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Imagining the Prostitute:
A Genealogy of Cinematic Representations of Power

Student: Nicholas Barkdull
Advisor: Prof. Joyce C.H. Liu

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研究生：白洛克 Student: Nicholas Barkdull
指導教授：劉紀蕙 Advisor: Joyce C.H. Liu

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ABSTRACT

This research will attempt to find Taiwanese cinematic uses of the ‘sex worker,’ and the implications contained within those uses in order to offer a nuanced alternative to common dichotomies which render discussions of the sex worker reductive. I will offer this alternative by tracing back cultural symbols which are rooted in history and society. Contemporary (mainly post-2000) Taiwanese cinema will be used as a frame for a genealogical analysis of these images of the sex worker. This genealogy will find threads connecting a complex network of ever-changing power relationships surrounding sex work through the metaphors of sex worker roles within films, which tell of a latticework of power that takes place along the axes of history, culture, and political economics.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Introduction: A New Way of Looking	- 1 -
The Problem	- 1 -
Background	- 2 -
The Feminist Schism	- 2 -
The Violent Male Gaze	- 4 -
Methodology	- 6 -
Structure of the Research	- 10 -
Chapter 2: Commodity and Power	- 17 -
A Time of Freedom: The Sex Worker as Literal Commodity Object	- 20 -
A Time of Love: A Lack of Certainty in Cold War Taiwan	- 27 -
A Time of Youth: A Complex Subjectivity Requiring Complex Resistances	- 34 -
Conclusions: A Semiosis Overlaid on the Topology of Taiwan	- 44 -
Chapter 3: The Brothel Prostitutes of <i>Monga</i> and <i>Days Looking at the Sea</i>: Fundamental Shifts in Power Through Modernity	- 49 -
Echoing the Past, Contextualizing the Future	- 51 -
<i>Days Looking at the Sea</i> : The Powers of Adoption, Family Law, and Patrilineality	- 53 -
<i>Monga</i> : Gangster Norms Coping with Femininity	- 64 -
Conclusions: Power Resistances Evolving with Society	- 77 -
Chapter 4: Location on the Margins: Migrants and Sex Workers in <i>The Fourth Portrait</i> and <i>Stilt</i>	- 83 -
Migrant Wives and Imagined Borders	- 83 -
Concubines, Wives, Prostitutes	- 86 -
Migrant Chinese Brides: Mothering Across the Impassable Strait	- 89 -
Mail-Order Brides from Vietnam: Commodities, Laws, and In-Laws	- 102 -
Conclusions: Taiwan as the Location of Legitimacy	- 114 -
Conclusion: Redefining the Grids, Redefining Power	- 119 -
Taking Back the Body	- 122 -
Shifting Centers of Power	- 124 -

What Can Be Concluded, and What Cannot - 129 -

Appendix 1: Figures..... - 130 -

Appendix 2: Films Analyzed in this Thesis - 137 -

Bibliography..... - 139 -

 Chinese Sources: - 139 -

 English Sources: - 139 -

Introduction: A New Way of Looking

The Problem

Taiwanese law currently defines penalties for sex work (according to the current law existing since the 1991, and especially after the presidency of Chen Shui-Bian starting in 2000, before which licensed prostitution existed in small numbers).¹ Likewise, feminists, activists, and academics are locked in a battle either advocating the abolishment of prostitution or the establishment of sex work as a legitimate form of work (or some slight variations, such as decriminalization). However, for all of these opinions there seems to be a lack of satisfactory definitions (many literally never define what sex work is), research (there is much speculation about sex workers but few interviews and ethnographies outside of government care facilities), and humanity (the sex worker becomes a concept in these debates, rather than a person). The first task of this research, therefore, is to briefly read between the lines of these sources for a Taiwanese institutional answer to the question: “What is sex work?” Since these (law, academics, and activists) are the major cultural institutions that define the deviancy or legitimacy of sex workers, it is worthwhile to use their discussions to supplement the discussion of film sources.

The mirror on the other side of these institutions is cinema, which reacts to the former’s definitions of sex work and in turn redefines them. The representations by film are not simply a reflection of sexual deviance, but are instead a web of societal and historical influences that combine to send a message. The second question of this research is therefore: “How are sex workers represented in Taiwanese films, and why?” and the third question is “What are the

¹Hung (2009: 21-22) points out that licensed prostitution existed for around 40 years since the KMT left China, and that Chen began a campaign against the practice as mayor of Taipei in 1997. By that time there were only 128 licensed prostitutes in the city (page 35).

¹Chou (2007) points out that licensed prostitution may technically still exist, but the Taipei Licensed Prostitutes Management Act of 1973 drastically decreased the practice through conditions which were hard to fulfill, “(e.g. death of brothel owner results in the brothels’ closure as brothel ownership and location is non-transferable),” and Chen’s 1997 actions put the nail in the coffin in Taipei.

implications of (all of) these definitions about Taiwanese society?” This last question is almost the same as asking “why?” in the first, but it is important because it follows the original question through to conclusion. It is the difference between knowing, for example, that prostitution is used in Chung Mong-Hong’s (鍾孟宏) *The Fourth Portrait* (第四張畫) to show the struggle of a migrant to properly take care of her child (answering “why?”) and asking what that means for borders and citizenship in Taiwan (answering “what are the implications?”).

Background

Originally, the first question of this thesis was, simply, “What is a sex worker?” It quickly became obvious that this should be defined by Taiwanese sources, and the first examined were the law and academic sources. Through these institutions, a two-sided debate emerged between Taiwanese abolitionists of sex work and advocates of sex work as work.

The Feminist Schism

An essay by Yenlin Ku (顧燕翎) (2008) tells about her role in Taiwanese feminist activism and how she believes feminists can work with the state. She led the Awakening Foundation, a feminist group that emerged in the late 1980s and began the fight against prostitution by first campaigning against child aboriginal prostitutes. She is thus one of the first modern “abolitionists,” and the others that have followed share similar roots.

Ku’s opposes of the advocates of sex work as work, not only in her position on sex work, but also in her stance on government and gender. Where feminists like Josephine Ho (何春蕤) and Yin-Bin Ning (甯應斌) claim that the state is causing problems for sex workers through a structure of patriarchy, Ku puts her faith in this structure and asserts that changing it from within

will help women. Ho and Milwertz (2008) (speaking about Ho's opinion) say that feminists like Ku are separate from the feminists on the other side of the schism because they work with the state, they do not wish to challenge patriarchal gender/sex norms, and they do not condone sex work.

There are, of course, exceptions to this "feminist schism," but many juridical and institutional definitions (NGOs, activist groups) are defined by this divide. Outside of Taiwan, the debate is historically and socially different, but this same general feminist schism can be applied to the most common views presented.

It should be noted that this schism has influenced a body of academic and juridical work which is polemic due to the focus of discrediting feminists on the other side. The method of genealogy (discussed in detail below) is therefore used as a different angle in this thesis, slicing into the false dichotomy by discovering the genesis of the present day. The result is an answer that goes beyond a simple binary which reduces the sex worker down to a nameless, faceless, non-human entity; or at times an answer that does so intentionally to demonstrate why this is a flawed worldview. The use of different filmic roles attempts to demonstrate the varied aspects and varied forms of sex workers, while the use of reduction down to a commodity body object is used to demonstrate the ease with which power adapts to control that object.

Examining sex worker roles in cinema with a genealogical approach therefore does not fall into these same schism categories. Instead of seeing messages that are "pro" or "anti" prostitute and/or state, much more dynamic characters emerge. The stories of migrants are revealed, as figured in Chung Mong-Hong's (鍾孟宏) *The Fourth Portrait* (第四張畫) or Yin-Chuan Tsai's (蔡銀娟) *Stilt* (候鳥來的季節). The genealogical impact of history on the modern girl is revealed as in Hou Hsiao Hsien's (侯孝賢) *Three Times* (最好的時光). Or the different

roles and definitions of authority, group law, and masculinity are revealed as in Doze Niu's (鈕承澤) *Monga* (艋舺).

Juridical and academic definitions of sex work can therefore be used as a starting point to see which films contain women defined this way and why, but they cannot be adhered to past that. After the initial definition, the films and characters contained within begin to speak for themselves, and for the society and history which they represent. These representations are the main focus of this project. The views of the feminist schism are therefore the first question to be problematized by this thesis, but the discussion quickly evolves beyond this starting point.

The Violent Male Gaze

Film, however, is fiction, and although the selected films in this thesis are intentional social commentaries or histories by their respective directors, the films themselves are also a topic of debate. Here, too, genealogy can be used to create a more complete picture; otherwise the message becomes misinterpreted as one of victimization or condemnation because of a patriarchal male gaze which is too easily attributed to films by certain authors. To give a solid understanding of this issue, an example serves best.

In Heather Griffiths's 2010 paper about prostitution in cinema, she talks about several prostitute archetypes that evolved in Hollywood cinema from the 1960s to 1990s. With each archetype, the prostitute, she says, is always presented as evil and needs to be redeemed. She is therefore forced to atone for her actions through abuse against her. Her theory is that this is part of a justification for violence against all women. She explains that in the sixties the archetype was "redeemed bad girl," and that she was given either punishment through death, or redemption through marriage. In the seventies, the archetype was "prostitute as victim," where the woman

was systematically victimized with violence instead of being punished or redeemed by the filmmaker. In the eighties, she was the “hooker with a heart of gold,” and was emotionally, rather than physically, abused with jokes and satirical slapstick violence. The nineties had two archetypes. One was the “Galatea,” which repeated the sixties pattern, but forced the woman to also repent for her poor upbringing as well as for being a prostitute. The other was the “strong prostitute,” which may seem like a break from the tradition of “forced atonement,” but in reality she is still forced to make up for her wrongs through violence despite choosing her profession willingly. Griffiths bases these archetypes on perpetuation through profit, which she cites as an idea taken from Horkheimer and Adorno.

Heather Griffith’s paper tries to explain only why these films are sexist by creating several categories, and placing each film, by decade, neatly into these categories. She does not explore why prostitutes were placed in these films and what their stories say about society. In other words, her methodology is the opposite of genealogy. Instead, she takes her own interpretation of Laura Mulvey, who asserted that the camera has a male, voyeuristic, and aggressive gaze, and attempts to fit these films into that premise. She does this by including 40 films, but only shortly summarizing a few as examples of each category she has created. Her research therefore becomes a shallow, two-dimensional glance at decades worth of prostitute films in only a few short pages.

This automatic victimization and claim of misogyny is what the genealogical method will try to counter. Certainly patriarchy can be part of a genealogy. Certainly sex workers are sometimes victims, face challenges, or are the object of a male gaze in some films, and these are all part of a genealogy too. But they are not the whole picture or the entire explanation—patriarchy is far from the *only* construction that impacts our world. Otherwise, by this sort of

definition, making a film that produces productive dialog about sex workers would be impossible. The idea of a universally-applied violent male gaze is therefore the second idea to be problematized by this thesis. However, these two questions—the feminist schism and the violent male gaze—need not be brought up again and again. This thesis is not a dialogue with the two theories, but instead an alternate way of viewing. The weaknesses of dichotomy and/or a monopolar structural view will naturally be revealed throughout the course of the paper.

Methodology

On Genealogy

“Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival” (Foucault 1977: 161).

The genealogical method that this thesis will use is inspired by Foucault and partially by Nietzsche. Foucault applies the methodology very effectively in much of his work, but he also speaks specifically about it when he examines Nietzsche:

From these elements, however, genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles (Foucault 1977: 140)

This is the goal of this thesis—to use genealogy to isolate the different scenes in which the sex worker engages in different roles without making them conclude in a “monotonous finality” or an over-generalized explanation. The premise is that cultural conceptions about “the oldest profession in the world”—prostitution—are also erroneously seen as “without history.” The images of the prostitute are often clichéd, and people often have a strong stance on the matter. The sex worker seems like a timeless figure, but she is not.

However, the sex worker is not some Platonic archetype, because, “The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events” (Foucault 1977: 155). Thus, the assertion of this thesis is simple: If the historical and societal influences that lead to a director positioning a sex worker in his or her film are examined, then a rich and unique story with its contextual implications will emerge for *each* of these characters. That is exactly what will be done in the following chapters.

However, there is a singular theme that emerges by performing this genealogy, and it can even be put into a single word: power. But the power relationships that emerge throughout this thesis are by no means singular, do not have a singular source or influence, and do not have a singular cause or effect. It could also be said that the object of power in this thesis is a singular thing: body. But again, bodies do not have singular form, and the power over them is in no way singular. Foucault has a lengthy quote on this topic in *Discipline and Punish*, which is nevertheless a priceless insight:

But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force, bearing on material elements, and yet without involving violence; it may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order. (Foucault 1995: 25-26)

It is my theory that the commodity body object of the sex worker fits perfectly into this explanation—that the body is tied up in economy and power, and that it is productive, subjected, and a base of resistance—and so I will explore the power relationships that place her in different societal points. However, I would like to add a new angle on this process with the use of films.

When talking about power, Foucault speaks in terms of a gaze operating with a technology of grids. Specifically, he mentions these grids four times in *The Birth of the Clinic*. His idea is connected with a system of classification, taxonomy, or *episteme*—in medicine, doctors begin their examination with a series of categories and groups, relating to yet differentiating from one another:

‘The knowledge of diseases is the doctor’s compass; the success of the cure depends on an exact knowledge of the disease’; the doctor’s gaze is directed initially not towards that concrete body, that visible whole, that positive plenitude that faces him—the patient—but towards intervals in nature, lacunae, distances, in which there appear, like negatives, ‘the signs that differentiate one disease from another, the true from the false, the legitimate from the bastard, the malign from the benign’ [13]. It is a grid that catches the real patient and holds back any therapeutic indiscretion. (Foucault 1994: 8)

By relating the characteristics of disease (or whatever is being examined) to one another, the gaze develops and is allowed to know and see, and therefore power over the object develops—”the gaze that sees is a gaze that dominates” (Foucault 1994: 39).

This is by no means invalid. In fact, this thesis recognizes the grid and employs it to certain ends. For instance, a grid (and it is “a” grid because systems of classification are malleable and thus the gaze shifts) overlaid on Taiwanese society reveals certain things like the box in the grid called “mail-order bride” being related to the box labeled “sex worker” or “sex worker” being related to categories of “hygiene.” In fact, the most macroscopic grid that is utilized by the gaze for power in this example could be said to be that of the false dichotomy constructed by the feminist schism—one box labeled “good,” and the other “bad.”

However, I have a new way of looking at this grid. This is because when talking about power, speaking in terms of a “grid” could be misleading (however usefully it is employed for the purposes of power). A grid is generally composed of squares or parallelograms, with each individual point equidistant from the others. Geometrically speaking, society is more like a latticework of molecules. Each molecule is composed of atoms, each of which has unique

properties. If an individual body is plugged into this relationship in place of the atom, the properties of the body cause variances in the energy potential, and power will form connections according to the lowest energy potential, meaning the bonding distance between individuals will vary, deforming the shape of the latticework. This means that society is anisotropic—the properties of society vary in different directions along different axes in multiple dimensions. So it is unrealistic to examine a body—here the sex worker—according to one single point, or even along the y-axis of history. Adding the x-axis of culture is still not enough. The addition of the z-axis of political economy (and possibly even further axes) is required, because the difference in the quality of power between the x and y axis is different than between the y and z axis is different than between the z and x axis. This latticework, stacked in three dimensions according to the energy potential of power, forms the surfaces of the crystal of a society, and that society's orientation forms according to the energy potential between the surfaces and other societies, forming an uneven grain. Therefore, one cannot find a weak point and crack the latticework along a flat plane. One can only pick an orientation in the x,y,z axes and analyze the bonds leading to other points in the latticework, or one can pull along an axis and examine the surface that emerges along the separation and how this surface differs when the structure is pulled apart along a different axis. By using film, I am using the hyperbole of fiction to more easily locate an x,y,z point in this latticework and pull along the various axes to record the results.

However, this latticework is not completely chaotic, and finding trends in these cultural sources is still useful. There are rules to these power relations—the grids which the gaze uses do exist—and the competing bonds can be traced back genealogically—they are simply not symmetrical lines with ninety-degree angles. Furthermore, this latticework still takes place on top of the various grids which have been constructed—influencing the gaze and power—and

these will still be taken into consideration (through, for example, the grid of society which differentiates “masculine” from “feminine” under the gaze of “gangster law”).

Structure of the Research

This research will be conducted through a genealogical analysis of Taiwanese cinema, structured in three body chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Throughout the chapters, the broader, global sex work definitions will come from the UNAIDS definition and other conventional (dictionary) definitions. For more specific theory on Taiwanese law and history, Hans Tao-Ming Huang and the laws themselves will be used. For analysis of cinema, semiotic theories will be applied to uncover historical and societal elements (martial law, globalization, historical metaphors etc.) and then the wide variety of scholars most appropriate for those topics will be cited for further understanding. In this way, the cinematic views will be linked to history, politics and society, forming a picture inspired by Foucault’s genealogical methodology, which he uses in such places as *The Birth of Biopolitics*, *The History of Sexuality, Discipline and Punish*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, etc.

Cinema is a perfect answer for the approach of genealogy because it is a perceived reflection of reality by directors who wish to convey important aspects of that reality—ideas such as gender roles, marginalization, identity, modernity, and citizenship are magnified for examination, and at the same time stereotypes can be subverted by a director’s detailed articulation. Thus, the main portion of this research will closely examine sex workers, women, immigrants, femininity, and masculinity in modern, globalizing Taiwan (to name only a few influences and roles of the sex worker).

The three chapters on Taiwanese cinema will be organized loosely and somewhat

ironically by “type” of sex worker (to juxtapose the “types” and show the differences between them) to illustrate at a glance that “sex worker” does not mean one specific thing. The individuals within the types vary—the first cinema chapter only contains one sex worker, a courtesan, but the brothel sex workers in the next chapter serve as stark contrasts for each other, and the migrant sex workers in the third chapter are represented by a mainland spouse who sometimes engages in sex work and a mail-order bride. In other words, the topics will be broad groupings in which the directors will respond in their own unique and varied ways.

The first cinema chapter (Chapter 2 of this thesis) examines the commodity of sex workers and the influence of power over this commodity which form the semiosis of her subjectivity. It uses the example of the perceived history of females in Taiwan, with their subjectivity being rooted in the symbol of the sex worker in Hou Hsiao Hsien’s (侯孝賢) *Three Times* (最好的時光). In his 1911 segment the woman is objectified and traded as a courtesan. She is explained through the metaphor of the objectification of Taiwan by the Japanese and the Qing dynasty. In fact, she wishes to stop being a courtesan and become a concubine, which can clearly be seen as a parallel—the status of women reflects the status of Taiwan, and this is confirmed by Chen’s (2008) interview with Hou, in which he says politics are told through individual stories in his film. Hou’s movie is also a memory. One theory that will be explored is that this 1911 story is the common perception of women’s status in the past (it is very simple and clear about the idea that the courtesan is not free and neither is Taiwan), and that is what influences views that evolve in the other segments of the movie. In the 1966 segment, the woman is seldom outside a pool hall. It will be argued that this is the accepted space of a woman whose job is to be looked at, and also the space in which life can be lived separate from the confusing political background of the times. In this segment she and the male lead seldom speak, and this

may reflect cultural memories about the confusion of what could be done or said about the future under the KMT police state. Compulsory military service is a major part of this segment, and it brings to the forefront the past of World War II and the present of the Cold War, as well as the fading dream of retaking the mainland. This was also an uncertain situation, where Taiwan served visually as a forward base against communism, but was not allowed by the U.S. and the international community to inflame the PRC by acting.

The 2005 segment is presented as a question against the background of those historical memories of the roles of women and the subjectivity which they construct for the character in the present day. The modern woman in Taipei, though physically liberated from being a courtesan and a concubine, and given a voice in the modern era, still struggles with the very recent history when this was not the case. On top of that, she faces the new challenge of how to express herself in a newly consumerist society where she is still not free from societal norms against homosexuality. Now she is an active exhibitionist, where previously she was forced into that role, and she tries to use this for further progress. She wears a tattoo of a Japanese yen, a symbol of her role in a globalized world with an uncertain future (Japan has been experiencing “The Lost Decade”). She seeks to be an activist by singing songs and making poems on her blog. Set on the background of the rest of the film, technology, capitalism, democracy, and history truly collide in this segment.

In the next chapter, the focus will move to the illegal, brothel sex worker in Doze Niu’s (鈕承澤) *Monga* (艋舺), contrasted with Tung Wang’s (王童) *Days Looking at the Sea* (看海的日子). *Days Looking at the Sea* was produced previously to 2000, but *Monga* references the film through parallel imagery, so it will be used as a genealogical source to examine *Monga*. That being said, while *Monga*’s brothel scenes visually mirror *Days Looking at the Sea*, each

addresses the issue of the brothel sex worker in a unique way shaped by the way in which power is constructed and shaped around the socio-economic situation of Taiwan. These two times are only a decade apart but cover a world of difference. They are thus discussed together because of the contrasting views they take of society. *Monga* examines Taiwan's gang culture (or what will be dubbed "gang law") conflicting with femininity, brought to a crisis by incoming Mainland gangs. The focus is on brotherhood as it is equated with femininity and a shared identity of Taiwanese-ness—both a modern view of the director from the globalized perspective and a perception of the 1980's as Taiwan was becoming more global. *Days Looking at the Sea*, on the other hand, is looking back at the 1970's, when local, familial identity took precedent. Another important difference is that *Monga* addresses power according to the law of gang culture and *Days Looking at the Sea* addresses power from filial values (what will be called "family law").

Aside from those questions, masculine roles in *Monga* will be examined as a comparison and contrast to the sex worker roles to see how gangsters' cultural attitudes may glorify and/or condemn aspects of gang life, and why this dichotomy cannot realistically apply as they want it to because of the complexity of the latticework of power relationships. In *Monga*, the gangsters try to represent such seemingly conflicting themes as masculinity, brotherhood, and loyalty in the face of a changing world in which Chinese gangs from the mainland try to invade Taipei with Western guns. The conflict of identity between Taiwanese (and how that idea manifests) and Chinese is a driving question of the film that seems to be left unanswered, or even deemed as unanswerable. The sex worker comes to represent the main character's debate over whether to embrace feminine attributes to heal his lack (his lack of a father and his lack of security—the chapter will explain in more detail) or side with uncompromising machismo. This debate, as well as their struggle to side with Taiwanese tradition or Chinese modernity, is extended to all

gangsters.

The final cinema chapter will be about migrant sex workers in Taiwan. It will begin by examining Chung Mong-Hong's (鍾孟宏) *The Fourth Portrait* (第四張畫, 2010). This film presents a migrant from mainland China who becomes a citizen by marrying a Taiwanese man and who makes her living by working in a *jiudian* (酒店). She is not the main character (her son is) but her job and her migrant status are central to the boy's story. Through this film, the themes of socioeconomic class in Taiwan are explored through her work, as well as the problems of a migrant bride with an abusive husband and the lack of legal options she has to solve them. Her status and the stigma surrounding it shape the life of the boy in the film, who struggles to adapt to living with her and his step-father after his biological father dies. The mother struggles with her job and her inadequate husband to try to take care of the child, and a message about Taiwanese society and poverty becomes clear through this situation.

The final section about migrants regards Yin-Chuan Tsai's (蔡銀娟) *Stilt* (候鳥來的季節). In *Stilt*, the history of familial norms in Taiwan will be explored to present a struggle to identify what the roles of men and women have become in the modern era. A man is a successful businessman but seen as a bad son; his wife cannot get pregnant and continue the family name. His brother is tough (manly) but the trait is killing him through alcoholism, and his own wife is a mail-order bride from Vietnam. Each character faces historical expectations about masculinity, femininity, and sexuality and in the end provides their own solution to the historical norms, which each go counter to expectations. The focus here will be on the mail order bride from Vietnam. Throughout the beginning of the film, her character is silent, often sitting passively in a pure white dress—a beautiful object to be looked at. However, about halfway through the film, she receives a letter from her love back in Vietnam, and suddenly she becomes much more than

just a passive object. Through her character, the stigma surrounding paid-for migrant brides is explored (and the question of how and whether it is different from legally-sanctioned sex work or normal marriage, bringing the themes back to the first chapter's exploration of power and commodity). Her mother-in-law constantly questions her value, saying she cannot speak the language, cannot cook or clean, and makes no money. Through this, the roles of a migrant wife in Taiwan are further explored. In the end she becomes pregnant and bears a son soon after her husband succumbs to his alcoholism and dies. Her brother-in-law, who is sterile, and his wife adopt the child, allowing her to return to her love and her life in Vietnam. Through the birth of the child, Taiwanese patrilineal society, citizenship, and tradition are further explored.

It is apparent even by the length and complexity of this summary that through each of these films there can be seen an allegory that goes much further than the simple question of "Is sex work right or wrong?" In some films the allegory is local, dealing with class, gender, or citizenship. In other films the allegory is broader, dealing with national legitimacy, identity, border, and the history of sovereignty. Through this complex web of varied reasons for positioning sex workers in films, it should be a clear conclusion that the figure of the sex worker is far more important than simple questions of morality or patriarchy. It is a problem which cannot be dichotomized. The genealogy will also reveal that each of these characters does indeed reflect one single realistic image of a sex worker that could be found at some place and time in Taiwan. This will therefore be a history—one which happens to be chronological even though it was not the reasoning behind structuring the chapters—but not a complete one. The purpose of this history will be to reveal that a different approach is needed past making absolute or universal statements. This history will reveal the latticework of power, which is constantly changing and

adapting, and is therefore useful if we wish to change and adapt our own bodies to it as well.

Chapter 2: Commodity and Power

Sex workers are commodities by the definitions examined in this thesis. This is not meant to be a negative judgment, but simply a product of how sex workers are often defined. The Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS probably reflects the most idealism, and it states, “For the purposes of this document, sex workers are defined as ‘female, male and transgender adults and young people who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, either regularly or occasionally, and who may or may not consciously define those activities as income-generating.’” Here, at first glance, the commodity is “sexual services,” but where do these sexual services come from? From the body, of course. The body therefore becomes a commodity—a use-value which has exchange value, and it does not matter whether this use-value comes directly, in the form of satisfying a need, or indirectly, in the form of a means of production (Marx 1887: 26). Therefore, a sewing machine is a commodity because it is a means of producing clothes. A calculator produces calculations and is therefore a commodity, and of course the word “calculator” in the past referred to a person and not a machine. Bodies, minds, and labor can therefore be commodities. The only place that Marx at first appears to contradict this is where he defines a commodity as “an object outside us” (Marx 1887: 26), but this does not actually exclude bodies. It only supports the idea that when a sex worker is defined as a commodity, she becomes an object, and furthermore she becomes an object “outside us”—outside of subjectivity. At first glance, this seems to exclude a sex worker from controlling her own commodity, however, she does not sell “herself,” she sells her body as an object. And that is what is being sold, not literally the sexual services, because there are no sexual services without body—the labor put into a commodity determines (in part) its value (Marx 1887: 29), and in this example,

sexual services are the labor which is being put into the commodity of the body in order to give it value. Therefore, a body can both be used for sex and exchanged for other commodities or money, and this is sex work.

To be clear, Taiwanese sources differ on the definition of sex work, but retain the idea of the sex worker as a commodity. However, this statement should not be shocking. The purpose of stating it is actually to introduce a series of other questions: “Are all bodies commodities?” At certain times, yes. Any laborer has use-value and exchange value, so she is *sometimes* considered a commodity. This idea aligns with Marx when he points out that labor power can be directly sold as a commodity (but only if it is offered on the market as a commodity—it is often used for other things such as increasing the value of another commodity, as discussed above) (Marx 1887: 117). “Are all instances of sex traded for money, goods, or services considered sex work?” Here, it really depends on definitions. According to the above definition, it looks like this is the case. Taiwanese definitions are similar:

The Criminal Code, first adopted in the 30’s in mainland China, in its most recent incarnation (not counting amendments) in 1979 states, “A person who for purpose of making a male or female to have sexual intercourse or make an obscene act with a third person induces, accepts, or arranges them to gain shall be sentenced to imprisonment...” (Criminal Code of the Republic of China 2013: Article 231). The Social Order Maintenance Act enacted in 1991, Article 80, defines a sex worker as “any individual who engages in sexual conduct or cohabitation with intent for financial gains” (J.Y. Interpretation No. 666 2009). (Pause for a moment here: Cohabitation with intent for financial gains? Does this include wives? This will be an important question later.) Article 2 of the Child and Youth Sexual Transaction Prevention Act of 1995 defines “sexual transaction” as “sexual intercourse or obscene act [*sic*] for a

consideration.” Finally, (abolitionist) academics have similar definitions: “For the purposes of this paper, prostitution is defined as exchange of personal interaction of a sexual nature for payment. This personal interaction may range from flirting, dancing, and drinking to sexual intercourse” (Hwang and Bedford 2003: 202).

So, then, are we all considered sex workers at some point or another? Interesting question.

However, defining a sex worker as a commodified body object is not the main point in itself, but rather it is the question of who (or what) *controls* this commodity—this body—“In fact nothing is more material, physical, corporal than the exercise of power” (Foucault 1981: 57-58). To trace this question reveals the important power dynamics underneath the surface of all representations of the sex worker—He who has the gold makes the rules. Herein lay the roots of one side of the false dichotomy surrounding sex workers—that they are morally reprehensible. Nietzsche pointed out the power dynamic when he traced back genealogical origins of morality, saying that good is etymologically equivalent to noble, and bad to common (Nietzsche 1996: 14-15) (in German, of course—the case for similar power dynamics existing in Taiwan will be made throughout the thesis through the influence of Western law, common concepts of hygiene, etc.). He also asserted that good is associated with the conquering race, bad with the native (Ibid: 15-17), and along with this idea that “the wealthy” and “the owners” are the meaning of *arya*, and that to the Greeks, the truth is the *powerful* (Ibid: 15). Most importantly, he linked the very concept of guilt to economy: “For example, have the previous exponents of the genealogy of morals had even the slightest inkling that the central moral concept of ‘guilt’ [*Schuld*] originated from the very material concept of ‘debt’ [*Shulden*]? Or that punishment as a form of repayment has developed in complete independence from any presupposition about free will or the lack of it?” (Ibid: 44).

Indeed, the idea that this commodity (the sex worker, intentionally dehumanized here with my apologies to illustrate the point) has been at the center of a *wide* variety of social power struggles should not be surprising, and is evident in virtually any film with a prostitute character.

A Time of Freedom: The Sex Worker as Literal Commodity Object

Three Times (最好的時光) is a 2005 movie directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien (侯孝賢) and written by Chu Tien-wen (朱天文). May (Shu Qi) fulfills the portrayal of commodity power dynamics in her role as a courtesan who serves Chen (Chang Chen) in the second segment of the film: *A Time of Freedom*. Before this title is revealed, however, it is contextualized as ironic—none of the characters are free. The opening scene shows a man, heavily framed by sliding doors with wooden panels on glass, forming a parallel grid that gives the visual impression of a cage or a prison cell. Little light shines through the doors in the background which repeat these parallel lines, and the interior is therefore darkened and the colors muted. When he lights the small flame, however, the lighting increases subtly, becoming warmer and more colorful. May is shown, again with the grid of window panels behind her and her own disembodied voice singing the song which will repeat throughout the segment. The voice gives the impression a wailing mourner. In this scene she pours hot water for Chen when he appears, adding reason to the heavy, cage-like framing and the anguished song—her position is total subservience. The two speak in inter-titles—they are not given a voice of their own, further signifying the powerlessness of every person who (tries to) speak in the segment. Only after these elements are introduced does the title of the segment fade onto screen over the image of a desk set next to yet another window, this time a small, dim opening with the parallel, horizontal and vertical lines crossing over a layer of fogged glass, beyond which is only another layer of the same glass. The objects on the

desk further repeat these lines and heavily frame a potted plant with a small cluster of white flowers at the top, and the plant in turn frames the title, which in Chinese is “Freedom Dream.” Here the flowers, struggling to reach higher out of their pot, can represent the situation of May, the courtesan dreaming of freedom, looking out of her dimly lit cage through the foggy and obscured glass only to see the bars of the second layer.

She plays the lyre for customers, and her job is for her carefully practiced song to be heard. When she plays, she is not given the power of being an active performer or an artist. She appears in the foreground, blurred by the focal point of the camera, which is symbolically focused on the men drinking tea around a table. She is separated from the men by a physical space, which is a signification of the metaphorical space between the courtesan and the world of men. Even the courtesan sitting at the table with the men is separated by look. She is looking downward, never at the men, with her hands folded in her lap, and clearly her job is to look only at the tea cups and refill them when they are empty. Except Chen, the men do not look at either woman, do not take in May’s performance actively as an audience does at a concert, but rather continue their conversation making her part of the atmosphere. Chen himself only looks at May with a sideways glance, his body never facing her, as if he is dividing a small part of his attention from the world of men to be interested in her. The song she is playing is not her own; it is a song she has been taught to play, and it is the sound of tradition—she is, again, not the artist of this song or the author of anything, but a socially positioned piece of entertainment being acted upon but never acting. With analysis, her position is clear, but the power dynamics of her position are conveyed when she takes on the metaphor of another power dynamic—that of the island of Taiwan.

In this segment, Chen is an activist visiting both Japan and China. This takes place in

1911 during the revolution to overthrow the Qing dynasty, but at the time Taiwan was under the rule of the Japanese empire. By making China a strong republic (by ousting the Qing dynasty) it was hoped that it would fight back against colonizers like Japan. The Society to Restore China's Prosperity had a secret oath among all of its members (one of which was of course Sun Yat-Sen): "Expel the barbarians [that is, the Manchus], revive China, and establish a republic" (Rhoads 1975: 39-40 brackets in text). However, China and Japan were not looking at Taiwan during this situation, the same way the men, the holders of power in that social dynamic of the tea house, do not look at May. The physical space that separates them is analogous to the physical seas that separate Taiwan from the rest of Asia, in a position that never allows Taiwan to act, but only to be acted upon. This all happens in the background of May's situation, outside of the heavy frames of the dimly-lit windows. She, as a courtesan, also has a master. Taiwan's is Japan, and hers is the madame of her brothel. While Taiwan is trying to turn to China for freedom from Japan, May is trying to turn to Chen for freedom from her brothel.

She subtly reveals her desires to Chen when she asks about the health of his son while she is braiding his hair. The implied subtext is that she wishes to be part of Chen's family, but he is already married. It is significant that she is braiding his hair during this scene, because it is both a gesture that she cares about him intimately and a further representation of her role. She is positioned behind him, unseen by him, serving him in a domestic task. This is the role of the concubine she wishes to be (and since he is married she could only hope to be his concubine)— "Both wives and concubines were brought into the household as sexual partners and producers of heirs, but wives were expected to manage domestic tasks, while concubines were themselves managed" (Watson and Ebrey 1991: 241). Thus caring about his son and braiding his hair are meant as gestures that she is willing to fulfill this subservient role. This would not be a problem,

for it is also revealed that A-mei, a fellow courtesan, is going to be sold as a concubine because she is pregnant by Mr. Su. The conflict is revealed through the negotiations over A-mei. May says her madame wants three hundred liang for the girl, but the Su family is only willing to give two hundred. The scenes where this negotiation happens remind that, “The language of gifts and reciprocity was used for wives; the idiom of the marketplace was used for concubines and maids” (Watson and Ebrey 1991: 239). A-mei is being traded from a courtesan to a concubine—she is at this point literally a commodity object. This is even more defined when A-mei’s replacement comes to the tea house to be trained. The young girl appears to be with her father, who is probably selling her, and she is a depressingly young ten years old. The madame looks her over, feels her chest, her arms, and her behind, and says, “She has good bone structure. But she is a little skinny.” This signifies once again both the commodification as body object of Taiwan’s women at this time—the madame is examining her as if she is evaluating the quality of a product—and emphasizes the fact that the courtesans are there to be looked at (a theme that continues all-throughout the film).

Daughter selling was common in Taiwan much more recently than 1911, especially to become wives, to “lead in” the birth of a son, or to become sex workers (see Wolf 1972: Chapter 11, “Girls Who Marry Their Brothers”), but other women could be bought (as seen above) and sold as well:

The literature suggests that a man could “sell” both his wife and his concubines (see, e.g., McGough 1976:126-27; J. Watson 1980b:231-32; for earlier periods see Ebrey 1986:11, 12). For example, he could pawn his wife or give her away in payment of a debt (for examples see Hershatter and Ocko in this volume). [...] It is ironic indeed that wives and concubines may have been more vulnerable to pawning and resale than indentured servants. (Watson and Ebrey 1991: 242)

In an attempt to show that he is a good person, but at the same time demonstrating the irony that he has to do so according to the power constructions surrounding the commodity of women, Chen offers to pay the difference for A-mei to be bought, prompting May to say, “In

your articles, you always criticize the taking of concubines.” Chen replies that he does disapprove of the practice, but in A-mei’s case he feels compelled to help. So while the Qing regime needs to be changed or else China will be too weak and inactive to take Taiwan back from Japan, Chen’s ideas also need to be changed before May can become his concubine. The only difference is that Chen’s problem with taking May as a concubine is noble on his part (unrealistically for a man at his time, but it is a filmic imagination) while the Qing is seen as an inept ruler. In the context of the film, Hou may be foreshadowing (or “post-shadowing,” because the 1966 segment of the film comes before this one) the undesirable coming of the police state of the KMT after Japanese rule. However, forgetting that, taken only in historical context, without looking to the future (which is probably unrealistic considering this portion of the film is entirely positioned to give context to the other two) rejoining China under the Qing is a power dynamic analogous to joining Chen’s household as a concubine.

May adds more context to this power dynamic metaphor in a conversation with A-mei. She begins by saying, “Mr. Su is honorable, his father is also very understanding. You are lucky.” Her next words reveal that in reality A-mei is only lucky because it could be worse. She says, “You will be married tomorrow, your life will change. You will have to rise early to serve your in-laws. Always defer to the first wife. Be humble and never behave willfully.” This is the true power dynamic which happened in Taiwanese households. The reason A-mei’s future father-in-law being understanding is “lucky” is because it means he may treat her less severely if she does not fulfill her role. During this exchange, A-mei appears to be on the verge of tears, and May’s face mirrors her in sorrowful sympathy. Both of them, as women, understand the cultural signifiers that come along with the word “marriage.” She is stepping out from under the rule of the brothel’s madame and into the rule of her in-laws’ household.

As if to call attention to the metaphor to the Taiwan situation, Chen visits May again and says, “Mr. Liang says China will not be ready to help us free ourselves from Japan for another three decades.” And in regards to her own freedom, May says that Madame is seeking a new girl to replace her, and has asked her to stay longer. Now the allegory is complete. Sexual freedom does not exist for her, and even her highest hope, to be a concubine, is pointed out to be a bleak role by her own words. For obvious reasons such as language difference, the continuing rule of the Qing emperor, and the mainlanders’ idea that the Taiwanese were part of the Japanese Empire and therefore could not be fully trusted (as seen, for example, in several places in Wu Zhuo-liu’s *Orphan of Asia*), reunification was not a great alternative to Japan’s rule. However, like Taiwan under Japan, May cannot choose the alternative. She is forced to wait indefinitely until her madame lets her go.

Clearly, May, as commodity and as sex worker, articulates one possible role of the prostitute. Taken alone, this segment could be misconstrued as a statement against prostitution because it is male violence against women. However, it is important to remember that it is one historical moment, placed in-between two other filmic imaginings of times that come after. What this demonstrates is both that the past of the sex worker influences the future (for all women, as will be shown later and therefore this film cannot be seen as a perpetuation of symbolic male violence against women by victimizing a prostitute) and that when power dynamics change, the entire situation and form of the sex worker changes as well. This is the significance of pointing out that it is not as important that a sex worker is a commodity, but *who* controls—has power over—that commodity. In this situation it is the madame, serving the male clients.

The other two segments do not contain sex workers (unless the above definition by Hwang and Bedford is taken literally—“For the purposes of this paper, prostitution is defined as

exchange of personal interaction of a sexual nature for payment. This personal interaction may range from flirting, dancing, and drinking to sexual intercourse”—then the pool-hall girl in the 1966 segment is a sex worker, and the modern incarnation of May may be as well, which says something else about the influence of 1911 May in itself) but they do contain women that have internalized the courtesan along with the social symbol of female, and this is partially expressed by the fact that the characters are played by the same actress (Shu Qi) with the same name (May). This argument is justified first by reality—by the fact that, while this 1911 story may seem to be far in the past and evidence of the archaic misogynistic practices of distant history, by 1930, the number of concubines actually increased over previous years (Wang 2000: 168), and the practice was not widely looked down upon until more recently. This means that there are still former concubines, courtesans, and comfort women living today. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the writer of this film is a Taiwanese female and she is almost certainly speaking about a past that influences her subjectivity. The other justification is given by the ideas of de Lauretis as she speaks about the subjectivity as “a woman” which Virginia Woolf describes from her experiences:

...how does ‘I’ come to know herself as ‘a woman,’ how is the speaking/writing self engendered as a female subject? [...] By certain signs, Woolf says; not only language [...] but gestures, visual signs, and something else which establishes their relation to the self and thus their meaning, ‘I was a woman.’ That something, she calls ‘instinct’ for lack of a better word. In order to pursue the question, I have proposed instead the term ‘experience’ and used it to designate an ongoing process by which subjectivity is constructed semiotically and historically. (de Lauretis 1984: 182)

The last line is most important here. Subjectivity is constructed semiotically and historically. Therefore, the past subjectivities of May as “a woman” influence her future subjectivities, and this becomes what de Lauretis above calls “experience.” This “experience” continues throughout the other segments of the film.

A Time of Love: A Lack of Certainty in Cold War Taiwan

The 1966 segment of the film (*A Time of Love* in English) actually comes first, but the silence of May in this segment (having quite a bit of on-screen time but very few lines of dialogue) and the uncertainty of the two protagonists leaves the question of why it is this way, and the 1911 segment is the answer.

In the beginning, Chen is drafted into the military, so he leaves a note for Haruko, the girl he likes, at the pool hall. In it he says, “I failed the university entrance exam twice. My mother has died. I have no idea what the future holds.” Of course he would be uncertain about the future because this takes place after World War II, during the Cold War, while Taiwan was serving as a temporary military base for the U.S. in the Vietnam War (one base was located in Kaohsiung, which is the same location of this segment), and during martial law in Taiwan. The 1911 courtesan further expresses why this is confusing—her “dream of freedom” has been fulfilled, but just as hers was a dream that included becoming a concubine, this 1966 story’s power dynamic has also shifted. Individual Taiwanese are thus still acted upon instead of being powerful actors.

The name of the island itself at this time also expresses the confusion of national identity: “After the Nationalist retreat in 1949, Taiwan's identity in English was divided among the names ‘Formosa’, ‘Taiwan’ and variations on China, such as ‘Free China’ and ‘Nationalist China’” (Harrison 2005: 15). The international political significance reaches even further:

In the 1950s and 1960s, this was referred to as the Formosa Problem, in which the US-supported nationalist government on Taiwan was recognized as the legitimate government of China, and held the China seat at the United Nations and the UN Security Council, while the Communist government of the mainland was excluded from international bodies and not recognized by many governments around the world. Many US observers at the time recognized the absurdity of non-recognition of the PRC and understood the hypocrisy of supporting a dictatorial regime on Taiwan called Free China in the name of democracy and freedom. (Harrison 2005: 44)

These elements are not explicit or at the forefront of the characters’ minds, but they are

part of the setting of a very specific historical moment. Charles Warner articulates this concept extremely well:

Throughout “A Time For Love,” Hou stages action, mostly pool playing, in front of doorways, interframing his actors but also underlining the division of interior and exterior space. The outside is often filmed in soft focus or rendered opaque with cigarette smoke. Not unlike his offscreen staging of historical events in *City of Sadness*, here Hou ruminates on windows and doorways as the spaces through which (official) history impinges on daily existence. If in the earlier film these thresholds set off a private sphere in which political realities can be discussed under the radar of the KMT, in “A Time for Love” they delimit a space in which time is slowed and suspended, in which locals and drifters can seek respite from the whirlwind of social change occurring just outside. (2006)

To add further context to this idea of characters set in a historical moment, the KMT took control of Taiwan 1945, but faced resistance and responded with force, resulting in the eventual 228 massacre in 1947, something Hou Hsiao-hsien is very conscious of, as evidenced by *City of Sadness*. He is also a Hakka, who escaped from the civil war in the mainland by coming to Taiwan in 1948. This places his point-of-view in a unique position. The name “Free China” discussed above also expresses this concept: “The name ‘Free China’ suggests the global struggle against Communism and Cold War geo-politics, while it effaces the distinction between people who identify as natives of Taiwan, *benshengren*, and the post-1949 mainland refugees (*waishengren*)” (Harrison 2005: 2). Hou would then technically be *waishengren*, however he was only a year old when arriving in Taiwan a year before the KMT retreat from the mainland and his Hakka heritage would place him in alliance with the Hakka *benshengren* of Taiwan. Despite both of these ideas, this segment of his film, which is expressed as a fond memory, takes place in Kaohsiung (further away from the KMT governmental and cosmopolitan center of Taipei) and the actors speak in Taiwanese (not Hakka). There is a linguistic separation between *waishengren*, the speakers of Mandarin, and the Taiwanese speaking *benshengren*. Hou’s nostalgic remembrance of a Taiwanese identity in this segment can again be explained by the 1911 segment of the film, and the violent Other which tried to rule Taiwan: “Japanese rulers imposed

discriminatory policies of separating the local Taiwanese. This encouraged Hoklos [Taiwanese speakers] and Hakkas to form a new collective identity—for the first time Han Chinese in Taiwan saw themselves as a distinctive ethnic group different from the Japanese” (Shih and Chen 2010: 90, brackets my own). Again, as expressed by the metaphor of the 1911 courtesan, Taiwan left Japanese rule only to be governed by a new master. The KMT replaced all of the privileged Japanese official positions with mainlanders, were suspected to be corrupt and inept (by causing inflation and unemployment), and finally put down the rebellion of the *benshengren* resulting in an estimated 10-20 thousand casualties during and after the 228 incident in 1947 (Shih and Chen: 91-92). After that, and for a period of time until just before Hou’s *City of Sadness* breached the topic in 1989, the 228 incident was taboo in Taiwan.

Although efforts to erase 228 from the public consciousness were an attempt to diminish this ethnic tension, the problem later became a central Taiwanese question. This segment of *Three Times* could be considered a continuation of the idea of “indigenisation,” since it is a retrospective look at “the best times.” Yang and Chang explain the concept of indigenisation further:

Indigenisation is arguably the single most important cultural and political development in Taiwan during the past three decades. The process began in the late 1970s in the realm of literary production. During this time, fictional tales that reflected local conditions and grassroots sensitivity began to gain ascendancy over genres transplanted from China after 1949. In the 1980s and early 1990s, indigenisation went hand-in-hand with protests for democracy and the quest for ethnic and social justice, and contributed to the formation of contemporary party politics in Taiwan. Unfortunately, indigenisation also provoked backlashes from civil war migrants and their offspring, who often felt excluded. (2010: 109)

This film is no exception to the idea of a quest for ethnic and social justice. The conflict of Taiwanese identity becomes Hou’s metaphor for the freedom of women in Taiwan (entirely rooted in the power-dynamic that surrounds the courtesan), the confusion and uncertainty he experienced in his youth, and the continuation of that uncertainty in the present day.

The way this all relates to the 1911 courtesan is through the shifting of power given as

metaphor for governmental shifts in power between the two sections of the film. The Cold War backdrop of Taiwan is again an allegory for what happened to that courtesan. However, just because Hou presents all of this as metaphor does not mean it had no real effect on actual, historical sex workers—the exact opposite is the case. In fact, after Japanese rule, the 1911 depicted version of the prostitute came under debate. Under the Japanese, these courtesans were legal, but clearly not free. They were a commodity controlled by more powerful forces. When the power of Japan left the island, the laws shifted, but this shift was neither a complete change nor a conscious liberation of women in any sense. It was more of an evolution of power.

The change in opinion during the Post-War Nationalist Period was due to the New Life Movement, for which Taiwan was already primed by Japanese rule and their use of hygiene to control the population.

The New Life Movement was the first state-sponsored campaign to reform people's everyday lives in modern China. Chiang Kai-shek launched the movement in 1934 in Nanchang, the location of his military headquarters. He defined "New Life" in terms of the traditional moral doctrines of propriety, righteousness, integrity, and conscience (li, yi, lian, chi), but, as the first step in this movement to revive national morality, Chiang chose to focus on disciplined and hygienic behavior. (Liu 2013: 30)

This strict focus on hygiene can be seen from the accounts of informants talking about regular house inspections for cleanliness during the Japanese period in Taiwan in Hill Gates's ethnography *Chinese Working Class Lives: Getting By in Taiwan*. In fact, the New Life Movement took influence directly from the Japanese: "When the modern Japanese police system was introduced into China by Yuan Shikai in the early 1900s, the police managed almost all aspects of social life, such as law enforcement, maintenance of order, public health, charity, political censorship, and correction of undesirable conduct (Reynolds 1993, 162–164)" (Liu 2013: 47-48). Liu gives the accounts of several authors who all essentially say, to varying degrees, that the New Life Movement was central to the formation of a new cohesive state. However, when the nationalists moved to Taiwan they needed to assert this cohesion on the

island. They did this by relying on the image of moral superiority of their culture over the Japanese:

...the police authority in Taiwan had already undertaken this task in the immediate aftermath of Taiwan's returning-to-China in 1945. Reasoning that 'our Taiwanese countrymen were allowed under the Japanese occupation to wallow in immorality which must be rectified' (*Taiwan Police Administration*, 1946, cited in Lin 1997: 111), the new Chinese nationalist government launched in 1946 an island-wide police modus operandi to outlaw hostesses and prostitutes (Lin 1997: 112). (Huang 2006: 239)

It is counter-intuitive, but the eventual licensing of prostitution years later under the nationalists was also in line with this ideology. They still wished to abolish prostitution, but with two approaches. The first was through the law, and the other was through attacking the source of the problem using social welfare, which could only be done through licensing and then taking stock of sex workers and regulating their hygiene, income and social opportunities, and discouraging them from the practice (Huang 2006: 240).

The influences of this use of moral hygiene to control a population and enforce an imagined common identity through the use of a police state are also clearly present in the Criminal Code brought over and adapted from republican period China, in which, until 1999, there existed in the prostitution article a category called "woman of respectable family" (*liangjiafunu*). If a woman was practicing prostitution she could be put into the category of "accustomed to immoral sexual behavior" and her brothel owner would not be prosecuted for a prostitute that was not of a "respectable family" (The Council of Grand Justices of the Judicial Yuan, Interpretation no. 718 [delivered in 1932], cited in Huang 2006: 239). In other words, it appears that the law itself said that policemen and courts should use their own judgment when it comes to sex workers, because they fall into two different categories. There are those that have good families and should continue to carry on that decent family name, so a brothel owner should be punished for leading such a girl astray. On the other hand there are those that are just "accustomed" to what they do. They are a lost cause, a bad seed, perhaps from a bad family, so

corrupting them is of no consequence.

The meaning of this can be unpacked into several statements. According to this, prostitution was legally defined as something which violated ideals of “respectable family” until the turn of the last century. A woman was thus expected to serve her family by being morally upright, which prostitution violated. Huang points out that a woman in the sex trade was a woman who was not married (a sexual deviant). The “woman of a respectable family” label, then, references both her duty to her father and to her (potential) husband. The duality of this, the “accustomed to immoral sexual behavior” label, implies that once a daughter has gone too far astray and become “accustomed” to immorality, at some point it is clear that she is not fit for the only decent role for a woman (marriage to a man) and there is no helping her.

In other words, 1966 May (remember: same actor, same name) is not a courtesan because the KMT is not an empire, using institutions (legally sanctioned brothels) to control the population, but rather a police state, using the idea of moral superiority of a constructed community (Taiwanese as Free Chinese) and the power relationships of family to control the population. By 1966, the KMT had been licensing prostitutes for a short time, but they had also gone through much effort to suppress the courtesan/geisha houses of the Japanese period and turn prostitutes into hostesses, which at least *appeared* to be more moral (Huang 2006: 239). 1966 May is part of this “cleaner” version of entertainment, being a hostess in a pool hall. Hou’s metaphors of politics, therefore, are extremely apt for discussing sex workers.

This power shift is what causes the confusion and silence of the protagonists, and that, in turn, is what eventually informs the metaphor of the courtesan. The formation of a Taiwanese identity and this segment, as mentioned above, begin after the end of World War II, which means May and Chen are part of the first generation of youth to experience a life outside of Japanese

rule. All of their parents and elders would inevitably have stories about the imperial ruler who lost the war, and they probably knew men that were drafted to serve that ruler. Compulsory military service is also a constant reminder of Taiwan's predicament. Having just fought for a losing team and now with a ruler quickly assigned by the U.S. (the KMT), a ruler which had its own uncertain future, it is not surprising that Chen might be confused. When Haruko, the girl with a name that again reminds of the Japanese, moves on to another place and her replacement, May, finds the very letter that expresses his uncertainty, it is understandable that Chen is at a loss for words.

When Chen first plays against her, the focal point (as it often is) is on May, and the score 24-7 can be seen on the chalkboard to point out that she is clearly losing. Later when they play together, Chen is winning by 45-18. May is obviously not working in the pool hall in order to provide competition for the patrons, but rather to provide someone to talk to and look at. When she takes her shots, Chen moves behind her—a clearly inconvenient position for her to play snooker and a convenient place for him to look at her. This dynamic again emphasizes the similarity to the 1911 segment, in which the courtesan is there for the enjoyment of men, and the fact that the only difference is the shifting of power. Men come and pay to play snooker and look at May. She is still a commodity body object.

The camera also signifies the power dynamic. It looks at her in this pool hall as she laboriously opens the huge, heavy doors in the morning and closes them at night. However, these doors, which serve to frame her just as the cage-like windows of the 1911 segment, are now being actively, if with a great effort, opened by her and light is shining through. Before she had no power over her cage, whereas now she does—she is employed, after all, and she has the ability to quit her job (which she later does). The several scenes where Chen is standing on a

boat, isolated and floating into a foggy grey background, are mirrored by this pool hall that May seems to seldom leave. The boat also serves as a metaphor for Taiwan, or at least its youth at this time, because in Taiwanese culture a seafarer is not often seen as free, traveling across the ocean, but rather as trapped within the confines of the boat. In fact, one term for “seafarer” borrowed from Taiwanese to Chinese (行船者) can translate as “people who walk on ships”(rather than people who sail freely on the sea) (Chiang 2013). She leaves her job three months later, but she is again made the subject of this uncertainty when she first boards a ferry of her own, only to appear again in another pool hall. Therefore, the constant examples of the camera looking at May simultaneously give her the passive, feminine role which expresses the role of women during this generation, and also make her the subject of the film.

To once again reinforce de Lauretis’s idea, that “a woman’s” subjectivity is constructed semiotically and historically, and my own idea that when examining *Three Times* this begins with the courtesan, this segment is constructed in a repetitive way which can relate to the situation of all people. This happens through the mirroring and repetition of the story which helps each subject identify with the other. Dag Sødtholt makes a great case for this, so his words are best here:

Shot structure can follow a repetitive pattern: when the woman leaves her job as a hostess at the pool hall and when the man later goes looking for her, we see both of them leaving on the ferry, and each time the initial shot is followed by a closer one. When in an early scene the man travels to the pool hall, the shot starts with the shadow of his cycle; later, during his search for the woman, one shot starts with the shadow of him walking down a street. In the last seconds of the story, their relationship is sealed by a shy holding of hands: the ‘banality’ of this action not only lifts the story up to a universal level, but can also be seen as the ultimate repetition, of an action that all lovers through history will have made. (2006)

A Time of Youth: A Complex Subjectivity Requiring Complex Resistances

The first two segments show a tracing of constructions that have morphed throughout time and echo into the present in the 2005 segment, *A Time of Youth*. The first scene is a stark contrast of modernity against the images of 1911, signified by a motorcycle ride through Taipei.

May is hugging Chen tightly, but it is later revealed that she is terrified because a seizure is coming on and she does not want to fall off. The challenges of the present are unique from those of the past. The location of Taipei signifies yet another shift in power towards the international, cosmopolitan, and economic. The imminent onset of a seizure solidifies the limitations of body, which were expressed in the oppressed role of the female in 1911.

In the second sequence, the two walk into Chen's apartment and the shot is filled with photographs covering the walls. After the two make love, May smokes a cigarette and looks at the pictures, fascinated. Now, the answer to 1911 May's dream of freedom is revealed—she is relatively liberated. The first indication is that she is smoking a cigarette, which is something neither of the other Mays does. This is not to say that Taiwanese women never smoked in the past, but it became such a symbol of liberation historically that it showed up in popular culture to express the concept. For example, the cover of *Modern Girl Around the World* shows a Shanghai modern girl with a cigarette, which is taken from a magazine cover in the interwar period. The potency of this symbol may be due to Chinese cultural taboos, which have recently been incarnated as a link between affluence and woman smokers in connection to the idea of emancipation (Ma 2010). Regardless of the strength of cultural taboos, smoking is an almost universal symbol of controlling the products one puts into one's body, and thus a metaphor for controlling sexuality. But the real key lies in the photographs. Most of the pictures are of women (of May herself, actually), which, given the sheer number of photos, is a fetishization on the part of Chen (the historical roots of which are shown in the other two segments). To reinforce this idea, as May is looking at the photographs, Chen comes and joins her and soon they are kissing again.

This seems to fit with Lacan's idea of the gaze,² which is hinted at in the previous sections, further reinforcing the development of the subject through semiotics and history. For Hou, this history on the part of the male protagonist has been leading to a development of gaze, which is a symbol of the power relationship he (and history) have developed: "The gaze is presented to us only in the form of a strange contingency, symbolic of what we find on the horizon, as the thrust of our experience, namely, the lack that constitutes castration anxiety. The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field" (1998: 72-73). Hou's time of youth is, for Chen, defined by a lack which he tries to make up for by photographing females. In fact, it could be said that Chen's character actually does not change much in this respect throughout the three periods. In 1966 he visits a pool hall to see hostesses who are there to be looked at. In 1911 he visits a tea house, and while his companions are merely passively listening to May, he is clearly looking at her while she is separated by a physical space. And in 2005 he is a photographer. According to Silverman,

In fact, the only truly productive gaze in the cinema is that of the camera; that gaze produces the images with which the viewer identifies, and which he or she loves. In short, the camera 'looks' the viewer as subject. However, just as a shot of a character within the fiction engaged in the activity of seeing functions to cover over the camera's coercive gaze, so the representation of the male subject in terms of vision has the effect of attributing to him qualities which in fact belong to that same apparatus—qualities of potency and authority. (1988: 223)

She later explains that one of the manifestations of this is fetishism. But Chen is easy to explain. He was explained by the first Chen in 1966—he was confused and uncertain about the future, and the object of historical powers—and he stayed the same in the other stories. That is his lack, the reason his "drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field." May is more dynamic, because she responds to this authority, and the way she does it changes throughout the three periods. Her character has always been forced into a passive role, feminized, and made into

² This "gaze" is referred to above as "look" to denote that the character is looking, or the camera is looking, but the total "gaze" of the film is not necessarily the same as either of these, and Foucault's "gaze" is different yet again. Here it is referred to as "gaze" because that is Lacan's terminology

a commodity (even in this segment), but now that she is liberated she is allowed to look as well, and take on the potency and authority of the camera. She holds the phallic cigarette as she uses the penetrating light in her hand to illuminate the photos one-by-one. Many show her with plastic wrap covering her mouth or a blindfold on her face. She does this because although she is relatively sexually liberated, she still feels limited in the modern world—economically (discussed below)—and she uses the symbols to point out the traditional lacks of her female body in order to speak out.

May proves that her character has changed from that of the 1966 or 1911 version because now she is gazing *back*. Edward Said said in *The Shadow of the West* that “The act of representing others almost always involves violence to the subject of representation,” yet May *uses* these photographs as an exhibitionist, indeed *because* of this violent representation. Again, in the photographs she has bound the parts of her body which produce authority—her mouth and her eyes—in order to agree with the potency of the camera, point it out, and thus deconstruct the power of the camera’s gaze to anyone that views the photographs. She also places these pictures on her blog where she writes poems, and they therefore complement the message she wishes to tell. She is using her exhibitionist role to speak by sealing her mouth, and transforming the traditionally passive, feminine, exhibitionist role into an active exhibitionism. When Chen attends her concert to hear her sing, he indeed does appear to be very violent when he photographs her, stepping up onto the stage, circling her and shooting from every angle, the physical space between them closer than normal social interactions and certainly closer than most photography. However, in doing this, he and his camera become part of her performance. She looks vulnerable and violated, and this is the entire message she wants to portray. “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain

relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power” (Sontag 1977). This is what May wants to articulate. She has been appropriated—like a commodity—and this is revealed both in the fact that she has tattooed a Japanese Yen onto her throat and by her consciousness of her body—her subjectivity as “a woman.” Again, she seems to be asking how she is different from the 1911 courtesan. Only in the difference of power—the difference of who owns the commodity—and here Hou and she are saying that the power has shifted to global consumerism. By looking at these photographs, examining them under a light which has been by now placed into a semiosis of the film in which light represents the hope of freedom for the female, she is placing herself in the position of a judge. She is evaluating both Chen’s work as a photographer and her own effectiveness at conveying her message, and this is how she is gazing back.

But why does May’s resistance as an object need to be so complex? The concept of gazing back was introduced in a much simpler form as part of the above mentioned phenomenon dubbed the “Modern Girl,” the inter-war woman that emerged out of the 20’s and 30’s to claim control over her body and her rights. The Chinese Modern Girl was represented by Shanghai, and shattered the world that trapped 1911 May. Since 2005 May gazes at the photographs with interest—photographs of which she enjoys being a part of as exhibitionist as well as voyeur—her technique for resistance of power shows similarity to the Modern Girl, but also shows a definite contrast in its complexity. The very fact that this technique of gazing back was already employed nearly a century ago means it will not work against the structure of power which has responded to it in kind. May’s reaction is thus a telling contrast. Madeleine Dong gives more context to the gaze of the Modern Girl in popular magazine cartoons of the time. One of the cartoons and her description of it are below:



“Brutal torture...A shy young man stepped on the trolley bus.”³

Much of Guo’s [the magazine cartoonist] work depicted the Modern Girl as spectacle...although the Modern Girls are making the man nervous, they are depicted in a way that is decorative, feminine, and not austere. Guo apparently intended to depict women and modern urban life as ‘lively, vigorous, and refreshing.’ ... While she is represented as an object of desire, fetishism, and voyeurism, she often does not appear to be passive but a desiring subject instead. She rarely shuns such gazes but blatantly ignores them, enjoys them, gazes back, or even purposely provokes and attracts them. She also gazes at herself: she is narcissistic and consciously makes herself attractive. (2008: 208, brackets my own)

For May responding to this legacy, gazing back and literally gazing at herself in the photographs, this means she is trying to be empowered, but fully realizing her means of doing so need to be more sophisticated than her predecessors. She is living in an unprecedented age of democracy and social activism in Taiwan, and she is finally liberated in her sexual and political preferences. 1966 May lived under martial law and 1911 May could not even choose which man would take her as a concubine, but 2005 May has a girlfriend and a male lover and expresses herself through music. Aside from the other two Mays, part of the semiosis of her subjectivity is the Modern Girl.

³Guo Jianying, (1934). *Jianyingmanhua*ji.

Also speaking on this topic, Tani Barlow said, “Your body belongs to you now, these interwar years’ scenes of use value seemed to say, in the same ways your cold cream or your education or your erotic choices do (or ought to) belong to you” (2008: 297). May is also trying to take ownership of her body, but in a different way.

Her way differs because to say that the power relations of the 1920s-30s in Shanghai describe May’s modern situation would be too simplistic. The point here is that the semiosis of May’s own reaction needs to contrast in the face of entirely new power constructions. And of course, May cannot simply buy cosmetic products and look at the men around her to be empowered, because power has already adapted to this form of resistance:

Mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the effect of an investment of power in the body: gymnastics, exercises, muscle-building, nudism, glorification of the body beautiful. [...] But once power produces this effect, there inevitably emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one’s own body against power, health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency. Suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter-attack in that same body. [...] But the impression that power weakens and vacillates here is in fact mistaken; power can retreat here, re-organise its forces, invest itself elsewhere ... and so the battle continues. (Foucault 1981: 56)

The modern girl invested herself in “glorification of the body beautiful,” but power responded in kind (Foucault here is of course not speaking specifically about Taiwan, but the example applies):

What is the response on the side of power? An economic (and perhaps also ideological) exploitation of eroticisation, from sun-tan products to pornographic films. Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. ‘Get undressed—but be slim, good-looking, tanned!’ For each move by one adversary, there is an answering one by the other. (Foucault 1981: 57)

Three ironies of May’s situation are that she can express herself through music as the author of that music (in 1911 she was forced to play music that was not her own), that her liberation comes at a cost which she expresses through a Yen tattoo on her throat, and that her body is still the source of her problems. She has epilepsy, she is going blind in one eye, and she has a hole in her heart. All of these things are a result of her being born premature, which

prompts her to say, “No past, no future. Only a greedy present.” For May, liberation from oppressors may come at the cost of being enslaved by a culture of consumerism. The ongoing question of modernity even since the Modern Girl and before is whether imperialism was traded for another form of (western) colonialism. This question cannot be easily answered (and is not answered by this movie). What can be said is this is yet again the expression of shifting power.

These problems also draw their background from the previous two stories. Her Yen tattoo, in the vulnerable and symbolic area of the neck where air, sustenance, and blood flow close to the surface and where an animal is collared and thus where the Yen is keeping her captive, expresses the irony that imperial Japan was ousted by World War II, yet their fate is still tied to Taiwan’s economically. Yau and Nieh investigated the correlations between Taiwan’s and Japan’s stocks and currency from 1991 to 2008 and found, “There exists strong evidence supporting the long-run equilibrium (cointegration) relationships between exchange rates and stock prices of the two countries...” (2009: 299). They showed that this correlation was especially strong during the Asian Financial Crisis, and this adds to the questions about the future which May feels. Taiwan’s economy has so far been built in large part by the three major industries of footwear manufacturing, petrochemicals, and semiconductors, but these industries have increasingly (or entirely, in the case of footwear) been moved to mainland China (Hsu and Cheng 2002).

So it is clear that May does not feel freer than her 1911 version. The power has simply shifted from the hands of the brothel owner to those of the global economy (its hands are invisible, supposedly). If it is still unclear why May has a Yen tattoo on her throat, and is a commodity, the answer is in her photographs. She makes her living through these photographs,

through her blog, her use of her body, to construct an image to make money as a singing performer. In this way, she is actually beginning to take control of herself, to have power over her own body commodity, which could be said to be the end-goal of the sex worker. However, in these photographs, she is demonstrating that she is powerless by covering her mouth and eyes, expressing the cultural historical fact of woman as exchanged, not exchanger: “The stated assumption became explicit in Lévi-Strauss’s paradoxical thesis that women are both like men and unlike men: they are human beings (like men), but their special function in culture and society is to be exchanged and circulated among men (unlike men)” (de Lauretis 1984: 161). Further evidence comes from reverse-engineering Rubin’s conclusions—If we trace back the fact that May is still relatively powerless despite her struggling, (which is the message of this segment once again told through the metaphor of Taiwan, in which political-economically Taiwan’s position is not one of active power, but one of being acted on by power) then it tells us that Rubin’s social analysis still applies to this situation:

If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them that are linked, the woman being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it. [...] If women are the gifts then it is men who are the exchange partners [...] as long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges—social organization (Rubin 1975 : 174).

And while this film is of course fiction, it reflects the truths of history based on the 1911 story (the commodity concubine which should be sufficiently demonstrated as historically accurate above), continuing into the 1966 story (in which the changes in historical law corroborate the film), and echoing into the present day.

If further historical evidence of the first two segments influencing the present day is needed, one only needs to look once more at the law. The Social Order Maintenance Act is the current Taiwanese law concerning prostitution, and the theme of power over women that began with legal prostitution in the Japanese period and continued with an imagined Taiwanese identity

of moral superiority enforced by the police state is readily apparent in its construction (and subsequent nullification for this newly-unfair use of power): “Article 80, Section 1, Sub-section 1 of the Social Order Maintenance Act [...] violates the principle of equality prescribed by Article 7 of the Constitution, and shall cease to be effective no later than two years since the issuance of this Interpretation” (J.Y. Interpretation No. 666 2009).

That same interpretation explains that the law causes inequality because sex workers are statistically female (and often financially burdened at that), and the law therefore punishes women more harshly than men:

Moreover, since the disputed provision does not consider the party who provides consideration culpable yet penalizes the party having the intent for financial gains, in light of the fact that the gender of the latter is more likely to be female, it virtually amounts to a control that only target and punish those females participated in sexual transactions. Particularly for some of the socially and economically disadvantaged females who engage in sexual transactions, their already miserable situations are often further aggravated by the penalties of the disputed provision. [sic](Ibid.)

The state of the law before the judicial interpretation and subsequent amendment brings us to Hou’s 2005 segment—in which May is a clear expression of the above laws which exist in a political-economic atmosphere that demands control over commodity body objects. However, this law being nullified (after the setting of this movie) is not a triumph. The law was revised to allow prostitution in designated areas, and outside of those areas the previous law applies. None of these “special areas” exist to date (社會秩序維護法) once again in response, as Foucault pointed out it always will. Therefore, he said, “One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs...” (Foucault 1981: 58).

Conclusions: A Semiosis Overlaid on the Topology of Taiwan

The Semiosis of the Subjectivity of May

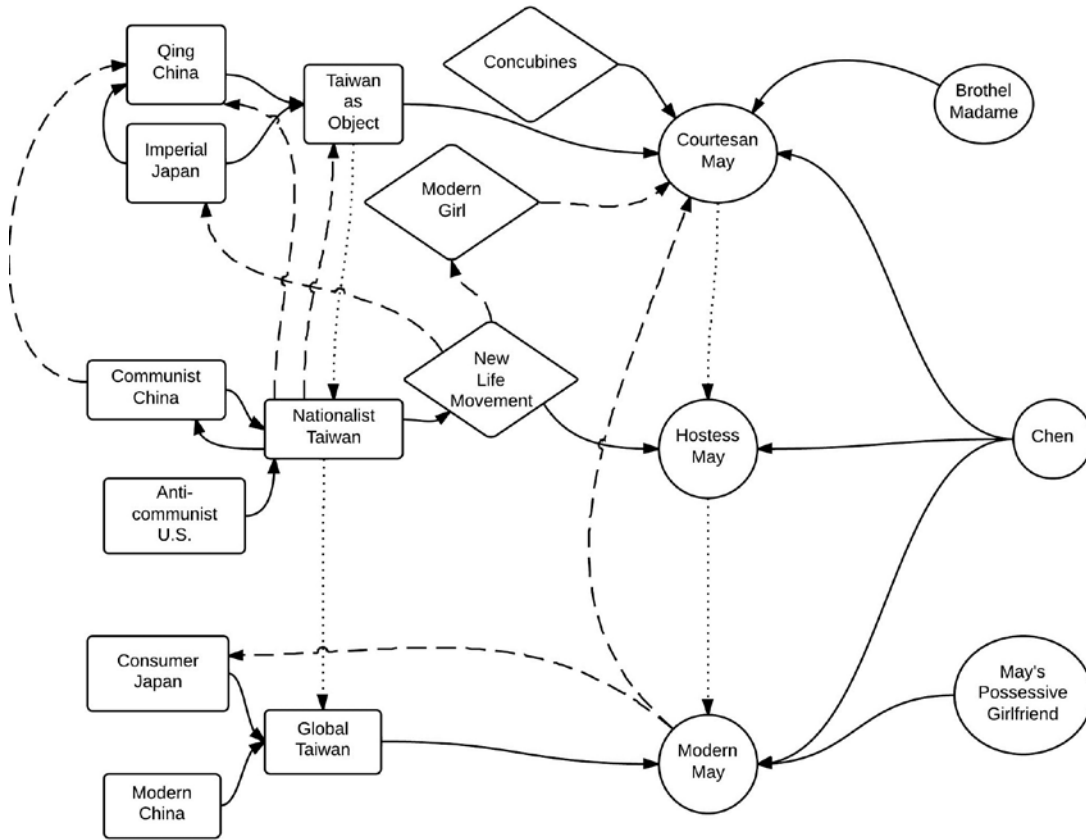


Figure 1: A simplified latticework revealing the powers which Hou established as shaping May's subjectivity.

Solid arrows represent power influence, dashed arrows represent resistance to power, and dotted arrows represent semiosis. Squares are locations, diamonds are concepts, and circles are individuals.

The above chart was made to demonstrate the power constructions revealed in this chapter.⁴ This latticework is still overlaid on a grid of sorts. From top to bottom, the y-axis is a rough progression of time. From left to right, categories are present—external locations, then the

⁴ The flaws of this chart should absolutely be noted. First, it is two-dimensional, and the latticework of society, as explained in the introduction, is anisotropic in multiple dimensions. Second, there are not just three qualities of power (power, resistance, and semiosis) as denoted by the solid dashed, and dotted lines. It is difficult to separate powers which influence from powers which resist and powers which control something as object. Ideally, the distances of the lines would also coordinate with the energy potential of power taking place, and the conceptual diamond "points" are actually categories which in reality are an abstraction of groups of points. Despite all these issues, these maps are useful for visualizing some of the more general trends taking place.

changing forms of Taiwan, concepts that influence the subjectivity of May, the different forms of May herself, and finally some of the human actors who, through masculinity, objectify May in various ways. Each arrow indicates a trend in the direction of the flow of power, a dashed line indicates a resistance of power, and a semiosis is indicated by a dotted line. Locations are included in this idea of semiosis because, while they are obviously not human, this research has found that locations can be objectified and also act as a sort of common subject—they are a key element in identity after all. At the beginning of this map, the Qing dynasty and Imperial Japan exert a force over Taiwan and objectify it, which in turn influences the subjectivity of May as a courtesan through analogy and through the political economic environment that demands a regulation of women as commodities. The concept of concubinage also influences this subjectivity.

For May as a hostess, her situation is influenced by Nationalist Taiwan, which is in turn a reaction to the Qing Dynasty, Communist China, and the anti-communist U.S. through their Taiwanese military alliance. Nationalist Taiwan used The New Life Movement as a technology in the beginning as a formation of a national identity and as resistance to several things, including communism, the aftermath of Japanese Empire, and the Modern Girl (see Dong 2008 and above). The Modern Girl itself was a resistance to objectification embodied in 1911 May, and so the combination of the Modern Girl and The New Life Movement are part of the semiosis of 1966 May's subjectivity, which in turn influences modern May.

Finally, global Japanese economy and modern China are two of the forces that act on modern, global Taiwan. This Taiwan influences modern May through her similarity to Taiwan as an object of economy. Her semiosis also draws directly on the past Mays. Modern May uses her body as a resistance both against being a commodity object, and against the roots of the original

commodity body object of the courtesan.

The right side of the chart shows the human actors that form her semiosis as object of masculine subjects. Chen is listed as one entity to make a statement about the relative static nature of his character. In contrast to May, he does not have to change as much under the forces of power. He does change throughout the film, but only to fit the time period—he is always the looking subject and his object is always May. However, he does this because the various powers tell him as “a male” that he “should be” the possessor of the gaze. He is responding to power as an index that power, and this can be seen through his role in the dispersed latticework, searching for an object of his gaze. Especially in the 1966 segment, he wanders, an object of the military, through different locations in Taiwan, searching for May. The other two representatives of power, interestingly, are female, but their power is manifest through masculine possession. The madame of the brothel literally owns May, and 2005 May’s girlfriend (also a symbol of consumerism as she is often taking May to clubs and enjoying luxuries with her) is possessive of her to the point that when May resists this power, her girlfriend commits suicide.

As visualized in this simplified latticework, May is thus embodied by the metaphor of Taiwan, beginning with and revolving around the figure of the sex worker. Her subjectivity as “a woman” developed through the semiosis of her previous versions. Beginning with the courtesan who struggled between two lives without freedom, she is represented by the Taiwanese under Japanese rule reaching out to their brothers who only became another ruler. The sex worker formed the identity of 1966 May, who was freer, but remained in the pool hall to be looked at. She and Taiwan enjoyed a time of progress, but it was uncertain and dictated by the Cold War politics of other nations as well as the identity constructed by the police state of the KMT. Finally, 2005 May has her youth and freedom to choose sexual partners. She is still gazed at, she

still makes music as the courtesan did, but now she does it actively, and she gazes back, pointing out her limitations to the world to provoke thought. Taiwan does the same, participating in the global market and pointing out its marginalized status on the world stage. For both, the question is how long this will last. This film has demonstrated the changing forms of power over this commodity of sex worker, and thus deconstructs approaching sex work from the standpoint of false dichotomy. It deconstructs the idea that a sex worker is inherently morally reprehensible because it demonstrates that historical power relationships placed women as courtesans and concubines—it had nothing to do with morals—and furthermore the two later versions of May demonstrate that when these power relationships change, any woman could have been a courtesan in the past. Most importantly on this question, it is crucial after seeing this film to ask what the difference is between the three Mays. Is only the 1911 version considered a sex worker, or are all of them? If not the later versions, then why the first? What makes her different? All three used their bodies for profit in similar ways, and the real fundamental changes were power dynamics. The film also deconstructs the idea that a sex worker is inherently an empowered feminist because as a commodity object under the power of other social influences, May was not empowered—and only by being extremely clever and active was she attempting to reclaim power in the present. Finally, this film deconstructs the idea that all films about prostitutes are victimization and/or male violence, because Hou used the symbols of the common Taiwan experience to elicit empathy with these female figures. This is why this analysis places Taiwan as a metaphor for May, and not May as a metaphor for Taiwan—it is more likely that the intended audience (the males, at least) will understand the power dynamics and feelings associated with being Taiwanese, the semiosis of Taiwan's history, and be able to apply it to the female in the film, rather than the other way around. This film, however, is only one example,

one possible answer covering three narrow historical moments. There are countless others which make up the infinite pieces of the stories of sex workers.

The value in the method of this chapter is therefore to set up the idea of the semiosis of subjectivity, which for sex workers relates to power over commodity body objects. These concepts can be visualized in a latticework of power constructions, which can be applied in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: The Brothel Prostitutes of *Monga* and *Days Looking at the Sea*: Fundamental Shifts in Power Through Modernity

It is now time to move on to the most common image of a sex worker in Taiwan—that of a woman in a brothel. Doze Niu's (鈕承澤) *Monga* (艋舺) is a film made in 2010 about the Monga district of Taipei during the 1980s. Ning (Ko Chia-yen) is a young brothel sex worker who matches the stereotypical images of Monga. When one thinks of the district, one calls up images of gangsters, Snake Alley, and the red glow of the nearby brothels. This image of brothel prostitution comes closest out of any of the films in this thesis to the western imagination of prostitution. The scenes of *Monga* could easily be in a western film attempting to depict the exotic East.

However, Doze Niu is not from the West, and he is not Orientalizing Monga. He is playing up the exotic angle slightly, but for a different purpose. His film is similar to Hou's 1966 story in that it is a bit nostalgic. In an interview titled "Days in the Wild" Doze Niu explains that he took inspiration from his childhood, which is meant to lend authenticity both to the movie and to the director by making them look true and tough using the imagined gangster lifestyle. About his past, he says, "I was bullied when I was young and then made friends who solved problems for me and gave me a sense of security. In our teenage years, our emotions overwhelmed logic and reason. We only knew we didn't want to be babies but our minds weren't that clear. We drifted away from our families just to make a point – som[e]thing which proves how naive we were" (Chen 2010). His interview statement that "we didn't want to be babies" contains implications about what a teen thinks a grown man is supposed to be like, however in retrospect he realizes the naiveté of these so-called manly qualities. His film has a similar message.

Even with this explanation, it is easy to look at *Monga* and think it is romanticizing a

cliché of gangster life and prostitution. Therefore, in order show the true genealogy of the film, it will be contrasted with the brothel prostitute character of Bai Mei (Hsiao-fen Lu) in Tung Wang's (王童) 1983 *Days Looking at the Sea* (看海的日子). This film also covers a very common conception of a prostitute, but in rural Taiwan. She is the sex worker which Au (2012) is crusading against when she discusses the young aboriginal girl who is sold to a brothel at a young age by her family.

These two films begin with brothel prostitutes, but contrast with each other in virtually every other way. One is urban and one is rural, one is positioned by global power and one by local power, and each are governed by the different norms of what will here be called “gang law” and “family law.” Much of their difference can also be explained by their different times. *Monga* is about the 1980s, looking back from the present. *Days Looking at the Sea* is about the 1970s, looking back from 1983. Both the years in which these films were made and the years they are about change the messages of the films.

So these films appear to be completely different, and furthermore this thesis is centered around post-2000 films to see the roots of present-day sex worker characters, so what is the connection between the two? Well, *Days Looking at the Sea* is part of the genesis of *Monga*, in that the difference between the two explains the evolution of the moment which *Monga* focuses on. More than that, though, the meeting of the main character and the prostitute in *Monga* is a mirror to a very similar scene in *Days Looking at the Sea*. There is no definitive proof that Doze Niu is consciously making a visual tribute to the earlier movie, but it is almost certain that he has seen it. If he has not, and did not make the parallel consciously, it is all the more reason to note the similarities, because it points to a common cultural imagination of the sex worker.

Echoing the Past, Contextualizing the Future

The scene in *Days Looking at the Sea*⁵ centers around Yin Yin, one of the prostitutes who is close to the main character Bai Mei. The scene is contextualized by a drunken client with a mess around his mouth trapping Yin Yin against the wall, and Bai Mei coming to her rescue by taking the client in her place. The madame of the brothel scolds Yin Yin for it (in a way which very much points out that the madame controls Yin Yin's body as commodity), but a new client walks in the door and the madame recognizes that he is young and hesitant, and convinces him to go with the new girl, Yin Yin. In the next scene she enters her room with a basin. Posters of famous models decorate her shabby walls covered in tattered wallpaper which has been plastered on. The new client waits awkwardly while she crosses the room and sets down the basin with downcast eyes. The client says that it looks like she has been crying. Yin Yin denies it, but then throws herself to the bed, crying. The client hesitantly reaches out a comforting hand, and she interprets his action as telling her to start taking her clothes off. He stops her and says, "This time you're not in a good mood. We don't have to do it, no problem." She thanks him and he says they can just talk. Then he says if she wants him to, he will come back again. She says, "You're a great person. How can you come to this place?" He answers, "Huh? Good people can't come here? Then I'm a bad person. What's your name?" Time is passed by a short scene of Bai Mei finishing with her troublesome client and vigorously brushing her teeth, then Yin Yin and her new friend exit her room. She asks if he will come again, and he says he will come often. In fact, this scene is a flashback to tell the story of how Yin Yin met her husband who Bai Mei has just met on a train along with their new son, who is a source of great happiness for the couple.

In *Monga*, the scene starts in a similar way, but it is told from the client's perspective.

⁵All translation for this movie is my own.

That client is also the main character of the film, Mosquito (Mark Chao). Mosquito's new gangster friends take him to the brothel as a sort of rite of passage, but he is nervous. His other friends handle themselves with familiarity in the dim environment lit with a red glow, and seen through the cage-like decorative metal bars on the window. The madame of this brothel is similarly a calculating salesman and middle-aged, but she has a more urban look. Like the madame in *Days Looking at the Sea*, she holds a cigarette as she compliments the customers and makes her sales pitch. Like the client in the above scene, Mosquito shows hesitation, and the madame again recognizes it, saying, "First time, huh?" and echoes some of the same lines as the other madame—"Auntie will find you a pretty one." This time, the abusive client is Mosquito's friend A-po (Huang Teng-hui), who brushes aside Ning's (Ko Chia-yen) hair to reveal the birth mark on her face and says, "Fuck! You scared the shit out of me. Auntie, how can you sell this kind of product?" He continues to harass her and reels his fist back, threatening to dig her eyes out until Mosquito steps in and says he will go with her.

The next scene shows Ning wringing a cloth out in a basin with downcast eyes. The shadow of a fan in her window slowly spinning gives the room a shabby feel and a poster of a model can be seen decorating the wall behind Ning, which is plastered with tattered wallpaper (all visual parallels to the above scene). Mosquito is there waiting and after a moment says, "Did you go to Show Shang Elementary School? Didn't you always carry a lunchbox in a washing powder bag?" Like Yin Yin before, she denies his first attempt to comfort her, saying, "You're thinking of someone else." His next question brings up a parallel conversation to the one about good and bad people in *Days Looking at the Sea*; he says, "You... Why do you want to be a hooker?" She answers, "What about you? Why do you want to be a gangster?" He does not have an answer, and they sit awkwardly for a moment with the shot framing them from the front as

they sit on the bed with an uncomfortable equal space between the sides of the screen and between the two of them. After a moment, she begins taking off her dress starting with the shoulder straps just as Yin Yin did, expecting that this is what the client wants. He stops her, asking if they can just talk first. In another parallel, he asks her what her name is, but instead of answering she says, “Whatever.” As he says his name is Mosquito, the sounds of sex bleed through the walls. He pulls the ear buds for his Walkman out of his pocket and closes the unnatural space between them, then the soundtrack plays “Making Love out of Nothing at All,” by Air Supply as the camera pulls away above the two listening. After a cut, Ning hands her tickets in at the front desk and now the grating on the window, instead of forming a cage-like appearance, forms red hearts over Ning as she calls to him through the window to tell him her name. The scene fades out as he walks away through the crowd and the Air Supply song ends on the words “...making love out of nothing at all.”

While these two sequences are very similar, they are used to achieve entirely different goals. This difference is another way to express the idea that cultural conceptions of sex workers may be clichéd, but the sex worker characters themselves are unique people positioned in different historical moments. In both scenes, pity is initially evoked by an abusive client. To stop there and say that these films are victimizing prostitutes to fulfill cultural expectations would be disingenuous.

Days Looking at the Sea: The Powers of Adoption, Family Law, and Patrilineality

Days Looking at the Sea takes place in a fishing harbor town (literally *Yugang* in the film) during the 1970s. This decade is the later part of the “industrial era” in Taiwan, and the period of shift from agriculture to industry could be said to have ended with the 1970s, after which a new

social and economic period began to develop (Government Information Office 2005). This means that the fishing economy shown in the film (mostly depicted in scenes of decaying boats beached on the shores and local salesmen sitting in shops filled with products from the sea in the beginning of the film) and the later move to an agricultural setting were both declining ways of life in Taiwan. This has an influence on the main character in the film, who is an adopted daughter, sold to a brothel, and makes her living off of fishermen. All of these things are artifacts of an agrarian lifestyle, and the form of sex worker she depicts is likely one of the last of her kind—later sex workers would need to migrate to more urban areas, and this is where *Monga* picks up. The money and power were to shift away from the laws of the rural farming family and toward a more global and industrial setting:

However, during Taiwan's transformation from an agriculture-based into an industrial-based economy, it encountered a number of socioeconomic problems. The principal issue was the employment of labor no longer needed in rural areas. When the agricultural sector's peripheral productivity fell, the ROC government took the initiative to develop foreign trade and establish export-processing and industrial zones to absorb the excess labor. Since providing employment opportunities for the huge labor force was a matter of crucial importance, the government encouraged the development of labor-intensive export industries. As a result, foreign investment poured in to capitalize on the island's inexpensive labor. (Ibid.)

If the assertions of this thesis are correct about these socio-economic changes influencing power relationships, there should be evidence found in the law. And indeed a change occurred in Taiwan during the industrializing period which directly reflects the shift of power from being family regulated to being controlled by globalized liberal economics (the quote is quite long but important proof for this point):

At the end of 1967 there occurred an important incident whose discursive effects were to deepen the perceived crisis of national culture. An article entitled 'Rest and Recuperation for America's Fighting Men' — featuring a photo of two Taiwanese women accompanying an American GI taking a bath in a hotel in the Beitou red light district — appeared in the 22 December 1967 issue of the US Time magazine. Although the services provided in Beitou were no secret, the nation was nonetheless shocked by this revelation. Expressing moral outrage, the press saw this exposure to the world of Beitou prostitution culture as shaming a nation predicated upon Confucian propriety and morality. Responding to public moral outcry, the police managed to track down Yu Ruiqing, one of the women prostitutes in the photo, and charged her with offending public decency under the criminal law (He 1968). They were able to track down Yu because she was a licensed prostitute. Most importantly, what she had done was completely legal

and the judge disallowed the case (Taiwan Daily 1968a). But throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Time picture event continued to be cited by the press as evidence of national shame.

In the immediate aftermath of the Time scandal, Chiang Kai-shek presided over the Sixth Annual Meeting of National Security held on 9 January 1968, laying down guidelines for social reform which aimed to ‘get rid of the decadent trend affecting guomin, reinforce spiritual mobilisation and cultivate invisible form of military power’ (Chiang, cited in Wang 1969: 190). Of the eight points mapped out in these guidelines, six pertained to the call for a lawful and ordered society in general, outlawing sexual immorality in particular, with the other two relating to the promotion of legitimate entertainment and the establishment of modern moral guidelines for guomin’s daily life conduct. Significantly, these guidelines were taken by the government as constituting an important part of its Cultural Renaissance Movement, a national campaign launched in 1966 to counteract Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution which aimed at ‘revitalizing’ the Confucian ethic, namely, the moral tradition of the sage-king.

These guidelines led to yet more regulatory changes. While stopping the licensing of category three PTB [Particular Type of Business—a Taiwanese governmental term for sex trade businesses] (along with brothels and dance hall/night clubs), the government also decided to regulate the non-PTB as PTB by thoroughly inspecting all the leisure/pleasure businesses premises. (Huang 2006: 244-245, brackets my own)

From this passage it can be clearly seen that previously the commodity of sex workers was controlled by the government—licensed as a “particular type of business”—and this was fine for maintaining the imagined moral level of the community, using the moral distinction to keep “good” girls in their family and regulating the “immoral” girls who lacked a “respectable family” (all of this is introduced in Chapter 2). However, when this power dynamic shifted, both from rural to urban (described in the above cited article as a “tidal wave of sex” due to a rapidly increasing urban population) and from local to global, the methods of power and regulation needed to adapt. Suddenly, licensed prostitution was no longer considered a moral course of action as the control of the commodity had slipped out of the hands of the police and into the hands of urbanites and international actors (brought to the attention of the international community by the American GI, and later, as the article states, Japanese sex tourists).

So again, *Days Looking at the Sea* being the story of a more rural prostitute, positioned in a fishing town, is a story that was fading. In the film this tension is felt by the protagonist as she realizes that she is getting old and time is running out. Interestingly, her response is actually to grab hold of the fading agricultural lifestyle while she still has a chance.

In the scene from *Days Looking at the Sea* described in the beginning of this chapter, the abusive customer is there for the dual purpose of making Bai Mei into a dynamic and empowered character and adding contrast for the story of Yin Yin, who is able to make a happy life with a son and good man who also happens to have visited the same brothel that day. The elements of empowering Bai Mei are an intricate path through the film concerning many factors, and since after *Days Looking at the Sea* Taiwan's society shifted once more, hers is a story of gaining power over her own body commodity in a way that would no longer apply after her time—"One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs..." (Foucault 1981: 58).

The placing of the abusive customer in the film has two purposes. The first is to make Bai Mei dynamic and empowered. Bai Mei comes to distract the client from the new Yin Yin, showing that she is more experienced and that sex workers develop skills to handle problems that come up in their work lives just as any other worker does (O'Neill (2001) notes this about many of the sex workers she interviews). This is not to say that prostitutes can cope with anything and never have to do anything undesirable—there is a bit of martyrdom or self-sacrifice happening here, as illustrated by the scene where Bai Mei applies a liberal amount of toothpaste to her toothbrush and vigorously scrubs her mouth. However, even this is not there just for the sake of it. It is part of the background of Bai Mei's character.

Later in the film, Bai Mei visits her adopted family for her step-father's funeral. When she arrives, the funeral is already in progress, and her siblings are kneeling in their burlap funeral clothes. She asks her step-mother why they are not holding the funeral the following day, as she was told, and her mother says that her siblings are busy with their work in Taipei and this is the only way. However, it is clear that the family has purposely excluded her from the funeral, and not allowing her to wear the funeral clothes and participate leaves her symbolically separated

from the traditional order of her father's authority. Later, her brothers and sisters all leave in a rush because of Bai Mei's presence. Before they leave, she tries to hold her nephew in her arms—another important aspect of her character which will be discussed below—and her sister-in-law gets mad at her brother for allowing her near their child. This all leads to a discussion between Bai Mei and her mother in the kitchen. Bai Mei reveals a major motivation for her character by saying, “You know, I am getting old,” and yet another hint to her personality is revealed when her mother offers to help find her a husband. Bai Mei points out that neither of them can find a decent man for her to marry, and her mother says, “Well, you are a hooker...” This statement does not necessarily reflect that nobody wants to marry her because they look down on her—as Margery Wolf points out, the concern is more about how loyal a daughter with an independent income will be. For example, she quotes an informant (brackets in the text are Wolf's), “But some people say that they would rather marry a prostitute [because she knows how difficult that way of earning a living can be] than to have your wife run away and become one after you marry” (1973: 205). This question of marriage will be important later. However, the focus of this scene is revealed when Bai Mei starts to cry and her mother tells her she should not cry on this funeral day (because of Taiwanese funeral ritual). This is the connection that calls her position of being a filial daughter into question.

Bai Mei's response to her mother is that she makes money for the whole family; they wear her clothes and eat her food but are blind to all of that because they are ashamed of her. With these words, she is saying she is a filial daughter. But before any conclusions are made about the Taiwanese view of prostitution based on her family's blindness, an even further investigation of Bai Mei's history is necessary. First, it should be noted that Bai Mei's siblings work in Taipei, the center of Taiwan's globalization. Again, this movie is set in the 70's, when

Taiwan is rising into its position as a major exporter, and so the island is becoming increasingly international as discussed above. This global influence should be included in the equation of the reactions of Bai Mei's family. Her mother still resides in a relatively rural area, and her reaction to Bai Mei is completely different from Bai Mei's siblings for this reason, along with her age. When Bai Mei points out that she has been a filial daughter, her mother can only respond by crying and repeating, "I know, I know."

The largest part of her being a filial daughter is actually revealed in another flashback which could be mistaken as further victimization without considering the history of what is happening. Earlier at the funeral, when Bai Mei is told to pray at her father's shrine, she looks at his portrait and remembers the day he sold her to the brothel. Aside from being a story of a sex worker, this is also a story of an adopted daughter. To see Bai Mei only as a girl forced into sex work by her family would be to ignore half of the equation. She is a very late example of a long tradition of a specific type of adoption, which began to die out as a practice as Taiwan was modernized in the way of international pressures, both due to the United Nations (another effect of the global image discussed above) and Taiwan's youth rejecting the traditional practice because of rising wages. This is *Days Looking at the Sea's* largest and most obvious manifestation of family law controlling the body commodity of women, and the reasons family law no longer holds this power should by now be apparent. This practice is thoroughly described in Margery Wolf's ethnographies, specifically in a chapter entitled "Girls Who Marry Their Brothers." The title describes the practice of adopting daughters, termed *sim-pua* by Wolf's Romanization of Taiwanese, in order to raise them as wives for the family's biological son. However, girls were also adopted for several other reasons which Wolf discusses in her ethnography, and many of these reasons could end in the adopted daughter being sold as a

prostitute (the reason for Bai Mei's adoption is not revealed in the film). Adoptions were done because of the immense cultural importance of continuing patrilineal descent, along with other cultural reasons:

Many crises in Taiwanese family life are resolved by the adoption of an infant. A woman whose baby dies may be given a child to ease her grief. Families who have no children and fear that they may be left without descendants adopt girls and later, if they can afford it, a boy. Sometimes a family is so anxious about descendants that a girl is adopted before a bride has been in the household a year. Even a woman who has borne a daughter or two may be presented with an adopted daughter to 'lead in a son.' Until recently the most common form of adoption was that of bringing in a *sim-pua* as a future daughter-in-law. Typically, a woman's newborn daughter would be given away (by her mother-in-law's arrangement) and another girl adopted-in to drink her milk. The adopted-in child would be raised as a kind of second-class daughter, and when she reached physical maturity, be quietly married to her foster brother. (Wolf 1973: 172)

Wolf calls this form of marriage typical, saying that "...over half of the marriages in the Taipei basin prior to 1925 did not require the transfer of a young woman to another household" (Ibid: 171). In other words, they already had an adopted daughter in the household. And, to explain part of Bai Mei's rejection by her family, these adopted daughters were not treated well.

Wolf illustrates this point by saying that everyday expressions reflect the pitiful lot of an adopted daughter. "...a girl with a sullen expression has a face like a *sim-pua*; a sobbing child cries like a *sim-pua*; a young girl complains that her parents make her work like a *sim-pua*" (Ibid: 172). Wolf also notes that adopted daughters often come at a time of grief, like the loss of a child, or along with a biological son, who she must share the mother's milk with and inevitably not get enough. Wolf's examples of these daughters' poor treatment go on and on: "In modern Taiwan parents have become very self-conscious about their treatment of adopted daughters, but they still make no pretense of an adopted child being the equal of their own children" (Ibid: 174). "The older girl ordered her around much as she might a servant, and her foster mother gave her complete responsibility for the more burdensome chores in the house" (Ibid.: 175). "We asked a forty-four-year-old woman about her early life as an adopted daughter. She told us, but she got more and more upset as her memories began to flow. The interview ended in tears" (Ibid: 175).

Finally, Wolf makes the point that really links Bai Mei's character to her self-sacrificing filial piety:

She had never been a daughter, so she was unlikely to make unsatisfactory comparisons with a former life style—in fact, her loyalties *were* those of a daughter. She had been trained from childhood to expect the less pleasant half of any task, to be last in line for hand-me-downs, to eat what was left, and to keep one eye on other people's faces. In short, she was trained as a daughter-in-law from infancy and had never passed through the disquieting experience of being a daughter. (Ibid: 179)

Bai Mei's victimization should therefore not be mistaken as the product of being a sex worker alone. In fact, it can even be said that a majority of her struggle is due to being an adopted daughter, and as an adopted daughter the power dynamics of her family already controlled her as a body commodity—treating her as a servant—even before she became a prostitute. This becomes even clearer when Wolf explains the positions of sex workers in rural Taiwan at this time. Many adopted daughters did become prostitutes. One of the first things Wolf says on the topic of sex workers in *The House of Lim* is about adopted daughters:

Since she was 'only an adopted daughter,' he would have been justified in selling her to the highest bidder when he found he no longer had reason to keep her and could no longer afford to keep her. The highest bidders in those days were dealers who bought attractive female children to raise as prostitutes, wealthy families who wanted slaves, or prostitutes who adopted daughters to raise in their profession as support for their own old age. (Wolf 1968: 100)

Here the control over the commodity of an adopted daughter by a father is exceedingly clear.

In her other ethnography, Wolf's prostitution chapter is titled, "Filial Daughters." This title should reveal the rural Taiwanese view of a prostitute like Bai Mei, but just to complete the point: "Although Taiwanese country people are very straitlaced when it comes to discussing the physical act of sex, they have quite a tolerant view of the woman who uses prostitution to support her parents" (Wolf 1973: 207-208). The reason is that the daughter is being filial. "They could hardly condemn a girl who obeys her parents and sacrifices her own opportunity for a normal life by becoming a prostitute. If she behaves herself in the village, they tend to regard her

as a particularly filial young woman who has paid her debt to her parents more completely than other young women” (Ibid: 208). Therefore, the mechanism of filial piety was used to give power to family law, but this changes when family sizes shrink and people migrate to the city, which is where *Monga* picks up.

This explains not only that Bai Mei is telling the truth when she points out how filial she has always been, but also her reception in the village when she decides to go back to live with her birth mother. The farmers all accept her happily, and even see her as a wise voice because of her urban experience. Prostitutes were considered “more interesting” than normal village girls because of their profession (Wolf 1968: 103), and this sentiment is expressed when Bai Mei joins in conversations with the old male farmers of the village. In one scene, the farmers are lamenting about the decreasing income they can get for their sweet potatoes. Bai Mei suggests that they should sell their sweet potatoes on different days, rather than all at once, so the higher scarcity will get higher prices. The old farmers listen with interest and say, “That makes sense!” Here, Bai Mei is able to take control of her situation for the first time in an interesting way. She has gone from a more urban (but still relatively rural) area to the most rural extreme, and this allows her to use her “urban” knowledge to participate in the language of economy with the men who make decisions for the community. She has in one interaction overturned the family law power dynamic because of urbanization, and this is yet another inkling of why national laws over morality responded to the shift and changed in order to create another power dynamic.

So, the initially described scene in *Days Looking at the Sea* is not there for the purpose of showing a pitiful prostitute being rescued by a male, but rather to show this change. Yin Yin does marry that customer, and if Yin Yin’s story was the subject of the entire movie it *might* imply that the only hope for a victim of prostitution is a man. However, the scene is there to tell

Bai Mei's story. Her story answers Yin Yin's and counters it, both through the revelation that her suffering is due to the long, underlying history of adopted daughters, and also by her eventual empowerment. In fact, after Bai Mei speaks to her mother at the funeral, she decides to have a son of her own (the exact way in which this empowering will be discussed below). If her solution was the same as Yin Yin's, the film could again be interpreted as a product of patriarchy, but it is not. In fact, Yin Yin's story is given to contrast Bai Mei's own method of continuing her family.

As mentioned above, this is a major theme of the movie. In the opening credits, the scenes of seaside Yugang are shown with old, sun-bleached fishing vessels beached on the shores. These imply aging in a time when prosperity is a fading memory. In the first scene, Bai Mei helps a boy find his lost ball and brings candy out to him, clearly showing her affection. Then, a fellow worker is shown crying at a table, saying she is getting too old to make money. The very obvious message of the film is that Bai Mei is getting older and she wants to have a son before it is too late. Like Yin Yin, she finds a client who she likes and tells him to come back the next day. When he comes back, however, she has already left for her biological mother's farm where she passes the time of her pregnancy by working hard and solving problems like paying for her brother to get an amputation. She becomes empowered and takes her life into her own hands *despite* the offer of a male "savior."

It is clear in the narrative of the film that Bai Mei becomes empowered and successful, but the question is why this portrayal succeeds and appears realistic. The answer is that Bai Mei is responding to the power relationship in kind. She is navigating the laws of the family that govern her body by using her body—she becomes pregnant. More importantly, she becomes pregnant with a son, showing that she is responding to the patrilineal power construction which likely resulted in her adoption in the first place, and her answer is that she can continue her

legacy without a husband (or a biological father, who is dead, or her adopted family which she leaves). She becomes the provider and decision maker for her family by paying for her brother's operation and restructuring the economy of the village. To top off her success, the government in the movie decides to give the farmland to the farmers. Thus by becoming a land-owning head of her family with a son, she is recognizing that if all of the power lies in the family, she will simply control the family, and therefore herself.

So within the context that rural Taiwanese do not look down on Bai Mei in *Days Looking at the Sea* and she is able to gain power among them, the question remains of why her siblings, in contrast, see her with disgust. This is partially explained by her status as an adopted daughter, but there is clearly more to it. Again, this has to do with the modernization and globalization of Taiwan. Her siblings all work in Taipei. They are part of the urban, globalizing world which is shifting the expectations of morality. Therefore, no matter how much power Bai Mei gains over family law, it is irrelevant to them because they are part of a newly evolving world. It is this same world which creates the environment of *Monga*. *Days Looking at the Sea* contains no reference to the law (other than the land reform)—meaning the law of the Republic of China. This is why the norms of the movie have been here dubbed as “family law,” which, it should be demonstrated by now, was the major influence for rural Taiwanese in the past. *Monga*, in stark contrast, is an interaction with state and international law through a counterculture—“gangster law.”

Monga: Gangster Norms Coping with Femininity

Above I said that *Days Looking at the Sea* comes at the end of a political and social era, which means that *Monga*, set in the late 1980's, takes place in an entirely new environment.

Beginning in the 1980s, drastic economic, social, and political changes took place in the ROC. Relations with the Chinese mainland also developed rapidly. The economy became increasingly open and free from earlier restrictive and protectionist tendencies.

First, in 1984, the ROC government announced plans for the liberalization and globalization of the economy as well as the privatization of government-run enterprises. In addition, interest-rate controls were abolished, tariff rates were slashed, and the central exchange rate was abandoned. To boost industrial development, the government established the Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park in 1981. (Government Information Office 2010)

This period can thus be called the “industrial growth” period. Liberalization and globalization are seen in the main conflict of *Monga*, which centers on the invasion and takeover by Chinese Mainland gangs. It can also be seen, once again, in trends surrounding prostitution law:

Public disquiet about the Police Offence Law began to emerge in the late 1970s. In the wake of increasing human rights agitation, liberals and legal scholars began to criticize the law from the viewpoint of jurisprudence, pointing out its dated/obscure regulatory codes and unevenly graduated penalties; the excessive para-judicial power it conferred on the police; and above all, its unconstitutional status (Lin 1979). The KMT government did not respond to this growing criticism until 1979 when a political crisis was caused by its severing of diplomatic ties with the US. As a political gesture to signal its willingness to reform, the government announced that it would replace it with a new law called ‘the Social Order Maintenance Law’ (Gui 1991). Nevertheless, it was not until 1991 that the Police Offence Law was finally abolished. (Huang 2006: 250)

Once again power was shifting, and the regime responded. In the previous section it was theorized that the trend of globalization would cause this shift, and indeed if the dates are examined this holds true. The “public disquiet” over the law coincides with the approximate time that Taiwan entered the international stage due to the Vietnam War (remember the American GI that set it all off in the previous section). The events of the year 1979 in the above passage were a clear message to Taiwan about the shifting of power to international influence (the imagined community of Taiwan regulated through family and police law would no longer suffice). Finally, 1991 coincides with the end of the Cold War, comes along with Taiwan’s first voting of their

parliament, and is a few years after the ending of martial law in Taiwan. *Monga* takes place on the eve of all of this, and so the ripples in the norms of the gangster law become apparent. As for the sex worker, she is of course more urban, but she is also used as the director's expression of the importance of femininity in the changing rules of gang law.

The interaction with local and international law created an environment of increasing condemnation and victimization of prostitutes toward the end of martial law in Taiwan, and the increased social activism led to the first powerful Christian (and therefore internationally-tied) NGOs—The Awakening Foundation in the beginning and later Garden of Hope, which took the lead beginning in 1992 with the help of lawyers and social workers to draft anti-prostitution law (Ho 2005: 88). International pressure was also a major factor:

The International Campaign to End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (established in Thailand in 1990, renamed in 1997 as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes and broadened to include the rest of the world, but still abbreviated as ECPAT) joined UNICEF in disclosing horrendous figures for children involved in sex tourism or prostitution in Asian countries. (Ibid: 88).

Of course, the 1959 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child was a factor in this international world-view, a view that defined rights such as, “The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form” (Article 9). It was the conservative NGOs that applied these sentiments to all sex work (not just of children, and not just involuntary prostitution) (see Au 2012).

But the 1990s take place after *Monga*, which is the focus now because it speaks about the genesis of the 90s revolution of modernizing sexuality to global, Christian views. This is both because of the time the film takes place and the fact that the director is looking back from the present day—he can see the end product of the film's contents. So now is the time to go back and examine the scene which parallels that in *Days Looking at the Sea*. Again the scene could be interpreted as victimization, but again it is placed to explain the main character. Mosquito is

hesitant at first, enough for the madame to recognize that it is his first time. Then, A-po abuses Ning verbally and threatens to do so physically, and Mosquito stops him. Before this is interpreted as the strong male stepping in to save the pitiful female, this needs to be recognized according to the “gangster law” which structures the film. Mosquito stepping in to save her is violating the masculine aspect of this law, which dictates that he should carry himself with machismo.

In fact, this is the only reason A-po is violent towards her as well. Earlier in the film, each of Mosquito’s friends is introduced by his voiceover as scenes show their history. Mosquito says A-po is an underdog who knows best about survival, and that he has “slaughtered 233 pigs, done 107 women, and kicked 375 people’s asses.” However, as Mosquito lists A-po’s claimed accomplishments, the scenes show his father, a butcher, scolding him for being too weak to kill a pig and asking why his son is such a coward, followed by A-po masturbating in his bathroom as the voiceover talks about how many women he has “done.” A-po clearly feels the need to compensate for his lack of bravery, and this triggers his display of what he thinks is masculinity in front of his friends.

Ning’s character is there, therefore, to show the feminine side of Mosquito. This is expressed not only by the fact that he does not want to sleep with her, but also by his question, “Why do you want to be a hooker?” and her response, “Why do you want to be a gangster?” Clearly, the answer is that he has no choice. His role is in this way passive and reacting to power with the only option possible—feminine—and through extension so are the roles of all of the gangsters. The beginning of the movie actually reveals that this is exactly how he became a gangster. He moves to the Monga district and was immediately bullied by Dog Boy (Han Dian Chen), the leader of another gang. After trying to defend himself, Mosquito is taken in by the

leader of the Gang of Princes, Dragon Lee (Rhydian Vaughan). The four gang members round up the rival gang that has been picking on Mosquito and line them up on a roof for Mosquito to beat up. Monk (Ethan Juan) sees Mosquito's hesitation and again points out the reason gangs form by saying, "If you don't fuck 'em up today, one day they will fuck you up." This logic reflects fear and a lack of security, a lack perceived as feminine by the gangsters which drives them to overcompensate with masculine violence. The other reason Mosquito joins is for brotherhood, and these two reasons—fear and brotherhood—conflict with each other throughout the rest of the film.

This theme of brotherhood explains all of Mosquito's motivations, and this goal of social cohesion is also a signifier of the feminine—"Woman, he [the semiologist] would say, is a human being, like man (semiology, after all, is a human science), but her specific function is reproduction: the reproduction of the biological species and the maintenance of social cohesion" (de Lauretis 1984: 18, brackets my own). The five first visit a temple to pray and make an oath to be brothers, then they make a blood pact by cutting their fingers over a bowl. A-po further shows the lack of "manliness" which he is always trying to compensate for by shying away from the razor and fainting when his finger is cut. This is further linked with the feminine by a semiosis of the film, which establishes the color red with the feminine—the red blood blossoming in the bowl mirrors the red cherry blossoms which become associated with the ideal of Japan (imagined as the ideal of woman is imagined and fetishized), with the emotional (and therefore feminine) connection with the ideal of a caring father, with the sex worker herself, and with the blood-ties of brotherhood. The cherry blossoms themselves take on a unique semiosis in this film. While, outside of the film, they can represent the brevity of life to a gangster due to the fact that they only bloom for a few days each year, *Monga* takes this symbol and combines it with the film's

own symbol of the feminine and brotherhood. By the end, therefore, this symbol takes on the meaning of the movie itself—the struggle of femininity and brotherhood with the brief and violent life of gangsters.

For instance, in the following scene, the five share their life dreams, and Mosquito's is to visit Japan to see the cherry blossoms. The others mock him, saying, "How romantic!" (or in other words, girly) but Mosquito explains that his father sent his mother a postcard from Japan with cherry blossoms on it, then died a few months later, before Mosquito was born. This and the very theme of brotherhood are the feminine conflict with the gangster law's norms of the masculine attributes of violence, pain tolerance, and emotional coldness. Furthermore, in this scene, one of the characters spits blood onto the floor from earlier in the day when the gang fought together, and they compare the appearance of the blood to a cherry blossom—linking the idea of violence to the conflicting idea of the brotherhood of gangsters and to femininity even further.

Ning is the revelation of Mosquito's commitment to this feminine side, and the expression of why it conflicts with the power construction of gangster law. She, as a prostitute, is the expression of a commodity controlled by this law, and therefore Mosquito's alliance with her highlights that he is the same. He remembers their innocent past in elementary school, and plays a love song on his tape player. She represents his hope that he can have his feminine attributes to cope with his emotional pain. This is especially shown in the scene where he paints cherry blossoms on her ceiling, linking the healing of his lack to feminine qualities and romantic hope for the future. These same qualities compensate for Ning's lack, as she is shown at the end of the film gazing up at the cherry blossoms on her ceiling and smiling while a client buries his face in the pillow next to her head. It is human emotion that makes her happy, not being "saved,"

because in the end Mosquito never actually takes her away from the brothel.

The same conflict of Mosquito's lack of a father is made more literal by the character of Grey Wolf (played by the director, Doze Niu). It is revealed throughout the film that he is Mosquito's real father (although neither of them knows it). Grey Wolf is also a Chinese gang boss from the mainland, trying to gain control of Monga's gangs by importing guns. The link to history that stands out most is that of Taiwan's most well-known organized crime syndicate, the Bamboo Union (竹聯幫). The notoriety of the gang alone lends itself to be used as an example in the film *Monga*, but one of the former bosses was also called White Wolf. This is a possibly intentional similarity to the director's own character Grey Wolf. The figure of White Wolf highlights the tie to international relations through the fact that he is himself *waishengren*, lived on the mainland until recently, and set up an association for peaceful reunification with the mainland (news.com.au 2013). The Bamboo Union has also been tied to the politics of the KMT, after a journalist was assassinated in the U.S. by Bamboo Union members. At the time it was extensively reported that the journalist had written subversive things about the KMT and as a result the party had trained assassins to silence him (The New York Times 1985). This incident also involved White Wolf: "Chang is also known for making public a taped confession of hitmen behind the shooting of Taiwanese American writer Henry Liu in 1984, an incident which had strained Taiwan's ties with the United States, according to Taiwanese media" (news.com.au 2013). This is once again a possible link to the film being about the shifting power of Taiwan.

Dragon's father, Boss Geta (Ma Ju-Lung), is the boss of the Temple Front gang, and he opposes the ideas of both mainlanders and guns. This is made explicit by the fact that he sends the Gang of Princes to the mountains to make and train with traditional weapons (spears and knives). When A-po begins to complain that it is pointless to use these weapons against guns,

Boss Geta overhears and says, “What the fuck did you say? Guns are evil things imported from the West. They are for those who don’t have balls. Weapons for the lowly.”

Machismo is made equivalent with *benshengren* by Boss Geta’s character. He cares for the temple, wears old-style Japanese geta, and always speaks Taiwanese, signifying his alignment with tradition. The mainland is made equivalent with outsiders when he talks about their use of guns being evil things imported by the West, and outsiders are feminized when he says those who use them don’t have balls. This is a direct reflection of his historical moment in which (as cited above) ties with China are increasing, as well as the power constructions set up by globalization. His words and actions are entirely motivated by an attempted response to reclaim this power on a local, traditional level. He equates machismo and power with physical violence by saying, “To establish oneself in the underground society, one depends on fists and knives.” However, the film has already established that this violent machismo interferes with the idea of brotherhood, and while Boss Geta is lecturing the Gang of Princes about guns, the camera closes in on Monk in brooding thought over his words. Monk later finds out that his own father was the former boss of the gang and had his arm cut off by Boss Geta. With this information, he decides to join the mainlanders in betraying the local gangs and killing Boss Geta, showing that the gangster law norms of machismo betray the brotherhood ideals of being in a gang. Boss Geta’s attempt to reclaim power is an unrealistic one, because he is responding with the constructions of power that existed in the past—the construction found in *Days Looking at the Sea* of familial (his gang being his family—literally, his son is the leader of the gang below his) power in an imagined community of Taiwan, isolated from the world and culturally superior.

Monga is also a look at the past from the present, in which the interaction between this globalization and modernity combine to produce problems. Modernity is clearly a large part of

the evolution and character of these gangs, starting at the time of *Monga*—“The gangs in Taiwan were able to accumulate a substantial amount of wealth after the 1980s when the Taiwanese economy took off” (National Central Police University 2005: 15)—but the question is in what ways this affected them. The film centers around the beginning of the import of guns, which lead to violence by betrayal. From a present day perspective, the end product of this trend can be seen: “...in November 2002, the United Bamboo, the Pine Union, and the Four Seas allied with the Heavenly Alliance's Sky Eagle Branch to smuggle a large amount of firearms into Taiwan to go to war with the Heavenly Alliance's Sun Branch” (National Central Police University 2005: 15). This international activity has led to large-scale adoption of the modern guns which Boss Geta tries (and fails) to fight against with tradition: “The main weapons of the gangs in Taiwan are guns. It is very common for each and every tong to have guns. When gang members are involved in gang conflicts or violent crime, they almost always use guns” (National Central Police University 2005: 15). Furthermore, this violence, as in *Monga*, breaks out when more “feminine” approaches break down: “There is both intergang and intragang violence. The main function of intragang violence is to control gang members' behaviors and the main purpose of intergang violence is to neutralize the power of rival gangs or to carryout certain gang activities and missions” (National Central Police University 2005: 15).

Boss Geta's conflict is one of *waishengren* and *benshengren*, modernity and tradition, and a crisis of masculinity and femininity. The conflict of *waishengren* and *benshengren* has always been one of power (but of course, this power shifts throughout history). The origins of the terms represent the imagined community of “Free China” that have now repeatedly appeared in this thesis:

The main reason why the label *waishengren* came to represent civil war migrants and their offspring in Taiwan can be attributed to the emphasis on a person's “native place” (*jiguan*) in traditional Chinese society and the legacy of the civil examination system during the imperial

dynasties. Jiguan was continued in the ROC Constitution drafted in 1947 to form a national assembly representing all of China. The system was maintained by the KMT after it relocated to Taiwan as the ROC state continued to categorise its citizens by their jiguan. However, as Wang Fu-chang has argued, jiguan was later used to legitimise the exiled KMT by maintaining the semblance of a government representing all of China with people and elected representatives from every province on the mainland. This would then justify the dominance of the mainland elite in “national” politics in a “temporary” set-up before the KMT could retake China. Under the jiguan registration system, people were identified by their provincial origins and patrilineal descent. An emphasis was placed on the categorical difference between “natives of (Taiwan) Province” (*bensheng*) and “outsiders of the Province” (*waisheng*). (Yang and Chang 2010: 112)

Since *waishengren* was used as a tool to legitimize power over Free China, it is inevitable that those opposed to this power would try to empower the label of *benshengren*. In these labels, power again responds to power in kind by using location. If *waishengren* gains its legitimacy from the locations in China, *benshengren* gains its legitimacy from the soil of Taiwan.

In 1971, the ROC lost its seat in the United Nations to the PRC. The ensuing diplomatic debacle culminated in the United States’ formal recognition of the PRC in 1979. During this time, the rise of a *bensheng*-dominated middle class in the aforementioned economic take-off and the emergence of a new generation of young dissident intellectuals formed what Hsiao A-chin called a ‘return to reality generation.’ They began to question the legitimacy of various claims made by the KMT. This led to a chain of events, including the rise of indigenisation and various social movements (labour, gender equality, environmentalism, Hakka/aboriginal rights, etc.), as well as the political opposition’s demands for democracy in the 1980s. (Ibid.)

Notice the repetition of power influences on a global level that at the beginning of this section sparked a change in prostitution law and thus the control of woman commodities. Boss Geta is part of this resistance against the *waishengren*, but instead of turning to democratic rights, he is appealing to the past. Even while he is a strong male, he is part of the class that has been controlled—making him feminine. His attempt to compensate using machismo responds to power in the wrong way. He is acting as if he is masculine and can dictate power based on the insulated community of Taiwan. This way does not respond to power in kind as “labor, gender equality, environmentalism, and Hakka/aboriginal rights” do because these all recognize that power now comes internationally, and appealing to the international community might spark change.

However, these are not clear-cut dichotomies by any means. Grey Wolf eventually

discovers that he is Mosquito's father, but by then he already knows that Monk is going to battle with the Gang of Princes and likely win because he has a gun. At the end of the movie he is shown crouched helplessly on the street because of this knowledge. His emotion here lends credence and hope to the side of the *waishengren*. Mosquito also seeks a father figure in Boss Geta. He buys him a chicken leg and Geta says while they are sitting on the temple steps eating, "You grew up without a father?" and Mosquito answers, "Is it that obvious?" Soon after, Geta is betrayed and murdered, leading Mosquito to confront Grey Wolf, question why he left his mother and ask him to take care of her if he is killed fighting Monk. Neither the mainland boss (*waishengren*, modernity) nor Boss Geta (*benshengren*, tradition) can be the father that Mosquito needs, and both lead to the destruction of Mosquito's brotherhood group through betrayal. There is therefore no clear answer that one is any better than the other—only that pure reliance on masculinity when one is not wholly masculine (and a question to be taken away from this is who, gangster or otherwise, can ever be purely masculine?) will lead to disappointment.

In fact, the efforts of Mosquito to find a father figure in both Geta and Grey Wolf followed by both of their betrayals is precluded by Mosquito visiting the prostitute, where he finds real answers. He is shown painting the cherry blossoms on her ceiling while she eats the food that he has brought her. This brothel scene precipitates his search to find repair for his lack through using femininity (and thus responding to power in kind) in several ways. The first, as mentioned above, is in the cherry blossoms. The second is in the fact that Mosquito has brought food for Ning—a nurturing and feminine gesture. The third comes when Ning tries to cover up the blemish on her face—the physical mark that represents her perceived female lack—and Mosquito brushes aside her hair, accepting that supposed lack. The contrast when machismo destroys everything in the end is a clear message.

At the end of the film, Monk badly injures Mosquito in the street and Mosquito holds out his arms pleading for an embrace. However, when Monk approaches, Mosquito takes the knife out of his leg and literally stabs Monk in the back. Monk echoes his lines at the beginning of the film which point out the feared lack of manhood—“If you don’t kill me today, I will kill you tomorrow.” Mosquito answers with the conflicting feminized motivation, crying, “I never understood what the point of all this fighting is. Now I’m even more confused. You’re my brother, but I have to kill you.” Monk’s answer is, “Because this is the street. Because we are gangsters. Whoever gets in the way dies. There is no other choice!” His words point out the norm of the gangster law—uncompromising machismo; no mercy. However, Mosquito shows that there is a choice by saying, “If this is the way of the street, then I am not a gangster. I am in this for friendship. I am in this for brotherhood. Guns are weapons for the lowly.” The idea that Mosquito has finally realized the role of femininity in being a respectable and loyal gangster is confirmed when he collapses to the ground reflecting that Monk believes it too, or he would not have accepted his embrace. The sentiment is then visually shown as Dragon slices open Monk’s back sending a spray of blood which appears as cherry blossoms in front of Mosquito’s smiling face. This crucial role of feminine attributes is again linked with the scene of Ning gazing up at the blossoms on her ceiling.

An interesting link between the real world and the film is that while *Monga* points out that gangs will violently destroy each other through betrayal without the feminine attributes brought out in Mosquito by the sex worker, the real-world Bamboo Union also seems to recognize this fact. The names of their original branches reflect qualities that the movie puts in conflict with machismo: “In 1981, the gang established its first eight branches labeled as follows: *Chung* (loyalty), *Shao* (filial pi[e]ty), *Len* (sympathy), *Eia* (love), *Shing* (trust), *Yi*

(righteousness), *Hor* (harmony), and *Ping* (peace)” (National Central Police University 2005: 13).

Some of the branches of the gang have also developed rules that go against *Monga*'s cold-hearted masculinity: “For example, the Central Tong's regulations are: (1) parents are number one; (2) ‘brothers’ are number two, (3) do not resist your superiors, follow the orders, (4) do not use drugs, (5) do not steal or rob, (6) do not rape, and (7) do not use your gang name to solve personal problems” (National Central Police University 2005: 14). Each of these attributes can be seen as feminine.

Further evidence that the Bamboo Union is the fictionalized gang of Grey Wolf in *Monga* is the existence of their rival gang, Heavenly Alliance, which formed out of the feminine position of being threatened by the Bamboo Union.

In 1984, Taiwanese authorities launched a nationwide gang sweep, code-named Operation Cleansweep, because of rampant gang activities. Many gang members were arrested and sent to prisons for rehabilitation. In the prisons, native Taiwanese gangsters banded together to protect themselves from members of the United Bamboo, a gang whose members were primarily descendants of Mainland Chinese who came to Taiwan after 1949. In 1986, at the Taipei Detention Center, under the leadership of the spiritual leader Lo Fu-chu, Lin Min-teh (aka Min-teh), Hsieh Tung-yun (aka Ah-pu-tou), Lee Por-shi, and Chen Hsien-ming (aka Ya-ba) declared the establishment of the “Heavenly Alliance.” (National Central Police University 2005: 18).

The “spiritual leader Lo Fu-chu” has similarities to the religious devotion of Boss Geta to his temple, and Monk's words, “If you don't fuck ‘em up today, one day they will fuck you up,” are very similar to the motivations for the formation of this gang. The gang also has similar rules to the core message of *Monga*: “According to police intelligence, the gang has four rules: (1) help ‘heaven’ in dispersing justice, that is support the weak and help the poor; (2) be honest and candid with other members, that is to be united, (3) follow the example of heaven and earth, that is to assist the world with empathy and justice, and (4) fly as high as possible, that is to travel around the world and do ‘just’ things” (National Central Police University 2005: 19). The last rule also alludes to the international consciousness of the gang. Of course, as seen above, this gang has also come to use guns more and more to betray their own members, as in the film:

“Members of the gang are often involved in intragang violence. For example, there was a major conflict between the Unity Branch and the Sun Branch, and there were bloody conflicts between the Old and New factions of the Sun Branch” (National Central Police University 2005: 19).

This historical evolution all depends on the feminization of Mosquito, which would not be successfully portrayed without the metaphor of Ning. By linking the two, Mosquito’s societal power status as a gangster is revealed to be the same as a sex worker because of the changes in gangster law. In Chapter 2, I discussed the importance in this genealogy of discerning who has control over the commodity body object of the sex worker. The struggle of the gang members to gain this symbolic power—over bodies—and their failure to do so illustrates all of the concepts in this chapter. Dog Boy begins the vicious struggle by trying to assert power over Dragon by raping his girlfriend (an attempt to control body). Dragon’s response is to order Dog Boy’s mouth and eyes super-glued shut (an attempt to control body). This disturbs Mosquito to the point that he visits the brothel, demanding to see Ning, but the madame says he has to get someone else because Ning is with a client. This is his first hint that he is not the (masculine) controller of Ning’s body. When Ning does come, he tries to force himself on her (an attempt to control body), but he sees whip marks on her back. She explains that for every ticket she does not collect, the madame whips her one time. Now Mosquito is forced to realize he does not, and cannot, control this commodity body object, or any other, including his own. He realizes that he is the same as her, begins to cry, and asks to stay the night, sleeping on her shoulder for comfort. Now he is posed in a feminine gesture, fully empathizing with her situation, and he is asking her to take on a masculine protective role because of her experience in having the subjectivity of “a woman.” In this series of scenes he is forced to confront his femininity—as far as the new Taiwan and global social setting is concerned, Mosquito is a woman and the only recourse he has

is to seek comfort in the empathy of another woman.

Conclusions: Power Resistances Evolving with Society

Locational Power Influences Forming Rural and Urban Taiwan

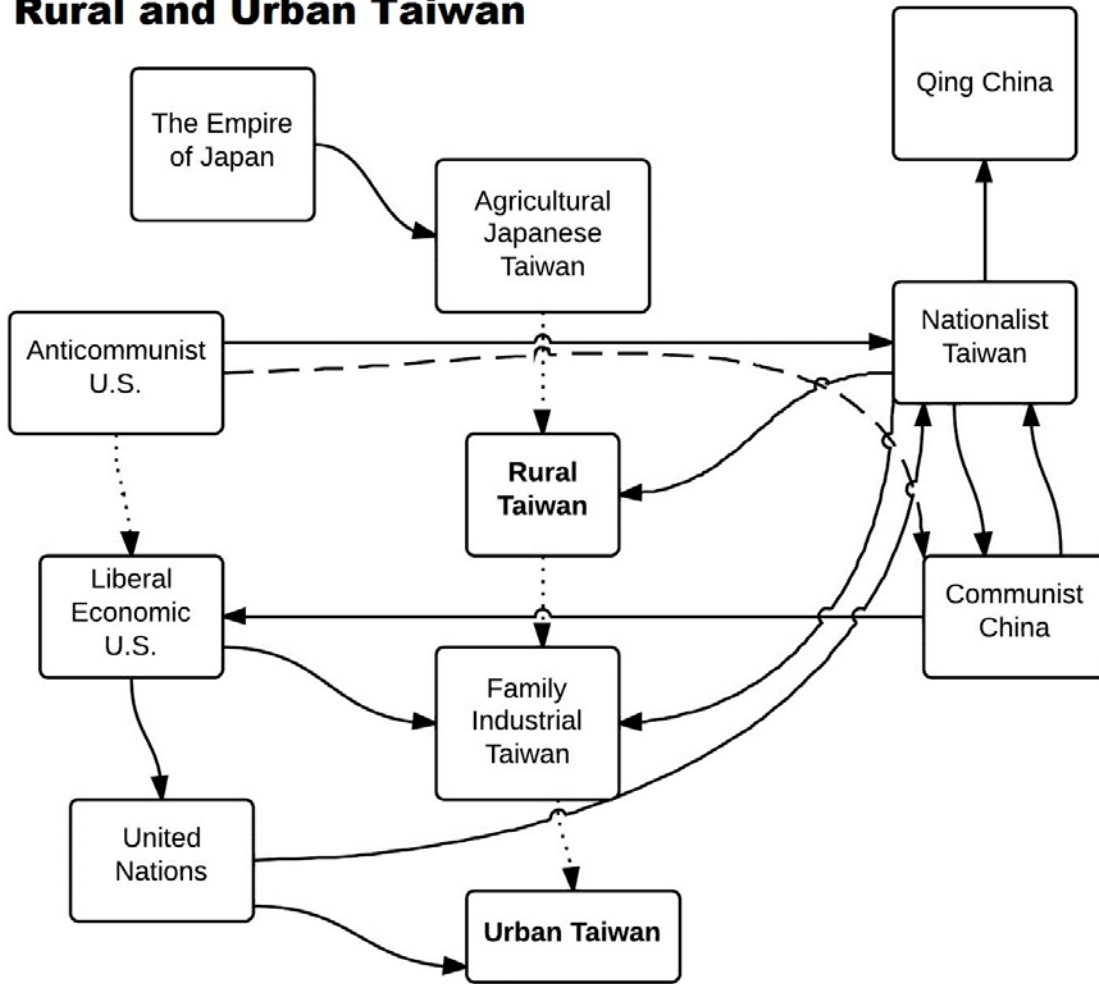


Figure 2: Simplified latticework of power constructions that formed the conceptual locations which took place during Taiwan's industrialization.

Due to the complex nature of combining these two films into one latticework map, it is easier to see what is happening if it is broken down into constituent dimensions first, then combined. These will be briefly explained, then an analysis will follow the combined map. The

above map shows the different conceptions of locations that interact with each other in these films. This map begins with the Japanese Empire and its influence over Taiwan, shaping it into an agricultural location with infrastructure. Later, Nationalist Taiwan came to shape rural Taiwan. Slowly, pressure from external influences such as the U.S., China, and the United Nations forced Nationalist Taiwan to examine its role internationally, and through these influences, Urban Taiwan emerged.

Conceptual Power Influences from Rural to Urban Taiwan

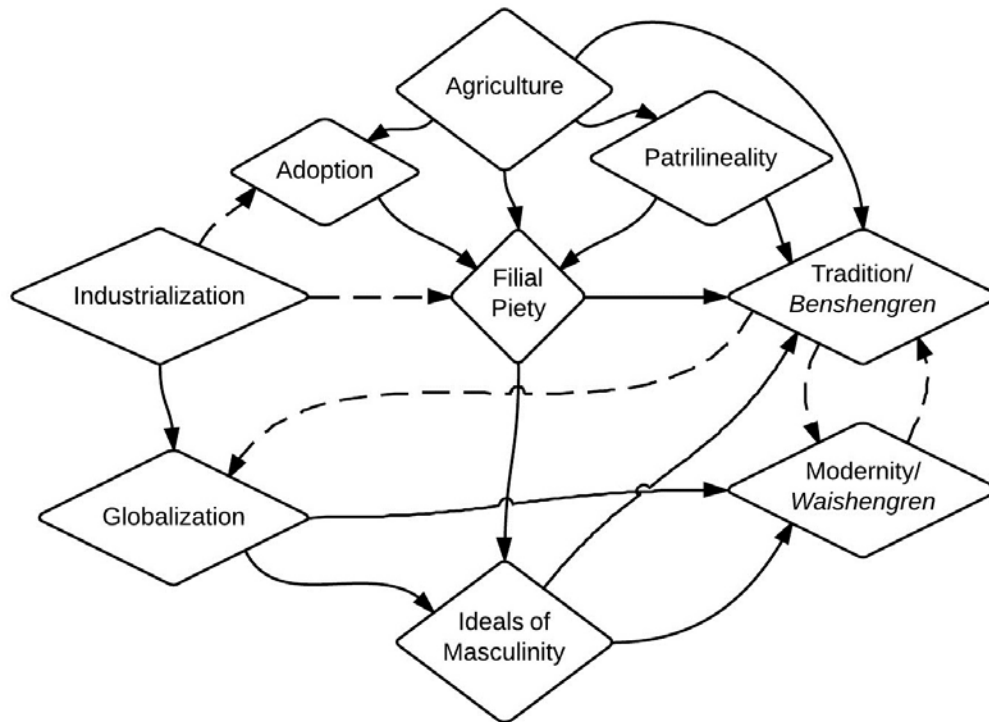


Figure 3: Simplified latticework of power constructions of concepts which shaped family law and gangster law.

Location was of course not the only factor in determining rural and urban Taiwan. The above map shows the concepts (which again could themselves each be examined as a latticework with its own genealogy) which shaped *Days Looking at the Sea* and *Monga*. Agriculture made

both patrilineality and adoption logical means of maintaining families, and in turn each of these influenced and was influenced by filial piety. Tradition and the *bensheng* ideals were shaped by this, but the rise of industrialization and globalization challenged all of the power concepts associated with agriculture. The concepts of *benshengren* and *waishengren* thus came to represent these struggling forces in *Monga*, and each took on characteristics associated with ideals of masculinity.

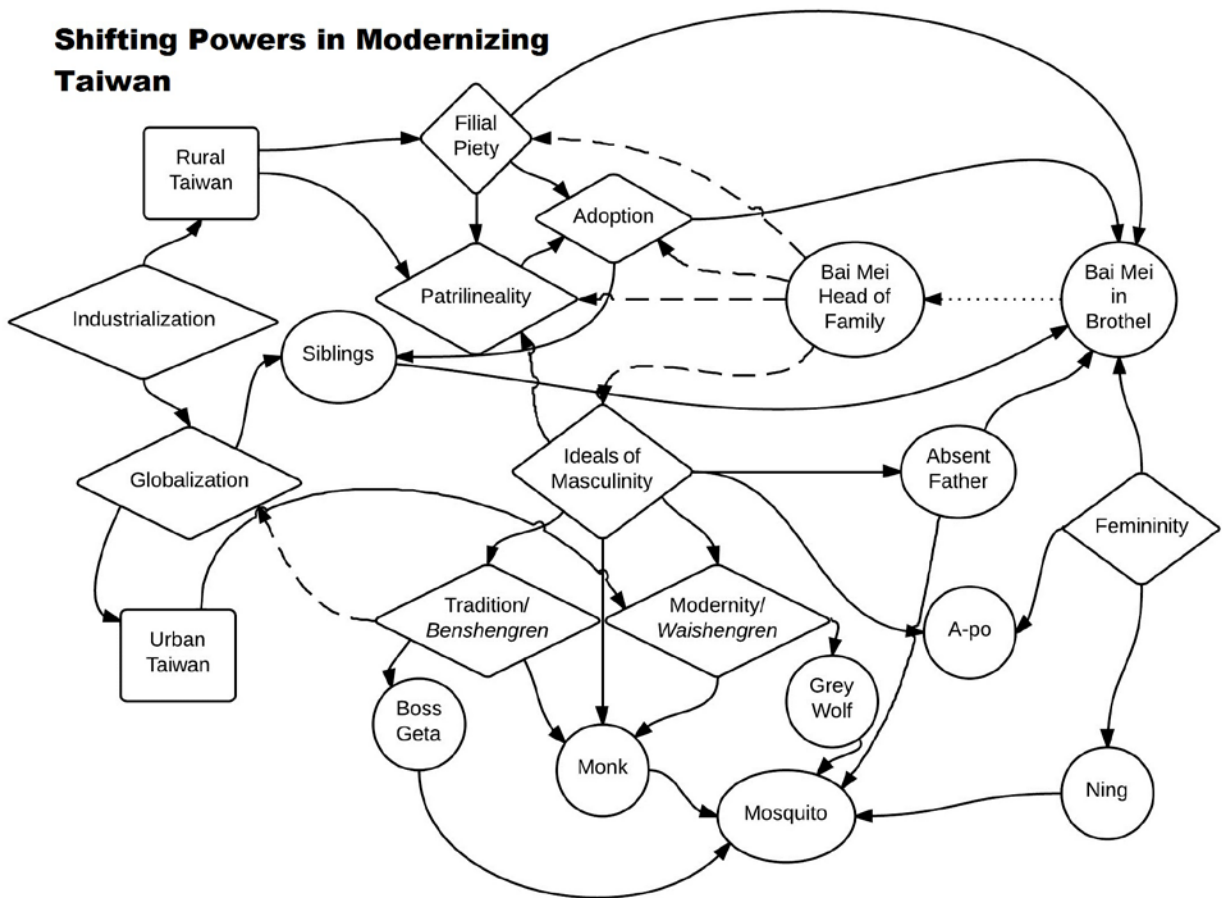


Figure 4: Simplified latticework of power constructions over the times of family law and gangster law. Solid arrows represent power influence, dashed arrows represent resistance to power, and dotted arrows represent semioses. Squares are locations, diamonds are concepts, and circles are individuals.

With the above maps combined with the individual representatives from the movie, the most visually apparent thing is the increased complexity. This is partially due to the diagram

covering two films instead of one, but it also reflects the increased complexity with which the directors examined their characters. Even with this increased complexity, there are still several points in the latticework omitted for the sake of relative simplicity. For instance, the madames of the two brothels are missing, but their roles as representatives of power are fairly obvious due to their inclusion in the *Three Times* map.

It is also more challenging to fit this diagram onto a grid, but the y-axis is still a rough progression of time, while the x-axis again begins with influences that shape the different manifestations of the location of Taiwan, followed by ideas that shape the subjectivity of the characters. Finally, in a very general sense, the left side contains more masculine sources and representations of power while the right side is relatively more feminine.

Beginning with “Rural Taiwan,” this conception of location allows for certain manifestations of filial piety and patrilineality. However, as time goes on, industrialization and globalization put a force on Rural Taiwan and shrink its presence in favor of Urban Taiwan. Filial piety and patrilineality allow for a form of adoption, which is a source of power exerted on Bai Mei when she is a brothel prostitute. More modern, urban globalization and more rural adoption are both represented by Bai Mei’s adopted siblings, who shape her subjectivity with a combination of the two.

From the diagram it is clear that there are several powers keeping Bai Mei in her place in the latticework, which is why her subjectivity is split into two points. When she bears a son and becomes the head of her family, she is resisting all of these forces. She resists filial piety by placing herself at the head of it and taking care of her natal family and village, she resists patrilineality by synthesizing her own line of descent, she resists her role as an adopted daughter by becoming a legitimate mother, and she resists concepts of masculinity by doing all of these

things as a woman.

However, these rural sources of power are replaced with the emerging concept of Urban Taiwan. Ideals of masculinity split into the resistance through tradition combined with *benshengren* as embodied by the father figure of Boss Geta, and modernity combined with *waishengren* as embodied by the father figure of Grey Wolf. All of these ideals reach a pinnacle and fail in the character of Monk, who is a potential model of ideal masculinity for Mosquito. In the face of this failing, femininity through Ning becomes a legitimate option for Mosquito's subjectivity. However, in contrast with Bai Mei, Mosquito has no outlet of power in this latticework—only a potential for resistance through utilizing femininity which is essentially left unanswered.

The influence of modernizing Taiwan on gangster law should thus be clear by now, and it is illustrated through the feminine attributes of Mosquito which come to the surface when he visits the sex worker. This is a completely different formula to the family law which was expressed by Bai Mei in *Days Looking at the Sea*, although the starting point of *Monga* is derived from a scene which closely mirrors its predecessor. However, both carry a message about the struggle of individuals in the face of power in changing times. Bai Mei struggles with the tradition of being a filial adopted daughter while her more cosmopolitan siblings begin to reject her for doing just that. Her solution is a mixture of the two—she moves to rural Taiwan where the traditional villagers accept her urban knowledge gratefully and at the same time shows the modern empowerment of a woman choosing to be a single mother (far ahead of the 90's revolution where this would become a more viable option for women). In *Monga*, Niu points out the tragedy of outsiders importing guns which would lead to increasingly more violence in the present day. However, he does not completely side with his romantic view of *benshengren*,

accepting traditional virtues like brotherhood as the real world gangs aimed to do in their rules, but rejecting the idea of unrefined machismo. His potential answer seems to be a complex mix of modernity and tradition, waishengren and beshengren, and masculinity and femininity expressed through Mosquito's interaction with Ning. Finally, the sex workers in both films are positioned in order to reveal these messages by signifying the history and society surrounding them. Neither of these films is read as an example of simple victimization, because the stories they tell are critical historical moments, and the characters in each are products of specific and intricate semioses of power constructions.

Chapter 4: Location on the Margins: Migrants and Sex Workers in *The Fourth Portrait and Stilt*

Migrant Wives and Imagined Borders

In Chapter 2, when talking about commodity and power, I quoted the definition of sex work in The Social Order Maintenance Act –“any individual who engages in sexual conduct or cohabitation with intent for financial gains” (J.Y. Interpretation No. 666 2009)). I stopped and asked a question there about whether wives could be included in this category. Obviously, not all wives marry men “with intent for financial gains,” however those brides that are purchased from an agency overseas—so-called “mail order” brides—are absolutely in this category (more evidence for this will be revealed in the following sections as well). In the first film that is analyzed in this chapter, the migrant wife is not a mail order bride (that is, she was not purchased through an agency), however the woman in the second film is a mail order bride from Vietnam. What is interesting about analyzing these two films is the similarities in their power constructions.

The above Social Order Maintenance Act is currently the law governing prostitution in Taiwan. It still applies as stated in the above quote, but with the change that in 2011, in order to make the law constitutional (as it punished women for prostitution but not men for being clients), an amendment was added to make sex work legal in special areas. None of these areas exist, which is another interesting product of power adapting to resistance, but the discussion of that is outside the scope of this thesis. What is interesting is the idea that control of the sex worker commodity is based on location. She is legal, in a specially controlled location “an appropriate distance” from schools, temples, churches, kindergartens, and other public buildings “of this

kind.” Prostitutes would also need to be licensed, HIV free, and get regular health checks (社會秩序維護法 2011). These regulations are virtually the same as those of licensed prostitution in the martial law period, but on a smaller scale—in special areas. Before, these regulations were motivated by an imagined moral superiority of the nation and its citizens as well as an attempt to control those morals through hygiene. In this law, the idea of moral superiority can be seen in the placing of the special areas away from public buildings and the hygiene can be seen in licensing and health checks. Since this law is based on location and coincides with the present day in which the economy is accommodating ever-increasing numbers of immigrants, there is a strong message of moral legitimacy based on location.

Foreign-born residents in Taiwan have grown from around 30,000 in 1991 to around 500,000 in 2006. Of these, about 18 percent have entered Taiwan through marriage. 90 percent of these cross-border marriages are from Southeast Asia and China (Ministry of Interior 2009, cited in Chuang and Lin: 1). At around 75,000, Vietnamese made up Taiwan’s largest population of non-Chinese nationals in 2007 (humantrafficking.org 2007). In 2003, David Wu, director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Ho Chi Minh City, said, "In 1995 there were only 1,476 Vietnamese women married to Taiwanese husbands. The number now is more than 60,000" (DinhThanh Lam 2003). By 2009 this number was up to around 100,000 (Tang and Wang 2011: 430-440).

Clearly, there is an increasing trend of immigrants, migrant brides, and “mail-order” brides, and the reason for this trend is economic. The brides are pushed out by financial difficulties, such as unpaid debts, jobless family members, bad harvests, or the chance for better lives in general (DinhThanh Lam 2003; humantrafficking.org 2007). On the Taiwanese side there is economic pull. The first factor is that men are willing to pay for wives—as much as

\$10,000USD (DinhThanh Lam 2003). Another factor is employment. Southeast Asians make up virtually 100 percent of foreign domestic and care workers (Lan 2008: 834). Housekeeping and private nursing are undesirable jobs for Taiwanese nationals, and so there is a demand vacuum to fill these positions (Wang and Bélanger 2008: 97).

The idea that, politically, there is a remnant of nationalism in the present day surrounding the morality of location which drives the discouragement of migrant brides is clearly evident in some unfortunate political statements. In fact, the lines that separate sex worker and immigrant are blurring in the modern period. Some of the same regulations and stigmas apply to both. In the context of Taiwanese policy pushing women to have children “if you love Taiwan” because of low fertility rates, Vice Minister of Education Chou Tsan-Te made a discouraging comment about the reproduction of immigrant women: “In a national education conference, Chou expressed his worry about the ‘low quality’ of immigrants and said that ‘foreign brides should not have so many children’” (Lan 2008: 841-842). Aside from being seen as producing low-quality offspring, migrant brides have also been stigmatized as having disease: “According to Chen (Chien-jen Chen, Director General of DOH), the seven issues [for AIDS prevention] the DOH will target are male homosexuality, the online sex industry, the sharing of needles in drug use, *foreign brides* and abortion, students from the fifth grade through middle school, conscripted servicemen, and people with HIV...” (Huang 2005: 1, emphasis added). This is a clear manifestation of the same hygiene regulations that attempt to control the commodity body objects of sex workers.

The stigmas go beyond governmental nationalism. Migrant brides have a presence in the media, and their portrayal is not a positive one. “The Taiwanese media construct the ‘foreign brides phenomenon’ as a social problem. The brides are portrayed either as passive victims or

materialist gold-diggers, and prone to committing crimes, while the bridegrooms are portrayed as the ‘socially undesirable,’ including physically or mentally disabled, and morally inferior” (Hsia 2007: 55).

Concubines, Wives, Prostitutes

This link between sex workers and brides is not actually surprising once the historical and societal reasons are traced back. Ding Naifei provides an excellent explanation in her essay, “Wife-in-Monogamy and ‘The Exaltation of Concubines.’” She demonstrates the genealogy of the technologies of control over sex workers and wives with a simple metaphor she borrows from McMahon and expands upon: The effects of Chinese polygamy still linger when talking about Chinese marriage, just as the history of slavery still impacts race relations in the U.S. (Ding 2007: 220).

Her essay explains what this means in the third section, where she examines the conflict of Chinese custom with British common law. Essentially, British judges interpreted Chinese polygamy to be similar to the more familiar Islamic polygamy, and thus legally treated it the same. This was not completely accurate, however, because in Chinese polygamy there is a primary wife, who is analogous to today’s “wife-in-monogamy” and then there are secondary wives, who aren’t actually wives at all but concubines. The issue with treating them all as wives, as British law came to do, was that they were originally not all treated equally within that cultural practice. Ding points out a fact that was mentioned in Chapter 1—that concubine status was essentially that of a family servant, and she was not the primary wife’s equal (Ding 2007: 231). Ding gives an example that a ruling in a British court might say all of the wives have the right to equally divide an inheritance (which before would belong solely to the primary wife) (Ding 2007: 232). Clearly the struggle to adapt to this modernization of marriage would cause

conflict—suddenly the previously inferior concubines are seen as “gold-diggers,” thus a connection between sex-objectified women and money formed, and this would condense into a stigma that applied to women outside of monogamous marriage—sex workers among them.

The title of Ding’s second section, quoted from Gayle Rubin, says, “[A woman] is no more a helpmate of man than gold is in itself money” (Ding 2007: 224). This is a reference to the idea that women are trafficked, but there is no inherent or biological reason for it. An interesting twist on this concept, however, is Ding’s idea that “giving women in marriage” is the highest and most valuable form of this trafficking, while concubines are merely “bought and sold” (Ding 2007: 227). Concubines, mistresses, and prostitutes are a lower status, being talked about in the language of economy. I would add to this the role of mail order bride, who is also bought and sold, but the link between the two (sex workers and mail order brides) does not end here.

Ding points out that this language of woman trafficking has evolved through U.S. based globalized feminism, especially when talking about Asia, to signify sex slavery (Ding 2007: 225-226). The state-sanctioned, lawful, heterosexual monogamous marriage has been separated out of this idea of human trafficking, and is seen as the only decent and proper alternative. Everything other than monogamy has become human trafficking and sex slavery. However, mail order brides are again an exception—humantrafficking.org, a resource created by the US State Department, has articles devoted to migrant brides, and Taiwan is pointed out as a destination of these brides.

Ding also asks, “What are we saying, what do we mean when we say that polygamy has never gone away, or that a certain figure is ‘fated’ to be a concubine/mistress, or that she has the ‘no-heart’ of a prostitute (biaoziwuqing)?” (Ding 2007: 221). Ding is saying certain women in Taiwanese society are labeled as concubines and prostitutes because of their personalities and

actions, even when they do not literally fill these roles. But in actuality, to say that these only relate to personalities and actions is false—they also relate once again to imagined morals based on location. The first “location” is the space of monogamy, outside of which sex needs to be controlled through laws governing sex workers (and again, they need to be contained with the location of specially designated areas). The second location, it appears from all of the above statements and laws as well as the films below, is Taiwan established as the location of morally superior Chinese culture.

And what of the wife-in-monogamy? Ding points out the marginalization of society’s “concubines,” but the “exaltation of the concubine” also raised an inferior woman to the status of wife, and this was condensed into the monogamous role. Is the wife-in-monogamy now seen as part domestic servant (part concubine)? Furthermore, if morality is dependent on location, and sex work is sanctioned within special areas, does marriage make a woman a contractual lifetime sex worker? Is marriage itself a sanctioned sex work area?

For all of these reasons, immigrants are especially applicable to the modern Taiwanese question of sex workers. It is probably no coincidence then that the two films about the present day in this thesis are about immigrants. However, the title of this chapter which says “Migrants and Sex Workers” is an intentional irony. These two stories are not categorically the same, and the “Sex Workers” part is actually posed as a question. The first film contains a migrant bride who also happens to occasionally engage in sex work. The second film portrays a mail order bride who does not engage in sex work *per se*, but is included because of the above description. Both are also included because of their status as commodity body objects, and the similarity in the way power treats them confirms that if neither or one of them is literally a “sex worker” (if there can ever be a single definition of “sex worker”), power constructions have applied this

label to them anyway.

Migrant Chinese Brides: Mothering Across the Impassable Strait

In Chung Mong-Hong's (鍾孟宏) *The Fourth Portrait* (第四張畫, 2010), the child protagonist, Wen-hsiang (Bi Xiao-Hai), faces loneliness and poverty after his father dies. Eventually, he goes to live with his mother and stepfather, who provide such a cold environment that the scenes from the beginning of the movie, in which Wen-hsiang rides down a slide and washes his school uniform without a single other person in frame, seem preferable.

A major aspect of the role of the inept mother, Wu Chun-lan (Hao Lei), lies in the fact she is a migrant and a hostess at a *jiudian* (酒店). This is made explicit when Wen-hsiang's teacher asks to meet with Chun-lan about his behavior in school. After a few sentences, the teacher asks where the mother's accent is from. She replies that she is from China and works in a *jiudian* while Wen-hsiang's stepfather works a night market stall.⁶ When the teacher shows the eerie picture the boy has drawn of his lost brother, Chun-lan lights a cigarette in the classroom, signifying her status as lower-class (because of her unawareness of areas where smoking is not allowed), as outside the institutional etiquette of Taiwan, and signifying that she is conflicted about the question of her children.

This scene shows certain expectations placed on Chun-lan. Her migrant status is immediately brought up in a meeting where her parenting is being questioned, and her explanation contains clues about the social commentary of the film. Her husband (Leon Dai Lap-Yan) sells small live fish in a night market, a job that brings in very little income. The portrayal of her job as a *jiudian* hostess highlights the working-class nature of the job and the clients.

⁶All translation for this movie is my own.

Aside from this, there is the implication that the parents cannot take care of the child easily because the stepfather is gone in the evening and the mother is gone all night, drinking with customers, and sleeping during the day.

After Chun-lan lights her cigarette, she takes out her Taiwan ID to show the teacher. She says that she coveted the ID for a long time, thinking it would bring a better life, but once she got it she knew that wasn't true. Shortly after she received her ID, her oldest son went missing, and it is later revealed that Wen-hsiang's stepfather beat him to death and hid the body. This is, in one aspect, a comment on the challenges Wen-hsiang faces as an impoverished child. Hsueh and Ku (2009) speculate that turmoil within the family is linked with the stagnating economy of Taiwan. Aside from this, there are also familial challenges for migrant spouses. The marriages of migrant workers may be built on shaky grounds because of the motivations of citizenship. A migrant woman in an abusive marriage may have no way out, and the expectations because of her immigrant status may impact the marriage as well (Friedman 2012).

Certainly throughout the film the stepfather exhibits emotional problems. At first he seems to be quietly depressed, but in two particular scenes it is shown that he is struggling to control his rage, which is clearly his only means of trying to assert that his masculinity is not impotent. In one, Wen-hsiang has told the police that he had an older brother and his stepfather kicks him in the chest, sending him to the floor, and makes threats about telling family secrets. In another, he confronts his wife for giving Wen-hsiang new clothes and a school bag. She replies that she doesn't know what to do to make him happy; she will do whatever he says, she moved when he said he wanted to move and she let him be jobless when he said he did not want to work. Here she again mentions his lack of an ability to provide—a subtle attack on his masculinity from her feminine standpoint. She is saying that she has allowed him to control her as a feminine

object despite his inability to fulfill the traditionally masculine side of that expectation. It is revealed throughout the film that this is the only real form of resistance Chun-lan has against the powers of masculinity. In a calm monotone, her husband continues to say that he is not unhappy, but it is clear from her words and the dark scene lit only by the fish tank that his anger is silent and dangerous. He realizes that his masculinity failed to solve problems when he killed her other son, but there is a clearly a cognitive dissonance between this and his expectations. His threat to explode at any minute is thus palpable. This scene succinctly highlights the role of Chun-lan as a migrant, who has no option but to defer to one representative of power relationships in her situation—her husband.

A viewer can easily and naturally read this idea of him being a representation of power through the symbols of the movie, but why is it so clear? And what does he really represent? It is not just a blanket statement of “patriarchy.” One answer is of course his use of violence to try to control those around him. The other answer, simply put, is that he is her gatekeeper into Taiwan. Being married to him is the reason she is not sent back across the strait and therefore, aside from being the head of the family, he represents the network of legal and symbolic power which Taiwan maintains over migrants.

Chun-lan’s work serves to highlight her situation, especially for those unaware of the plight of migrant brides, and that will be discussed below, but even without the factor of her work her situation is helpless. Without her husband, she does not belong in Taiwanese society and that takes precedent over any abuse she faces. Friedman (2012) articulates this particularly well. She says that when migrant brides face domestic violence, a gap between laws protecting women and immigration law becomes painfully clear. This is due to a disparity between “Taiwan’s commitment to women’s security and well-being, on the one hand, and the country’s

intense anxiety about immigrants from China and the ‘authenticity’ of cross-Strait marriages, on the other” (Friedman 2012: 225). This statement not only implies a pervasive nationalistic fear of immigrants seen in the first section of this chapter, but also a widespread suspicion of migrant brides using marriage to immigrate. These sentiments correlate closely with the law: “Faced with spousal abuse, many Chinese women feel trapped by an immigration regime that emphasizes border regulation and national security over individual rights to physical, emotional, and psychological safety” (Ibid: 225). Therefore, in this situation, power favors a strong border over allowing for the smooth integration of outsiders—and this is quite obviously related to the Communist regime as enemy since the formation of the ROC government, however much this position has evolved.

Furthermore, the scene which expresses her psychological turmoil presents other problems for her. It is not said whether or not she knows that her husband beat her oldest son to death—each of them explain that he ran away and nobody ever found him—but she certainly knows he used to get angry and beat her son. It is also unknown whether her husband ever beats her (it is a good guess that he does, but it is not mentioned in the film itself), so her concern is over her younger son. The man expresses his cold, dangerous hatred for the child by questioning why she would go upstairs to see him at all, and then questioning her decision to buy him clothes—“He doesn’t have clothes to wear?” She is obviously afraid for her son, whom she is trying her best to take care of in her own way, despite the limitations of her situation. However, she has no legal recourse in this situation. The child was raised by his biological father, and he is a Taiwanese child. She is a migrant, so a national border stands in the way of her protecting her child.

The issue of children and custody aside, Friedman asserts “abused immigrant spouses

encounter what I term a ‘double authenticity bind’ because they must prove the legitimacy of both their marriage and their reasons for leaving the relationship if they are to retain legal status in Taiwan” (Friedman 2012: 225). For Chun-lan, add to this the fact that a mainland spouse is not just an immigrant, but an immigrant from the political adversary of China. Furthermore, add the extra complication of proving the abuse of a child who previously had not lived with her, and who is a different nationality than her. Having a Taiwanese child is one of the only ways out of an abusive relationship for a migrant spouse (Friedman 2012: 227), but this is under normal circumstances. Proving that it is the child, not her, that is the reason for wanting to leave the marriage is more complicated since she did not raise him and has already proven to be a less-than-fit mother. On top of this, she works in a *jiudian*. Even without the social stigma of hostesses as sex workers, her schedule of late nights proves to be a problem in the short time Wen-hsiang has stayed with her.

However, there *are* social signifiers connected with her profession which deserve more attention. When her work is introduced, the movie shows the exterior of the *jiudian*, shipping containers stacked on top of each other to make compartments with colored blinking lights decorating the railings of the stairs where girls in short, tight dresses and high heels are approaching. There is a shot of a canopy of trees with colored light bulbs hanging from the branches. Karaoke can be heard while the camera pans down and across tables of men in unbuttoned white or floral collared shirts drinking Taiwan Beer with hostesses. Finally, Chun-lan is shown entering a compartment through the plastic ribbon dividers while a conversation is happening. She is wearing a short wig, heavy makeup, and long manicured nails, which she holds out carefully as she cradles a cigarette, listening to the conversation. This is all still seen through the plastic dividers, which glow with pink light and distort the image, conveying

intoxication, as the tinny karaoke machine plays another song in the background.

The man speaking is trying to convince a hostess to sleep with him. “Last week you said no, this week you said no, you have to help me sort it out.” Chun-lan comes to the new girl’s aid with the tone and posture of someone experienced and in charge. She has clearly dealt with enough customers to handle a stubborn drunk. The client says the girl or Chun-lan will go home with him tonight, and Chun-lan tries to joke with him and distract him by talking about how the new hostess is like a little girl and a virgin. The customer gets mad and throws alcohol in Chun-lan’s face, yelling vulgarities and asserting his masculinity to the horror of the other hostesses and to the approval of his friend. He says, “Do you know who I am? I come here and spend this much money for jokes?”

The reason this phrase is used—“asserting his masculinity”—becomes apparent in the next scene, where the client is struggling to have sex with a bored-looking Chun-lan from behind. Finally, she curses and slaps him, then asks why he can’t perform. She asks how he can drink that much and still expect to get it up, and the camera shows him swaying by the wall without pants, mouth hanging open. She relates the two situations, saying that when he threw alcohol at her she lost face, but nobody is here to see his shame.

This introduction says quite a bit about her profession, and about *jiudian*. There are very expensive *jiudian* in Taiwan, but Chun-lan’s is probably one of the cheapest. As mentioned above, it is made of shipping containers, so in all the scenes without karaoke music, the footsteps of high heels can be heard clunking across the metal floors. The colorful lights decorating every possible space associate this place with cultural artifacts like red, betel nut stained teeth and blue work trucks—they are the kind of lights seen on older roads and the entrances to highways where girls sit in stands in bras and panties to sell betel nuts to men in trucks, vans, or on scooters.

These lights are seen everywhere, but less in cosmopolitan Taipei and more in rural areas. They are associated with kitsch.

The customers of the *jiudian* are mostly the middle-aged, overweight rural men (wearing the collared floral shirts) or the white shirted businessmen. Some of them have suits, and in the scene above the man talked about how much money he spent, but their suits are disheveled and they are out in the countryside. It is likely that they are employees, not bosses, and middle class, but not rich. One explanation, given by interviewees in Shu-ling and Bedford's 2010 study, is that these men are pushed around all day at work, so it feels good for them to go to a *jiudian* and be waited on by a hostess on whom they can take out their frustration. Chun-lan's appearance during the scene clearly signifies her status. Her wig, heavy makeup, and nails denote her as an object of the gaze—and the customer interprets himself as the one that gazes, the one that has power over her, which he interprets to mean he can possess her sexually as well as visually. Since serving the customer is her job, the power dynamic enforces this and leaves her with no recourse when he makes her lose face. Her way of trying to change this dynamic is a resistance in-kind—by slapping him (an aggression against his body since he was asserting power over hers) and by pointing out the contradiction that he assumed a masculine role with her and then failed to perform sexually. Just as her husband's masculinity proved to be impotent, ending in the death of her son, this client's masculinity is literally impotent when trying to hold the conflicting expectations of heavy drinking and sexual performance. Chun-lan's response here is, like in the conversation with her husband, to point out that she has fulfilled the expected role of the feminine only for masculinity to fail. She demonstrably understands the representatives of power attempting to control her and resists accordingly.

Whatever the motivations for this sequence, it reflects the working class through and

through. There is little if any upper-middle-class presence at Chun-lan's job, and quite a bit of representation from the lower classes. This may be a comment on the types of jobs available to immigrants from the mainland. The list for legally allowed jobs for "Foreign Workers" in Taiwan is quite long, but does not cover many professions:

1. Specialized or technical work;
2. Director/Manager/Executive of a business invested in or set up by overseas [*sic*] Chinese or foreigner(s) with the authorization of the Government of the Republic of China;
3. Teacher at the following schools, as indicated:
 - 1) Teacher at a public or registered private college/university or school established especially for foreign residents;
 - 2) Approved teacher teaching course(s) on foreign language(s) at a public or registered private high school or below;
 - 3) Teacher teaching course(s) at a public or registered private experimental high school's bilingual department or at bilingual school;
 4. Full-time teacher teaching course(s) on foreign language(s) at a short-term class registered for supplementary schooling in accordance with the Supplementary Education Act;
5. Sports coach and athlete;
6. Religious, artistic, and show business work;
7. Crew member of a merchant vessel, working vessel, and vessel ad hoc permitted by the Ministry of Transportation and Communication;
8. Marine fishing/netting work;
9. Household assistant;
10. Work designated by the Central Competent Authority in response to national major construction project(s) or economic/social development needs;
11. Other specialized work ad hoc approved by the Central Competent Authority due to the lack of such specialist in the domestic employment market and the business necessity to retain the service of such specialist therefor. (Employment Services Act 2006: Article 46, English translation by the Ministry of Labor)

Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on employing Taiwanese nationals first:

With respect to the employment of Foreign Worker(s) to engage in work as referred to in Subparagraphs 8 to 11 of Paragraph 1 of Article 46, Employer shall first make domestic recruitment with reasonable labor terms; only when such domestic recruitment cannot acquire sufficient number of employee(s) to satisfy his/her business needs may Employer apply for Permit to recruit Foreign Person(s) with a view to filling up such insufficiency. (Ibid: Article 47)

And:

For the purpose of protecting nationals' right to work, no employment of Foreign Worker may jeopardize nationals' opportunity in employment, their employment terms, economic development or social stability. (Ibid: Article 42)

These are only a few examples. The laws continue along these lines in quite a bit of detail, but the point should be made by now. To summarize, the laws require a business only in special need of foreign workers to hire them only in certain professions, to apply for a work permit first

(which is of course temporary), and there are even stipulations about notifying the correct labor unions, etc. By far, it is safe to say that in the environment of Taiwan, an English teacher would have the highest chance of finding a job. Outside of cram schools and other businesses with special needs for foreign labor, which regularly navigate these fairly opaque laws, the chances of businesses going through the trouble of hiring a foreign worker are low. A bride from the mainland obviously has no language to teach, so options are limited.

These laws are manifest in sociological studies as well. In an essay on the social exclusion of migrant brides, it was discovered that mainlanders fared better when integrating into Taiwanese society than those from Vietnam, but they did not prove to be very well incorporated into the workforce. For many of the examples, this was due to pressure from the family. This is another interesting manifestation of the new form of power based on location. Under martial law nationalism, there was an emphasis on family law as seen by Bai Mei's story in Chapter 3. Now there is a rethinking of nationalism and locational power, and the remnants of family law are emerging in immigrant interactions. In the essay just mentioned, one bride got a job through a friend, but her husband tried to interfere. Another reported that no employers would hire her without a Taiwan ID (Chu and Sun 2010: 16-17). However, Chun-lan falls into neither of these categories. She is pressured by her husband to support the family, not the other way around, and she has a Taiwan ID. It could be that she began working at the *jiudian* before she attained citizenship, and this would explain why her son does not live with her, as well as the overwhelming conflict she faces when she is tasked with taking care of him. This is also backed up by the experienced way she handles herself at her job. Furthermore, it is a safe bet that one of the few places that would accept a worker under the table would be a *jiudian* constructed from shipping containers in the countryside. Since 2001, most migrant workers in Taiwan are female,

and factory jobs are disappearing while less formal jobs like caregivers are constantly in demand. These types of jobs have led to a steep rise in undocumented female workers, estimated to be over 20,000 women by the end of 2009 (although it is unclear whether these numbers include mainland Chinese women, which would raise the statistics even further) (Migrant Workers in Taiwan 2011: Images 3, 4, and 6). Other alternatives like a server in a restaurant, a convenience store worker, or other common jobs for women without an advanced education would require citizenship and would pay less. Sex work requires no citizenship.

The film also points out that even with citizenship, her problems are not automatically solved. She says so herself when she shows her ID card to the teacher and says she worked so hard to get it thinking it would bring a better life but it did not. Social analysis reflects this sentiment: “Chinese spouses face heightened scrutiny as they embark on the immigration and naturalization process, and this intensified regulatory gaze persists even after they become Taiwan citizens” (Friedman 2010: 75). According to Friedman, this is because these migrant marriages are themselves an embodiment of tense cross-strait relations. This is shown by their “exceptional” citizenship status—even after they are full citizens, women face a ten-year bar on civil service employment and limitations on sponsoring dependents from China (Friedman 2010: 76). This is a remnant of the fact that Taiwan as a nation itself, and therefore its identity, was formed around the idea that the KMT would retake the mainland. Everything since then, from Taiwan losing its UN seat, to cross-strait tensions over Taiwan’s first elections, to the very recent Sunflower Student Movement over the cross-strait trade deal, are all present in immigration laws like the above mentioned by Friedman and in the symbol of migrant brides themselves. This not only further explains Chun-lan’s lack of employment options, but also carries the implied message that she is not a “real” citizen of Taiwan. If she had children in China, they would be

Chinese, not Taiwanese. On the reverse side, her own son born in Taiwan is even less “hers.” He is Taiwanese, and he is only living with her because his father died.

Chun-lan is not a unique case. Employment of Mainland Chinese brides is estimated to be a little less than 25%. About three quarters of those have high school education or below. Almost a quarter work in a rural area like Chun-lan, 56% have citizenship like she does, and around a third have a husband who does not have a full-time job, like hers (2003 Survey of Foreign and Mainland Spouses’ Life Status cited in Chuang and Lin: Tables 2 and 4). Two thirds of mainland brides work in services, like Chun-lan, with most of the other third working in industry (Chuang, Ning, and Lin 2010: Table 1). As mentioned above, analyzing these statistics has suggested that migrants’ employment has a lot to do with their family situation, such as the influence of their husband and whether they have children or not, and little to do with factors of human capital. In fact, higher education does not significantly correlate with employment among this group (Chuang, Ning, and Lin 2010).

If conclusions were extrapolated from this data, it would likely create a story very similar to Chun-lan’s. Her education is not mentioned in the film, and statistically it is not important. She has a job because her husband told her to get one. This trend and the data cited so far imply that migrant brides do not live their lives independently. Instead they are forced to react to immigration laws, their husbands, their in-laws, their children, their bosses, and their clients. This is the globalized manifestation of control over the commodity body object. This puts the earlier scene into context: her actions are limited to making the customer happy, to making her husband happy, to fulfilling the feminine role which is the only space she can occupy, and if she is lucky, to using that feminine role to point out the flaws in masculine actors. She is forced to bow to this pressure, but she displays the skills of a woman with experience and handles the

situation with the few options she has. Her job is both a product of and a metaphor for her situation. She is forced to do as her husband says, but like in her job, she is experienced—in the darkened scene where he confronts her, she never raises her voice and uses the resources she has been given to plead her case.

The child, Wen-hsiang, is the focus of the film, however, and his mother's situation is also used to illustrate his conflict. It is clear that with her few options, she could not be there for him as a mother no matter how hard she tried. This, therefore, is more than the director creating a character of a sex worker and saying, "See, she is a prostitute and prostitutes are bad so she can't be a mother." He is instead leading the viewer to see that socially she is in a position where she does not have the option to be the mother she wants to be. Even then, there is still hope. Again, her status has forced her to develop the skills of making her client happy and handling the tense situations of childlike drunks. She does this by joking and calming—"gentling" the client and trying to compromise with him. When the customer proves to be too drunk to get what he thinks he wants, she scolds him. These are, ironically, the qualities of a caring mother. A mother tries to make her children happy, to see her point-of-view, but when a child misbehaves a mother is strict. It is therefore not her character or morality holding her back, but her entanglement in a network of power. Furthermore, she is fulfilling her assigned feminine role as expected, and having the qualities of a mother are included in this. It is the contradictions she points out in masculinity which are holding her back from the role.

Chun-lan is actually described completely in the few short scenes described above. The majority of the film is devoted to her son, but her character embodies his entire conflict, making him the manifestation of the consequences of controlling the body commodity of women in this way. Wen-hsiang's future is uncertain because of this situation, partially explained by the "push-

pull” phenomenon brought on by globalization described in the first section of this chapter. To reiterate, Taiwan’s low fertility rate has caused a demand pull, and this explains the number of migrant caregivers in Taiwan. Another factor is that the rising wages of the Taiwanese cause them to see certain jobs as undesirable, creating a space for a migrant workforce (Lu 2000: 118). That all explains why his mother came to Taiwan, and reasons for why she has the job she does, but this simple economic reason does not fully explain the struggle of Wen-hsiang as a child. His conflict is the combination of this globalization and the historical genesis that the sex worker has described in the thesis thus far. His father is dead, and in a patrilineal society where his mother has an ambiguous role in Taiwan—where she as a mainlander is associated by law with the opposition of the mainland, where she has no choice but to take on a job with incompatible hours for raising a child—Wen-hsiang is isolated. His step-father’s animosity towards him compounds the problem, especially when it is revealed that he killed Wen-hsiang’s brother. When Wen-hsiang’s teacher asks him to look in a small mirror and draw a picture of himself in the end, the slow-motion close-up on his face shows his turmoil. Given this situation, where he has moved from poverty-stricken and isolated rural Taiwan to a new city and school, given the fact that he is surrounded by Taiwanese-speaking, temporary caretakers who scrap junk or steal for money on the one side, a step-father who works in a night market and a mother who speaks heavily accented Mandarin on the other, who is he really and what kind of self-portrait can he produce? What is his identity—a product of global Taiwan, a second-generation immigrant, a rural Taiwanese boy picking through the urban decay of the margins of global Taipei, all of the above, or something else entirely?

Mail-Order Brides from Vietnam: Commodities, Laws, and In-Laws

Given the complications of migrants from the mainland, it should be no surprise that a migrant from Vietnam faces her own set of problems. In Yin-Chuan Tsai's (蔡銀娟) *Stilt* (候鳥來的季節), Feng (Helen Thanh Dao) is a mail-order bride from Vietnam. While the category of mail-order bride is not automatically the same as "sex worker," the reasons for discussing her position should be clear by now, even if Taiwanese definitions of the term are the only thing considered.

Aside from the beginning section of this chapter, one important reason to focus on this character is to highlight the question of why one working in a brothel or as a hostess is considered a sex worker by academics like Hwang and Bedford due to merely flirting for money, but a bride may not be. Particularly in one scene, Feng's mother-in-law accuses her of using all the money she is earning to send back to her family in Vietnam, and certainly her motivation is financial—she receives letters from her love in Vietnam throughout the film, so her motivation is not love. This highlights the economic motivations of banning prostitution because it interferes with the norm of marriage (as discussed above) over the excuse of morals (Au 2012) or systematic male violence (O'Neill 2001) often cited by feminists. In fact, this was the motivation from the beginning of KMT rule in Taiwan: "...prostitution was unavoidable as 'society has not reached the ideal stage whereby every man has a job and every woman has a husband'..." (Huang 2006: 240). This trend of economic motivations continued on for quite some time as well:

After a decade of outright banning of prostitution, the KMT government finally adopted the licensing policy, thus promulgating a regulation that prescribed the following four administrative procedures for local authorities:

- (1) rooting-out illicit prostitutes completely: illicit prostitutes, once arrested, should be checked for venereal diseases.
- (2) registering and managing: police were to be the authority in the matter of licensed brothels.
- (3) rescuing (those forced into prostitution) and guiding the licensed prostitutes to regain

respectability (by getting married).

(4) retaining and reforming: local governments should encourage the private sector to institute women's training/reform centres. (Huang 2006: 241)

And to reiterate, another reason is that it brings up the question which Ding Naifei (2007) explored, which is to what degree the history of concubines and wives have combined into the role of the modern wife in monogamy. This is a question of patriarchy (to use a term that I acknowledge is too broad and simplistic, but will suffice right now for brevity), which is explored by Tang and Wang (2011) as they ask how Vietnamese brides seek independence and empowerment in the Chinese patriarchal system. This has much to do with patrilineal society, which is where *Stilt* begins.

Feng is introduced by a landing plane followed by a scene of her and her husband, Xiong (Zhuang Kai-Xun), looking nervous on the side of the road with luggage. To be completely correct, she is not introduced, because her name is only revealed when it is written on a red envelope by her brother-in-law to congratulate her marriage. In fact she does not even speak (except to say, "Thank you" to the offered red envelope) until more than halfway through the film as she earnestly tries to speak Chinese to her husband. So she is shown on the side of the road with a shy, nervous expression in a pure white dress. She is the image of demure innocence and obedience as she prays at her husband's father's shrine. The importance of filial piety, patrilineal society, and ancestor worship is emphasized not only from the fact that this is the very first thing she does upon arriving in Taiwan, but also by her traditional mother-in-law telling her in Taiwanese to pray to him every day. The mother sees that she does not understand and asks her son why she can't speak Mandarin if she has been taking classes, then accuses her of taking the tuition for herself. Her son points out that it takes time and she was speaking Taiwanese (not Mandarin), but the conflict is set up. Given that the context of this scene is centered on

patrilineal values, the mother is questioning how a Vietnamese woman can be part of her family.

The scenes described up until now are a clear equation of power structures constructed around location. One is the location of Vietnam in relation to Taiwan, signified by the landing jetliner. In the beginning section of this chapter, the stigmas discussed about the hygiene of migrant brides (specifically, that they are an AIDS risk), the weakness of their offspring, and their moral character are a clear indication of an imagined national superiority over other locations in Southeast Asia, and these are all parallel to beliefs about sex workers. This is reinforced by the previously discussed ideas of national moral superiority imported with the KMT Nationalist party. The other is the location of Taiwan as a source of cultural and ancestral power validity. This is established by the emphasis on patrilineality that has been discussed up until now, which is manifest in the ancestor worship of Taiwan. In the previous chapter, this ancestor worship is seen in *Days Looking at the Sea* when Bai Mei prays in front of her father's portrait, and the very similar scene here. This concept is also linked to location through Taiwanese traditions such as Tomb Sweeping Day. However, there is a slight split here in either the emphasis on Chinese culture as manifest in the legitimacy of *waishengren* drawing from locations in the mainland and in the legitimacy of *benshengren* drawing from locations in Taiwan (as discussed in Chapter 2). When the mother speaks Taiwanese, she signifies the *benshengren* emphasis on the location of Taiwan.

The importance of the family line is a common theme for the mother, who problematizes both of her sons' relationships with the question of filial piety juxtaposed against modernizing, globalizing Taiwan. The conflict and answers all begin and end with Feng. The mother, her son, and his new wife live together in south Taiwan where the land is sinking into the ocean, and their issues are revealed in metaphor when their house once again floods. Feng is sent to bring a ladle

to help scoop out the water, but she brings a broom, causing her mother-in-law to start complaining about her. She points out that the girl cannot communicate, cook, or clean, so she should at least get a part-time job and stay out of the way. Feng bringing a broom when she should have brought a ladle represents her perceived lack of ability to contribute to the family; she is the wrong tool for the job because she is a foreigner. Her husband Xiong's job extends the metaphor. He works in construction to raise houses on stilts to keep them away from the rising water, but as his mother points out, the work comes too seldom for him to earn enough money to do the job on their own house. He is literally incapable of supporting his household—a location symbolizing the heavily emphasized importance of family thus far—and his wife is not helping as she should.

In another scene, Xiong's mother lectures him about spending money, saying that his elder brother, Min (James Wen), pays for everything including Xiong's wife and her ring. He is emasculated by his lack of ability to provide as a man. This undermines his efforts to follow traditional ideals of manliness. He lives with his mother, speaks Taiwanese, smokes and drinks—all possible signifiers of masculinity through filial piety, the legitimacy of *benshengren* culture based on location, and toughness. But it is killing him. He has liver disease from alcoholism, following in the footsteps of his father who died of it, but when he tries to stop drinking his friend questions his manliness.

Min lacks the more traditional style of masculinity that Xiong possesses, despite his ability to provide for his family, and it also leads back to Feng. While Min sends money home to his family, he is distant from them and rarely speaks to his brother, making him a less than filial son. Besides this, he and his wife struggle to have a child. His lack as a man is expressed in literal terms when he goes to a fertility clinic. When he hands a vial of his semen to the nurse and

apologizes for how little there is, she says, blandly, “That will be fine.” The significance of this for Min is emphasized as he sits down uncomfortably in the waiting room several seats away from his wife, Ying (Bianca Bai). His lack as a man isolates him from his familial responsibility, which takes on a literal spatial manifestation. Min’s mother complains about their lack of a child over dinner, causing Xiong to mock how often she repeats this grievance, highlighting the familial pressure to continue a lineage. Min’s feeling of lack is also expressed through the metaphor of stilts, a type of bird, which he watches for a living in a wildlife reserve. He names a family of birds and becomes obsessed with the male bird, who constantly worries over his family.

However, Min’s wife faces most of the pressure from her mother-in-law. This can be seen not only in the mother’s complaining, but also in historical Taiwanese values. Several ethnographies detail this situation, but Margery Wolf’s *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (1972) specifically addresses this issue in a chapter appropriately named “Waiting.” While this ethnography is from the 70’s, from the time that in Chapter 3 was described as being ruled by “family law,” its explanations apply to this modern story not only because history has been layered on top of this foundation, but also because the nationalism which worked in terms of this family law in the past hold certain similarities to the re-emerging locational power shown in these films set in the present day. But of course, this film is also about the conflict of this traditional power construction and modern changes, making Wolf’s chapter relevant in yet another way. The opening words of the chapter carry a heavy message: “A Taiwanese marriage is not conceived of in terms of a man taking a wife, but of a family calling in a daughter-in-law, and every bride is well aware that pleasing her husband is the least of her concerns, that it is her mother-in-law’s face she must watch” (Wolf 1972: 142). Much of the chapter is focused on this relationship, because at that time in rural Taiwan a daughter-in-law would move into her

husband's house and she needed to do her part to cook, clean, and possibly bring an income. This situation also explains the struggle of Xiong and Feng closely, but even though Ying does not live with her mother-in-law, it applies to her as well. The crucial reason for this relationship traces back to the importance of continuing the family line—to bring a new son into the house.

Wolf explains this well:

For most families the first year after a new bride's arrival is one of peace; it is also one of waiting. The emphasis on fertility in the marriage rituals is not simply a survival from the old days. Most members of the senior generation still say quite frankly that the function of a daughter-in-law is to provide descendants. An enormous amount of money has been spent to bring in a girl capable of extending the family another generation, and any delay is certain to cause anxiety. (Wolf 1972: 147)

Ying's mother-in-law is certainly anxious, and Min feels inadequate because of it, but Ying faces the most pressure. This dynamic is expressed especially well in a scene where Ying says she wants to try in-vitro fertilization. Min would rather not face the problem, consistent with his fantasy of living through the life of the birds he watches instead of confronting his issues, and says they can live a carefree life or adopt. Ying gets emotional and shouts that she wants her own child. Otherwise, she will feel the weight of cultural pressures.

The link back to Feng is the director's answer to the conflict of traditional culture and modernity. The context of Feng's mother-in-law doubting her ability to be a part of the family is a deep part of this answer. As mentioned above, her situation parallels that of a sex worker partially because of the historical idea that prostitution and marriage are incompatible, though this is not necessarily true of historical Taiwan—"Most prostitutes marry at some point in their lives, but quite often the union is neither a conventional marriage nor a stable one" (Wolf 1972: 205). Keeping in mind that Wolf is an American anthropologist carrying the stigmas of her own culture, the idea that this marriage may be "unconventional" deserves further explanation: "Parents in desperate need of an income might try for an uxorilocal marriage, but failing that, the only recourse is to have their daughters earn the most money possible, which almost inevitably

means working as a prostitute” (Ibid.: 207). In the described scenes above it can be seen that Feng’s mother-in-law suspects that she is this kind of daughter—she is married to support her family in Vietnam and not her husband’s family. However, in the end of the film Feng becomes pregnant. Her husband dies of his liver disease and she delivers the baby at the same time. It is then revealed that before he died, Xiong found out that Feng was in love with a man in Vietnam and told Min to send her back to Vietnam after his death. Feng does return to her country, and leaves her newborn girl to Min and Ying. The oldest son finally has a child of his own and in this way the family line has been passed on because of the crossing of borders. Therefore, as has been the repeating theme of every single film, the powerless sex worker has navigated the latticework of power and responded in kind using her body—this time even doing it effectively enough to solve each other character’s conflict with power.

This solution navigates the meaning of family, community, citizenship, and nation on the backdrop of patriarchy, which is not a unique struggle among Vietnamese migrant brides. An estimated 100,000 Vietnamese women had married Taiwanese men as of 2009 (Tang and Wang 2011: 430). “Some of these female immigrants have experienced unfulfilled expectations, differences in gender culture, domestic violence and divorce (Tang, Bélanger, & Wang, 2011)” (Tang and Wang 2011: 430). Another study specifically measured the distress levels of these brides: “Among the 203 participants, 6.4% had a high level of immigration distress; 91.1% had moderate distress; and 2.5% had minor distress. Higher mean scores were found for the loss, novelty and language accommodation subscales of the Demand of Immigration Specific Distress scale” (Yang, Wang, and Anderson 2010: 647). Feng is a new bride in Taiwan, her husband has trouble with money, and she soon finds a job but it does not bring much income. All of these factors were shown to be correlated with higher stress levels (Yang, Wang, and Anderson 2010).

So, seeing that Feng's situation is a real problem which many other migrant brides face, what are the options for them to deal with it?

Wang and Tang suggest that Vietnamese women can seek empowerment through employment, which is part of the way that Feng copes with the construction of patrilineal expectations. They also say, "More specifically, we contend that Taiwan's state intervention in the form of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and Taiwan's economic structure based on flexible small- and medium-sized enterprises are beneficial factors which have helped women leave unhappy marriages" (Wang and Tang 2011: 431). However, Feng's marriage is not necessarily unhappy, and it is certainly not abusive. Nevertheless, she faces conflict, and the authors of the above study address this as well,

According to the research of one of the co-authors of this paper more than 90% of the Vietnamese wives of Taiwanese men said they were satisfied with their marriage (Wang, 2001) [...] Women of different cultural and class backgrounds might have different expectations and behaviors in response to Taiwan's patriarchal family structure. While the experiences of immigrant Vietnamese women cannot be generalized, the social structures that they face are common to all immigrants to some degree. (Ibid: 431)

Stilt is one (fictional) example of those "different expectations and behaviors," but others should be explored.

Unfortunately, some of these problems are not easily solved by the empowerment method of getting a job, like Wang and Tang suggest. Their goal in this is to show that Vietnamese brides should not be seen as helpless victims. While the victimization of women (mail-order brides and sex workers especially) can be unhelpful at the very least, there also needs to be the realization that they do face a few concrete, somewhat homogenous, and unchanging problems which they can do little to solve on their own. For immigrants, these include (at least) the exclusion categories of economic, political, social relations, cultural, spatial, and welfare (Chu and Sun 2010: terms introduced on pages 13-14).

Notice how similar these exclusions are to the sex worker—for a start, as discussed in the

first section of this chapter, brides may be excluded by their family not allowing them to work. The example of Feng, like Chun-lan in the first chapter, is the opposite of this—her mother-in-law insists she find a job. However, there is one example interview from Chu and Sun that shows economic exclusion can be a real problem for Vietnamese brides: “It’s hard to find jobs because the boss wouldn’t want to hire me because I’m a foreign bride, or I’ll get lower pay while doing the same job Moreover, my mother-in-law is afraid that I’ll run away so she doesn’t want me to go out to work” (2011: 16). Here the bride is clearly reduced to commodity body object and the body is controlled according to location (her place is inside the home).

Since it takes a certain amount of time to get a Taiwan ID card, new migrant brides are not allowed to vote, and are thus politically excluded, showing political locational legitimacy. This is not portrayed in *Stilt*, but it is still important to note for two interesting reasons. The first is that this is another example where women cannot be empowered by finding a job. In fact, one informant reported that she did not have time to participate politically because she and her husband worked too much. The other reason is that, according to Chu and Sun, Taiwanese laws actually make it so citizenship takes longer to obtain for mainland brides than for Vietnamese brides. While mainlanders have the advantage linguistically and culturally when trying to integrate into society, they have a disadvantage politically (2011: 17-18).

Exclusion from social relations, on the other hand, is a larger issue for Vietnamese brides. It can be seen from Margery Wolf’s ethnographies that, historically, social networks are intertwined with the family in Taiwan. On this topic she says, “Unless she is so fortunate as to have relatives of her own in the village, her first acquaintances among the village women are relatives or friends of her husband’s mother or sisters-in-law,” and, “In the past, when a mother-in-law’s authority over her daughter-in-law was more complete, village opinion was a powerful

force for justice” (Wolf 1972: 146). In other parts of the book, she details the pitiful situation of the few new brides who have not managed to make any friends in the community. While this ethnography is speaking about the past, it was the recent past. In a modern, globalizing world people move with the flows of their jobs and meet new people rather than staying in one village. However, a new Vietnamese bride is analogous to this past situation. She is new to the village of Taiwan, and she is introduced to society by her family, and is thus locationally controllable by them. This can be seen in *Stilt*, where Feng does not talk to anybody, because she cannot speak their language. Her only friend becomes a fellow Vietnamese server at her work, and her situation is otherwise utterly lonely. Part of this is her mother-in-law’s rejection of her, and it can be seen in interviews that this is a powerful force: “My husband cares a lot about money ... if I spend more my husband’s money, he’ll argue with me. I live with my father-, mother-, brothers- and sisters-in-law after I got married and they all look down on me ... my parents-in-law and husband don’t let me go out to know new friends” [*sic*] (Chu and Sun 2010: 18).

Cultural exclusion is naturally tied to this, and *Stilt* focuses on the language barrier several times. The mother-in-law complains that the bride cannot understand from the very first scene she meets her, and many times thereafter, including the scene where she says that she is useless to the household. Her husband and brother-in-law also communicate to her exclusively through gestures. Min gives her the congratulatory red envelope by taking her hand and putting the envelope in it. Xiong gives her the wedding ring by holding it out to her, and when she shyly turns away, he too takes her hand and places the ring in her palm. Although they are trying to show that they care about and love her, they are also implicitly admitting that there is no way to genuinely communicate to her by only using gestures. Several interviews reveal the same problem in a real context: “About knowing words, I learn part of it from watching television and

I know how to write my own name, but I can't read and write too many words; I can also understand a little Taiwanese," and another, "I feel discrimination because I don't understand Chinese and Taiwanese and I can't read Chinese, so my husband and my mother-in-law thinks that they can't communicate with me." [sic] This does not only apply to relationships between husbands and their families, it also influences the raising of children: "No matter school work or talking, I don't teach my children and I don't want to teach because I'm afraid that I have accent while talking and so that my children's accent will be like me" [sic] (Chu and Sun 2010: 19).

Chu and Sun also briefly talk about spatial exclusion. This would mean either a bride not being able to live where she chose, or being excluded from certain spaces because of being an immigrant. Of course, they found that brides could not choose where they live, but this is a bit of a given. The question that should be asked there is to what degree *all* women in general are allowed to choose their space, or in other words how often a husband and his family dominate that decision. For Feng, she is of course stuck in her husband's sinking house. The "empowerment" of employment might change this situation for some, but it would depend on how easily they could transition to another job in another area and on having enough income to make a move. Chu and Sun did not find any examples of migrant brides who are excluded from certain spaces because of their nationality, but I would suggest that all of the other categories are tied to space and location—the latticework of power is just not so apparent.

Finally, welfare exclusion is both a product of the complicated path to citizenship combined with the qualifications for assistance. Chu and Sun give an example of a bride who cannot see well out one of her eyes, but still did not qualify for disability assistance (2010: 20). However, this is not because of her immigrant status, but because of the strict regulations on welfare in Taiwan—for everybody. Nevertheless, one does not qualify for national health

insurance without an ID card. One bride in Chu and Sun's study did not qualify for health insurance during her pregnancy with her first child (2010: 20). In *Stilt*, Feng has a child as well. The movie does not mention her insurance situation, but it would be safe to assume Min paid for the pregnancy as he did everything else. Then, the child became his own, raising the point that a child can belong to Taiwan but be overlooked by the government's social safety network, based on the legitimacy of location (which is similar to the ambiguous situation of Chun-lan's child in the previous section).

It is clear that the types of exclusion Feng faced in the film were not unique to this fiction, but were a very real consideration of societal questions. Most of this exclusion came from her mother-in-law, a very important figure in Taiwanese society, and intertwined with patrilineal society. Her exclusion of Feng was rooted in the bride's situation—she was bought from another country, her presence was due to money, and her mother-in-law was suspicious that Feng's motives were only to get more money—she was a commodity body object. This, again, reverberates with the message of Ding Naifei's paper on the wife in monogamy. The concubine was legally raised to the status of wife and the two were condensed into one, with a remainder of the status falling onto women outside of monogamy. For all carrying remnants of concubine status there are lingering stigmas of the “gold-digger” as well as the question (conscious or not) of to what degree marriage is a contract for monogamous sex. This leads straight to the question of the sex worker and the very beginning of this thesis. What is a sex worker? What are her motives; are they only for money? Is the globalized version of the legal courtesan from the past a version of the same woman that has evolved into the mail order bride? What does this mean for human trafficking vs. personal freedoms? Is a mail-order bride nothing more than a sex worker with a long-term contract? What about any other wife?

Conclusions: Taiwan as the Location of Legitimacy

Locational Power Influences for Immigrants

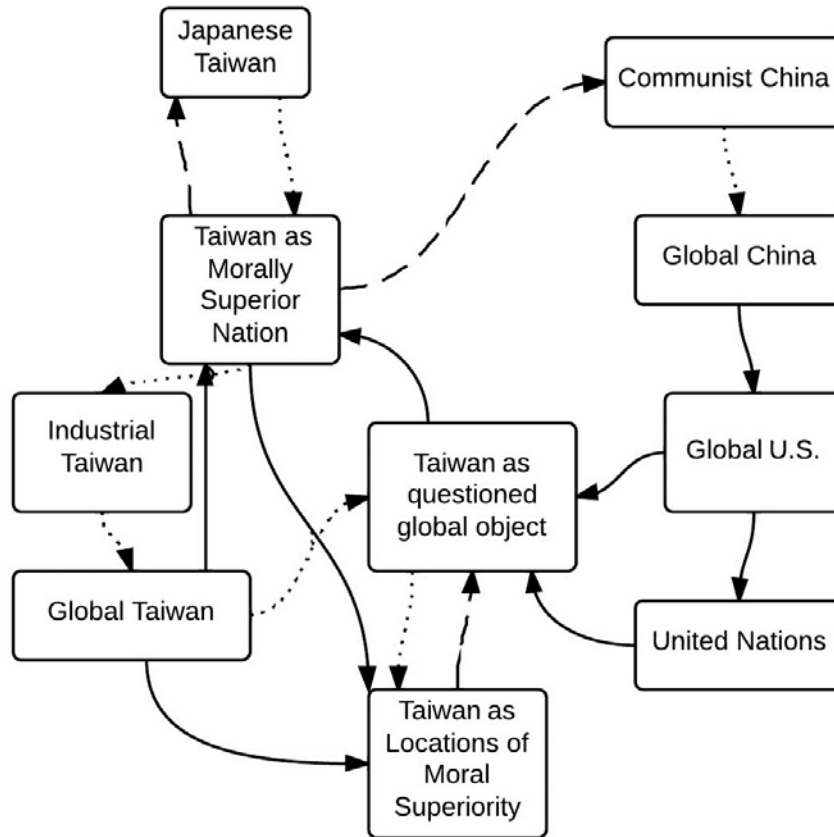


Figure 5: Simplified latticework of power influencing immigrants through changing conceptions of location.

As in the last chapter, the latticework maps will be broken down into locations, then concepts, then combined for a conclusion. The above map begins again with Japanese Taiwan, and while many characteristics of Taiwan during the Nationalist period are similar to the Japanese period, the Nationalist response was at the same time a resistance to Japanese Taiwan by being conceived of as morally superior. Therefore, Taiwan as Morally Superior Nation is both a semiosis and a resistance of Japanese Taiwan. Through external locations, however, Taiwan is

soon seen as questioned. Along this path, Taiwan transforms from industrial to global. With the economic success of questioned Taiwan, a resistance emerged. Influenced by the idea of a morally superior nation, smaller locations of moral superiority emerged within Taiwan.

Conceptual Power Influences for Immigrants

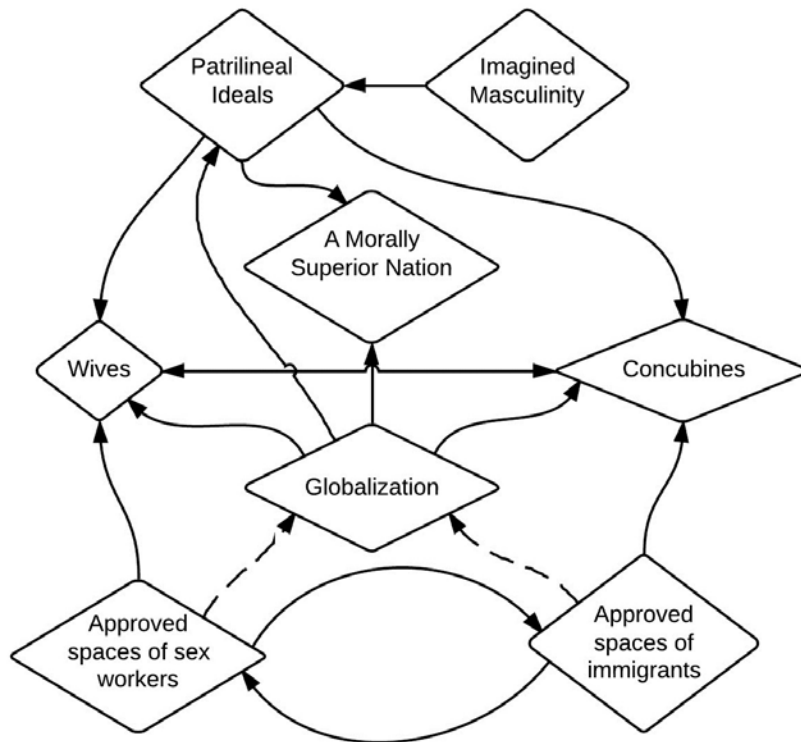


Figure 6: Simplified latticework of powerful concepts with influence over migrant brides.

This map of concepts begins with patrilineal ideals, which helped to shape the idea of a morally superior nation along with early concepts of wives and concubines. The concept of globalization soon changed all of these, however, by questioning Taiwan and by importing Western law governing marriage. The resistances to this questioning globalization take place through the idea of spaces where sex workers and immigrants are to be contained. These approved spaces then further shape modern concepts of wives and concubines.

taken over for this past idea. These laws are represented by the points of “Approved spaces of immigrants,” and “Approved spaces of sex workers.” Immigration law combined with the nationalist hygiene stigmas discussed at the beginning of this chapter form the former, and the revised (and again note the connotations of the name) Social Order Maintenance Act, allowing prostitution in certain areas, forms the latter.

These two concepts interact closely with the conceptions of “wives” and “concubines,” both of which form the subjectivities of Chun-lan and Feng. From the other side, imagined masculinity has an impact on both of these characters through the ways in which their husbands (and Chun-lan’s clients) believe they should act. Finally, patrilineal ideals as influenced in the modern day by globalization influence Chun-lan by calling into question her care for her son, and Feng through her mother-in-law who controls her family with traditional values.

In the case of Chun-lan, there is little resistance to the competing influences of locational legitimacy over her migrant status on one side and male violence on the other. She can only resist by exploiting flaws in violent masculinity on a case-by-case basis. This is why the diagram shows her son, Wen-xiang, almost disconnected at the margin of the image. He has no definite seat in the latticework in terms of resistance (his own or his mother’s on his behalf) or as object of power except to be pushed out by his stepfather.

In the case of Feng, the resistance to everything comes from her child. The baby satisfies the patrilineal ideals of the mother by continuing the family line, but challenges the concept of patrilineality itself by being a half-Vietnamese baby, thus using the influence of globalism as part of its resistance. It also resists the approved space of immigrants by being part of a Taiwanese line of descent. However, for this to be possible, Feng must leave Taiwan. Another reason for this is that her approved space for being a “sex worker” (here, again, sex worker is

“commodity body object” and her approved space is as a wife) no longer exists with the death of her husband.

Therefore, each migrant, while influenced by very similar sources of power in a general sense, faces completely unique challenges. A large part of it is their differing nationalities (language and cultural challenges for Feng and political challenges for Chun-lan), but the above diagram shows that this is not the only factor. Each of their stories is composed of a complex genesis of history, society, economics, and culture which leads to their individual subjectivity. One thing is clear: the current laws, national status, and films being produced reveal a picture of Taiwan which emphasizes location—specifically for immigrants. This is modern Taiwan, and only time will tell how she copes with her migrants.

Conclusion: Redefining the Grids, Redefining Power

To go back to the introduction of this thesis and Foucault, several grids of power have emerged throughout these chapters. While it is the goal of this thesis to redefine them, these grids are still useful—they isolate, regroup, and define similarities from differences. They empower the gaze and make the invisible visible.

For instance, a grid of external geography that has influence on Taiwan in this subject alone includes Qing China, Imperial Japan, Communist China, Anti-communist U.S., Consumer Japan, Modern China, China in general, and the UN. This grid is extremely useful for seeing, at a glance, the wide variety of different external factors shaping the subjectivity of the various sex workers in the films.

A grid of the different forms of Taiwan includes Taiwan as Object (historically), Nationalist Taiwan, Global Taiwan, Rural Taiwan, Urban Taiwan, Taiwan as questioned global object, and Taiwan as location of moral superiority. This grid demonstrates the constant evolution of the topology in which these films take place.

A grid of cultural conceptual influences includes Concubines, The Modern Girl, The New Life Movement, Industrialization, Globalization, Filial Piety, Patrilineality, Adoption, Ideals of Masculinity, Femininity, Tradition, Modernity, *Waishengren*, *Benshengren*, Approved Spaces of Immigrants, Approved Spaces of Sex Workers, Wives, etc. This grid is useful for pointing out that there is no single cause of the position of sex workers in society. And the grids continue on like this.

Any of these grids could also be reformed in different ways, including groupings of all locations, feminine and masculine actors, etc. and doing so would change the gaze with which this topic is examined. These grids are so useful (and unavoidable if the topic is to be seen in a

coherent way) because they make clear something which is not clear. However, they also reduce multidimensional society down to an x, y axis. This flat image has the disadvantage of flattening the characters themselves and synthesizing categories, clichés, and stereotypes. By defining these wide categories, they can be resisted, but they can also be used by power in an unhelpful way. That is why the latticework method of mapping was used here (however simplified it needed to be).

Through the latticework maps, it is revealed that 1911 May was not simply a victim of male objectification—she was the beginning of a complex semiosis that led to the present incarnation of May. Bai Mei was not simply a victim of sex slavery and an object of pity—she was a product of adoption and filial piety who used these forces to become the subject of the film, and furthermore she was part of the genesis for her urban version. Ning was not simply an abused object—she was a metaphor for the femininity of Mosquito’s own situation which allowed him to understand his own subjectivity. Chun-lan was not simply an inept mother because of her morals—she was an expression of the flaws in painting female immigrants with the same moral brush. And Feng was not simply a commodity—she was the answer to how traditional norms coping with a modern, global world can be answered.

The traditional taxonomy of society seems to be the classification of sex workers as one box in the grid, differentiated from other forms of women. The latticework of genealogy redefines this grid and its categories. In this thesis alone there is a courtesan, a rural prostitute in a brothel house, an urban brothel prostitute, a hostess, and a mail order bride. Each is completely different from the next, and not only because of the addition of history. The other axes of political economy and culture are also ever-present.

Aside from this, the grid can be shifted again to reveal that each woman’s subjectivity is

not entirely composed of her identity as a sex worker (if she even thinks of herself in that way at all). 1911 May is difficult to identify as anything else, as is Ning, because they exist entirely in their positions without any outside context from the directors. Still, May could define her subjectivity as caring for and loving Chen as well as an entertainer, and Ning could define herself as friend of Mosquito. Even with the very brief amount of time she spends on screen, Ning is mostly his friend and his source of comfort and seldom performs as a sex worker despite always being in a brothel. The other women much more clearly develop subjectivities completely disconnected from sex work. Bai Mei is a filial daughter and sister, a farmer, and eventually a mother. Chun-lan is an immigrant and a mother. Feng is an immigrant and wife, then eventually a mother.

The reclassification goes on—the three above that are classified as mothers are mothers in completely different ways. Bai Mei becomes a mother due to the traditional pressure of patrilineality, and it is her response to this pressure that is also her resistance due to her choice to do so without a man in her life. Chun-lan's status as mother serves to question her and point out the difficulty of cross-strait tensions. One of her sons is dead, victim of abuse by her husband, one of her sons does not belong to that husband and it is questioned whether he even belongs to her, and one is an infant with the same abusive husband and could be said to represent the compromise with abusive powers which she needs to make as a migrant bride. In contrast, Feng's child is a symbolic crossing of borders—a reconciliation with the question of whether an immigrant can continue a Taiwanese family line.

And again, Chun-lan and Feng are both migrant brides, but in completely different ways. They both marry to immigrate, but Chun-lan becomes a commodity body object more because of the job she gets after she crosses the border, where Feng begins her crossing as a commodity

body object. Chun-lan faces the unique challenge of cross-strait tensions, while Feng faces the challenge of language difference. Chun-lan faces an abusive husband struggling to be masculine, but Feng faces the problem of a critical mother-in-law. These characteristics break down the categories into mainland Chinese bride and Vietnamese mail-order bride, but even then their situations are due to the fact that they are unique individuals with differing circumstances and personalities.

In other words, the grids can be useful for some things, but they also continue on being redefined forever until eventually the individual is reached. That individual is part of a web of social, historical, and geographical influences that is completely unique from any other individual. These are the powers that are more accurately revealed by the latticework.

Taking Back the Body

A useful trend that can be found through the latticework, and visible in the maps, is the idea that by knowing which direction power is flowing, it can be resisted. There is only one map constructed in this thesis in which the arrows indicating power squeeze the character with no readily available outlet provided by the director. Ironically, that is the male character of Mosquito, and in the film it is an open question whether he can use the femininity Ning has pointed out within him to resist the machismo of gangster law (the film ends before any conclusion is made, but his feelings definitely swing toward this direction). But perhaps it is not so ironic after all that the only character in this position is a male, because the film is trying to draw a parallel between his situation as a gangster, with power pressing on all sides, and the position of femininity—specifically the sex worker—as being a situation socially squeezed by an intersection of powers. Aside from this situation, each film includes at least one opportunity for

resistance by each character through the use of her body.

For all of these other characters, the respective maps show one or more outlets. Furthermore, it is easy to see that they all respond to power in kind (a phrase which has now been repeated many times throughout these pages). For four of the five sex workers, however, their outlet is produced by their own body, but incarnated in the body of another. May needs to reach her modern form before she can resist the objectification of her original form. Ning needs to use her femininity to influence Mosquito. Feng needs to bear a child to transverse the border of Taiwan. And Bai Mei is slightly different, in that she transforms into a different version of herself in order to resist the multiple forms of power that pressured her before.

The only sex worker who remains a sex worker and resists power is Chun-lan. She does this by questioning the masculinity which her client and husband see as infallible, but which turns out to be flawed and capable of impotence. This actually might be the most realistic solution by any of the directors, because otherwise an implication develops that a sex worker cannot take control of her own commodity body object while retaining that same body. On the other hand, these maps of the other films do reveal the important question of whether any version of Taiwan up until now allows for a sex worker to control her commodity body, or whether it is impossible.

The risk in this, as laid out at the beginning of this thesis, is not that this theorized impossibility could be true. It is that it could be interpreted as being completely explained by victimization. The visual complexity of the latticework maps alone counters this interpretation. Aside from this, perhaps a body does need to change in order to resist the powers acting upon it. In this case, labeling these situations as victimization is countered because in each of these examples the solution originated in the bodies of the women, regardless of where the final

manifestation ended up. Furthermore, if the trend of these films is extrapolated, it appears that a modern, global Taiwan may allow for some different forms of resistance.

Shifting Centers of Power

The three latticework maps included in the above chapters differ from each other quite a bit (the maps are also included in Appendix 1 below for quick reference). Even when two films are placed together on one map, their connections occur across fairly wide concepts (such as patrilineality or ideals of masculinity). The simplest explanation for their disparity is that the maps are analyzing different films. But a more complex answer involves the reasons why the films differ in the first place, which is because of the directors' unique identifications of centers of power, and the placement of these in their films according to what they feel (consciously or not) most impacts their subjects. That is what has been explained in the previous chapters through the genealogy of each of the films, but the effect of this analysis solidifies if the latticework maps are examined together. What is revealed is a shifting of the centers of power depending on time, social position, culture, and the individuals themselves.

The centers of power can be examined beginning with representatives of that power. Many of these representatives are predictably male, but it is telling that not all of them are. In *Three Times*, the male representative, or more appropriately the index of power, is Chen throughout the three periods. He becomes an index of power by taking on the traditionally male possessive gaze. However, this form of power seems completely unintentional on his part—he is merely a representative of power, not the source of it. In each of the three times, he too is an object—of the Japanese Empire in 1911, of the nationalist government in 1966, and of the global, liberalized economy in 2005, and these powers interpellate him into the role of a gazing male

searching for an object of his gaze. In this way, he is not as powerful as the other representatives of power in this film because his role and his subjectivity are dictated by other centers of power. He is simply “a man” because he is “supposed to be” throughout the three periods, consistently, and this is a major contributing factor to the semiosis of the subjectivity of May as “a woman,” and through the extension of her analogy, of the subjectivities of Taiwanese people under the same powers during these three times. The other directors discussed in this thesis do not expressly include this form of power, this “being a gazing male,” but rather position their representatives as channeling other conceptual sources of power. The power in *Three Times*, for the most part, occurs in this linking of a consistent factor—Chen—to all three times to form what the writer and director see as the common ground that connects May to past women.

In *Three Times*, the representatives similar to those in the other films are the two females—the brothel madame and May’s girlfriend. Both possess her in a more literal sense and the madame’s role is partially to solidify the analogy between the ownership of May and Japan’s ownership of Taiwan as a commodity. In a very literal way, the madame also represents, personally to May, the only alternative to the oppressive situation of marriage, and in a larger sense she is the middle-man market representative of the state control of economics. In *Days Looking at the Sea* and *Monga*, there are also madames, but they have been left off of the latticework map both for the sake of simplicity and because the discussion of *Three Times* covers their roles. To be exact, the madame in *Monga* is a stock character standing in for the role of owning Ning as a commodity (the middle-man between power and economy again, but this time outside of the juridical system), and in *Days Looking at the Sea* there are several brothel owners. The first is cruel, buying Bai Mei as a child and scolding her for not being willing to open her legs, the second is the shrewd saleswoman who parallels the madame in *Monga*, and the third is

an older lady who mothers Bai Mei and lets her go when she decides to leave. In this way, Bai Mei's first owner is on the latticework map in the form of the power of adoption combined with the representative of her (absent) father. Her third madame is merely a metaphorical expression of Bai Mei's successful resistance against the powers that formerly constricted her. The remaining madames who are absent from the map for *Monga* and *Days Looking at the Sea* are actually present in the map for *Three Times*. The message about power expressed by Hou's film is that sex workers are commodity body objects controlled by the juridical, political, and economic currents of their times, and that the forces that control those commodities create a semiosis. The madame is therefore a crucial part of that map. This semiosis is present in the other films; however the shifting powers which the directors explored are manifest in differing forms on their respective maps.

In *The Fourth Portrait*, these possessive actors are present as Chun-lan's husband and the client. However, the centers of power are shifted in this film in order to express flawed masculinity. Therefore, while Hou's focus is merely on the madame and May's girlfriend possessing her as an object, the map of *The Fourth Portrait* needs to include the conceptual source of the power being channeled by its representatives, which is in this case labeled as "Imagined Masculinity."

In *Stilt*, the representative of possessive power over Feng is her husband, Xiong. However, Xiong is essentially a conduit for the power of his mother, who in turn is channeling the concept of patrilineal ideals, which is a major center of power in the film. Still, the patrilineal ideals which Feng's mother-in-law is representing become so important to her only because of the conflicting power of globalization, represented by the metaphor of her house sinking into the ocean as Taiwan changes. Therefore, the traditional center of power in this film is struggling

against the modern one.

These two centers of power also struggle against each other in *Monga*, but their representatives, Boss Geta for tradition and Grey Wolf for modernity, also take on the ethnic powers of *benshengren* and *waishengren*, respectively. There is a similarity in the way that Boss Geta's tradition and the mother in *Stilt*'s tradition are a reaction to globalization. They are both interpreted as having their strength in a masculine power, and both have a racial aspect. These two characters pose a question about the legitimacy of outsiders and doubts as to whether they can be incorporated under the centers of power which they adhere to. However, they are also different because Boss Geta is focused on imagined masculinity, which he interprets as violent machismo, whereas Feng's mother-in-law maintains a focus on the perceived power of the family. In this way, Geta represents the substitute *bensheng* father of Taiwan, but Feng's mother-in-law represents Taiwan as the hostile matriarch for incoming migrants.

Relying solely on masculine concepts as sources of power fails for Boss Geta, for the objects of his influence, Monk and Mosquito, for Feng's mother-in-law, and for her son Xiong. However, patrilineal ideals are a powerful influence over Chun-lan, who is trying to be a legitimate mother, and are a successful tool of resistance for Bai Mei. At the same time, Boss Geta's form of masculinity in tradition provides an opportunity for Chun-lan to use femininity to point out the flaws of these uncompromising views and for Ning to demonstrate the power of femininity to compensate for masculine flaws, yet provides a challenge to Bai Mei when masculinity manifests in the tradition of adoption. *Stilt* is different still by combining adoption and modernity in the form of globalization to respond to tradition.

These widely different incarnations of what on the surface appears to be the same center of power (traditional masculinity) are products of the entirely different positions of the films. To

simplify it down to its constituent parts, the centers of power are pushed and pulled by the combination of history, imaginations of location, and economics. As time passes, culture morphs. Technologies change, allowing for locations to change. People become more mobile, less reliant on the past idea of a nuclear, rural family which once held so much power. As in Niu's metaphor, Boss Geta's spears and knives are surpassed by guns. Adoption changes forms and becomes a tool to form a new global family. Farmers become urbanites, and the way they make their living is tied up in a globalized, neo-liberal economy. A space for immigrants needs to be negotiated. Laws change, and spaces for wives, concubines, and sex workers need to be negotiated. At each point along this transformation, resistance necessarily changes forms.

May needs to resist having no ownership over herself, which was formed by the semiosis of her history, and it needs to take place on her body because that is what she is trying to take back, but she cannot do it through cosmetics and clothes as the Modern Girl did because possession by consumerism is a new force that she is confronted with. Her resistance is therefore to point out her lack with a Yen tattoo and by covering her mouth and eyes. Bai Mei lives in a world ruled by family rural traditions, so her resistance comes in the form of taking control of those traditions by taking control of her family. This would never work for Mosquito, who is faced with the failing of those traditions in an urban, globalizing world and therefore his resistance only has hope in incorporating some femininity. Chun-lan cannot combine masculinity and femininity because her space is overdetermined due to her status as a wife, an immigrant, and a sex worker. Her resistance needs to use this space—this overdetermined femininity—as a base to point out the failings of those forces which determine it. Feng cannot do the same because her different culture and language as Vietnamese means that her space as an immigrant is still an open question. Her resistance comes in the form of answering that question with a

Taiwanese-Vietnamese child. These latticework maps therefore overlap with certain, very broad concepts such as tradition and globalization, but the roles that these concepts play as centers of power are constantly in flux.

What Can Be Concluded, and What Cannot

The question of the sex worker is often represented as a problem of the structure of patriarchy, but this genealogy should have made it apparent that a giant asterisk needs to be put on the word patriarchy. What version of patriarchy? Where, in what time, what culture, what social class, and in what economy? There is therefore no moral prescription or sweeping legal remedy to the question of sex work, because sex workers are all unique, individual, and human. The vast number of possible dialectics surrounding how a sex worker is even defined, according to herself, the law, or anybody else, provides a variety of moral and ethical valences which complicate the discussion of sex work beyond reductionist statements.

With all of these variables, a sex worker can only examine power and respond to it in kind, because, “One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs...” (Foucault 1981: 58).

Appendix 1: Figures

The Semiosis of the Subjectivity of May

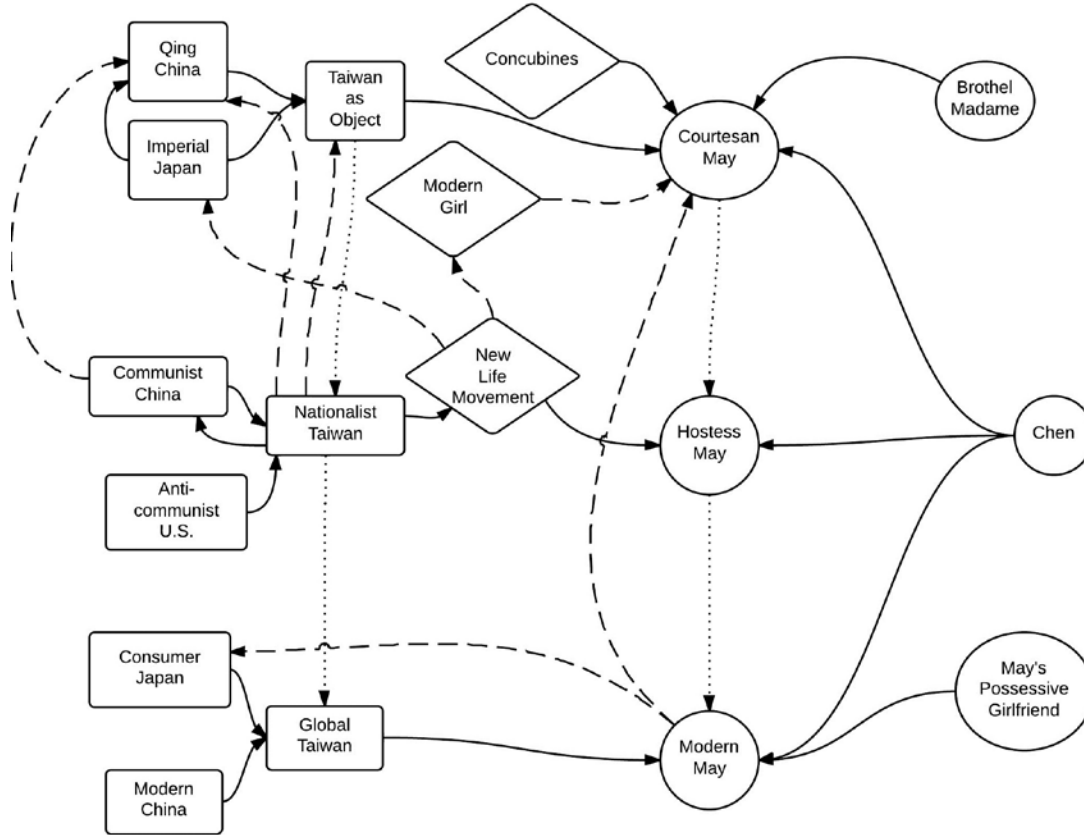


Figure 1: A simplified latticework revealing the powers which Hou established as shaping May's subjectivity.
 Solid arrows represent power influence, dashed arrows represent resistance to power, and dotted arrows represent semioses. Squares are locations, diamonds are concepts, and circles are individuals.

Locational Power Influences Forming Rural and Urban Taiwan

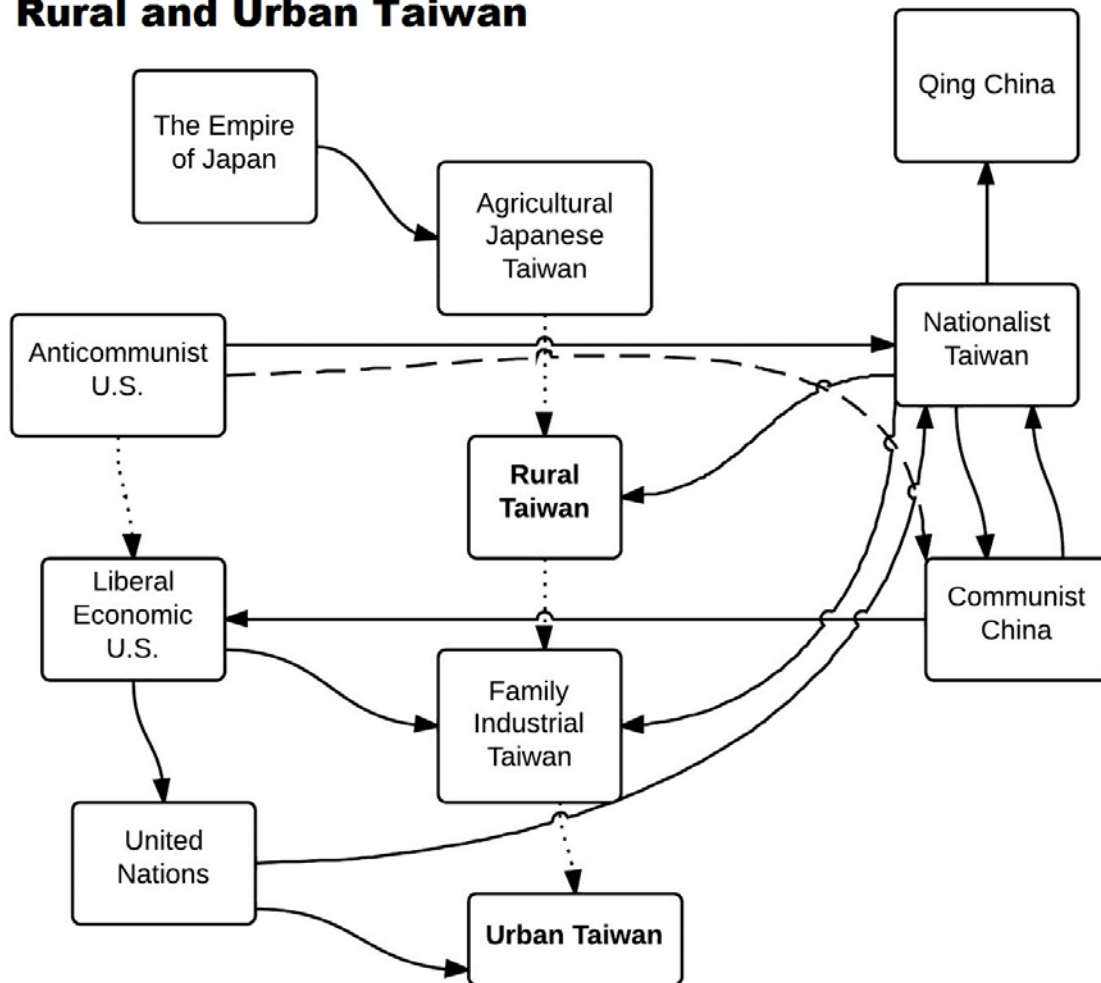


Figure 2: Simplified latticework of power constructions that formed the conceptual locations which took place during Taiwan's industrialization.

Conceptual Power Influences from Rural to Urban Taiwan

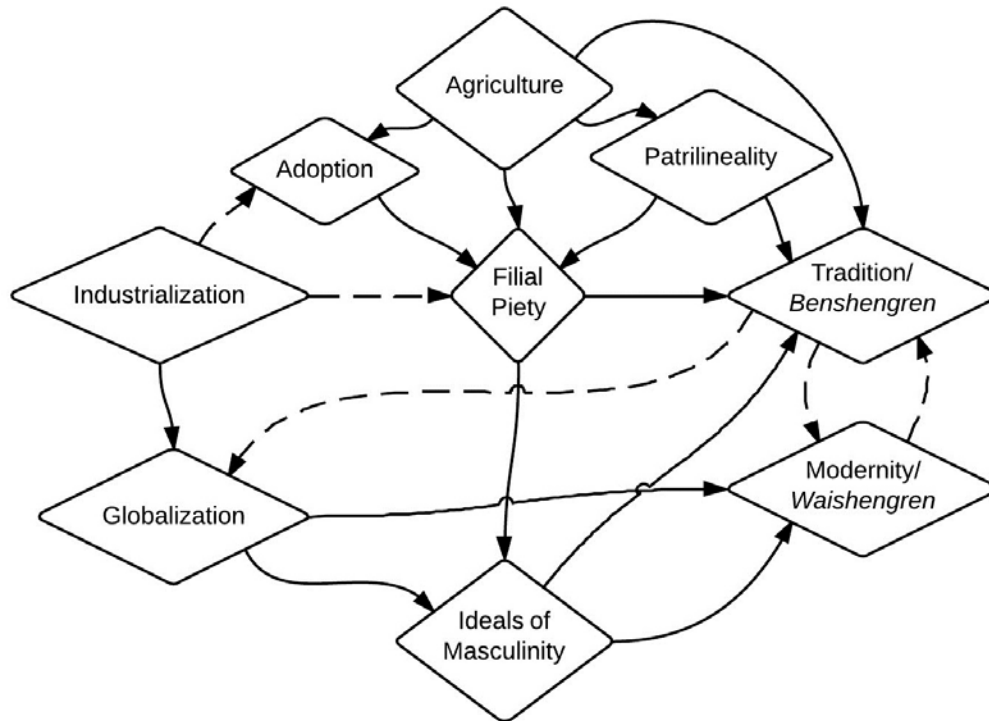


Figure 3: Simplified latticework of power constructions of concepts which shaped family law and gangster law.

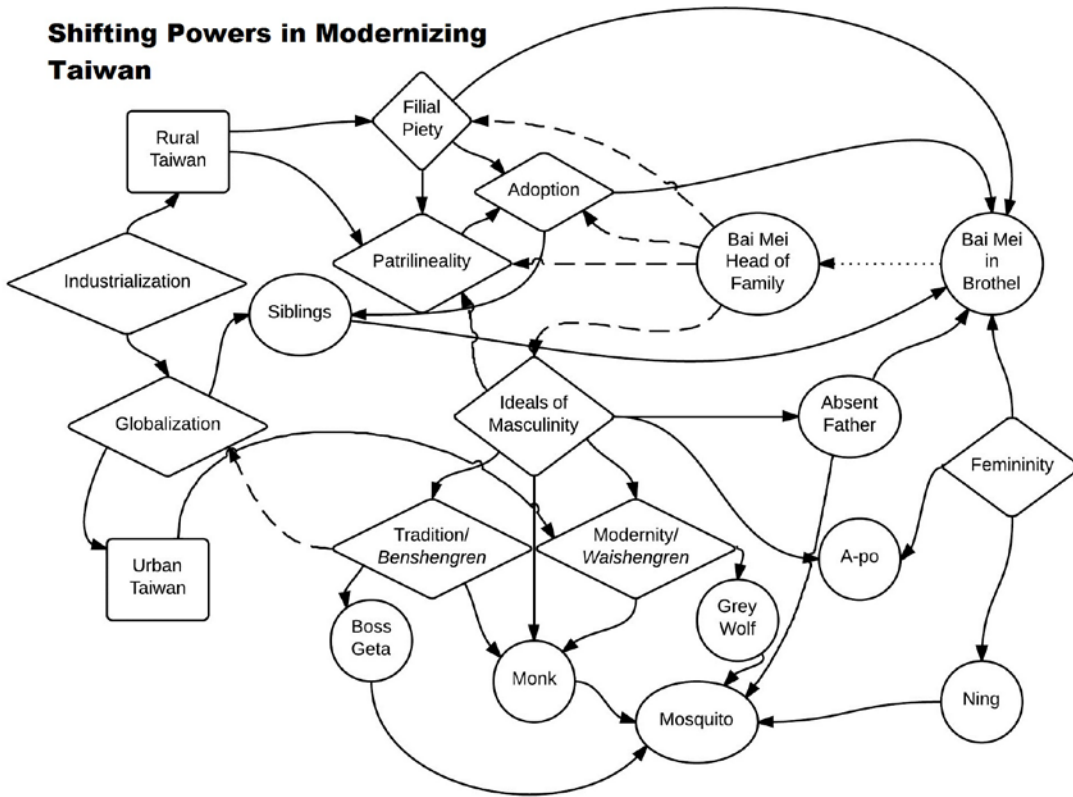


Figure 4: Simplified latticework of power constructions over the times of family law and gangster law. Solid arrows represent power influence, dashed arrows represent resistance to power, and dotted arrows represent semiosis. Squares are locations, diamonds are concepts, and circles are individuals.

Locational Power Influences for Immigrants

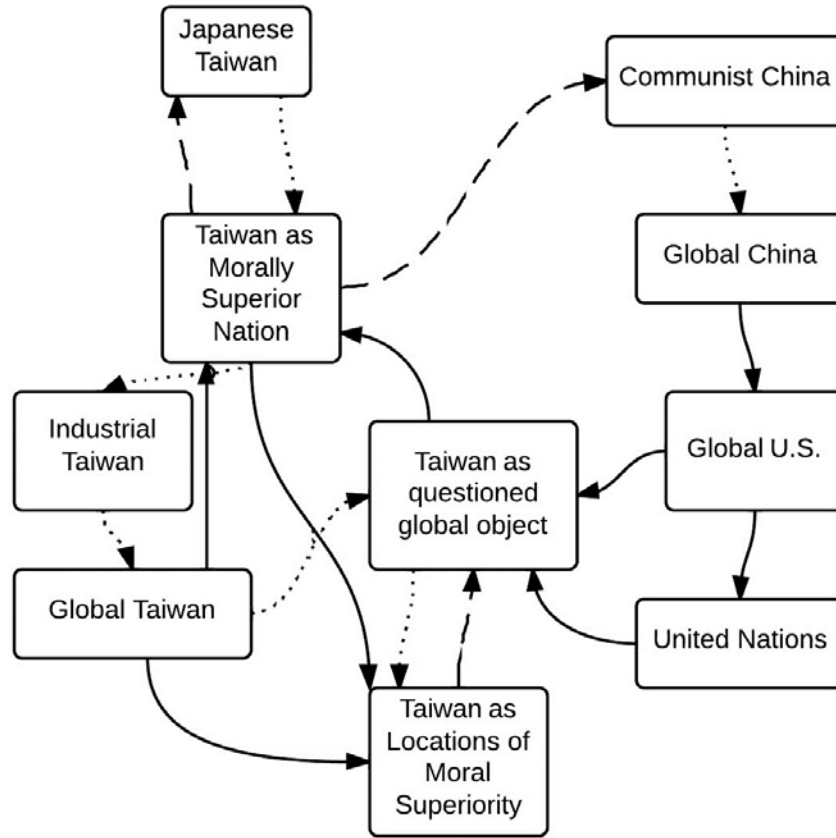


Figure 5: Simplified latticework of power influencing immigrants through changing conceptions of location.

Conceptual Power Influences for Immigrants

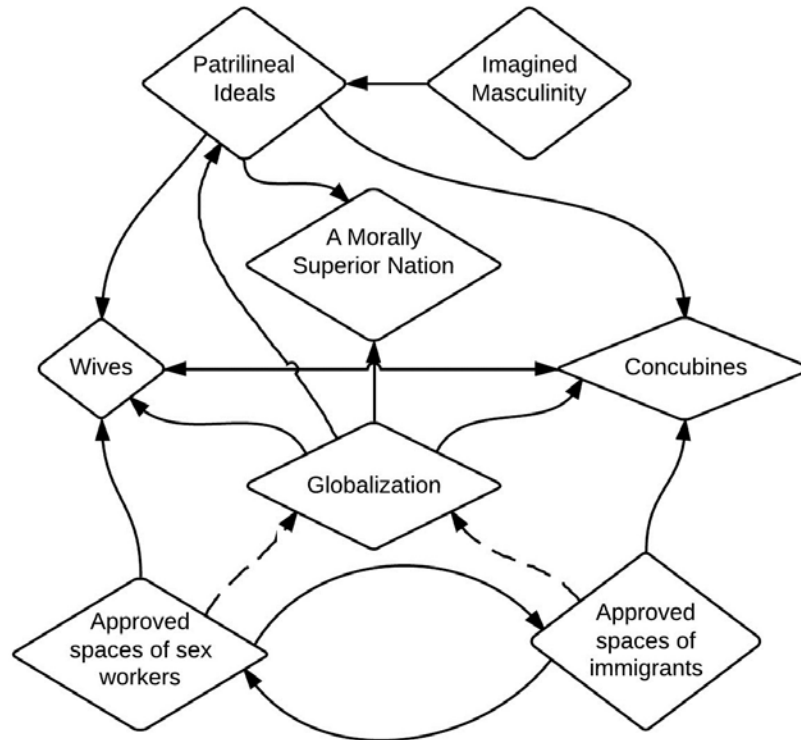


Figure 6: Simplified latticework of powerful concepts with influence over migrant brides.

Power Over Migrants Intertwined with Location

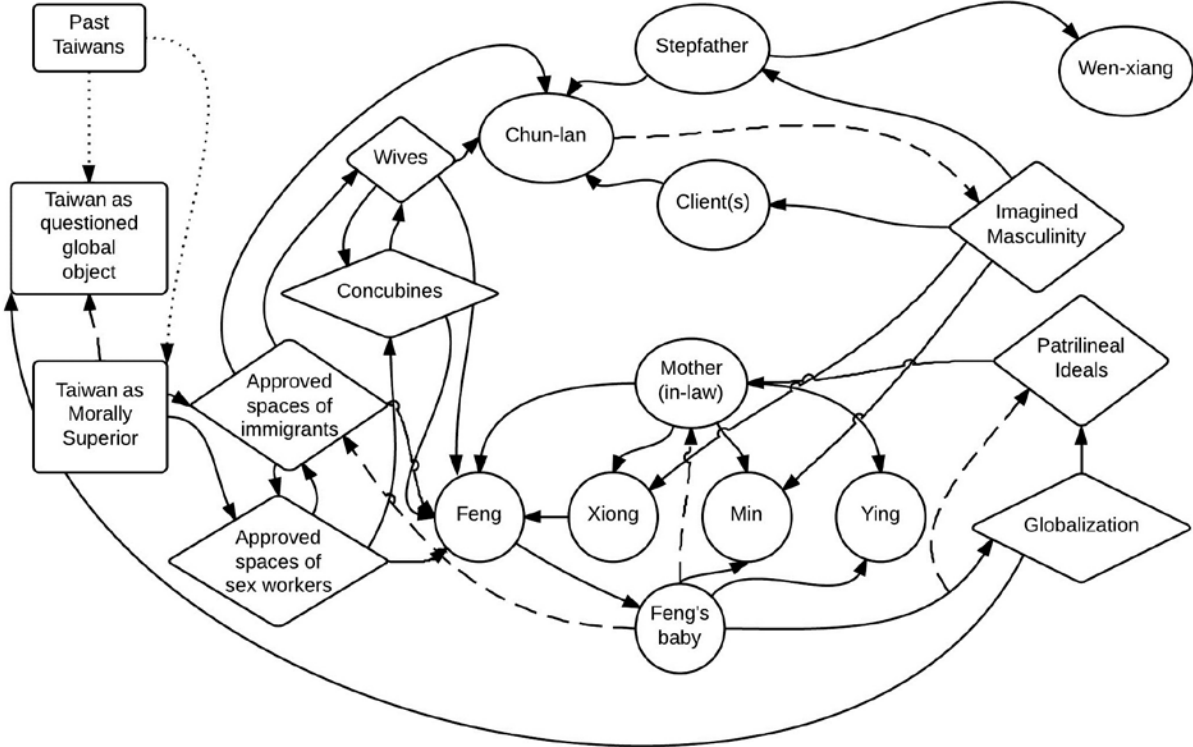


Figure 7: Simplified latticework of power controlling migrant brides through family representatives. Solid arrows represent power influence, dashed arrows represent resistance to power, and dotted arrows represent semiosis. Squares are locations, diamonds are concepts, and circles are individuals.

Appendix 2: Films Analyzed in this Thesis

Title: Three Times (最好的時光)

Director: Hou Hsiao-Hsien (侯孝賢)

Writer: Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Chu Tien-wen (朱天文)

Year: 2005

Setting: Kaohsiung, 1966; Dadaocheng, 1911; Taipei, 2005

Title: Days Looking at the Sea (看海的日子) (Flower in the Rainy Night)

Director: Tung Wang (王童)

Writer: Chunming Huang (黃春明)

Year: 1983

Setting: Yugang, late 1970's

Title: Monga (艋舺)

Director: Doze Niu (鈕承澤)

Writer: Tseng Li-ting (曾莉婷), Doze Niu

Year: 2010

Setting: Monga district, Taipei, 1986-87

Title: The Fourth Portrait (第四張畫)

Director: Chung Mong-Hong (鍾孟宏)

Writer: Chung Mong-Hong, Tu Hsiang-Wen

Year: 2010

Setting: North Taiwan, present day

Title: Stilt/My Dear Stilt (候鳥來的季節)

Director: Tsai Yin-Chuan (蔡銀娟), Isaac Li Zhi-Chiang (李志薈)

Writer: Tsai Yin-Chuan

Year: 2012

Setting: Taipei/South Taiwan, present day

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