to Foucault:

In the classical age all the representations are interconnected as signs; all together, they form, as it were, an immense network; each one posits itself in its transparency as the sign of what represent.<sup>207</sup>

Tsai just relocates and reconstructs these past synchronic signs to make representations of the beautifully nostalgic memory as the postmodern totality, since he transforms all of the structuring elements as the present living materials by transgressing the temporal boundary between historical and current time to mingle all of them together progressing in the same time and space as the contradictory present-becoming.

Therefore, Tsai forms the text, *Dragon Inn*, as past history there by fusing it with the present presence of each member of the audience and staff running in the current time of a space in the narrative structure to make the new present-becoming in this Fu-Ho theater. Although the film in film has ended, all the anonymous signifiers carried by the unknown characters remain lingering around the borderless spatio-temporality, and probably they will meet together soon to continue their cinematic age through ceaselessly producing different presents with the temporal disorder.

#### **4.6 Wayward Cloud: 2005**

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<sup>207</sup>. Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Science*. Routledge 1991, p 65.

#### 4.6.1 Deferring a watermelon in the incessant slippage of meaning

Language in modern times was constituted by words, each having their origins grounded in the conventional, institutional and historical interpretations, which had become their legitimate horizon; on the other hand, the world was also covered with signs. Hence they must be deciphered precisely in order to constitute the truth with a representable and comprehensible meaning. Moreover, the rule of structuring those signs had also prescribed that all the components should be organized with resemblances and affinities, which are themselves no more than forms of similitude.

All of these signs with resemblances congregating in an adjacent area always communicate and adjust one another with a harmonious, congruent and coherent order in convenience based on their similitude, which also need signatures to name and describe them.

Nevertheless, in the postmodernist text, words should not only be a unit stored in an informational reservoir to be constituted as a unified and transparent text to interpret and evidence a granted thing and thematic sense. Rather they should be an empty sign to rewrite and subvert any established knowledge through functioning itself slipping downward the different presents fused with any marginal and ex-centric linguistic components to invent the plural and paradoxical text in the infinitely diachronic progression.

Therefore, the main narrative structure in “*Wayward Cloud*” (2005) is also constituted by deconstructing watermelon and water into sequences producing the unrepresentable and magic becoming, which has transgressed their logocentric definitions, hermeneutical prolongations and conceptual analogy

categorized and compiled in a dictionary or an encyclopedia. Tsai just unleashes watermelon and water as free signifiers betraying their hermeneutical meanings nominated in the foundational knowledge to let them empty themselves and spontaneously engage in inventing their own unparalleled paradigms with fantastic momentums via cannibalizing the different themselves with other different structural elements coming from different family systems. Therefore Derrida has claimed the reflexive structure, letting the word speak and write itself as others, to invent the discourse:

A discourse would be starting the inventive beginning by speaking of itself, in a reflexive structure that not only does not produce coincidence with or presence to itself, but which instead projects the advent of the self, of the “speaking” or “writing” of itself as other, that is to say, in the manner of trace. I shall content myself with mentioning the value of “self-reflexivity”.

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Hence, in the first scene of the film, a young girl wearing a nursing suit and carrying a watermelon passes by a young woman (the female protagonist) very quickly. Nevertheless, in the second scene, the fantastic simulacrum has also been produced. The girl in the nursing suit promptly becomes a porn actress, her sexual organ has been ludicrously displaced by a half-cut watermelon and a porn actor is rapidly poking the watermelon back and forth with his finger, the scene is dubbed with her provocative groan. Moreover, in the following shot in the same scene, the porn actor feeds the actress with a large slice of watermelon into her mouth.

On the other hand, meanwhile, there is also a cutting-across movement of deconstructing watermelon is progressing. A young woman is watching the news on television; it reports a watermelon-eating competition is excitingly running and also that this game attracts many participants of different ages. However, in the following sequence, just incredibly linking the porn actor is having sex with the porn

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<sup>208</sup> .In Attridge, Derek (ed). *Jacques, Derrida: Acts Of Literature* . Routledge, 1992 , pp 317-318.

actress passionately and the watermelon has become an empty shell he wears as a hat on his head. In the parallel plot, the young woman is still watching the news on television; it reports that a severe water shortage due to a drought is coming soon. It also predicts that the price of mineral water will be more expensive than watermelon juice and reports that the water level in a dam in Taiwan has fallen below its standard level.

In the next sequence, the porn actor uses toilet paper to wipe the watermelon seeds from his body and then he throws it into the empty watermelon put on the basin like a trash-can. In the following scene, the porn actress suddenly takes off her clothes with a scream, while taking the elevator with other crew members, because some ants are climbing over her body attracted by the sweetness.

As such, in this succession of scenes, the sign of watermelon not only plays as a seed disseminated in the divergent spaces to get insemination and also produces its unrepeatable and the magic presence of the present. In other words, if watermelon did not act as the free sign unfettered from its hermeneutical truth and participate in deferring meaning through breaking the congruent narrative structure and grammatical rules, all the sexual scene would just be represented as an objective reality instead of inventing a chain of fantastically mutable present- becoming. In other words, like the watermelon transformed as the object of sexual fantasy, a bowling ball and moisturizing lotion in *Vive L'amour* , watermelon in *Wayward Cloud* is also always in a mobilizing state with no fixed locus as its inheritance. This has also been described by Derrida:

A central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute....Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in

the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus, but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play.<sup>209</sup>

The sign of watermelon in the sexual scenes has lost its origin but also creates the moment to constitute itself with others incommensurably to create the different presents without a center. These are ludicrous displacements that have been deferred from genital organ, hat, trash-can and an attraction to ants from the fantastic process of putting the sign in play. On the other hand, the sign of watermelon on the television news is a modernist text, which represents its ontological representation based on extending its genetic resemblance, because a watermelon-eating competition and watermelon juice still remain watermelon as a fruit with a fixed meaning in its materiality, a product needing to be exhausted and consumed. Moreover, when both sequences of storylines actualize watermelon in crosscutting each other, this interwoven textuality has become the marvelous postmodern writing, a postmodern discourse hooking a modern text's structure.

Following the above sense, when drought affects Taiwan, it causes many watermelons to float on the river, these act like exiled signifiers with no meaning, bearing no beginning and future and are only kept in motion to wait for being produced as its present-becoming by someone who supplements the new meaning on them with his individual paradigm and unexplainable performativity to create the fantastic moment.

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<sup>209</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp 353-354.

Therefore, a young woman picks up a watermelon from the river at home; she kisses it and seemingly attempts to satisfy her physical need by treating it as the absurd displacement of a lover's face to submerge herself in a sexual fantasy. In another scene, Tsai also carnivalizes this text with a singular camp effect by depicting the young woman also hiding a watermelon under her clothes to imitate a pregnant woman about to deliver, so she just splits her legs and lies down face forward on the stairs with the exaggerated painful groaning.

For watermelon to have the different fantastic presents, watermelon itself cannot be a harmonious organism to be constituted by a series of determinations related to it as a coherent syntagmatic system to produce a logical representation. Thus, watermelon should distinguish itself from the ground. This difference in itself has been described by Deleuze:

In effect, difference ceases to be reflexive and recovers an effectively real concept only to the extent that it designates catastrophes: either breaks of continuity in the series of resemblances or impassable fissures between the analogical structures. It ceases to be reflexive only in order to become catastrophic.<sup>210</sup>

Hence, the watermelon, interacted with a porn actor and a actress, the watermelon activity reported by television news and the watermelon picked up by a young woman from the river, except the middle one, which is a typical modernist progression, all of them, becoming the exiled signifiers, are put into the playground in order to create a free and arbitrary self-proliferating association as the unprecedented mirage and the ridiculous analogy as catastrophes. On the other hand, it is also incarnated by characters exerting their self-reflexivity into interplaying with this amazing fruit. Therefore, watermelon has

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<sup>210</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press. 1994. p35.

become the unconditional and unrestricted signifier without needing to connect its other resemblances to stabilize the truth but only waits to be posited in the process of producing the different present with the infinite difference.

#### **4.6.2 Inventing the ahistorically and magically spatio-temporal moment**

Unlike the water contextualized either as a toxic substance bringing agony to the male protagonist in *The River*, or as the disturbing, fatal and also tranquilizing substance making male and female protagonist scared and happy in *The Hole*, here water is playing a role of free signifier to exile itself with nomadic characteristic. It is to be supplemented with the inexperienced and provisional meaning through the present discourse in *Wayward Cloud*, which is also incarnated as a fantastic germ wrapped in itself and will receive insemination in the process of producing the characters' reflexivity and of transforming the nature of space in time.

As such, Tsai not only enchants with his wizardry in transforming the nature of the water- storage tank as a bath tub but also makes its meaning slip downward to the infinite difference through continuously supplementing the new narrative elements from the different genre-text in order to invent the new spatial simulacrum. As Derrida wrote:

What I shall call the law of the law of genre. It is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>. In Attridge, Derek(ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature*. Published by Routledge, 1992, p 227.

Therefore, in the same space, after diving into the storage tank of water, the porn actor just seamlessly becomes a fish-like man with scales and fins without through any connective shot as mediation to bridge this transformational gap of switching from the realist to super-naturalist text.

This also means that Tsai perfectly utilizes the postmodernist syntax structure incarnating the cinematic temporal sequence as the constellation of the successive presence of the momentary presents. On the other hand, when the porn actor is transformed as a fish, the text also transgresses the textual boundary and becomes the opera drama genre with the hallucinatory moment. However, he just starts to use his song and swimming performance to express his loneliness and also hopes the beautiful moonlight will listen to his words transmitted from his inner mind.

Hence, with respect to the combination constituted by these two heterogeneously performing forms and texts, analyzed by the theory of avant-garde works of art, this marvelous montage can never be an organic art, since all of the structuring parts coming from the different taxonomic categories in this scene are organized by their own spontaneity and subjectivity in order to create the fantastic aesthetic effect and mirage in this incongruent composition.

In other words, this heterogeneous hybrid is far away from the modernist hermeneutical circle, because the parts cannot be understood through the whole and the whole also cannot be explained by the parts either. This nonorganic cinematic structure has transgressed the boundary between the realist and super-naturalist forms and texts to constellate the montage effect. In this nonorganic composition, each of the fabrics just co-participates to invent this momentary present without belonging either to each other or the whole and only being apart from any precursors. This purport of nonorganic art has been described by Burger :

The fundamental precondition for this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole. This precondition is rejected by the nonorganic work, and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts “emancipate” themselves from a superordinate whole.<sup>212</sup>

In another respect, when the porn actor is transformed into a fish-like man, the filmic space is still in the same space, a water-storage tank, but it has also been transmuted into a swimming pool with the postmodern metalanguage, supplementing more contextualized elements on the original text in order to internalize the precursor as the new presence of the present. This big pool on the top of the apartment building has been decorated by several long hanging chains of bulbs on poles surrounding the whole place in order to metamorphose this plural space into a dream place disengaged from its original and previous realist feature of space in the past time as an area of disastrous drought. In fact, this new space is a new global space in which a pure experience of a spatial present is produced to transgress its past history and future destiny as the postmodernist sublime, as in Jameson’s statement about spatialization below:

What we must now affirm is that it is precisely this whole extraordinarily demoralizing and depressing original new global space which is the “moment of truth” of postmodernism. What has been called the postmodernist “sublime” is only the moment in which this content has become most explicit, has moved the closet to the surface of consciousness as a coherent new type of space in its own right.<sup>213</sup>

Hence, through comparing these two spaces, the original and modified, their external resemblances have still slightly existed. Nevertheless, the internal meaning has been converted into the amazing difference. This means that the water- storage tank is only a text provided as the self-materials to be produced in

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<sup>212</sup> . Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant –Garde*. Manchester University Press, 1984, p 80.

<sup>213</sup> .Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press. 1991. P49.

motion with the present discourse in order to reconstitute the textual references as the provisional fantasy incarnated at the spatial present rather than representing the parental similitude with the modernist metalanguage. In other words, creating the simulacrum in space through embedding the new temporality in its spatialization has also become the postmodernist sublime to redeem this solitary man's agony in his realistic life.

#### **4.6.3 Texts reciprocating each other to produce the postmodern spatialization**

In the scene set in the beautiful Lake Park in the *Wayward Cloud*, fantastic paradoxical meaning is invented through supplementing the carnivalized incised text, the choreographed drama genre in a historical space, which is fused with the different form of preceding realist text. Hence, referring to the spatialization, although all the referential meanings were made already, there and past, with the profound tourist and historical value and memory, it has also been modified by the extreme euphoria with singing and dancing performativity in order to inscribe its own temporal and spatial present to create this space only known and seen just right here and now, with the ephemeral mirage converting its cultural code.

In this choreographed drama, there are two female protagonists, a young woman and a Taiwanese porn actress are singing and dancing with a number of young girls holding parasols with watermelon patterns at several remarkable scenic sites in this Lake Park. However, in other scenes, the lonely girl satisfies her physical desire through transmuting a watermelon as the nonmaterial thing, a sign-displacement of sexual fantasy, and the Taiwanese porn actress in this period of water shortage also requires the crew to sprinkle water on her body as a substitute for sweat to enrich her enacting of sexual acts.

Therefore, although they have never met each other in the film and always produce their presents with realist expression, in this Lake Park, Tsai just makes them completely emancipate themselves from their true lives with the carnivalized style, and also lets them exuberantly co-perform their singing and dancing with other joyful girls, which just invents the hallucinatory momentum without concerning the narrative logic and textual congruence. In other words, this is also a fabulous demonstration of intertextuality making watermelon and waters the nomadic signifiers that freely interweave themselves with other different constitutional fabrics in this playground, Lake Park. The meanings of both signifiers are still slipping in divergence, because the watermelon patterns on the parasols have been deferred as a happy sign swaying with the pleasant song and dance.

On the other hand, water has also been deferred as the water from the lake merrily running beneath the long zigzag bridge where the people are enjoying their cheerful activity with sweet melody in the here. This continuum of deferral in meaning is like Derrida's description:

Everything begins with reproduction. Always already: repositories of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presences always by deferral".<sup>214</sup>

On the other hand, this fantastic textual interchange, the transfer of materials from one genre-text to another by means of demolishing the ontological boundary to constellate every given text to engender the infinity of the new text, has been explained by Hutcheon as follows:

Postmodern intertextuality challenges are both closure and single, centralized meaning. Its willed and willful provisionality rests largely upon its acceptance of the inevitable textual infiltration of prior discursive practices. The typically contradictory

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<sup>214</sup> . Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 266.

intertextuality of postmodern art both provides and undermines context. In Vincent Leitch's terms: Intertextuality posits both an uncentered historical enclosure and an abysmal decentered foundation for language and textuality...However paradoxically formulated, intertextuality offers a liberating determinism.<sup>215</sup>

Therefore, in the same scene, Lake Park, when the young woman, the Taiwanese porn actress and other girls enjoy their time here, the euphoric atmosphere created by them has also erased its original and historical meaning through erasing its trace remaining in the collective memory. And moreover it supplements the magically productive inscription in this space in order to invent the inexperienced provisionality.

Spatialization, then, whatever it may take away in the capacity to think time and History, also opens a door onto a whole new domain for libidinal investment of the Utopian and even the protopolitical type".<sup>216</sup>

With this sense of spatialization, particularly, in the scene in Lake Park, the young woman holds the legs of an imposing statue of the late Taiwanese President Chiang Kai-Shek, singing to him "I want your love; why do you not come over to me". This really subverts the historical signification in this space and also supplements her libidinal desire through trying to seduce love from this president with the marvelous camp effect. On the other hand, referring to historical sign, this great man, President Chung ruled over Taiwan for thirty years and his statue has also been imprinted in some of Taiwanese people's minds as a symbol of immortal spirit and actually, as a political factor, he has also been exaggeratedly glorified, even mythologized, as a historical totem of rescuing Taiwan and China.

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<sup>215</sup> . Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988, p 127.

<sup>216</sup> . Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991, p160.

Nevertheless, Tsai has evacuated this general recognition and collective memory by virtue of depicting this young woman soliciting this heroic personage in order to transform President Chung into a regular person, to reshape his image and satirize his haughty status in the political ideology. When all the beautiful girls gather in this huge square, circle the statue and sing a frisky love song, this present discourse has also transformed here as a utopian space for erasing all historical and institutional traces embedded in this inherent space. This utopian space has also been described by Jameson:

Utopian space outside the dynamics of the market, which can (for Michaels) be characterized as necessarily and constitutively “impure” as an infinite “supplementarity” which can never know fulfillment (or “satisfaction”) and which draws all kinds of within itself. Another name for the illusory dream of an alternate non-market space is of course, “production” itself.<sup>217</sup>

Therefore, this is the beautiful dream and the fantastic simulacrum that has been split from its indigenous contextualization and supplemented with magic power in order to enchant this realist space embedded with the historical and cultural code to become the carnivalized play ground. In other words, Tsai has evacuated its ontological meaning, but builds the dream garden in this realist landscape to create the spatial present in the film.

#### **4.6.4 Erasing the demarcation between the fictional and realistic life**

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<sup>217</sup>. Ibid., p 202.

Latter the young woman, one of the female protagonists coincidentally meets the porn actor in a park. She starts to connect with the people from the world of erotic videotapes until the final scene; she is eventually brought by Tsai's sorcery into the real process of pornography-production. Before that, the female protagonist has been shown to be falling in love with the male porn actor and Tsai also depicts her one day, unexpectedly, borrowing a videotape of a porn film acted by her boyfriend and a Japanese porn actress.

While watching this tape at home, she surprisingly finds them, notably the porn actress, just lying down in the elevator without consciousness and then she dragged the actress back home. As such, this man-made world, a fictional and fantastic space, is just interconnected with her real world by her personal internalization. This interior erotic text, transferred as a product, a duplicated reality shown through an intermediary, the television screen, has been incarnated as the untouchable simulacrum soliciting this young woman away from her real life. This enchanted vision seems to mesmerize into her entering this fictional world in which she can knit her fantastic illusion to situate herself in the inventive magic association. Hence, it is like Baudrillard's statement:

For us the medium, the image medium, has imposed itself between the real and the imaginary, upsetting the balance between the two, with a kind of fatality which has its own logic".<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup>. Baudrillard, Jean. *The Evil Demon of Images and The Procession of Simulacra*. In Docherty, Thomas (ed). *Postmodernism, A Reader*. Cambridge University Press. 1993, pp 194-195.

Therefore, this image from the lustful scene just creates the gigantic simulacrum, not unreal but a simulacrum. Love-making scenes are a truth for a male and female having sex. Nevertheless, all of their actions have been contextualized, dramatized and post-produced already.

Here too is the disappearance of representing reality as Plato's simulacrum, because it has been substituted by infinite reproduction under an uninterrupted circuit to generate new meaning, and makes the illusion more real than real reality like Baudrillard's simulacrum. Moreover, unlike the mother watching pornography in her home and her lover's house in *The River*, Tsai enchants his wizardry in order to bring the young woman away from the product, the simulacrum, and allow her personally to participate in this process of making porn video. In other words, he tries to connect these two worlds together, a real world and a fictionalized world, through depicting this young woman visiting the set of a porn video.

Hence, in the last scene, the young woman accidentally helps the film crew to manhandle the Japanese porn actress she had seen in the porn video, and who had also stayed at her home before, back to the apartment, the location of producing the simulacrum. Although the Japanese porn actress is still in coma, the production and the actress is just positioned by the crew so that she is lying face down with her legs apart. The porn actor immediately has sexual intercourse with her.

Meanwhile, the young woman is just standing outside the apartment, behind the round wooden grating, as a passive observer viewing this scene. Formerly, only characters caste in the porn film, like seeds, were disseminated from the fictionalized text to assimilate with her real life, now she also comes to interconnect automatically with this internal text, the production of an erotic film. However, she really is shocked when she sees her boyfriend being a porn actor and having sex with an unconsciousness woman.

So, what she is viewing is a motion of creating the realist image instead of the simulacrum with which she used to be enraptured from the video on her television screen.

The porn actor becomes more passionately in enacting the sex scene, when he realizes his girl friend is standing outside watching him. Moreover, the Japanese porn actress is still motionless and voiceless, her body shaken involuntarily, so the young woman just suddenly starts to groan for her and for herself to match her boyfriend's sexual action. In other words, she changes her former passive position as an observer into that of a spontaneous participant in the continuous process of meaning -production, although she is still standing outside the shooting location.

On the other hand, although Barthes has said, the goal of literary work is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text, actually, this reader merely enjoys his autonomy in rewriting the meaning of the text through his rebirth but text itself has never been changed. Nevertheless, Tsai indeed supplements and modifies this statement and makes the observer, the young woman, become a real producer in constituting this erotic text.

Thus, the young woman continues uttering her groans for the unconscious Japanese porn actress to make this unoriginal voice correspond well with the porn actor's action, thus modifying the text with her participation. This is like a real simulation happening in a recording room, when the young woman dubs the sound for the porn actress, but in fact she is viewing a live show progressing in front of her. Thus, her passionate groan has become the pure presence of the present to catch and alter this present-becoming rather than watching a product and dubbing the sound for an already-made porn film.

In other words, this is a marvelous simulacrum in which the young woman is presently improvising her lustful voice for this progressing image and subverting the foundational sense of dubbing as only existing in post-production. Instead, live dubbing can correspond with the present production simultaneously and also transforms dubbing as a motion running with the present discourse through fantastically grafting the narrative fabrics from the different origins.

As the young woman groans louder and louder, this irresistible catalyst of stimulation also causes the porn actor to make his sexual action faster and faster. Hence, eventually, when her boyfriend is about to ejaculate, he just suddenly pulls out his penis, runs to the wooden grating dividing the inside and outside space, and abruptly sticks it into the young woman's mouth; however, he still keeps this sexual intercourse in motion until he ejaculates. When he puts his penis into her mouth, the young woman stops groaning and his last ejaculation marks the end of the film. In other words, through the porn actor's ejaculation, two parts of the world not only combine together but also make the young woman unexpectedly and personally meet this cruelly real truth through her authentically participating in this video production and even involuntarily becoming an actress with a role at the end of the film.

However, at the end of the film, after her boyfriend's ejaculation, the young woman just holds his penis in her mouth and the camera is still running without being stopped by the director calling "Cut". As such, it becomes a fantastic postmodern denouement, an ending that also refers to another new trigger. In other words, *Wayward Cloud* never comes to an end; it is still in the advancing process, being shot in video or film or both, as a wrapper.

## **4.7 *I Do Not Want To Sleep Alone: 2006***

### **4.7.1 A fantastic heterotopias, an engulfed city with the plural culture**

In his essay “In The Zone”, McHale has quoted the meaning of heterotopias from Michel Foucault:

There is a worse kind of disorder than that of the incongruous, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry...in such a state, things are “laid”, “placed”, “arranged” in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University press, 1987, p 44.

The entire storylines of *I Do Not Want To Sleep Alone* (2006) are developed in the Malaysian city of Kuala Lumpur, a multicultural and multilingual zone, and heterotopias. This fantastic city has transgressed a rule of modernity attempting to endow a city with an appropriate name to mark and categorize its features distinctively to strengthen its difference and identity based on the semiology.

Nevertheless, Tsai chooses postmodern language to write a story which reflects the plural facets embedded with the multidimensional humanities in this city, Kuala Lumpur. Here is a heterotopia, replete with differences in its social structure and cultural stance. It is not a space abiding with the law of semiology or hermeneutics that all the things should congruently link together with their likeness, but things coming from diverse loci are unrestricted by any rule in their mingling and juxtaposing each other in their own spontaneities. In other words, this city is constructed in the infinite language system with the innate freedom instead of in an enclosed language system with a hermeneutical stance.

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they destroy "syntax" in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite to one another) to "hold together".<sup>220</sup>

Hence, at the beginning of the film, a homeless Chinese man with no history is robbed and attacked one night during an assembly of some Malaysian praying, having recourse to a shaman to help them win a significant sum of money from the lottery. After the shaman asks him a question, he is punched, because he cannot speak Malaysian in this heterotopias; a city where Malaysian and Chinese people are live in a mixed-race community without bearing any resemblance to each other.

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<sup>220</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 44.

On the other hand, the coffee shop where a young woman works is always patronized by Malaysians and also always plays Malaysian music, but a hotel on a street this young woman frequently visits has a big neon sign just in Chinese, so both of these different cultural signs are just juxtaposed in this city, disregarding their differences. In another scene, inside a room in a building, is a paralyzed man is lying down on the bed and the female manger of coffee shop and this same young woman have to clean and massage him every day. Here the background music also alternates between Malaysian and Chinese love folk songs. The songs are superimposed with the two different languages also without having any resemblance.

Not only are these multicultural and multilingual signs freely linking together with differences in Kuala Lumpur, but also in the building, which is the major shooting location in the film, the spaces and residents have also been deconstructed and reconstructed by Tsai in order to create a plural text.

In this building, the ground floor is a coffee shop with a female manager and a young woman assistant. The first floor is a pleasant bed room where two women tend to the paralyzed man. The second floor is a nasty bed room where a Malaysian itinerant worker and a homeless Chinese person live together. In other words, referring to the space, Tsai just designs the plural loci without imposing the totalizing characteristic and usage on this building but he combines all the spatial units as a multifunctional zone. Hence it becomes a commercial and health-caring venue and all the residents are also living in this building mixed are of different races, languages and socio-economic scales. Tsai tries to produce this fantastic plural theme of humanity in Kuala Lumpur and designs a miniature of heterotopias in this building in order to show every diversity in the postmodern totality.

#### 4.7.2 A process of ceaselessly producing the meaning of a mattress

If a mattress is only viewed as a thing or a product with the concept rooted in its sense of materiality, it will be described as a model with a fixed thematic content to be identified. Therefore, this product with a presupposition will be waiting to be complemented, to solidify its hermeneutical truth through constituting the syntagmatic system in fulfilling this aim.

On other words, it also will be constructed by the enclosed language chain in order to express a steady, linear and controllable passage to represent its hermeneutical prolongation. Nevertheless, writerly text never regards a model as a product with its labeled name put on the shelf in a cupboard, but it should be inscribed with the productive function, like a seed; disseminated into the continuous motion of freely melting itself with disperse others in the open field to create the infinite difference. This is also the unstable process of producing the intensity instead of extensity to make itself different, as Deleuze explains:

Intensity is difference, but this difference tends to deny or cancel itself out in extensity and underneath quality. It is true that qualities are signs flash across the interval of a difference. In so doing, however, they measure the time of equalization- in other words, the time taken by the difference to cancel itself out in the extensity in which it is distributed.<sup>221</sup>

It is also to say that Tsai just designs the incessant process of producing this intensity, with ramified texts written by a same mattress in order to cancel itself out as a disseminated seed to wander and to fuse other different structural elements to create the different present- becoming. In other words, it is also a

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<sup>221</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994. p 223

diachronic discourse consisting of the discontinuous and fragmentary present discourse driven by a mattress in its permanent motion.

Hence, after a bunch of itinerant workers incidentally find an old mattress on the street, they just happily raise this thing as an exiled magical signifier together and carry on wandering around with it. They seemingly transport a seed, this old mattress into the process of producing meaning through disseminating it, as it links itself with other quoted textual elements suddenly appearing before them in this playground, Kuala Lumpur. Later, they rescue and transport a homeless Chinese man who was being robbed, and attacked. They lie him down on the sidewalk with this mattress and also carry him on it like a human ambulance.

In the following sequence, one of the workers, named Rawang, cleans this old mattress and lets the homeless Chinese man sleep with him on it. He also starts to tend to the Chinese man who is seriously wounded. Moreover, Rawang even sometimes looks at him affectionately during his rehabilitation. However, upon his recovery, the anonymous Chinese man, falls in love with that coffee-shop waitress, and eventually he brings her to sleep with him on the old mattress.

Nevertheless, when Rawang gets to know of this, one day, he almost kills the Chinese man, on the old mattress, driven to this action by his love for him. In the final scene, the mattress has been transformed into a raft, floating on a big lake and carrying these three solitary people towards an unknown future and place. Hence, although this old mattress neither actualizes its inaugural act nor has ever revealed its history, it has become the fantastic process of being supplemented with a different meaning to produce its infinite difference as intensity. This meaning of supplement in postmodern writing has also been elucidated by Derrida:

There have never been anything but supplement, substitutive signification which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the “real“ supervening , and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation, etc. And thus to infinity, for we have read , in the text, that the absolute present , Nature, that which words like real mother name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence.<sup>222</sup>

The temporal development in the film is always based on how to destabilize the meaning of this mattress in the free syntagmatic system to invent the real and new supervening.

#### **4.7.3 Discovering the resemblance from the difference**

There is another bed in the same building, on the lower floor, and a paralyzed man is also lying down here, who is acted by the same actor who plays the role of the Chinese homeless man. He has to be massaged and cleaned the body by his wife, who manages the coffee shop downstairs and the waitress who works there. Hence, referring to the resemblance between the residents living on the upper and lower floors, it is against the theory of hermeneutics, because although both of them are tended to by other people simultaneously, with a clear similitude in the characterization and spatial setting, it is still difficult to categorize them absolutely in a same or different locust and taxonomy with the formal distinction:

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<sup>222</sup> .Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. John Hopkins University Press, 1976, p 159.

Formal distinction is, in effect, a real distinction, since it is grounded in being or in the object; but it is not necessarily a numerical distinction because it is established between essences or senses, between “formal reason” which may allow the persistence of the subject to which they are attributed.<sup>223</sup>

It is impossible to possess this formal distinction without losing anything of its totality, because the resemblance can be generated by a tiny difference and the difference can also be discovered from deconstructing the resemblance. In other words, the classic hierarchy fences off the heterogeneity mixing with homogeneity into the uniform structural system which is impossible for postmodern writing to accept. On the other hand, there is another type of distinction that can distinguish difference from breaking down the resemblance:

The other type of distinction, modal distinction, is established between being or the attributes on the one hand, and the intensive variations of which these are capable on the other. These variations, like degree of whiteness, are individuating modalities of which the finite and infinite constitute precisely singular intensities.<sup>224</sup>

Hence, with this sense of modal distinction, comparing and deconstructing all of these constituents are functioning in both main narrative structures, paralleling each other as two centers in a whole and developed under the simultaneously temporal order.

The two centers are constituted by a paralyzed man, his wife and a waitress in a pleasant room, in the one side, and an injured homeless man tenderly taken care of by an itinerant worker in a nasty room, on the other side. Obviously, the resemblance generated from the difference is revealed in the same actor playing two different roles, in juxtaposing a paralyzed man with a seriously wounded man (the first man is in much more serious condition than second); in juxtaposing the mechanical care of the female

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<sup>223</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994. p 39.

<sup>224</sup> .Ibid., p 39.

manager and waitress with the dedicated care from an itinerant worker (different degree of care and carers' genders); and in mixing a comfortable bed in a nice room with an old mattress in a sloppy and gloomy room in the same building (different quality of housing facility).

All of these components structured in text really confuse our search for a distinct demarcation in their identities and differences. However, there is a middle position of making their comparison taken by Tsai to create this plural and paradoxical text generated from these two compositions with the inseparable and unidentifiable discrepancy and similitude. They have mingled together, difference is created within the resemblance and resemblance is manifested from the difference.

#### **4.7.4 Time is enunciated with present discourse with neither beginning nor end moving in permanent motion.**

Derrida has described scission as follows:

The scission, the decision-which is both deciding and decided-the shot/throw/blow parts the seeds as it projects it. It inscribes difference in the heart of life ("it is that very difference, that implacable difference") which is the condition for their operation. Nothing is complete in itself, and it can only be completed by what it lacks. But what each particular thing is infinite; we cannot know in advance what complement it calls for".<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 304.

Therefore, scission is the fragmentarily progressing motion and a non-full text, which certainly is created by means of the incessant events skipping their beginnings and ends, only produced by the present discourse in order to repudiate a notion of that presence is never present with the indispensable and ineffaceable connection with history. This fragmentarily progressing narrative will not constitute each contextual part from its beginning, but it is only an approach capable of witnessing my participation in my story, disregarding my absence from the commencement of history.

Hence, each scene in "*I do not want to sleep alone*" is a cut-off, a scission which has leaped over its commencement and denouement without following a chronological sequence, but it connects each other as the permanent motion without expressing the starting and ending point in every single scene. This also means that when they link with each other, it will become the process of producing the fantastic moment without reaching the future and also skipping the teleological development of explaining the original cause and certain effect in the narrative sequence. In other words, this is the energetic continuum activated with the present discourse to produce only here and now. This fantastic temporal structure of stringing a series of moments, fencing off the present from past and future, is explained by Currie:

A moment, like a word, only comes into being as a structure of exclusion or an undivided presence. A moment can only be present when it is not yet in the past and no longer in the future. But any definition of what a moment is, any attempt to cleanse the moment of the trace of past and future and see it as pure presence will be forced to impose arbitrary boundaries which mark off the present from past and future.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup>. Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, MARTIN Press.1998. p 81.

Therefore, at the beginning of the film, the homeless Chinese man is being severely interrogated for joining in a gambling meeting organized by a shaman, which is a present event just progressing here, with no beginning. In the following scene, a bunch of itinerant workers carrying an old mattress find him lying on the sidewalk and rescue him. It does not show how the homeless was attacked or moved to here as a definite end to explain the previous sequential development, and also it does not reveal how the group of workers came to be here and find him to mark the beginning of the plot.

In the middle parts of the film, this homeless Chinese man recovers well thanks to Rawang's passionate care. We know this, because he can get up from the old mattress and drinks the green juice brought to him. Nevertheless, in the following scene, the homeless man just stands in the staircase and teases and seduces the waitress by trying to have a sip from the coffee cup brought by her on tray, as she is going to serve coffee to the customers.

However, in the next scene, he has sex with the female manager in a nasty alley at night. Hence, this hooking the incised text seamlessly with its following incised text means that Tsai cannibalizes all the bracketed progressing episodes existing in the state of dynamic movement marking no past trace and future denouement together. In other words, although the homeless man has intimate corporeal contact with both women, are never told when he got to know the young waitress and the female manager, and how he came to be attracted to both of them.

Hence, postmodern writing in the temporal sequence just produces the process of ceaselessly connecting the different scissions, escaping from their inaugural acts with a quantum leap as the present discourse. On the other hand, the structure of this new text is not that of archeological or hermeneutical teleology which should be depicted with clearly sequential development by sticking all the events

together with the glue of cause and effect systematically to mark them with a precisely numerical order, Derrida has thus delineated the purport of the new text:

If thought belongs from the beginning to no one, if “impersonification” is what is initial, then this is quite simply because the text never in fact begins. Not that its rifts are erased or its “positive” ruptures blurred and blended into the continuum of something always-already-there. But precisely because the rifts in it never stand as origins: they always transform a preexisting text<sup>227</sup>

In other words, the different incised texts constituted in the same temporal development marking no beginning and end just creates the pure presence of the present. Therefore, in the latter part of the film, after the Chinese man brings the waitress home and has an intimate relationship with her on the old mattress, in the following sequence of scenes, the female manager violently slaps her in the room, and Rawang also angrily wants to kill the Chinese man still on the old mattress. But the film never presents to us when and how the female manager or Rawang knows of any attractions between these characters.

On the other hand, there is no clue hinting that Rawang has a homosexual orientation, so temporal rifts are leapt over but also filled by directly connecting the most productively and dramatically quoted plots together, moving in an undivided presence. If each scene entirely develops its own causality, it will be impossible momentarily to hook them together running in the present discourse, because they have diverse origins and durations. In other words, referring to the sense of historicity, postmodern writing is contrary to modernism:

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<sup>227</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 333.

Hermeneutics sees history as a living dialogue between past, present and future, and seeks patiently to remove obstacles to this endless mutual communication.”<sup>228</sup>

As a result, although there are different beginnings, cannibalizations and interactions between the ramifying storylines driven by the different protagonists, Tsai refuses to give us a clear genetic map for each of their chronological developments. Instead, he creates this fantastic lacuna to provide multiple accesses for the audience to imagine spontaneously these concealed gap-bridges. On the other hand, all the scissions will reciprocate each other in the same temporal prolongation and this narrative discourse still remains in perpetual motion. Postmodern writing just strings together the different climaxes of each momentary effect as endless present motion:

As with any structure of exclusion, the moment then becomes an entity in its own right but only by virtue of the fact that it has arbitrarily excluded the relations that constitute it. One is hard pushed to explain what one means by a moment without reference to the past and the future, because it is structured by their exclusion.<sup>229</sup>

Hence, unlike the water in *Wayward Cloud* carrying the watermelon to an uncertain destination, in the last scene, when a heavy haze descends on the city, these three people, the homeless Chinese man, Rawang and the young woman just lie deeply asleep on the old mattress, slowly floating on the water, without the film telling us why and how they sleep together, or know and get along with each other. This beautiful lacuna creates the imaginary space for the audience to re-inscribe their texts from the rift in the teleological development. On the other hand, three people quietly sleeping on the old mattress just act as an exiled signifier aimlessly wandering on the playground without origin and end, but still in permanent motion. This marvelous textual lacuna is made by a productive structuration, in spite of its lacking the causal explanation in the consequential language system. Barthes has also explained this structuration :

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<sup>228</sup>.Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory*. TJ International . Padstow, Cornwall. 1996. p 65. .

<sup>229</sup>.Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. ST, MARTIN’S Press.. 1998. pp 81-82.

We are, in fact, concerned not to manifest a structure but to produce a structuration. The blanks and looseness of the analysis will be like footprints marking the escape of the text; for if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unitary; architectonic, finite: it is the fragment, the shards, the broken or obliterated network-all the movements and inflections of a vast “dissolve”, which permits both overlapping and loss of message.<sup>230</sup>

Therefore, this movement of producing a structuration will be progressing in the infinite language chain and it also goes astray from the teleological framework unable to manifest a linear development for its insufficient message in bridging the gap between cause and effect. However, owing to this dearth, this fragmentary network just can incessantly produce the momentary truth with no obvious trace linking from causality. In other words, it will be like the old mattress, finally becoming a raft and drifting towards an uncertain future to trigger its new present -becoming with no pause and past trace but movement.

## **CHAPTER 5 Learning from Kim Ki-Duk's Films**

### **Part 4 Postmodernism in Asian Cinema**

#### **5.1 *The Isle-2000***

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<sup>230</sup> Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*. Blackwell Press. 1991, p 20.

### 5.1.1 Erasing the locus of causal link and producing the incessant trigger

As in Tsai's film *Good Bye Dragon Inn* (2002) , where the audience just attend to see the film without us knowing about their arrival and departure, in *The Isle* ( 2000) all of the inaugural acts of causality driving the diverse storylines with the different characters staying at this fishing island have also been concealed. In other words, each of them including the female manager here is an anonymous person, an erased signifier not showing any past trace in this narrative structure. Therefore, the narrative fabrics in the process of producing the meaning have entirely disengaged from their indigenous commencements where the teleological development starts. This means that each part of the plot does not have to connect its preexisting text to build up a whole map to express the linear structure with the consequential language to fill up this causal and temporal rift, as it regards the whole as the process of producing the ceaselessly new trigger in order to create the presence of the present and momentum unpredictably emerging here and now.

Therefore, meaning-production cannot be a matter of filling a hole in a whole in depending on the external link with beginning without missing any pre-established message. It is the process of each decentralized part randomly blending with one another in the absence of its past. In other words, this dynamic continuum constituted by the fragmentary fabrics only produces each of its self-presence of the present. Derrida has exemplified the literature as a part without a whole as below:

No doubt literature, too, seems to aim toward the filling of a lack (a hole) in a whole that should not itself in its essence be missing (to) itself. But literature is also the exception to everything: at once the exception in the whole, the want-of-

wholeness in the whole, and the exception to everything, that which exists by itself, alone, with nothing else, in exception to all. A part that, within and without the whole, marks the wholly other, the other incommensurate with the whole.<sup>231</sup>

Hence, from the first scene, all the anonymous narrative elements are disseminated in floating fishing cabins scattered on a huge lake. Each of them is already here with no message about his background or why and how he came to stay and fish here. It also means that they lodge in these fishing cabins as the mobile signifiers erasing the origin in mapping out the whole. On the other hand, there is an unleashed moving signifier, the female manager of this fishing ground, whose history is also an enigma, ferrying the new comers to the finishing cabins or doing business with other guests. As such, she produces the present discourse with the momentary truth through her incessantly mingling with them, these exiled seeds with no past trace.

### **5.1.2 Dissemination**

In *The Isle*, all of the events merely take place in this fishing ground on the lake. The whole narrative structure is constructed by disseminated seeds flying here in order to create their new trigger, present-becoming. In other words, the inaugural places of consequential development in between cause and effect have been effaced by Kim and the biographical messages about these different people are still canceled. Thus, it also makes them like pollen disengaging from the flower in order to create their new continuum, happening in front of us.

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<sup>231</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press. 1981. p 56.

Therefore, in the film, one of guests is arrested by two policemen as they seek to check his ID card to identify him with a wanted man. This event takes place momentarily, without any harbinger; the policemen suddenly appear here, without expressing the causal process how and why they have come here to investigate the case. Another guest, the male protagonist, who is fishing in another floating cabin, commits suicide by swallowing fishhooks as soon as he saw that the man was caught by policemen. Later, both policemen also come to his cabin to continue the investigation, but they only find the female manager mopping the floor here, since the male protagonist has been sunk into the lake by her. These successive sequences of events create a momentary impact, because the message transmitted from the male protagonist's background is so insufficient that one cannot transparently interpret his suicide attempt.

On the other hand, Kim also never tells us when and how the male manager, a fantastic fluid signifier, comes here and save his life by putting him into the lake. Consequential progress is always blocked by the fragmentary development in time and space, because Kim just wants to trigger all the narrative scissions with the new beginning to create the momentum on this playground.

As such, when a bunch of beautiful prostitutes are ferried by the female manager to one of the fishing cabins, Kim also does not depict the whole narrative process of how the guests call for sex, but only attempts to depict all the textual components just promptly arriving here to produce the provisional novelty, with a hole in explaining where preexisting text took place outside this fishing ground. This postmodern truth stresses the momentary astonishment to produce the text by text itself, as the disseminated seeds freely land on new ground to create their new present- becoming.

### **5.1.3 Making the fishhooks into the meaning of difference, the same and new**

In *The Isle*, there are many scenes endowing fishhooks with different inconceivable meanings through sign- functions. Fishhook can always go outside of itself to make an entirely different itself to produce divergent truth in a variety of crucial, fatal, dangerous and exciting situations and to direct violence towards all humans.

Hence, these variable moments triggered from animality are far from the rational and harmonious model of social life purported in modernity. Kim just depicts the bloody violence inflicted throughout the whole film on humans and animals to show how the rough unwanted force raging in this fishing island has also entirely destroyed the humanist values and prestige based on modern civilization. In other words, it just claims that human life is like a fish on a hook. The intellectual and humanistic lives of the bourgeoisie have lost their way and become like fish out of water, imposed by a concatenation of brutal and dehumanized spectacles associated with fishhooks.

Kim deconstructs the general and uniform usage of fishhook by exiling it from its regular meaning in order to destabilize the truth of pulling fishhook outwards far from its logical association. These momentums produced from the shocking truth of fishhook are its marginal and peripheral meanings far beyond its general recognition, but they are replete with productive, impossible and paradoxical reality.

As a result, Kim just regards fishhook as a self-material and makes its centralizing meaning spare way to the margins to let it project out its marvelous self-reflexivity by breaking down itself from being a unit in the foundational narrative structure to join the different processes of producing the present- becoming in the temporal progress in *The Isle*. This makes the fishhook an instance of difference:

“Difference” were evil and already negative, so that it could produce affirmation only by expiation—that is, by assuming at once both the weight of that which is denied and negation itself.”<sup>232</sup>

Moreover, Kim also designs fishhooks as a series of different new triggers filling the temporal lacunas among the disconnected episodes as an innovative totality and this evil and negative itself also invents its plural and fluid meaning contextualized in a sequence of plots.

Hence, at the beginning, fishhook is posited in its original meaning of guests catching the fish. Later, Kim enchants with his wizardry on it to veer the development of storyline as the mobile progress of producing the fishhook with ceaselessly new and different presents. Therefore, after a guest, a wanted man, is shot in the lake for trying to escape arrest, he is drawn towards the fishing cabin by a policeman using a fishhook. On seeing the policemen coming to investigate the case, the male protagonist suddenly commits suicide by swallowing a throng of fishhooks, and he is also at once hidden under the water by the female manager. Later, after pulling him up with a fishing line, she proceeds to clear his throat of fishhooks with the aid of pliers.

Latter, one day when the male protagonist is steering the boat away, trying to leave her, the female protagonist takes a second throng of fishhooks and forces them into her vagina, and then powerfully pulls them outwards. Her unbearable pain makes her scream grievously and causes him to make his path back to her. He parts her legs and tries to take out the fishhooks from her genital organ, as well as

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<sup>232</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994, p53.

changing his attitude towards starting to look after her. In other words, the meaning of fishhooks invented by Kim has entirely encroached on the linguistic law of semiotics, as Derrida express it:

No ground of nonsignification –understood as insignificance or an institution of a present truth–stretches out to give it foundation under the play and the coming into being of signs. Semiotics no longer depends on logic. Logic according to Peirce, is only a semiotic:” Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for semiotics (semeiotike), the quasi-necessary, or formal, doctrine of signs”.<sup>233</sup>

Hence, it is somewhat similar to the watermelon having differently impossible meanings by Tsai in his film *Wayward Cloud* (2005). Fishhooks also do not have a given general sense as a sign to be represented with its logical association in the contextualization to express a regular experience and objective reality. In other words, it has a wayward and nomadic impulse to produce the unparalleled praxis of life and dehumanized sense by virtue of making itself different, negative and marginal.

#### **5.1.4 Deconstructing objects for prolonging the temporal sequence seamlessly in a dehumanized field**

Referring to the fragmentary structure in *The Isle*, although there is no linear narrative either exploring the interrelationship between cause and effect or centralizing the connection between the storylines activated by the different characters in this fishing ground, the material objects like iron wire, fishhooks, half-cut fish and cranes repeat again and again, not only to create the different new provisionality in a dearth of the continuously temporal identity, but also to link the disconnected narrative sequences in time through productively exchanging or displacing each other’s features. In other words, the meanings

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<sup>233</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p 48.

of these material texts play as a joint to bridge the gap in between each episode running in the ruptured temporal progress.

Hence, at the beginning of the film, the male protagonist uses iron wires to shape and knit a girl sitting on a swing as a delicate hand-made toy and gives it to the female manager, which indeed gives her a good impression of him. Later, this iron wire is transformed and changed into a fishhook. Continuously, Kim exiles this fishhook produced as a disconnected and incoherent material text with its own unprecedented paradigm to transmute itself as a crucial and fatal tool; to hook a seriously injured wanted man in the lake, to be swallowed for suicide, to perform self-mutilation for calling her lover back, to catch a fish and cut it in half by a man and a prostitute as well as for the female and male protagonist to re-catch the same half-cut fish, to saw a rift in the temporal sequence.

On the other hand, in the latter part of the film, after the female protagonist kills a prostitute who loves the male protagonist, and a pimp tries to find this missing prostitute, she sinks them like bait into the lake. Eventually, this fishhook is also displaced by a huge hook, a crane, used to lift up the motorcycle ridden by the dead prostitute and their corpses from the lake, like pulling up the fish. Therefore the meaning invented by the material object itself from iron wire to fishhooks to crane can be regarded as the process of destabilizing meaning as Derrida formulated it:

The indefinite process of supplementarity has always already infiltrated presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition and the splitting of the self. Representation in the abyss of presence is not an accident of presence; the desire of presence is, on the contrary, born from the abyss (the indefinite multiplication) of representation, from the representation of representation, etc. The supplement itself is quite exorbitant, in every sense of the word.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> . Ibid., p 163.

On the other hand, this succession of inhumane spectacles is also replete with animality derived from the supplementarity of fishhooks really shattering the modern utopia of purporting a rational and moral social life. The guests come to the finishing ground, not only to catch the fish but also to gratify their lust via fishing, this external action. In other words, all the fishing lodges floating on the lake are also like carriers of sex. Each guest uses fishhooks to indulge his corporeal sensuality but also destroys himself; eventually, and ridiculously, they are hooked out of the lake by fishhooks and cranes in this dehumanized field.

### **5.1.5 Sexuality is pleasure with pain to redeem the hopelessness. Medicine or perversion ?**

Like incest scene in *The River* (1997), in which Tsai rewrites the Oedipus complex institutionalized in Freud's theory, in *The Isle*, Kim also particularly depicts two sexual scenes for the male protagonist and the female manager, which take place at appalling moments, mingling contradictory and even shocking emotions together in order to subvert the thematic sense of pleasure written in the sexual paradigm. Both postmodern sexual texts have transgressed sexuality in its happy purity to the opposite field of agony in order to produce an indescribable ecstasy with the plural and paradoxical passion inscribed in the incongruently narrative structure. Moreover, this strikingly incommensurable sexual spectacle of having pleasure with the inflicting pain also oversteps the paradigm of sadomasochism theory, because Freud has taken up and reformulated the question of sadomasochism as below:

A person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else in a sexual relationship is also capable of enjoying as pleasure any pain which he may himself derive from sexual relation. A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the

active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may present his predominant sexual activity.<sup>235</sup>

Hence, the postmodern sublime, the momentary truth produced by Kim in *The Isle*, subverts this thematic sense of sexual perversion. The first episode of their sexual love happens suddenly under such a very incredible condition. On the female protagonist pulling the throng of fishhooks out of male protagonist's mouth, she just climbs on his body and spontaneously has sex with him. In other words, this is the fantastic simulacrum, because her passionate action imposed on a seriously injurious man has become such the incommensurable combination, which might express that she wants to use sexual pleasure to relieve his pain or rather that she wants to feel pleasure through producing pain in him as in the sadomasochist paradigm of Freud.

Thus sex for her is working as the displacement of medicine to remedy him due to his having seriously hurt himself. On the other hand, she may just abruptly desire to have sex with him to content her lustful need and also relieve his pain, but she is not a sadist as defined by Freud in enjoying her pleasure, because he suffers the unbearable pain from his suicide attempt not for preparing for an orgy of perverse sex. And this pain is not produced by her in him either.

In other words, Kim blends orgasm and agony together to produce sexuality as the unexplainable self-reflexivity as the momentary truth without being pinned down in any theory in order to subvert its fixed sense. Hence sexuality is not a pure sense of pleasure but combines the heterogeneous emotional and

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<sup>235</sup>. Sigmund, Freud. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. Cited in Deleuze, Gilles and Sacher-Masoch, Leopold. *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*. Zone Books, 1991, p 43.

physical senses incongruently to create the postmodern sublime rather than to represent the natural and institutional truth in modern paradigm about sexuality and sadomasochism.

The second sexual scene just takes place after the male protagonist returns in the motorboat and removes the fishhooks from her vagina. Then he also unexpectedly, roughly and immediately has intercourse with her. This is such an unbelievably sensational, bloody, striking and even disgusting moment and his reckless sexual behavior assumed on her badly injured genital organ has also become a terribly incommensurable and provisional composition, tremendously confusing the fundamental sense of enjoying perverse sexual pleasure in a modern paradigm.

Did he also really want to use this lustful joy to soothe her unbearable agony from her injured vagina? Or did he attempt to produce this physical ecstasy to compensate for his trying to leave her? Of course, all the answers must transgress the sadomasochism in Freud's theory, because Freud distinguishes two types of sadism:

The first is purely aggressive and only aims at domination; the second is hedonistic and aims at producing pain in others. The masochistic experience of a link between one's own pleasure and one's own pain falls between these two forms of sadism".<sup>236</sup>

In other words, this sexual scene reveals that she performs self-mutilation not waiting to have sex and being an ostensible masochist. The position she takes is utterly positive as well as has never felt hedonistic during this sexual progress. On the other hand, after his ejaculation, he is just suddenly crying without expressing any joyful emotion, because he still feels vacant and powerless from his trying to

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<sup>236</sup> . Ibid., p 43

rely on sexuality to redeem his or their hopeless life. It is also to say that being an ostensible sadist, in this sexual simulacrum, he has neither enjoyed pleasure nor given gratification to his lover.

Kim constitutes the passionate and sensual with traumatic fabrics incommensurably together to let them contaminate and assimilate each other to pluralize the text with polysemy. It also supplements the sexual pleasure with mobile, provisional and contradictory meaning to offend against its institutional knowledge or general cognition rather than to extend it from its paradigmatic sense. Hence, referring to sexual self-reflexivity in both scenes, they are nothing to do with morality, expressive aesthetic and logic but they invent clashing, interfering and exchanging features to overstep the foundational knowledge defining sadomasochism as sexual gratification from inflicting or submitting to physical or emotional abuse.

The protagonists have never really enjoyed corporeal pleasure from the interchanging process of melting violence and pain with sex and this incongruent passion has been transformed by Kim as a medicine to redeem their impotence, insecurity and void. Actually there is no definite answer and interpretation which can give to these paradoxical and provocative sexual spectacles as an uncontestable decipherment. Thus, it also opens thousands of accesses for us to re-inscribe its meaning beyond the modern sexual paradigm.

### **5.1.6 Stop in progress**

In the last scene in *The Isle*, the female protagonist kills herself, and her beautiful naked and pale corpse lies facing upwards, with both eyes open, in a small boat sinking under the water like a newly born baby.

Kim embodies her like a drifting signifier with an uncertain meaning. Therefore it also disengages far from the enclosed teleological structure attempting to reach a definite terminal to certify that there is no room to complement more messages to the further development of story as a full stop. Nevertheless, she restarts to exile herself toward the infinite difference via her self-proliferation, because she is waiting for supplementarity to keep herself in the permanently moving state like an uncompleted beautiful picture sleeping under the water.

Simultaneously, the male protagonist is confined in a drifting yellow fishing cabin wandering around the lake and carrying him toward an aimless destination, which is somewhat like the last scene in Tsai's film, *I do not want to sleep alone* (2006), the old mattress bringing the three sleeping people towards an uncertain place. In other words, this postmodern borderless playground can never be a place:

Semic place...glued to hermeneutic space: the point is always to locate in the perspective of the classic text a profound or final truth (the profound is what is discovered at the end).<sup>237</sup>

Therefore, Kim is also acting as a carrier of seeds and will disseminate them by his unpredictable engagement in this incalculable voyage to produce the different presents. Kim describes these bifurcate denouements in progress to generate meaning with the infinite difference and puts the story in ceaseless action toward the two limitless adventures. Hence both stops in movement work as the dual new and separate commencements in the story without revealing the final truth as an end.

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<sup>237</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher. 1992. pp171- 172.

## 5.2 *Bad Guy-2001*

### 5.2.1 Postmodernist new principles of chaos, contingency, spontaneity and organism

Modern politics was informed by strong normative values and utopian visions of a world of universal freedom, equality, and harmony<sup>238</sup>. The important tenets of modern social theory have the attempt to grasp systemic relations in society, to ground social critique in normative assumptions, or to transform society along emancipatory lines.<sup>239</sup>

This rational and specialized cultural mode has also been extended and utilized to reflect and enrich everyday life in different aspects; truth, normative rightness, authenticity and beauty represented from social life. In other words, the modern paradigm attempted to organize around mechanical metaphors, deterministic logic, individualism and humanist ideals to search for universal truths and values and to construct uniform and comprehensive schemes and knowledge.

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<sup>238</sup>. Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997. p 271.

<sup>239</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 270.

Nevertheless, Kim employs the new postmodernist principles that decry utopian and humanistic values as dystopian and dehumanizing; that abandon mechanical and deterministic schemes to subvert this overoptimistic purport of modernity. He opts to develop art and produce every day's social life with the utterly self-presence and individual praxis, which are lacking the humanist values and also transgress any truth legitimized by foundational and absolute knowledge, often to embrace a radical skepticism, relativism, and nihilism.

As such, Kim uses postmodern discourse to disillusion this utopian and humanist value presented in the aesthetical expression and moralizing life and also employs physical pain and violence as a direct outgrowth, the only type of immediate response to enable characters in film to spontaneously show their true lives on the fringes of Seoul. As such, it is a different characterization and narrative approach in depicting this postmodern life stance from Tsai's film *Vive L'amour* (1994), because the characters in his film are not outcasts but mentally void people, and they also chose the euphoric way of facing their plight rather than expressing their uneasiness and anger with bloody and violent methods.

Hence, at the beginning of *Bad Guy* (2001), the male protagonist (a gang boss), after aimlessly strolling around Seoul, sitting on a bench, he suddenly sees the female protagonist (a college student) enjoying a chat with her boy friend next to him. This sweet and warm spectacle unreasonably and instantly makes him fall for her. He strides over to her and forcibly kisses her. This film is thus abruptly triggered by the present discourse and its commencement does not provide prior information about the past, but promptly activates the story with a random beginning detached from history. In other words, this discourse is the sheer presence of the present through arbitrarily linking the incalculable contingency just taking place here and now, which will never express a deductive process with a strict causality and logic in interpreting why this event takes place.

However, the story just starts with this momentary present and the rough gang boss also exerts his utter spontaneity. He shows self-reflexivity with the first person pronoun “I” to speak of my story with my everyday praxis producing my present, instead of Kim using the third person “HE”, based on the established theory in the psychoanalysis paradigm to investigate and certify what my motivation is to kiss her with a logical interpretation as the science writing. Thus Kim depicts the male protagonist expressing his love, self-presence to this college student irrationally, unexplainably, and spontaneously, just to enjoy his momentary pleasure. This productive reflexivity happening in this urban life has erased the concept of archi-trace as a logo to actualize the interior representation. This momentary truth refuses to maintain the legibility of the historical originality, as described by Derrida:

Our aim is limited: to locate in Freud’s text several points of reference, and to isolate, on the threshold of a systematic examination, those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure, as this closure limits not only the history of philosophy but also the orientation of the “ human science”, notably of a certain linguistics.<sup>240</sup>

In other words, this is only the misconduct and outrageous improvisation of a gang boss working in a red light district encroaching on law and morality and he hardly notices her disgust at his violent kiss. Subsequently, a group of soldiers in the area become angry and severely beat him, which is typical postmodern writing; a clipped text escaped from its origin with emphasis on creating the provisionality without explaining where they come from in order to keep the storyline in ceaseless action. He is hurt and bleeding as well as being spat on by the college student. All the contextualizing fragments merely randomly link together from different unknown origins as the present discourse. Moreover, it does not

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<sup>240</sup> .Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 249.

scientifically explore this male protagonist's motivation and consciousness as a systematic examination bound in the enclosed linguistic system.

### **5.2.2 Keeping narrative in progress to catch here and now**

In the sequential developments of the plot lines, after the female and male protagonist separating from this metropolitan city, Seoul, one day the college student is just hanging around and reading books in a bookstore. The gang boss also coincidentally appears here and spies on her, which also lacks the linear structure of interpreting how he knows she will be here and how they would meet? In other words, this postmodern text just blends and keeps all the events in progress to catch here and now with the present discourse without tracing their respective commencements. Hence, postmodern writing never actually begins and its temporal rift in the consequential language should be bridged by manifesting the causality; always-already-there has been blurred by mingling the different incised texts into the continuum of the present discourse as an undivided presence.

In other words, this is a clipped text disregarding the textual commencement, whose past rupture has been filled by triggering off the scission with the insufficient messages fusing each other and running together in the present progress to create the sequence of momentums. Thus, as, Derrida has said:

In the indefiniteness of a past that has never been present, at the moment a scission triggers off the game and lights into the text”,<sup>241</sup>

In the same scene, the bookstore, Kim continuously blends the other disseminated seeds as a clipped text by means of effacing either where they fly from or how they settle here to transmute them into the inseminating process. Therefore, Kim makes the beautiful college student also coincidentally pick up a lost wallet put on a book in the bookstore, a trap set up by the gang boss, but how this conspiracy was made without being known as a causal message. Then, when she takes the money out of the wallet in the rest room and hurriedly leaves, a man just rushes in there, finds the discarded wallet and also immediately runs out to catch her.

These successive events are integrated by fragmentary scissions which lack any inaugural act, strung together by contingencies to create the unpredictable present continuum rather than all events being linked with causal glue, enunciated by the third-person pronoun with the guarantee, to represent a clear correlation between each story line from its beginning.

All the scissions organize the whole narrative framework from beginning to end in *Bad Guy*, detached from their initial points without representing the preceding history and viewing themselves as completely autonomic new triggers without bearing a past trace but incessantly producing the progressing action through randomly mingling with each other to invent numerous fantastic momentums.

Hence, on stealing money and leaving the bookstore, the college student is immediately caught by the man and taken to a brothel to be pressed into prostitution. She takes out a loan and agrees to pay the

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<sup>241</sup> . Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 340.

money back to him. Nevertheless, the gang boss is working here, and it has never unfolded how he intends and intrigues to catch her. Another example is, after being caught by the gang boss for escaping from the brothel, she is taken by him to a beautiful beach where a girl is committing suicide by walking slowly toward sea until the high waves overwhelm her. Eventually the college student picks up a photograph left by her on the sand. In other words, all the fragmentary scissions have different unrevealed origins and always keep themselves in motion, in the organically and dynamically progressing state. Moreover, these clipped parts spontaneously blend into each other in order to invent the ceaseless new present- becoming with provisional novelty again and again.

### **5.2.3 An amphibian text, destabilizing answer between right and wrong**

The modern paradigm emerged in society organized around mechanical metaphors, deterministic logic, critical reason, individualism and humanist ideals, a search for universal truths and values”<sup>242</sup>,

However, postmodern text has never been as monumental and profound as to discover and manifest an unquestionable and ultimate truth, but merely attempts to produce a string of momentary, hallucinatory and superficial texts to destabilize truth. It will never provide a determinate answer and never identifies sense:

The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. The result of philosophy is not a number of “philosophical propositions”, but to make proposition clear.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup>. Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997, p 18.

<sup>243</sup>. Wittgenstein, Ludwig’s statement cited in Schlick, Moritz. *The Future Of Philosophy*. In Rorty, Richard (ed). *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*. The University of Chicago Press.1967. p 52.

Hence, postmodern text is constituted by the present discourse with a self-contradictory theme and discursive framework, which does not attempt to discover the ultimate truth but always declares a middle answer, mobilizing between right and wrong. In other words, the world also can never be composed by a logical structure to organize the sentences to assert a particular fact:

An “ideal” language must be neither vague nor ambiguous. Perhaps even more important is requirement of being “logical”  
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By means of discourse progressing incoherently and unsteadily with self-contradictory content, straying from an exact path towards an absolute truth, this determination and judgment to explore the fact will sometimes get closer to a positive assertion and also sometimes suddenly switch closer to a negative assertion without ceasing its motion in order to produce the continuously provisional supposition. In other words, these mutably transmitted messages from the postmodern text will never reveal a definite entrance to access a confirmed truth there. This postmodern text has also been described by McHale:

The essential trope of fiction, writes the postmodernist novelist Ron Sukenick, “is hypothesis, provisional supposition, a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as of disbelief”. This captures informally an intuition about the special logical status of the fictional text, is condition of being in-between, amphibious-neither true nor false suspended between belief and disbelief.<sup>245</sup>

As such, from the beginning to the end in *Bad Guy*, all the messages conveyed from each episode are maintained to assume a supposition with an amphibious answer, an in-between, a middle interpretation,

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<sup>244</sup> .Copi, Irving. Language Analysis And Metaphysical Inquiry. In Rorty, Richard (ed ). *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*. The University of Chicago Press.1967.p 129.

<sup>245</sup> . McHale, Brian. *Postmodernism Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 33.

which is giving a neither true nor false belief, and is contextualized as a contradictory supposition to disorient a conclusion. Thus, does the gang boss really love the young college student, or wish to hurt her? The answer has also been depicted as a process of dialectic by Kim, blending love with hurt incommensurably together to articulate this amphibian text in depicting his motivation and deed. This postmodern truth never presents a sheer validity to clarify the supposition and also directly shatters this dichotomized possible world, excluding the middle answer in the modern paradigm.

Therefore, with the development of story, it unfolds that he loves her, so he sets her up to be made to come to the brothel where he is working. He hurts her, because he also makes her become a hooker. He loves her, yet feels deeply inferior while facing her, so he has never touched her and always silently hides himself behind a secret mirror, watching her having sex with other men to superficially enjoy this voyeurism as he performs his vigilance of the sexual clients in order to protect her.

However, this ostensible voyeurism has transgressed the psychoanalysis paradigm and has also been written with the postmodernist text, because according to his position in the brothel, he indeed has the power to have sex with her and does not need the sexual replacement of deriving his sexual gratification from observing her sexual acts, especially from a secret vantage point. Moreover, he has never got excitement from this, he does not delight in his voyeurism, but it always enables him to order his men to rescue her from danger in advance.

Continuously, he hurts her, since she does not have to be here and do this job. He loves her and protects her. When, he finds a client having sex with her roughly, he orders the other pimps to rescue her at once. But if he really loves her, how he can tolerate that she works as a hooker and has sex with so many men every day? Why she must suffer like this? Hence, Kim creates sequence of tremendously self-

contradictory constructs beyond the inner logic in the modern language and orchestrates the plot line with this ridiculous and incongruent syntagmatic structure to make this oppositional linguistic units, love and hurt exchange, transgress, contaminate and permeate each other as amphibian writing.

Nevertheless, just because it oversteps the boundary of the binary apposition and constitutes the incommensurable linguistic chain, the resolution and judgment to assert the proposition will be swayed backwards and forwards between positive and negative assertion and also create the incessant provisional suppositions. The thematic of postmodernist text against classical logic can be explained thus:

Classical logic recognizes three such modalities: necessity, possibility, impossibility. Propositions about the real world fall under the modality of necessity. Propositions in fiction; they require, in short, “suspension of belief as well as of disbelief”... .... Umberto Eco thinks not. He excludes logical impossibility from the propositions that constitutes worlds: every proposition must be either true or false of a possible world; it cannot be both true and false.<sup>246</sup>

For Kim, true and false modality can not only coexist in propositions without obeying the law of excluding the middle, but they can also exchange positions in a narrative development. Truth in a postmodern text is not a product which means that all the contextualizing elements should unite together to support this mutual goal to prove the propositions always demarcated by a definitely positive or negative confirmation. Hence, it always provides a shapeable text with the unstable assertion waiting to be modified and reproduced as the new provisional proposition, which cannot be either true or false but destabilized in between them. In other words, this ambiguity transmitted from the text designed by Kim

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<sup>246</sup> . Ibid., p 33.

is somewhat similar to Tsai's film *Vive L'amour*, when the columbarium salesman masturbates under the bed, while knowing there is heterosexual intercourse taking place on the bed. Afterwards, he climbs on the bed and kisses the man who lies there; hence his sexual preference is ambiguous.

Therefore, going on this sense of an impossible world, of suspension of belief and of disbelief, in *Bad Guy*, the female protagonist certainly hates the gang boss. After she finds out he has set her up to be a prostitute, and particularly when she is forcefully brought back after escaping from the brothel. However, Kim does not follow modern linguistics with its emphasis on the binary opposition to depict the conflict taking place between how she continuously fights to run away from the brothel and how the gang boss also simultaneously tries to confine her in the red light district, as a long circuit of narrative development to reveal who finally wins this game.

Kim is not constrained by this classically logical thinking in contextualizing this necessity, the college's student's goal of returning home as a purposeful development towards an end. In other words, he creates a third, middle and in-between modality without guiding the development of the plot line bound by her initial attempt to assert if it is possible or impossible for her to return to her original life, but activates the different present-becoming with no return and denouement.

Hence, since being taken back by the gang boss, while on her way home after escaping from the brothel, she has been living under his protection. During this time period, he has also saved her several times from other pimps' attempts at rape and gangsters' sexual assaults, which just triggers her story with the different present-becoming entirely detached from her original attempt. Even though all of her sufferings are inflicted by him, she also changes and comes to appreciate that he protects her from harm, so the

postmodern text is required to be produced as the chain of the new becoming progressing in time without being reduced to a rational deductive system like the readerly, classic text:

The readerly is controlled by the principle of non-contradiction, but by multiplying solidarities, by stressing at every opportunity the compatible nature of circumstances, by attaching narrated event together with a kind of logical “paste”...it assumes the careful and suspicious mien of an individual afraid of being caught in some flagrant contradiction.”<sup>247</sup>

Therefore, unlike readerly text, in the prison scene, where the gang boss has taken the place of his friend on a murder charge, and is waiting to be executed, she just screams to him, shedding bitter tears. She says, “You cannot stay here! Get out of here! Get out of here!” Actually, he wants to die, as he loves her and purposely creates the chance to let her leave the brothel, the aim of which completely deviates from his original motivation, and produces the new present- becoming. On the other hand, she really wants him out of jail, because she hates him, considering that her nasty situation is actually imposed by him, and she also loves him, not wanting him to stay behind bars, as she needs his care and shelter, in spite of his ruining her life.

In other words, her internal intention has also been entirely detached from her original intention and creates a paradoxical text, a fantastic deferral of ultimate truth. In addition, she has become a filthy prostitute already. Even though she could return to her normal life, she would now be deemed reprehensible by the social values legitimized by law and morality and would remain an outcast in modern society. Therefore, after being released from prison, the gang boss sets her free from the brothel and she seems happy to regain her freedom. However, after she aimlessly strolls around the streets and places in Seoul where they met together, she still tries to go back to be with this rogue who destroyed

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<sup>247</sup> . Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell Publisher. 1992. p 156.

her future, as she now feels so isolated from this normal urban life. She has become marginalized, unable to situate herself in the society. McHale has also referred to this amphibian postmodernist discourse describing the world:

Postmodernist discourse is precisely the discourse that denies the possibility of ontological grounding...an ontology is a description of a universe, not of the universe; that is, it may describe any universe, potentially a plurality of universe. In other words to “do”, in this perspective is not necessarily to seek some grounding for our universe; it might just as appropriately involve describing other universes, including “possible” or even “impossible” universes.<sup>248</sup>

This possible world in the postmodernist text will no longer be dichotomized as the propositions with an absolute recognition of true and false excluding the third modality. The beliefs and disbeliefs posited in the binary oppositional poles can also be exchanged or mingled together. In other words, hate can be transformed to love and vice versa, or hate can coexist with love in order to constitute a contradictory text disregarding their origins and ontology as in the real life of human beings in this impossible world

#### **5.2.4 Refusing the end as a conclusion, but creating it as the new trigger in**

##### **action**

The nature of the phenomenon in temporal circulation has provided the taken-for-granted paradigm as a core thought, a notation capped by a conclusion in a sequentially logic development, such as begin/end, continue/stop. This is also the purport of the readerly text:

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<sup>248</sup>. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernism Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 27.

The law of value of the readerly, is to fill in the chains of causality; for thus each determinant must be, insofar as possible, determined, so that every notation is intermediary, doubly oriented, caught up in an ultimate progression”.<sup>249</sup>

Therefore this principle just makes classic narrative becomes basically subjected to the logic-temporal order and the chains of causality. In the narrative process, the entire crisis taking place in the temporal development should be settled by a series of actions as an end. Everything that has been written and posited in a dense tension naturally requires an eventual decipherment as a denouement in order to indicate an unquestionable answer in this teleological movement progressing in an organic and schematic structure.

Nevertheless, *Bad Guy* is a writerly text not establishing any absolute conclusion as an ending to resolve all the questions as a transparent and stationary denouement. Barthes has also claimed that the writerly text should tear down the enclosed linguistic system; therefore he raised a concept of “knot”.<sup>250</sup> It is to say, the knot should be situated at the peak of the crisis in order to divert its discoursing path to a new trigger, so it is not an outcome, but a new starting point disseminated from the conclusion.

As such, in the last scene of *Bad Guy*, both of them just leave brothel and face their goalless future without knowing how to start their new life but just wandering around the city. However, one day, the male protagonist acquires a pick-up and modifies it as a mobile brothel in order to keep soliciting man to have sex with the girl he loves to make their living on an aimless journey. In the final shot, after finishing having sex with a client, she just goes to squat with him by sea and then they drives off in the pick-up to travel to another place. Thus this story never comes to an end but just starts again; this

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<sup>249</sup>.Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Blackwell . 1992. pp 181-182.

<sup>250</sup>.The discourse could suddenly think of something else, abandon its obsession with telling the whole story, change direction in order to produce a more effective network; curiously, we call the knot (the story). Roland, Barthes. *S/Z*. Blackwell Press, 1992, p 52.

floating signifier and seed (the mobile brothel) will be disseminated anywhere and also will integrate with other linguistic units to continue this story in permanent movement.

In other words, there is no story that should be written with a full stop as an end to manifest that a final decipherment has resolved the last puzzle to cease all of the narrative movements. On the contrary, the value and definition of the denouement should not conform to the modernist principle as a pause in the logic-temporal development. Therefore, Kim just puts an end to the process of untiringly producing the different present- becoming with pick-up aimlessly wandering in this impossible world.

### **5.3 *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter.....and Spring- 2003***

#### **5.3.1 Transgressing the rule of stratification and constituting living beings as a**

##### **gram**

In the Classical age, three notions: mathesis, taxinomia, genesis- were designated not so much as separate domains as a solid grid of kinships that define general configuration. One of these empirical eruditions, whose purport and rule used to demarcate things by means of an accurately structuring order, is called taxonomy. According to Foucault:

Taxinomia is a science of order-a qualitative mathesis. But understood in the strict science mathesis is a science of equalities, and therefore of attributions and judgments; it is a science of truth”.<sup>251</sup>

Actually, taxonomy not only situates objects into differentiated realms according to their objective essences institutionalized by scientific knowledge of beings, but this circumscription of things also guides us to establish the table of visible identities and differences. Therefore genesis starts to play a crucial role as a definitional and authoritative sense associated with things in order to manifest the linkage between hermeneutics and resemblance derived from their indigenous names and meanings.

On the contrary, in the “Spring” section in this film, Kim entirely subverts the purport of taxonomic category and depicts a boy who is a monk, a carrier and a constructor of an unleashed sign, rowing a boat to his free play ground, a forest located behind a temple and circled by the lake. All the natural things here for him have lost their objective essences in the taxonomical classification and he puts them in play without any structural sense.

As such, he just joyfully and freely regards these objects and beings as exiled linguistic units, signifiers, in this poetic and picturesque play ground in order to constitute them randomly in play through his everyday praxis with the profound self-reflexivity, disregarding any constraint from any linguistic law. Therefore, after swimming in the lake here, the boy just uses a rope with a small stone tied to it and successively catches a fish, a frog and a snake. He fastens them by this small stone tied with rope, which makes them move very exhaustingly and clumsily and this also pleases him very much.

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<sup>251</sup>. Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things : An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences*. Rutledge 1991, p 74.

In other words, the boy monk's self-reflexivity has also encroached on taxonomic category. Referring to the empirical essence, a stone tied with rope has become the heterogeneous coupling resulting from both of them being attributed to the different stratifications. On the other hand, the natural quality of stone is also different from that of fish, frog and snake and there is also no any close affinity or resemblance among these elements. A rope is usually used to tether a horse or cow; rather than these things described above, creating an illogical association.

The boy monk messes up the uniform order and homogeneity of the natural beings attributed in the hierarchical structure to produce his present discourse willy-nilly through his everyday praxis. He spontaneously invents the reality with the simulacrum rather than only representing an objective reality. This, overthrows the theory of semiology, in accordance with Foucault:

Just as interpretation in the sixteenth century, with its superimposition of a semiology upon a hermeneutics, was essentially a knowledge based on similitude, so the ordering of things by means of sign constitutes all empirical forms of knowledge based upon identity and difference".<sup>252</sup>

Hence, the boy monk really puts signs into play with his self-reflexivity, disregarding the inner logic among the natural beings, and creates the provisional and fantastic novelty via erasing the knowledge of resemblance in identifying the things. In addition, fastening a rope with a small stone to a fish, a frog and a snake is like putting the heterogeneous and ubiquitous elements together in order to denaturalize the generic system and to produce the performative and impossible meaning. Hence, Deleuze has also repudiated taxonomic category:

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<sup>252</sup>. Ibid., p 57.

The great taxonomic units-genera, families, orders and classes-no longer provide a means of understanding difference by relating it to such apparent conditions as resemblances, identities, analogies and determined oppositions. On the contrary, these taxonomic units are understood on the basis of such fundamental mechanisms of natural selection as difference and the differentiation of difference.<sup>253</sup>

On the other hand, this provisional novelty results from the boy monk's cruel treatment of these creatures without considering their suffering and only wanting to satisfy his momentary pleasure through binding them into play. Hence, this is an actualization of postmodern writing:

The advent of writing is the advent of this play; today such a play is coming into its own, effacing the limit starting from which one had thought to regulate the circulation of signs.<sup>254</sup>

However, even though the boy monk creates this postmodern text, in the sequential scenes, after observing his misconduct, the master of the temple just continues the process of generating meaning in action in this advent of writing and play by means of ordering that he should also walk with a stone tied with a rope fastening him in order to feel other creatures' distress, until he can discover and release all the living beings abused by him, otherwise his misdeed will bind him forever.

In other words, the master also designates the boy monk to continuously produce his new becoming with his present discourse, because nothing can be predicted in the process of his searching for creatures hurt by him and all contingencies also will appear in front of him. On the other hand, it does not matter a stone with a rope tied on anything, which will be attributed to a structure of grammatology, a boy and a

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<sup>253</sup>. Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press. 1994. p24.

<sup>254</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. John Hopkins University Press, 1976, p 7.

group creatures coupled with a thing, stone, in constituting the postmodern text and it is against the linguistic rule of structuralism. In other words, it does not need to connect other elements to generate the meaning but can produce provisional meaning by self-multiplicity, because this gram has been as a person or thing that couples or links together. This is also somewhat similar to the scene in Tsai's film *Vive L'amour* in combining the loving-making on the bed with the masturbating under the bed to let two different signs juxtapose and reciprocate each other in same space to create the unexplainable meaning in a structure of grammatology.

### **5.3.2 Signs lacking the first birth and creating the same and new**

In the second section, "Summer", the boy monk, a carrier of free signifiers, has grown up to be an adolescent and cannot bear the anguish of his monotonous life in the mountains. He cannot resist the temptation and warmth from a heterosexual girl who comes to the temple to rehabilitate her health. On the other hand, although there is a big temporal gap between two sections, Kim continuously defers the meaning of all the signifiers in "Spring" in the infinite slippage by means of mingling them with the different narrative components progressing in these same places circling the temple to trigger new meaning without repeating their resemblances.

In other words, all the signifiers have been erased from their original meanings supplemented in "Spring" in order to be put into play again but these new provisional compositions also reveal the intractable sin that still accompanies. He rows the same boat with this young lady to his forest behind the temple to release his lust rather than to have simple fun here as before, and also has sex with her on a big rock beside the lake rather than catching the fish and swimming here as before. Moreover, he also has sex with her on this boat, and one night, he rows it, swirling around the lake, to dissipate his sexual anxiety

rather than using it as a means of pleasure-seeking as before. Actually, they do love each other, and at twilight they just sit side by side behind a shoe containing a pair of happy fishes swimming rather than a piteous creature as tortured by him before.

Hence, although these signs repeat in the same field, they also trigger the new meaning detached from the origin as the same and new; they have also been consecutively posited in the progress to produce the meaning in the indefinite difference without a logocentric nomination. In other words, language has always existed in a state of emptiness remaining under an insufficient condition in order to enable itself to integrate with other narrative elements without feeling full, but always starving to produce the different present. This meaning of difference has also been enunciated by Derrida as below:

Difference is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be "present", appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element.<sup>255</sup>

Therefore, at the end of the "Summer" section, the adolescent takes a wooden statue of the Buddha and rows the boat away from the temple to start a beautiful life. However, in the "Fall" section, he has become an adult, a murderer who has killed his wife and eventually he is taken away by two policemen from the temple. This causes the master to pile woods in it on the lake and to terminate his life by burning himself. In other words, the boat has been transformed as a master's terminal of life.

At the beginning of the "Winter" section, when the entire lake is completely frozen, the former monk comes back to the temple from prison, and finds the master's remains in this same boat, which is like a

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<sup>255</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. Difference. in Cahoon, Lawrence (ed), *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, Blackwell Press, 2003, p 231.

cremation. He brings these memorial things to the temple and starts his new life. In other words, this boat in the sign-function has been produced as the same and new as below

For us there is no word, nor in general a sign, which is not constituted by the possibility of repeating itself. A sign which does not repeat itself, which is not already divided by repetition in its first time, is not a sign”.<sup>256</sup>

Moreover, these different provisional truths created from the same thing in the diachronic development are also an invention, as explained entailed by Derrida:

No matter how little we retain of the semantic load of the word ” invention”, no matter what indeterminacy we leave to it for the moment, we have at least, the feeling that an invention ought not, as such as it first emerges, have a status. At the moment when it erupts, the inaugural invention ought to overflow, overlook, transgress, negate (or, at least-this is a supplementary complication-avoid or deny) the status.<sup>257</sup>

Therefore, it is somewhat similar to the watermelon invented with different meanings by Tsai in *Wayward Cloud* (2005). The meaning of this boat is also supplemented by the present discourse progressing in a spatio-temporal transformation to hollow itself, making itself different with the invention without returning to its origins. In other words, the thing and space are same but have been inscribed with the new self-praxis as the individual’s free practice to produce the different present-becoming without imposing a center on a sign to deplete its totalization.

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<sup>256</sup> Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press , 1984, xxii (Foreword).

<sup>257</sup> .In Attridge, Derek(ed). *Jacques Derrida: Acts Of Literature* . Routledge, 1992. p335.

### 5.3.3 Ceaselessly reshuffling the preexisting texts with the nonorganic structure

Jameson has proposed a term, “reification”, to state the dissociation between the sign and its reference as the follows:

Reification, a force whose logic is one of ruthless separation and disjunction, of specialization and rationalization”.<sup>258</sup>

Certainly, this force also breaks the traditional referential meaning asunder from its sign and also enters into an open field of language, disjoining the sign from the reference without remaining its conceptualized reality. In other words, this marvelously immeasurable referential distance from the sign creates the hallucinatory moment and also completely enjoys the free-floating utopian existence.

As such, in the “Fall” section, after being saved from suicide by his master, the former monk is severely beaten by him, as the master tries to find a way to tranquilize his fear and anxiety. Then, the master completely exerts his self-reflexivity and invents his present by virtue of holding his cat and using its tail to dip the ink and writing the Buddhist scripture on the wooden square in front of the temple. His innovative, improvising and spontaneous performativity has subverted this reference, scripture, embodied as a sacred sign, because it should be written by a hair-brush in calligraphy on a piece of fine paper or on a grand wall inside the temple in order to represent its divine value. However, Kim depicts this master and constitutes his writerly text by the postmodern writing through integrating the heterogeneous narrative elements together to invent the fantastic and unprecedented momentum.

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<sup>258</sup>. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press. 1991, p 90.

A cat's tail does not have affinity and resemblance with a hair-brush, because it is neither a pen nor a tool that can be used to write words with ink. Similarly, all the historical Buddhist scriptures are written or printed on delicate paper with graceful calligraphy, which cannot be displaced by a wooden square as an arbitrary substitute, because this space is a common and public place only for graffiti. In other words, this provisional composition lacks inner logic but produces a simulacrum.

As a result, this saintly reference, scripture, is written by a cat's tail with ink on a wooden square. It loses its sublimity but becomes formless postmodern art with more popularization, and also creates the spatial present. This momentary meaning of space is also been created by Tsai in *The Hole* (1997) and *Wayward Cloud* (2005) through the approach of montage writing, combining the two different kinds of the genre-texts together in supplementing the provisional truth on the original space as a utopian space. However, Kim just depicts the master exerting his self-reflexivity and performativity directly creating art on this wood square in order to produce the momentary mirage for this space.

Hence, the master is also an avant-gardist, constructing fabrics disregarding their ontological truth and breaking their hierarchy to let them freely graft, penetrate and even contaminate each others' referential meaning to demolish an organic whole and to explore a new territory. Hence, it also becomes the unparalleled and unexplainable totality composed by the different components coming from various sorts as a nonorganic work of art. In other words, the composition of a cat's tail, ink, calligraphy, wooden square and scripture has also become the avant-gardist work, which has lost its sense of solemnity as an intellectual and monumental work, but is produced as an emancipatory work consisting of the various autonomous elements which are unfamiliar and even alien from each other. Burger has also described avant-gardiste as follows:

Whereas in the organic work of art, the structural principle governs the parts and joins them in a unified whole, in the avant-gardiste work, the parts have a significantly larger autonomy vis-à-vis the whole. They become less important as constituent elements of a totality of meaning and simultaneously more important as relatively autonomous signs.<sup>259</sup>

On the other hand, in the middle of writing the scripture on the wooden square, this avant-gardist, master also orders his disciple, the murderer, to use a knife to carve each word written by him on it. Therefore, he not only becomes composed in his mind through sculpting the Buddhist scripture, but also creates a new provisional novelty by means of reproducing the original text. He looks like the other avant-gardist, concentrating on carving these ostensibly sacred words chisel by chisel. Even when two policemen come to arrest him they are also hindered by the master in order to let him carry on carving until he finishes it before being put under arrest.

Actually, this should be an episode described with tension for the policemen, having to keep vigilant eyes on him, but Kim employs a postmodernist narrative device to carnivalize this nervous and stressful atmosphere by tearing down the relation of the binary opposition between the police and the criminal through depicting the policemen, as feeling touched by his dedication and even being willing to hold a candle to let him continue his work after dark. This provisional reality shapes them like a friend in the diachronic transformation.

After he finishes his works of art, and falls asleep on the wooden square, the master also continuously reproduces this scripture by coloring the carved words in paint. Hence,

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<sup>259</sup> Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Manchester University Press, 1984, pp 83-84.

Postmodernism theory can thus finally raise to the level of the system itself as well as its most intimate propagandas, which celebrate the innate freedom of an increasingly absolute self-reproduction.<sup>260</sup>

This presence of the spatial present created by this nonorganic art just produces the continuously fantastic simulacrum progressing in action. This development of each stage always transforms its prior model as the new becoming with enjoying the innate freedom in its self-reproduction.

### **5.3.4 Meaning is context-bound, but context is boundless to catch the undivided**

#### **presence in motion**

Postmodern text is constructed with the spontaneous narrative elements always progressing in motion far from their origins and past traces in order to produce the different presents in the temporal and spatial transformation:

This synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived or living present. It is in this present that time is deployed.<sup>261</sup>

Therefore, all the narrative development will seemingly be regarded as a natural circulation that always has been progressing in the ceaseless movement. In this diachronic transition, the immediate presence

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<sup>260</sup> .Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press.1991, p 65.

<sup>261</sup> . Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994. p70.

incessantly produced in the syntagmatic system will also fill up the temporal rift as the pure present discourse progressing in an undivided presence. On the other hand, referring to this undivided presence, this whole linguistic structure is constituted by successive scissions as a fragmentary composition bridging the hiatus of causality developed in a temporal sequence in order to produce the infinite present with no full stop.

Hence, in *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring* (2003), although the narrative structure is constructed by a sundered circulation of four seasons with the obvious natural transformation incarnated as a spatial and temporal continuity embedded in the narrative development, there is no ostensible past and future tense of narrative manifested in the logic-temporal progress. In other words, the whole narrative framework in the film is constituted by the various clipped texts, which incessantly trigger off the development of story from the different new becoming escaping from their inaugural acts by erasing their past and also directly participating in the process of producing the pure presence.

Hence, in the “Summer” section, a sick girl comes with her mother to the temple for quiet recuperation. This is just as the fantastic clipped text, without informing its coming in advance, also immediately connecting the preceding “Spring” section as the following new present. It has detached from its indigenous hearth and promptly takes the boat crossing from the town gate in the lake to get here, like a disseminated seed, scattered in this lake area and spontaneously engaging in the process of producing the incessantly present- becoming.

In the “Fall “section, a murderer suddenly appears back at the temple to avoid police arrest. This is also a marvelous scission, without displaying its prior sequence at all, just successively and instantly linking the denouement still in progress from the “Summer “section which had presented him (as an adolescent)

taking a boat and leaving the temple without furthermore manifesting his destination. Therefore, both events, leaving without arriving in any place in the past future, and coming back without starting from any place in the present past, just integrate each other as the postmodern continuum of creating an undivided presence.

In the “Fall” section, once arriving at the temple, the murderer has been depicted as blended in the present discourse without recollecting his past trace, when he used to have a life here or after he left here. Therefore Kim only describes how he expresses his pure presence of the present with self-reflexivity, as confronting his life dilemma here and now. Eventually, he is taken away by the policemen without displaying his life in prison marking a full stop. However, in the “Winter” section, the temporal connection in filling the spatio-temporal gap is the same as above mentioned in order to maintain the narrative passage posited in the present progress. This has also been stated as a third time-image by Deleuze:

The third concerns the series of time, which brings together the before and the after in a becoming, instead of separating them; its paradox is to introduce an enduring interval in the movement itself. The three time- image all break with indirect representation, but also shatter the empirical continuation of time, the chronological succession, the separation of the before and the after. They are thus connected with each other and interpenetrate.<sup>262</sup>

Hence, sequentially, a bald man comes here in the “Winter” section without showing his departure place, and the following succession of scissions are just strung as a chain of present- becoming, showing

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<sup>262</sup>.Deleuze,Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Athlone Press.1989, p 155.

neither the past nor the future. The starts triggered by the momentary instants are not real beginnings and the abrupt denouements ceasing the progression of scissions are not real ends either. However, when both living parts connect with each other, it will produce an undivided presence in filling the interval in the chronological succession.

On the other hand, at the end of *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring*, it just expresses that many circulations of the four seasons have passed with the spatio-temporal transition, and eventually a new spring comes. The infant left by his mother to the former monk in the “Winter” section has grown into a child, who is played by the same actor as the boy in the first section, and is adopted by him. This is somewhat similar to the same actor acting the two different fathers in Tsai’s film, *What Time Is It There?* (2001), creating a new beginning without giving an end to the film.

So, this present discourse also shows that there is no end in film and this end is always the new beginning still in the progress of producing its new presence of the present. As such, even though this “Spring” and same child designated by Kim may materialize which is the same as when the master raised him before, now both signs have also been metamorphosed and merged with the chronological succession to invent the new present- becoming through making the difference from the resemblance with its own reproduction.

This unprecedented new becoming promptly emerges in the new “Spring” and becomes a new advancing present linked from the preceding present with no halt. The gap in the chronological succession has been filled by a series of new becomings seamlessly interconnecting each other in the untiringly progressing movement. In other words, this new “Spring” has been metamorphosed in the

process of producing the infinite difference with no conclusion and resolution as an end and this story is just starting.

#### **5.4 *Samaritan Girl*- 2004**

##### **5.4.1 Sexuality is the present discourse produced by the individual paradigm**

###### **merely for its own self-presence**

The essential method used by postmodernists to analyze sexuality does not reside in a matter of physical excitement or mental solace etched by the physiology and medical theories. These attempts to sustain the privileged knowledge written by scientific discourse in the West and institutionalized by means of utilizing an enormous apparatus to explore the subject based on systematic examinations, experiments and machinery, as an incitement to deduce an ordered system of discourse as a uniform truth. Instead, in the postmodern paradigm, sexuality is the unprecedented present discourse enunciated by self-reflexivity and also functions in the fantastic process of self-production detached from any law, morality and foundational knowledge.

Therefore, sex cannot become something fundamental, controllable, or deductable. All the established discourses concerning it should be problematized like the clinical, statistical and psychoanalytical discoveries by Freud specified already:

On the threshold of a systematic examination, those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained logocentric closure, as this closure limits not only the history of philosophy but also the orientation of the “human sciences”, notably of certain linguistics. If the Freudian break-through has an historical originality, this originality is not due to its peaceful coexistence or theoretical complicity with this linguistics, at least in its congenital phonologism.<sup>263</sup>

In other words, the thematic sense between sign and sex also provides the granted interpretation, deduced through a methodical system of discovering the decipherment of metaphorical models, so a psychological theory deserving any consideration must furnish an explanation of memory. As Derrida writes:

Freud invokes the signs which do not transcribe living, full speech, master of itself and self-present”.<sup>264</sup>

Hence, the aim to illuminate the meaning of a sexual trace in general and eventually as the identical representation extended from the metaphorical signification to institutionalize the sexual paradigm with the popular sense in the modernist writing. However, in the postmodern paradigm, sex is incomparable experience and is completely driven by individual spontaneity to carry out the self-praxis without being grounded in any established expertise in order to produce sex as the unrepresentative personal practice with a specific intensity and quality.

As such, in *Samaritan Girl* (2004), the reason that the first girl in the film engages in prostitution is that she needs the money to pay for a European trip to enjoy her spiritual life. Moreover, she also always mentions that there was a prostitute in India who tried to convert all of her clients to Buddhism after she had sex with them. As a result, it becomes a postmodernist text with an inconceivable self-contradiction

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<sup>263</sup> . Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. The University of Chicago Press. 1981.p 249.

<sup>264</sup> .Ibid., p 249.

in producing sexual discourse without concerning a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law, and taboo and also transgressing all of its logical, systematic and legitimate knowledge and judgment in psychoanalysis, social norms and jurisprudence.

This fantastic truth creates a woman who is a prostitute but still a woman of faith. This incident disregards its ontological impurity but invents the incongruent combination by mixing sex with redemption. Thus, Kim produces the unprecedented and unexplainable truth through characterizing this first Samaritan girl as a sentimental, elegant and simple girl rather than representing the objective truth bridled by a general recognition to portray her. On the other hand, she always writes down all the details of her clients and treats them like friends, even though she still earns money from them for providing the sexual services to establish each other's disreputable connection.

In other words, this new fact incarnated by the girl of regarding her clients as her friends, this fallacious displacement between clients and friends, enables us to explore the alternative and impossible truth through breaking the boundary of the binary opposition etched on the stone of modernity, magically guiding the entire plot to a virgin territory.

Therefore, incredibly, after this first Samaritan girl falls from building to prevent the policemen's arrest and when she is near her death in hospital, she naively wants her friend to bring one of the clients she loves, according to his details written in her notebook to see her before she dies. This is a fantastic simulacrum characterizing her as a pure angel and entirely disengages her from any established image based on the general perception, about her as a prostitute.

Postmodernists renounce closed structure, fixed meaning, and rigid order in favor of play, indeterminacy. That is why this first Samaritan girl's self-praxis as depicted by Kim never transmits any meaning conforming to the taken-for-granted truth of illicit sex. It is also to say that this girl's unparalleled characteristics re-inscribe the name of a prostitute specified in any sexual belief. She is an innocent sexual worker attempting to produce her own presence of the present without duplicating any paradigmatic record in depicting a prostitute.

#### **5.4.2 The ecstasy of communication functioning from screen and network in the obscene postmodern world**

Samaritan girl is a postmodern term to name female sex workers (most of whom are young students), who use on-line communications in order to complete sexual transactions, a practice common in Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China. In this process of bargaining, normally, the provider and receiver will not see each other but rely on linguistic description to introduce themselves, discuss the cost, and eventually decide the place to meet.

Actually, it is the fantastic ecstasy of communication, as both of them are incarnated as the clipped texts without unfolding their origins and self-introductions. They emanate from different places and contingently and momentarily fuse together without either seeing each other or knowing each other's locations, but co-participate in this corporeal activity in postmodern society. In other words, the computer screen produces a series of fragmentarily literal texts from an unknown person and a site, which just constitutes the momentary truth owing to its distance and intangible awareness. In addition, with the participation of technology, this isolated hyperreality has been created as the simulacrum in the marvelous process of inventing the present- becoming.

Therefore, at the beginning of the film, the first Samaritan girl is doing her business, typing words in an unknown place to communicate distantly and mysteriously with her anonymous sexual client. During this process of creating the continuous momentum, they have to instantly dialogue with each other by supplementing uncontested individual details on screen by words in order to produce this marvelous simulacrum. This postmodern social image has also been described by Baudrillard:

Each person sees himself at the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect and remote sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his universe of origin”<sup>265</sup>.

In other words, once in possession of a device for operating the long-distance transmission of computerized information, the Samaritan girl can engage in her business at any time and place and vice versa for clients. So, in this sexual transaction, she does not need a brothel and a pimp, and also she is able to entirely enjoy her spontaneity in providing this sexual service at a flexible time, an unfixed place and even a mobilizing place as a completely autonomous person, her own boss without needing in the intermediaries of legal advice or business premises in the postmodern era. Therefore, the second Samaritan girl in the film also always undertakes it after school and the place for having sex can even be in a car parked in a public scenic site.

These cybernetic appliances with telematic power have changed the money-making channel and occasion in this postmodern society, and create a sense of provisional passion exchanged between

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<sup>265</sup>. Baudrillard, Jean. The Ecstasy of Communication. In Foster, Hal ( ed). *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays On Postmodern Culture*. Published by Bay press, 1983, p 128.

individuals in their ephemeral associations. Therefore, this second Samaritan girl in the film always easily contacts her clients after school and exchanges this momentary corporeal warmth with her clients, whom she will meet only once in her life. Baudrillard has also described this consuming phenomenon as below:

Today it is the very space of habitation that is conceived as both receiver and distributor, as the space of both reception and operations, the control screen and terminal which as such may be endowed with telematic power that is with the capability of regulating everything from a distance, including work in the home and, of course, consumption, play, social relations and leisure.<sup>266</sup>

Both of the two Samaritan girls view themselves as commodities and want to dedicate themselves to the postmodern market system to find their sexual customers. In other words, they have to advertise themselves by means of transforming their body into the provocative text, posting it on the computer screen with the mesmerizing linguistic content to incite the never-met clients to accept this sexual transaction. Hence, it does not matter whether the information is transmitted from a computer or a cell phone; they just attempt to commoditize themselves through a sequence of commercialized literary descriptions to create the fantastic image, the momentary simulacrum to stimulate clients' minds to fulfill their goal of consumption:

Baudrillard theorizes a cybernetic, self-reproducing society based on consumption, media, information, and high technology, a society in which exchange occur at the level of signs, images, and information".<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup>. Ibid., p 128.

<sup>267</sup>. Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997, p 96.

Therefore, the more cybernetic appliances are assimilated in life, the more intangible origins of truth will become hyperreal realities, even more authentic than a real truth. This also explains why both two Samaritan girls can incite so many men to desire a bargain with them, only relying on a computer and a cell phone to advertise themselves. As a result, this beautiful unknown distributor exists at a distance, whose writing and voice will knit a fantastic self-image to become more mesmerizing than its real portrait, so that it enchants the various men to seek to catch this marvelous illusion.

In other words, from the postmodern human condition and communication process, this postmodern world has been saturated by ecstasy and obscenity, a variety of female figures have been designed as seductive signs so that obscenity does not need to be hidden or repressed, but has prevailed in the cybernetic circuit and networks. Baudrillard has delineated the purport of obscenity and ecstasy in postmodern society:

The obscene puts an end to every representation. But it is not only the sexual that becomes obscene in pornography; today there is a whole pornography of information and communication, that is to say, of circuits and networks, pornography of all functions and objects in their readability, their fluidity, their availability, their regulation, in their performativity, in their branching, in their polyvalence, in their free expression.<sup>268</sup>

Therefore, many sexual clients with different social backgrounds and occupations can get the convenient and ubiquitous access to the fantastic and performative information of prostitution from both of the Samaritan girls in the film and also enjoy their sexual services. It is also to say that both senses of ecstasy and obscenity are thus visible, available and accessible in this cybernetic, commoditized and

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<sup>268</sup>. Baudrillard, Jean. The Ecstasy of Communication.. In Foster, Hal(ed). *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays On Postmodern Culture*. Published Bay press, 1983, pp 130 -131.

consumerist world, which has substituted the sexuality, passion and desire. Even though they infringe the law, they still permeate every corner of postmodern life in Seoul.

### **5.4.3 Displacing fundamental statement with my performativity in the little**

#### **narrative**

The theme of “the end of grand narratives” in the post modern condition (Lyotard, 1984) plays out differently in the various sectors of contemporary culture. In philosophy and social theory, it stands for the renunciation of grand systems of philosophy, of totalizing theory that attempts to capture the dynamics of the whole, in favor local narratives, minor knowledges, ironic science, or more modest “poor thought”.<sup>269</sup>

Hence, taking the approach of little narrative, before the death of the first Samaritan girl (apart from her arranging sexual transactions with the different clients) Kim exclusively delineates her spending time merely with her friend without extending any other narrative lines to describe her school and family lives. In other words, the narrative standpoint employed by Kim to dissect this first Samaritan girl is as narrow as a little narrative, and never tries to utilize broader, deeper and more thoughtful institutional knowledge such as sociology and psychology to explore the more significant interconnections between her life and her external environments. This postmodern little narrative also can be seen in Tsai’s film

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<sup>269</sup> . Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. *The Postmodern Turn*. Guilford Press, 1997, p 256.

*Vive L'amour* (1994); it just presents the three protagonists' intimate lives without displaying their connections with their families and with anyone else in their lives.

This narrow, pinpointed depiction of the girl has been minimized as her fragmentary and inventive self-reflexivity in materializing her own value and attitude of life. Hence, although it is outrageously disengaged from the realms of social morality, law and ordered knowledge, it still creates a sequence of provisional astonishments and shocks, overstepping the legitimized and dogmatic boundary of rules and academic erudition, whose perspectives of narrative content and structure are against those of modernity and are in favor of discourses of conflict, crisis or decay.

On the other hand, this narrative of postmodern poor thought with unleashed spontaneity in constituting the unprecedented individual syntagmatic system designed by Kim is also continuously utilized to delineate her good friend's unpredictable encounters and self-reflexivity. After the first Samaritan girl dies; her friend resolutely decides to be a new Samaritan girl, who is only actualized by her own performativity in order to subvert the paradigmatic sense of Samaritan girl. It is like Lyotard's statement about performativity:

It replaces the definition of essences with the calculation of interactions; it makes "players" assume responsibility not only for the statements they purpose, but also for the rules to which they submit those statements in order to render them acceptable.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Lyotard, Jean –Francois. *The Postmodern Condition : A Report An Knowledge*. Manchester University Press.1984, p 62.

Hence, this second Samaritan girl just chooses to dedicate herself to sexual transactions in her own way and carry out it feasibly without charging one single cent from her clients. She even gives back the money earned by her friend to all of them, as she wants to use sex to redeem and commemorate her friend as a sexual worker and co-religionist. There is no logical, rational and foundational statement as forethought to mark Kim's *Samaritan Girl*, because he creates her as a productively and paradoxically plural noun with the incarnation of sin and redemption, a heterogeneous composition.

The second Samaritan girl starts to contact the clients from viewing her friend's diary in which all of their details and subtle sensations are clearly recorded. In other words, even though this daily journal can be reckoned as a history witnessing the first girl's past present, the second Samaritan girl attempts to use her own performativity and personal praxis to transmute her friend's past history into the present discourse as her own story.

It is also to say that she does not want to represent this history as recorded in the diary but regards it as an incomplete text providing the reference for her to invent the new reality as the new present. This is achieved by supplementing more provisional truth in this past personal archive, as Deleuze said:

A present which is coextensive with time: it would be sufficient to consider contemplation applied to the infinite succession of instants".<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Athlone Press, 1994, p 76

Therefore, when this creative second Samaritan girl undertakes sex transactions with the different clients, she never mentions anything about her friend, in order to erase the locus of past trace, and only improvises her self-reflexivity to interact with them to produce the new instant.

In this process of producing the new present- becoming, she successively teases one client for his timidity in having sex, and has also given a fantastic sexual service to one of her clients, due to her adolescent body making him recall his past beautiful youth. As such, unlike the idea of a Samaritan girl defined in the general knowledge, after having sex she always leans against her clients' shoulders, to listen carefully to the words uttered from their inner minds, like a clinical psychologist, and also returns the money earned by her friend to them.

In other words, this second Samaritan girl transmutes sex into a medicine and lets this illegally sexual transaction become an effective remedy to cure the clients' physical and psychic needs. Sex has become a heterogonous combination of poison and medicine. This has also been described by Derrida in deconstructing the pharmakon in Plato's Pharmacy in order to tear down the hierarchy of these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc) as below:

If one got to thinking that something like the pharmakon-or writing-far from being governed by these oppositions, opens up their very possibility without letting itself be comprehended by them; if one got to thinking that it can only be out of something like writing-or the pharmakon-that the strange difference between inside and outside can spring.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> . Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 103.

Therefore, sex, as defined by the second Samaritan girl, is a remedy and medicine to redeem her friend's sin and pacify the men's lustful or mental agony. On the other hand, although it is immoral and unlawful in the modern canonical paradigm, her inventive performativity has created prostitution with the plural meaning as a poison and a medicine, which also raises a question to problematize this unlawful deed judged by the sense of law and order of modernity. As such, sex could be regarded as a poison for its contamination the society, or as a medicine for soothing people's anxiety, while a poison is also a kind of medicine and a medicine is also a kind of poison.

#### **5.4.4 Intercepting and participating in the clipped text to produce its different present-becoming**

Later, the second Samaritan girl's father, a policeman, comes to know of her misconduct. He tries personally to take part in steering her present discourse toward an unexpected deferral. The father also views his daughter's presence of the present as an incomplete text allowing him to manipulate as the new present exceptionally detached from its origin, deviated in its during and disoriented to its future. On the other hand, Kim also utilizes the postmodern structure positing plot line progressing with action linking action and this is also the constellation of scission linking scission.

Kim does not express the starting point of how the second Samaritan girl contacts her clients and how they meet or how her father intercepts this information. So, the first time, when her father abruptly participates in reproducing her present discourse, before she meets her client, the man has been blocked and forced to drink wine with him, and then he is also threatened to leave. Eventually, the girl's voice, urging him to come over soon, is transmitted from this sexual client's cell phone from an unknown place. As a result, three of these cut-offs are fused together without beginning and also reproduced as the present- becoming with a manipulated result in this capricious meaning-generation process.

In other words, the father is also producing the new becoming with his limited knowledge in modifying the present activated by his daughter. His unbridled spontaneity also makes him act like a free signifier, a disseminated seed, in participating in mingling himself with the other progressing scissions in order to make the meaning slip to the marvelous difference. Therefore, through his engagement in this active process of inventing the present- becoming, the father just becomes a positive producer instead of a passive interpreter in his attempt to infiltrate himself into a process of meaning-generation to enunciate his discourse with the first- person- pronoun, I, triggering off the new present- becoming from a scission just progressing in front of him. As Derrida wrote:

I am passing through here as that which marks and strikes the tale in progress, making it derive from itself.....this "I" is the name of the full force of writing which, in one flow, triggers off the tale and keeps it in progress, but it is above all the simulacrum-and that simulacrum must be understood as a force-of an identity that is ceaselessly dislocated, displaced, thrown outside itself, precisely by this kind of writing by force.<sup>273</sup>

Hence, when the father tries to hinder his daughter's undertaking of prostitution for the second time in film, he not only jumps ahead of the man on his way to meet her, but also sincerely and severely

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<sup>273</sup> .Ibid., p 326.

preaches to him not to do so, making him feel ashamed until he leaves with profound apology. However, after the man has returned home, when he is enjoying meal with his family, this father, this I, just suddenly rings the door bell and unpredictably takes part in this progressing discourse.

He starts to manipulate and steer this new present discourse towards an uncertain path by scolding and even slapping him in front of his family. Nevertheless, after the father leaves the man's apartment, the appallingly and unpredictably momentary becoming just takes place. A horrible bumping sound emanates from off-scene and a stream of blood slowly flows into the frame, the man has killed himself. Therefore, the father, as I, produces a different present by personally taking part in the process of inventing the new present- becoming.

#### **5.4.5 Triggering off a new commencement as a progressing pause in the nonorganic structure**

According to Burger:

The development of a concept of the nonorganic work of art is a central task of the theory of the avant-garde .<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> .Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p 68.

This means that it constitutes all the trace-erased elements without the memory of attaching any of their logocentric loci together to transgress the boundary of patriarchic language and to produce an inventive and hallucinatory plural text with an ephemeral momentum.

Therefore, in the last scene in *Samaritan Girl*, on their way backing home, the father just temporarily parks his car in the river valley and coincidentally wants to teach his daughter how to drive. Later he really becomes an avant-gardist and a postmodern writer, because he just starts to paint the pebbles yellow and, moreover, he lays them as a winding track embedded in this incongruently natural field, eventually, his daughter just practices driving on this fantastic track.

In other words, all the constituents building a car track in this amazing postmodern art have subverted their logocentric meanings and co-produce this simulacrum, instead of representing an objective reality in a natural environment. In addition, deconstructing all the fabrics in a totality here, this pebble-built car track is incommensurably integrated with other structural elements in this valley, such as the rest of the non-reproduced pebbles, the river, the bridge, the trees, the clouds, and the puddles in this natural ecology. This nonorganic art engulfed here and now and constituted by the individual elements without being necessarily subordinate to an organizing principle has also been delineated by Burger:

In the avant-gardiste work, they are aesthetically legitimate even as individual elements. Their effect is not necessarily mediated through the whole of the work but to be thought of as standing on its own. In the avant-gardiste work, the individual sign does not refer primarily to the work as a whole but to reality. The recipient is free to respond to the individual sign as an important statement concerning the praxis of life.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup>. Ibid., p 90.

Hence, it is just this self-praxis motivating the father, all depending on his spontaneity in viewing pebbles as individual unparalleled elements to constitute with other heterogeneous fabrics as a nonorganic whole with his own syntax system. This is also an exemplary case of creating the spatial present as in *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter.....and Spring* (2003), where the master and his disciple creating avant-garde art on a wooden square. On the other hand, when his daughter is driving on this pebble-built track, here, it has really been transformed as a naturally practice-driving field, a marvelously mobile installation art with the spatial present. All the elements are created here and now in this river valley, as Derrida's wrote:

I would speak of a sort of participation without belonging- a taking part in without being part of, without having membership in a set".<sup>276</sup>

By investigating how the entire components form a set, an internal pocket is always much larger than the whole. However, when this moving avant-garde art is progressed by the daughter's driving, this father also carries on performing his praxis of life, calling a detective to bring him to justice for killing one of his daughter's clients. After ending this short dialogue on his cell phone, he looks tenderly at his daughter's snaking track in this field of avant-gardiste art. This may express that the father wants her to learn how to control her life through personally participating in activating this nonorganic work as the progressing present discourse. A few minutes later, he gets in the police car and leaves without telling his daughter; thus she just hopelessly drives the car in pursuit, but the distance between them also becomes further and further.

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<sup>276</sup>. In Attridge, Derek (ed). *Jacques Derrida : Acts Of Literature* . Routledge. 1992, p 227.

Hence, the end of the film is still in the process of creating the new becoming and it is not a full stop, a completed product to be shelved, because all the puzzles have been solved step by step in its logic-temporal development as an end. This is like his films *The Isle* (2000) and *Bad Guy* (2001), the floating cabin and the pick-up just drifting and running towards the unpredictable place as a new commencement. As such, this denouement is still in the process of incessantly producing the momentary truth with perpetual difference.

## **5.5 *3iron* 2004**

### **5.5.1 There is no his story but only my presence of the present triggers off the**

## **incessant moment**

My own enunciation manifests my constantly producing story with my present discourse. In other words, this self-presence of the present is a constitution structured by the various cut-offs which always exist in a state of the pure present, whose emptiness comes from the different strings of anonymous beginnings. Hence my story will be structured in a series of becoming without marking the before and during as the third time, according to Deleuze:

Far from ensuring the occurrence of the cycle and analogy, the third time excludes them. In accordance with the new frontier, the difference between the two repetitions becomes the following: the Before and the During are and remain repetitions, but operates only once and for all. The third repetition distributes them in accordance with the straight line of time, but also eliminates them, determining them to operate only once and for all, keeping the “all times “for the third time alone.<sup>277</sup>

Hence, my self-presence will not express the prediction as such by tracing back to where I was absent before, because these pre-existing parts will provide more prior history to interpret and constrain what I am doing, and also foretell how I will become as if the other enunciator, He, is telling my story with an omniscient knowledge standing behind me, always complementing what I lose in my absence from the commencements of diversified events and trying to fill these lacunas in this chorological succession without a hole in the narrative structure. I opt to enunciate my own present discourse in the process of producing the present- becoming, while spontaneously facing a chain of disruptive events, scissions just momentarily emerging in front of me. Hence I will also become an aimless wanderer or sleepwalker, looking for the unpredictable contingencies hidden in each corner of society in order to transmute them as my story in the third time.

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<sup>277</sup>.Deleuze, Gilles. *Differenceand Repetition*. Athlone Press.1994. p297.

As such, the beginning of Kim's *3iron* (2004), it does not reveal the real starting point of a story driven by a young man, but it directly activates a bracketed discourse, a progressing scission just coming without expressing its commencement. In other words, no introduction is given to this young man by Kim, because the present does not have to go outside itself in order to pass from past to future.

On the other hand, he has also been inscribed in this incised text as the new beginning, the incomplete discourse spontaneously trying to connect other cut-offs in action in order to string the numerous new triggers without indigenous marks as the process of ceaselessly producing the new present -becoming through his praxis of life. Moreover, his innovative practice in his euphoric but nihilistic life has also been incarnated as the marginalized social phenomena hidden in the scattered corners of Seoul, far from the optimistic and idealistic stance of modern life.

Hence, after the young man sneaks into a fancy mansion using a skeleton key, there is a scission, a present discourse just progressing here, telling a story about a beautiful woman who is the victim of domestic violence. In other words, all structure in this scene is constituted by a scission interlinking a scission; while he is looking around the living room, the answering machine also transmits her husband's apology for beating her, without showing the entirety of this informational source from its beginning. This domestic violence has just happened already without being seen by the young man.

Moreover, later, when this young man sees items of this woman's clothing here, the film does not express how he got them. When he waters the plant here, it does not indicate how he got this watering can. When he plays golf in the back yard here, there is not a map showing how he found this club and ball and got here. When he fixes the weight scale here, it does not describe how he got his equipment. When the young woman sees at his eccentric behavior here, Kim does not tell us how she finds him and

how she appears in this house. In addition, when the young man returns to rescue this victim of domestic tyranny, Kim does not express where he comes back from. Therefore, this present discourse is composed by a sequence of scissions, incarnated as the progressing action with no beginning and end in the third time. This undivided presence integrated by the bracketed contextualization has also been delineated by Derrida:

The possibility –or the potency-of the present is but its own limit, its inner fold, its impossibility-or its impotence. Such will have been the relation between presence and castration in play and at stake....The presence of the present only forms a surface, only enters squarely on stage, only institutes itself as something face-to-face-something present-only triggers off discourse-...-only unclenches its teeth, in the play of this cut, this scission.<sup>278</sup>

In other words, this present discourse, without expressing the past or origin, or indicating the future or end in either a big eternal structure (scene and scene) or several small internal compositions (shot and shot), just produces the momentary and unpredictable truth, a succession of simulacra. Kim also utilizes this pure present presence in organizing the whole film. On the other hand, this young man still transfers all of these unforeseeable contingencies as the continuously different present -becoming through producing his own self-reflexivity with things and events appearing uprightly before him and with the beautiful woman.

## **5.5.2 Narrative structure organized by the permanent present discourse with no**

### **inaugural act**

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<sup>278</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 303.

Kim also attempts to continue this self-presence of the present through converting the decision, his story, history, having been there, into the present- becoming, my story, progressing here as enunciated by the present discourse. In other words, scission is a fragmentarily progressing and an unfull text, written by what I am telling you, based on my personal present attendance. It also repudiates the notion of that presence is never present with an indispensable and ineffaceable connection with past memory. As Derrida says:

It is of course a beginning that is forever fictional, and the scission, far from being an inaugural act, is dictated by the absence<sup>279</sup>.

Therefore, Kim shows that after the young man and the beautiful woman leave the mansion, they just start to explore their lives based on their self-presence of the present to face the real everyday urban life in Seoul. They still use the skeleton key to open doors and sneak into different houses as squatters, without showing how they arrive and choose here, as it has been contextualized as a random scission leaping from its virginal narrative structure without a before and during. In other words, this present discourse will also be enunciated as soon as they get into a place, because they will confront the events just arising before them like a pure upsurge.

Hence, after entering a house, he directly starts the answer machine as it transmits the past messages, revealing that the house owner has gone on vacation. And one of the other past traces is the beautiful woman's photograph hung on the wall, implying that she (a victim of domestic violence) probably used to be a famous actress or model. Nevertheless, on seeing this photo, he starts to produce his presence of

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<sup>279</sup>. Ibid., p 300.

the present by means of using his cell phone, taking the picture of himself with this beautiful photograph. A past trace stands on the wall as a background, without expressing where he got this instrument, the cell phone, in order to produce the new becoming witnessing this present.

In the following scenes, they also sneak into other different houses and, as usual, the young man pushes the button of the answer machine, which conveys the past information that this family has also gone on vacation. Then, both marginalized people immediately inscribe their present discourse by their interacting with things with no forethought, but with the pure improvisation in order to constitute the novel momentum to produce here and now.

However, in this euphoric mood, the beautiful woman suddenly gives the young man a pair of scissors, without showing either where she got them or what her motivation is to have an immediate haircut. So, this postmodern text makes him just start to cut her hair for her. Without expressing his completion of this unexpected job, he uses his cell phone to take a photograph of them in order to witness this fantastic moment and catch the here and now. As such, this episode can suggest that violence is not the only vent for Kim's characters to release their deeply repressed emotions, because they can also use the euphoric mood like the male protagonist in Tsai's film *Vive L'amour* (1994), facing their plights. Eventually, they still have never spoken a single word to each other but they sleep together like two injured animals.

In other words, it does not matter where they sneak in; they always make their own presence of the present by producing the provisional novelty through their interaction with things or with each other. As Derrida wrote:

Post-structuralism was a product of that blend of euphoria and disillusionment, liberation and dissipation, carnival and catastrophe.<sup>280</sup>

As such, although these things such as a cell phone, answering machines, scissors and photographs act like residuals with no rich referential meaning, these materials have also become their own elements and are only constructed to produce their momentary astonishment in the space where they are facing and feeling.

### **5.5.3 Dehumanized and dystopian society**

In Tsai's film *Vive L'amour*, after entering the empty apartment, the characters just sleep or make love, without encountering anything having taken place here. In contrast, the urban wanderers and squatters in *3iron*, they always unlawfully enter the different houses in which there is a scission progressing. While encountering this, they also choose to be a producer, I, to engage in this upsurge of contingency and to transform it as their own presence of the present. On the other hand, all of these scissions exist behind a door through which they sneak, which also materialize the different social phenomena hidden in Seoul. Actually, these various daily lives have also been far from the intellectual life established by modernism.

Hence, after leaving a warm historical house, they just sneak into a common apartment, still without displaying a map of how to leave there and get here. There is a scission just taking place here; an old man has died on the floor next to vomited blood. While they are stunned by viewing this appalling spectacle, simultaneously, the telephone is also ringing. After they refuse to pick it up, there is other

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<sup>280</sup> .Ibid., p 123.

scission also transmitting the present message from the answer machine, which is the dead man's phoning son to ask how he feels and also apologizes for his delay in replying to his former emergency call for help. However, encountering both scissions without developing from their commencements just appearing before them, they just inscribe them with their own present discourse.

Unbelievably and illogically, they next put the Korean traditional burial dress on this dead old man, without indicating where they got it from, as if treating one of their own families. Then, ridiculously and piteously, this old man's corpse is finally buried, cautiously and ceremoniously, in the park by these two city wanderers, who have no any blood relation with this abandoned and solitary old man. Nevertheless, it also reveals the family kinship based on Confucian family ethical hierarchy which has waned in Korea.

#### **5.5.4 Truth invented and deferred from its pre-established name**

In *3iron*, several turning points in the narrative's structure spring from the young man misplaying golf in ludicrous places. The performativity of club-swinging and ball-hitting always creates an incredible present-becoming to steer the plot line abruptly in different unexpected directions. Golf is merely provided as the individual material to be played anywhere; hitting golf balls is no longer a sign of enjoying a sport but a process of creating its difference.

Hence, this difference also refuses to repeat and represent its resemblance and possibility grounded in its general concept but is eager to create a catastrophe and impossibility by virtue of detaching itself from the prolongation of duplicating its similitude in order to produce the new values rather than recognize

the established sense. This new can also mean infinite difference as Deleuze's delineation of the new as below:

The new, with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new, just as the established was always established from the outset.....What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new-in other words, difference-calls forth forces which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable terra incognita.<sup>281</sup>

As such, the first time the young man is seen playing golf is in an appropriate place conforming to the general experience, a large back yard. But his utter spontaneity drives him to swing the club as a fatal weapon, hitting the ball to attack the rough husband who is inflicting domestic violence on the beautiful woman rather than for pure exercise. Thus his self-reflexivity just enables him to take her away from home. On the other hand, the anti-domestic violence laws in Korea cannot absolutely protect all women. Patriarchic dominance is still incorrigible in the Korean family system; it has never been eradicated by social progress based on the humanist values of liberty, morality and law in the modern purport. However, ridiculously, this hopeless young woman, suffering from the perpetual domestic violence, has to be rescued by an unknown squatter rather than by the legitimate social authority.

The second time we see him playing golf is in an incongruent place, a park; he just amuses himself by his own fantastic self-reflexivity. His hitting of the small white ball is in order to face his vacant life with his euphoric and nihilistic attitude. As a result, playing golf has skipped away from an exercise in naming itself with a sense of ontological truth and taxonomical distribution.

The third time he plays golf is in an absurd and incredible place, the median strip of a main road. He exerts his self-reflexivity by hitting a ball tied with a wire circling a tree as the beautiful woman tenderly

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<sup>281</sup> . Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Atholone Press, 1994, p136.

watches him play with a smile. Nevertheless, eventually he swings the club too hard and causes the ball to detach and fly away from the tree, violently smashing the windscreen and rear-view mirror of a car on the road and killing a girl in this car. As a result, absurdity, catastrophe and unpredictable murder and a sensational moment are created by his self-presence of the present. This also overthrows the meaning of the ontology of golf-playing, to invent the new reality and present-becoming. Hence, unlike the columbarium salesman in Tsai's film, *Vive L'amour*, exerting his self-reflexivity in interacting with the watermelon to create a momentary novelty to please himself, Kim just depicts this young man also wanting to seek fun from his monotonous life through playing golf with his performativity, but it causes a deadly catastrophe.

In other words, golf-playing, as a term, is no longer an entertainment as the lexicon tells us, but can be transformed into a deadly game inscribed by this young man's present discourse. Therefore the golf club is also no longer a sporting instrument but a fatal weapon, and the median strip also displaces a golf course as the shooting range, the postmodern utopian space, drawing a heterogeneous space with itself in the process of making itself different from median strip to golf course to shooting range. This process of incessantly generating the plural meaning with no origin as through disseminating and germinating the seed has been delineated by Derrida:

There is no first insemination. The semen is already swarming. The "primal" "insemination is dissemination. A trace, a graft whose traces have been lost. Whether in the case of what is called "language" (discourse, text, etc.) or in the case of some "real" seed-sowing, each term is indeed a germ, and each germ a term. The term, the atomic element, engenders by division, grafting, proliferation. It is a seed and not an absolute term.<sup>282</sup>

Therefore, truth should be invented and deferred from its pre-established recognition as a term, its first birth is also the infinite birth through going outside itself and combining with other nonlinear and

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<sup>282</sup> . Derrida, Jacques, *Dissemination*, University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 304.

heterogeneous narrative fabrics to illustrate the sense of absurdity or fantastic momentum of the world, which is also the process of tirelessly disseminating and germinating the seed to produce the different self-presence of the presents. In other words, this self-reflexivity always makes the seed multiplied from the start, so playing golf in the space will invent the different present- becoming by taking itself away from its simple common sense prior to its insemination.

**5.5.5 Once the voice loses its origin; the author will just enter into his own death  
and writing begins.**

The theater, an independent and autonomous art, must, in order to revive or simply to live, realize what differentiates it from text, pure speech, literature, and all other fixed and written means. We can perfectly well continue to conceive of a theater based upon the authority of the text and on a text more and more wordy, diffuse, and boring, to which the esthetic of the stage would be subject.<sup>283</sup>

This concept can also be applied for contextualizing the cinema. Writing must have its autonomy without being subjected to speech of language for merely being its representation ordered from the author-creator's voice. In other words, visual production is incarnated by the present action in action, which is without words on the script recited by actors as the prior knowledge. Visual language can create its self-presence of the present without being subjugated to speech in duplicating its sound-image, so it can be produced as characters' improvising their performativity while facing the unforeseeable

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<sup>283</sup>. Artaud is indeed speaking of perversion and not of forgetting, for example, in this letter to Benjamin Cre'mieux. Quoted in Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 298.

contingency just appearing before them as the present discourse. Certainly, it will be against the speech for its eluding sight and stress on representing its prior conceptual content.

This ahistorical and unexplainable present is unlikely to be produced by spoken language, the dialogue in the script, because these incessant presents are constituted by the fragmentary, discontinuous and unrepresentable scissions that can only be co-produced by the actors' improvising their actions instead of their spoken language. As a result, speech is not assumed to give the spontaneous expression to explain these unpredictable moments with its historical mark embed in the phonic trace. Therefore, scripts must be written by visual language to produce the momentary novelty to catch the present.

Hence, this is the same principle with which Kim directs and writes his film, *3iron*. The first dialogue spoken between the beautiful young woman and the young man occurs at a late stage in the film. We can still count the number of words are spoken in the film on our fingers, because most of the plots are described by image-language rather than spoken language. In other words, the script of the film is written by visual elements situated in the very supplementary positions to depict how the actors react and gesticulate while facing the diverse visualized milieus actualized by the successive contingencies erected in front of them.

On the other hand, oral communication between the two lonely protagonists is unnecessary, because what they need is a co-dependence through a silent mental interchange which is beyond the value of spoken language in carrying any effective exchange of ideas described in the rational and logical value of modernity. In other respects, it also reveals how the usage of language in communication between the people has become dysfunctional in this highly affluent society of Korea.

Furthermore, the dialogues in *3iron* seem to be uttered as improvisation by the actors which merely and instantly function as agents to be coincided with the body languages, without being written as the systematic and organized sentences to represent any coherent concept and deep thought, while they are confronting the indeterminate and absurd instants. As such, all the dialogues are subjugated to the different present, written by the image-language. These play a very minor role as the tersely astonishing and moody sentences, to match the momentary gesticulations or prompt actions interacting with the image-designed environments and events.

Hence, when the police exhume the old man's corpse, one of them just says, "They really buried him like family". When the prison officer cannot see the young man during his patrol, after he has completed his meditation and practiced fantastic martial arts in his cell, the officer just rushes into it and beats him severely from the wall he climbed on, yelling out in anger, "Where can you hide? Disappearing?" Thus, most dialogues spoken in the film work out like immediate and superficial languages without providing any significant and thoughtful meaning. As a result, this is also the visualized script described by Derrida:

Present in dreams, speech can only behave as an element among others, sometimes like a "thing" which the primary process manipulates its own economy. In this process thoughts are transformed into images, mainly of a visual sort; that is to say, word presentations are taken to the thing-presentations ... Artaud too, speaks of a "visual and plastic materialization of speech" and of making use of speech in a concrete and spatial sense<sup>284</sup>.

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<sup>284</sup>.Ibid., p304.

Kim's writing for *3iron* is thus trying to capture the visual, plastic and narrative presents to materialize how the actors spontaneously participate and produce their present discourses while facing different visualized scissions like fantastic dreams. This agrees with Derrida's statement delineating the present:

You live in the present, in "what is called present", in consciousness, you witness what seems to be in front of you, what is upright before you, advancing toward you, what stands out against the very horizon of the world, becomes a figure against ground, takes shape as it faces you".<sup>285</sup>

As such, dialogues that the actors need to memorize in advance do not work out anymore in film, because they have become the producer of the different present- becoming without requiring any preceding knowledge as a guidance standing before their self-reflexivity. Spoken language has been deprived of its privilege of articulating the idea with transparency; its position has been taken over by the visual language to actualize this unpredictable contingency appearing and disappearing in a disconnection with before and during in the progress of producing present- becoming. Hence, speech has to be assimilated with images to behave as a part of actors' improvisation, witnessing and producing the present instead of the speech- presentation duplicating the past memory.

On the other hand, in *3iron*, the lines never provide the important and predictable messages to help the story develop. Dialogues will not become perpetual remarks but just act like a reactive voice for characters instinctively ejaculating the words while confronting the present erected before them. This postmodern society has provided the fertile soil to cultivate this incessantly visualized contingency with no aid from the spoken language. This is somewhat similar to Tsai's intention for his film, *Vive L'amour*, wanting the audience to see the film rather hear it. The only difference is that most of the visual images

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<sup>285</sup>. Derrida, Jacques, *Dissemination*, University of Chicago Press, 1981, p 307.

designed by Tsai produce the ephemeral pleasure in expressing the protagonists' alienation from society, but some of the performative visual images designed by Kim possess latent danger in expressing the protagonists' mental void in this postmodern world.

## **PART 5 CONCLUSION**

### **Chapter 6 Postmodern life and text in Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films**

#### **6.1 Cross-references**

As all I have written in anatomizing and investigating both Tsai's and Kim's films piece by piece in chapters 4 and 5 respectively can only briefly interconnect the two directors' films in between themselves, from one film to the next and make the cross-references between their works in making the comparisons or sharing each other's narrative features. This is because every single episode in each of their films is unparalleled and should be treated as an independent and an incomparable work not only in its text but in all of the structural elements constituted in every single scene and shot, functioning in differently amazing and hallucinatory situations

In other words, Tsai and Kim's movies have always provided exclusive texts and structures to be navigated by a variety of postmodern thinking such as postmodern philosophy, social and cultural images, narrative structure in time and space, sign-function, meaning-production, and characters. Moreover, this also can present more cross-references to both directors' works.

With respect to postmodern philosophy, the truth is always progressing in a state of mobility and is also a process of incessantly generating meaning in the difference and bifurcation, like Tsai rewriting the meaning of Oedipus complex in *The River* (1997), and Kim also rewriting the meaning of sadomasochism in *The Isle* (2000), to create the new present from an institutionalized term. This also implies that time is not a continuity of prolonging and representing the past memory of thematic sense and conceptual content of signs, but it is a ceaseless movement of producing the new becoming disregarding any pre-knowledge teaching us how to think and write.

With respect to postmodern cultural and social images, the image of thought is created on groundlessness to make the infinite difference which can never be ordered in any category but only produce the eternal return. Cultural spectacle will not be described with an analogical materialization in its sequential developments, because this world is always endlessly moving and changing, with no return of same, similar or equal. Hence, Tsai designs the columbarium salesman creating an impossible and fantastic interaction with his things in expressing his solitude in *Vive L'amour* (1994), and Kim also characterizes the two Samaritan girls as a pure prostitute and a religious people in *Samaritan Girl* (2004). Neither director ever displays the objective truth rooted in the general sense as a social and cultural image.

With respect to the postmodern narrative structure in time and space, it is constituted by the diversified fragmentary scissions interweaving each other with no commencement and running in incessant action in order to produce different presents advancing in the disconnected spaces. As such, Tsai's film, *I do not want to sleep alone* (2006), never fills the temporal rift in the process of how the cause links the effect in the development of storyline. And Kim's film, *3irons* (2004), through both squatters stalking in different houses, also never displays a clear awareness in connecting when they leave and where they come in going from one place to the next place.

With respect to the postmodern sign-function, all signs replace centres through erasing their origins, histories, memories and privileged concepts in order to defer the fixed meaning in the infinite difference. Hence, in Tsai's film, *Wayward Cloud* (2005), watermelon is transformed as a substitute for a female's genital organ, a trash-can, a hat, an object of sexual fantasy and a baby in the womb, to produce different momentary novelty. In Kim's film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring* (2003), boat is transmuted as carrier for pleasure, lust and anguish, a cremation and coffin, to produce different becomings.

With respect to postmodern meaning-production, all the narrative elements produce the momentary truth, each time of its presence, which is a new departure with a new productive trigger, without repeating the sameness but actualizing the divergence. Hence, in Tsai's film *Wayward Cloud*, through interconnecting the realist and supernatural texts together, the male protagonist is transformed into a merman and the water-storage tank is also reproduced as a swimming pool to create the provisional mirage without repeating the original meaning of time and space. In Kim's film, *Samaritan Girl*, the father acts as an avant-garde artist, through his reconstituting and reproducing the ubiquitous materials in the valley, transforming the space as a practice-driving track to create a new present without duplicating its indigenous meaning.

With respect to the postmodern characters in Tsai and Kim's films, although they are living on the social margin, in Tsai's film, they are regular people but in Kim's films they are outcasts. On the other hand, Tsai depicts their characters as using the euphoric way to face their plights, but Kim prefers to sketch his character using violent ways in expressing their anguish and anger. Hence, in Tsai's film, *The Hole* (1998), the female protagonist enjoys phone-sex without an interlocutor to produce the fantastic simulacrum to dissipate her mental void, and in *Vive L'amour*, the columbarium salesman, puts on

female costume and faces the mirror, making very provocative and flirtatious poses to amuse himself in facing his loneliness.

On the contrary, in Kim's film, *The Isle*, the female protagonist mutilates herself to keep the love from her boyfriend to fulfill her mental and physical desire, and in *Bad Guy* (2001), the male protagonist also needs to fight brutally with his good friend to let the college girl stay under his vigilance to compensate for his lack of love.

Therefore, certainly, all of these different postmodern discourses have been employed by me very systematically, not merely to prove that Tsai and Kim's films should be categorized as postmodern movies among Asian cinema, but they have been reinvented as postmodern film approaches by me to dismember their works. Bellow, I will summarize the six criteria I have used to identify postmodern films and also utilize these to illustrate more cross-references between Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films and between each of a range of their films under the analysis of different postmodern discourse.

## **6.2 The criteria for identifying postmodern films**

### **6.2.1 Waning of the bourgeois life**

For postmodernists, all the centers constituted in the world system are marginalized, like the murky gay sauna in *The River* (1997), hidden in a corner in metropolis, Taipei, where men enjoy transient homosexual pleasure without seeing each other but only physically make contact with temporary partners to satisfy their animal desires and also co-produce this homosexual mirage as well as creating the postmodern sublime, the momentary pleasure. Hence, it eschews the historically transcendental

discourse with the awesome sentiment and transgresses the social recognitions of custom and culture. In other words, this absurdity and provisional truth incarnated in the post-urban life portrayed by Tsai announce that humanist values are no longer clear and also will not make today's Taiwanese affluent society progress. As a result, the corollary is that Taipei will no longer represent a finite crystallization of modernity.

On the other hand, in *The River*, in this dysfunctional family, all members' relationships are very apathetic and they even ignore each other. Eventually, incestuous love allows father and son to find salvation through exchanging their corporeal heat and even secretions, which also makes this helpless redemption transcend to the level of postmodern utopian sentiment. Therefore, language in the symbolic system discoursed by Lacan, has been destroyed by Tsai's image of momentary truth created in this small dark room in a gay sauna.

Language has lost its function as the incontestable doctrine of situating people in a hierarchical structure embedded in the family kinship system. So, a father's name is not a father and vice versa for a son. This also questions Confucian family values; perhaps homosexual love can displace familial love or at least be viewed as a type of familial love. Tsai has produced the perfect postmodernist text without offering a definite answer from the cinematic text; it severely problematizes the universal and collective virtues, values and norms grounded in everyday life in Taiwan.

Therefore, in Tsai Ming-Liang's films, this metropolitan city of Taipei, no longer retains its utopian figure in the present, and has said farewell to the modernizing era. Now, it has to face a new wave of expansion and demolition of a world system of value and thinking. Thus in *The Hole* (1998), Tsai explores the location identity, a space, the residual city debris, and left behind, surviving the decline of

modernism. This residual space is still hidden and unnoticeable, scattered in Taipei, a city facing the aftermath of the modern era.

On the other hand, the modern social structure and values, an optimistic and ideal incarnation of cultural code expressing a style, formalism, foundationalism or international style as the rational organization of everyday social life rooted in Confucian utopian doctrine, have also been displaced by the violence, cruelty, absurdity, and chaos illustrated in contemporary Korean society by Kim Ki-Duk. This fundamental humanist belief has been stated as below:

Principal among the Confucian teachings by which Koreans still set much store are the five relationships. These instruct that: between ruler and minister, there should be righteousness, between father and son, there should be affection; between husband and wife, there should be attention to their separation functions...between friends, there should be faithfulness. These phrases provide as good a clue as any to some of the basic tenets of Korean society.<sup>286</sup>

Nevertheless, Kim always excavates the marginalized life of outcasts excluded from the hierarchic social system and showcases their alienated, outrageous and absurd lives in Korean society. He attempts to add to this unsettling and outlandish mix, postmodern capitalist social images coexisting with the ingrained Confucian-based morality and ethic prevailing in Taiwan, Korea, Japan and China, this cultural circle.

In Kim Ki-Duk's film *3Irons* (2004), a beautiful wife becomes a victim of domestic violence. Therefore, the matrimonial contract of modern society does not guarantee marital bliss. The brutal postmodern

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<sup>286</sup>. Hoare, James and Pares, Susan. *Korea: An Introduction*. Kegan Paul International limited, 1988, p117.

social image tears down the Confucian relationship between the husband and wife that stresses separation functions. The husband, who earns the money, masters the outside, and the wife, who takes care of the family, masters the inside. Although she does this by being a good housewife, she still suffers from patriarchal dominance.

Moreover, in *3 Irons*, when the two protagonists sneak into a murky and filthy apartment, there is an old man lying dead on the floor with a pool of blood beside him, no family looking after him or knowing about his death, even in this affluent Korean society. They put him in burial clothes, put him in a coffin, and eventually bury him in the park, as though they were his son and daughter. In other words, this plot is not only constituted by a strikingly superficial momentum, but it also announces the waning of modern social values, because there should be affection between father and son based on Confucian principles. Hence, this postmodern social image of inhumanity and dystopia really disillusiones the idealistic family values of modernity in Korea.

On the other hand, in *Samaritan Girl* (2004), Kim Ki-Duk portrays a prevalent phenomenon of society in Seoul, Korea. Nevertheless, it is not the usual propaganda about the great computer industry of Korea, as always seen on postcards, because the adolescent prostitution depicted here is made successful by the cybernetic illusion by immediately transmitting and receiving momentary messages, without seeing each other when arranging this sexual transaction. As a result, this scientific device has been utilized for criminal activity. In addition, all the sexual clients in the film have a certain level of social status, and come from the white-collar class, driving luxurious cars, wearing fancy clothes and living in beautiful apartments. They also become killers, consuming the immaturely adolescent body.

In other words, although Korean people lead affluent lives made possible by advanced scientific and technological developments, this new social malady is accompanied by the upgrade of cybernetic systems in this so-called bourgeois society. Therefore Kim tells us that a well-developed economy based on the rational thinking system of science and technology will neither fulfil social ideals in the future, nor offer the beautiful appearance and semblance of a better world. Cinema as an art is unable to perform the tenet of modernity with the social function of representing a beautiful daily life.

#### **6.2.2 Meaning produced among free signifiers with no logocentric mark**

In an interview with Taiwanese film director Tsai Ming-Liang, he described the slippage of the meaning of things deferred in the difference in his films as follows:

People with a particular look, or a glass of water, or water itself, or a door...Those are all things that interest me in everyday life. It's obvious that I change with all the different experiences in my life and these things which I carry on liking it fact always suggest different ideas to me....the fact that I always put them in my films.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup>. Rehn, Jean-Pierre, Joyard, Olivier and Riviere, Daniele. *Tsai Ming-Liang*. Dis Voir. 1999 , p 108.

Therefore, if Tsai Ming-Liang had abided by the modernist linguistic rules of describing the meanings of things based on dictionary definitions as an absolute, the interaction between protagonists and things would not have been written as the postmodern text. In *Vive L'amour* (1994), the indigenous meaning of a water melon would not have been transmuted as a bowling ball, a beautiful face and skin-care lotion all conveyed by a solitary man to create his unparalleled praxis of life and to trigger off the new and destabilized ontological truth of a water melon in the process of producing the meaning in the infinite difference.

On the other hand, in all of Tsai-Ming Liang's films, water plays an essential role in the postmodern text and is produced as a fluid and uncertain linguistic element transmitting the various unpredictably fantastic moments by entirely disengaging itself from any central organization purported by the modern linguistic system, acting as an anonymous substance. As a result, when Tsai is asked a question based on the utter hermeneutical concept of modernity:

In Chinese symbolism, water is seen as chaos, the primeval chaos. Does it also have that sense for you; he just answers: 'I'd never thought of that'....and also says" every time I bring in something like water, there has to be a reason in my mind; it always means that I have found something interesting in it. And it's always different, always rich".<sup>288</sup>

In the same interview, Tsai continues:

Water is like air, it is something essential to life. That's my starting-point for using water: Of course, water comes in different forms, it can be found in different situations.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup>. Ibid., p 113.

<sup>289</sup>. Ibid.

It can also be said that the meaning of water in Tsai's films has no logocentric father as an unchallengeable matrix constrained by semiology upon hermeneutics to represent the resemblance logically extended from the incorrigible privileged knowledge. Otherwise his films could not be completely written as postmodern texts, commanding attention at prominent international film festivals.

On the other hand, Tsai Ming-Liang's film, *Wayward Cloud* (2005), from my standpoint, is the best film yet made, in any country, for exemplifying Derrida's theory of postmodern writing. This is because, in the film, the meaning of things is profoundly supplemented through the process of ceaselessly interweaving themselves with other narrative elements from different syntagmatic systems to cause the meaning of things always to slip down in the inventive process of germination and insemination, taking away from themselves to be added, which can be illustrated from the first scene to the last scene in *Wayward Cloud*. As Derrida wrote:

This movement of play, permitted by the lack or absence of a centre or origin, is the movement of supplementarity.<sup>290</sup>

In other words, watermelon and water have been enunciated as different present discourses which convey the same object but always create the different new novelty. The meaning of both two things have been evacuated in order to participate in the movement of supplementarity to interweave themselves with other heterogeneous narrative elements detached from their centers to produce the different presence of the presents. As a result, Tsai just puts watermelon and water into play as free signifiers to mingle other unfamiliar elements together to produce simulacra. It is also a process of

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<sup>290</sup>.Derrida, Jacques *Writing and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p 365.

mobilizing the nomination of a thing through transgressing its taxonomical category, interweaving itself with other ex-centric objects in action as the paradoxical plurality and the new form of hallucination without marking a precise name.

On the other hand, Korean film director Kim Ki-Duk also tears down the closure of this Western modern discourse in attempting to arrange all the narrative fabrics of a text in a circle around a centre and guardian of truth as its centralized organization. As a result, in his film, *3iron*, the male protagonist has also manifested the process of successively producing paradoxical meanings with his own self-reflexivity. This is seen in the fantastic linguistic combinations of heterogeneity constituted by his playing golf in various incommensurable places, such as a park, a median strip and a parking lot, in order to create the different indescribable present- becoming. Thus, there is not the privileged knowledge to guide us to constitute a stable and an ultimate truth in postmodern writing. Its discourse will be always invented in the untiring progression with no halt but infinite difference.

### **6.2.3 Postmodern texts transgressing the institutional knowledge based on the modern paradigm**

A beautiful difference is unhooked from the granted patrimony and general recognition, but makes up incredible, indescribable, transformational or abusive expansion and arbitrary connections with the thematic sense, as written in the postmodern texts. Therefore, the incestuous scene in Tsai Ming-Liang's film, *The River*, problematizes how this scene can be deciphered and originated from the Oedipus complex. In the classical mythical record, Oedipus is the story of incest between a mother and a son and

this tragedy results from the lack of awareness of both about what they have committed, just as the father and son have sex in a murky space where they cannot recognize each other.

In addition, in Freud's work, incestuous desire is the paradigmatic case of a repressed desire that has to be displaced. In other words, foundational knowledge merely dwells on the heterosexual paradigm of sex and also excludes homosexuality from taking place between blood relations. Therefore, Tsai deploys his present discourse to produce the incestuous text in difference; this postmodern writing also creates the simulacrum of transmuting incest into a same-sex sex relation.

On the other hand, in *Isle*, Kim Ki-Duk also illustrates some outrageous sexual plots by incongruently mingling pain with pleasure as a fantastic and shocking provisionality. In numerous interviews he has commented on the walking wounded who populate his films:

These scenes of self-mutilation are all about sadomasochism. They are the only type of immediate response that my characters are capable of showing. At the same time, the physical wounds are symbol, expressing how the characters are struggling in society.<sup>291</sup>

Nevertheless, like the incestuous scene in Tsai's film, *The River*, with the sadomasochism in Kim's film, *The Isle*, this sexual paradigm indigenously chiseled on the monument of modernity has been rewritten by Kim's present discourse as the paradoxical text of postmodernity. In other words, it only produces the

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<sup>291</sup> . Totaro, Donato. SEOM/THE ISLE. In Bowyer, Justin(ed). *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*. Wallflower Press, 2004, p209

unprecedented reality instead of the resemblance extended from its unalterably original and monumental stance. This immediate response is the so-called momentum in postmodern writing, a superficial, provisional and ahistorical novelty.

Hence, with respect to the sadomasochistic scenes in *The Isle*, when the male and female protagonists feel powerless to sooth their fear and anguish, they just suddenly mutilate themselves to express their emotional pain. It does not matter who does this, he or she will immediately have sex with another in order to redeem them both from this unbearable helplessness and trauma. In other words, this immediate sadomasochism, the postmodern sublime, the momentary pleasure, has become a medicine to rescue both of them from the present dilemma rather than duplicating the meaning of sadomasochism rooted in its paradigmatic sense of modernity in which it has been institutionalized as abnormal sexual pleasure enjoyed through a process of abusing each other constrained in the realm of psychoanalysis. Thus, Kim has invented a new meaning of sadomasochism

Moreover, in Kim Ki-Duk's film *Samaritan Girl*, he describes the lives of two female students engaging in sexual transactions. If this film had been constructed according to the semantic theory, the meaning of Samaritan girl would have been derived from its hermeneutical truth, prostitution, because this term refers to a girl who employs the computer as a vehicle to put her personal details on the internet as the advertisement for sexual transactions and to communicate with clients. This postmodern term is only used in well-developed Asian countries Taiwan, Japan, Korea and China. On the other hand, the general belief will also tell us that this is a moral, ethical and legal issue, and only a shameless girl who itches to have a better material life, or a poor girl who wants to provide a better life for her family, will become a prostitute, selling her body and soul.

Nevertheless, Kim discards the expert's homology, but chooses to invent his paralogy by means of depicting the first Samaritan girl as being eager to visit European countries to enrich her spiritual life and to imitate an Indian prostitute converting all her clients to Buddhism. The second Samaritan girl wants to redeem her friend's sin through having sex with all the men who have had sexual transactions with her without payment, and indeed refunding the money to all of these clients.

In other words, it should be reprehensible in semiotic theory, if their motivations for working as a prostitute are in correspondence with Kim's paradigmatic sense. According to hermeneutical truth about a term in the modern paradigm, a prostitute is always a prostitute who cannot possess such a noble sentiments; otherwise she would not choose to be a prostitute. On the contrary, both Samaritan girls have been written by Kim the postmodern texts to produce how an angel's virtue has transgressed the judgemental realm of morality, ethics and law. However, it still will be repudiated by modern theory, because their outrageous sexually misconduct is against the humanist value of modernity, as well as showing that a prostitute can do good deeds in this dichotomized world.

As such, if Kim had been constrained by this rooted concept of the Samaritan Girl, without regarding a term as a germ that will not only get a first birth, he would not have depicted them as prostitutes with strong religious faith, because this heresy must be rejected by the modern theory for its contradictory and absurd thematic sense. How can a religious person also be a prostitute? How can this hierarchy be overstepped? Nevertheless, this so-called paralogy is well used by Kim to invent the new and impossible truth rather than to represent an objective truth conceptualized by the absolute knowledge and general belief.

It can also be said that all the films made by Kim are not naive realist films that merely represent a common social phenomenon, seen and systematically analyzed in newspapers and social archives. Rather they are hyperbolic realist films enunciated by his individual paradigm to produce the unparalleled praxis of life overstepping the institutional knowledge of modernity. This is also the reason why Kim Ki-Duk is always Kim Ki-Duk, whose films entirely written as postmodern texts replete with paradox have won numerous international honours.

#### **6.2.4 To write is to graft and to create intertextuality**

In Tsai Ming-Liang's film, *The River*, some fantastic combinations are constituted by different texts coming from irrelevant genres and schools mingling with each other to create the momentary simulacrum, the postmodern sublime, transgressing the modern utopia. For example, after a woman in the city unbearably plagued by an unknown epidemic has been depicted by the regular cinematic fiction, a choreographed opera, an utterly different performing text from the unrelated family system is just abruptly and illogically grafted onto this preceding realist feature. Therefore, it produces the incommensurably intertextual text as a fantastic sequential development. On the other hand, this helpless female is also transformed into a singer in this textual hybridity, singing an old classical Chinese pop song and dancing with some beautiful girls as a displacement to soothe her agony.

Hence, this heterogeneous composition also breaks the law of textual purity established by modernity and transmutes the historical reference; classical Chinese song with the present discourse through supplementing the new meaning in depicting the same female character wearing archaic costume and performing in this choreographic opera in the same place, the corridor of an apartment, as the spatial present in the film, which metamorphoses the historical materials into a process of producing the

presence of the present rather than only to represent its historical aura based on mimesis to reminisce the nostalgia of modernity.

In other words, this fantastic graft of realist narrative and choreographic opera becomes a perfect example of intertextuality, a marvellous plural text which mingles and converts the past and heterogeneous elements into the present discourse. Nevertheless, all the film articles I have collected describe it just as a beautiful collage, and mainly focus on portraying the history and content of this classical Chinese song, without using postmodern linguistic theory to explore how both these incongruent texts are fused together in producing the intertextual effect against the hermeneutics theory of modernity. And how the present discourses trigger off their text's elements from the different origins and centers in creating this postmodern simulacrum, the temporary composition in transgressing the spatio-temporal gap.

On the other hand, we can refer to how each grafted text continues to radiate back towards the site of its removal and to transform that too, as it affects the new territory. This marvellous collage is thus grafted in Tsai Ming-Liang's film *Wayward Cloud*. In the scene of the top apartment, suffering from an interruption of water supply, the marginalized and solitary pornography actor, steps into and swims in a huge water- storage tank. The narrative text and genre then just suddenly and seamlessly grafts onto a heterogeneous performing art, an opera drama, hence this present space and actor have also been transformed into a swimming pool and merman.

As a result, Tsai triggers off a new momentum through an undivided presence. The male protagonist sings a classical song about how the moonlight is beautiful, but he still feels lonely. In other words, Tsai

tries to graft this unforeseeably emerging opera drama onto the preceding realist feature to describe how much the character longs to dissipate his present sorrow without regarding for the fact that there is a huge difference in their genres and contents categorized as a narrative fiction and an opera drama, and realist text and super-natural text. Tsai just imaginatively links them together in the same space in order to denaturalize the reality to demolish the organic totality and to produce different presents.

On the other hand, this creating the spatial present also illustrated in Kim's film, *Samaritan Girl*, where the father innovatively uses the ubiquitous materials in the river valley as his self-material without considering their essence in reconstructing this natural space as a practice-driving place.

### **6.2.5 Producing the different presence of the present**

All of Tsai Ming-Liang's and Kim Ki-Duk's films are constituted by mingling the scattered citations of quotation marks skipping their beginnings as the continuous present discourse in this postmodern writing. However, referring to producing the present, it can be dissected into different aspects to materialize how these presents can be detached from their commencements and matrices to create their own becoming. Moreover, Tsai Ming-Liang has also explained:

The reason why I always deal with the present in my films is simply because that's what I want to show. Things of the present are true; they seem to me totally authentic, they clearly belong to reality.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup>. Rehn, Jean-Pierre, Joyard, Olivier, and Riviere, Daniele, *Tsai Ming-Liang*. Dis Voir, 1991. p103.

Hence, all the characters in his films are without any informational precedence. They are incarnated as free signifiers not only to inconceivably interplay with their surrounding objects with schizophrenic language to make objects of the present are true but also to spontaneously stroll the city to face and participate where something has been progressing here to write their own present stories lacking any past trace.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, this prominent trait of postmodern writing in Tsai's films is almost entirely overlooked by scholars. It is merely mentioned in one book, which is entirely dedicated to analyzing his films, *Tsai Ming-Liang*, by Rehn, Jean-Pierre, Joyard, Olivier, and Riviere, Daniele<sup>293</sup> with rather shallow descriptions. This book uses postmodern terms, like present and here and now, superficially touching on the film's linguistic effect without exploring a deeply structural approach based on postmodern writing theory to deconstruct Tsai's films by navigating how this postmodern text is constructed in its whole process.

On the other hand, in *Wayward Cloud*, Tsai even produces this present by giving absolute freedom to let the dancers emancipate themselves from their past learning and foundational knowledge and to create a choreographic opera with the new performing style and text, losing its fixed and appropriate name but enjoying its authentic present. Therefore it becomes various sequences of improvised bodily movements, activated by the freewill of the dancers and their organic actions also become hard to identify as dance , owing to lacking the rehearsing and choreographic form.

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<sup>293</sup>. Rehn, Jean-Pierre, Joyard, Olivier, and Riviere, Daniele, *Tsai Ming-Liang*, Dis Voir, 1991

In other words, it entirely produces the present rather than repeating graceful movements designed by a choreographer in order to create a spontaneous and energetic combination of actions without displaying any dancing technique. Even though such a succession of distorted, exaggerated and dynamic movements, which really express the desire for acquiring, even hunting love, this text itself is unlikely to be labelled as a dance, since its textual identity has also gone beyond the paradigm of modern dance in order to create the new present.

In an interview, Tsai explains why this, a sequence of unnamed movements, was not elaborately designed, and he also repudiates one art critic who criticizes him in a local newspaper, saying that this ungraceful choreography has raped the best dancers in Hong Kong, performing this part:

Personally, I do not think it's a matter of rape, but rather that it's a shame these dancers always end up doing the same thing. They told me –they also said the same thing publicly–that they were used to working to create beautifully-choreographed movements which would be repeated thousands of times, and performed without thinking. With me they were forced to think, to convey an idea and justify each of their movements.<sup>294</sup>

Therefore, Tsai attempted to obliterate the normative text institutionalizing dance in the paradigm of modern art. The movement he wanted is to create the new present, an unparalleled performance, rather than to represent the past accumulated experiences having been reviewed in rehearsal again and again.

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<sup>294</sup>. Ibid., p 98.

It can also be said that although this random composition of improvised movements detached from its conceptualized mould may not be evaluated as the modern choreography with an academic judgment and artistic certification, this new performing genre made by Tsai also indeed proclaimed that the meaning of dance should be erased from any well-choreographed movements and from any foundational properties imposed on it. As such, postmodern text is always text itself without needing the form to be identified and categorized in order to produce the new present.

On the other hand, in Kim Ki-Duk's film, *3iron*, all the structural developments of the story exemplify the Derridean theory of dissemination; because almost entire plot strains are strung from the scattered, unrelated and independent progressing scissions. And male and female protagonists just play as I, a disseminator, spontaneously engaging in all of these incisions in motion to produce the unrepeated becoming. This means that from the beginning of the film, the male protagonist, a squatter, just starts to sow the seeds in each house he sneaks into in with his participation in the scission progressing here. Therefore these seeds carried by him will also commence to germinate to produce the new present in all the empty premises, as his self-presence of the present and authentic here and now.

Moreover, when the male protagonist brings the female protagonist clandestinely sneaking into the different vacant houses, simultaneously, they also disseminate the seeds on the soil fertilized by scission which has been progressing here. Meanwhile, the other cut-off will also be coming into the house externally at any time to trigger off more contingency to let them transform it as the new present-becoming, here and now. Hence, in Kim's film, *3iron*, as the male and female protagonist are looking at the old man dead on the floor, there is phone call just ringing at the same time. And, eventually, two of them just bury him in the park.

### 6.2.6 All narrative structures are constituted by scissions detached from their beginning

Tsai Ming-Liang and Kim Ki-Duk's films are composed of scissions, fragmentary plot strands, each of them has detached from its beginning and when it grafts onto other cut-off, this postmodern present discourse will not reach a full stop in its development, because it will just make a quantum leap to continuously connect the numerous different scissions here and there to keep all the narrative in a state of action running in an undivided presence.

Hence, in Tsai Ming-Liang's film *What Time Is It There?*, in the first scene, father is walking around the living room looking for his son, and the following sequence does not unveil the final result, whether he fulfils his intention or not. However, the second scene skips the successive order of causal linkage and indicates a huge temporal gap through abruptly showing the son just holding his father's funereal photograph in the car.

In other words, this combination of two scenes can be exemplified as a scission connecting a scission, an incompletely running progress linking an incompletely running progress in the permanent action rather than the chronological succession in the classic text should express the distinct division like the natural circulation functioning in between the beginning and end of each action.

On the other hand, in Kim's film, *The Isle*, all the characters, with no biographical messages, have been just here or come incessantly to this fishing ground without showing the different places and times of their departure. They behave like the disseminated seeds escaping from their mother buds and promptly flying to this picturesque lakeside setting to enjoy their fishing in a floating cabin, like their new

inseminations produced as the new present. Therefore, each of them scattered on this lake, has also been contextualized as a scission and also links each other as a whole story. It can also be said that this innovative structure of postmodern text should be analyzed by postmodern writing theory that can probe the flesh and blood constituted in the postmodern narrative framework.

Hence, in this thesis I have clearly formulated the sequenced development of postmodern history and the different fields of postmodern theory, introducing generally the most conspicuous features of Tsai and Kim's films and making comparisons between their films and those of some of other genres of Asian cinema. I have incisively analyzed both directors' films grounded in a variety of postmodern approaches, insightfully made cross- references between Tsai and Kim's films and have proposed six criteria for identifying postmodern films.

As such, this sequence of discourses constituted by systematically describing the different postmodern theories as groundings in navigating both directors' works in my thesis has illuminated in a very clear sense and content that Tsai Ming-Ling and Kim-Ki-Duk's films should be analyzed by the full extent of postmodern approaches to realize the core of their cinematic thematic. Finally this will vindicate them as two of the most prominent postmodern film directors in the world from their first films to their last.

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