

LIFE ON THE MOVE:  
WOMEN'S MIGRATION AND RE/MAKING HOME IN CONTEMPORARY  
CHINESE AND SINOPHONE LITERATURE AND FILM

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

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My dissertation examines the transformation of family and the reinvention of home from migrant women's perspectives as represented in contemporary Chinese and Sinophone literature and film. In the era of globalization, people are increasingly mobile both within and across borders, resulting in the reshaping of family structure and re-conceptualization of home. In this dissertation I contend that migration is closely related to family dynamics and that migration also facilitates women's agency in transforming family structure, navigating cultural differences, and negotiating with local societies and nation-states.

The Chinese concept of *jia* 家 can be translated into English as family, home or house, and "homeness" in the context of Chinese migration is particularly associated with a geographical origin, a dwelling, a settlement, or familial intimacy. In this regard, I argue that migration is a process which reflects tradition, modernity and transnationalism, yet it can move beyond the metanarrative of homeland and nationalism that is often promoted by patriarchal cultural producers. I treat home as a locally defined notion to offer an alternate understanding of women migrants' localization rather than focusing on the myth of return to the homeland.

Women's transgression of the boundaries of the household and their movement to other geographical locales transform their gendered role within the family, inciting their agency in opposing patriarchy and nationalism and creating space within which to negotiate the challenges of gender inequity, cultural difference, and marginalization. In contrast with the male-centered grand narrative featuring nostalgia for the homeland, I find that tales of women migrants show their protagonists eagerly adapting to their host countries and embracing local experiences. Hence, my dissertation focuses on the literary and cinematic representation of women migrants in contemporary Chinese and Sinophone literary works, documentaries and fictional films and explores four types of movement: immigration to North America, multiple transnational movements, cross-Strait migration from Taiwan to China, and new marriage-based immigration in Taiwan. Analysis of these works will improve understanding of the transnational flow of populations, the contested notion of home in migration, as well as the ways in which place-based literary and cultural productions are influenced by real-world migration.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

With the bed facing the casement and noctilucence shining through the chink, I feel comfortable and familiar, perceiving a “home” of my own in this dark house. Those decorations and furniture will be “rooted” after being settled for a while? That is life.

To me, turning off the light marks the moment of being at home.

- Y. Huang, *A Stop in Tokyo* (2014)

Each individual has his or her own way of perceiving and constructing the notion of home through physical and mental conceptualizations. Feeling at home can be an effect of a sense of security and belonging or it can result from relocation and migration. The concept of “homeness” is thus reinvented and mediated when individuals position themselves in the world in relation to others, whom they associate with familiarity and intimacy. Whereas the concept of “home” is mostly associated with stability and rootedness, the experience of migration challenges the concept’s fixity and generates the reconstruction of homeness as a fluid and recurring motif, which relies on one’s lived experience in a given time and space.

To understand the relation between homemaking and physical migration, my dissertation analyzes four types of migrations, which differently transform home and family structures as represented in contemporary Chinese and Sinophone literature and film. I argue that women migrants transform their gender role, moving from being

confined to the domestic sphere to being agents of homemaking in the new host land, and exercise agency through the site of home where they can get in contact with the world.

Women's migration narratives represent a shift from rootlessness to rootedness and the reconstruction of home is locally manipulated through the encounter and employment of social and cultural differences. Although Chinese migration has a long history and many literary and visual texts have been produced in response to migration, my dissertation pays special attention to current East Asian literary and cultural texts produced within the age of globalization and late capitalism in order to study the economically-oriented movements.

Home is the key trope of my project, and it is a term that is closely related to localization, intimacy, and economic development. Since the existing scholarship of diaspora and migration highlights the relation between home(lands) and national identity, my project in turn argues that home can be reconstructed as a fundamental familial space with which migrants can identify in addition to the formation of national and ethnic identities. Further, home is mediated for migrants who negotiate with the multiple cultures and local societies of their host lands. With regard to the connotations of *jia* 家, it is significant to explore how the notion of home is conceptualized through transnational migration and how women's movements influence their homemaking in new societies. At



the same time, the reconstruction of home accompanies subject and identity formation, and thus I will also investigate how women migrants carve out their senses of self through homemaking practices. In contrast to the image of home bound to homeland and nation, I propose that the locally-produced home can be seen as a unique approach associated with localization and adaptation. In other words, I intend to demonstrate that home can be reinvented through kinship and intimacy at the same time as it is socially and culturally defined by virtue of the cultural and historical differences in the host countries.

The complex configuration and diverse conceptualizations of home correspond to various forms of women's subjectivity, senses of self, and belonging. Border-crossing migration exemplifies the transgression beyond conventional boundaries and further generates women's agency in resisting patriarchal societies. Women's mobility in different geographical locales not only shows their resistance to patriarchy, subordination, marginalization and even capitalism, but also contributes to the possibilities of localization and adaptation. It is important to note that the last chapter of my dissertation will address Southeast Asian migrants who are not Han-Chinese. However, after marrying into a family that reflects cultural and social differences, these migrants are forced to take on responsibilities within the household, such as those associated with

reproduction and housework. This group of foreign spouses indeed provides an alternative angle from which to understand the transformation of familial structures and the notion of home in Chinese-speaking sites, in that most migrants learn to speak Mandarin in order to survive in their host country, Taiwan. In addition to the transformation of family structures, this group of foreign spouses also contributes to local Sinophone cultural production. Accordingly, I intend to build my project around women's migration and their lived experiences to investigate formations of feminine subjectivity and belonging in migration.

In addition to gender, class is another crucial element that profoundly affects subject formation, which in turn engenders diverse forms of agency within literary and filmic texts. In my dissertation, I explore women's migration in terms of class, with subjects ranging from upper-middle-class cosmopolitans to lower-class foreign spouses, in order to examine how local homemaking and identity formation are influenced by socio-economic status. Class is of importance in terms of contemporary migration, which is often generated by economic growth, late capitalism, and globalization. By comparing experiences of women within different classes, I intend to show the fact that women's gendered agency is associated with education, capital and class, which contribute to various forms of subjectivity and identity. On the other hand, class is highly associated

with literary and cultural production and often influences the medium of expression.

Middle-class women writers who have obtained higher education and cultural capital can delineate their lived experiences based on their geographical trajectories through writing and a number of other media. On the other hand, foreign spouses who cannot speak for themselves in public are represented mostly through visual media. This finding attests to the fact that documentary film serves as a tool for carving out underground stories from unheard subjects' perspectives, which literary representations may not be able to accomplish in the same way. I propose that literary works embody women writers' agency in representing their own experiences whereas filmmaking offers a platform on which voiceless female subjects can be filmed and represented. Through textual analysis and comparison between and among different genres, my dissertation seeks to demonstrate the distinct representational politics of migration in novels, prose, documentary, and feature films.

I will demonstrate how literary and cinematic texts represent issues of migration, homeness and identity formation. In other disciplines such as sociology, geography, and anthropology, scholars have offered rich insights concerning these issues. However, my dissertation pays special attention to the relation between physical migration and cultural production. In other words, I suggest that transnational migration is not only a

sociopolitical and global phenomenon, but also a contributor to literary and visual production. Exploring migration-oriented issues within contemporary Chinese and Sinophone literature and film is therefore the priority of my dissertation.

I examine four types of migration patterns: migration from China to North America, multiple boundary-crossings, cross-Strait migration from Taiwan to China, and marriage-based new immigration in Taiwan. The structure of my analysis reflects the migration patterns I analyze instead of the geographical locales in which works are produced. I highlight migrants' mobility and agency in practices of homemaking. In addition, I compare the literary works and films produced by PRC-based and Taiwan-based writers and filmmakers respectively to demonstrate differences in culture, ideology and representational politics.

### **Contextualizing Migration and Home**

My dissertation aims to examine women's migration and its influence on transforming family and (re)making of home and identity formation as represented in contemporary Chinese and Sinophone literature and film. In existing scholarship, migration tends to be regarded as an individual action undertaken for voluntary and involuntary reasons,<sup>1</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary reasons include searching for better life, studying abroad, business investment, and job demand.

home is closely tied to the notion of nostalgia, imaginations of homeland, and identity.

However, I contend that the movement of border-crossing encourages migrants to make a new home through transformation of family structures, employment, and a variety of cultural elements such as history, memory, and language. I also argue that representations of local homemaking problematize the concept of a singular root as related to origin, nation, and Chineseness in the transnational context, and aim to show that homemaking is a way of negotiating with host countries and cultural differences.

In Chinese accounts, the concept of *jia* 家 (family) is related to *guo* 國 (nation) and regarded as national allegory. The major theme in Chinese native soil literature 鄉土文學 of the 1920-'40s is revisiting native place for utopian imagination in response to the Western power. According to Ming-yan Lai's discussion of *xiangtu* 鄉土 nativism in China, Chinese intellectuals' construction of home in literary texts is in response to national projects and modernity. As Lai notes:

*Xiangtu* nativism's figuration of the native in terms of exploited labor mapped variably onto hierarchical oppositions between the nation and the West, and between the urban and the rural inserts questions of social justice and the value of a tradition moral order into the consideration of the meaning and ends of modernity,

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Involuntary reasons are political force, refugee status, and natural disasters.

challenging the Pacific Rim discourse's presumption of economic development as the indisputable yardstick and goal of modernity. (31)

For instance, Lu Xun's 鲁迅 and Shen Congwen's 沈從文 depictions of native place and home are bound to nostalgia and a sense of rootlessness for their lost native land, the *guxiang* 故鄉. Departing from home discourse, their writings show close connections between home and nation, and evoke national projects of modernity by reimagining native place. Prasenjit Duara notes that in Lu Xun's writing, "the local is where today's peasant and gentry mired in feudalism must become tomorrow's modern citizens" (25).

Furthermore, in Ba Jin's 巴金 *Jia* 家 (*Family* 1933), the Gao family symbolizes patriarchy and feudalism, and the home space is regarded as a cage that confines the protagonists' free love and revolutionary sentiment. These texts all demonstrate the symbols of family and home linked to the broader picture of nation and modernity.

In modern and contemporary Chinese literature regarding migration, the myths of homeland and nostalgia deeply inspire writers' imagination of the past and their attachment to the concept of origin. The notion of home for Bai Xian-yong's 白先勇 rootless generation<sup>2</sup> is associated with the image of lost or ideal homeland, nationalism and patriotism. In *Niuyueke* 紐約客 (*The New Yorker* 2007), Bai explicitly connects home

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<sup>2</sup> Here I refer to the second generation of mainlanders in Taiwan who retreated to Taiwan with their families after the end of the Chinese Civil war in 1949.

to the idea of a lost homeland after the Chinese Civil War, which results in mainlanders' retreat to Taiwan, and delineates the first and second generations' rootlessness. This male-centered grand narrative of home suggests a close relation between home and nation in modern Chinese literature. Moreover, the works of Sinophone<sup>3</sup> writers such as Bai Xian-yong, Zhang Xi-guo 張系國 and Liu Da-ren 劉大任 show the authors' passion and concern for modern Chinese history and politics but seldom address the local conditions and cultural encounters experienced in the host countries. In other words, the concept of home for these authors is tied to their origin nation, and they have undergone the process of identity crisis in terms of nationalism and patriotism. In this regard, if male writers outline the picture of the official history and politics in memory of the past, how do women migrants delineate their lived experiences after they migrate to another geographic locale? What does home mean to women migrants? What elements do they adopt and employ in building a new home? My answers to these questions centralize my dissertation in light of the interplay between women's migration and re/making home.

In my dissertation, notions of homeness are divided into four different types in terms of migratory patterns and representational politics. Chapter II lays out the shift from homeland to host land in early migration. Chapter III focuses on flexible home to

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<sup>3</sup> In my dissertation, I use Sinophone to categorize the work of migrant writers who live outside the geographical locale of the People's Republic of China.

highlight the multiple cultural elements employed in homemaking. In Chapter IV, the metaphor of home is associated with representational politics on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Finally, Chapter V demonstrates that homeness is defined through the multilingualism inherited from Taiwan New Cinema to construct Taiwan as a multicultural society. In my dissertation, the notion of home helps us reconsider women migrants' agency in response to social realities in their host countries.

### **Defining the Field and Terminology**

In contemporary Chinese literature, works written by overseas students and immigrants are categorized as exile literature by virtue of the content and writers' identities. In these texts, rootlessness and exile are two crucial themes that arise in response to involuntary factors of migration. Therefore, these writers express nostalgia and deep attachment to lost homelands in their writing. In *Diliuzhi shouzhǐ* 第六隻手指, Bai Xian-yong notes that second-generation mainlanders in Taiwan experience a sense of rootlessness because they cannot find their own place, which causes them to become the generation of exile (112-114). The writing of overseas life therefore shows a close tie between homeland and migration, and implies the binary between the center of the homeland and the periphery of the host land. Writing home refers to the imagination of



nation and homeland, and the male-dominated grand narrative of home regarded as national allegory concretizes the focus of homeland. Thus home, family, and nation are intertwined to shape the notion of *jia* in the context of modern Chinese literature.

However, I question if the concept of home is limited to imaginations of homeland and exilic consciousness. My dissertation's main focus is the ways in which spatial and affective meanings of home are locally redefined by women migrants in opposition to the grand narrative of homeland.

In the age of globalization, migration is closely related to cross-border movement and transnationalism, and the flow of populations also contributes to the reconfiguration of home as a metaphor in terms of an individual's lived experience. Many scholars have adopted discourses of diaspora in the study of Chinese people outside China under the domination of nationalism; discourses of diaspora also suggest the unified ideal utopia of Chinese people around the world. In other words, Chinese diasporas are seen as tightly connected to the homeland because they share similar race, ethnicity and kinship ties. Chineseness is another paradigm adopted to unify Chinese people as a whole in a utopian imagination. However, I propose that discourses of diaspora can be problematic in studying current place-based literary and cultural productions in various Chinese-speaking sites, such as Taiwan and Malaysia. The paradigm of diaspora attempts to co-opt

Han-Chinese people's cultural productions around the world as the works of a unified community and neglects the local differences in different geographical locations. Local differences should be taken into consideration because the historical and cultural backgrounds of the host country indeed influence immigrants' practices of localization.

Similarly, Shu-mei Shih challenges the discourse of diaspora, and claims that "diaspora has an end date. When the (im)migrants settle and become localized, many choose to end their state of diaspora by the second or third generation" ("Against Diaspora" 37).<sup>4</sup> Shih is correct in that the discourse of diaspora is not relevant in studying the second or later generations of immigrants, because the later generations may no longer feel attached to their ancestors' homelands. Furthermore, those who migrate more than once do not reside in a specific geographical locale and, more importantly, they do not seem to long to return to their homeland with an exilic consciousness. Aihwa Ong defines these migrants with the notion of flexible citizenship: "I use the term flexible citizenship to refer especially to the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family

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<sup>4</sup> For more reference, please see Shu-mei Shih, "Against Diaspora: The Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in Shih, Tsai, and Bernards' *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

relocation” (112). Flexible citizenship engenders mobility that should be considered in the discussion of localization. As a result, Shu-mei Shih proposes the concept of Sinophone to replace diaspora, and defines it as “a place-based, everyday practice and experience, and thus it is a historical formation that constantly undergoes transformation reflecting local needs and conditions” (*Visuality and Identity* 30). According to Shih’s definition, Sinophone is a linguistically-oriented term that incorporates all works produced in the Sinitic languages outside of the geographic boundaries of China. I incorporate Shu-mei Shih’s theoretical construction of Sinophone into my writing and find productivity in exploring local Sinophone production and articulation. Since language is the only standard for constructing the field of Sinophone literature, I am interested in examining how place-based production is practically operated through literary and film texts, as well as what other cultural elements are adopted in addition to language.

Furthermore, Sinophone offers an alternative approach in examining different definitions of home in terms of locales of residence, and one’s place of residence also generates heterogeneity in different Sinophone sites. Shu-mei Shih inspiringly defines the term Sinophone:

Sinophone studies allows us to rethink the relationship between roots and routes by considering the conceptions of roots as place-based rather than ancestral or routes as a more mobile conception of home-ness rather than wandering and homelessness [...] The place of residence can change—some people migrate more than once—but to consider that place as home may thus be the highest form of rootedness. Routes, than, can become roots. (“Against Diaspora” 38)

In this quote, Shih points out migrants’ mobility and their agency in homemaking. She draws our attention to the notion of home in migration studies as well as in the context of Chinese literature. In this regard, home is more than origin, nation, or homeland, but can rather function more productively in relation to the local. It is also central to migration in terms of both the sending and receiving countries, and opens a space for migrants to get in contact with the outside world.

Chinese and Sinophone are umbrella terms that categorize the literary and film texts I study particularly in terms of the writers and filmmakers’ identities. I will use the term *Chinese* to refer to those who are born and live in the People’s Republic of China; I regard their work as existing within the category of so-called “mainstream” Chinese literature and film. The term *Sinophone* is adopted to define those who have experienced migration outside the geographical boundaries of China, and yet still use Sinitic

languages in their everyday life. In addition to categorization, in Chapter V, which focuses on new immigrants and Taiwanese films, I use the term Sinophone to further demonstrate how Sinitic languages are appropriated to imagine a big family and construct Taiwan as a new home in order to unify new immigrants from Southeast Asia and China. The Sinophone in the case of Taiwan conveys more political implications and embodies new immigrants' struggle through language learning.

Nevertheless, there is little English-language scholarship addressing these writers and filmmakers. Texts by migrant writers are usually considered the realm of ethnic studies and Asian American studies.<sup>5</sup> One of the objectives in my dissertation is to examine writers who are of significance, in terms of aesthetics and crucial issues presented in their works, but have historically been neglected, such as Zhang Ling 張翎 and Chang Yuan 章緣. Since these writers have migrated to geographical locales outside of China, the categorization of these writers and their works is therefore problematic due to these writers' identities, language usage, content in their works, and publishing venue. As a result, the paradigm of the Sinophone with an emphasis on place-based production becomes one of the main theoretical frameworks in my dissertation. In this way, I intend

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<sup>5</sup> Sheng-mei Ma writes on Nieh Hualing in his book *Immigrant Subjectivities in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Literatures* (1998). Hsin-Sheng C. Kao in *Nativism Overseas* situates (1993) Nieh in the context of native soil literature and examines how her writing is in response to the rise of Taiwanese subjectivity from overseas.

to look at how different patterns of migration contribute to a variety of homemaking and local cultural productions.

In the first half of my dissertation, I focus on literary works; in the second portion, I analyze both documentary and feature films. Following the blossoming of Taiwanese New Cinema, the genre of Taiwanese New Documentary emerged in the 1980s, accompanying the aboriginal, women's, and workers' movements. According to Kuei-fen Chiu, "if New Cinema was informed by a bourgeois outlook, the new documentary was marked by its inclination to represent the marginalized and the suppressed" ("The Vision of Taiwan New Documentary" 19). Chiu further points out that the new documentary movement came with the purpose of "giving a voice to the voiceless" (19). More significantly, the rise of documentary is closely tied to social phenomena in both Taiwan and PRC. In *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement* edited by Chris Berry, Xinyu Lu and Lisa Rofel, the chapters examine how documentary film is a tool filmmakers use to criticize and comment on current social issues concerning rapid changes in postsocialist China. Accordingly, I attempt to investigate films that feature subordinated and voiceless groups to demonstrate how they represent various sociocultural phenomena in light of migration. More discussions on documentary and feature films will be provided in the later chapters.

## **Theorizing Home**

Home is a contested notion, which I conceptualize as a site of interpersonal interaction, subject formation, and relations of power. To fully theorize the trope of home, I first delve into how subjects conceive of and desire home. I adopt theoretical frameworks from migration studies and women's and gender studies to approach literary and film texts. By incorporating an interdisciplinary theorization of home in analyzing contemporary literary and cultural productions, I problematize the politically constructed notion of home as one that is always linked to nation, and look at how different patterns of migration embody "homeness" as a place-based production. I contend that Chinese women writers indeed make efforts to portray their local lived experiences and intertwine their narratives of home with cultural differences in order to construct place-based identities and subjectivities within the domestic sphere. Similarly, the filmmakers I analyze represent the otherwise voiceless subjects' migratory trajectories to show oppressed subjects' agency in making a new home. By comparing literary and film texts, I demonstrate multiple perspectives of migration and focus on how cultural producers transform the notion of home.

I use "homeness" to encompass migrants' sense of home, physical dwelling, and emotional conceptualizations of space. Home as a site of interpersonal interaction is

associated with kinship, marriage, and intimacy, and is fundamental to human existence and women's subject formation. Family is the primary social relationship in Chinese culture, and according to *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*The Doctrine of the Mean*), the formation of a subject is also affiliated with the five relationships: ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, and friends.<sup>6</sup> These relationships present common social hierarchies in Chinese society, some of which are based on gender, but they also imply the absence of women in most social relations. Women are bound to the inner space of the household, and their senses of self are defined within these familial spaces. It is noteworthy that to understand women's subjectivity, the familial space and kinship are the essential sites within the Chinese context. Furthermore, marriage plays a crucial role in defining female subjectivity, and women's movement from one household to another also engenders the transformation of subjectivity and identity. Needless to say, the household effectively defines women's roles within the family in the Chinese society.

Familial intimacy is another key element in the construction of home. Love is one of the essential emotions that shape human subjects' feeling toward home and family. In *Revolution of the Heart*, Haiyan Lee theorizes the notion of emotion in relation to the transformation of modernity and the construction of self in the Chinese context from the

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<sup>6</sup> The translation of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. Web. 27 April 2015.  
<[http://www.cnculture.net/ebook/jing/sishu/Zhongyong\\_En.html](http://www.cnculture.net/ebook/jing/sishu/Zhongyong_En.html)>



late imperial period to contemporary times. Through adopting Michel Foucault's genealogy theory and Raymond William's "structure of feeling," she conceptualizes Confucian, enlightenment, and revolutionary structures of feeling to contend that "the discourses of sentiment are not merely representations or expressions of inner emotions, but articulatory practices that participate in (re)defining the social order and (re)producing forms of self and sociality" (8). In Lee's account, love was socially constructed and is associated with tradition, the fate of the nation, the relationship between subjects, and social order in the early twentieth century. However, in the contemporary period, globalization and the rise of late capitalism commercialized the notion of intimacy.<sup>7</sup> As a result, I will examine the transformation of intimacy in relation to the reconstruction of home and argue that the reinvention of home is driven by women's economically influenced patterns of migration.

With reference to migration, my first inquiry concerns why and how migrants desire to remake a home and subsequently write about home after relocation. In this regard, I will draw on the notion of Sigmund Freud's uncanny (*unheimlich*), which is defined as an ambivalent sense of encountering something familiar yet frightening by virtue of its intimacy. As Freud notes, "the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, homelike, familiar;

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<sup>7</sup> See Michael Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978), and Anthony Giddens' *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992).

the prefix 'un' is the token of repression...uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition" (15). In this case, it is the emotional impulse that leads us to long for something that is familiar and known, somewhere called "home." The return and recurrence of familiarity and homelike space is driven by desire, and the subject longs for home because of the loss of it.

Homi Bhabha further develops Freud's notion of the uncanny and proposes the notion of "unhomely" to explain the state of migrants' sense of belonging and sense of home, especially for those who have been colonized, are people of color, and/or are from the Third World. Bhabha reminds us that "unhomely" does not mean the lack of home or possessing a home, but instead refers to the disruption between home and the world. In "The World and the Home," he writes that the unhomely "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (141). The in-betweenness in Bhabha's account ultimately points to an outcome of repression in that the home is not yours and the process of negotiation is ongoing. The narrative of home similarly marks a temporality of an "event" in history and "a moment of transit" (Bhabha

144), which reflects the in-betweenness of the individual and collective, personal and nation, colonizer and colonized, and home and host land. Writing home therefore helps us acquire a clearer understanding of the world; nevertheless, it is one that is never complete.

At the same time, the desire for remaking a home derives from the loss of a home, and is closely associated with nostalgia. Svetlana Boym in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* clearly defines the term “nostalgia”:

Nostalgia (from *nostos*—return home, and *algai*—longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure or a superimposition of the two images—of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface. (xiii-xiv)

Boym draws our attention to nostalgia as an affective longing for a sense of community and belonging through memory, and yet it also marks a moment of homecoming, whether it is physical or imaginary. Moreover, nostalgia evaluates the importance of time, in that “it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of

our dreams” (xv). With this regard, migration not only refers to relocation from one place to another, but it also transgresses the boundaries of time. It is nostalgic desire that engenders migrant subjects’ motivation in remaking a home in the host country.

With attention to what Avtah Brah calls a “homing desire” (16), migrants employ a system of knowledge to create a new home. Since migration suggests at least one movement from the native place to another geographical locale, the native place can be regarded as an original source of knowledge that migrants are able to adopt in building a new home in the host country. The second source of homemaking involves cultural differences in the host land that migrants acquire local knowledge through learning. These two sources are fundamental in that they are based on reality. However, one should consider the fact that emotion and desire, which are not based on knowledge per se, also drive migrants to remake a home. The interaction between knowledge and affective conceptualization contributes to the doubleness of homemaking in migration. The doubleness of the uncanny with spatial and temporal parallels reminds us that homemaking is always an ongoing process in that migrants desire a home that is familiar. At the same time, the new home can never be the same as the native/original home in that displacement and relocation hinder the possibility of duplication.

Furthermore, home and away are often regarded as trajectories, which are contradictory; however, globalization and the formation of flexible citizenship make it possible for people to make a new home locally. According to Shelly Mallet, “home is a virtual place, a repository for memories of the lived space. It locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space” (63). Sara Ahmed also argues that “there is always an encounter with strangeness at stake, even within the home: the home does not secure identity by expelling strangers, but requires those strangers to establish relations of proximity and distance within the home, and not just between home and away” (340).

Both of these scholars point out the notion that encounters with differences in time and space facilitate the reconstruction of home, and migration contributes to the possibility of making a home rather than destroying it. In contrast to the general definition of home as a place that is safe and stable, transnational families encounter local differences, which positively engender the fluidity and mobility of homeness.

The concept of homeness in cultural texts related to transnational migration emphasizes encounters with a variety of cultural differences, which are employed by migrants to create a new home. According to Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, the importance of transnational homes resides in their performativity and multiplicity:

In many ways, transnational homes are sites of memory and can be understood as performative spaces within which both personal and inherited connections to other remembered or imagined homes are embodied, enacted and reworked. Such connections reveal the broader intersections of home, memory, identity and belongings across transnational space, and are materialized through, for example, domestic architecture and design, décor, furnishings and other objects within the home, and through family relationships and domestic practices. (212)

Transnational homes are thus intersections, which embody multiple constructions of variegated cultural elements. In my dissertation, I address representations of transnational homeness in four dimensions: history, memory, language, and local cultures. These elements are interwoven in the literary and cinematic narratives of home to unveil migrants' desires, negotiations with the homeland and host country, and localization.

I argue that women migrants represent connection by virtue of domesticity and “its occurrence as a metaphor in feminist writings” (Martin and Mohanty 291). According to Bidy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, women, especially women of color, cannot assume “‘home’ within feminist communities as they have been constituted” (291), yet the notion of “home” is the product of struggle and negotiation. Along these lines, I will problematize the natural tie between women and home, in that women continually

remake conceptions of home through processes of construction and reinvention. For women, homemaking not only engenders agency, but also enables one's unique subject formation.

Interestingly, migrant women have fully put homemaking into practice by building up the connection with the local society of their host country. In her study of diasporic Irish women, Bronwen Walter points out the importance of women's homemaking:

Diasporic women are...placed in a paradoxical relationship to home. It can be a source of containment and fixity, rendering women invisible, and linking them to the mundane and routine. But it can also be the basis for challenging dominant cultures both outside and inside their own ethnic group. Issues of identity and belonging are thus raised for diasporic women by their relationships with home.

(197)

Walter identifies the necessity and importance of women migrants' homemaking, and proposes that it helps them to challenge the hierarchy of cultures between a host country and native land. Blunt and Dowling, moreover, further elaborate on women migrants' agency by arguing, "Rather than view diasporic homemaking as the reproduction of static notions of tradition and culture, it is important to think about the ways in which it is a dynamic and transformative process shaped by the mixing and reworking of traditions

and cultures” (215). Women’s homemaking thus does not involve the duplication of native culture, but more significantly, transforms and reinvents the meaning of home through employing cultural elements of both the native and host lands.

In her renowned work *Space, Place and Gender*, British geographer Doreen Massey clearly claims that “‘home’ as a site of indulgence in nostalgia” relies on a “very different concept and it is one which is very tied in with gender” (10). She proposes that space is the interplay between power and signification, and can be created and recreated in terms of power structure and gender differences. Home is thus a gendered space in which gender differences result in the diverse constructions of home, in that it defines gender role and engenders power relations. Furthermore, as bell hooks puts it,

Home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become. (1995:171-172)<sup>8</sup>

It is provocative that the meaning of home is reinvented in terms of difference, and the notion of home is no longer fixed and confined to the conventional social system. The

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<sup>8</sup> This citation is quoted from Doreen Massey’s book *Space, Place and Gender*.



construction of home also refers to subject formation; individuals identify with “home” at the same time that “home” shapes one’s sense of self.

Massey’s discussion of space and place is of significance in understanding that space refers to social interrelation through space-time contexts, whereas place is an articulation of those relations at a certain moment. It is noteworthy that the identities of a place are no longer fixed and singular but flexible and porous in terms of the continuously transformative relations and articulations that occur between subject and place. Massey has inspiringly claimed that identities are not defined through the fixed physical and geographical boundaries but are indeed constructed through transgression beyond the boundary. Hence, the identification of place is an ongoing process closely connected to social interrelation, human subjects, and time. With regard to gender and place, Massey further argues a strong association between the feminine and the local in the sense that women contribute more to local lives than men do through getting in contact with local residents in daily life and actively engaging in local societies. My textual analyses of literary and cinematic texts are built upon the above theoretical framework to argue that transformative representations of home are driven by women migrants’ longing for home and negotiations with multiple cultures as they construct various identities.

## Outline of Chapters

This dissertation is structured in terms of four migration patterns, including migration from China to North America, multiple transnational movements, cross-Strait migration from Taiwan to China, and new immigration in Taiwan. Since it is an interdisciplinary and cross-media study, the first two chapters focus on literary works and the second half pays special attention to documentary and feature films. Meanwhile, although I sometimes look at the authors' migratory experiences and the filmmakers' positions and interventions, this dissertation is primarily text-centered. Through textual analyses built around the transformative notion of home, I aim to unpack various representations of homeness in different contexts and demonstrate how women migrants are involved in local homemaking.

Chapter II focuses on representations of history and memory in Sinophone American and Canadian literature, with a focus on Zhang Ling's 張翎 (1957-) *Jinshan* 金山 (*Gold Mountain Blues* 2010) and Yan Geling's 嚴歌苓 (1958-) *Fusang* 扶桑 (*The Lost Daughter of Happiness* 1996). In existing scholarship on Asian American literature, representations of history are adopted in the formation of national identity, and home is usually regarded as a national allegory. I treat historical representations as formations of gendered subjectivity within family. In this chapter, I examine unofficial historical

narratives represented by Zhang and Yan to present the crucial issues in early immigration to North America. It is useful to investigate women's roles at the early stage of Chinese migration even though some women represented in the literary works I analyze did not physically migrate to North America. I argue that Zhang and Yan situate women in the context of early Chinese migration to point out the importance of Chinese women who are illustrated as either left-behind wives or prostitutes. Through the rhetoric of history and family genealogy in the novels, this chapter demonstrates the significant role of Chinese women within cross-Pacific families and the modification and subordination of women's bodies. Meanwhile, these two novels explicitly suggest that home is shifted from the homeland in China to the host countries, Canada and the United States, in order to investigate cultural encounters at the initial stage of migration.

Zhang Ling's *Gold Mountain Blues* is a significant epic narrative which addresses the one-hundred-year history of Chinese immigration into Canada and delineates five generations of Chinese immigrants' struggles and sacrifices within this historical context. This story explicitly indicates that women, represented as victims in the initial stage of Chinese migration, were left behind and had to serve as substitutes for their husbands by taking charge of the family. In analyzing *Gold Mountain Blues*, I argue that the construction of the Chinese family in the absence of men not only represents the

importance of women's roles within the cross-Pacific family, but also offers an alternative angle from which to understand the evolution of female subjectivity throughout the unofficial historical narrative which subverts the male-dominated grand narrative.

Yan Geling's representative work *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*<sup>9</sup> is built upon the historical narrative of discrimination and exclusion that took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, representing the marginalization of Chinese immigrants in the United States through a first-person narrator, who is a fifth-generation Chinese-American.

Although existing studies of this novel address the romantic and interracial relationships and the authentication of the Chinese female body, I choose to address the literary imagination of local homemaking. I find this story to be an early outline of localization, which was accomplished through cultural encounters with whites, discrimination and exclusion, and the reconstruction of home. This idea of home relies on the local sociocultural condition for the sake of constructing subjectivity and gendered identity.

In Chapter II, I contend that female-centered, unofficial historical narrative is not only national allegory, but also unveils a woman's real trajectories and everyday experiences.

The focus of the early Chinese migration to North America also demonstrated the chronological process of localization within a specific time-period, including the late

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<sup>9</sup> The Chinese version was published in 1996 by Taipei Linking Books. In this project, I quote the text from its English version translated by Cathy Silber in 2001.

nineteenth century to the present. The history and memories of this migration help to reconstruct local home life and rewrite family genealogy.

Chapter III explores multiple transnational movements as represented by Nieh Hualing 聶華苓 (1925-) and Chang Yuan 章緣 (1963-), and proposes the notion of a flexible home that is reconstructed with multiple cultures. Female migratory trajectories amid multiple locales allows for mobility in crossing borders as well as exploration of agency in transforming the perception of home through the use of many cultural elements from different geographical locales. In this chapter, I consider the lives of Nieh Hualing and Chang Yuan, who belong to two different generations. This comparison helps to illustrate that multiple transnational migrations bring about transformative reconstruction of the home in both a fluid and hybrid way, reinventing the concept by virtue of a specific time-period and geographical locale.

Nieh Hualing's autobiography *Sanbeizi* 三輩子 (*Three Lives* 2011) chronologically delineates Nieh's personal history in three stages, which are divided by the geographical locales in which she resides. Nieh, as a prominent Chinese writer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, experienced multiple border-crossings from China, to Taiwan and then to the United States, and *Three Lives* offers rich insight into these migrations as well as modern and contemporary Chinese history. Although feelings of exile and nostalgia dominate her

early works, such as *Mulberry and Peach* (1976), I suggest that *Three Lives* offers an alternative angle for interpreting the notion of home and homeland, as well as the process of relocation. I also argue that *Three Lives* can be regarded as a textual homecoming, where diverse connotations of home are reconfigured through personal memories and life experiences.

On the other hand, Chang Yuan's works represent more contemporary transnational migration which is generated by globalization and late capitalism. Chang Yuan, a new-generation Taiwanese writer, moved to the United States in the 1990s, then relocated to Beijing, and is now settled in the city of Shanghai. Her multiple relocations have had a great impact on her writing that exemplifies female migrants' connections to different locales and how they redefine the notion of home based on local conditions. While Nieh Hualing's transnational migration is necessary due to political turbulence, Chang Yuan is an example of a migrant with flexible citizenship, with economic and cultural capital that facilitate voluntary localization and adaptation within a given host country.

I will analyze Chang's prose collection *Dang Zhang Ailing de linju* 當張愛玲的鄰居 (*Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* 2008) to examining how local cultures influenced Chang's re-conceptualization of the definition of home. I propose that Chang's characterization of home moves beyond kinship and marriage through encounter with

cultural differences, and becomes socially and culturally constructed. On one hand, Chang's lived experiences of travelling across borders are manipulated by the global economy, and represent the experiences of middle-class migrants who have had better education and localize more easily. On the other hand, the representation of a flexible home in relation to female agency in creating that home is another approach to localization. The image of home is reinvented through material and cultural encounters. Moreover, it is a simulacrum, in that it is never the same as the origin home. Thus, Chang's writing shows that the transformation of the meaning of home shifts from stable to mobile and redefines itself through multiple transnational movements.

Nieh and Chang demonstrate that these variations in experience of transnational migrations are often due to generational differences, geographical trajectories and external social and historical backgrounds. Hence, this chapter presents the idea that home is place-based and regarded as part of a local production within the context of a female's multiple movements.

Chapter IV investigates the presentations of various Taiwanese businessmen's families in China, focusing on their wives' life experiences. Cross-strait migration between Taiwan and China<sup>10</sup> has become a crucial issue in the contemporary period, inspiring

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<sup>10</sup> Cross-Strait migration can refer to two directions of movement, including migration from China to

writers and filmmakers to pay attention to an issue that had rarely been examined. The emergence of Taiwanese businessmen and their respective enterprises in China began in the 1980s due to a blossoming of Taiwan's economy, as well as the creation of the open-door policy in China. An economically-oriented migration has often caused the separation of families, and the absence of men in a household increases a woman's burdens and concerns about marriage and family bonds. As a result, wives have often moved back and forth between Taiwan and China to maintain their families. Cross-Strait migration truly reflects the related issues of transnational families and the female migrant's struggles for the ideal, intimate family life. Along this line, Chapter IV highlights the trope of home as reinvented in a response to representational politics on both sides of the Taiwan strait, demonstrating how Taiwanese wives' roles are being transformed and how they are redefining home within this economically oriented migration.

PRC director Wang Jun's 王俊 *Taitai de wutai* 太太的舞台 (*A Wife's Stage* 2003),<sup>11</sup> is a documentary film that romanticizes Taiwanese businessmen's wives and their adaptation and identification in China. Its angle is largely related to government support,

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Taiwan (especially Chinese women who marry Taiwanese men) and the westward movement from Taiwan to China; this chapter centralizes its discussion on Taiwanese businesspersons and their families in China.

<sup>11</sup> This documentary film was broadcasted on television and the internet. The filmmaker Wang Jun serves as the vice director of the television department at the Jiangsu Television Station. See the introduction to Wang Jun. Web. 5 February 2015. <[http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_492ea41a010005b7.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_492ea41a010005b7.html)>



ensorship and political ideology. This documentary focuses on Suzhou, a locality to which many Taiwanese businessmen relocate their firms and families. I contend that the main interviewee's positive reactions to cross-strait migration and localization in this film are highlighted to glorify the advantages of relocating to China, and thus fulfill propagandistic purposes. As the interviewee states, she and her husband gave away all their furniture and sold their house in Taiwan to settle down in Suzhou. Their conceptualization of home is therefore built upon the concept of union of their family, whether it is in Taiwan or China. The positive tone of this documentary explicitly suggests that Taiwanese businessmen and their families who migrate to China will benefit from a better and happier life.

*Chang'e yueshi* 嫦娥月事 (*Chang'e's Monthly Visit* 2003) is the name of a documentary film directed by a Taiwanese director, Liao Jin-gui 廖錦桂. With a sociology background, Liao is dedicated to making films concerning social issues, so consequently this documentary focuses on four Taiwanese businessmen's wives in Guangdong, Beijing and Shanghai and their constant travels between Taiwan and China. These wives reluctantly migrate to China in order to reunite with their husbands and families. As a result, the representation of home becomes economically driven, but at the same time, is built upon marriage and familial intimacy. The wives' struggles reflect that

cross-strait migrations are closely tied to their families and homes. Their options are either to live alone in Taiwan with their children or to move to a new place to be with their husbands. I propose that they undergo a sense of rootlessness, yet their struggles are not a national/ethnic identity crisis but a crisis of familial intimacy. The global economy and late capitalism transform their conceptualizations of home. Thus, I am interested in investigating how the concept of home is reconstructed by the emergence of late capitalism in this film.

I juxtapose that these two documentary films produced by PRC and Taiwanese filmmakers respectively because they were created in order to show different experiences of localization and thus question one singular understanding of home in the context of cross-Strait migration. On one hand, global economy helps facilitate cross-Strait migration and leads to the separation of families. On the other hand, it does contribute to better economic lives for these families. However, the wives involved in the cross-Strait migration can become either victims or winners as the two films have shown us, and their continuing movement and eventual settlement truly generate the reinvention of the concept of home. Meanwhile, the filmmakers present two fairly typical types of Taiwanese wives' life experiences in China, and I contend that the cinematic

representation of home is highly driven by representational politics, the directors' positions and their selection of filmed subjects.

Chapter V elaborates on the creation of a group categorized as “xinyimin 新移民” (new immigrant) a term used in Taiwan for defining those migrants who come to Taiwan through marriage (mostly from Southeast Asia and China), and how this population has increasingly transformed the family structure within Taiwan. Marital migration from Southeast Asia has had crucial economic and sociocultural impacts on Taiwan. In this chapter, I will analyze a feature film series aimed at families with foreign spouses within Taiwan to calculate how they are involved in Sinophone cultural production and how the idea of home is created to reflect Taiwan as one big happy family with the new immigrants' participation.

Southeast Asian foreign spouses in Taiwan are regarded as members of a lower class since their places of origin are considered developing countries. The stereotyped impression of these new migrants is thus that they are oppressed and silent. However, their participation in the household through marriage indeed transforms the typical Taiwanese family structure. It is worth pointing out that most of these immigrants still keep close ties to their biological families and also provide financial support for them. Their sense of “double homeness,” as I will define in this chapter, is built upon the

connection between two families and two nations both economically and emotionally. I will point out discrepant meanings and connotations of two coexisting families/homes of Southeast Asian and Chinese migrants, and how they transform the family structure and construct their subjectivity in Taiwan.

In this chapter, a feature film series *Neiren/wairen xinyimin xilie dianying* 內人外人 新移民系列電影 (*We Are Family* 2012) will be analyzed to provide an understanding of how new immigrants are incorporated into the cultural production of Sinophone Taiwan. This series includes four films, *Yelianxiang* 野蓮香 (*My Little Honey Moon*), *Jinsun* 金孫 (*The Golden Child*), *Daibi de xingfu shenghuo* 黛比的幸福生活 (*The Happy Life of Debbie*) and *Jilin de yueguang* 吉林的月光 (*The Moonlight in Jilin*), which shed light on the localization of four female migrants from China, Indonesia, and Vietnam and their negotiations with local dissimilarities in Taiwan. Along with the textual analysis of *We Are Family*, I intend to point out the relationship between new immigrants and homemaking as represented in these films highlighting the emergence of the migration phenomena that have increasingly influenced place-based cultural production in Taiwan in regard to new immigrants' localization. Defining homeness is therefore of importance in understanding modernity and transnationalism, and in understanding the construction of Sinophone Taiwan which reflects different migratory experiences and local needs.

*The Moonlight in Jilin* tells a story of a Chinese medical school graduate, Bian Weiwei, who relocates to Taiwan via a counterfeit marriage in order to earn money to pay her mother's medical fees. Her nominal husband is a fugitive and only shows up once in the film. In Taiwan, Weiwei works in a massage parlor, exhibiting expert skills in acupuncture massage, and is assisted by her husband's subordinate, Zhou, who eventually falls in love with her. At the same time, Weiwei's friend travels to Taiwan for a visit and discovers Weiwei's miserable secret life. The friend's brother, Weiwei's former lover, then persuades Weiwei to return to China. At the end of the film, Weiwei waves farewell to her two Taiwanese companions at the airport and returns to China. By juxtaposing Taiwan and Weiwei's hometown of Jilin, the film romanticizes Weiwei's beautiful memories of her hometown, highlighting flashbacks to idyllic snowy scenes and a romantic relationship. On the other hand, the discrimination Weiwei experiences when interacting with Taiwanese characters, along with the oppressive heat of a summer in Taiwan reflects a Chinese spouse's marginalized status in Taiwan and leads to her departure at the end.

*My Little Honey Moon* features a Vietnamese spouse called Joan and her life in Meinung, Kaohsiung, where the majority of the population is Hakka and the economic activity is agriculturally based. In this story, Joan marries into a Hakka household that

includes a capable and conservative mother-in-law and an economically incompetent husband. She bears the burden of reproduction, and she endures accusations of being a gold-digger and of stealing property from her in-laws. These discriminatory behaviors eventually cause Joan to run away from home. By the conclusion of the film, Joan's husband engages in self-reflection and exerts effort to learn Vietnamese. His behavior recaptures Joan's heart and contributes to their reunion.

*The Golden Child* (which refers to a grandson) is set within a traditional family in a primitive agricultural village, in which the majority of the population speaks Taiwanese (Hokkien). The protagonist, Kimki from Vietnam, marries into Kam's family, and she is expected to give birth to a baby boy and keep the family line alive. However, she is initially unaware that Kam is linked to a middle-aged, divorced woman who has two children. She is obedient and silent within the household. Kimki is portrayed as an outsider from Vietnam but is regarded as an insider, as part of the family, as well. She never does give birth to a son, but instead adopts her sister's son to help pass on the Kam family name. A complete family becomes a happy family and yields a happy ending to the film.

*The Happy Life of Debbie* sheds light on a nuclear family with a Taiwanese husband named Lu, an Indonesian wife named Debbie, and Debbie's son, Han. Debbie moves to

Taiwan and works at a coffee farm just as she did in Indonesia. Her husband loses his job because of alcohol abuse and does nothing all day long. Therefore, Debbie has become the breadwinner in the family. Her son, Han is always scoffed at by his classmates because of his dark skin and his identity as a foreign bride's son. The melodramatic representation in *The Happy Life of Debbie* offers the audience a happy and positive interpretation of a new immigrants' life in Taiwan and a Taiwanese father's compromises and cultural negotiations with his wife and step-son.

This chapter argues that *We Are Family*, which dramatizes individual migratory trajectory and life experiences, offers audiences an alternative angle from which to understand new immigrants' stories and hear their voices. Unlike the stereotyped and oppressive images of new immigrants as silent and marginal, this entire movie series calls our attention to the reversal of gendered politics and patriarchy within new immigrant households. Women migrants play an important role in the transformation of family structure and the construction of local homeness, which is in relation to their gendered roles within domestic spheres. The cinematic representations therefore show us the possibility of women migrants' empowerment and agency through localization and homemaking in Taiwan.

In my dissertation, I seek to propose that the transformation of home and family is place-based in terms of local difference and time, and a woman's transnational migration contributes to the reconstruction of home and complicates the concept of a singular root which symbolizes homeland. First of all, the rhetoric of migratory history is appropriated in constructing a local home and forming a female's subjectivity within that home space and likewise, showing the barriers of localization. Secondly, multiple movements generate conversation and discussion in making the contested notion of home a continuously transformed one in need of local differences. Thirdly, economic-driven migration brings on the separation of family but also contributes to a locally produced home space, whether separate or united, in terms of familial intimacy and materiality. Lastly, although foreign spouses are often regarded as subordinate and voiceless, they are powerful in transforming the familial structure and connecting the two homes through their migratory experiences, and also through their participation in Sinophone articulation.



## CHAPTER II

### MOVING FROM HOMELAND TO HOST LAND:

#### REWRITING CHINESE IMMIGRATION HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICA

A group of emaciated Asians walked from wooden vessels anchored along the west coast of the United States. They had traveled from far away simply because they heard that this foreign land was embedded with gold. They had long pigtailed, wore leaf hats and carried their belongings on shoulder poles. Among them, there were occasionally one or two women with bound-feet. Obviously, this group of people was extremely different from mainstream American society. This is the specific circumstance I had created for Fusang, Chris, and Da Yong.

--Yan Geling, *Fusang* (ii)<sup>12</sup>

Yan Geling's description of Chinese immigrants as they first landed in America highlights "differences" in terms of physical appearance, dress and cultural practices—specifically long pigtailed and bound feet in this case. This is the very circumstance created by Yan Geling in her novels, and it is close to historical reality. The initial stage of Chinese immigration to North America occurred in the nineteenth century, and most Chinese immigrants were laborers working in the mining industry or transcontinental

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<sup>12</sup> The citation is translated from Yan Geling's preface "Mainstream and Margin" in the Chinese version of *Fusang* published in Taiwan, 1996.

railroad construction. Because of the high demand for manual labor for railway construction and land development, Chinese coolies imported from China were mostly male. For male Chinese immigrants, job opportunities in North America provided them an alternative approach to making a living for their families back in China. Over time, more and more Chinese men were willing to migrate to North America to fulfill economic demand. Eventually, discrimination and hostility toward Chinese immigrants led to the prohibition of Chinese immigration in 1882. As Andrea Louie writes, “Chinese Exclusion Laws (1882-1943), enacted by a U.S. government that wanted to control labor competition, shaped patterns of family formation by restricting the entry of most classes of Chinese women into the United States” (741). The Chinese Exclusion Act not only affected women’s migration, but more importantly, hindered Chinese men in North America from reuniting with family members living on the Chinese mainland. The exclusionary laws simultaneously brought about the formation of a bachelor society and the transformation of Chinese family structure in China and the United States.

Along with physical migration, the representation of Chinese coolies and male immigrants during the first-wave immigration (1820-1911) to North America can be seen in the works written by first-generation immigrant male writers in English, such as Lin

Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976) and Chin Yang Lee 黎錦陽 (1915-).<sup>13</sup> Both Lin and Lee shed light on western influence on Chinese traditional culture and values, and the spatial representation in their works is confined to Chinatown rather than America at large. More significantly, they foreground Chinese male immigrants' indivisible tie to their homeland, which they reveal through practicing and preserving Chinese culture in their host country. For instance Shuang Shen has mentioned that Lin Yutang's "views on gender and family have consistently placed women in the domestic sphere and equate femininity with certain notion of the ideal family" (407). I would further suggest that while traditional Chinese values were maintained in the new environment after migration from the homeland, these authors seldom address settlement, localization, and immigrants' attempts to negotiate with mainstream cultural differences. What modern male writers intend to present in their literary works is Chinese male immigrants' contribution to the preservation of Chinese culture in the host society through patriarchy, pro-Chinese patriotism and nationalism.

However, the invisibility of women in history and literary works during the early immigration to North America does not suggest that women did not participate in the process of immigration. On the contrary, they play different roles from men with multiple

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<sup>13</sup> Lin's and Lee's works were written in English, and then translated into Chinese. Their primary target audience should be American readers.

functions and positions in history and its literary representation. Although women either did not physically migrate or migrated through illegal means, their stories should be taken into account because of their effect on the formation and transformation of family structure and their in-between position in relation to both home and host countries. Zhang Ling's *Gold Mountain Blues* and Yan Geling's *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* are two good examples that highlight women's significance in the early migration and register the importance of history. *Gold Mountain Blues* traces the genealogy of a transnational family in Canada from a fifth-generation descendant's perspective, and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* depicts a Chinese woman immigrant's experience of hardship, commodification of her body, and marginalization as a prostitute in the United States, also from a fictional fifth-generation Chinese immigrant's literary viewpoint. I propose that both novels register the importance of Chinese women migrants who were neglected in the historical record and most literary narratives. Women's migratory experiences offer alternative dimensions of understanding early Chinese immigration that exist parallel to official historical record and androcentric grand narrative.

In addition, Zhang Ling and Yan Geling adopt analepsis in order to trace previous generations' stories and migratory trajectories. The protagonists' struggle, interaction, and negotiation with local differences become the center of the narratives in these two

novels. Their notions of home as well as their focal points are geographically shifted from their homeland to their host countries as the narrative goes on. In Lin Yutang's and C. Y. Lee's works, it is explicitly shown that the migrant root is firmly planted in the Chinese homeland. However, I contend that Zhang's and Yan's writings suggest a process of "root-searching," yet the root is the history of Chinese immigration and ancestral trajectories in North America rather than a concrete geographical origin in the homeland. The literary creation of descendant narrators is therefore in response to the searching for this root.

This chapter seeks to examine unofficial historical narrative of the early migration of Chinese to North America as represented by contemporary women writers—Zhang Ling and Yan Geling. It is important to investigate women's role at the initial stage of Chinese migration, even though some of the women represented in the literary works did not physically migrate to North America. Through the fictional historical narrative in their novels, I propose that Zhang Ling and Yan Geling situate women in the historical context of early Chinese migration in order to highlight the significance of women's gender role within the trans-Pacific family, discuss the commodification and subordination of women's bodies, and rediscover early Chinese immigration through writing as an approach of root-searching. Meanwhile, *Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of*

*Happiness* exemplify the way that women rewrite immigration history from a gendered perspective to explore everyday lived experience.

### **Chinese Immigration and the Transformation of Family**

The Chinese immigration to Canada and America began in the mid-nineteenth century, and a large number of Chinese immigrants landed in North America after 1858 to take part in the Gold Rush. Later on, as many Chinese migrant workers participated in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the transcontinental railway, the Chinese population increased in both Canada and the United States. The gender imbalance in Chinese immigration suggests that early immigration was closely related to economic concerns and survival. Owing to restrictive immigration policies, most of the earliest Chinese immigrants were single men, and this resulted in the separation of pre-existing Chinese families and the formation of new trans-Pacific families.

In *From China to Canada*, the authors remark that native place and kinship are two crucial elements in constructing Chinese immigrants' identities and local communities. According to Edgar Wickberg, early immigration can be categorized into two forms, known as coolie broker, who was transported from China to North America individually, and chain migration:

In chain migration [...] which was common in Canada after 1900, the immigrant came on his own and worked until he had saved enough for a trip back to China.

During the first return to his village he might marry, or, if already married, he might arrange to bring back with him a teen-aged son or nephew. Through subsequent return trips accompanied by teen-aged relatives, fractional families without women were assembled abroad. (5)

This immigration pattern indicates that early Chinese immigrants kept close ties with their families back home through remittance and intermittent physical return. In *Chinese Family and Kinship*, Hugh D. R. Baker notes that “Kinship proper did play a part in the pattern of emigration in that there was a strong tendency for an established emigrant to act as a magnet for others of his kin, who could come to his area of settlement in the hope of emulating his success” (169). Along this line, it is obvious that early Chinese immigration to North America was clan-based and male-centered, and kinship played a crucial role at the initial stage of migration. In the meantime, since men had migrated out of China, the structure of split households therefore contributed to the formation of trans-Pacific families.

According to Haiming Liu, trans-Pacific family is defined as “the division of immediate family members on both sides of the Pacific” (3). Liu further points out that

the trans-Pacific family is different from the traditional Chinese family and creates a new relationship between children and parents, China and the United States. He argues that “This relationship represents not only cultural, but also political and emotional linkages. These linkages encompass capitalist expansion in China, racism in America, and above all, the struggle of Chinese Americans for social status and mobility in a new country” (29). Although Liu’s study targets Chinese Americans, I find it is also valid in rethinking the relationship between Chinese immigrants in Canada and their families in China. The concept of the trans-Pacific family helps us reconsider the transformative notion of family and home in light of the flow of cultural and economic capital through cross-Pacific migration. It suggests that geographical boundary-crossing transforms traditional Chinese family structure and the absence of male family members also alters women’s gender role within these families.

Since family is fundamental to the construction of home, the transformation of family structure has impacted the conceptualization of home. Cross-border movement not only transforms family structure, but also leads migrant subjects to redefine their personal notions of home. The departure from original home and natal family results in the possibility of making a new home in the host land, and under these circumstances, home can be associated with family in light of kinship and marriage as well as geographical



space—homeland and host land. Thus, Chinese immigration contributes to the new structure of family, and in the meantime initiates the reinvention of home. Through revisiting the early immigration to North America, this chapter demonstrates how these two novels represent the shift of home space from homeland to host land in order to manifest the relation between Chinese immigrants and their settlement in Canada and the United States.

### **The Categories: Immigrant Literature/Asian American Literature/the Sinophone**

Chinese-language literary works on Chinese immigrants and their lived experience is categorized in different paradigms in light of language, writer identity, and content.

Generally speaking, there are three major literary fields which incorporate those literary works: immigrant literature, Asian American (Canadian) literature and Sinophone literature. The categorization of each literary field contains diverse geopolitics, identity politics, and linguistic standards. Each literary field has its purpose and standard of incorporating or excluding any literary work regarding Chinese immigrants and their experiences. As a result, this sort of literature inhabits an ambivalent, overlapping and even marginalized position vis-à-vis mainstream Chinese literature. The difficulty of categorization, on the other hand, suggests Chinese immigrants' in-between position as

well as writers' shifting perspectives between homeland and host land. Therefore, it is necessary to review the development of each field in order to determine a suitable place in literary history to situate certain literary works.

The category of immigrant literature is derived from the *liuxuesheng wenxue* 留學生文學 (overseas student literature) of 1960s Taiwan. In the 1960s and 1970s Taiwanese literary field, "overseas student literature" emerged as an important sub-genre, because at the time many students studied abroad in America, and some of them wrote novels and memoirs to share their overseas experiences with others back in Taiwan. Many critics categorize "overseas student literature" on the basis of its content (Chi Bang-Yuan 1990; Tsai Ya-Shiun 2001), and the representative writers include Yu Li-Hua 於梨華, Nieh Hua-Ling 聶華苓, Bai Xian-Yong 白先勇, Cong Su 叢甦, and Ou-Yang Tz 歐陽子. Since many of these students settled in America after graduating from school, their social status and identity shifted from foreign student to immigrant. Thus overseas student literature eventually became *yimin wenxue* 移民文學 (immigrant literature). The literary works in this category cover a broad range of issues including identity crisis, alienation, assimilation and other predicaments in everyday life in the United States.

In the three decades from 1960 to 1990, overseas Taiwanese writers focused more on the expression of their struggle and suffering from cultural shock, racial discrimination,

and a sense of rootlessness. Taiwan broke off political relations with the United States in the early 1960s, and yet American culture continued to have a great impact on Taiwan and its modernization after that time. When students planned to study abroad, they typically had a beautiful American dream and expected to be headed to a paradise. However, cultural difference and racial discrimination in the United States often led to sudden disillusionment. Thus, the literary works written and published during this period address immigrants' new lives with hardships, homesickness and nostalgia for their homeland in Taiwan.

In the context of China, because of the Communist's take-over in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1976, the population of Chinese immigrants from mainland China to the Americas declined from the 1950s to the 1970s. After the Open Door Policy was proclaimed in the early 1980s, another wave of Chinese migrated to North America. Therefore, the immigrant literature written by Chinese writers from the mainland, such as Yan Geling, Zhang Ling, Ha Jin 哈金 and Bei Dao 北島, appeared in the 1980s aligned with political changes that resulted in immigration to America. The literary production by Chinese and Taiwanese immigrant writers is subject to the trends of mainstream contemporary Chinese and Taiwanese literature. It can be read as a sub-genre based on writers' identity as immigrants and the narrative focus on overseas lived experiences.

However, the categorization neglects writers' agency in claiming a position for themselves in the mainstream market of the host countries and their consciousness of constructing a new identity, and eliminates the possibility of cross-cultural interaction through literary production.

Asian American literature is another paradigm, which strives to incorporate those literary works closely related to immigrants' experience in the United States written by Asian American writers. However, language is the first challenge of the categorization, because Asian American studies mainly examines Anglophone literature rather than Chinese-language literary works. Moreover, Asian American studies is established in the context of ethnic and race studies, and investigates assimilation of Asian immigrants into the host culture. Most Asian American writers are descendants of Chinese immigrants, and English is their mother tongue. The selection of language highlights their American identities instead of their Chinese identities, and also determines the target audience and the publishing market. In this regard, Asian American writers' purposes of literary production are different from those written in Chinese language.

Though language is a complicated issue in Asian American studies, some critics suggest that relevant Chinese-language literature should be incorporated into the category of Asian American literature (Shan 1998; Yin 2000). The LOWNIUS (Languages of

What Is Now the United States) project introduced by Te-hsing Shan “explores the possibility of multilingual American literature, putting the concept of multi-ethnicity and especially multilingualism into practice, and unearthing literatures not in English that have long existed yet been unduly neglected” (118). The inclusion of Chinese-language literature in Asian American studies is an attempt to redefine and reconstruct American literature as multilingual and multicultural. Xiao-huang Yin, on the other hand, proposes that Chinese-language literature is part of Asian American literature because of the frequent usage of Chinese language among the immigrant population. As he puts it in his survey of Chinese American literature since the 1850s:

[Chinese language literature] provides social stability for new immigrants and is enormously popular among Chinese Americans. The many volumes of Chinese language literature on display in Chinatown bookstores throughout the United States are clear evidence of the genre’s powerful influence in the community. Given that around 70 percent of Chinese Americans are immigrants and more than 80 percent, including those who are native-born, speak some Chinese at home, it is inexcusable to ignore work written in the Chinese language in a sociohistorical study of Chinese American literature. (2)

Although Chinese immigrants' reception of Chinese-language literature can contribute to literary production, I argue that the visibility of Chinese-language literature is relatively low in the American mainstream market as well as within the field of Asian American studies. However, this does not suggest that Chinese-language literature of immigrants is insignificant for readers in North America and other Chinese-speaking places. Rather, it is the product of globalization and transnational flow of people and goods, and is closely related to Chinese immigrants' social and cultural development in North America.

Clearly, the categorization of Chinese-language literature produced in places where Chinese is not the dominant language remains a challenge in a world with such rapid transformation and flow.

The Sinophone offers an alternative by categorizing Chinese-language works primarily by language of production and secondarily by country of origin. It yields subcategories such as Sinophone American literature and Sinophone Canadian literature. Since the Sinophone is a place-based cultural production with local needs, I would suggest that historicity and hybridity are of importance in the construction of Sinophone American and Canadian literature. In *Writing Chinese: Reshaping Chinese Cultural Identity*, Letty Chen mentions that "oftentimes depictions or representations of 'China' in the works of Chinese American writers are judged and scrutinized not in terms of their

artistic or aesthetic achievement, but by the measure of ‘authenticity’” (99). She argues that not only can Chinese in the mainland legitimize Chineseness, but Chinese outside China also have authority in claiming cultural authenticity. She also proposes that the “‘Asian American’ signifier [...] culture-based” and she argues “that it is more a cultural identity than an ethnic identity” (103). For Chen, the legitimacy of claiming and defining Chineseness and authenticity is central to the categorization of Chinese-language literature. However, Chen’s discussion on Chinese language literature is intertwined with diasporic discourse, which claims a close tie between immigrants and their homelands. I propose that the essence of Chinese-language literature in North America goes far beyond the reclamation of Chineseness, but is more about hybridization and cross-cultural encounters in a specific time and space. Accordingly, I subscribe to Shu-mei Shih’s provocative argument that “nostalgia for China in Sinophone American literature is nostalgia produced from the experience of living in the United States and hence, is local, a form of American nostalgia” (715). The representation of China as the homeland is not necessarily associated with immigrants’ longing for returning homecoming, nor does it reclaim the legitimacy of Chineseness. Rather, it can be regarded as part of the ongoing process of negotiation and localization through appropriating historicity in expressing

immigrants' nostalgia for the "homeland." This process is apparent in Zhang Ling's and Yan Geling's novels discussed in this chapter.

Sinophone North American literature as a category offers the possibility of containing Chinese-language literature written by immigrant writers from different Chinese speaking sites, including China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, just to name a few. Given that the field can be constructed to reflect local needs, language is simply a standard that allows us to understand cultural production with Sinitic languages. Moreover, writers' attitude and determination in facing their host countries and searching for recognition is in response to the significance of place-based production and articulation with other Sinophone fields. Thus, in this chapter I attempt to examine two novels written by Sinophone Canadian and American writers to demonstrate the possibility of employing the Sinophone to tease out the issues of place-based cultural production through the notion of homeness.

### ***Gold Mountain Blues:***

#### **Root-searching and the Genealogy of the Transnational Family**

Zhang Ling (1957-), a Chinese female writer and a clinical audiologist in Canada, was born in Wenzhou, China, and migrated to Canada in 1986. She is renowned for her novels, including *Wangyue* 望月 (*Sisters from Shanghai* 1988), *Youguo xinniang* 郵購新



娘 (*Mail Order Bride* 2004), *Jiachuo de bi'an* 交錯的彼岸 (*Beyond the Ocean* 2009), *Yuzhen* 餘震 (*Aftershock* 2009), which was adapted for the screen by movie director Feng Xiaogang (馮小剛), and *Jinshan* 金山 (*Gold Mountain Blues* 2010). *Gold Mountain Blues* features an epic narrative, which addresses the history of Chinese immigration to Canada from the time of the Gold Rush, delineating five generations of Chinese immigrants' lived experiences in terms of the process of cross-border movement and localization. Zhang adopts the form of analepsis by writing from the perspective of a fifth-generation Chinese Canadian and situates the narrative in the trans-Pacific context through juxtaposing past and present China and Canada. It is interesting to explore the clan-based narrative and the fictional representation of the early Chinese immigration to Canada in this novel because the literary narrative carves out space for unrecorded everyday life events in history.

*Gold Mountain Blue* centers on five generations of the Fong family originating from Kaiping, Guangdong Province. The male protagonist Fong Tak Fat 方得法 is a first-generation Chinese Canadian who migrates to Canada in order to make a living for his family. His wife Kwan Suk Yin 關淑賢 (a.k.a Six Fingers 六指) is an educated woman who refuses to marry into the Fong family as a concubine, and is thus finally married to Fong Tak Fat as the first wife. After her husband migrates to Canada, she assumes the

position of caretaker for the entire family in Kaiping in the absence of male members, including her husband and two sons. In this regard, I contend that Six Fingers' gender role is transformed from that of a subordinate woman to that of a strong household mistress, and her subjectivity is also reconstructed within the trans-Pacific household. In addition to Six Fingers, there are several female protagonists in this novel such as her daughter-in-law Miss Chow 周氏 (a.k.a Cat Eyes 貓眼) and granddaughter Fong Yin Ling 方延齡, who all end up with tragic lives resulting from the hardship and predicaments involved in early Canadian immigration. Most importantly, the story is narrated from the perspective of the fifth generation descendant Amy Smith, a sociologist at a Canadian university, who goes on a root-searching journey to Kaiping. Thus, although the male protagonists are the ones who physically migrate to Canada, Zhang Ling intentionally situates women at the center of her fictional representation and unofficial narrative of immigration history in order to shed light on the roles and subjectivity of a previously forgotten group.

### **1. Women in Early Immigration**

To my great surprise, I found a woman's dress. It was pink, embroidered with faded golden peonies and full of moth holes. I uncovered yet another surprise—a pair of

pantyhose was hidden in the sleeve. They looked thread bare from repeated washing, with a huge run spreading from the heel all the way up to where the legs part. (L. Zhang viii-ix)

Zhang Ling, in the preface of this novel, describes the moment when she first encountered women's belongings at fortress traditional home in Kaiping, Guangdong in 2003. This is what inspired her epic fictional representation of Chinese immigrants and their everyday life. The women's belongings therefore call our attention to women's lived experience at the initial stage of Chinese immigration. After she discovered the historical remnants and everyday fragments, Zhang Ling asked, "What kind of woman was she who owned this pair of pantyhose almost a century ago? Had she been the mistress of the household? On what occasion would she wear this elaborate dress? Was she lonely, with her husband away toiling in the Gold Mountain trying to make enough money so that she could afford such expensive things?" (ix) With reference to Zhang's inquiries, it is of importance to explore women's gender role within the household when male members are away from home on the other side of Pacific Ocean, and examine the transformation of women's positions and subjectivities within the domestic space.

In Confucian tradition, "Men are breadwinners; women are homemakers 男主外女主内" is the rule, and the boundaries of the family home strictly defined conventional

gender roles: men work outside and provide for the family, and women stay at home and take care of housework and childrearing. This rule not only serves as the basis for social relations in Confucian society but also reveals the gendered hierarchy within the traditional Chinese household. Thus, it is clear why men were the ones who migrated overseas as coolies or traders at the initial stage of immigration while women remained in China to manage the household. However, as women's positions are necessarily transformed and subverted when men leave the household, women's empowerment is also closely entwined with the relational power structure within the trans-Pacific family in *Gold Mountain Blues*. In this regard, migration truly transforms family structure and gender power relations, since women's power and subjectivity is redefined in the absence of husbands in the household.

Although *Gold Mountain Blues* focuses on the male protagonist Fong Tak Fat's journey to Gold Mountain, Fong's left-behind wife Six Fingers should be taken into account to explore her empowerment in the household in China. Six Fingers is an educated woman, competent in calligraphy and poetry, and she has a strong awareness of her marriage. She insists that she would never marry as a concubine but only as a first wife. Although she was not born in a gentry family, her cultural capital, including literacy and painting skill, helped her construct her subjectivity as a talented woman in the late

nineteenth century. When Amy Smith, the fifth-generation descendant of the Fong immigrants, visits the village where her great-grandmother Six Fingers lived a hundred-years ago, she is surprised to learn of her great-grandmother's talent. As Amy's local tour guide, a representative of the Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs, explains to Amy, "She wasn't just a painter. There was no one like her around here. You'd call her a 'liberated women' if you were writing a thesis. Of course, that's if there were liberated women a hundred or so years ago" (90). In this sense, we can understand that her cultural capital and advanced thinking toward marriage challenges the image of traditional Chinese women as confined to the household, obedient, and voiceless.

In addition, Six Fingers' virtue and sense of responsibility contribute to her transformation into capable mistress in her husband's absence. When her husband Fong Tak Fat is away from home, she takes charge of the entire household with courage and determination. Her fearless and self-sacrificing behavior also changes her mother-in-law's impression of her. Originally, her mother-in-law was unsatisfied with her because of her extra finger. However, after she sacrifices herself to save her mother-in-law, she obtains power over the household:

It also occurred to [the mother-in-law] that Six Fingers had quite a few merits. She was capable, upright and had a mind of her own. When it came to important family

affairs, there was no way that blind old Mrs. Mak or her weak and helpless sister-in-law could cope. What they needed, when her son was not there, was someone like Six Fingers to be the mainstay of the family. She had not permitted Ah-Fat to marry Six Fingers as his senior wife because she was afraid of losing face in the village. (121)

Six Fingers' mother-in-law affirms Six Fingers' empowerment and position within this household. What consolidates Six Fingers' crucial role in the Fong family is not only her capacity and literacy, but also the absence of male family members.

According to the structure of the trans-Pacific family, economic capital and social mobility accumulates through migration, and this should be taken into consideration in relation to the split family structure. When Six Fingers is persuaded by Auntie Cheung Tai, the village matchmaker, to marry the Gold Mountain man Fong Tak Fat, Auntie Cheung Tai particularly mentions the financial benefit and social mobility Six Fingers may gain from such a marriage. "Being junior wife to a Gold Mountain man isn't the same as with other families. There you'd have to put up with the mother-in-law and the first wife's bad temper. But ten to one, this Gold Mountain man would take you back with him and you could be happy together in Gold Mountain, and leave the first wife to look after the family back here. That's what all Gold Mountain men do" (117-118).

Besides splitting the traditional Chinese family, the economic capital accumulated through migration also allows women to physically transgress the traditional physical boundaries of the household. Although eventually Six Fingers becomes the only wife of Fong Tak Fat and she never goes to Gold Mountain in her lifetime, her social mobility is generated through her cultural and economic capital. Her marriage to a Gold Mountain man facilitates her empowerment within the household and even the village.

## **2. History and Family Genealogy**

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, the genealogy of the Fong family is traced back and established through women's perspectives. In an online interview, Zhang Ling mentioned that the names on the gravestone of Chinese coolies she discovered in Vancouver in 1986 evoked her interest and curiosity about the issues regarding these men and their families.<sup>14</sup> In 2003, the aforementioned encounter with women's belongings in Kaiping further motivated her to write a story about a Gold Mountain man and his family, especially the left-behind women. This calls our attention to why and how the family genealogy is fictionally constructed in light of Chinese immigrants' lived experiences. In

*Gold Mountain Blues*, history and memory are appropriated for the fictional

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<sup>14</sup> See the online interview "Zhang Ling's reading of *Gold Mountain Blues*." Web. 11 April, 2015. <<http://live.video.sina.com.cn/play/book/chatshow/1515.html>>

representation and construction of family genealogy, and these elements are interweaved with depiction of Chinese immigrants' everyday life to construct a nostalgic narrative of Chinese immigration in Canada.

Family genealogy is key to literary production of migration for the purpose of root-searching and identity formation. According to Lien Chao in *Beyond Silence*, reconstruction of family genealogy is one of the major forms in Chinese Canadian literature written in English because writers are thus capable of presenting the process of immigrants' survival from marginalization to assimilation and acculturation. Similarly, Zhang Ling appropriates the format of family genealogy to represent Chinese immigrants' life struggle in Canada. However, since the target audiences are different in Anglophone and Sinophone writing, the purpose of writing family genealogy in Chinese language and the writing strategy Zhang Ling applies in *Gold Mountain Blues* should be examined.

*Gold Mountain Blues* features the juxtaposition of both China/Canada and past/present through fragments of memory and history. On the one hand, the geographical juxtaposition is in accordance with the Fong family's split household, and reflects the ongoing interaction between the Fong family members on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. The communication between family members in China and Canada through



letters and the remittance of money are in response to the transnational features of trans-Pacific families. On the other hand, the novel's sense of temporal discontinuity is derived from the device of analepsis, which appears in the form of a descendant's root-searching journey from Canada to China. Thus, the juxtaposition in both spatial and temporal dimensions is crucial to understand immigrants' trajectory.

In Zhang Ling's novel, spatial representation is limited to specific villages and cities, such as Spur-on Village 自勉村 and Vancouver City. Zhang intentionally provides abundant historical background on each country, such as immigration policy, racial discrimination in Canada, and land reform in China, to highlight the importance of locality in migration and formation of identity. It is explicitly shown that both external and local forces have crucially influenced individuals' everyday lives. For instance, not only does the immigration to Canada separate the Fong Family, but the Chinese Immigration Act also leads to the inability to reunite with family members. In *Gold Mountain Blues*, Six Fingers remarks that the Immigration Act has caused her misery, making her the mistress of a family in China but preventing her from fulfilling a promise between her and her husband to reunite in Canada:

Six Fingers felt that she had put all her energies into ensuring the men in her life grew big and strong, only to deliver them into the maw of the lion that was Gold

Mountain. She fought bitterly with the Gold Mountain lion over her men, but she could never win. By the time her daughter had grown up, the Gold Mountain government had passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Gold Mountain men were furious about that, but Six Fingers did not share their anger. She was secretly pleased—at least she could keep one child at home. (395)

This portion of the novel takes place in 1930, right after the proclamation of the Exclusion Act. Six Fingers' emotions are in response to the metanarrative of the Immigration Act, an individual reaction to a grand historical incident. Furthermore, in the novel, Gold Mountain is emblematic of the immigrant's desire to seek a living despite separation from family. History is explicitly and deliberately appropriated in the narrative in apposition with everyday life to manifest social circumstances in the early immigration.

In addition to spatial mapping, temporal discontinuity is crucial in weaving the five-generation family genealogy through analepsis. In her article "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva provocatively proposes that while men's time is linear and logical, women's time is eternal and recurrent (1981). It is noteworthy that not only the artistic device of flashback, but also the narrative root-searching journey of the fifth-generation family member registers breaks in time that complement with the fragmented geographical

mapping in the novel. The significance of temporal discontinuity is its relation to women's perception of time and space. Women's perception of time as discontinuous allows for the deconstruction of male/linear historical time.

The Fong family's migration to Canada in the nineteenth century and the fifth-generation descendant Amy Smith's root-searching journey in twenty-first century China are juxtaposed in *Gold Mountain Blues*. In order to differentiate this novel from typical historical accounts, Zhang Ling adopts female protagonists and focuses on the domestic sphere to construct a fictional family genealogy. The narrative of the novel begins with the fifth-generation descendant Amy's visit in her great grandparents' native place in Kaiping, Guangdong in 2004. Right after the depiction of Amy's first encounter with her ancestors' remains such as house and furniture, the narrative shifts back to focus on her ancestors in 1872. The deconstruction of linear time is adopted for the purpose of highlighting the fragmented representation of everyday life and family genealogy from a female perspective in opposition to the official history.

### **3. Home Is Where Family/Root Is**

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, family genealogy and nostalgia help us to rethink the relation between family and home as well as home and homeland in migration. Home is

closely entwined with nostalgia, which is derived from the desire for a lost or idealized home. According to Svetlana Boym, “nostalgia (from *nostos*—return home, and *algia*—longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy”

(xiii). Using Boym’s definition, the notion of home can be imagined through fantasy and nostalgia, and re/created through dwelling and kinship. Migration involves leaving home and heading to another locale both geographically and emotionally. Yet migration facilitates subjects’ mobility and agency in homemaking in terms of both physical and spiritual dimensions. Hence, migration offers a new understanding of home, and thus, it is meaningful to tease out the different implications and meanings of homeness in migration.

Since the narrative of *Gold Mountain Blues* traverses more than one hundred years (1872-2004) and covers five generations of the Fong family, the notion of home transforms throughout the novel with cultural differences and representational politics in light of specific times and places. The initial narrative is set in Spur-on Village, Kaiping, Guangdong in 1872, during the reign of Emperor Tongzhi. Under the influence of Confucian values, the concept of home is closely bound to family, village, and community. As Zhang Ling writes, “By the reign of Tongzhi, Spur-on Village had grown

into a sizeable place, with over a hundred families. There were two clans: the Fongs, the dominant family and descendants of the Annamese brothers, and the Aus, outsiders who had come from Fujian...Later the two families began to intermarry, the daughters of one with the sons of the other” (11-12). We also see in the initial form of migration out of China that family/clan-based connections are important and that geographical affinity often determines exactly when and where migrants travel. In this initial stage of migration, home is conceptualized as the ancestral place where family and clan reside.

The juxtaposition of China and Canada in the novel not only shows Chinese immigrants’ mobility in border crossing, but also reveals the separation of family and home. Unlike the conventional notion of home, migration results in the separation of family and the re-creation of home when immigrants settle down in a new locale. In the novel, the first-generation Chinese immigrant Fong Tak Fat migrates from Kaiping to Vancouver to make a living in the late nineteenth century. When he settles down in Vancouver, he is supposed to create a new home in Canada. Yet the interaction between him and his family back in China through his visits and the remittance of money means that he maintains a close tie to his homeland across the Pacific Ocean that supersedes any attachment he may be developing to his new environment. For the first-generation of

Chinese immigrants, the notion of home is linked to the place of origin as seen through their longing for return.

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, home is also defined by the physical dwelling that is affected by the transnational flow of money through remittance. The purpose of Chinese immigration to North America at the initial stage was tied to economic demand. Most male Chinese immigrants headed to Gold Mountain in order to make more money to support their families back in their homeland. In *Gold Mountain Blues*, the fortress home (diulau 雕樓), the physical house, is the product of transnational remittance and migration. It not only becomes a unique architectural style within Guangdong province, but also symbolizes Chinese immigrants' contributions to their native place. As Zhang Ling explains in the preface of this novel, "These houses were built with the money the coolies sent home, to protect the women and children they left behind, since this area was susceptible to flooding and bandits roamed the countryside. Since the coolies were scattered all around the world, the style of the fortress homes bore clear marks of the country where the money came from" (viii). Essentially, conception of home in the novel is created through both kinship and physical dwelling. The construction of the fortress home affirms the close tie between Chinese immigrants in Canada and their family in the

homeland. While migrants may eventually no longer return home, the fortress home embodies their familial intimacy and economic support within the trans-Pacific family.

The separation inherent in the trans-Pacific family ultimately leads to Chinese immigrants' sense of double homeness. When the first-generation Chinese immigrants crossed the Pacific Ocean, they had a Gold Mountain dream. When they arrived in a foreign land, they struggled and wondered whether the Gold Mountain was actually the wonderland that would allow them to fulfill that dream. In *Gold Mountain Blues*, when Six Fingers asks her husband Fong Tak Fat if the Gold Mountain is a good place, her husband replies, "If it was all good, why would we all come home? If it was all bad, then there wouldn't be so many Gold Mountain men, would there? Anyway, you'll be coming. Then you can see for yourself whether it's good or bad" (131). Although geographical boundaries separate the family into two, the conceptualization of home is still crucial to the Fong family and is defined through kinship, marriage and emotion. For early Chinese immigrants, reunion with family was the ultimate goal for them no matter where home was. Since they had homes on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, the sense of double homeness eventually became a unique characteristic of the trans-Pacific family.

In addition to the conceptualization of home with origin, dwelling, and intimacy in the homeland, the recreation and reconstruction of home in the host country Canada reflects

Chinese immigrants' encounter with local differences. The conventional Chinese conception of home, which is bound to family and nation-state through filial piety and loyalty, is transformed through cultural encounters, displacement and dislocation. Essentially, the separation of the trans-Pacific family challenges the unity of the traditional Chinese family. Western individualism increasingly influences Chinese immigrants' values through assimilation and acculturation.

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, Chinese immigrants' homes in Vancouver are marked by loss, loneliness and trauma. Because of the restrictive immigration policy, the early immigration was limited to men. Since marriage is one of the crucial elements that constitute home in traditional Chinese culture, the lack of women results in a sense of incompleteness of home for the early Chinese immigrants. Chinese male immigrants turn to local women for romance in order to fulfill their desire for a sense of home. For instance, in the novel, the second-generation Chinese immigrant Fong Kam Shan 方錦山 encounters a girl of mixed English and First Nations ancestry named Sundance. Although they cannot get married due to Kam Shan's status as a Chinese, their interracial romance becomes a beautiful memory in Kam Shan's life. Later on, Kam Shan gets married to a Chinese woman named Cat Eyes, who is brought to Canada as a prostitute, in order to save her from hardship. Obviously, neither of these two women is an ideal match for



Kam Shan according to traditional marital values. However, marriage is necessary for single Chinese man to form a local home and fulfill needs related to loneliness, desire, and reproduction. At the same time, hardships caused by the Immigrant Act and discrimination negatively affects individuals because they cannot go back to their homeland to marry or bring their original wives to Canada. Hence, the construction of home through marriage in the host country is a necessity for Chinese immigrants to survive and localize.

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, Kam Shan's wife Cat Eyes, who works as a waitress, becomes the main source of income for the Fong family. Her position within the Fong family transforms the image of traditional virtuous women, who were usually confined to the domestic sphere and spent their time doing housework. Although she is an obedient, responsible and virtuous Chinese woman, her empowerment is generated through her financial support for the Fong family in Canada. Although Fong Tak Fat, Cat Eyes' father-in-law states, "It's not proper for a woman to go out to work to support the whole family" (429), Cat Eyes still strives to work hard and take care of the whole family without complaint. Both the different social environment and Chinese immigrants' social status as the underclass in Canada transform Cat Eyes' position and subvert her gendered role within the Chinese family. Migration challenges the conventional Chinese family and

offers an alternative space for women's mobility and empowerment. The new home for Chinese immigrants in the host country is defined by marriage and financial support, and fundamental need facilitates the construction of this formulation of home.

As I mentioned earlier, the family genealogy of the Fong family is constructed through women's perspectives and women are central to the narrative of Chinese immigration. Home is defined by kinship and intimacy as well as marriage. However, in her novel *Zhang Ling* questions the traditional Chinese family and shows how trans-Pacific families grow and change through marriage. Amy Smith, a fifth-generation descendant of the Fong family, her mother Yin Ling, as well as the third generation Fong women never officially married in their entire lives. Home, for the Fong women, is an illusory and indefinite idea owing to dislocation and discrimination in the host country. For Amy, it initially seems meaningless to look for home because she had never known her father. Her identity as a mixed Canadian is only explicitly revealed through the color of her hair and eyes. Yet her emotional attachment to her mother and the Fong family inspires her to revise her understanding of home.

In her root-searching trip to Guangdong, Amy's encounter with her grandmother's belongings in the fortress home evokes her affective connection with her family. As the author tells, "The photo of her grandmother smiling at the camera, holding a baby in her

arms by the No-Name River, caught Amy off-guard. She did have roots, after all” (414).

The nostalgic imagination of the past through inheritance embodies Chinese immigrants’ conception of home and root as well as homecoming. What is unique in this novel is that the family genealogy is women-centered. From Amy’s perspective, “She had no father, so she did not have any relatives from her father’s family. And her mother was an only child, so she had almost no experience of kinship either” (415). Unlike the traditional Chinese male-dominated family tree, the family genealogy is constituted and narrated through the female descendant’s root-searching and women’s lived experiences. Home is therefore where family and root are situated, and the root-searching journey also marks Chinese immigrants’ descendants’ homecoming.

### *The Lost Daughter of Happiness:*

#### **Hostility, Intercultural Encounters, and Unsettled Home**

If *Gold Mountain Blues* shows readers a lively picture of transnational family and its connections on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, what was the reality of intercultural encounters with locals when early Chinese immigrants arrived in North America in the nineteenth century? *Fusang* 扶桑 (*The Lost Daughter of Happiness* 1996)<sup>15</sup>, written by a

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<sup>15</sup> *Fusang* was first published in Taiwan in 1998, and was translated into English by Cathy Silber in 2001.

renowned Chinese immigrant writer Yan Geling 嚴歌苓, represents early Chinese immigrants' difficulties from a meta-fictional perspective in order to rediscover the forgotten memories and history of early immigration to the United States. As Pin-chia Feng has pointed out in her insightful analysis of *Fusang (The Lost Daughter of Happiness)*: "Besides the desire to record the drama and tragedy of immigration, Yan is also attempting to construct a textual linkage between herself and her maltreated and oppressed forebears" (70). Interestingly, both *Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* are meta-fictions in which the authors deliberately adopt contemporary viewpoints to trace the history of Chinese immigration to North America. However, unlike how the fictional construction of transnational family genealogy in *Gold Mountain Blues* highlights immigrants' memory of China and their ties to the homeland, *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* is an alternative case that demonstrates how local situations in the United States have influenced Chinese immigrants' settlement and how cultural encounters take place between immigrants and locals.

Yan Geling was born in 1958 in Shanghai into a middle-class intellectual family. She became a dancer at age 12 in the People's Liberation Army, performing with the army around China during the Cultural Revolution. She started her creative writing while she was in the army. At age 20, she served as a journalist covering the Sino-Vietnamese War.

She came to the United States in 1989 and received her master of fine arts degree in fiction writing from Columbia College, Chicago. Yan is known for her fiction, novellas and screenplays, and some of her works have been adapted for film such as *Siao Yu* 少女小漁 (1995) directed by Sylvia Chang 張艾嘉, *Xiu Xiu* 天浴 (1998) directed by Chen Chung 陳沖, and *Jinling shisanchai* 金陵十三釵 (*The Flowers of War* 2011) directed by Zhang Yimou 張藝謀. Her works specifically focus on two major topics—the lives of Chinese immigrants in the United States and Chinese history, especially wars and political turmoil—and her representative works written in Chinese language include *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* (1998), *Ren Huan* 人寰 (1998), *Dijiuge guafu* 第九個寡婦 (*The Ninth Widow* 2006), and *Yige nuren de shishi* 一個女人的史詩 (*The Epic of A Woman* 2007).<sup>16</sup> Yan's writing reflects her complicated background as an immigrant and her marriage to a Caucasian diplomat. Accordingly it is difficult to categorize her as simply a Chinese (immigrant) writer or an Asian American writer (Feng 62).

*The Lost Daughter of Happiness* is set in San Francisco Chinatown in the nineteenth century. It is loosely based on official historical documentation of Chinese immigration Yan unearthed. It depicts the experiences of female protagonist Fusang, who was abducted from a remote mountain village in China and brought to San Francisco to work

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<sup>16</sup> The publication years of Yan's works are based on versions published in Taiwan, because most of her works are published first in Taiwan and are then circulated in China.

as a prostitute. It focuses on the intriguing relationships between Fusang, her German-American client Chris, and the Chinese gangster Da Yong who saves Fusang from the brothel and, as revealed at the end of the novel, eventually becomes her husband. Yan deliberately illustrates the historical background and social circumstances in the nineteenth century in the novel, particularly exclusion and discrimination in the United States. Interestingly, the narrative is delivered by a first-person narrator who is categorized as a “fifth-wave Chinese immigrant” (*The Lost Daughter of Happiness* 3), and the representation of Fusang is frequently generated by the narrator’s gaze. The image of Fusang as a prostitute who is trafficked to the United States suggests a person who is oppressed and passive, yet Yan constructs Fusang as a woman who has subjectivity and agency in looking for her own happiness and surviving in the United States. Unlike those virtuous left-behind women in *Gold Mountain Blues*, Fusang and her body are constructed as an exotic site that facilitates interracial romance and intercultural encounter.

The fictional construction of Fusang shifts the image of the traditional Chinese women, making space for heroism, bravery, and freedom in the context of early Chinese immigration. Following enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Chinese male immigrants lived in a bachelor society. However, rather than presenting the grand

narrative of male immigrants' hardship as in Lin Yutang's *Chinatown* 唐人街 and C. Y. Lee's *The Flower Drum Song* 花鼓歌, Yan Geling chooses to make the female protagonist Fusang the center of *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*. According to Sally E. McWilliams' reading, the novel constitutes a form of a feminist writing:

Yan's text necessitates an investigation into the reconstruction of a feminist literary history and its relation to both the nation-state and current transnational practices of capitalism. In shaping the discourse of female subjectivity into a site of competing experiences, perspectives, and meanings, *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* rewrites a masculinized and racialized nationalism into a feminist diasporic space of agency and potentiality. (133-134)

The significance of this novel not only lies in its representation of women immigrants but also in the way that it draws our attention to the transformation and subversion of the male-centered narrative on early Chinese immigration to America through writing women and their everyday lives.

### **1. Woman's Body and Embodiment of Hostility**

Because of the Chinese Immigration Act, few Chinese women were allowed to immigrate to the United States between the late nineteenth century and the early

twentieth century. Those Chinese immigrants who did manage to move to America in the nineteenth century were typically poor and lower class, from remote countryside villages or coastal towns in China. They endured back-breaking labor and rampant discrimination overseas in order to make a living for family members back in China and look for a better life for themselves. *Gold Mountain Blues* depicts how men migrated from China to Canada for more job opportunities, serving as miners and railroad coolies. Alternatively, *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* portrays a Chinese female immigrant who is forced to work as a prostitute. This fictional character's experience reflects a common predicament faced by poor Chinese women in the early stages of immigration to North America. As Amy Ling remarks, "there were two nonconformists who braved the journey and became the first women to immigrate to the United States; they present an interesting contrast, for one was domestic servant, the other a prostitute" (10). Female Chinese immigrants' lack of occupational choices resulted not only from the limitations placed on them by the host country, but also from the combination of Confucian conservatism and crippling poverty that limited their power and educational attainment in their homeland.

The female protagonist Fusang in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* is neither an ordinary Chinese woman nor a degenerate who willingly chooses to prostitute herself. She is abducted by a man and trafficked to the United States, and then sold to a brothel.



Regardless, the literary construction of Fusang's image reflects her extraordinary sexual appeal as a Chinese prostitute in the United States. The first person narrator describes her in this way:

I know who you were: a twenty-year-old prostitute, one of a succession of three thousand prostitutes from China. When you stepped upon these golden shores, you were a fully grown woman. You had no skills, no seductive charms, not a trace of lust in your eyes. People could sense your distinctive simplicity the moment they met you. In an instant, you could make any man feel as if it were his wedding night. So you were a born prostitute, a good-as-new bride.

(...)

You have a strange name: Fusang. You're not from the Canton delta, so your price is 30 percent higher than those girls with names like Pearl, Silky, or Snapper, who had a hard time proving themselves unsullied by foreign sailors on shore (2-3).

The narrator's first impression of Fusang shows a contradictory embodiment of seduction and purity. On the one hand, her feminine and seductive appearance directs our eyes to her female body. On the other hand, her purity is emblematic of the supposed virtue of Chinese women and her unsophisticated personality attracts western clients who can

fulfill their Oriental fantasies through her. Fusang is therefore unknowingly equipped with alluring elements that make her an ideal prostitute.

Furthermore, the gaze of the narrator on Fusang's body implies Yan's double creation of this female protagonist. There are at least two layers of Fusang's portrayal. First of all, the first narrator's gaze indicates a subject-object relationship between Fusang and the narrator. As the narrator remarks, "You know I too am auctioning" (4). In this regard, as an unwilling prostitute, Fusang is an object that receives the narrator's impression and judgment. The objectification of Fusang and her body indicates that Fusang is not only be sullied by clients, but becomes the object of literary representation. As Pin-chia Feng notes, "staging this slave woman as the central character, therefore, comes close to selling her as a piece of oriental curiosity, a fact that the narrator is clearly aware of. Despite a sense of textual affiliation, the narrator's project of recovering the past could very easily objectify and orientalize her protagonist" (64). Moreover, it is clear that the objectification of the protagonist is not limited to the single perspective of the narrator, but involves the double gazes of the narrator and the author Yan Geling. Yan applies double gazes—herself as a writer and the first person narrator created by Yan in the novel to explore similarities in social status and lived experiences shared by women immigrants from different generations, particularly the ways in which they have encountered

objectification and subordination in both fictional representation and in the real world.

Beyond inviting multiple gazes, Fusang's body and personality are multi-faceted, embodying various cultural values and intercultural encounters. First of all, her role as a prostitute means that she automatically lacks the virtue of a traditional Chinese woman and transgresses beyond Confucian gender norms. At the beginning, Fusang is a married left-behind woman who takes charge of the household when her husband is away. One day she runs into a man in the market who informs her that her husband has asked him to bring her overseas. She initially denies his invitation, but is eventually persuaded when the man says, "Come on, your in-laws use you to farm, to cook, to chop pig feed—your mother-in-laws has married you in for herself. Don't you know that? [...] Without a husband, you can't have kids, and how'll you get a daughter-in-law to cook and do laundry for you in your old age?" (46). As a traditional Chinese wife/daughter-in-law, Fusang is in charge of housework, fertility and being filial to her mother-in-law. Her body is designated for labor and reproduction, as is the Confucian norm. Given her eventual role as a prostitute, it is somewhat ironic that her motivation for immigration is her desire to be a proper wife and provide her husband with offspring. By detailing the circumstances surrounding Fusang's abduction, the author defines Fusang as a traditional and "decent" Chinese woman who is more attractive in the United States, because she

embodies the traditional value and carries the image of a typical Chinese woman that can fulfill men's fantasy and curiosity.

Fusang's abduction not only contributes to her geographical transgression beyond the confines of her home, but also leads to the commodification of her female body. When Fusang arrives in San Francisco, she is sold to a brothel. Like other women who are smuggled from China to the United States Fusang is marked with a price:

Chinatown's official commodity exchange printed the going rates daily.

The madam took the list under the light to read it.

April 16

Rice                      \$ 2.00 per sack

Fresh shrimp            \$ .10 per pound

Salt fish                 \$ .08 per pound

...

**Girls                      \$ 6.00 per pound (54)**

Besides the oriental fantasy projected upon her, Fusang is transformed into a commodity with a clear price in the exchange market of Chinatown in San Francisco. According to Wen Jin, "Fusang's experiences as a Chinatown server [...] allegorize Western imperialism and neo-imperial practice in China and the violent racialization of Chinese

immigrants in the U.S. from the mid-nineteenth century onward” (577). Furthermore, it reveals Chinese women immigrants’ lower class and inhumane conditions in the United States. They were labeled as marginal and subordinate outsiders because of their race and culture, and were associated with commodification and objectification in a way that mirrored the national hierarchy between China and the United States.

Fusang’s immigration to the United States engenders the transformation of her cultural embodiment of Confucian convention to her status as an object inviting western masculine gaze on her body. In the novel, Fusang’s very first client is a twelve-year-old white boy named Chris, whose family originates from Germany. As the narrator reminds us, one of the features that attract Chris to visit the Chinatown brothel is “the cheapness of Chinese prostitutes” (16). The market economy of female bodies again defines Fusang and her contemporary Chinese prostitutes’ lower social status in society. Meanwhile, Fusang seduces Chris with her beauty, exoticism and motherliness. As the narrative describes,

His desire for thrills disappeared. His enthusiasm to try out a cheap Chinese whore turned to adoration. The adoration boys all over the world feel for ripe beautiful women. That age-old, predictable adoration.

Nothing could make him brave now, not even the inferiority everyone of his race ascribed to everyone of yours, including you personally. He could no longer muster his bravado. He just stared at you with those blue eyes, watching you cracking melon seeds with your teeth, watching you pour tea for him. And when you cooled his tea, breath by breath, he trembled with longing. (17)

Through the eyes of Chris, Fusang's beauty and sexuality change her from a cheap, subordinate prostitute into a goddess-like icon. In this respect, Fusang is an "other" onto whom westerners' oriental fantasy is projected. In her diasporic reading of *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, Sally E. McWilliams remarks that "the moral and racial degeneracy were mirrored onto the bodies of Chinese women even prior to their entrance into the United States" (137). She further proposes "the novel schematically traces Chris' relationship with Fusang through the representation of the masculinized gaze of ownership as a form of rescue" (138). I agree with McWilliams' and other scholars' allegorical reading on the interracial relationship between Chris and Fusang, and her interpretation of how the female body is co-opted as a site that reveals the effects of Orientalism, masculinity, gender hierarchy and power relations between China and the West (McWilliam 2005; Jin 2006). The local male residents' stereotyped impression on

Chinese women explicitly projects on prostitutes, and to a certain extent, Chris' perspective represents white men's consumption of the Chinese female body.

However, I contend that the narrative construction of the female body involves more than just commodification, consumption and oriental projection. The body is a site for understanding intercultural encounters, conflict and negotiation. The fictional narrative shows that Chris constantly visits the brothel in order to fulfill his curiosity and desire for Fusang. In the meantime, a white boy's patronage of a Chinese brothel aligns with the broader historical context, which featured discrimination and relegation of Chinese immigrants to substandard conditions in Chinatown. As the subcontext of the novel reveals, Chinese immigrants were discriminated against and sometimes forced to leave the United States because of the stereotype:

The people here were terrified of the obscure terrain between gentleness and cruelty.

Handbills scattered from the sky, and one landed right next to the exquisite feet of a Chinese prostitute. How could such righteous indignation and these feet in pink satin relate? Which was mocking the other?

Chris was not aware of this layer of absurdity. (58)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This line is not translated into English version, but I find it is very central to the relationship between

The juxtaposition of the bound feet and the anti-Chinese petition is significant in understanding sociocultural construction of female body. It suggests a parallel to gentleness and cruelty meted out on human subjects, as represented in the relationship between Fusang and Chris. The bound feet symbolize Chinese immigrants' insignificant existence in the United States, whereas the handbills invite violence and discrimination against the immigrants. It suggests that white men can conquer Chinese women in the brothels; meanwhile, national exclusion can force Chinese immigrants into a desperate spot. As a symbol, Fusang's body here moves beyond femininity and oriental fantasy to the realm of intercultural encounter between Chinese immigrants and local Americans, suggesting the hostility toward Chinese immigrants.

In literary representation, Chinatown is often subject to prejudice, and is associated with decadence, poverty and crime. Similarly, the Chinese prostitute is presented "as vector of disease, disruption and moral contagion" (McWilliams 137). This impression drives hostility toward outsiders and strangers—Chinese immigrants in this novel. As Immanuel Kant writes, "Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction, but so long as he peacefully occupies his

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Fusang and Chris and later conflict.



place, one may not treat him with hostility” (Kant 1923:357).<sup>18</sup> Hostility therefore engenders conflicts between cultures in the process of encounter, and it helps us understand the tension between individuals, ethnicities and nations. Along with the stereotyped construction of Chinatown, arguments over the prostitute Fusang eventually lead to discrimination, exclusion and hostility towards Chinese immigrants. As the narrator informs us:

I just got back from the square where two armies fought over you more than a hundred years ago. Of course, you don't know they were fighting over you. You have to wait a hundred years, for someone like me to dig through one hundred and six history books, the way the Chinese kept chipping away in the most depleted gold mines, for the truth to finally pan out. All accounts of the fight are pretty vague. They say things like: “Allegedly it had something to do with a prostitute,” and “Allegedly that prostitute was the cause of the conflict.” I don't use the word allegedly, I just say, It was you. You were the cause of it all. (114-115)

In this regard, the first person narrator seems to suggest that Fusang is the one who causes the conflict between Chinese immigrants and local Americans. However, I propose that there are two layers of implication behind the message the narrator intends

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<sup>18</sup> This quotation is cited from Panu Minkkinen's “Hostility and Hospitality.”

to convey. On one hand, the unofficial historical narrative is constructed by the fifth-generation Chinese descendant, and it can be understood as a fictitious event in the literary representation. On the other hand, it is important to tease out the purpose of the narrator's assertion that Fusang is the cause of the conflict. As mentioned, Fusang is a charming prostitute who attracts many white boys. Chris' sexual desire for Fusang evolves into an interracial romance. Thus Fusang's body is doubly constructed by the author and the narrator as a site where both the cultural encounter and the conflict takes place. In other words, Fusang's body is a place that anyone can easily access for different purposes. Local Americans can fulfill their sexual desire and oriental fantasies through meeting Fusang and consuming her corporeal body. In the meantime, because the Chinese prostitute is treated as the origin of disease and decadence, Fusang is concurrently attractive and repellant, a cause of conflict between immigrants and locals and within the locals themselves. Accordingly, the dual sides of Fusang represent the Chinese prostitute's significant position in displaying intercultural conflict and encounters.

Another crucial narrative issue that speaks to hostility is rape. In the novel, Chinatown in San Francisco is represented as a ghetto where many illegal and poor Chinese immigrants temporarily settle. The Chinatown brothels containing thousands of Chinese

prostitutes attract many white teenagers' curiosity. Meanwhile, the conflicts between Chinese immigrants and local Americans happen again and again, because "some Chinamen stripped the pants off some bastards and threw them overboard...How come I got fired? Of course it's the Chinamen" (200). Thus local Americans' vengefulness is targeted at Fusang as she is an object that is easily accessible, and Chris becomes involved as well:

Where are they taking you? Twenty or thirty men are listening to the ripping of silk all over your body and watching you stumble as if drunk as they push you back and forth.

Someone says, Look at her feet! Chinamen call them sexy!

She's the corruption of all morality and decency!

The street is pitch black, for all the gaslights have been broken.

Now I see it: a horseless carriage.

You have been dragged inside and men take turns coming through the curtain.

You don't call for help; you don't bite or scratch. You reach for the jacket of each man, and during his wild heavings, you bite off a button.

You don't call them names, you just open your body toward an expanse of nothingness. You concentrate on opening yourself, time after time, except for your fists, which are full of buttons. (208-209)

As shown in the later story, one of the buttons belongs to Chris. Through either desire or hatred, Fusang is targeted for destruction. Chris eventually joins the group of rapists at the provocation of his companions in order to show his patriotism. For Chris, at the moment of the rape, Fusang is associated with hostility and violence rather than seduction and fantasy. Conversely, Fusang's passive reaction to the rape is worth noting.

Throughout their relationship, Fusang always silently and obediently responds to Chris' requests. Fusang seems to sacrifice herself to save her fellow immigrants and reconcile the conflict. Obviously, Fusang is a mother-like figure to Chris from the very first sight, and during the rape she is again represented as a goddess of sacrifice. She thus represents one of the approaches of localization in the United States by passively negotiating with hostility.

## **2. The In-between Status of the Woman Immigrant**

In addition to Fusang's relationship with Chris, which many scholars have examined in light of orientalism, race and ethnicity, there is another relationship worthy of

consideration—that between Fusang and Da Yong. As the novel describes, Da Yong is a Chinese gangster who is well-known for his righteousness and his kind-heartedness in helping the needy in San Francisco’s Chinatown. He rescues Fusang several times, once when she is being auctioned off, and again when she is imprisoned in a hospital during a conflict between Chinese immigrants and local white residents. Afterwards, Da Yong learns that he and Fusang come from the same village in China and that Fusang shares similar characteristics with his wife back in his hometown. This geographical and affective affinity brings on Da Yong’s deep sentimental attachment to Fusang. Thus the emotional bond between Chinese male and female immigrants calls us to revisit the function of Chinese women immigrants and their bodies in this novel, as the relationship transforms Fusang’s body into a site of complex human relationships, intimacy and sense of belonging.

Since Chinese immigrants share similar migratory trajectories, their places of origin are of importance in building bonds with each other and in developing a sense of belonging in a community. Fusang is the very first prostitute in which Da Yong ever took interest. When he learns that Fusang is also from a village in Hunan, he is struck by the fact and explains that “A friend of mine, same age as me, has a wife back home, a girl from a tea grower’s family in Hunan” (160). The reader is aware that the friend is Da

Yong himself. Here, we might borrow from Freud's notion of the uncanny, the "class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (1). We can regard Fusang as a double for Da Yong's wife, and her characteristics generate a sense of the uncanny and feelings of both familiarity and homelessness in Da Yong. The Freudian double is a recurrent motif in the novel.<sup>19</sup> After encountering Fusang, Da Yong recalls his memory of his wife through doubling and projecting his wife's image on Fusang. Fusang thus becomes a double that can fulfill Da Yong's desire for a sense of home. Da Yong's sense of the uncanny is intertwined with his relationship with Fusang, and eventually results in their marriage. However, Da Yong initially denies that fact that Fusang is standing in for his wife who is supposed to be staying at home and waiting for his return. As Da Yong's detailed inner monologue reveals:

How could this whore have more or less the same background as his own wife? He stared angrily at his hands spread braced on his knees. They looked like starfish clinging to a reef. He didn't want the two women to overlap in any way. His wife was still there, embroidering, pushing the millstone, waiting for him. Each time he

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<sup>19</sup> As Freud defines the notion of double: "Hoffmann accentuates this relation by the transferring mental processes from the one person to the other—what we should call telepathy—so that the one possesses knowledge, feeling and experience in common with the other, identities himself with another person, so that his self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for his own—in other words, by doubling, dividing and interchanging the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character-trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations" (9).

sent money home he got the same short, explicit reply from his mother: We got money, everyone's fine. No matter how narrow his escapes from death, when the time came, there would always be a place to take him in. There, nothing he did would be judged and his slate would be wiped clean with a single stroke. There, in his wife's arms. This was why he was so fearless; no matter how bad things got, he always had an escape route, he always had a home to go back to. The reason he sent money home was to maintain this way out. This escape route was absolutely indispensable, for without it, there would be no turning back from all his dangerous journeys and he would be reduced to a life of hopelessness and wandering. Without that wife waiting for him back home, he might as well whirl the rest of his life away on the merry-go-round of brothels. And so when Fusang's background ended up coinciding so closely with his wife's, he nearly dislocated her jaw. He felt the whore now winning his affection was about to cut off his escape route. (161)

Through Da Yong's self-reflection, we learn that a sense of home is a primary desire for Chinese immigrants, particularly when they face exclusion and prejudice in the host country. The ideal wife from Da Yong's perspective is one who is able to take good care of his family when he is away. His wife should be a proper and decent Chinese woman, and more importantly, the desired home is located on the other side of the Pacific Ocean,

and one day he would return. The desire for and attachment to the home in his imagination constantly supports his life in the United States. Da Yong is similar to Fong Tak Fat in *Gold Mountain Blues* because he believes that his wife is waiting for him, yet his ideal home is suddenly destroyed as he meets Fusang who looks like his wife, and in fact she is. The discovery of Fusang's background along with Da Yong's monologue therefore predicts their sentimental attachment at a later stage.

The relationship between Fusang and Da Yong is built upon their common place of origin—a tea growing village in Hunan 湖南. For Chinese immigrants and the protagonists in this novel, the geographical origin is one of the factors that connect them with each other and initiates the construction of local community. Philip A. Kuhn, in his book *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, offers an innovative study on Chinese emigration since the Maritime Expansion in the seventeenth century. In Kuhn's discussion of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, the author mentions how Chinese migrants from similar geographic locations and backgrounds are more likely to bind together in their new locales. The construction of groups, including gangs organized by dialects, and kinship groups determined by surnames and brotherhood known as mutual-assistance societies, results from the influence from and competition with colonial powers, the British empire in Southeast Asia for instance. The groups register different



types of ties that allow Chinese immigrants to identify with their homeland and construct their identities in the host country (Kuhn 2008). Fusang and Da Yong's case indicates that geographical affinity undoubtedly helps them build a sense of belonging and identity as a group of outsiders in the United States. Their familiarity with each other results from their attachment to their common hometown.

As mentioned, Da Yong is a famously righteous gangster, who saves prostitutes like Fusang from auction in San Francisco's Chinatown. As the narrator states: "the books talk about dozens of Chinatown kingpins, but only as stereotypes. Ah Ding [Da Yong's original name] has been omitted entirely...He has the beauty of animal. When you saw him examining you from behind the flame, he looked just like a panther" (30). Moreover, "As Ah Ding lifted the flame to your face, he seemed obsessed by the proportion between your feet and body, oblivious to the fact that the police were at that very moment turning the place out" (31). As suggested by the narrator in the novel, Da Yong initially gazes upon and judges Fusang by her appearance and body just as her white johns would. However, the background Da Yong and Fusang shares differentiated their relationship from the one between a prostitute and her clients. In addition to their place of origin, more importantly, Fusang's motherly personality creates feelings of security, intimacy and homeness for Da Yong.

Da Yong's identification with Fusang further suggests his process of subject formation. Fusang is more than an object for consumption and commodification, but is constructed as an other for the purpose of identification. For Chinese immigrants who were excluded and marginalized in the United States, their desire of identification supports their will to survive in the foreign land. I suggest that Fusang functions as an other for Da Yong, and the process of subject formation is first built upon their emotional bond. After Da Yong saves Fusang from the hospital which confines Chinese patients with tuberculosis, they seem to fall in love and treat each other as family. Fusang's carefulness and consideration inspires Da Yong's memory of his hometown:

As he looked at her, what came to mind was the river back home, old and young women lined up on its bank waiting for the postman. Threaded needles stuck through their aprons, there were eating peaches or lichees or plums. One of them was his wife. The knife in his hand drooped, and he said to Fusang regretfully, If you were my wife, I'd kill you.

Fusang had never seen him so serious.

He continued, If I killed you, it would be out of love for you. Do you know that?

(...)

He certainly wanted to kill the white devils who had torn up Fusang, but the one he

wanted to kill most was Fusang herself. He'd always believed that a man only killed the woman he loved best.

He found it hard to believe that he really cared about her so much. (221-222)

The desire to kill Fusang reveals Da Yong's deep attachment and emotional bond to Fusang. On the one hand, Fusang reminds him of hometown memories and stirs up nostalgia for homeland. On the other hand, at this moment Da Yong regards Fusang as a substitute for his wife in China, particularly because the narrative shows us that "a few days before, someone brought him a message from home, saying his wife had come over to find him" (222). His intimacy with Fusang explicitly originates from his longing for his wife. In this respect, Fusang offers him an opportunity to serve as a husband through their commitment and sentiment. Da Yong can avoid being alone and excluded by obtaining security, intimacy, and a sense of homeness through his relationship with Fusang. His attachment to Fusang also defines his sense of being at home in that Fusang embodies those elements he desires while in a foreign land.

Furthermore, Fusang and Da Yong accomplish their goal of homemaking in the host country through their marriage before Da Yong is sentenced to death. Although Fusang has an intriguing relationship with Chris, she eventually decides to be Da Yong's bride. The basis of their marriage, as I argue, lies in immigrants' longing for a sense of

belonging and homeness. Meanwhile, through his marriage to Fusang, Da Yong produces an uncanny household that serves as a double; in reality, he now has two wives and two houses. On the wedding in front of the gallows, Da Yong acts as a proper groom and marries Fusang in the Chinese tradition. When the ceremony is taking place, the convergence of Fusang's beauty and Da Yong's imagination of their wedding back home demonstrates Da Yong's nostalgia and concern about his wife:

Da Yong smiled as he looked at his bride. He could thoroughly imagine her pushing the millstone, chopping firewood, shouldering baskets on a carrying pole. The Fusang he saw was beating laundry at the river, shelling peas on the threshold, waiting for him to come home. He could see the women lined up on the riverbank and Fusang running out from their midst to meet not the postman, but him, Da Yong, home at last. This was Da Yong at sixty and meeting him was Fusang at fifty.

(270)

Sally McWilliams regards the marriage of Da Yong and Fusang as representing a form of salvation for women. As she has put it, "it is not only the clear delineation between wife and whore that steadies Da Yong; it is also the equation of his wife with China and the whore with the American Chinatown. This overlay of nationalism onto the morally sanctioned and desirable woman functions to write the Chinese prostitute into a story of

alienation and displacement at hands of the Chinese man” (140). I agree with McWilliams’ statement that Fusang functions as a link that connects Da Yong and his homeland in China. However, I would further propose that Fusang registers as a symbol of local home for Da Yong, and they eventually create a home in the United States, in that Fusang becomes a married woman, not a prostitute at all. Fusang is situated in the in-between position lying between China and the United States, the traditional Chinese values of being a proper wife and the exclusion and discrimination created by the Immigrant Act and local Americans’ stereotypes. Although Fusang indeed brings Da Yong’s ashes back to China in order to fulfill his desire for return, Fusang decides to remain in San Francisco till her death. Accordingly, the marriage is significant for Fusang thanks to the transformation of her status from a whore to a wife. Her homecoming is therefore aligned with her marriage with Da Yong and her return to the United States from China after she fulfills Da Yong’s last wish. In this regard, Fusang’s in-betweenness not only lies in white and Chinese men’s consumption of her body, but more importantly, in the way that she embodies diverse cultural values, complex human relationships and sentimental bonds.

### 3. The Literary Creation of the Chinese Woman Immigrant

While the Chinese women in *Gold Mountain Blues* never physically migrate, Fusang in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* is forced to travel overseas by abduction that leads to her prostitution. In the time of early Chinese migration to North America, women were not allowed to migrate legally, and they were unwilling to be trafficked along with male migrants. Yet in *Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, Zhang Ling and Yan Geling intentionally shed light on left-behind women and female immigrants as well as their lived experiences through analepsis and meta-fictional narrative. To what extent are women migrants of importance in understanding the history of Chinese migration and the challenges Chinese migrants encounter in their host countries? Why do certain contemporary women writers centralize their narratives on women rather than men? How does the literary representation of Chinese women migrants reflect reality?

In *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, Yan Geling creates her protagonist as a prostitute, and situates her in the context of early Chinese migration in the late nineteenth century. In the meantime, she constructs the first person narrator as a fifth-generation Chinese-American female, and some critics propose that the first-person narrator functions as a semi-autobiographical subject which refers to Yan herself (Feng 2000; McWilliams 2005; Jin 2006). The construction of the first-person narrator interrupts the linear narrative of

the novel, but more importantly, the fictional dialogue between the narrator and Fusang raises interesting questions regarding the life struggle in the host country they share. As the narrator describes the similar experiences inherited from the former generations:

We flock to Chinatown too to limit our culture shock. We too crowd into cramped, shabby apartments, a group of us splitting the rent, a sense of safety a matter of everyone feeling equally unsafe, a sense of good luck a matter of everyone feeling equally unlucky. And then, just like your more immediate successors, we begin, step by cautious step, to break out into non-Chinese territory. (153)

We are no longer as goal-oriented or self-directed as our predecessors. We cannot even find direction in fighting discrimination. It comes concealed in too many different forms now; it is too subtle, too sophisticated. It is almost like an illusion, there one minute, gone the next, not like in your day, when it came in the form of thugs chasing and beating us up like Da Yong had no trouble finding and taking them down. (155)

As shown by the narrator, hostility has been haunting Chinese immigrants generation by generation. Chinatown is viewed as a home-like place that contains those who yearn for a sense of security and belonging. Furthermore, one crucial reason that Chinese immigrants flock to Chinatown is exclusion from the mainstream population and society. Sadly, the

inescapable hostility continuously keeps Chinese immigrants' localization and homemaking from mainstream recognition in the host countries. The description of early migration in the novel shows the marginalization of Fusang owing to her color, ethnicity and social status, and the fifth generation narrator describes feeling a similar sense of disenfranchisement. The literary creation of Fusang and the fifth-generation narrator therefore manifests how the broader historical and social environment of the host country has affected Chinese immigrants' settlement.

In addition to the convergence of Fusang and the narrator due to their similar background, their identity as women has influenced their migratory experience. Since Fusang was abducted and sold to a brothel in San Francisco Chinatown, her immigration can be regarded as an involuntary act. Conversely, those Chinese women who enjoy freedom and mobility in the contemporary period supposedly have a great deal of agency in constructing their subjectivity. However, some Chinese women immigrants now engage in an alternative form of prostitution, selling their bodies in exchange for green cards and wealth as the narrator describes:

What does it mean, anyway, to sell oneself? People think you sold yourself. But what about all these women around me? Times have changed. Look at all these women setting prices for themselves: a house, a car, an income of so many



thousands per year. Okay, it's a deal. They just call it something else: marriage.

Wives sell themselves nightly, their bodies mute and aloof as merchandise. In return they get three meals a day and closets and drawers full of clothes and jewelry. And this isn't the only way it's done. Some sell out for power, others for fame. Some sell themselves for a city residence permit in China or a green card in the U.S. Are there any women out there who aren't selling themselves? (224)

In this regard, the commodification of women's bodies is not unique to the initial stage of migration. The difference lies in subject's voluntary or involuntary motivation. The consumption of women's bodies through physical possession and cultural production reveals one aspect of women immigrants' fate and is affected by multiple social norms, such as patriarchy, discrimination and representation. The commodification of their bodies, to a certain extent, suggests their negotiation with patriarchy and the host country, and becomes one of their approaches to localization in the receiving society. Thus I suggest that the literary construction of Fusang is associated with Yan's reflection on her own lived experience and her observation of Chinese women migrants' life struggles. It draws our attention to Chinese women immigrants' ongoing process of subject formation and negotiation with cultural difference.

The relationship between Fusang and the narrator is built upon asynchronism as well as fictionality. In the novel, the narrator constantly asserts that Fusang is carved out from her research regarding thousands of Chinese prostitutes tracing back to the nineteenth century. The narrator's illustration of Fusang suggests a gap between the past and the present, and history and fiction. In the meantime, Yan's creation of the narrator is the manifestation of double fictional representation of Chinese women immigrants. As Wen Jin puts it, "Yan draws attention to the ways in which her representation of a nineteenth century Chinese prostitute blurs the boundary between history and fiction and questions the presumed stability of historical knowledge" (576). Similarly, Sally McWilliams also mentions this literary approach:

The text [*The Lost Daughter of Happiness*] becomes an interrogation into the processes of writing and self-representation that construct the parameters of the contemporary feminist diasporic subject and the historical narrative in which she finds herself. By contesting the rationality of linearity and the normative aspects of representation, the novel reveals the need for historical and literary connections for women of the Chinese diaspora but not at the expense of innovation, creativity, and female agency. (134)

The relationship between fiction and history is therefore borne out of Yan's double creation of Chinese women immigrants. The intervention of the narrator's voice disrupts the linear narrative and reveals the first-person narrator's power over the representation of Fusang. Moreover, her affirmation of the historicity of Fusang's background offers a certain sense of historical reality. To put it another way, Fusang is more than a fictional character, as we are assured that she may have existed in history. However, the historical books regarding Chinese prostitutes do not provide detailed descriptions of each prostitute. This situation both erases and makes room for the creation of female subjectivity. What the first-person narrator attempts to represent is Fusang's everyday life and Chinese immigrants' predicament and life struggle under the background of the Immigration Act. Thus the double creation gives voice to these Chinese female immigrants and engenders the writing of a subaltern history.

In the discourse on Chinese diaspora, immigrants are viewed as sojourners who keep close ties to their homeland through nostalgia and homesickness (Ma and Cartier 2003). However, *Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* turn to shed light on Chinese immigrants' cross-Pacific migration and shift the focal point to the host countries. Seen in light of geographical locales, both Zhang Ling and Yan Geling intend to trace Chinese immigrants' migratory trajectory in the host countries—Canada and the

United States. The notion of home in their writings is associated with the host countries instead of the homeland—China. Although the juxtaposition of homeland and host country still exist in the narrative of these novels, the ongoing process of Chinese immigrant’s negotiation between these two homes register the trajectory of their movement. According to Shelly Fisher Fishkin, “we are likely to focus not only on the proverbial immigrant who leaves somewhere called ‘home’ to make a new home in the U.S., but also on the endless of comings and goings that create familial, cultural and linguistic and economic ties across national borders” (10). It is inevitable that an author will write about the homeland in the stories of immigrants. However, I would suggest that the two novels I have analyzed offer alternative viewpoints on Chinese immigrants’ settlement and localization in their host countries. The literary representation of home space is not confined to allegorical and national implications of home. The homeness in Zhang and Yan’s novels brings on the possibility of Chinese immigrants’ settlement, and the flashback strategy both authors adopt inscribes the unofficial record of early migration through immigrants’ everyday life.

## Conclusion

*Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* focus on Chinese immigration to North America at the initial stage, and depict immigrants' everyday lives as an addendum to the historical record. Women's perspective is of particular interest in the novels. On the one hand, women descendants' root-searching and reconstruction of family genealogy challenge the conventional male-centered family tree and grand narrative. On the other hand, the female protagonists redefine the notion of home in the novels through their empowerment and subject formation within the household or through the process of cross-border movement. Migration results in the split structure of the trans-Pacific family, the absence of male members with the domestic sphere, and the possibility of homemaking in the host countries. Along with migration, women subvert their gender position and generate their agency through taking over the domestic sphere and redefining and re-conceptualizing the notion of home. I conclude that migration truly transforms women's gender role, family structure and the notion of home through negotiation with geographical boundaries, economic capital and cultural difference. Moreover, I propose that the fictional representation of Chinese immigration history creates a site where multi-layered spatial and temporal elements are embedded to reflect the ongoing process of migration and homecoming. The homemaking in the novels I

discuss is differentiated from the typical narrative of sojourners and Chinese diasporas closely tied to homeland. I argue that homemaking essentially is generated by immigrants' mobility and agency in localizing in the host country.

In *Gold Mountain Blues*, Zhang Ling appropriates history and memory for the purpose of constructing family genealogy and representing Chinese immigration through individual's everyday lived experience. The narrative shows the interaction between physical migration and fictional representation as well as the individual's reaction to history. Meanwhile, the novel calls us to rethink how the transnational flow of people, capital and culture influence identity formation and localization in migration. *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* unveils the invisible cultural encounter and conflict between Chinese immigrants and local Americans under the historical circumstances of the Immigration Act and racial discrimination. With reference to Chinese immigrants' experiences, the uniqueness of these two novels is seen in how the broader historical and social condition such as immigrant laws in North America and the political situation in China influenced and shaped Chinese immigrants' existence. I would suggest that rather than intentionally building up a close tie with the homeland, Zhang and Yan are actively engaged in unearthing historical remanence aligned with contemporary sociocultural environment in order to represent the early migration from a meta-fictional perspective.

Woman and home are two crucial devices that they use to present alternative pictures of Chinese immigrants' lived experience and survival. In the meanwhile, the geographical locales—Canada and America—and the migratory trajectory from China to North America reveal Zhang's and Yang's attitude and purpose of writing which is directly related to their identity formation.

Through the literary representation of split family structure and redefinition of home, the two novels demonstrate the tension between Chinese immigrants and local Americans as well as the uneasy process of settlement and localization. Hostility and discrimination challenge immigrants' attempts at making a home in the host countries. The perspectives of the descendant narrators raise questions about the difficulties of homemaking, suggesting that the difficulty of inclusion and recognition from mainstream society still haunts immigrants generation by generation.

## CHAPTER III

### FLEXIBLE HOME:

#### MULTIPLE TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND TRANSLOCAL

#### IMAGINATION

This chapter explores multiple transnational movements in relation to representations of homemaking within texts by two women writers: Nieh Hualing (1925-) and Chang Yuan (1963-). A group of women's migratory trajectories evoke their mobility in border-crossing as well as their gendered agency in transforming the notion of home. I focus on two women writers who belong to different generations and examine their works in order to demonstrate how representations of transnational migrations connect with transformative reconstructions of home. Through these writers' appropriation of various cultural elements from different societies, such as language, memory and history, the notion of home is continuously recreated and reinvented based on the specific time-period and geographical locales, which are inevitably driven by these migrants' longing for home. More importantly, because these two writers are well-educated and have cultural and economic capital, their middle-class status should be taken into account. It is noteworthy that homeness is culturally and materially defined with multiplicity.



Nieh Hualing's memoir *Sanbeizi* 三輩子 (*Three Lives* 2011) chronologically narrates the personal history of Nieh's lived experiences in three stages which are demarcated by the geographical locales in which she has resided, including China, Taiwan, and the United States. Nieh, as a prominent Chinese writer in the twentieth century, has experienced multiple border-crossings from China to Taiwan to the United States. Her memoir is a rich source of information on her multiple transnational movements, and also serves as a literary narrative of modern and contemporary Chinese history. By situating personal stories within a broader historical context, *Three Lives* sheds a special light on its female characters, including Nieh's mother and daughters. Although Nieh focuses on themes of exile and nostalgia in her early works including *Sangqing yu taohong* 桑青與桃紅 (*Mulberry and Peach* 1976) and *Qianshanwai shuichangliu* 千山外 水長流 (*Far Away, A River* 1985), I suggest that *Three Lives* offers an alternative interpretation and reconceptualization of themes related to home and homeland as well as the process of re/localization. I argue that *Three Lives* illuminates a textual homecoming through its diverse meanings of home, which are reconfigured through personal memory, history and lived experience. Accordingly, I read *Three Lives* through the divergent connotations of home and sense of place to contend that women's mobility makes the notion of home

fluid and contested. Nevertheless, homemaking is an ongoing process, since a newly-made home is never as real as the original.

In contrast, Chang Yuan's works represent contemporary transnational migration generated by globalization and late capitalism. Chang, a new-generation Taiwanese writer, moved to the United States in the 1990s, later relocated to Beijing, and is now currently settled in Shanghai. Her multiple relocations have greatly impacted her writing, which illustrates the connections between one female migrant's sense of location and definition of "home" in relation to how she imagines urban space as a simulacrum. If Nieh Hualing's representation of transnational migration is based on involuntary forces related to wars and politics, Chang Yuan's presentation of migration shows migrants as flexible citizens whose economic and cultural capital facilitates their localization and adaptation in the host country.

I will analyze Chang's prose collection *Dang Zhang Ailing de linju* 當張愛玲的鄰居 (*Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* 2008) to examine how local culture influences Chang's cosmopolitan representation of urban space, especially within Beijing and Shanghai. After encountering cultural differences in Taiwan, the United States, and China, Chang's conceptualization of home moves beyond kinship and marriage, and is socially and culturally constructed through multiple cultures. Chang's lived experience of border

crossing is manipulated by the global economy, and her writing represents middle-class migrants who have access to education as well as economic and cultural capital.

Furthermore, her attention to the notion of a flexible home directly relates to women's gendered agency in creating a home space. Chang reinvents the image of home through attention to materiality and diverse cultural encounters. In this way, Chang's writing shows the transformation of home from stable to fluid by virtue of hybridization of multiple cultures, including Taiwan, the United States, and China.

Seen in light of multiple border crossings, Nieh and Chang demonstrate differing types of transnational movements due to their generational differences, geographical trajectories, and social and historical backgrounds. In response, this chapter argues that the notion of home is continuously redefined through hybrid cultures, particularly in the context of women's multiple migrations.

### **Memory and Boundary Crossing in Nieh Hualing's *Three Lives***

I am a tree. The roots are in China. The trunk is in Taiwan. The branches are in Iowa. Am I a Chinese writer or a Chinese American writer? I feel like a woman with three styles of dresses, I am comfortable in each one of them. (Nieh 2011)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The quote is cited from the back cover of *Three Lives*.

To adequately examine her autobiography *Three Lives*, it is necessary to revisit similar themes of nostalgia and place in Nieh Hualing's earlier work, *Mulberry and Peach*. Nieh, a renowned Chinese writer of the twentieth century, was born in Wuhan, Hubei Province in 1925, and retreated to Taiwan after the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. After relocating to Taiwan, she served as the chief editor of the arts and literature column of *Ziyou Zhongguo* 自由中國 (*The Free China Fortnightly*) until 1960. This journal, which promoted democracy, freedom, and civil rights, was popular among intellectuals during the 1950s, yet was banned by the Kuomintang government in 1960. Nieh met Paul Engle in Taiwan in 1963 and soon after decided to accept Engle's proposal to migrate to the United States in 1964. In 1967, she co-founded the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa with Engle. To date, the program has hosted over 1400 writers from more than 140 countries. The profound influence of the International Writing Program is apparent in her literary depictions of Iowa as her third home.

*Three Lives*, revised from multiple versions of *Sansheng sanshi* 三生三世 (*One Tree Three Lives* 2004) and *Sansheng yingxiang* 三生影像 (*Three Lives in Images* 2008) which were originally published in Hong Kong and Mainland China, was released in Taiwan in 2011.<sup>21</sup> The version published in Taiwan includes more than 284 photos,

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<sup>21</sup> *Three Lives* was first published in Mainland China by Tianjin Hundred Flower Publisher in 2004, and

illustrations, and letters between Nieh, her lover Paul Engle, and her writer friends. *Three Lives* covers a long period, from 1925 to 1991 when Engle passed away, and is divided into three stages: “Guyuan 故園” (the Native Land) (1925-1949), “Ludao xiaoyequ 綠島小夜曲” (the Nocturne of Green Island) (1949-1964), and “Honglou qingshi 紅樓情事” (Love Stories in Iowa) (1964-1991). Despite the fact that this autobiography is chronological and place-based, the narrative also depends on the included photo illustrations, as well as the crucial historical, and personal events the author incorporates. In addition, the shift from one stage to another is demarcated by Nieh’s relocation, which indicates that her movement from one location to another plays a crucial role in her autobiographical narrative. The first section, “the Native Land,” ends in 1949 when Nieh and her family retreat to Taiwan with the Nationalists after the Chinese Civil War. The second section, “the Nocturne of Green Island,” depicts her short stay in Taiwan until 1964. The last section, “Love Stories in Iowa,” shares stories of Nieh’s life with Engle in Iowa. The narrative in *Three Lives*, therefore, is generated through transnational movement and Nieh’s employment of memory associated with three sites, specifically China, Taiwan and the United States.

From a female perspective, Nieh's *Three Lives* employs a grand narrative paradigm, which differentiates it from other autobiographies by women writers, which often focus on self, daily life, individual experience, desire, or the female body. In *Personal Matters*, Lingzhen Wang notes women writers' purpose of writing autobiography or autobiographical fiction:

For modern Chinese women, to write autobiographically means to negotiate their lives and senses of self, to express their (constructed and constructing) views of history, and to articulate gendered subjects (both conforming and disrupting) into history, rather than to "objectively" and retrospectively capture a socially and culturally endorsed masculine form of life. (2)

A common purpose of writing autobiography for Chinese women writers is to negotiate their self with the nation-state. However, I suggest that Nieh's autobiographical practice represents an interconnected sense of masculine history and feminine sentimentality. Her narrative transgresses women's individual experiences, and is mainly situated in the historical context of modern Chinese history. At the same time, she addresses her personal experience and subjective emotions in response to the grand narrative of history dominated by men. The gendered subject in her narrative is no longer objectified, but actively participates in the construction of historical narrative.

To situate her personal story within history, Nieh highlights the Chinese Civil War as filtered through her childhood and teenage memories in the first section. In “Weicheng 圍城” (Fortress Besieged), which shares its title with Qian Zhongshu’s 錢鍾書 famous novel, Nieh describes her wedding ceremony, which took place during the time when the Communists intruded into Beijing in 1947. As Nieh writes:

As a matter of fact, I was the only passenger on the plane.

And that was the last flight from Nanjing to Beijing. The Communists had besieged Beijing. After the plane landed, the Communists took over the airport.

I suddenly felt lost in a big northern family, and also got married suddenly. Zhenglu and his brother got married simultaneously, and the wedding was held amidst the thunder of artillery. The parents congratulated them with good words. Artillery dropped around the wedding hall, and firecrackers were not needed at all. (142)

Since marriage is widely considered as one of the most important events in a woman’s life, Nieh deliberately represents her wedding in great detail. Because the wedding and Communist take-over of Beijing happen simultaneously, her personal experience becomes intertwined with political turbulence. Through the essay, we understand that Nieh not only tells her personal stories, but more importantly, she also presents historical events and her emotional reactions to them. This example shows how Nieh treats

individual lived experience and grand historical narratives equally by placing her personal matters in the context of modern Chinese history.

In addition, Nieh defines her exile in relation to politics and history while her conceptualization of home is closely tied to the nation. She experienced the Chinese Civil war as an exiled student and faced political persecution under the Kuomintang (KMT) government during the White Terror period. As the subtitles of the first section, “Liulang 流浪” (Exile) and “Taowang 逃亡” (Escape) show us, the state of being an exiled student dominates Nieh’s childhood and teenage memory. For instance, she recalls being a student at the National Central University in Nanjing, China:

On the night of August 10th 1945, Wang Zhenglu, Xu Shiqing, Yuan Ling, and I wandered around South Park in Chongqing in a terrified mood. They talked about the Kuomintang and the Communists, where to go, right or left? At that time, many young people stood at the crossroad between right and left. My family suffered from tragedy during the Republican political revolution. And now, the revolution came again. (137)

Nieh’s sense of exile is interwoven with different historical and political events. Her female perspective offers an alternative angle from which to understand exile, which is also a major theme in her well-known work *Mulberry and Peach*. Through her position



as a female subject, her autobiographical narrative draws upon common people's daily lives and suffering during times of war, as well as the notions of an exiled consciousness, nostalgia, migration, and remigration. It is evident that Nieh's writing shows that *jia* (family) and *guo* (nation) are indivisible.

*Mulberry and Peach* was first published in 1976, and it depicts the experiences of two Chinese women in exile—Mulberry and Peach—who are actually one. It narrates Mulberry's movement from post-war China, to Taiwan, and then to the United States. Peach is Mulberry's schizophrenic self who is interviewed by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, and she keeps writing letters to the immigration officers when she is on the road. Nieh employs spatial movement and discontinuous time to disrupt linear time and male-centered historical narrative. The structure of *Mulberry and Peach* alternates between Peach's letters and Mulberry's diary entries. It displays Mulberry's and Peach's movements between China, Taiwan, and the United States, and yet it does not explicitly describe each historical period. The discourse of the novel is carried out through the parallel forms of the narrative and the letters and diaries to unveil Chinese migrants' experiences of the unhomely. *Mulberry and Peach* can be read as Nieh's first narrative of women migrants' exile and sense of rootlessness. Furthermore, the narrative is fragmentary, constructed by weaving together key historic moments in modern Chinese

history (Ma 49). Through the embodiment of the allegorical implication that the women migrants' lives symbolize the fate of the nation in the Cold-war period, it shows Chinese migrants' displacement and detachment from the nation state of the motherland—China as well as the host country—the United States.<sup>22</sup>

However, in contrast to *Mulberry and Peach*, *Three Lives*' depiction of Nieh's relocation in the United States and reconstruction of home turns rootlessness into rootedness. In Nieh's literary works, women's agency and mobility make it possible to recreate "home" spaces in different locations in order to negotiate with nation-states. I propose that the creation and recreation of "home" in relation to the author's history of exile can be regarded as a crucial motif. On the one hand, she constructs home as a space, on which women rely to construct gender roles within the household. On the other hand, homemaking can be regarded as a means of articulating women's agency and capital, so women can negotiate and employ cultural differences in creating and imagining home space. Home is a trope that women writers adopt to present and construct their subjectivities. As Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti write concerning the relation between novels and the domestic sphere, "In writing from a domestic space of house, household,

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<sup>22</sup> For more discussion, see Sau-Ling Wong, "Afterword" 209-230; Sheng-mei Ma, "Immigrant Schizophrenic in Asian Diaspora Literature" 40-62; Sau-Ling C. Wong "The Stakes of Textual Border-Crossing: Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* in Sinocentric, Asian American, and Feminist Critical Practices" 130-152.

and family, women writers can create a position in the field of cultural production from which to value ordinary women's lives, the quotidian, and the minute" (843). Home is a key signifier in Nieh's *Three Lives* that shows the audience the relation between homemaking and subject formation.

In the context of boundary-crossing, home is neither fixed nor stable, but fluid and constantly redefined and recreated. According to Shelly Mallet's "Understanding Home," "home is a virtual place, a repository for memories of the lived space. It locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space" (63). Homes are imprinted with memories, time, and space, and are also associated with familial relationships. This definition is radically different from the essential concept of home as a fixed, secure, and settled space. In this case, conceptions of home and spaces that cannot be defined as a home are not oppositional but mutually defined. In "Home and Away," Sara Ahmed argues that home and "away" are not divided spaces by pointing out the importance of "strangeness" in making a home: "There is always an encounter with strangeness at stake, even within the home: the home does not secure identity by expelling strangers, but requires those strangers to establish relations of proximity" and distance within the home, and not just between home and away" (340). She also asserts that "there is already

strangeness and movement within home itself” (340), so the concept of home can be reinvented through migration. Home and “away” are not contradictory but intertwined.

In *Three Lives*, there are different layers of homeness, including home as familial space, as nation, and as constructed literary field. Meanwhile, geographical locations also define different home spaces. Avtar Brah discusses diasporic space, wherein the differences between home as a space where people live and home as a space where people come from are significant:

On the one hand, “home” is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of “origin.” On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells. (192)

Brah’s discussion on home for diaspora points to place of origin and current locale of residence. Similarly, Nieh’s autobiography lays out different definitions of “home.” Her reinvention of home is associated with lived experience and regarded as a strategy of localization within diverse environments. In addition, Nieh’s access to the idea of home is not only accomplished through occupying a physical dwelling, but also by writing an autobiography that portrays her lost, real, and ideal homes.

## 1. Family and Individual Memory in War-Time China

Since *Three Lives* is an autobiography, individual memory centralizes the narrative to reflect the author's lived experience. Generally speaking, home space is crucial to one's individual social network and relationships, and family is fundamental to the construction of home space. Since autobiography originates from one's self and individual story, depictions of familial relationships and household memories have an important impact on autobiographical writing. Thus the first section of Nieh's *Three Lives* is structured in terms of the intimate familial relationships she experiences, especially during her childhood and teenage years living in war-time China.

First, Nieh's familial relationships have been formed and reformed through notions of kinship and intimacy. The absence of male figures in her life forces her to behave as the head of her household. Her father served as an official for the nationalist government and was killed by the Communists in 1936. In *Three Lives*, Nieh recalls the scene when she learned of her father's death: "Mother did not say anything but lowered her head and walked home. Right after we got home, mother looked for 'Wuhan Daily News,' which was on the table and nobody had touched it. Mother unfolded the newspaper, with the title saying, 'The Martyrdom of Guizhou Official Nieh Nufu'" (73). Furthermore, Nieh's first husband, Wang Zhenglu, is a translator who works overseas; they are separated for

such a long time that their marriage ends in divorce. Because of this fact, she seldom mentions her first husband in her writing. Since she does not have significant male family members, she builds close relationships with her mother and daughters. She takes on many family responsibilities, including accompanying her female kin in the retreat to Taiwan, before eventually relocating to the United States. As she writes: “I was not happy in the first few years in Taiwan. I started writing, worked two jobs, and did translation in order to support my family. My family’s burdens caused me much pressure” (182). Nieh’s autobiography reflects the close ties she shares with her female kin and the importance of women in her literary creation.

In addition, since *Three Lives* can be categorized as a woman’s autobiography, female experience is central to the narrative. Her relationship with her mother, for instance, is one of the most important memories she deliberately portrays, and her relationship with her own daughters is equally important. At the beginning of the autobiography, Nieh portrays her family through her mother’s perspective. She explains that her family reflects the typical, patriarchal structure of Chinese families within the Republican era. Her mother experiences the transformation from the late imperial era to the Republican, and subscribes to some traditional ideas and habits, while also developing some modern behaviors:

Mother's mind is semi-open, much like her half-bound feet, always wearing embroidered shoes. Mother wears glasses, and looks civilized like a May Fourth woman. She embraces new things, and also enjoys reading *Wisdom in Chinese Proverbs*: women should cherish chastity while men should follow talented sages. She memorizes *Three Character Classics*, and always has *The Dream of Red Chamber* and *Romance of the Western Chamber* by her bed. (36)

Nieh's mother is a talented woman who marries into a patriarchal family and suffers from oppression as a result. In "Muqin de zibai 母親的自白" (Mother's Confession), Nieh writes from her mother's perspective to illustrate her mother's marriage and the family's history during the war. Nieh situates her mother in the center of her autobiographical narrative to reverse traditional conceptions of male-centered biography and autobiography. The mother/female-oriented narrative thus contributes to her autobiographical practice as a means of giving voice to women and reconstructing their subjectivities.

Nieh employs familial memory to represent the places where her family has lived, including Wuhan, which is her hometown; Taipei, a temporary lodging; and Iowa, her present locale. The depiction of several places where her family has stayed while in exile illuminates family memories. For example, Sandouping (三斗坪), which she depicts in

her fiction *Shiqu de jinlingzi* 失去的金鈴子 (*The Lost Golden Bell* 1964) as well as

*Three Lives*, is actually her mother's grandmother's home:

The slope of Sandouping is a soil-made stairway, but going up from the river dam, it is flagstone. Then Sandouping is over there [...] Sandouping is full of special smells, a mixture of sunshine, soil, grass and mildew.

I was thirteen then. Autumn, 1938.

Mother's grandmother was living in Sandouping. (89)

Nieh shows that the tie between mother and daughter is inherited generation by generation. In *The Lost Golden Bell*, she also writes of this place, and then subsequently mentions it in the postscript “Lingzi shi wo ma? 苓子是我嗎?” (Am I the Heroine?): “After all these years, my longing has turned the other way—back to Sandouping. I long to return there and relive my life” (137).<sup>23</sup> In this regard, Nieh is deeply attached to Sandouping due to both the intimate mother-daughter relationship she experiences as well as the sense of belonging it offers her. The depiction of family-oriented places, such as Sandouping and Wuhan, is repeatedly revisited in her autobiographical narrative.

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<sup>23</sup> Translation is quoted from Hsin-sheng Kao's *Nativism Overseas*, 132.



Nieh's homecoming with her daughters affects how one reads her representations of her native land. After thirty years, Nieh, her daughters, and her second husband Paul Engle return to Wuhan and the Yangzi River. She narrates:

The Yellow Crane Tower of the river has disappeared, but I am coming back with my husband and daughters. I will certainly visit the river and travel by boat with my family, all the Nieh family. Surely, I will go on board at Jiang Han where father's coffin with the funeral scroll written by my grandfather was sent back.

Now, at the moment my foot earnestly steps on the boat, my life is totally complete.

Then I pray to my mother: mom, you can rest in peace. (403)

This conceptualization of coming home refers to her connection with the native land, the past, and childhood memories. Additionally, what makes her life complete is not simply the process of returning home, but the fact that she experiences this homecoming while accompanied by her family. The representation of her native land and homecoming is, therefore, interwoven with past, present, and multiple family ties. Homecoming is accomplished in a certain space and time.

## 2. Nation, Exile, and History in Writing Taiwan

Exile and nostalgia are the most central themes in Nieh Hualing's previous works as well as in *Three Lives. Mulberry and Peach*, which some critics regard as semi-autobiographical, depicts one exiled woman's experiences of transnational migration. The theme of being in exile is narrated again and again in Nieh's fictions and other literary works in order to display the rootlessness of the exile generation. Nieh herself also mentions that the twentieth century is the century of politically-induced exile, whether by choice or by force (490). Accordingly, in addition to personal memory, *Three Lives* represents the association between family and nation, and contributes to the writing of history and representations of nation from a woman's perspective.

Nieh Hualing's retreat to Taiwan and her further migration to the United States both result from political persecution, the former because of the Chinese Civil war, and the latter because of the White Terror in Taiwan.<sup>24</sup> Because her migrations are involuntary, she defines herself as in exile. In addition to home and family, her representations of homeland are associated with the nation and politics; her homeland without a doubt is Mainland China where she was born and grew up. Thus, memories of war dominate her narratives of China both when she lived there as well as afterwards, as she moves to

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<sup>24</sup> White Terror refers to the period of 1949 to 1987 when martial law was lifted. Some intellectuals and elites who were considered political dissidents were suppressed by the KMT.

different places, such as Beijing and Chongqing. She recalls her memories of war in Chongqing as an exilic student:

The anti-Japanese war was lost in 1944. The Japanese troops invaded Guizhou, and then Sichuan. Many male fellows joined the army, and my brother Hanzhong also joined the air force in spite of mother's concern. Is the nation alive or dead?

Nobody had an answer. (137)

Her sense of exile and rootlessness is definitively political. As an intellectual, actively participating in politics is regarded as a revolutionary and liberal behavior associated with modernity. Nieh's focus on the continued response to the political situation of the nation indicates that her concerns move beyond home and family to the nation as a whole.

If *Mulberry and Peach* could be understood and read as a national allegory, this autobiography, to a certain extent, realistically represents modern Chinese history associated with wars and exile. Nieh's exile to different places during the war is marked by specific political events. Nieh situates her narrative in a broader historical context in order to realistically record the political situation, and she constantly and sentimentally expresses her nostalgia and homesickness for her family in southern China. In this case, representations of home and nation are built upon her reaction to political turbulence and negotiation with the nation-state.

Because of the nature of exile, the state of being always on the road becomes a fundamental theme in *Three Lives*. Nieh describes her route from southern to northern China, and her identity as an outsider in Beijing:

In the early March 1949, people were allowed to pass through the Northern liberated area and the Kuomintang dominated area. After receiving the permit, we packed up right away.

After having arrived in Beijing from Nanjing a few months earlier, I had not heard from mother and had no idea where my mother, brothers, and sisters were. The South and North were totally different worlds: the North was conservative while the South was open. I am only an outsider in that big family. I would definitely return to the Yangtze River. (144-145)

Even though she is away from her home, the close ties to her natal land persist. Her depictions of travel routes during the war suggest her own rootlessness and the uncertainty of the nation's fate. Living in this divided society and sharing a fate with the nation results in the creation of Nieh's identity as an outsider. Her unfamiliarity with Beijing evokes her homesickness for the South, which is her place of origin. In addition, Nieh expresses the notion of home through different perspectives with attention to issue

of displacement and dislocation. In the end, Nieh's definition of home is bound to the fate of the nation to a certain extent.

Nieh's section on Taiwan is more about trauma and alienation than homecoming and intimate attachment to a certain place. While living in Taiwan, Nieh served as the literary editor for *Free China*, which is a liberal journal promoting democracy and freedom. However, this journal was banned in 1960 by the KMT government, and the journal's major members were arrested and put in prison. Nieh was also under surveillance and suffered under martial law. Therefore, her memories of Taiwan are traumatic and given the least attention in her autobiography. Her exilic experience and memories of Taiwan illustrate how she was confined to her house due to political oppression.

As shown in her autobiography as well as in *Mulberry and Peach*, political persecution forces exilic subjects to be confined in a certain space – a space that can be both spiritual and physical. Exiled subjects are forced to remove themselves from mainstream society. In *Mulberry and Peach*, the female protagonist Mulberry flees to Taiwan and stays in an attic; the confining space of the attic is depicted as alienating and comes to symbolize the history of the location. Nieh portrays Mulberry's temporal residence in Taiwan:

The little attic window looks out over the street, and peering out from the left side of the window, we can see the roof and the fence of the house at Number Three. Peering out from the right side we can see the roof and the fence of the house at Number Five. Crows fly away above the rooftops. Directly across from the window is the blackened chimney of a crematorium. We don't dare stand in front of the window for fear someone might see us. (118)

The attic symbolizes the tension and horror that haunted people during the White Terror period of 1950s Taiwan. The attic in *Mulberry and Peach* symbolizes Nieh's lived reality of suffering and constant surveillance as described in *Three Lives*. This intertextuality becomes an extension of trauma repeatedly presented in Nieh's works. The attic and thus her lived experiences haunt one another; the trauma of isolation finally results in her migration to the United States.

Similarly, the representation of segregated space illuminates Nieh's response to trauma: Nieh confines herself to her house located on Songjiang Road in Taipei. Nieh addresses both the geographical location as well as the surveillance that occurs outside of her house in Taiwan:

No. 3, Alley 124 Songjiang Road was my house in Taipei then. At that time, there were only a few alleys on Songjiang Road situated in the empty field. The location

is secluded and inconvenient...I took my mother and family and fled from the Mainland to Taiwan, how could we have had freedom to choose our location? My family moved to Songjiang Road with uncertainty. (212-213)

By mapping the site of her home space in Taipei, Nieh physically locates herself far from the center of the city at the same time as she spiritually locates her family's suffering within the confinement of the home. The political oppression of the Mainlanders under KMT dominance causes Nieh's family to suffer persecution. In addition to the political environment, Nieh's predicament may result from patriarchy. As James Clifford maintains, "Life for women in diasporic situations can be doubly painful—struggling with material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with demands of family and work, and with claims of old and new patriarchies" (259). Nieh not only suffers from political suppression by the KMT government, but more importantly, her responsibility as a household head comes from the absence of male figures. By tracing the exilic routes and locations where she and her family stayed, Nieh interweaves geopolitics with personal and historical transformation.

In contrast to a woman's autobiography on trivial matters in the domestic sphere, Nieh's narrative goes far beyond individual experience, and is placed in a broader historical context. As Nieh notes in *Three Lives*, "Seen through my eyes, politics is one

drama and another. I am concerned about politics but unwilling to participate in them. What I am interested in is people on the political stage” (193). As she suggests in these lines, in addition to the grand narrative of history, individual reactions to politics and history become the main concern of *Three Lives*. Nieh intentionally draws on the transformation of history and politics to depict personal lived experiences. The representations of native lands therefore draw on the lost homeland, which I regard as an “ideal and nostalgic” home to which exiles would never move back but to which they long to return. In contrast, the depiction of home in Taiwan is more about trauma. As suggested here, politics and national history help to shape conceptualizations of home, in which people’s lived experience is closely tied to the fate of the nation as Nieh demonstrates in her autobiographical writing.

### **3. Boundary Crossing and Reinventing Home in the United States**

Since *Three Lives* originates from Nieh Hualing’s past and present lived experience, her multiple boundary crossings contribute to a distinct transnational perspective. If Sara Ahmed’s home and “away” are not contradictory, how can home be reinvented after such a migration? I contend that Nieh’s mobility is generated from her economic and cultural capital, including her family, talent, and creative writing, which allow her to recreate a



new home in Iowa. The notion of home in her U.S. experience is constructed in various forms, such as her second marriage to Paul Engle and their International Writing Program.

In general, home and “away” are understood as two contradictory routes, but they actually connect through migration. As Ahmed remarks, “the home as skin suggests the boundary between self and home is permeable, but also that the boundary between home and away is permeable as well. Here, movement is also movement within the constitution of home as such” (341). At the same time, Susheila Nasta argues in *Home Truths* that “the question of home becomes reconfigured with this space. For diaspora does not only create an unrequited desire for a lost homeland, but also ‘home desire,’ a desire to reinvent and rewrite home as much as a desire to come to terms with an exile from it” (7). Accordingly, the making and remaking of home is understandable in light of the desire for home as an exile. In addition to nostalgia for homeland, the recreation of home is important in relocating to a new place. Nieh’s relocation to Iowa as depicted in *Three Lives* is a good example of interpreting the desire for home, which sets her autobiography apart from her previous works, which tend to exemplify longing for return and nostalgia for homeland.

Why is the reinvention of home crucial to understanding Nieh Hualing's previous nostalgia and sense of exile as well as her state of being in the United States? I argue her second marriage to Engle makes it possible for her to generate agency in her new host country. Although her migration to the United States results at least in part from political forces, she eventually finds a location where she can settle down permanently. She describes her making of a new home in Iowa in geographical and physical details:

We eventually made our home in a red house located on the hill along the Iowa River. I love willows, so Paul plants one in front of our house. The willow sways by the window reflecting a river scene...My study room faces the Iowa River, and the willow by the river evokes feelings of nostalgia. Paul sets a mirror by my desk, facing another window, to reflect another river south (Jiang nan). While being with Paul and living between two "south rivers" in his native land, I feel very satisfied. Paul knows that I am in his home and feels grateful. (326-327)

The dwelling in Iowa marks a new start for Nieh through relocation. The reconfiguration of home with Engle also creates the space of love and security which she has longed for, so the desire for home is fulfilled through her homemaking and localization in Iowa. On the other hand, the physical and geographical setting in Iowa is similar to that of her homeland and thus accomplishes her longing for return to her homeland. The overlapping

of similar landscapes from her homeland and her present location contributes to the complete process of homecoming.

Cultural encounters further bring on the reconfiguration of home through boundary crossing migration. In addition to her marriage and family life in Iowa, the foundation of the International Writing Program can be regarded as reinvention and an extension of the concept of home imprinted in a physical locale like Iowa. The International Writing Program is constituted by different members of various ethnicities who share similar experiences to make home a possibility. Writers from different countries share similar exilic experiences, and finally they are redeemed through residing in such a new home as Iowa. The construction of home is accomplished through cultural differences, and every member of this home keeps a close tie to it.

Besides, the home of the International Writing Program blurs the boundary between private and public spheres, and demonstrates Nieh's global concern and transnational perspective in creating home space. In this way, it is the collective memory of exile that constructs home. Here, I propose that the concept of home moves beyond one's household and nation, and that it is transnationally bounded. In the last section entitled "Liufangying 流放吟" (The Chant of Exile—the Twentieth Century), Nieh illustrates several exilic writers' experiences from different countries. For instance, she discusses

Sahar Khalifen, a writer from Palestine who came to Iowa several times from 1978-1988.

Nieh quotes Khalifen's letter to her and Engle in her autobiography:

Being an Arabian, a Palestinian and a feminist, I feel confused about the United States consciously and emotionally. However, to me, Iowa is always the most beautiful part of the United States. Race, nationality and religion are just symphony and variation, but not conflict and split. (521)

It is obvious that the home space here crosses lines of race, nationality, gender, and cultural boundaries, and reaches a broader ideal home constituted within collective memories of exile.

Through her marriage and the founding of the International Writing Program, *Three Lives* offers an alternative angle of localization that is differentiated from Nieh's previous writing, which focused on nostalgia and rootlessness. Dwelling on a specific locale allows exiles like Nieh to represent the host country in terms of localization. This depiction of Iowa shows her attachment to the new land:

The beauty of Iowa can be understood only when you dwell upon this fertile land.

The people of Iowa are as steady as the fertile land. In this unreliable world, this place and these people instill a sense of security and stability. (312)

My life seems to be three lives—the Mainland, Taiwan, and Iowa. It almost all

happens on the river—the Yangzi River, the Jialing River, and the Iowa River. Paul and I experience different lives separately. In this red building and deer garden, we recall those already lost, and feel attached to what we have at present. (328)

Nieh's attachment to the United States indicates that her memories of the past and present are tangled together to shape her autobiographical narrative of migration. The localization does not refer to the total abandonment of homeland and/or memories; instead, it offers a new angle in understanding Nieh's memories of the past and present, which are imprinted throughout her autobiography.

In *Three Lives*, home is redefined and reconfigured in terms of multiple boundary-crossing movements. From nostalgia and rootlessness to locatedness, it is worth noticing that the trajectory of homemaking is an ongoing process through time and space. In Nieh's previous works, her sense of exile dominates her narrative due to her personal experiences with political turbulence. However, after experiencing multiple transnational migrations, the writing of different locales exemplifies the process of localization rather than nostalgia and rootlessness. Nieh mentioned in an interview that after moving to the U.S., she wondered if she should start to write in English or keep her mother language. Accordingly, she did not write for a couple of years, and then she started to write again in

Chinese.<sup>25</sup> This choice brought the birth of her famous work *Mulberry and Peach*.

Therefore, the only thing she preserves after crossing multiple boundaries is her mother language. Afterwards, she published several works, and most of them are about textual homecoming. Besides *Mulberry and Peach*, she wrote *Far Away, A River*, which documents textual homecoming. It is noteworthy that she continually writes stories of homecoming, whether they concern women in exile as in *Mulberry and Peach* or a Chinese-American daughter who goes to Stone City in Iowa to search for her father's native land in *Far Away, A River*. I contend that the notion of homecoming is actually accomplished through her writing, more than through her memories of physically returning to an imagined homeland. *Three Lives*, therefore, offers an alternative understanding of the purpose of writing homecoming stories.

*Three Lives* covers more than sixty years and crosses three geographical boundaries to narrate both personal experiences and modern Chinese history. It not only shows Nieh's emotional expression toward home/homeland, but also explicitly represents exilic people's lived experiences and trajectories in such a transformative world. Through writing such an autobiography, Nieh's homecoming is finally accomplished.

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<sup>25</sup> See the documentary film on Nieh Hualing: *One Tree Three Lives* (Angie Chen, 2012).

## Translocal Representation of Chinese Urban Space in Chang Yuan's *Being Eileen*

### *Zhang's Neighbor*

While Nieh Hualing's *Three Lives* deals with history, nation, and personal life during a time of political turbulence, Chang Yuan's prose collection *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* highlights migrants' mobility and capital in transnational movement in the age of late capitalism. Chang Yuan, a female Taiwanese writer, moved to the United States in the 1990s, and then relocated to Beijing, and is now currently residing in Shanghai. She received her bachelor's degree from the Department of Chinese Literature at the National Taiwan University, and her master's degree of cultural studies from New York University. She worked as a reporter for the *World Journal*, and has published eight books, including two novels, five novellas, and one prose collection.<sup>26</sup> Her first two books—*Women in the Locker Room* and *The Night of the Flood*—are feminist writings that address issues related to women's private lives, liberation, and sexuality. Following the same line, her literary representations of migrants' experiences are built upon a female perspective, but put more emphasis on women migrants' engagement with local societies. In addition, her writing, particularly short stories, has been influenced by Eileen Zhang, because she has

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<sup>26</sup> Chang Yuan's works include *Genyishi de nuren* 更衣室的女人 (*Women in the Locker Room* 1997), *Dashui zhi ye* 大水之夜 (*The Night of the Flood* 2000), *Yi* 疫 (*The City of Plague* 2003), *Cajian er guo* 擦肩而過 (*Two Ships in the Night* 2005), *Dang Zhang Ailing de linju* 當張愛玲的鄰居 (*Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* 2008), *Yuejie* 越界 (*Crossing the Border* 2009), *Zhuangren tange* 雙人探戈 (*It Takes Two to Tango* 2011), and *Jiu'ai* 舊愛 (*Old Flame* 2012).

read many of Zhang's work in college (Li 2015). Being a fan of Eileen Zhang makes Chang Yuan learn more about Shanghai in Zhang's works. After relocating in Shanghai, Eileen Zhang's writing becomes a major source for Chang Yuan to explore and localize in the local society. Chan Yuan's fandom thus contributes to the birth of her prose collection *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor*.

Chang Yuan's multiple relocations to Taiwan, the United States, and China have influenced her writing of migrants' trajectories, everyday life, and urban space. Her writing sheds light on women migrants' connection with different geographical locales on the basis of local conditions and memories of homeland. Her first novel *The City of Plague* (2003) depicts Taiwanese immigrants in New York City, and includes the "new" Chinatown in Flushing in the depiction of Taiwanese immigrants' local community and their sense of belonging (Hsieh 2009). Her other works depict transnational movement and the literary representation of four cities, Taipei, New York, Beijing, and Shanghai, which are the cities Chang has inhabited. Here, I pay special attention to *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* (2008), which portrays Chinese cities from the cosmopolitan viewpoint of migrants who are well-versed in western civilization and multiculturalism.

*Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* is divided into two major sections: "Nuyueke zai Beijing 紐約客在北京" (New Yorker in Beijing) and "Shanghai fuqian" 上海浮潛



(Floating in Shanghai). Both address Chang's observations of everyday life in these two cities she regards as "new homes" from the perspective of a foreigner, with emphasis on the cities' urban landscapes, cultural differences, and social phenomena. After encountering cultural differences in multiple societies, Chang represents urban spaces as enclaves which are socially and culturally constructed as sites of translocal imagination and cultural hybridization. According to their review of scholarship on translocality, Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak conclude:

The central idea of translocality is aptly synthesized by Brickell and Datta (2011a, p. 3) as "situatedness during mobility." Authors engaging in the development of a translocal perspective seek to integrate notions of fluidity and discontinuity associated with mobilities, movements and flows on the one hand with notions of fixity, groundedness and situatedness in particular settings on the other. (376)

In a similar vein, Yingjin Zhang defines translocal as "place-based imagination [that] reveals dynamic process of the local/global (or glocal)—processes that involve not just the traffic of capital and people but that of ideas, images, styles, and technologies across places in polylocality" (136). Along these lines, translocality offers an analytical paradigm for us to examine the flow of people and knowledge between the global and the local, and more importantly, it emphasizes both mobility and rootedness to suggest that

there is a close connection between subject and place. While people can freely migrate among places, they can build up a network and identify with places at their own will. I adopt the notion of translocality to analyze Chang's writing, in that she employs different cultural models and various cultural elements in writing about Chinese urban space. I regard her writing as an example of translocal imagination based on her multiple transnational movements and her flexible relations with various cities, and propose that her writing embodies both mobility and situatedness.

Moreover, since Chang's multiple border crossings are manipulated by the global economy, her writing specifically addresses middle-class migrants who have accumulated education and capital. The literary representations of Beijing and Shanghai in Chang's work are constructed in relation to women's agency and upward mobility. The image of place is not only reinvented by material and cultural encounters and migratory trajectories, but also reveals how local urban space in China is transformed and created by middle-class migrants' privilege and cosmopolitanism.

### **1. American Guest from Taiwan**

Who am I? American, Chinese and Taiwanese play a part of my identity formation.

Taiwan is mother and birthplace, whether good or bad. The United States is a

partner that provides job, house, and responsibility. Shanghai is like a lover, the present tense. Everything is being discovered and ongoing. (Yao 32)

Chang's self-identification is worth noting: similar to the tree metaphor in Nieh Hualing's conceptualization of home, Chang adopts social networks to define her relationship with three sites and political entities, including Taiwan, the United States, and Shanghai. It is not surprising that Taiwan, as her place of origin, is portrayed as a mother, which one cannot choose and is subject to destiny. It is common for immigrants to call their home country their "mother land." Meanwhile, the United States as a host country is defined as a partner that offers a flourishing environment for immigrants to study abroad, build careers, and settle with their families. Chang Yuan is one of those individuals who have pursued the "American dream," settled into a new life, and built up ties to the host land. In addition to Chang's bonds with Taiwan and the United States, her bond with Shanghai is represented in a romantic light, associated with freshness, adventure, discovery, and exploration. Through Chang's conceptualization of her sense of place, it is obvious that her identity formation is complex and ongoing in that she keeps different ties with multiple locales and adopts various elements for self-identification while moving around the world as a cosmopolitan.

“American Guest from Taiwan,” which literally refers to someone who migrates from Taiwan to the United States, is a phrase Chang creates to define herself, which points to the hybridization of multiple identities. The phrase is first used in the subtitle of *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor: “Taiwan liumeike de jinghu shenghuo ji 台灣留美客的京滬生活記”* (The Beijing and Shanghai Diary of an American Guest from Taiwan). Chang’s self-identification is clearly articulated through her multicultural background, and draws our attention to her self-positioning as a cosmopolitan. Her identity is thus fluid and porous depending on her sense of place and current state of being, and also contributes to her representation of urban space by employing various cultural elements from Taiwan, the United States, and China. As an American guest from Taiwan, she implicitly negotiates between homeland and host countries. The status of being an American guest from Taiwan represents at least two boundary crossings between Taiwan and the United States. Her writing, therefore, establishes a new paradigm of transnational migration, and depicts local life and culture instead of expressing nostalgia for the homeland. It represents the local but also transnational culture from an “in-between” perspective. As Homi Bhabha defines “in-betweeness”:

Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such

spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an “in-between” temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. (148)

The in-betweenness is related to a given time and space, and links the subjects with multidirectional production and reproduction of representing the world. In Chang’s case, the in-betweenness is derived from her own positioning as a guest who moves around different geographical locales. Her representations of places are hybrid, melding multiple cultures into a postmodern product that can be produced by her self-positioning with the world.

However, unlike Nieh Hualing’s (self-)exile due to political turbulence, Chang Yuan’s mobility results from her economic and cultural capital, and is motivated by economic reasons. She can be seen as one who has access to a particular type of “flexible citizenship” and who is able to choose her place of settlement and citizenship by virtue of economic-driven concerns. According to Aihwa Ong, “flexible citizenship” can be defined as follows:

Flexible citizenship refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their request to accumulate capital and

social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes. (6)

In this reference, negotiation and renegotiation with different political entities and power structures encourages cultural producers' representation of place. As Chang's transnational movement is due to her husband's career, her mobility and self-identification is generated by the accumulation of economic and cultural capital. She is mostly free from the confinement of a certain political entity and nationality, but constructs a hybrid identity as an "American Guest from Taiwan." This identity embodies her agency in being able to use and conceptualize cultures in multiple sites.

Interestingly, the notion of a "guest" is opposed to the notion of a "host" and refers to the temporal status of immigrants within their host countries. On the one hand, "guest" can be associated with Chang's mobility and fluid identity. On the other hand, it points to a salient boundary between resident and immigrant, in that immigrants may experience a sense of rootlessness in the host land such that they are forever understood as guests. In addition to being an American guest from Taiwan, "guest of New York" is another term frequently used in Chang Yuan's writing. "Niuyueke 紐約客" (New Yorker) can be literally translated into two ways: New Yorker and guest of New York. Though she

identifies as a New Yorker, Chang identifies with the city in terms of her lived experience.

For instance, the opening paragraph of “Zhuzai Beijing 住在北京” (Living in Beijing)

tells us:

I was lucky to be a resident of New York for a couple of years. I moved back and forth between Manhattan by subway and indulged in its uniqueness. New York was always my ideal place for work and entertainment, no matter where I had moved to, whether Queens or Bergen County in New Jersey. In my mind, I regarded myself as a New Yorker. (21)

Her daily life in New York stimulates Chang’s attachment to the city and her identity is similar to that of other New Yorkers’.

In contrast, there is another side to Chang’s lived experiences, which strongly distinguishes her immigrant experience from that of the residents:

The Chinese television series *A Native of Beijing in New York* was very popular several years ago. It tells the stories of Beijing immigrants in New York and their American dream. The prosperity of Manhattan has amazed visitors, but once you have settled down, you need to confront survival issues. In addition to bustling avenues, there are dark and desolate alleys. This is the major difference between visitor and resident. (23)

This paragraph illustrates the difficulty Chang experiences living in her host country.

While one might imagine that immigrants can fulfill the American dream by living a good life and getting accustomed to the environment, the boundary between visiting and living leads to immigrants' self-positioning as temporal guests. They hardly become native-born residents in the host country. Thus, "guest of New York" is another identity Chang incorporates to understand her experiences as a migrant woman writer.

If "guest of New York" registers only one geographical reference, the identity of "American guest from Taiwan" contributes to a more complex identity formation, in that at least two cultures are necessary in the construction of this new identity. As Chang notes in the introduction, "All I write is a Beijing and Shanghai diary of an American guest from Taiwan. Taiwan and the United States are two cultural models" (12). Without a doubt, Chang consciously adopts and appropriates her multicultural experiences to write about her daily life in China. Her observations on Chinese cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, are built upon her migratory remains as an outsider. For example, Chang adopts standards of American culture to evaluate her quality of life in China. In one instance, she uses U.S. dollars to assess prices in Beijing:

Our fastidiousness is to live in the United States with our standard towards housing.

Thus it is usually very expensive to meet our expectations. As a contrast, there are



people that we know who live in a narrow alley that costs less than a 100 US dollar rent; they have no heater during the winter and no air conditioner throughout the summer; shower and toilet are all not provided. Therefore, our “necessary” requirement seems to be luxurious. (22-23)

The comparison of housing conditions implies Chang’s preference for the western viewpoint in evaluating her new life in Beijing. Living conditions in the United States become the standard against which Chang understands her previous experiences living in different countries. Throughout Chang’s writing, living in Beijing is not the same as residing there, but rather a way to see and experience it from an outsider’s perspective. The identity of an American guest from Taiwan helps her mobilize the experiences she gained in the United States to represent her current place of residence. The American model that she has adopted not only implicitly reflects western superiority but, more significantly, suggests that she keeps a distance from her local society and chooses to be a “guest.” I propose that this ambivalence of multiple identities, including being a guest of New York and an American guest from Taiwan, is in close relation to her transnational movement and cultivation of multiculturalism as a cosmopolitan.

## **2. Beijing: The Cultural Encounter between Taiwan, the United States, and China**

Based on her multiple identities and cultural encounters, Chang's focus on Chinese cities embodies transnational imagination as a hybrid product. In other words, transnational relocation generates the hybridization of multiple cultures in immigrants' everyday practice, and the cultures of homeland and previous host land have also influenced immigrants' localization in a new place. In this regard, ways of seeing and experiencing the world derive from one's acquisition of local knowledge. Clifford Geertz addresses the importance of local knowledge and argues that to fully comprehend a place, one must situate it in a specific time and space (1983). For instance, taking public transportation is a way of getting accustomed to a new place. Transportation also implies the restriction of seeing, being seen, and the division of cultures, in that it guides migrants in a specific way of exploring the new place. Chang compares the public transportation in New York and Beijing in "Pai shenme dui 排什麼隊" (Why Bother Waiting in Line):

Sometimes the situation of taking the subway in New York is as crowded as in Beijing, but the difference is that it gets crowded after all passengers move into the subway. In Beijing, it is truly a battle to get into public transportation. What makes the situation worse is that people do not seem to have the concept of order. It is common to cut in line in Beijing... When her [one friend of Chang Yuan] daughter

tried to purchase subway ticket after school, people kept getting in front of her even when she was the next person for service. Finally she learned from her mother that she needed to secure her surroundings by using her elbows first. (Chang 81)

Under the circumstances, Chang again takes New York life as a standard to implicitly criticize life in Beijing by comparing the transportation systems. Through the depiction of the crowded subway, the hierarchy of two cultures is created in terms of Chang's critical depiction of social phenomena related to travel. By writing about transportation, Chang suggests that she cannot get used to the disorder in Beijing, in that she comes from a relatively organized city—New York. The disorder makes her avoid identifying as a local Beijinger and maintain her identity as a foreigner.

However, after experiencing multiple transnational movements, the boundaries between nation states and cities become vague and unstable. The cosmopolitan identity makes it possible for her to settle down anywhere in the world. Chang's identities as a foreigner and migrant are no longer problematic because anywhere could become her home; at the same time, no place is a real home, according to her representation of Beijing in “Li Lianying xinshijie 李蓮英新世界” (The New World of Li Lianying):

All my friends worry about whether I can get used to living in Beijing. What they do not know is the intimate feeling I have sensed when I got back to a place where

everyone speaks Chinese and privacy is not being considered seriously after I lived in the United States for more than ten years. The role of foreigner has already been fused with my mind deeply, and it is always a foreign land no matter wherever I go, even in Taiwan. In Beijing, I have not been trying to buy those products from Taiwan as other Taiwanese people might do to fulfill their nostalgia. Instead, I accept everything from another culture naturally. But what I do need to keep reminding myself is the superiority of physical life. (18)

Being a foreigner allows Chang to benefit from the encounters of multiple cultures, but it also generates her ability to be mobile and experience a sense of security living anywhere.

There seems to be no difference between the places she lives in that the boundary between places is fluid and unstable in her transnational migration. James Clifford proposes the concept of “root” and “route” to address the notion of cultural mobility as understood through travel. Cultural identities gradually become more unstable to collapse the binary structure of local/foreign, and construct the differences between comparative and inharmonious urban cultures (Clifford 1997). Hence, the representation of Beijing is hybrid and translocal, which integrates various cultures into one imagination of the city as a result of the author’s travels.

In addition to the model of American culture and lifestyle, Chang pays attention to her memory of Taiwan in writing her life in Beijing. The intercultural influence between Taiwan and Beijing thus brings a sense of convenience and homeness to immigrants' lived experience in the host land. Taiwanese culture is embedded in the representation of Beijing:

I sense the savour of Taiwan while living in Beijing today. The taste is delivered by Taiwanese popular culture. The relation between Taiwan and the mainland is similar to Hong Kong and Taiwan in the previous days, when Hong Kong was the source of fashion and consumer culture.

Right after arriving in Beijing, my friends treated us at a barbeque restaurant in Houhai. In the beautiful night scene, the outdoor bar is crowded with guests.

However, the background music is Taiwanese popular songs from fifteen to twenty years ago. (66)

Chang describes her surprising discovery of Taiwanese culture in Beijing, which plays a crucial role in her life. The popular culture from one's homeland truly comforts Taiwanese immigrants. The circulation of Taiwanese popular songs infuses a distinct element into Chang's writing of local life.

With reference to Chang's multiple identities, it is worth noting that the literary representation of Beijing from a foreigner's perspective is built upon Chang's employment of various cultural elements. From Chang's viewpoint, Beijing can only be depicted in terms of her Taiwanese memories, American experiences, and local observations. Meanwhile, her adoption of distinct cultural models incorporates different functions: American experience reveals the comparison between west and east, and Taiwanese memory unveils nostalgia for homeland.

### **3. Shanghai: Metropolitan, Taiwanese Community, and Eileen Zhang**

After a short stay in Beijing, Chang moves to Shanghai, where she currently resides, and here she gains one more point of reference. It is unsurprising that her writing of Shanghai is embedded with at least three kinds of cultures. More interestingly, the literary representation of such a metropolitan area also helps her reconstruct identity.

Shanghai marks a new orientation for Chang Yuan after relocation, and it becomes a major source for her writing after 2008.<sup>27</sup> Since Shanghai has become one of the major destinations for Taiwanese businessmen and their families, the Taiwanese community is

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<sup>27</sup> Since 2008, Chang Yuan has published one prose collection, two novellas and one fictional work. All four works are situated in Shanghai within its Taiwanese community. See, for example, *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* (2008), *Crossing the Border* (2009), *It Takes Two to Tango* (2011), and *Old Flame* (2012).

integral to Chang's writing about her new destination. It is important to note that rather than depicting Taiwanese businesspersons' success in China, Chang's writing centers on the wives of Taiwanese businessmen, who have relocated to Shanghai for their husbands' careers and share similar experiences with her. Chang depicts Taiwanese mothers in Shanghai in "Taima fantai xiujia 台媽返台休假" (Taiwanese Moms' Vacation Back to Taiwan):

When summer vacation begins, the majority of Taiwanese moms disappear from Shanghai. These moms happily leave Shanghai and return to Taiwan with their children, food, and fake brand products.

(...)

Many Taiwanese moms regard the life in Shanghai as temporary, and believe they would move back to Taiwan one day. They do not read local media or learn to speak Shanghainese, and only watch Taiwanese television programs. They try their best to purchase products from Taiwan, including drinks, soy sauce, and toilet paper, and are confident of those things made in Taiwan. Their life style is seen as passive accommodation rather than positive integration. (175)

Many migrants look for local communities, which are made up of people who have emigrated from the same country. As Chang notes, this is true of a large number of

Taiwanese migrants in Shanghai, most of whom are Taiwanese businessmen and their families. The community not only plays an important role in Chang's Shanghai life, but also becomes a major source of inspiration for her writing. The landscape of Shanghai is partly shaped by a sense of a Taiwanese community, with which Chang may identify.

However, after living in multiple places, Chang intentionally distinguishes herself from the group of Taiwanese mothers she mentions. She highly values her multicultural experiences in her self-identification as a cosmopolitan. Chang contemplates the difference between herself and these Taiwanese mothers:

In Shanghai, I had inevitably been classified under the category of "Taiwanese mom," however, I understand the essential difference between this identity and myself. The experience I gained while I lived in another country helped me to easily adapt to the lifestyle in Beijing; and the similar weather between Shanghai and Taiwan makes me to readily used to living in Shanghai. I did not have the desire for Taiwanese products, including commercial, cultural and political products. Instead, I purchase local products, read a local newspaper and magazines. In fact, I feel the cultural differences between East and West are much more intense than between the mainland China and Taiwan. (176)



Although Taiwan is her homeland, Chang does not eagerly long to return and purchase products from Taiwan. Instead, she can settle down quickly and get accustomed to local life by identifying with the local culture. Chang keeps some distance from the local Taiwanese community and products to maintain her identity as an American guest from Taiwan rather than as a Taiwanese mother. Taiwan thus becomes one of the cultural symbols that she can employ in comparing cultures from different geographical locales. Yet, it is not a place that she wishes to return to or to which she is attached.

Meanwhile, it is significant that Chang sheds light on Taiwanese mothers, who share similar experiences with her in that their migration also results from their husbands' career development. The Taiwanese mothers' (as well as Chang's) relocation to Shanghai is at least somewhat passively generated through job opportunity and global capitalism, which lead to westward movement to China from Taiwan. She is able to make friends with these wives of Taiwanese businessmen due to the large population of Taiwanese in Shanghai. In "Shanghai bu jimo 上海不寂寞" (Shanghai is Not Lonely), Chang writes, "There are hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese, actively participating in society. It is easy to meet groups of friends, such as Taiwanese wives and Taiwanese guests with foreign experiences like me" (186). However, the difference between Chang and these Taiwanese mothers is their specific temporality of residence. While Chang can migrate

and relocate to a new place and make a new home, the Taiwanese mothers continually look forward to the opportunity to return to Taiwan. The sense of belonging to Shanghai functions differently for Chang and the group of Taiwanese mothers she discusses.

Chang is not the only writer who refers to the lives of Taiwanese mothers when writing about Shanghai; the renowned Shanghai writer Eileen Zhang also employs similar tropes in representing the city. The indivisible relation between Eileen Zhang and Shanghai is played out in Chang's literary imagination of the metropolis. Many tourists visit Eileen Zhang's Changde apartment 常德公寓 to show their appreciation for the author, and so too does Chang Yuan. As Chang Yuan remarks in "Dang Zhang Ailing de linju 當張愛玲的鄰居" (Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor), "it is unavoidable to be reminded of Eileen Zhang when living in Shanghai" (212). The allusion to Eileen Zhang's literary works and Chang's depiction of Zhang's apartment are worthy of note. Chang describes her experience in taking the elevator in her apartment:

While entering the apartment, I met the lady sitting by the elevator. Oh, she is the one who controlled the elevator in Eileen Zhang's writing. She depicted such a vivid person in "Notes on Apartment Life." The lady was well educated and well

dressed, glancing over residents' newspapers, leisurely cooking on the stove, and helping Eileen Zhang throw away a soymilk bottle. (213)<sup>28</sup>

Eileen Zhang's prose on apartment living is a crucial reference for Chang as she tours the apartment, a popular spot in Shanghai. The familiarity of the apartment from Eileen Zhang's prose also motivates Chang to rent a unit under the one in which Eileen Zhang lived. She believes that living in close proximity to Zhang's apartment is a means of identifying with Shanghai. Eileen Zhang and her writing become a symbol, which helps Chang Yuan to accomplish her Shanghai dream of identifying herself with the city.

Nevertheless, the poor quality of the apartment keeps Chang from renting the unit, and being a neighbor to Eileen Zhang eventually turns out to be a pipe dream. According to the conclusion of "Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor":

It has been a week and I have not received any response. The dream of being a neighbor of Eileen Zhang is far away from reality. It would be not too far actually, once I would rent the apartment and stay there for a while. But how could I make do with it?...Living under the unit where she had stayed makes me feel closer to her.

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<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the elevator person in Eileen Zhang's work is male. As Eileen Zhang writes, "Our elevator man is a real character, well read and erudite, of rare cultivation, a man who keeps meticulous tabs on the comings and goings of each family in the building." It is obvious that the description is Chang Yuan's imitation of Eileen Chang's work. See the English translation of "Notes on Apartment Life." Web. 28 April 2015. <<http://www.adgo.com.hk/eileen/books/eng/26/01.html>>

My Shanghai memories can benefit from her legend. If I could take a nap in the dim house, there would be a dream about Eileen Zhang. (219)

The line between reality and dreams is drawn in Chang's writing. Eileen Zhang's Shanghai only exists in Chang's literary imagination, and is employed in constructing the city through the notion of *déjà vu*. The representation of Shanghai in Chang's work is partly carried out by depicting Zhang's apartment and her legend. Meanwhile, the dreaming process contributes to Chang's identification with Zhang, even as it comes to be simply an illusion in the end. The home in Shanghai for Eileen Zhang and Chang Yuan is never a permanent home, in that they share the similar experiences of moving to different places.

Accordingly, Chang's literary imagination of Shanghai closely relates to the intervention she accomplishes through her female perspective. She depicts mundane and trivial matters in everyday life, such as taking public transportation, going shopping, and learning to dance. Daily life is a major theme in women's writing. Chang also seeks to identify with the group of Taiwanese mothers as well as Eileen Zhang, in that the need for a sense of belonging leads her to attach herself to various female communities in Shanghai. However, Chang's identity as a migrant keeps her distant from local society,

and it is apparent that her representation of Shanghai is built upon selective themes in order to portray the city from a cosmopolitan consumer's perspective.

#### **4. The Difference Between Being a Guest and a Resident**

Although Chang Yuan's self-identification as a cosmopolitan contributes to the possibility of homemaking everywhere, a boundary still exists between being a guest and being a resident. "Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor" suggests that it is not possible to be a truly authentic Shanghai woman by means of renting a house near Eileen Zhang's former residence. Chang's identity as an American guest from Taiwan illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of transnational migration. In one way, this identity allows Chang to employ various cultural elements from different geographical locales to differently imagine her current place of dwelling. As shown and examined above, the literary representations of Beijing and Shanghai spring from Chang's translocal imagination and appropriation of cultural models from Taiwan and the United States. It is distinct from the writings of local Beijing and Shanghai residents by virtue of its reference to cultural hybridization. At the same time, this identity creates distance between Chang and the local society by maintaining her status as a guest.

First of all, cultural differences are barriers that prevent migrants from adjusting to a new society. For instance, limited access to the internet is one of the inconveniences foreigners encounter in Shanghai. As Chang notes in “Jingmeng 驚夢” (Frightening Dream) :

While trying to surf websites from Taiwan and the United States, the searching engine shows it is not accessible. Hence, when I live in China, it is not convenient for me to read news on other Chinese-speaking sites, including the recent publications of Chinese writers in North America. I need to study negative news reports about China from New York Times.

In the clues of daily life and language, I am frequently aroused from my dream, and have a sense that this place is not my hometown. (205-206)

It is obvious that Chang can employ various cultural elements in representing Chinese cities as new homes, and yet the new homes are not the same as the place of origin. In this way, Chang’s translocal imagination of Beijing and Shanghai is constructed through rational knowledge. However, her emotional conceptualization of home as associated with familiarity and similarity produces the differences she experiences between new homes and her place of origin. The boundary between being a guest and a host becomes clear at the moment when local residents do not comprehend the significance of feeling

limited by technology. Yet, at the same time, it is clear that migrants sense these inconveniences only because they do not occur in their homeland.

Chang's attention to multiple cultural models is closely associated with her identity formation as a migrant. "Where are you from, guest?" is a question Chang is frequently asked in Beijing. Her answer directly refers to her self-identification, which is fluid and only defined in terms of her current place of residence:

After living in Beijing for a long time, I am comfortable in answering the question "where are you from?" My answer is straightforward: Taiwan. However, a Taiwanese cannot fully explain my cultural background. In my observation and discovery of Beijing in the past year, my viewpoint has been built upon my American experience, comparison of the west and east, city and country, and collective and individual. Those surprises come from a western cultural producer, not a Taiwanese guest. (110)

Chang's multiple boundary crossings result in her floating identification, which is constructed and reconstructed based on where she positions herself. This fluid identity is closely tied to the intersection of multiple cultures in Taiwan, the United States, and China at a given time.

Chang states the possibility of making a home locally, stating, “Taipei, New York, Beijing and Shanghai are the four pivots for my family. From now on, returning to any of them is going home, and host land thus becomes hometown” (13). However, I argue that the ambivalence of being a guest still haunts migrants wherever they move. For Chang Yuan, the places are arbitrary in that she is able to move from one place to another. The notion of home is simulacrum that is never settled as a permanent home. Migrants may have mobility in moving around the world, and yet the difference between being a guest and a host never disappears. The making of home space through Chang Yuan’s writing draws our attention to the ways that writing can unravel urban spaces from a foreign perspective. However, Chang’s identity as an American guest from Taiwan challenges the possibility of assimilation and localization in her new society.

### **Conclusion**

In shifting between three sites—China, Taiwan, and the United States—Nieh Hualing and Chang Yuan not only experience multiple movements but also deploy mobility and agency in negotiating with various political entities and cultures. Aihwa Ong defines “transnationalism” as a term that “refers to the cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of ‘culture’” (4). Indeed, the literary



works of Nieh and Chang develop an understanding of how multiple cultures are deployed in spatial representation, identity formation, and cultural production. The cultural models of these sites encourage these writers to remake a home in a given time and place, and reconfigure the notion of home by means of employment of cultural elements from former and current places of residence.

Nieh Hualing's *Three Lives* demonstrates the migration pattern of (self-)exile due to political turbulence and the search for a better life. The narrative is positioned in the grand context of modern Chinese history to reflect individual reaction and women's conceptions of homeness in reaction to key national events. It reveals migrants' struggle with different political entities, and points out that political turbulence is one of the major factors that encourages multiple transnational movement. Chang Yuan's border crossing is different from Nieh's in that it is generated by late capitalism and economic opportunity. Her mobility in relocation and localization contributes to her agency in using and conceptualizing cultures in writing. The translocal imagination of Chinese urban space in *Being Eileen Zhang's Neighbor* is a product of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Consequently, Nieh and Chang reconfigure the notion of home in terms of a given time and place. Along with continuing movements, their homeness is fluid and built upon lived experiences in transnational migration. Their literary representations of

geographies are tied to their individual senses of belonging, identity formation, and deployment of multiple cultures. Thus, home is on the move.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPLIT FAMILY OR IDEAL HOME:

#### REPRESENTING CROSS-STRAIT MIGRATION IN DOCUMENTARY FILM

##### **Introduction**

This chapter<sup>29</sup> investigates contemporary PRC and Taiwanese documentary film representations of Taiwanese businesspersons' family relations in China, and the concomitant transformation of homeness and familial intimacy in their lives. The emergence of Taiwanese enterprises in China began in the late 1980s, and the attendant migration has resulted in relocation, the separation of families, and changed women's roles as their husbands travel between Taiwan and mainland China. Unlike the prominent visibility of Taiwanese businesspersons' success stories and extramarital affairs in mass media, their wives are often voiceless and marginalized. Documentary film is created as a tool in criticizing and commenting on current social issues and giving voice to a voiceless class. As such, it is not surprising that the wives of Taiwanese businesspersons have become the topics of documentaries. In a related turn, the representation of women in the context of cross-Taiwan Strait interaction calls our attention to other issues, such as

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<sup>29</sup> An earlier version of the chapter entitled "Representation of Familial Intimacy across the Taiwan Strait: The Reinvention of Homeness among Taiwanese Wives in Documentaries" is published in *China Information* 29.1 (2015): 89-106.

marriage crises, cultural conflict, and identity formation. In these respects, this chapter sheds light on cross-Strait migration and explores the conceptualization of homeness and the transformation of women's gender roles, as seen from the viewpoints of Taiwanese businessperson's wives. Two documentary films—*Taitai de wutai* 太太的舞台 (*A Wife's Stage* 2003) and *Chang'e yueshi* 嫦娥月事 (*Chang'e's Monthly Visit* 2003) are discussed. They are produced by filmmakers in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, respectively, and demonstrate how women's subject formation and agency have been produced and influenced by this economically-prompted migration, and how familial intimacy has been changed by the forces of international globalization and capitalism. Through textual analysis of these two films, I argue that women have become domestic labor that is not only subjected to capitalist exploitation, but also suffers from the change of family structure and becomes vulnerable to marriage crisis, which occurs due to the commodification of familial intimacy. In comparing the Taiwanese and Chinese documentary films, I contend that the two films can be read in terms of the directors' positions, the selection of filmed subjects, and the creation purposes and themes. The representational politics of the wives' homemaking is related to the cinematic portrayal of women's identity and spatial formation. The trope of home is adopted by PRC and Taiwanese filmmakers in response to the representational politics; while home is created

as an ideal site for Taiwanese immigrants to settle down in the PRC documentary film, Taiwanese filmmakers tend to highlight the split structure of Taiwanese businessmen's families and their wives' struggle with familial intimacy. All of these points are in response to the different political ideologies of each side of the Taiwan Strait.

### **Cross-Strait Migration**

The historical emergence of Taiwanese businesspersons and their enterprises dates to the 1980s. Deng Xiaoping's (1904-1997) economic reforms and open door policy (1978-) encouraged Taiwanese investment in China. Moreover, Keng Shu, Gunter Schubert and Emmy Rui-hua Lin note that "labor-intensive industries in Taiwan were forced to cut costs due to structural changes in the Taiwanese economy" (26). China offers relatively cheaper labor than Taiwan, so sufficient supply of labor has been a major impetus for Taiwanese businesspersons to move their firms to China. In this regard, both domestic economic structure and international policies have influenced the westward movement of Taiwanese enterprises and the flow of people and goods. These transformative economic trends have engendered cross-Strait migration, and Taiwanese businesspersons and their families are major sources of migration to China. Demographic estimates through 2013 show that nearly 1.5-2 million Taiwanese people reside in China temporarily or

permanently, including Taiwanese businesspersons, dispatched personnel, and their families.<sup>30</sup> This economy-oriented migration is driven not only by capitalist modes of production and associated globalization, but also by political and economic relations and government regulations linking Taiwan and China.

Cross-Strait migration is noteworthy in that men comprise the majority of the migratory subjects, and these men often have different identities by way of their business relations and their objectives and ambitions. They include “small- and medium-level Taiwanese business owners (*xiao taishang* 小台商), Taiwanese managers or staff posted in China (*taigan* 台幹), Taiwanese who choose to stay in the mainland despite career setbacks (*zhongyou yizu* 中遊一族 or *tailiu* 台流), and Taiwanese laborers working in China (*tailao* 台勞)” (T. Huang 484). In accordance with traditional Chinese values, the division of labor is gendered, in that men make a living for the family in public spheres, while women are homebound and responsible for domestic work. The boundary between inner and outer spaces of households has triggered mobility as businesspersons (re)construct their social status and relations. In addition to the gender roles defined by the boundaries of household and social spheres, businesses have been operated by men in China as far back as the Northern Song dynasty. The male-dominated business culture

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<sup>30</sup> See “Move on to China, SWOT Looks for Advantages.” Web. 08 Feb 2014.  
<<http://www.rsicfund.com/news/ReadNews.aspx?id=2662>>

has remained to the present day, and thus it is almost exclusively male Taiwanese businessmen who are shifting their firms to China in order to seek cheaper labor and make more profits. This is not to say that women are not involved in business and career development, and this will be examined later. However, in terms of cultural values and everyday life, the cross-Strait migration is dominated by migrant men.

In her research on familial and intimate relations in Taiwanese businessmen's families, Taiwanese sociologist Hsiu-Hua Shen remarks that "transnational business masculinity" (appropriated from Australian academic Raewyn Connell), which is characterized by "its increasingly libertarian sexuality, with a growing tendency to commodify relations with women" ("The First Taiwanese Wives' and 'the Chinese Mistresses'" 421), is related to the international division of labor in economic globalization, and brings about the transformation of familial and intimate relations between Taiwanese businessmen, their formal wives and their extramarital partners in China. She further notes:

First, I would argue that an international division of labour develops among women to provide flexible familial, emotional, and sexual services to travelling businessmen...Second, and the following logically from the last point, the primary relationship among women involved transnationally in this particular international division of labour is doomed to conflict because monogamous marriage is exposed

to non-traditional heterosexual liaisons resulting from the specific process of gendered, sexualized economic globalization. (422)

In Shen's discussion of the gendered role of "the first Taiwanese wives" and "the Chinese mistresses," women are subordinated and exploited in the context of economic globalization driven by capitalism, and their bodies are commodified by Taiwanese businessmen in order to fulfill different desires—their homebound wives fulfill roles in domestic labor and child caring, while their Chinese lovers are sexual providers and emotional supporters. This "division of labor" is gendered, sexualized, hierarchical and even geographical. The exploitation of women and their bodies in these migratory roles and patterns is closely associated with transformative economic trends.

Shen's interviews with Taiwanese businessmen reveal an alternative representing both the consumption of women and their bodies, and labor in light of patriarchy and masculinity. The Taiwanese first wives and the Chinese mistresses are objectified as commodities and burdened with certain social expectations from Taiwanese businessmen's perspectives. This ethnographic finding shows that these businessmen's domination of women's bodies in both sexual and emotional aspects has been rationalized and privileged. As Shen observes:



Deep play with regard to the consumption of Chinese women, combined with a sense of male competition and bonding, is consequently developed into a “transnational status ritual” for these Taiwanese businessmen to experience, display and intensify their upward move in position and identity as privileged, transnational businessmen in China. In this case, women’s bodies become platforms for establishing a transnational business class that is gendered and sexualized in character. (“The Purchase of Transnational Intimacy” 70)

The surplus capital accumulated by Taiwanese businessmen in China makes it possible for them to support both their home families and their mistresses. In this light, these men accrue privileges including the straightforward purchase of sexual and emotional intimacy from their Chinese lovers, and the exploitation of their first wives and the commodification of familial intimacy through money sent back home. The rise of Taiwanese businessmen as a new class in China is, therefore, simultaneously masculine, patriarchal and hierarchical.

Following their husbands’ steps, many Taiwanese women migrate to China in order to maintain a complete and happy family or look for a better life. In the case of Taiwanese businesspersons and their families, most are well-educated and have significant sociocultural and economic capital. They even believe that moving to China helps them

accumulate more money. In his study on Taiwanese women in China, Ping Lin applies Karen O'Reilly and Michaela Benson's theoretical framework of "lifestyle migration" to the phenomenon of cross-Strait migration. "Lifestyle migration" was initially a term used to describe how some Western migrants move back and forth between their homeland and other geographical locales in order to enjoy an adventurous, exotic life while increasing their upward mobility, as they are "relatively rich in capital" compared to the natives of their chosen host countries ("Taiwanese Women in China: Integration and Mobility in Gendered Enclave" 108). With reference to his interviews with Taiwanese wives, Lin rightly points out that some married women move to China not only to reunite with their husbands, but more importantly, to enjoy a more upper class lifestyle. Many expect to become "*shaonainai* 少奶奶," rich wives who do not need to worry about anything and can simply enjoy luxurious lifestyles. As Lin puts it,

Although these married respondents were aware that they might not be a *shaonainai* or have a cosy life, they all agreed that the prospect of a comfortable life lessened their worries about migration to some extent. This expectation of enjoying oneself a little is a common finding in previous studies of European expatriates in Asia. The married respondents did not move purely for the sake of a family reunion, but were also attracted by the ideas of a comfortable life overseas. (113)

Although moving upward to a higher social status is an appealing motivation for migration, these wives' sense of optimism typically dissolves right after they arrive in China. They may become "*shaonainai*," admired by others due to their luxurious lifestyles, yet their hardships of settlement and confinement within the household generally go unnoticed. They tend to maintain their identity as Taiwanese and are unwilling to interact with the locals and integrate into their communities. They frequently sense cultural differences between themselves and local residents in terms of habits, taste and consumption ("Home Alone, Taiwanese Single Women in Mainland China" 120).

The difficulty of getting a job, interacting with the locals, and integrating within the mainstream society lead many Taiwanese wives to struggle emotionally. Loneliness, rootlessness and insecurity come along with cross-Strait migration and cause these women's identity crises at a time when they are striving to save their marriage and family.

Overall, it is clear that the experiences of Taiwanese businesspersons and their wives in China are extremely disparate.

Taiwanese businessmen's increasing migration to China, and, by extension, their pursuit of Chinese mistresses, can be seen as one way they have developed and extended both their businesses and their personal success. These men and their pursuits have become popular topics of ethnographical and empirical studies, as well as mass media

productions. Interest in these individuals is such that Taiwanese popular business magazine *Tianxia zazhi* 天下雜誌 (*Common Wealth Magazine*)<sup>31</sup> features a special column on successful Taiwanese businesspersons in China. A Shanghai-based magazine *Yiju Shanghai* 移居上海 (*Emigrate to Shanghai Magazine*)<sup>32</sup>, which is popular among Hong Kong, Taiwanese and overseas Chinese, also features regular reports on well-known Taiwanese businesspersons as a means of attracting more investment in China. These representations are almost always male-centred. However, the voices and lived experiences of women—both formal wives at home in Taiwan, and Chinese mistresses—are often overlooked in studies of physical cross-Strait migration as well as in mass media representation. I suggest that despite the magnetism of the bright success stories of Taiwanese businessmen, wives' voices should be taken into consideration in order to offer an alternative perspective to the male-dominated “economic miracle” celebrated by Taiwanese businessmen and the mass media.

Most of these Taiwanese wives are subordinated, marginalized, and voiceless within the household and in the mainstream mass media. They have no choice but to either move to China or take full responsibility for their families in Taiwan as their husbands are away

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<sup>31</sup> See *Tianxia zazhi* 天下雜誌 (*Common Wealth Magazine*). Web. 20 September, 2014.  
<<http://www.cw.com.tw/>>

<sup>32</sup> See *Yiju Shanghai* 移居上海 (*Emigrate to Shanghai Magazine*). Web. 20 September, 2014.  
<<http://www.yiju.cc/>>

developing their businesses in China. The dominant mass media celebration of the success of Taiwanese businessmen and their firms is complicit with patriarchy and capitalism, systems in which these wives are marginalized. Yet, without documenting women's lived experiences, it is difficult to see and understand their hardship in the cross-Strait migration. These women's voices and stories can contribute towards the examination of exploitation and distinct types of transformations, such as family, gender role and identity, under the influence of global capitalism and the transnational flow of migrants. The representation of women's lived experience happens to best illustrate the mundane dimension of the economic-driven migration.

Since Taiwanese wives' migratory trajectory is closely related to family dynamics, the home space can be read as a microcosm of the nation-state, especially in a society with heavy Confucian influence. The Chinese value of family and the cultural differences between Taiwan and China are embedded in the construction of homeness through the lens of Taiwanese migrants. However, cross-Strait migration is unique because China is constructed as a so-called "homeland" for some Taiwanese people, especially for mainlanders who retreated from China with the Nationalists in 1949 and their descendants. In "Chinese Diaspora 'at Home,'" Ping Lin's research on mainlanders (*waishengren* 外省人) who migrate from Taiwan to China shows that immigrants have

had a hard time integrating into local society. The boundary between Taiwanese and local Chinese leads to a shift in their understanding of themselves. According to Lin's works, "their self-identification [changes] from 'Chinese' and regarding China as their ethnic homeland, to 'not so Chinese' or 'not the Chinese Chinese'" ("Chinese Diaspora 'at Home'" 53). In this case, do Taiwanese migrants in China believe that they have migrated to another geographical locale with sociocultural differences? Or do they believe they are "returning" to their place of origin? Homeness is thus of importance in examining Taiwanese migrants' settlement and sense of belonging in China. In addition to migrant subjects' sense of home, the ways in which the media and governments on each side of the Taiwan Strait represent the reinvention of home is of significance. Seen in this light, the representation of homeness is in response to politics, power and hegemony, manipulated by the media to convey certain ideology through documenting Taiwanese migrants' experiences in China.

Home is a crucial trope in Confucian-driven societies as well as in Sinophone cultural production. In the Confucian family system, home is bound to kinship, blood ties and marriage, and regarded as the fundamental site of social relationships. To ethnic Chinese residing abroad, mainland China is treated as a homeland in the discourses of both sojourners and the Chinese diaspora. Derived from the concepts of *huaqiao* (華僑,

sojourner or overseas Chinese), the term “Chinese diaspora” has been created as another umbrella term, as it intends to define Chinese people around the world as a family in terms of race, ethnicity, and “Chineseness”. The conceptualizations of *huaqiao* and Chinese diaspora point to the existence, distinction and boundary of center and periphery, in which mainland China still maintains its centric and proper position. The separation between center and periphery, however, results in the marginalization of Chinese immigrants and their culture outside of mainland China. Home thus becomes a crucial trope for different articulations within and outside mainland China to construct an imagined community characterized by Chineseness and to privilege “China proper”.

Interestingly, in her definition of the Sinophone, Shu-mei Shih provocatively remarks that “the margins of China and Chineseness” are not only confined to the geographical periphery outside China, but “it is also understood as those non-Han cultures within China where the imposition of the dominant Han culture has elicited numerous responses, from assimilation to anticolonial resistance in the dominant language, Hanyu” (“Against Diaspora” 25). Shih treats the Qing dynasty as an empire that started expanding its territory in the eighteenth century (“The Concept of the Sinophone” 711), and proposes that the writings of ethnic minority groups within the territory that is now the People’s Republic of China, including Mongols, Manchus, and Tibetans, should be considered

Sinophone minority literature in China (712). Writers from these minority groups either willingly or reluctantly speak and write in the standard language of the Han in addition to their own mother tongues, engaging in a process of assimilation into Han culture to different degrees (713). In this regard, I would push further to consider the distinctive pattern of cross-Strait migration, in which Taiwanese migrants in China are forced to assimilate into the dominant culture manipulated by the Communist Party to a certain degree. Even though the cultural production and representation regarding the cross-Strait migration are accomplished in the Sinitic languages, cultural elements appropriated and articulated in the production differ from those operated by the Chinese mainstream cultural producers. In other words, with the emergence of cross-Strait migration, how can we understand the cultural production of these Taiwanese migrants in China? How do we categorize this sort of cultural production regarding the distinctive migratory pattern? What sorts of issues are raised through the interaction between Taiwanese migrants and local Chinese? The case study of cross-Strait migration draws our attention to so-called “China proper” and the tension between each side of the Taiwan Strait along with the westward movement of Taiwanese migrants and the cultural production and representation of this phenomenon in both Taiwan and China.



In this chapter, I intend to examine women's perspective and their process of homemaking for the purpose of challenging the conspiracies of patriarchy and capitalism. Taiwanese businessmen may strategically identify with China for the sake of a practical concern about the development of their business. They treat China as a partner in order to establish and expand their firms, and in turn, may view China as an ideal place to reside. Their wives, on the contrary, encounter identity crisis, in that they cannot find a productive identity in which to situate themselves in the host society, yet they do not want to be left behind in Taiwan. They experience cultural difference in daily life as they walk down the streets or shop at local market in the host country. The tension of being treated as a foreigner results in the transformation of identification and their sense of homemaking. The question of how to be Taiwanese in China and how to maintain a family with Taiwanese characteristics become Taiwanese wives' responsibility when they relocate to China. Hence, their reinvention of homeness through local homemaking contributes to a specific dimension of cultural production in the cross-Strait migration.

### **The Development of Contemporary Documentary Film in Taiwan and China**

Speaking of genre, the production of documentary films is associated with social movement and engagement, and carves out a space for marginalized and subordinated

classes. The genre is eloquently defined in Bill Nichols' *Introduction to Documentary*:

The fact that documentaries are not a *reproduction* of reality gives them a voice of their own. They are, instead, a *representation* of the world. The voice of documentary makes us aware that someone is speaking to us from his or her own perspective about the world we hold in common with that person. (68)

In other words, the function of documentary is to represent the world through a certain perspective at a given time and space. Documentaries are not only about reality and real people telling stories about what happened in the real world (Nichols 7-9), but most importantly, they also convey the messages that the filmmakers and the filmed subjects tend to deliver through the camera. In addition to the filmmakers' engagement in filmmaking, the subjects' voices plays central roles in response to the theme. The significance of documentary as a genre lies in the mediation between reality, filmed subject, and filmmaker with a distinctive point of view.

In Taiwan, the emergence of documentary filmmaking can be traced back to the 1940s and was affected by the KMT government through the foundation of two studios: Taiwan dianying shechichang 台灣電影攝製場 (Taiwan Film Studio) and Zhongguo dianying zhipian chang 中國電影製片廠 (the China Film Studio) (Chi 153). After the Nationalist retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the media was under state control until martial law was lifted

in 1987. Cultural production, including literature, film and other forms of art works, was forced to correspond to the political ideologies promoted by the KMT in order to pass censorship. Thus, the films produced by the two major film studios delivered highly propagandistic and didactic ideologies and “were firmly embedded in the official apparatus of the martial law period” (Chi 154). With the lifting of the martial law, following the blossoming of Taiwan New Cinema, Taiwan New Documentary emerged in the 1980s, accompanying aboriginal, women’s, and workers’ social movements (Chi 156; Chiu 19). In 1986, in order to offer an oppositional viewpoint to the state-owned media, a group of young people organized a media group called “Green Team” (*luse xiaozu* 綠色小組) to record “the Nationalist government’s heavy-handed manner of dealing with the opposition” (Lin and Sang 1).<sup>33</sup> The Green Team marks the transition of Taiwanese documentary film to one of the representatives of “little media” (*Xiaozhong meiti* 小眾媒體) (Chi 156).<sup>34</sup> The emergence of the Green Team and their production of documentary films undoubtedly point to an alternative perspective of cultural production. As Sylvia

Lin and Tze-lan Sang remark in their introduction to *Documenting Taiwan*:

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<sup>33</sup> The emergence of Taiwanese documentary can be dated to 1903 when Taiwan was colonized by Japan. At that time, documentary film was implemented in order to celebrate the achievement of Japanese occupation. From the Japanese colonial period to the time of the KMT government, documentary filmmaking was dominated by the state and served political purposes. The revitalization of documentary film as a new form took place in the early 1980s, when it typically had a subversive function.

<sup>34</sup> According to Robert Chi, the rise of “little media” was associated with two social forces: one is the explosion of social movements, and the other is the development of inexpensive video technology.

Green Team's pioneering documentary endeavor not only helped hasten the demise of the Nationalist government's authoritarian, one-party rule but also breathed new life into documentary filmmaking in Taiwan. Furthermore, it introduced a political and politicized angle that was heretofore unexplored territory. The subsequent years saw the emergence of non-fiction films dealing with such formerly taboo topics as the February 28 Incident and the White Terror. (2)

In this regard, resistance and subversion are key to the production of documentary film in Taiwan; the targeted superstructure indicates the nation-state, mainstream discourse, hegemony, patriarchy, capitalism, globalization, and power of the so-called "center." The rediscovery of invisible events and marginalized and voiceless subjects is thus a top priority of documentary filmmaking in contemporary Taiwan.

In analyzing the development of Taiwan New Cinema and nativist literature (*xiangtu wenxue* 鄉土文學) in the 1970s, Kuei-fen Chiu provocatively proposes that what connects Taiwan New Cinema, nativism literature, and Taiwanese New Documentary is the goal of "giving a voice to the voiceless" ("The Vision of Taiwan New Documentary" 17). As she puts it:

While giving voice to the voiceless was a top priority in *xiangtu* writers' social and cultural vision, it was dropped in Taiwan New Cinema's "reformation" agenda. To

look for the type of film motivated by a kindred social vision that gave the impetus to xiangtu literature, we turn to “grassroots” form of film production that was set in motion about the time Taiwan New Cinema was emerging: independent documentary film in the early 1980s. (18)

Marginalized and voiceless subjects as well as social movements in the 1980s thus become fundamental materials and major sources for documentary filmmaking. In this view, the new mode of Taiwan documentary film is closely tied to social phenomena in contemporary Taiwanese society. Furthermore, in terms of cinematic techniques, documentary filmmaking registers its characteristics through “grassroots” form and consciousness, on-the-spot realism and the emphasis of “authenticity” and “reality” through eyewitness (19). However, the realistic mode of documentary filmmaking does not necessarily intend to objectively document certain events or personal stories. Rather, it carries certain ideology and conveys a specific and unique point of view through camera work and production (Nichols 18; Barnouw 344). Hence, Taiwan New Documentary can be treated as a critical tool with subversive power to represent the marginalized from a grassroots point of view using eyewitness techniques.

In the context of the People’s Republic of China, the rise of independent documentary filmmaking shares a similar route and similar political functions with that which took

place in Taiwan, and a common factor was government control. In *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement*, Chris Berry, Xinyu Lu and Lisa Rofel point to the state and the party's crucial role in documentary filmmaking. As they note:

Before 1990 all documentary was state-produced, and took the form of illustrated lectures. Television news was delivered by newsreaders who spoke as the mouthpiece of the Communist Party and the government. There were no spontaneous interviews with the man (or woman) on the street, and no investigative reporting shows. Independent film production was impossible in an era where all the studios were nationally owned and controlled. (4)

Similar to Taiwanese media during the martial law period, the production of PRC documentary has been (and still is) manipulated, censored, and dominated by the Communist party. The powerful state control and strict censorship therefore become an impetus for the rise of new documentary filmmaking.

Rebellion and resistance are two common characteristics of the Chinese New documentary movement that are also prevalent in Taiwan New Documentary. According to Xinyu Lu, the spirit of rebellion of this movement is “against the old, rigid aspects of Maoist utopianism and established political ideologies in China. [The directors] presented a challenge especially to the hegemonic notion of ‘reality’ and how it should be

represented in film” (15). In this regard, documentary has been appropriated and created to criticize and comment on the current social issues brought about by rapid change in postsocialist China. Moreover, the filmmakers of the Chinese New Documentary movement are more concerned about social movements featuring subjects who are overlooked by the state-owned media. The new mode of Chinese documentary films “addressed new political themes, filmed social subjects marginalized by mainstream and official media, and transformed audio-visual culture in China, including not only independent documentary and amateur work on the internet but also broadcast television and fiction feature film production” (Berry, Lu, and Rofel 7). Accordingly, documenting marginalized groups is a core concern of documentary filmmaking in both contemporary Taiwan and China, where the mass media is dominated by the political ideological apparatus and produces mostly propaganda.

In representing marginalized subjects through oppositional perspectives, “on-the-spot realism” (*jishi zhuyi* 紀實主義) registers a departure from “the type of highly orchestrated realism associated with socialist realism” (Berry, Lu, and Rofel 5). In 1990, Wu Wenguang, a leading filmmaker of Chinese New Documentary movement, used “a hand-held camera, no artificial lighting, synch sound that was often unclear, and shot things as they happened,” which best defines “on-the-spot realism” as a “nitty-gritty and

low-budget style” (5). This cinematic style not only offers an alternative to the dominant and hegemonic state viewpoint from “the bottom up on the status of different social classes under current political, economic, and social transformations in China” (Lu 32), but more importantly, it helps create a close relationship between filmmakers and their subjects. As Berry, Lu, and Rofel state regarding the significance of Chinese New

Documentary movement:

The independent documentary practice that has developed in China works from completely contrary assumptions. It understands documentary making as a part of life, not a representation separate from it. Furthermore, the documentarians see their work as part of the lives of their subjects, and they are concerned that their documentary making should be a social practice that helps those people. (10)

Because of humanistic concern and active engagement with filmed subjects, the voices and everyday lives of marginalized groups have been carved out through this genre.

Documentary filmmaking creates a space for challenging and criticizing social phenomena and “giving voice” to unheard and invisible groups of people, such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities, and homosexuals. Yet, the public awareness of Chinese New Documentary is limited due to censorship in China, where it is very



difficult to gain access to these films. Overall, censorship has a great impact on the distribution and visibility of certain independent documentary films.

In addition, unlike the independent documentaries that serve as “little media” in Taiwan and reach a limited audience, the production of Chinese New Documentary takes place both inside and outside the mainstream media system, “especially against the ‘special topic program’ (*Zhuangtipian* 專題片), the model of traditional Chinese television propaganda program” (Lu 16). The special topic program helps the Communist Party to promote political propaganda and inspire socialist ideology. However, in challenging the state’s propaganda, situating filmed subjects in an oppositional place becomes the documentary filmmakers’ top priority to provide an alternative understanding of social problems and common people’s lived experiences. Yet, since many documentary filmmakers work within the television system, they keep a close connection to the state-owned media. It is noteworthy that the production of Chinese New Documentary occurs both inside and outside the official system, though the positions of the film production points to diverse purposes. One of my case studies in this chapter, *A Wife’s Stage*, is an example of documentary filmmaking within the official system and belongs to the “special topic program.” Although it is sponsored by the state, it does shed

light on marginalized subjects in China. It articulates both hegemonic ideology and migrants' suffering in the film production. I will provide further analysis in a later section.

In the context of Taiwan and China, documentary filmmaking serves as a tool for responding to social phenomena both critically and politically, and conveys certain representational ideology in order to call the audience's attention to socially marginalized groups and their hardships. Documentary film not only embodies the reaction and resistance of these groups to capitalism and globalization, but also empowers filmed subjects by allowing them to speak for themselves. I propose that the convergence of critical representational politics of documentary filmmaking and marginalization of Taiwanese wives in cross-Strait migration offers a significant space for understanding everyday life and the predicaments of these voiceless women left behind by global capitalism.

Accordingly, in this chapter I seek to analyze two documentary films covering cross-Strait migration with a focus on Taiwanese businessmen's wives, in order to tease out the transformation of women's roles, subject formation and their conceptualization of homeness. *A Wife's Stage*, produced by PRC filmmaker Wang Jun 王俊, conveys PRC political ideology by portraying China as an ideal homeland for Taiwanese businesspersons and their families. In this film, the director pays special attention to the

case of a Taiwanese wife's relocation to Suzhou, China. With emphasis on a successful process of localization by way of the wife's own business ventures and her openness to local knowledge in her adopted city, this film constructs Suzhou as a perfect destination for Taiwanese migration. *A Wife's Stage* romanticizes economically-oriented migration as a peaceful process, and presents a win-win situation for both Taiwanese husbands and wives in their relocation to China.

*Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, filmed by Taiwanese director Liao Jin-Gui, 廖錦桂 addresses women's migratory trajectories from Taiwan to China through four Taiwanese women's personal stories. These married Taiwanese women live in Beijing, Shanghai and Dongguan. While Taiwanese businessmen are deeply involved in developing and expanding their businesses in China, women, who typically lack the same freedom and mobility, are confined to the household in order to help fulfill and support their husbands' dreams. This film demonstrates that the cross-Strait migration has transformed women's gender and social roles as well as familial intimacy and structure, in opposition to traditional kinship-based ideals. The split structure of Taiwanese businessperson's families highlights challenges regarding children's education, marriage crises, and identity formation. This film draws special attention to women's voices and personal stories in order to question stereotyped representations in terms of masculinity. In

comparing this film with *A Wife's Stage*, it is significant to note that the contradictory representation of family structure, either spilt or complete, brings about divergent constructions of homeness and identity formation, which are both driven by capitalist forces encouraging migration across the Strait.

This chapter examines how these two films represent the transformation of women's roles within households, and their conceptualization of homeness through moves back and forth across the Taiwan Strait. All of interviewees in these two films were once career women in Taiwan, but most of them quit their jobs and followed their husbands to China in order to preserve their marriages and families. In the transition from career woman to housewife, it is important to investigate how social and gender roles have been transformed by migration propelled by capitalist forces and family choice. In addition to the transformation of women's roles, familial intimacy is also commoditized and sustained by the money Taiwanese businessmen send to their families. Accordingly, the cinematic representation offers a significant view onto how women's migratory trajectories and life struggles have been transformed by the forces of global capitalism.

## Successful Businesswoman and an “Ideal” Home

*A Wife's Stage* offers an alternative understanding of Taiwanese women's localization by showing how they can exercise their agency in homemaking within the structure of capitalism. *A Wife's Stage*, directed by PRC director Wang Jun, was produced and supported by the local government of Jiangsu province in China, and awarded second prize in the “Zhongguo jilupian xueshujiang 中國紀錄片學術獎” (Chinese Documentary Academy Award) and first prize in the “Jiangsu dianshi jinfenghuang jiang 江蘇電視金鳳凰獎” (Jiangsu TV Golden Phoenix Award).<sup>35</sup> Since the film was funded by the government, I suggest that, to a certain extent, it is infused with political ideology and marketing agenda that imposed guidelines on the filmed subjects, and that the filmed subjects may tend to present a certain performativity in order to fulfill the government's agenda and make a better living in Suzhou.

*A Wife's Stage* addresses a single case of a Taiwanese wife in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. The main interviewee in the film, Sha Man-ying 沙曼瑩, is a Taiwanese migrant, and her husband is a pioneering Taiwanese businessman working for Philips in China. The film opens with a sequence portraying a gathering of Taiwanese wives within the Association of Taiwanese Women in Suzhou, which is a branch of the Association of

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<sup>35</sup> See the introduction of Wang Jun. Wed. 05 February 2015.  
<[http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_492ea41a010005b7.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_492ea41a010005b7.html)>

Taiwanese Businessmen. In the scenes featuring Taiwanese wives socializing, they are shown practicing a Taiwanese aboriginal dance and making *zongzi* 粽子(sticky rice wrapped in leaves). These activities are highlighted in order to reflect these women's Taiwanese cultural practices in China. The narrative is then built upon the director's interview with Sha Man-ying and the illustration of her family's localization through the voice-over's intervention. After Sha settled in Suzhou, she opens a boutique. As the film progresses, her interaction with the locals and her sightseeing trips with friends visiting from Taiwan are documented in support of the representation of Sha's localization in Suzhou. I propose that the purpose of the film production is to portray an ideal home in Suzhou for these Taiwanese migrants and to represent China as an ideal site for Taiwanese to "return" and identify with as a homeland.

The image and personality of the interviewee, Sha Man-ying, and the other Taiwanese women in the film, are presented in a different way from those in *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, who appear as victims. I argue that the director intentionally selects an interviewee who is a representative of a successful businesswoman with a strong personality in order to affect the theme of the film. In the film, Sha Man-ying is represented as a brave, tough and independent woman. She is actively involved with the Taiwanese Women Association in Suzhou, and welcomes other Taiwanese wives into her home. In addition

to Sha, the president of the association also makes an appearance in the film, and she performs in a positive way as she takes care of other Taiwanese women and makes the association feel like a big family. As the film shows, Sha, the president, and other Taiwanese women are not confined to the domestic sphere as traditional housewives, but are all actively participating in public activities and creating a space for themselves.

In cross-Strait migration, Sha's role and identity have been transformed. According to her interview with the filmmaker, Sha used to be a travel agent in Taiwan, but relocated to Suzhou with her children in order to reunite with her husband. After settling in Suzhou, she "decided to be a full-time housewife and hopefully made a good arrangement for my family." Interestingly, the interview between the filmmaker and Sha takes place in her house, located in Jiangfeng Garden, Suzhou. Sha's husband Mr. Li is also filmed. As opposed to the absence of husbands in *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, the representation of the husband-wife relationship in this film is harmonious, and suggests familial intimacy. The long shot on Sha and her husband indicates a positive tone of Sha's intimate interaction with her husband. The film seeks to document a success story of a Taiwanese businessman's happy family in China. In the film, migrant Taiwanese wives are not victims, but rather, are supported by their husbands.

After the sequence featuring the interview shot in Sha's home, the camera shifts to Sha's store, Angela's Design. With her husband's financial and emotional support, Sha starts her own business selling cheongsam (a close-fitting silk dress traditionally worn by Chinese women) in collaboration with a local professional designer, featuring Suzhou silk fabric. The observational shot at the store portrays Sha as an independent and successful businesswoman, and captures her interaction with local customers in a positive way to offer the audience more details concerning her engagement in the local society. A close-up of Sha's smiling face given to her customer reflects her confidence as a designer and owner of the store. In this regard, the sequence filmed at the store not only reveals the shifting of geographical locales from private to public, but also demonstrates the triple transformation of Sha's role, from a career woman in Taiwan to a housewife and successful businesswoman in China. I contend that women's subjectivity is reconstructed through the filmic representation of spatial practice in the domestic sphere and in the design store, in which women's identity and space are redefined with each other.

In addition to the transformation of Sha's role within the household, the film sheds light on her interaction with the locals, which is traced through her everyday life in Suzhou. In the film, it is noteworthy that the voice-over holds a crucial and authoritative position within the film narrative, representing Suzhou as an ideal destination for



Taiwanese migrants. The founding of Sha's fashion boutique marks the start of her localization. The significance of voice-over commentary in documentary, according to Robert Chi, lies in "what critics and practitioners of documentary often refer to as the lecture format or the voice of God" (154). In the film, as the voice-over tells us, "Because of Suzhou's cultural resource, the place creates a perfect environment for [Sha]." It suggests that Sha's success results from her design and business potential as well as Suzhou's distinctive cultural environment. The voice-over as one of the crucial voices in documentary film conveys the central messages the filmmaker intentionally delivers. As Bill Nichols proposes, "The voice of documentary conveys a sense of what the filmmaker's social point of view is and how this point of view becomes manifest in the acting of making the film" (71). In this case, the dominant voice-over commentary explicitly tells viewers that Suzhou is an appealing place with gorgeous landscape and plentiful cultural resources.

Moreover, through accompanying Sha throughout her day, the filmmaker employs the tracking shots to illustrate her interaction with the locals while shopping in the market. In these sequences, Sha praises the locally produced vegetables as much cheaper and of better quality than those in Taiwan. She also invites other Taiwanese wives to her home and teaches them how to cook Taiwanese cuisine with local products. The appropriation

of local knowledge through cooking demonstrates how Sha becomes accustomed to local life in Suzhou. Meanwhile, in an interview sequence, Sha explains, “If you want to love this place, you have to become acquainted with local people. Otherwise, you will be an outsider forever. I feel like I’m a Suzhou local now.” In this case, her knowledge of Suzhou as well as her self-identification helps Sha to make a home locally, and thus her conception of homeness is constructed through her absorption of local customs and interaction with the local people. Accordingly, these selective sequences not only reveal Sha’s localization, but imply the theme of the film, which intends to convey a politicized desire to integrate Taiwanese migrants into Chinese life.

More significantly, the construction of the ideal home is practiced through the domination of the voice-over in the film, which is an extension of the local government that funded and censored the film. The powerful and persuasive voice-over inserted after filming complements the director’s visual strategies and dominates a major position in the narrative (in addition to the director’s interviews with Sha Man-ying). At the beginning, the voice-over suggests that “Taiwanese wives gradually discover their own space in Suzhou.” The voice-over provides a convincing impression that Suzhou is a perfect destination for Sha’s and other Taiwanese migrants’ localization. Additionally, during tracking shots of the founding of Sha’s store, the voice-over reveals that “Sha

would like to become an ‘indigenous’ Suzhou local.” We see that Sha’s self-identification is established through the interpretative narrative of the voice-over, accompanied by a hegemonic imposition of identity. As the film concludes, the voice-over tells us, “Mrs. Li says that she has been settling down in Suzhou, and regards Suzhou as her home.”

In sum, *A Wife’s Stage* not only creates a space for Taiwanese wives, but also represents Suzhou as an ideal home for their local homemaking. It is noteworthy that the elements and the interviews the director conducts and selects in his filmmaking are closely associated with the purpose of bringing Taiwanese into the fold. On the one hand, the transformation of women’s roles is represented positively, in that they exercise agency in creating their own space. On the other hand, the homeness aligned with Taiwanese wives’ localization is redefined through the lens of the film’s subjects, as well as the film production. The film intends to present a win-win situation for both the local people and Taiwanese migrants through their dwelling and investment in mainland China. The film thus applies political ideology to Taiwanese wives’ everyday lives in order to portray a positive view of cross-Strait migration.

## Domestic Labor and the Confinement of Home Space

*Chang'e's Monthly Visit* is a documentary film that references the migratory trajectories from Taiwan to China of Taiwanese businessmen's wives, through four stories taking place in Beijing, Shanghai and Dongguan. In the title of the film, Chang'e 嫦娥 refers to the protagonist of an ancient Chinese myth who swallowed elixir she stole from the Heavenly Empress and fled to the moon. This accident resulted in the separation of Chang'e and her husband Hou-yi 后羿. The title explicitly points to the separation of the filmed subjects and their families. The subtitle of this film, "Taishang mama de qianxi xinshi 台商媽媽的遷徙心事" (The Migratory Stories of Taiwanese Moms), suggests that these Taiwanese women face insecurity and rootlessness in their cross-Strait migration, in that they are forced to move back and forth between China and Taiwan to visit family members just like Chang'e had to travel to visit Hou-yi. The narrative is built upon four segments featuring four Taiwanese wives and their personal perspectives, along with the director's intervention through voice-over. This fragmented representation thus gives us a glimpse of how women react to their cross-Strait movement.

In *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, Shu-qing 蜀卿, who used to be a journalist, is in the process of moving to Beijing because her husband has been appointed to a new position. Featuring Shu-qing's house hunting, this portion of the film conveys the outset of

Taiwanese migrants' relocation and settlement in China. The second subject is Rui'e 瑞娥, who decides to move her family to Beijing in order to save more money. As her children are growing up, she feels she needs to find a job and reconstruct her social status. Zhu Ping 朱萍, in turn was a professional accountant in Taiwan, and her husband is a lawyer in international business. He is dispatched to Shanghai and is seldom at home. After settling down in Shanghai, Zhu Ping feels like she is on a long, leisurely vacation, spending her time learning piano and painting. Otherwise, raising her daughter is her only focus in life. The last case is a tragedy. Gui-yu 桂玉, whose husband is an owner of a medium-sized firm in Taiwan, moves to Dongguan in order to take care of her daughters. Unlike the comfortable marriages and unified families in the previous three cases, Gui-yu lives a distressed life in an apartment rented by her husband near the Taiwan Businessmen's Dongguan School, where wives are called "rent mothers" to express their marginalization in the rural village. The film ends with the brief summary of the four filmed subjects' current situations. Shu-qing is busy packing up her belongings at her place in Taipei, preparing for her permanent move to Beijing. The director follows her as she wanders around her neighborhood in Taipei to document her Taiwanese memories and her interaction with vendors. Rui'e had worked for a while but eventually lost her job again. Zhu Ping is still on her long vacation. Viewers also learn that Gui-yu has co-

founded a publishing house with her friend, and has turned her tragic life into a positive one. In the film, these four cases unveil women's everyday lives after migrating—ever subjected to economic drives—and the transformation of their lived experience, subjectivity and identity.

Throughout the film, men are mostly absent, leaving women free to openly express their thoughts in their own voices. Yet, it is interesting that the film starts with a shot of the Shanghai landscape, with a caption reading “The Paramount 百樂門大舞廳”, labeling a building erected in the 1930's that remains a symbol of Shanghai entertainment culture emblematic of modernity and cosmopolitanism. In Leo Ou-fan Lee's renowned book *Shanghai Modern*, he regards “Shanghai in the 1930s as a cultural matrix of Chinese modernity” (xi) and points out that the dance hall features the modern architecture and urban space which “constitutes its modern qualities” (5). The emergence of female dance waitresses and hostesses was closely associated with dance hall culture. Thus, the dance hall and the so-called “modern woman” symbolize the specifically Chinese modernity of 1930s Shanghai. The image of a dance hall with a dancing couple in this film not only emphasizes the shift of geographical location from Taiwan to China, but also implies the sexual encounter between Taiwanese businessmen and Chinese women. The opening scene can be treated as a taken-for-granted masculine narrative

celebrated by the mass media. It is common for Taiwanese men to have sexual affairs with Chinese women and to frequent restaurants and clubs with their clients and business partners. The opening sequence can be read as a superstructure of capitalism and patriarchy that the succeeding narrative tends to resist. Immediately, the screen turns black, and we hear the overlapping voices of the four interviewees expressing their suffering as a result of their cross-Strait migration. The blackened screen foreshadows Taiwanese wives' uncertain futures, their misfortunes, and the dramatic changes of their lives, in contrast with their husbands' newfound power and prosperity. The colorful dance hall and black screen present contrasting scenes denoting the migratory journey of Taiwanese wives. The marginalization of women thus takes place right after the relocation in black, signifying transition.

Since the stories of Taiwanese businesspersons in the mass media are focused on men, women appear to be marginalized and voiceless. I propose that the documentary film genre creates a space for women to speak, with their own versions of stories of migration in China. According to Kuei-fen Chiu in her discussion on the emergence of Taiwan's new documentary filmmaking, "If New Cinema was informed by a bourgeois outlook, the new documentary was marked by its inclination to represent the marginalized and the suppressed" ("The Vision of Taiwan New Documentary" 19). Tze-lan Sang also notes

that “documentary film plays a major role, fulfilling its promise as a powerful medium for preserving and shaping personal and collective memories” (“Reclaiming Taiwan’s Colonial Modernity” 62). Chiu further proposes that new documentary filmmaking is “giving a voice to the voiceless,” especially female directors. Furthermore, as she remarks:

Documentary filmmaking by women is gaining momentum in contemporary Taiwan. What is particularly striking about this specific phenomenon is that in a lot of the documentaries by women, ‘subjectivity’ is not treated as ‘given’ but something that is disturbingly problematic. This is very much in line with contemporary theoretical views on subjectivity as ‘non-static’, or, in the words of Judith Butler, ‘performative’ (Butler 1991, 18; Juhasz 1999, 208). (“Documentary Power” 171)

The Taiwanese director Liao Jin-Gui, the director of *Chang’e’s Monthly Visit*, seeks to create a space for women through her camera, in order to represent women’s suffering under the forces of capitalism as galvanized by their husbands, and to challenge the illusion of complete and happy family life as portrayed in *A Wife’s Stage*. Rather than duplicating the masculine narrative of Taiwanese businessmen, the director interweaves four personal stories with a special focus on cross-Strait migration in order to investigate



multiple survival approaches and to inform viewers of wives' predicaments under the resplendent surface of the westward movement to China.

In *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, the four interviewees are Taiwanese women who are connected by the fact that their husbands are all employed in local/transnational enterprises or have their own firms in China. As the director's interactive interviews with these women show, most of these women used to be career women in Taiwan, working as journalists, accountants, and so on. However, in order to reunite with their husbands and maintain their marriages and families, they decide to quit their jobs and move to China. Most of them thus become housewives, taking care of their children and doing housework. As the first interviewee Shu-qing succinctly states, "Once I moved to China, my focus was family." After relocating to China, these women are confined to the domestic sphere and become unpaid domestic labor. Most of the shots are taken in the subjects' houses. As the film portrays, the women are busy with housework, cooking, and taking care of their children in the household, and seldom enjoy time with friends in the public sphere. When careers are no longer a possibility, the family and home space thus become the most fundamental aspects of these women's everyday lives.

In the first segment of the documentary, the director applies a participatory mode, which "emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subject" (Nichols 31), to trace

Shu-qing's movement between potential apartments and houses in Beijing. The house-hunting scene highlights Shu-qing's relocation from Taiwan to China, and underscores that the home space will be fundamental in her daily life after she quits her job as a reporter. The home constitutes Shu-qing's first level of confinement. It is noteworthy that the rented apartments and houses Shu-qing visits are only available to foreigners and diplomats, and are monitored by the police and security guards. It suggests the second confinement of Shu-qing as a Taiwanese, in that her movement is controlled by the government and limited to a specific area. Shu-qing does not only lose her public identity as a career woman, but she is also bound to the monitored locale.

In light of the gender division of labor, I argue that the economic-oriented migration reinforces the patriarchal family structure in these Taiwanese businessmen's families, and the cinematic representations demonstrate the interplay between capitalism and patriarchy played out in the lives of Taiwanese wives. In Marxist cultural studies, the development of technology and the transformative mode of production bring about a transformation of women's roles. According to Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey's study on the influence of women's roles in different regions of Great Britain in the nineteenth century:

Extremely schematically, capitalism presented patriarchy with different challenges in different parts of the country. The question was in what ways the terms of male dominance would be reformulated within these changed conditions. Further this process of accommodation between capitalism and patriarchy produced a different synthesis of the two in different places. It was a synthesis which was clearly visible in the nature of gender relations, and in the lives of women. (197-198)

Cross-Strait migration is an example of the confluence of capitalism and patriarchy in the contemporary era, and thus men resume their power and domination within the household after moving to China. Geographic displacement and changes in social conditions in line with the capitalist mode of production reshapes the structure of gender politics within the household of Taiwanese businesspersons.

The film explicitly showcases the transformation of women's roles by way of situating its subjects in the domestic sphere, instead of painting a broad picture of business enterprises and national ideology. The spatial representation of the domestic sphere indicates that these Taiwanese wives are no longer aspiring professional career women, but are now confined to their households. In the second segment of the film, Rui'e, whose husband works in a transnational advertising company in Beijing, quits her job and relocates from Taiwan with her husband and children. The opening shot of Rui'e's

segment shows her teaching her son how to write the Chinese characters of the film's title in her home, and it is worth noting that the characters are traditional (as used in Taiwan) not simplified (as used in China), reinforcing her close cultural tie to Taiwan. The mother-son relationship highlighted in this scene not only suggests that Taiwanese wives are resuming the burden of housework and children's education in line with traditional social expectations, but also registers the transition of Rui'e's subject formation from a confident career woman to a wanting mother. In the interview, Rui'e mentions that she and her husband decided to move to China to save more money and to live together. Their original plan was to move back to Taiwan in two or three years. However, Rui'e's husband insists on staying in Beijing longer because he is not ready to move back to Taiwan and start another career. A close-up of her face discloses her helplessness as she says, "I put too much emphasis on this space. I totally don't take myself into consideration. To be honest, living here in Beijing makes me unhappy." Rui'e's case reveals the loss of women's freedom and public identity in the cross-Strait migration, while family, especially husband and children, become more important in her new life. According to the voice-over explanation following Rui'e's self-reflection, "Five years ago, the family dream was the same as Rui'e's, but after five years, Rui'e feels more confused." Hence, Rui'e's story unveils women's unheeded voices and lost selves

beneath the seemingly bright surface of Taiwanese businesspersons' lived experience in China. While Taiwanese businessmen succeed in establishing their businesses, their wives develop a sense of uncertainty and even loss.

During the director's interview with Rui'e, her friend Grace, who is also a Taiwanese wife, appears on camera and expresses her opinion about cross-Strait migration. Rui'e and Grace agree that they do not have confidence anymore after moving to China. As Grace says, "My ten years of work experience are invalid now. When my husband asks me to prepare something, I feel like I am a senior servant." The self-labeled "senior servant" marks Taiwanese wives' status as domestic labor, exploited by their husbands. The terms "housewife," "senior servant," and "*lao ma zi* 老媽子" (old mom) are related to power structure and gender politics within the household. These Taiwanese women become subordinate housewives obedient to their husbands, working as unpaid domestic labor at home. The cases of Rui'e and Grace exemplify how male domination is exercised through the subordination and exploitation of women within the domestic sphere.

The confinement of these women is limited not only to the domestic sphere. The cinematic representation of local landscape and geographic locale also exemplifies the enclosure of women's bodies in the host country. After the sequences of the home space and the interview with Rui'e, the director expressly traces Rui'e's footprints in the alleys

of Beijing. While taking a walk, Rui'e says, "Living here in Beijing is painful. I'm not content feeling like duckweed."<sup>36</sup> Rui'e's sense of rootlessness leads her to wander through Beijing to the Temple of Heaven, a symbolic location that evokes nostalgia and homesickness in Rui'e that she visits when she misses her hometown in Taiwan. Although she enjoys talking to elders in the Temple of Heaven, an invisible boundary still excludes Rui'e. As the voice-over notes, "Although the wall of Beijing had collapsed, there seems to be an invisible boundary leaving Rui'e out of Beijing's inner world." The frame of the door of the Temple of Heaven as seen through a deep focus shot symbolizes the relation between Rui'e and Beijing. Rui'e's body is not only confined by the doorframe, but is blacked out when backlit against the physical landscape. In addition to her status as a housewife, her identity has been shifted from that of a local in Taiwan to that of a foreign migrant in Beijing. The spatial representation thus lays out women's position within the household as well as in the host society. The double confinement reflected in the framing shots and visual setting in the film calls our attention to the marginalization of these Taiwanese women.

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<sup>36</sup> Duckweed floats on the surface of water without a root. In Chinese culture, duckweed symbolizes a sense of rootlessness. In Cao Zhi's (曹植) famous poem "Duckweed," the first two lines are "Duckweed floats in water, drifting with wind" (浮萍寄清水，隨風東西流). In this poem, duckweed refers to a woman whose fate is dependent on her husband after marriage.

Similar to the geographical mapping through camera framing in the film, the director intentionally chooses to focus on women in three major cities in China, Beijing, Shanghai and Dongguan, which are all popular destinations for Taiwanese migrants. The narrative draws out the symbolic trajectory of the cross-Strait migration from North to South, from metropolitan to countryside. The third interviewee, Zhu Ping, temporarily stays in prosperous metropolitan Shanghai, which has the second largest population of Taiwanese immigrants next to Dongguan, Guangdong Province. Zhu Ping's husband is a famous international business lawyer and is always busy at work. Zhu Ping used to be an accountant, but quit her job to be a housewife. She lives with her daughter Xiao Benyu 蕭本玉 in an apartment, and only sees her husband once or twice a week. Zhu Ping and Xiao Benyu belong to a sort of artificial nuclear family, in that the father/husband figure is absent most of the time. As Zhu Ping tells us in the interview, "We seldom get together. My husband is hardworking, and we only meet once or twice a week. Sometimes I feel a spell of hollowness." She also wishes that her daughter would not grow up too fast, as she would feel even lonelier if she did not have someone to care for. The close mother-daughter relationship is addressed by virtue of the scenes shot in the domestic sphere showing Zhu Ping preparing a meal for her daughter and helping with her homework.

The scenes indicate that the absence of the father/husband figure is quite common in the families of Taiwanese businesspersons.

Zhu Ping's case demonstrates the commodification of familial intimacy in cross-Strait migration. In the interview with Zhu Ping and her daughter, we learn that Benyu studies at an international American school in Shanghai. The American school education symbolizes a form of cultural capital, and it helps accomplish a transnational dream, particularly for expatriate families like Zhu Ping's family. Since her husband cannot spend time taking care of his family, financial support becomes the major investment he can give to his family. In this regard, familial intimacy is not associated with love, caregiving, and emotional support, but becomes a commodity that the businessman husband/father can purchase with money.

The last interviewee, Gui-yu, resides in Dongguan, which is home to the majority of Taiwanese businesspersons and their firms in China. However, the camera does not focus on the prosperity of the urban space and the development of these Taiwanese firms, but instead, deliberately displays an unknown village where a Taiwanese school is located. The "Taiwanese Businessmen's Dongguan School" (TBDS 東莞台商子弟學校) was established at Shang-yi village (上一村), Dongguan in 1999, for the children of



Taiwanese businessmen.<sup>37</sup> TBDS is the first school for Taiwanese businesspersons' children recognized by both China and Taiwan, and is located in one of Dongguan's up-and-coming elite districts.<sup>38</sup> Despite its appealing description, the director of the documentary represents the village as remote and backward through lighting and framing. How and why does the director portray Gui-yu's story and setting in a way that breaks from the established understanding of the privileged Taiwanese lifestyle in China?

Through the dim lighting and primitive landscape, we are told that the school and the village seem to be located in an undeveloped area of Guangdong Province. As the voice-over and a drab long shot of the village reveals, "Shang-yi Village is a place you cannot find on the map. Gui-yu and other Taiwanese mothers are residing in this place." As the film portrays, the geographic locale of the village suggests the marginalization of these Taiwanese wives and children, who are ignored by their husbands and fathers. They are confined to an enclosed area, prevented from enjoying the developed prosperity of the urban space. The filmic framing represents these women and children's hardships after

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<sup>37</sup> The introduction on the website to this school suggests that the economic-oriented migration has led to issues including personal health, marriage, and education. Once the school was established, it was hoped these problems would be solved. See the website of Taiwan Businessmen's Dongguan School. Web. 4 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.td-school.org.cn/3ws0608/od.htm>>

<sup>38</sup> See the introduction of Taiwanese Businessmen's Dongguan School on online blog: <http://alberthsieh.com/765/%E3%80%90%E5%AD%B8%E6%A0%A1%E6%95%99%E8%82%B2%E3%80%91%E5%BB%A3%E6%9D%B1%E6%9D%B1%E8%8E%9E%EF%BC%8E%E6%9D%B1%E8%8E%9E%E5%8F%B0%E5%95%86%E5%AD%90%E5%BC%9F%E5%AD%B8%E6%A0%A1>, and Baidu on the village. Web. 19 Aug 2014 <<http://baike.baidu.com/view/3093544.htm>>

moving to China and delivers the director's purpose of unveiling the dark side of cross-Strait migration.

It is noteworthy that the confinement of these wives and children is enforced by the Taiwanese husbands through their financial investment. As the film shows, the school was funded and constructed by the Taiwanese Businessmen's Association. Meanwhile, Taiwanese businessmen rent the many apartments near the school in order to accommodate their wives who are taking care of their children. Gui-yu is one of these wives. The village symbolically registers the segregation of these women and children. As the voice-over indicates, "Inside the iron gate is a world which belongs to mother and daughter. And this is a world of women *only*." However, this situation is not generated through women's autonomy, but through Taiwanese businessmen's capital. The marginalization represented in the film is limited not only to the geographical locale of the village, but also to women's status in society as dictated by the forces of capitalism wielded by Taiwanese businessmen. In this regard, the school is more than a physical location; it is also a mental space, conceptualized as segregation. The director's approach highlights the confines of physical boundaries and portrays the helplessness of these women and children.

Moreover, the founding of the school and building of apartments in a remote village are manipulated by Taiwanese men's financial contributions to their families, which lead to alienation and segregation. The Taiwanese businesspersons constantly travel back and forth between Taiwan and China, and they are busy at work or taking care of their mistresses, whereas their wives and daughters are confined to the rented apartment. In this case, familial intimacy within these households is commoditized through the investment of money, rather than physical and emotional caregiving. I propose that the school operated by Taiwanese businessmen is in response to the capitalist mode of production of space, in which women and children are exploited. Taiwanese businessmen virtually sacrifice their families to maintain power and make profit.

Meanwhile, the emergence of the "rent mother" is associated with cross-Strait migration in light of the gendered division of labor. While Taiwanese businessmen earn money for their families, their wives are given no more than the responsibility of housework, and nurturance of the children and their education. The last interviewee Gui-yu is one of the rent mothers in Dongguan. As Gui-yu confesses, "Many Taiwanese mothers who quit their jobs and come here are despised by their husbands." She insists on taking care of her own children, and thus follows her husband to Dongguan. In Taiwan, she was a business owner who strived for the success of the firm alongside her husband.

Although this film does not directly point to her husband's affair with a Chinese mistress, her self-reflection implicitly reveals the reality. As Gui-yu complains, "It was painful living with him in Taiwan. After coming to China, he puts his wife aside and in turn serves his Chinese mistress...China is men's heaven but women's hell."

The transformation of Gui-yu's role exemplifies the reproduction of identity in the Taiwan-to-China migration. Cheng-shu Kao's study on small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan indicates the importance of the "boss lady" in the development of these enterprises. "Boss lady is not only the partner of the boss, but more importantly, she is part of the Taiwanese experience" (1999). The boss lady, who takes charge of both household and enterprise, has played a crucial role in the economic development in Taiwan that has taken place since the 1980s, and the phenomenon also marks Taiwanese women's empowerment within the household. However, after moving their enterprises to China, Taiwanese wives' roles have been transformed. They are not powerful boss ladies anymore, but are now subject to male dominance. As the film shows, after migration Gui-yu is no longer in charge of the family business, and her life as a traditional mother and wife is all about housework and children. This economic-oriented migration, as we have seen, has transformed women's roles and lives in dramatic ways.

In addition to the transformation of their roles, women's confinement within the domestic sphere raises a question regarding their reconstruction of homeness. In migration, identity formation and physical displacement bring about the redefinition of home for migrants. In the discourse of diaspora, migrants supposedly keep a close tie to their homelands. I suggest that the home space represented in the film is fragmented and split in line with the discontinuing narrative of the four segments. Rather than tracing these Taiwanese immigrants' trajectories in a broader way, through the mapping of nation-state, the director limits the camera to the domestic sphere, the four interviewees' homes and villages. The disappearance of Taiwan and China in a larger view in the film calls our attention to these women migrants' identity formation in their homes. Their conceptualization of homeness is in relation to their identity, which is limited to the domestic sphere instead of the nation-state. The reconstruction of homeness in the film can be interpreted in different ways. First of all, unlike Taiwanese businessmen's close relations with the local population that is required to develop their business, these female migrants do not care about aspects of the outside world, including economy and politics. Second, the director intentionally focuses on the domestic sphere in order to designate women's everyday lives in lived space after migration. Thirdly, I contend that the representation of home space in the film not only demonstrates the transformation of

women's roles, but also showcases the process of their subject formation within the household. Last but not least, it is worthy of note that cultural elements appropriated in constructing homeness from these Taiwanese wives' perspectives are closely associated with their homeland, such as teaching traditional characters and eating Taiwanese-produced foods. It seems that they cannot easily identify with the host country, China, but instead keep a close tie to Taiwan which they continue to regard as a home. Hence, homeness through the lens of these female migrants is of importance in understanding women's migratory trajectories and their reactions to migration. It is in response to these women's sense of belonging which is tightly bound to the domestic sphere and native land and culture.

*Chang'e's Monthly Visit* as a documentary film represents physical migration through four Taiwanese wives' lived experiences. The representational space of the film is constructed through four segments, particularly focusing on the transformation of women's roles and their relations with household. The film gives shape to the unheard voices of Taiwanese wives and their everyday experiences in the process of migration, which is engendered by the forces of global capitalism. The narrative of the film suggests that traditional social expectations regarding housewives and good mothers have been

foisted on the women, which reinforces the persistence of male dominance through the collaboration of capitalism and patriarchy.

### **Conclusion**

*A Wife's Stage* and *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* both signal a renewed focus on cross-Strait migration, reinforced by global capitalism. Departing from the common representation of male dominance and masculinity in the mass media, documentary films carve out a special space for Taiwanese women, who are experiencing a dramatic transformation of gender roles and lifestyle by way of migration to China. Both films document women's migratory trajectories and everyday lives in order to establish how their roles are being transformed, and how they are redefining homeness in this economic-oriented migratory trend. However, since the films were filmed by Taiwanese and PRC directors respectively, they reflect different ideologies and representational politics, and reveal very different filmic strategies. I argue that the two films can be read in terms of the directors' positions, the selection of filmed subjects, and the creation purposes and themes. All of these points are in response to the political ideologies of each side of the Taiwan Strait.

In terms of women's roles and voices, *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* addresses Taiwanese wives' predicaments through four personal stories. The director illustrates women's lived experiences within the domestic sphere, which symbolizes the confinement of women and male dominance. Aligning Taiwanese wives' personal stories, the film shows how cross-Strait migration has influenced women's roles and has resulted in exploitation by their husbands. In contrast, *A Wife's Stage* sheds light on a single case, celebrating the success of a Taiwanese businessman and the localization of his family in China. With the support of economic capital, the major interviewee establishes her own local business. Although she experience the transformation of her gender role in the process of migration, as with the Taiwanese wives in *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, this wife obtains more social and economic capital, as well as the freedom to exercise her agency, by accumulating local knowledge and through her active homemaking. The representation of Taiwanese wives in both films unveils women's lived experience and creates a space that includes women's voices in terms of the transformation of their roles within the domestic sphere in the new host country.

Aligning with Taiwanese wives' roles in the cross-Strait migration, the reconstruction of homeness is another crucial element addressed in both films. *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* reveals the commodification of familial intimacy sustained by Taiwanese businessmen's



economic investment. Homeness in this film is represented as unstable and challenged at every step of migration and localization. Taiwanese wives in *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* find difficulty dwelling in and accommodating themselves to their new locale. Thus they are confined to the domestic sphere, with their effort and responsibility directed towards family. *A Wife's Stage*, on the other hand, portrays an ideal relocated home for Taiwanese businessmen and their families. Homeness is represented as harmonious for all Taiwanese migrants. Overall, I contend that homeness in both films is in response to representational politics. Whereas *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* pokes holes in the success stories of cross-Strait migration by revealing Taiwanese women's unsteady trajectories, *A Wife's Stage* provides an impression of a harmonious home in order to appeal to a broad base of Taiwanese migrants. The production of the films is closely associated with physical migration, political ideology and global capitalism, in order to reveal women's lived experience as influenced and transformed by this large economic-oriented migration. Homeness is thus a crucial trope of articulations and representations in both Taiwanese and PRC documentary films, which call attention to identity formation and assimilation into mainland Chinese culture in extremely different way.

## CHAPTER V

### MULTILINGUAL HOME:

#### NEW IMMIGRANTS AND DOUBLE HOMENESS IN SINOPHONE TAIWAN

This chapter<sup>39</sup> explores the transformation of family structure and double homeness from the perspective of new immigrants who migrate from Southeast Asia and China to Taiwan, and investigates how Taiwanese media represents new immigrants' process of reinventing a sense of home and restructuring a traditional Han-Chinese family. "New immigrant" is a newly-coined term in Taiwan which defines those who come to Taiwan from China or Southeast Asia through marriage, and this growing population has increasingly transformed family structure and the notion of home. For foreign spouses in Taiwan, most migratory experiences result from economic need and are undertaken in order to support family in their native countries. Both economically and emotionally, the concept of home is built upon a close connection between two homes, one in Taiwan and one in the country of origin. In this regard, homeness in migration is associated with geographical origin, dwelling as well as familial intimacy. Since the notion of home is reinvented through migratory experiences and local differences in a specific time, it is a site which is closely associated with the place-based production of Sinophone Taiwan.

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<sup>39</sup> An earlier version of the chapter is forthcoming in *American Journal of Chinese Studies*.

Aligned with Shu-mei Shih's definition of Sinophone, it is "a place-based, everyday practice and experience, and thus it is a historical formation that constantly undergoes transformation reflecting local needs and conditions" (*Visuality and Identity* 30).

Accordingly, this chapter aims to examine how the transformative notion of home is constructed with local particularities, such as cultural articulation and multilingual environment, through the lens of new immigrants. The movie series *neiren wairen xiyimin xilie dianying* 內人外人新移民系列電影 (*We Are Family* 2012) will be analyzed in order to provide an understanding of how new immigrants are incorporated in the cultural production of Sinophone Taiwan. This series includes four films, *My Little Honey Moon* (野蓮香), *The Golden Child* (金孫), *The Happy Life of Debbie* (黛比的幸福生活) and *The Moonlight in Jilin* (吉林的月光), which shed light on the localization of women migrants from China, Indonesia, and Vietnam and their negotiation with local differences in Taiwan. With the analysis of *We Are Family*, this chapter looks at the relation between new immigrants and homemaking as represented in these films to propose that the emergence of migration phenomena has increasingly influenced place-based cultural production in Taiwan in light of new immigrants' localization. Homeness is therefore of importance in understanding modernity and transnationalism, and in constructing a Sinophone Taiwan that reflects different migratory experiences and local needs.

## New Immigrants in Taiwan

The context of transnational migration, globalization and the flow of goods promotes mobility around the world and the formation of flexible citizenship (Ong 1999). This generates the possibility of migrant homemaking in new places of residence. The representation of migrants and their cultures is of importance in understanding place-based cultural production (Shih 2007). In the case of Taiwan, new immigrants are defined as those who have been migrating and settling there since the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> The majority of new immigrants are female; only 3% of the total population of new immigrants, mostly from Southeast Asia, is male (H. Lin 2).<sup>41</sup> Most of these immigrant spouses, especially females, become housewives, providing important labor and sharing the workload within households. According to Hsiao-Chuan Hsia, “the Taiwanese men married to ‘foreign brides’ are mostly farmers or working class. Though the poverty created by globalization was not as serious in Taiwan, low-skilled agricultural and industrial laborers are disadvantaged in Taiwan’s domestic marriage market” (“Empowering Foreign Brides and Community through Praxis-Oriented Research” 95). A number of these Taiwanese men

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<sup>40</sup> The number of new immigrants has been increasing since the 1990s, with the population in 2011 numbering 446,143, nearly 2% of the total population. Most of these people are foreign spouses who married in Taiwan, and they frequently hail from China, Southeast Asia or the Philippines. See the Statics of Foreign Spouses, National Immigration Agency. Web. 7 Jan. 2014.  
<<http://www.immigration.gov.tw/np.asp?ctNode=31523&mp=1>>

<sup>41</sup> Because male new immigrants have only composed 3% of the population of new immigrants, they are nearly invisible and overlooked in mass media.

are from the countryside or from fishing villages, and are excluded from economic globalization. An intercultural marriage with a new immigrant not only solves problems of reproduction, but also offers unpaid labor for farming and fishing families (Lan 231). The political and cultural incorporation of new immigrants into Taiwanese society is thus of importance due to the growing population and its influence on the national building project and the remaking of Taiwanese identity.

Designed to adapt new immigrants to Taiwanese society, the government provides literacy education to new immigrants. The purpose of offering new immigrants literacy education is “to improve new immigrants’ communication skills, their ability to meet their families’ demands, and to assist in the education of their children” (Chueh 1110). Ho-Chia Chueh further points out that “Literacy education is often believed to be a way of ‘empowering’ and ‘liberating’ new immigrants because it develops their linguistic, psychological, and social capabilities and therefore opens a new window of opportunity for new residents of Taiwan” (1111). Obviously, language learning is tied to daily activities and identity formation. From the perspective of new immigrants, they receive official literacy education as a gift from the government in exchange of their labor to their families. The literacy education provided through government support is mostly in Mandarin, the national linguistic paradigm. However, many new immigrants marry into

households featuring various spoken dialects. In addition to Mandarin, their acquisition of other dialects, such as Hokkien (known as Taiwanese) and Hakka, allows for identity formation through everyday practice. The linguistic issue thus should be taken into serious consideration when exploring cultural production with the involvement of new immigrants.

Taiwanese mass media, particularly newspapers and TV dramas, portrays new immigrants in a relatively negative way. They are often labeled as greedy gold-diggers because they marry into Taiwanese families out of economic need. Hsiao-Chuan Hsia's discussion of the representation of new immigrants points out that "the media have been overwhelmed by stories of the prevalence of run-away 'foreign brides,' divorce, domestic violence, and recently, the 'poor quality of the children of foreign brides'" ("Imaged and Imagined Threat to the Nation" 55). She further argues that these foreign brides are represented in terms of a "double-bind structure," in which "the portrayed subjects can hardly get away with being stereotyped, because if they contradict with one image, they are immediately caught into the opposing image" (62). Though these new immigrants are frequently stereotyped as either gold-diggers or oppressed and silent household servants, I contend that their involvement in Taiwanese households through marriage renders them agents of familial transformation, resulting in their subject formation and empowerment

within the domestic sphere. In addition to household work, they are increasingly incorporated into local cultural production through everyday practice and their representation in mass media, literature and film.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, although these foreign spouses have migrated and married into Taiwanese families, they still keep close ties to their natal families and their native lands, and they frequently provide financial support to family members in their home countries. It is interesting to note that both economically and emotionally, the transformative notion of home is built upon the connection between two families and two homes and the interaction between cultures. Home becomes an important trope in the representation of new immigrants and their identity formation, and a significant site with various implications for the study of migration, space, gender, and contemporary cultural production in Taiwan.

In order to understand the transformative notion of home, this chapter will analyze the Taiwanese movie series *We Are Family*. The series includes four feature films: *My Little Honey Moon* (directed by Cheng Yu-Chieh 鄭有傑), *The Golden Child* (directed by Chou She-Wei 周旭薇), *The Happy Life of Debbie* (directed by Fu Tien-Yu 傅天余) and

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<sup>42</sup> More and more new immigrants actively participate in local cultural production through filmmaking and creative writing. For instance, the Taiwanese Literature Award for Migrants has been held annually since 2014 by the Chinese Association for Foreign Spouses and Labor's Voice and the National Museum of Taiwan Literature. According to the official website of the award, the aim is to "encourage migrant writers and record the history that is happening now. Through the literary productions of immigrants and migrant workers, we will see stories of living in foreign lands, the feeling of having two homelands, and having parents of two nationalities, open before our eyes." (See <http://2014tlam-en.blogspot.tw/> 17 April 2015) In addition, a couple of new immigrants have learned documentary filmmaking and recorded their life in Taiwan, e.g. Nyugen Kim Hong' *Out/Marriage* (2012) and *Lovely Strangers* (2013).

*The Moonlight in Jilin* (directed by Chen Hui-Ling 陳慧翎). This movie series, which was released in 2012 and was sponsored by the Foreign Spouse Assistance Fund of the Ministry of the Interior of the R.O.C, was the first fictional feature-length movie series which addressed new immigrants' life experiences in Taiwan.<sup>43</sup> The four films were screened in theaters, and *My Little Honey Moon* was selected as the opening film for the 2012 New Taipei City Film Festival. The movie series focuses on four women immigrants who have migrated to Taiwan from China, Indonesia and Vietnam and their stories within the households into which they married.

According to an interview with the movie series producer Li Gang 李崗, the way in which Taiwanese media represents new immigrants is important:

The population of new immigrants in Taiwan is greater than that of aboriginal peoples. The government and the people have started to pay attention to these issues. But we hope to move beyond governmental policy and official ideology, and shed light on new immigrants' life stories from their own perspectives and perception. Some of them choose to settle down. Some of them disappear into the

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<sup>43</sup> Before this movie series was released in 2012, most films about new immigrants were made in documentary format. Examples include Lin Xiao-fang's *Foreign Spouses in Meinung* 外籍新娘在美濃 (2001), Tsai Chung-long's trilogy on foreign spouses 移民新娘三部曲 (2003), and Nguyen Kim Hong's *Out Marriage* 失婚記 (2012).



Taiwan populace. Some of them eventually return to their homelands. No matter where they end up, each of them has her own lived experiences.<sup>44</sup>

Given the government funding and the producer's explanation, the movie series conveys both official ideology and fictional representation through the lens of new immigrants. A clear purpose of producing this movie series is to draw the audience's attentions to new immigrants' lived experience in Taiwan.

The four filmmakers, Cheng Yu-Chieh, Chou She-Wei, Fu Tien-Yu, and Chen Hui-Ling, are representative new-generation directors in Taiwan. Among them, Chou is the most experienced female director. She worked with Ang Lee on *Pushing Hands* (1991) as an assistant director, and most of her films concern female and family experiences. *The Golden Child* similarly focuses on the family and addresses the conflict between the female immigrant and other family members. Cheng Yu-Chieh, the only male to contribute to the movie series, is both a director and an actor, and has appeared in many TV dramas. His first feature film *Yinian zhichu* 一年之初 (*Do Over* 2006) etched his name into Taiwanese film history, and his films are usually road movies. *My Little Honey Moon* is no exception. Fu Tian-Yu's creative works include literature, TV drama and

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<sup>44</sup> My translation of the online interview “Liuxi yixiang hou, zhuixung xingfu de kewang 流徙異鄉後，追尋幸福的渴望” (After Migrating to a Foreign Land, They Desire to Search for Happiness: The Interview of the Directors of We Are Family). Web. 2 July 2013.  
<[http://www.funscreen.com.tw/headline.asp?H\\_No=408](http://www.funscreen.com.tw/headline.asp?H_No=408)>

feature film, and her only other feature-length film, *Daiwo qu yuanfang* 帶我去遠方 (*Somewhere I Have Never Travelled* 2009) narrates the touching love story between a blind girl and a boy to present issues related to difference and minority status. Along the same line, *The Happy Life of Debbie* calls our attention to the cultural and ethnic differences of new immigrants. Chen Hui-Ling is known for her production of TV drama, especially *Xiayizhan xingfu* 下一站幸福 (*Autumn's Concerto* 2009). The four filmmakers were selected by producer Li Gang to join the production of this series. Although the original scripts were sketched by Li, the four filmmakers applied their different perspectives and techniques to shoot their films, presenting their personal experiences and observations of new immigrants in Taiwan.

*The Moonlight in Jilin* tells the story of a student of Chinese medicine named Bian Weiwei who moves from mainland China to Taiwan through a fake marriage in order to earn money to pay for her mother's medical expenses. Her nominal husband is a fugitive and only shows up once throughout the entire film. In Taiwan, Weiwei works in a massage parlor, using her expertise in acupuncture massage. She is frequently assisted by her husband's subordinate, Zhou, who eventually falls in love with her. When she goes to service a client at a hotel, Weiwei meets a cop named Jia-hao, who is attracted to Weiwei at first sight and assists her by pretending to be her husband when her best friend

Chengliang comes to visit her from Jilin. Chengliang's visit marks the climax of the film, and Chengliang eventually discovers that Weiwei is not happy in Taiwan. Chengliang's brother Chenggong, who used to be Weiwei's lover, thus sends Weiwei a letter containing a one-way ticket from Taipei to Jilin. At the end of the film, Weiwei waves farewell to Zhou and Jia-hao at the airport and returns to China. The film romanticizes the protagonist's beautiful memories of her hometown through scenes of falling snow and moments in her past romantic relationship. These nostalgic scenes are juxtaposed with scenes that dramatize the Taiwanese summer heat and reveal the discrimination Weiwei faces as a marginalized foreign spouse. Weiwei cannot come to terms with the contrast between her homeland and her adopted home, and this leads to her departure at the end of the film.

*My Little Honey Moon* chronicles Vietnamese spouse Joan's life in Meinung, Kaohsiung, where the majority of the population is Hakka and the economic activity is mainly based on agriculture. The Mandarin title of the film is *Yelianxiang*, in which *yelian* refers to water snowflake, a kind of vegetable that grows in ponds, which is the most important product in Meinung. Notably, many foreign spouses make a living by planting water snowflake. The symbolic meaning of the title suggests new immigrants' labor, diligence and contribution to the land in their host country Taiwan. In the story,

since Joan has married into a Hakka household featuring a capable and conservative mother-in-law and coward husband, she has been bearing the burden of reproduction and her in-law's unfounded accusations of thievery. These discriminatory, distrustful behaviors in Joan's in-law and husband eventually cause her to run away from home. At the end of the film, Joan's husband's self-reflection and effort to learn Vietnamese earn Joan's heart and contribute to their reunion. *My Little Honey Moon* successfully portrays both the upsides and downsides of new immigrants' lives in Taiwan.

The title of *The Golden Child* refers to a grandson. It is set in the home of a traditional family in a primitive agricultural village, in which the majority of the population speaks Taiwanese (Hokkien). In the Kam family, the mother is in charge of the household because the father is paralyzed, and she decides to look for a foreign spouse for her son Kam in order to obtain help with housework and carry on the family lineage. Kimki, a woman from Vietnam, marries into Kam's family, but does not know that Kam has been dating a middle-age divorced woman who has two children. Kimki is obedient and always silent within the household. In addition to the human relationships within the household, the remote village setting drives the film's plot, as it is targeted by consortiums with the intent to develop the land for business purposes. Through a broadcast, the leader of the neighborhood reminds the local people that corrupt outsiders

show up frequently in the village. In the film, these corrupt outsiders include a consortium, Kimki's sister's African boyfriend, and even Kimki herself, who is treated as a fraudster when it is discovered that she has a son back in Vietnam. Although the village is a stressful environment for Kimki, the emotional bonds and sense of belonging she develops within the household are the most appealing aspect of the film. Kimki is an outsider from Vietnam, but she is regarded as an insider as part of the Kam family. When she fails to produce a son, she adopts her sister's son to pass on the Kam family name. The film ends on a high note, with images of a complete and happy family.

*The Happy Life of Debbie* sheds light on a nuclear family that includes a Taiwanese husband, Lu, an Indonesian wife, Debbie, and Debbie's son, Han. Debbie had moved to Taiwan fifteen years earlier to work on a coffee farm as she had in Indonesia. Her husband Lu lost his job because of his alcoholism and idles about all day long. Therefore, Debbie becomes the only financial support for the family. Her son Han is always bullied by his classmates because of his dark skin and his identity as a foreign spouse's son. The family lives an ordinary life until a strange visitor comes to the town from Indonesia. The visitor turns out to be Han's biological father, Jama. Jama's appearance is a turning point in the film, as it threatens Lu's status as Han's step-father, and also prompts Lu's discovery of his love and concern for Han. Lu thus makes an effort to take good care of

Han, taking the boy fishing and exacting revenge on Han's classmates for their discrimination. Lu also approaches Debbie with a better attitude and supports her when she decides to attend a coffee competition. *The Happy Life of Debbie* offers the audience a happy and positive view of new immigrants' lives in Taiwan, showing a Taiwanese father's compromise and cultural negotiation with his foreign wife and step-son.

Overall, the movie series romanticizes new immigrants' lives through fictional melodramatic representation, offering an alternative angle from which the audience can understand new immigrants' perspectives concerning their new families and homes in Taiwan. As opposed to the male-centered grand narrative of home as the imagination of homeland and nation-state, the ways in which women migrants reinvent the notion of home from a gendered perspective is especially crucial to understanding place-based cultural production. Their status as daughters-in-law initially marks them as outsiders in the household, and meanwhile, their national identities further hinder them from blending in with local residents. Thus, gender politics within new immigrants' households as well as the tension and interaction between local Taiwanese and new immigrants are emphasized in the films. The perspectives of new immigrants offer a different angle from which to interpret the relationship between physical migration, gender politics and identity formation in *We Are Family*.

In addition to gender politics, it is noteworthy that multiple languages are spoken in the films to present Taiwan as a multilingual society. *My Little Honey Moon* includes Hakka, Mandarin and Vietnamese. *The Golden Child* features Hokkien and Mandarin. *The Happy Life of Debbie* features Mandarin, Hokkien and Indonesian. In *Moonlight in Jilin*, most actors speak Mandarin with different accents, such as Northwestern Chinese and Taiwanese. The strategy of adopting multilingual dialogues in the films not only presents the local reality in Taiwan, but also demonstrates that the notion of home as constructed with cultural differences. Language is a major element adopted in representing homeness in the movie series.

Through a case study of *We Are Family*, this chapter aims to examine how new immigrants transform the structure of the traditional family and (re)define the fundamental space of home, as well as how gender politics is performed within new immigrant households. Furthermore, juxtaposition of the homes of a migrant's current new locale and their homeland is explicitly represented in different ways in these films and is also crucial to understanding the transformative nature of home for new immigrants as well as the incorporation of new immigrants in Taiwanese cultural production.

## **From the Mainland to Taiwan: Language and Home in Cinema Taiwan**

The emergence of Taiwan cinema can be traced back to the Japanese Occupation period. Following the occupation, Taiwan experienced political turbulence for more than twenty years, including the retreat of the KMT regime to Taiwan, the 228 incident and the White Terror.<sup>45</sup> In its first two decades, filmmaking in Taiwan was limited to newsreels and education films with special interest in anti-communist and anti-Russian ideologies (Hong 97). From 1949 to the early 1960s, nostalgia and retrieving the lost homeland, mainland China, were two crucial themes of the cultural production in response to Nationalist propagandist Zhang Dao-Fan's 張道藩 cultural policy based on the Nationalist ideology. The representation and imagination of the homeland centralizes the narrative of cultural production, and thus the artistic works produced in name of “*Fangong wenxue* 反共文學” (anti-communist literature) were propagandistic in nature. However, during this turbulent period in Taiwan's society, film production was limited.

In the 1980s, a group of young directors, including renowned Taiwanese directors Hou Hsiao-Hsien (侯孝賢 1947-) and Edward Yang (楊德昌 1947-2007), elevated Taiwanese film production with their pursuit of high aesthetics. Their auteurial style of filmmaking marked a dramatic and crucial transition in Taiwanese film history, now

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<sup>45</sup> The 228 Incident of 1947 involved conflict between mainlanders and local Taiwanese. Many anti-government civilians were killed, and the incident marked the beginning of the White Terror (1949-1987).



known as Taiwan New Cinema. The first film of the Taiwan New Cinema movement is Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Guangyin de gushi* 光陰的故事 (*In Our Time* 1982), which features naturalism, realism, and literary adaptation, focusing on mundane life, individual stories and collective memory. Interest in representing rootedness and the local in Taiwan through artistic techniques such as observational realism and modernist expressionism (Berry and Lu 5), becomes the distinctive characteristic of Taiwan New Cinema.

Meanwhile, the pursuit of high aesthetics is practiced through “long shots that both distanced dramatic incident and saved film stock due to production constraints such as meager budgets and casting of nonprofessional, inexperienced actors” in response to CMPC's (Central Motion Picture Corporation) policy of “low cost, high production” (Davis 134). As Chia-chi Wu notes, “Taiwan New Cinema started out as political and cultural rebellion in the domestic context, got re-inscribed as an anticolonial cinema against Japanese, Chinese, or American imperialism on the international stage (but distinct from the category of ‘Third Cinema’), and ended up transforming itself into a supplier of international cinema” (88). Overall, Taiwan New Cinema is characterized by both realistic representation and aesthetic performance.

In addition to aesthetic experimentation, Taiwan New Cinema can be treated as a “recovery cinema” for the way in which it reveals unspoken history; “It used historical

material that for a long time was taboo and off limits under a regime that forbade depictions of Taiwan's colonial history and beyond" (Davis 134). The historical material and events carved out and shown on the screen by New Cinema filmmakers include the 228 Incident (1947) and the White Terror (1949-1987). During the period of martial law, these events were politically sensitive and subject to the censorship of the state.

Therefore, the recovery is not only limited to generic filmmaking itself, but more importantly, the suppressed memory and traumatic history that are revisited on screen.

Furthermore, beyond the big picture of history and politics, the emphasis on ordinary people and everyday life in Taiwan is also significant in New Cinema. Along with the development of society and industrialization, New Cinema unveiled Taiwanese people's lived experiences and reaction to modernization, especially in the countryside. Hou Hsiao-Hsien's films are appropriate examples of the features of New Cinema created in response to both history and everyday life. According to June Yip, one of the objectives of Taiwan New Cinema is "the restoration of Taiwan's 'popular memory' (大眾記憶)—images of modern Taiwanese people and their diverse experiences—to the island's cultural consciousness" (69). The representation of everyday life thus becomes a strategy to challenge the singular official history.

As a leading figure of Taiwan New Cinema, Hou not only deals with Taiwanese history and ordinary people's lived experiences in his films, but more importantly, portrays social realities with a focus on heteroglossia in order to question the linguistic hegemony of Mandarin. In most of Hou's films, multilingual performances speak to Hou's style as an auteur, as well as Taiwanese social reality. Unlike the Mandarin-based films produced in the early stage of the KMT regime, Hou's films adopt multiple languages, including Mandarin, Hakka, Hokkien and Japanese, to present Taiwan as a multilingual society. The multilingual representation on screen is meaningful, in that it mimics how Taiwanese people speak in daily life. Moreover, since New Cinema presents counterhegemonic memory of the past as supplement to official history, the appropriation of multilingual speech thus offers alternatives of identity formation as well as the recovery of dialects. As June Yip notes, "As a medium that is both aural and visual, the cinema greatly facilitated hsiang-t'u's project of rejuvenating the Taiwanese dialect and recapturing elements of indigenous oral culture, restoring some of the concrete immediacy of communication that champions of oral culture value so highly" (165). The polyphony of New Cinema not only marks a transition from monophony to heteroglossia on screen, but also becomes a crucial element adopted in films by the later generation of Taiwanese directors—Wei De-sheng's 魏德聖 *Haijiao qihao* 海角七號 (*Cape No.7*

2008) is an example. *We Are Family* also inherits this linguistic feature to portray the multilingual families of new immigrants.

Through the recovery of history and the adoption of dialects, Taiwan New Cinema tends to portray Taiwan as a home for Taiwanese people, rather than lamenting the lost homeland of mainland China. Since the era of Taiwan New Cinema, home has thus become a major theme and metaphor mediated and represented by Taiwanese filmmakers. As Darrel Williams Davis writes:

New Cinema's visibility stems not just from directorial talent but from its homeland convictions, approach, and techniques. Taiwan-as-homeland though, is a contested, mutating idea, depending on who mobilizes it and in what context. New Cinema began by exploring the home and family of bildungsroman and then expanded toward sociopolitical, historical aspects of Taiwan. (135)

While the geographical settings of films moved from the mainland to Taiwan, the cultural production also became rooted in local Taiwan in support of homemaking through filmmaking. In order to depict Taiwan as a distinct home, directors employ various local materials and cultural elements from the society, including language, dialect, family, everyday life, semi-rural settings and adaptations of Nativist literature (Davis 135). In filmmaking, representing Taiwan as a home is more than a national project; Taiwanese

filmmaking is carried out by ordinary people from a grassroots perspective in opposition to the official narrative.

The contested notion of home has been thematically transformed to reflect various political and cultural movements and policies in Taiwan, including anti-communist literary policies in the 1950s, the nativist literary movement in the 1980s, Taiwan New Cinema in the 1980s, and then localization in the 1990s. Aligned with the economic and political development, “localism (*bentu*) expanded in the 1990s, as KMT cultural prescriptions yielded to commercial incentives and imperatives. *Bentu* is a sensibility that champions the legitimacy of a distinct Taiwanese identity, the character and content of which should be determined by the Taiwanese people” (Makeham and Hsiao 1).

Furthermore, as Davis notes:

Localism was reproduced, multiplied, variegated, and splintered into diverse voices and platforms. On television and radio there was government support for Hakka, aboriginal and other channels that served minority communities. These various *bentu* platforms differed in their political positions, demographics and levels of activism. *Bentu*-led localism was later enshrined as part of cultural and educational policy under Chen Shui-bian’s DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) administration in 2000. (144)

Localism therefore has been both supported by the government and practiced through cultural production since the 1990s. It best describes the multilingual and multicultural society of Taiwan with the cooperation of the government and grassroots filmmakers. Meanwhile, it helps construct a sense of home in Taiwan local culture through the reinvention of homeness in terms of social realities and so-called “Taiwanese-ness”.

With reference to localism, the film production of the new age departs from the political and ideological propaganda promoted by the KMT and the high aesthetics of New Cinema, and turns its focus on targeting local audiences and catering to domestic tastes with “popular formats and narrative momentum” (Davis 145). Wei De-sheng’s *Cape No. 7* marks a turning point in the history of Taiwan Cinema due to its indulgence in commercial romance, its multilingual practice and its appropriation of Japanese colonial history. It presents two parallel love stories, one set during the Japanese occupation and the other set in the contemporary period, to record the colonial past through local memory. In 2008, *Cape No. 7* hit the highest box office numbers for a Chinese-language film in Taiwanese film history (C. Wang 136),<sup>46</sup> and successfully attracted both older and younger moviegoers to buy tickets and visit theaters. Supporting local Taiwanese film

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<sup>46</sup> According to Chialan Sharon Wang, “Cape No. 7 success streak bought it up to the third highest-grossing film in the film history of Taiwan, only next to *Titanic* (dir. James Cameron) in 1997 and *Jurassic Park* (dir. Steven Spielberg in 1993)” (136).

(*guopian* 國片) as a national campaign not only responds to localism, but more importantly, is supported by Taiwanese people's consciousness concerning Taiwan's local culture. Around the time the film was released on screen, Taiwan had entered a slump in both domestic and international politics.<sup>47</sup> As Chialan Sharon Wang rightly writes, "At this juncture, the film's lighthearted portrayal of a group of nobodies, each attaining self-fulfillment and coming to a communitarian solidarity in a township at the southern tip of the island Hengchun, comes in time to comfort the island's wounded national ego" (136). *Cape No. 7* indeed touched Taiwanese people's hearts with its romantic love story, entertaining portrayal of *Tai'ke* (台客) culture<sup>48</sup> and realistic representation of history.

The distinctive reference to localism in *Cape No. 7* is associated with the film's multilingual practice and the incorporation of characters of diverse ethnicities. The director Wei De-sheng purposefully built his cast to include multiple ethnicities including Hokkien, Hakka and aboriginals to document social reality in Taiwan. It is worth noting that mainlanders are missing from the film, and so is "standard" Mandarin. There is not a

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<sup>47</sup> Chialan Sharon Wang notes, "Cape No. 7 was released at a time when the Taiwanese were demoralized by news about former president Chen Shuibien's embezzlement scandals, the economic downturn under the administration of the newly elected president Ma Yinjeou, and a dwarfed national status in the Beijing Olympics, where the Taiwanese team was left with the choice of entering the games either as Chinese Taipei or as China Taipei, and ended up winning a far lower number of medals than the island's expectations" (136).

<sup>48</sup> Chialan Sharon Wang defines *Tai'ke* as "literally 'Taiwanese hillbilly', 'Tai-ke' is a cultural staple embodied in various aspects such as accent, sense of fashion and lifestyle that are considered native Taiwanese" (145).

single unified spoken language in the film, and instead polyglot dialogues in Hokkien, Hakka and Taiwanese-Mandarin dominate. The creation of a multilingual environment in *Cape No. 7* best reflects the social reality in Taiwan. Moreover, in order to complete the mission of homemaking in Taiwan, the multilingual and multiethnic representation of the film portrays Sinophone Taiwan as a society that uses multiple languages, thus departing from the monophonic hegemony of the KMT regime at the earlier stage of Taiwan's history.

The incorporation of Hakka and native aboriginal languages in *Cape No. 7* contributes to alternative national and cultural imagination and new Taiwanese identity in the age of indigenization in terms of Li Denghui's 李登輝 governmental policy as well as the efforts in cultural production. In the reality of Taiwanese society, there are mainlanders (*waishengren* 外省人) and Taiwanese (*benshengren* 本省人, most of whom are Hoklo 河洛/閩南人), Hakka, or indigenous people,<sup>49</sup> and new immigrants. The creation of the home space in the film portrays Taiwan as a community that belongs to local Taiwanese of various ethnicities. Accordingly, the success of *Cape No. 7* is not only limited to its grassroots consciousness that well fits into local taste; its recognition of the ethnic

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<sup>49</sup> There are at least 16 tribes officially recognized by the government of Republic of China, Taiwan. See the introduction to Taiwanese tribes. Web. 14 April 2015.  
<<http://www.apc.gov.tw/portal/cateInfo.html?CID=5DD9C4959C302B9FD0636733C6861689>>



diversity of Taiwan makes this film a watershed in the history of Taiwan cinema.

Multicultural representation through filmmaking is thus closely tied to nation building and identity formation in Taiwan.

Along the same line, the production of the *We Are Family* movie series, with its focus on new immigrants, is relevant due to the growing population of foreign spouses and their children in Taiwan. On the one hand, the creation of home in Taiwan through both state policy and cultural production targets all of the residents with different ethnicities in Taiwan, and new immigrants have been included as one of the groups. On the other hand, multilingual practice is distinctive in Taiwan, in that it is not limited to Sinitic languages and aboriginal languages, but extended to the native languages spoken by new immigrants, such as Vietnamese, Indonesian and “standard” Mandarin from China. As a result, the polyphonic phenomenon in line with the distinctive theme of homemaking through the lens of new immigrants is quite common in Taiwanese filmmaking at the present.

### **Gender Politics and the Melodramatic Representation of Family**

The four films of *We Are Family* are all set within the household, and address human relationships and gender politics, including the relationships between husband and wife,

mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and elders and second-generation children. Within *We Are Family*, the familial space as a microcosm of cultural entity is crucial to cultural production and helps individuals rethink family structure in the age of globalization. This series especially focuses on members of transnational families with split structures as shown in *The Moonlight in Jilin*, or Taiwanese families with a foreign spouse in the other three films. These households with new immigrants are full of complicated human relationships and social networks, stemming from new immigrants' nationalities and cultural differences. This section examines how the films in *We Are Family* represent the transformation of family structure and human relationship, and examines how gender politics and power structures are evolved within new immigrant households.

In stories of migration, including those depicted in contemporary Chinese-language cinema, family conflict is neither new nor unique to new immigrants in Taiwan. When immigrants encounter cultural differences, the value systems of their native homes are challenged and ultimately influenced by the mainstream culture of the host country. Ang Lee's well-known *Fuqin sanbuqu* 父親三部曲 (Father-Knows-Best trilogy), including *Tuishou* 推手 (*Pushing Hands* 1992), *Xiyan* 喜宴 (*The Wedding Banquet* 1993), and *Yinshi nan'nu* 飲食男女 (*Eat Drink Man Woman* 1994), offers good fictional representations of the challenges faced by Confucian-driven and patriarchal families

following migration to the United States. This trilogy draws our attention to how Chinese family values are confronted by western civilization and individualism. Chris Berry invokes the western form of melodrama in analyzing *The Wedding Banquet*, and proposes that Chinese melodrama is different from western melodrama because it is influenced by Confucian values. He claims that Chinese melodrama should be translated as “*jiating lunli pian* 家庭倫理片” (family ethical film), in which “*lunli* 倫理” is considered “a specific term for ethics, referring to the Confucian code of reciprocal ethical obligations” (“*Wedding Banquet*” 185). Moreover, he suggests that “the Chinese family *lunlipian* is itself a modern and hybrid form that stages the tension between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ as a tension between different models of subjectivity, with competing value systems for judging behavior” (186). Thus, Chinese melodrama centers around family in order to represent cultural conflict and ethical issues, and more importantly, reveals the significance and influence of Confucian values on family. I find Berry’s definition of Chinese melodrama valid in analyzing *We Are Family* because of the ways in which the films depict tension between local Taiwanese and new immigrants in the family context where different cultural values collide.

First of all, it is important to note that the Mandarin and English titles of this movie series have totally different implications and reflect different representational politics.

The producer and the filmmakers select a traditional Chinese expression of family—*neiren/wairen* 內人/外人 for the Mandarin title that invokes various connotations and symbolic meanings in linguistic and cultural contexts of Chinese society. The *neiwai* boundary is also associated with gender distinction. The traditional relationship between genders, domestic boundaries and rituals is explained in the *Books of Rites*: “In housing, there should be a strict demarcation between the inner and the outer parts, with a door separating them. The two parts should share neither a well nor a washroom nor a privy. The men are in charge of all the affairs on the outside; the women manage the affairs on the inside” (23).<sup>50</sup> Maram Epstein further reminds us that the distinction between inner (*nei* 內) and outer (*wai* 外) is commonly appropriated in defining gender relations that are fluid and contested, and yet the ambiguity of the gender distinction lies in the architectural boundary, especially in Ming-Qing literary texts. As Epstein inspiringly writes, “This passages<sup>51</sup> obscures the processes of negotiation through which actual social boundaries were established by treating the *neiwai* distinction as a product not of language and culture but of the solidity of architectural construction” (23). Read in this

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<sup>50</sup> The citation is quoted from Maram Epstein’s *Competing Discourses*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> This passage is “In housing, there should be a strict demarcation between the inner and the outer parts, with a door separating them. The two parts should share neither a well nor a washroom nor a privy. The man are in charge of all the affairs on the outside; the women manage the affairs on the inside” (Epstein 23).

light, the gender division and social roles are not fixed but are fluid and ambiguous through the rupture and transgression of physical and sociocultural boundaries.

Moreover, the *neiren* (內人) in Mandarin is the polite title for a wife in contrast to the husband, the *wai zi* (外子). These terms point to the gendered confinement of the wife within the household while the husband is associated with external sphere according to the Confucian requirements for proper behavior within marriage. Meanwhile, a daughter-in-law is usually treated as an outsider who marries into her husband's family rather than a biological relative. In referring to a paradigm inherited from ancient Chinese culture, the Mandarin title of the movie series—*neiren wairen xinyimin xilie dianying* 內人外人新移民系列電影—literally signifies disconnect between insider and outsider within the domestic sphere as well as in society, and refers to an explicit and uncomfortable boundary lying between local Taiwanese and foreign spouses. In addition to gender division, the *neiwai* boundary is related to geographic locales and geopolitical imagination in migration. From the perspective of local residents of the host country, immigrants are outsiders and belong to the exterior sphere. The geographical boundary suggests the hierarchical and ethical relationships between Taiwan as a host and new immigrants as guests, and shows the tension between hospitality and hostility which affect new immigrants' localization and homemaking. The *neiren/wairen* distinction best

illustrates the complex status of new immigrants in the family as well as the society in Taiwan. In terms of gender division and geographic locale, foreign spouses are double marginalized. However, the transgression of ethnic, sociocultural, geographical boundaries may make it possible for new immigrants to generate agency, redefine their social roles, and reconstruct their identities within the household and in the society. The ways in which foreign spouses negotiate with cultural differences and reconfigure their subjectivity in daily activities are thus important in understanding gender politics.

The English title selected for the film series, *We Are Family*, expresses positive and utopian universalism and highlights the incorporation of new immigrants into Taiwanese film production and representation. This title may stem from government funding and a certain propagandistic element in the films. As mentioned earlier in the chapters, the notion of home is adopted by the state and culture producers for different purposes. In the case of *We Are Family*, the definition of family is not based on kinship or blood ties, but on marriage and migration. Beyond the domestic sphere, the family and home can also be treated as the imagination of the state, in that those who reside on the island of Taiwan are regarded as members of a big family. However, in this regard, the universal construction of family and the boundary between insider and outsider seem to be contradictory. Whether a new immigrant is an outsider or a part of the family thus comes

into question. The status of new immigrants brings on the tension between local Taiwanese and foreign spouses as well as the problem of incorporation into political construction and cultural production. Accordingly, the microcosmic space of family not only contains human relationships and conflict, but also reflects intercultural issues. The paradoxical connotations of the Mandarin and English titles are a result of what Chinese melodrama represents—the tension among family members as well as the interplay between tradition, modernity and transnationalism in households featuring migration.

The four films of *We Are Family* describe different types of family structures, embodying new immigrants' various approaches to settlement, localization and identity formation in Taiwan. *The Moonlight in Jilin* focuses on a mainland spouse's predicament and tragic marriage in Taiwan. The family structure in this film is imperfect, because the female protagonist, Bian Weiwei, abandons her and forces her to become a masseuse in order to make a living. Unlike a traditional family constructed through kinship, intimacy and marriage, Weiwei's family in Taiwan is defined by the social network she builds as a masseuse, and the love triangle between Weiwei, the hooligan Zhou, and her client Jia-Hao exemplifies the intriguing interactions that occur between local Taiwanese and mainland partners. For Weiwei, real family is in China where her mother and friends reside, not in Taiwan. Weiwei's experience of family in Taiwan is violent and traumatic.

Weiwei's imperfect marriage and her identity as a mainland spouse earn her the local Taiwanese nickname "*dalumei* 大陸妹" which literally means "mainland sister" in English, a term that highlights mainland women's sexuality and economic need. Shu-mei Shih's interpretation of *dalumei* is as follows:

Popularized by sensational stories of sexual exploitation in newspapers, the *dalumei* was a woman who in most cases worked as a prostitute, willing or otherwise, and who in some cases successfully disguised as a native and worked as a singer, waitress, bar hostess, or beautician. The word mainland (*dalu*) suggested economic backwardness and hence the quest for monetary gain; the term little sister (*mei*) suggests the means by which the quest was conducted—sexuality and youth.

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The notion of *dalumei* is defined through sexuality and careers that are closely tied to the consumption of the female body. In her discussion of mainland women as represented in Taiwan and Hong Kong media, Shih further points out that "The *dalumei*'s two prime signifiers are money and sex: her desire for money makes her a readily available sex object, which provides moral justification for her exploiters ('she herself wants it')" ("Gender and a Geopolitics of Desire" 289). The notion of *dalumei* conveys bias against foreign spouses and female immigrants from China. In *The Moonlight in Jilin*, the owner



of the massage parlor calls Weiwei “*dalumei*” several times to categorize her as a lower-class outsider who has come to Taiwan for money. The stereotyped impression of mainland spouses not only reflects discriminatory attitudes towards Weiwei’s geographical origin, but also reveals the political tension between Taiwan and China.

However, not all of the mainland spouses are gold-diggers and sexual providers. Some are well-educated and have good self-esteem. The protagonist Bian Weiwei in *The Moonlight in Jilin* is a good example, and she is portrayed as a tough and independent Chinese woman. Although Bian Weiwei works in the massage parlor, she holds a bachelor degree in Chinese medicine. Contrary to the general impression of “*dalumei*,” Weiwei always remains professional in her work as a masseuse instead of working as a prostitute, and she does have agency in maintaining her profession and her dignity. At one point, Weiwei meets a client who is attracted by her beauty and asks her to name her price for sexual activity. The client says, “Stop pretending. Chinese people like you...you come to Taiwan just for money. Stop pretending to be a princess.” His statement reveals common attitudes regarding *dalumei*, and discriminates against a foreign spouse from China by assuming her to be a gold-digger. Weiwei is treated as a subordinate and marginalized foreigner from the local hoodlum’s perspective. However, Weiwei turns down her customer immediately and bursts out by saying “I do massage ONLY.” It is

easy to tell through the scene that her infuriated reaction to the client reflects a desire to maintain her dignity and morality as a foreign spouse, and it can be regarded as a form of resistance. She successfully resumes her power to claim her morality and rejection of bodily consumption from the male Taiwanese customer, and the hierarchy between the male hoodlum and Weiwei is subverted through her resistance. This reminds the audience that the primary purpose of her cross-Strait marriage is to earn money to cover her mother's medical expenses, not her own material desire. As the film goes on, local Taiwanese's prejudice finally incites Weiwei's disappointment and sense of rootlessness on the island, and leads to her final return to her homeland in China. Weiwei's eventual departure from Taiwan and return to Jilin reveals her practice of agency. As she makes a decision after receiving a one-way ticket and a check from her former lover Chenggong, she confesses, "During the past few years, the whole citizenship thing sat on my heart like a big rock. I could never move it. It hurts me whenever I take a breath. It's so weird that ever since I got divorced, the rock has been gone." Getting divorced and giving up citizenship both result from Weiwei's self-esteem and her desire to set herself free from prejudice and patriarchy. *The Moonlight in Jilin* demonstrates how Weiwei successfully reverses the stereotype of the *dalumei* and escapes from an unpleasant environment in Taiwan. It shows that not all foreign spouses abandon their dignity in order to make

money without choice. This film presents an in-depth portrait of how a new immigrant interacts and negotiates with the locals while maintaining her dignity and agency. As *The Moonlight in Jilin* is a fictional feature film, Weiwei's lived experiences are romanticized, sometimes even fantastic and projected with a utopian impression. Moreover, the *dalumei* is portrayed in a different way from how newspapers have represented her in Shih's discussion, and Weiwei has agency in turning her tragedy around in Taiwan.

Although Taiwan is a patriarchal society to a certain extent, I find the juxtaposition of a powerful mother-in-law and a deficient son in new immigrant households to be a common trope in a number of Taiwanese films. These films may be drawing inspiration from real situations. Many Taiwanese men get married to foreign spouses because they are unable to find a Taiwanese wife or they have an innate or acquired deficiency. In this case, Taiwanese men who have foreign spouses are often deficient in certain ways, and the gender politics in their families differ from those in more traditional Taiwanese families. In these families there are often powerful mothers-in-laws who take charge of the entire household and search for a wife for their weak sons. *My Little Honey Moon* and *The Golden Child* are two good fictional cases that represent this newly-emerging family structure and mother-son relationship along with the import of foreign spouses to Taiwan.

*My Little Honey Moon* addresses the hardships of Vietnamese immigrant Joan, whose Taiwanese mother-in-law constantly entreats her to give birth to a son. This film demonstrates how the identity of a foreign wife invites the mother-in-law's malevolence and suspicion. The film portrays Joan, who is married into the Xiao family and has a daughter, as a responsible and docile foreign spouse. The Xiao family is a relatively traditional and poor Hakka family<sup>52</sup> in southern Taiwan. Throughout the film, the narrative is built upon Joan's everyday life working in the field with her husband. With the absence of a patriarchal figure, Joan's mother-in-law is depicted as a capable Hakka woman who takes charge of the household and expects a grandson from Joan. Her expectation is transmitted to Joan through verbal advice and pressure, and she even secretly passes Chinese medicine to Joan to increase fertility. From the perspective of the mother-in-law, having a foreign spouse in the family is necessary in order to fulfill familial obligations, such as housework and reproduction. Unfortunately for Joan, her marriage partner is a filial son but a cowardly husband. Every time his mother brings up the reproduction issue, he is always silent and never protects Joan. It is obvious that a war lies ahead between women in the household, and suggests a transformation of power relations within the household, in which men lose their power.

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<sup>52</sup> In general, Hakka people preserve their own culture and are known for being hardworking, frugal and conservative.

Furthermore, the mother-in-law's suspicion is aroused by Joan's ethnicity as a Vietnamese and her identity as a foreign spouse. The director and the screenwriter deploy dramatic incidents to develop the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. For instance, one day when the mother-in-law discovers that the house title is missing from the drawer, she immediately makes a phone call to report Joan as a burglar to the police office. Eventually Joan's husband confesses that he is the one who walked off with the title. This incident points to the uncrossable boundary and unremovable prejudice on new immigrants. It also reveals a sense of distrust and insecurity between local Taiwanese and foreign spouses as well as the tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The sequence offers the audience an impression that new immigrants are mostly regarded as outsiders within the domestic sphere. However, the narrative takes a turn through Joan's confrontation with her family. After the title incident takes place, Joan bursts in on her husband and mother-in-law in tears, saying in a solid tone "I've been married here for six years. Since I've been married here, I'll take this place as my hometown. So I will devote to this home for the rest of my life. I beg you guys...Don't treat me as an outsider. Please." Through a close-up of Joan's crying face, to the audience understands how Joan's narration functions in the film. I propose that the director deliberately focuses on Joan's sincere attitude toward her family to show the audience a

new immigrant's state of mind. Joan's brave and touching confession shows her agency in making an effort to reverse her lower status as a daughter-in-law and foreign spouse. Her willingness to devote herself and integrate into the family also contributes to her local home-making. For this reason, the prejudiced impression on new immigrants is successfully turned over by means of Joan's agency in negotiating with her Taiwanese family.

In addition to the confession, Joan asserts her will by running away from her in-law's home to embark on a road trip with her daughter. She drives her husband's truck from Meinung to Taitung, where Joan's daughter's former art teacher currently resides, to meet up with the teacher and fulfill her dream of travelling to the sea. The director Yu-Chieh Cheng turns to the road movie genre to chronicle Joan's trip to Taitung. In his discussion of this film, Ziyi Bao's points out the significant characteristics of a road movie: "The major themes of road movies include: self, the external world, where home is, why people embark on a trip, what is the end of the trip, and the interaction between body and mind." The depiction of the road trip to Taitung best illustrates how Joan reclaims her ability to define herself and her sense of home. She is no longer an oppressed and subordinate foreign spouse and domestic laborer within the household, but a brave and free modern woman in motion. In the film, the representation of new immigrants' lived

experience and subversive action is crucial in revealing the transformation of family structure and nature. On the one hand, the tension between Joan, her weak husband and her domineering mother-in-law challenges notions of the traditional patriarchal family, and also brings a woman-centered structure to this new immigrant's household. On the other hand, Joan's process of redefining her social status within the domestic sphere shows new immigrants' intervention and involvement through everyday practice. In this regard, women's empowerment is aligned with the inversion of gendered hierarchy as well as the practice of mobility.

*The Golden Child* shares similar modes of gendered immigrant representation with *My Little Honey Moon*, but more explicitly indicates the problem and significance of reproduction within the traditional household. In *The Golden Child*, the male protagonist, Kam, has been dating an older girlfriend who has had two previous marriages and has a teenage son. Kam's mother is worried about continuing their family line. As Kam's mother tells him, "You'll be a homeless bum, with no wife or children to look after you... You're such a loser." Kam is constructed as a male character who is castrated and powerless. Accordingly, his mother decides to look for a foreign spouse for her son. She eventually settles on a Vietnamese woman named Kimki. Kimki is portrayed as a docile and silent Vietnamese foreign spouse. Kimki's responsibilities in the household include

taking care of her paralyzed father-in-law and producing a child. It is noteworthy that the household is dominated by the mother-in-law due to the patriarch's illness. Both *My Little Honey Moon* and *The Golden Child* present images of the subversion of the traditional patriarchal family, and show how the elder female characters seize power over the households. The importance of producing a son to carry on the family name is also addressed by both films. As Kam's mother tells Kimki in *The Golden Child* when they meet neighbors with grandsons at a temple, "When you give birth to my grandson, I'll reward you with a huge piece of gold." The notion of "golden child" reveals the importance of male heirs within a traditional family. This sequence shows traditional values of reproduction and the mother-in-law's encouragement, as well as her severe pressure on Kimki. Throughout the film, Kimki is silent and obedient, and rarely interacts with her mother-in-law and husband. At the beginning, it is clear that there is no love between Kam and Kimki, and their marriage is based on fertility and labor. The melodramatic representation of this new immigrant's household is ultimately built upon the intriguing relationships between Kam, his older girlfriend, and Kimki. Kimki is incapable of giving birth to a grandson and is passively obedient to her mother-in-law. Her silence results in the marginalization of her status in this household. Read in this light, I would suggest that the essential problems of reproduction and traditional values



incite the transformation of family structure and create family tension. We see how oppression of new immigrants not only results from patriarchal cultural norms, but also comes from the tension between mother-in-laws and new female immigrants.

However, Kimki and her mother-in-law's relationship is depicted in a relatively ambivalent way. Especially after her mother-in-law passes away suddenly, Kimki's status within the domestic sphere is transformed. Although Kimki's mother-in-law frequently puts pressure on her, the film implicitly shows that she still treats her well and teaches her how to do housework. Kimki also learns that her mother-in-law shares her experience as an outsider, as she originally lived in the city. The mother-in-law says, "When I married a man of this village. People here looked down on me as an outsider daughter-in-law. They tried to bully me. But I was doormat. You must work hard and give birth to a boy. Their household only has girls, they can't produce boys." Interestingly, the importance of giving birth to a male child goes beyond preservation of the family tree and becomes part of women's subjectivity. It is a way to earn people's respect and promote one's status within the family and the village. After her mother-in-law passes away, Kimki takes charge of the household. Although she never becomes pregnant, she eventually adopts her sister's son. Her husband Kam cares about her more after his mother's passing. At the end

of the film, the family is living happily, and Kimki is no longer treated as an outsider. The boundary between insider and outsider thus is blurred through restructuring of the family.

In their melodramatic representations of traditional households, *My Little Honey Moon* and *The Golden Child* call our attention to cultural conflict centered on reproduction.

Giving birth to a boy is a new immigrant bride's responsibility, because it is the fundamental requirement of a Confucian family. In these two films, the filmic representation of strong mothers, weak sons, and marginalized daughters-in-law shows audiences one of the typical family structures in traditional new-immigrant households.

Obviously, an invisible boundary can exist between new immigrants and their family members in Taiwan. The image of strong mothers also shows the audiences unique gender politics and women's empowerment as performed within new immigrant households. However, foreign spouses in the fictional representations are not subordinate and marginalized all of the time. Their agency subverts the typical patriarchal nature of Chinese family and redefines their status within the domestic sphere. It is notable that these films offer a distinctive angle from which we can hear the foreign spouses' voices and understand how they survive in the host country.

*The Happy Life of Debbie* shows an alternate understanding of a nuclear family, featuring a weak Taiwanese husband Lu, his capable Indonesian wife Debbie, and

Debbie's son Han. In this film, the director Fu Tien-Yu tends to represent the positive side of new immigrants' lived experience in Taiwan through the Taiwanese husband's love for his Indonesian stepson. On the surface, this mixed family structure is more progressive and modern than the households in the previous three films. But the Indonesian son, Han, becomes a key contributor to family tension in the intercultural marriage. Because of his dark skin, Han's classmates always look down on him and scoff at him, saying that he is neither a biological son of his father nor an indigenous Taiwanese. For instance, when Han has a swimming class at school, his cheap swimming trunks become discolored. His classmates laugh at him by saying, "Lu Xing-han is losing his color. He looks more like a Taiwanese now." The joke pokes fun at Han's ethnicity and skin color, and meanwhile reflects local Taiwanese's prejudice. Yet the tension between locals and foreign spouses is transversal, in that the center of the household is dominated by the foreign spouse. In this household, the Indonesian spouse, Debbie, works on a coffee farm to make a living for her family, and her husband, Lu, has been laid off because of his alcoholism. Consequently, this new immigrant family is differentiated from traditional families because of the woman's empowerment and domination, which transform the male-centered structure. In the absence of in-laws, Debbie takes controls of the whole household economically and socially. Interestingly,

through cross-cutting and flashback to connect memories of Taiwan and Indonesia, we are informed that Debbie left Indonesia for Taiwan because she was unmarried and pregnant. Han's biological father, Jama, is an upper level businessman who belongs to a different ethnic group and social status than Debbie. Debbie's mother does not allow her to continue seeing him, and her neighbors say, "You should send Debbie to Taiwan. She'll have a happy life in Taiwan." From the perspective of people in the less developed country, marrying into a family in Taiwan generates upward mobility and assures a better material life. As the film shows, Debbie's happiness in Taiwan is built upon her ability to maintain the household and be economically independent while preserving cultural values from the home country, Indonesia. It is also associated with the nature of the matriarchal society in which Debbie was raised.

What keeps this family complete and eventually brings happiness is the father Lu's willingness to cross ethnic boundaries and treat Han as a real son. Han's biological father Jama's visit to Taiwan marks a transition from tension to harmony within the household. When Jama surprisingly shows up at Debbie's home and has a conversation with her in Indonesian, Lu senses the ambiguity in their relationship and is aware that Jama is going to take Han away. Afterwards, Lu treats Han even better than before, such as taking him fishing and taking revenge on his classmates. While Jama is about to leave Taiwan, Lu

asks Debbie to beg Jama not to take Han back to Indonesia. In the end, they find out that Jama is not attempting to obtain custody of Han, as he has his own family in Indonesia. Lu and Debbie are then able to relax and live a happy life together with Han. Although Debbie is dominant within the household, Lu's boundary-crossing is more meaningful in making the international marriage possible and practical. As the film ends up with a close-up of Debbie's smile, *The Happy Life of Debbie* thus demonstrates how a traditional family is transformed, but more importantly, it shows a touching and happy intercultural marriage.

Through these four melodramatic representations of new immigrants' households, we see how family structure is transformed, and how family values are confronted, by way of intercultural marriage between Taiwanese men and foreign spouses. We see that family tension is closely associated with cultural conflict and differences in value systems. The familial space reflects essential human relationships, the conflict between tradition and modernity, and more significantly, the interaction and negotiation of cultural differences. These films, to a certain extent, represent new immigrant households and their daily activities, especially through the lens of female foreign spouses. Their involvement within the domestic sphere not only demonstrates how the family structure is transformed and familial value is challenged, but more importantly shows how immigrant women

reconstruct their subjectivity and identity in migration. But what does family symbolize beyond the embodiment of cultural values and differences? Since family is fundamental to the conception of home, the next section will explore how family and the role of women migrants contribute to the construction of homeness in migration.

### **Double Homeness: Native Place and Local Home**

The narrative of home is key to understanding modernity in modern and contemporary Chinese literature and culture, and it is also intertwined with discussions of native land, settlement, exile, diaspora and various forms of migration. Home can obviously be a physical place such as a dwelling, a house, a settlement, or a place of origin, but it also embodies emotion, relationships, and identity in an abstract sense. Home is therefore pertinent to our understanding of migrants' lived experiences in different geographical locales. The previous section demonstrated the transformation of family structure and gender politics under the influence of new immigrants, and indicated that familial space is essential to constructing a home. This section aims to investigate the symbolic meaning of home through women migrants' continuous construction and reconfiguration.

The majority of new immigrants to Taiwan come from China and Southeast Asia. For these immigrants, the juxtaposition of two homes—in their native lands and Taiwan—

defines new immigrants' double homeness. This sense of double homeness demonstrates how new immigrants interact with both host and home societies and get involved with nation-building projects on behalf of both their native country and Taiwan. I suggest that, unlike those who are in exile or forced to leave their homelands, new immigrants to Taiwan often find that their two homes are in concordance. These homes imply diverse emotional and political meanings in the representation of new immigrants' migratory trajectory and lived experiences. Meanwhile, the memory and culture of native lands contribute to new immigrants' local homemaking. How these two homes are represented and what they signify will be investigated in the following textual analysis of *We Are Family*.

### **1. The Juxtaposition of Native Place and Current Home**

To further understand the relationship between new immigrants and their perception of home, the cinematic representation of homes in Taiwan and immigrants' native lands should be taken into consideration. As mentioned previously, new immigrants keep a close tie to their native lands due to the financial support they provide to their natal families in their home countries. Within the *We are Family* series, *The Moonlight in Jilin* possesses the most telling title in terms of transnational perceptions of home, as it

expresses nostalgia for the good old days in Jilin, China. In this film, the director romanticizes the immigrant character's beautiful memories of her native home through long shots of snowy plains, typical scenes in Northeast China. The shallow focus especially highlights the Chinese spouse Bian Weiwei's sadness about leaving home and her love for a foreign land (Figure 1). The native land, Jilin, is the site of Weiwei's sweet memories of her childhood friend and lover as well as her intimate bond with her mother. The unforgettable memory thus haunts Weiwei's daily life in Taiwan, and appears as a dream sequence featuring clear snow and pure love.



Figure 1. Weiwei in her hometown, Jilin

Juxtaposing hot, sultry scenes in Taiwan with cold, crisp scenes in Jilin, the director presents the contrast of the current location and Bian Weiwei's native land through cross-



cutting, and highlights the extremes of the character's emotional struggles. The images of heat and humidity in Taiwan represent an unstable and threatening environment, whereas the snowy and powdery white Jilin hometown conveys a sense of peace and romance.

The positive imagination of the homeland foreshadows Weiwei's eventual departure from her fragmented home in Taiwan and her return to Jilin.

Additionally, in *The Moonlight in Jilin*, the construction of home is not only limited to the geographical locales—Taipei and Jilin—but is also built upon the mainland spouse Weiwei's emotional perception of places in light of lived experience and memory. From the cinematic technique of cross-cutting, we learn that Weiwei had a romantic relationship in her hometown Jilin. In order to cover her mother's medical expenses, she had to leave her mother and lover behind and move to Taiwan. Every time that Weiwei gets into contact with her mother over the phone, the frame of the film is cross-cut from Taiwan to Jilin through flashback. The beautiful landscape, familial intimacy and close friendships are deployed to reflect Weiwei's nostalgia and sense of longing for her hometown, Jilin. Beyond the physical geographical locale, Weiwei's memory of and intimacy with lover makes her homesick. As the film shows us, Weiwei receives a letter from her former lover, saying that "Our hometown has changed, but I remain the same. I'll be here waiting from you." Thus, that which makes people conceive of a place as

home is closely associated with one's emotional perception and intimate bonds. In the film, the juxtaposition of Jilin and Taipei is not only confined to the division of home and host places. More importantly, it crystallizes Weiwei's conception of homeness through emotion and memory. From Weiwei's perspective, Jilin is her hometown, the place where she grew up and developed her romantic relationship, whereas in Taipei, she is mostly treated as an outsider. In this case, it is possible for Weiwei to regard both Jilin and Taipei as homes, but the reconfiguration of homeness is an on-going process along with immigrants' movement and social networking.

## **2. The Encounter between Homeland and Host Land**

In addition to the comparison of the two homes, the purpose of romanticizing the homeland is also to draw our attention to the reality of the current home and emphasize the importance of local homemaking. In addition to *The Moonlight in Jilin*, most of the films in *We are Family* evoke hometown memory in developing current experience. More significantly, cultural elements of homeland are appropriated in making a local home to show cultural encounters between homeland and host land. *My Little Honey Moon*, focusing on Vietnam spouse Joan's life in Meinung, is an example of the appropriation of homeland culture in local cultural production within the new immigrant's household in

Taiwan. Although *My Little Honey Moon* makes use of emotionally-charged Vietnamese music and visually depicts the Vietnamese spouse Joan's hometown in a romanticized way, I argue that these positive hometown signifiers actually contribute to Joan's local homemaking in Taiwan. At the beginning of the film, Joan is overwhelmed by the responsibility of reproduction and her mother-in-law's malevolence. Her weak husband cannot do anything to help her, and is simply obedient to his powerful mother. The family is of conservative Hakka background, dominated by Joan's domineering mother-in-law. Because of her family's financial situation, Joan refuses to give birth to another child. Her evasion of the reproduction issue increases her mother-in-law's discrimination and malevolence towards her. The family tension eventually leads to her escape from her family and home in Taiwan, and prompts her road trip to Taitung with her daughter. When she walks with her daughter to her friend's home, the non-diegetic sound of Vietnamese background music accompanies their walk to suggest Joan's memory of her homeland, Vietnam. As Joan suddenly passes out on the road, a filmic montage featuring images of Joan in traditional Vietnamese dress in her native land appears like a dream as the Vietnamese song continues (Figure 2). The lyrics of the Vietnamese song describe the symbolic meaning of homeland: "Everyone has one homeland, as one has only one

mother. If one forgets his homeland, he can never grow up...The homeland is a small bridge, leads mother in paddy hat home. The homeland is a night with full moon.”



Figure 2. Joan dressed in traditional Vietnamese clothes

The images and sounds of Vietnam evoke Joan’s memory and nostalgia for her hometown. Furthermore, the encounter of her native place—Vietnam in her imagination—and her current home in Taiwan in reality through montage mark the transition to a local homecoming that will resolve the problem of the new immigrants’ rootlessness. The cultural elements, such as Vietnamese song and language, are employed by the director to present cultural encounters within the household. As the film continues,

Joan's husband and mother-in-law become worried about Joan and her daughter, and her husband even begins to learn to speak Vietnamese in order to save his marriage, regain his beloved wife and daughter, and keep the family complete. He goes to Taitung where his wife and daughter are temporarily staying in order to escape from their reality, and asks them for forgiveness. Joan is touched by the fact that her husband is learning Vietnamese, and the film ends on a happy note, featuring their dialogue in both Mandarin and Vietnamese. Joan's use of Mandarin marks her own process of acculturation, while her husband's acquisition of Vietnamese also shows the incorporation of a foreign culture. Both of these developments spur the progress of building feelings of home in Taiwan. Hence, the appropriation of a Vietnamese song and a representation of Joan's hometown in muted color and at a slow pace are entwined with the construction of her local home. The shots of the native land are no longer simply where new immigrants long for return, but also become significant elements, such as Vietnamese and the background music, for local Taiwanese appropriation and incorporation, in order to construct a multicultural home. Joan's gender role also calls our attention to the importance of female migrants' empowerment, which actually reverses traditional male roles in the construction of a family.

Accordingly, the juxtaposition of Taiwan and new immigrants' homelands is engaged with the construction of local homeness. Here, what I call local homeness is associated with new immigrants' empowerment, settlement and localization. First of all, multilingual practice is one of the features of Joan's local home in Taiwan. It is worthy of note that the film reflects Taiwan's multilingual phenomenon through the characters' dialogue. There are at least three languages spoken in *My Little Honey Moon*: Hakka, Mandarin and Vietnamese. Since language plays a crucial role in cultural production, the film describes how multiple languages are spoken and appropriated in the film production, which is different from typical Chinese-language cinema. As Shu-mei Shih defines the notion of Sinophone based on linguistic essence, she writes:

The 'Sino' part of the language family refers to the Sinitic languages, where the so-called dialects are actually different languages or topolects, as Victor Mair has shown. Sinitic language communities therefore refer to all the communities that speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Fukienese, Hakka, Teochi, and so forth, and hence Sinophone studies is a study involved in many languages and Sinophone literature is itself a multilingual literature. ("Again Diaspora" 9)

Meanwhile, Shih proposes that "The Sinophone is a place-based, everyday practice and experience, and thus it is a historical formation that constantly undergoes transformation

reflecting local needs and conditions” (*Visuality and Identity* 30). With reference to the Sinophone, *My Little Honey Moon* is a product of place-based cultural production through representing multilingual practice within the new immigrant’s household. It is noteworthy that the languages spoken within the household are not limited to Sinitic languages, but include Joan’s mother tongue, which is Vietnamese. Joan’s conceptualization of homeness is built upon her daily activities and the dialects spoken, which contributes to the making of multilingual and multicultural home. Multilingual representation is not simply linked to a single nation-state, but is accomplished through cultural encounter between local Taiwanese and new immigrants.

*My Little Honey Moon* shows audiences Joan’s localization through her involvement and acculturation in the Taiwanese household as physical dwelling. Moreover, she keeps close ties to her hometown by speaking Vietnamese and making phone calls to her mother in Vietnam. Although it seems that the two homes are weighted equally in terms of emotional importance to Joan, I contend that the Vietnamese memory is embedded in the construction of local home. It also symbolizes female migrants’ power over local Taiwanese men through linguistic acquisition as Joan’s husband learns to speak Vietnamese as a conciliatory gesture. The home in Taiwan evolves along with Joan’s localization as well as the hybridization of Taiwanese and Vietnamese cultures. As a

result, it is important to note that heterogeneity foregrounds the construction of local homeness with multiple cultures and languages, and the representation of native land moves beyond nostalgia and homesickness.

Though also displaying a romanticized homeland in its cinematic representation of new immigrants' lives, *The Happy Life of Debbie* exemplifies another approach to localization, through the transplantation of homeland culture to Taiwan. In this film, the director uses coffee as a pivotal device to connect the Indonesian spouse Debbie's current lived experience in Taiwan and her memory of Indonesia. Coffee is an important industry in Indonesia as well as in Gu-keng, Yunlin, Debbie's place of residence in the film. The recurrence of coffee farming and coffee-brewing in this film refers to the close connection between Taiwan and Indonesia in new immigrants' perspectives, and the embodiment of their emotional ties to both places. The motif of coffee reconciles cultural conflict between local Taiwanese and foreign spouses, and opens up possibilities for new immigrants' localization. The cinematic representation of coffee is not only in response to the interaction between new immigrants' two homes, but also highlights immigrants' agency in creating a local home with their familiar culture. In this sense, Debbie's perception of home as a place where she can smell coffee is a significant mental and physical element in dialogue with localization. As the film shows us, Debbie's memory



of Indonesia co-exists with her lived experiences in her current home, through the image of coffee. The boundary between the reality of the current home and memory of the hometown is thus blurred and integrated.

In addition to the embodiment of Indonesian culture through the image of coffee, the local homemaking in *The Happy Life of Debbie* is in line with the transformation of family structure. As outlined in my previous discussion on new immigrant family structure, homeness is represented as multicultural through the diversity of family members. The constitution of a multicultural home is built upon the integration of Taiwanese and Indonesian cultures and the interactions between the Taiwanese father, the Indonesian mother, and the son. For the Indonesian spouse, Debbie, the configuration of home corresponds to intimacy with her family in Taiwan. In her perception, home is neither in Indonesia nor with her husband's family, but it is constructed through her intercultural marriage and her localization in Taiwan.

Similarly, *The Golden Child* questions the traditional configuration of home based on kinship and marriage, and offers an alternative perspective from which to understand transnational family and transformative notions of home, in dialogue with the conflict between tradition and modernity. The family's struggle in this film is not limited to the cultural conflict between local Taiwanese and a foreign spouse; it is also affected by

modernization and globalization. *The Golden Child* addresses the transformation of a traditional family, as well as the influence of transnational investment in an agricultural village. It is true that the intercultural marriage challenges the tradition of family values and primogeniture, since by the end of this film, the Vietnamese spouse Kimki has not yet given birth to a son and adopts her sister's son instead. The adoption threatens the tradition of carrying on one's ancestral line. Furthermore, Kimki silently witnesses the transformation of the village she identifies as home in Taiwan, and the transnational investment in the land that results in the building of new hotels also influences this new immigrant family's income from the poultry industry. The homeness from the gendered perspective of new immigrants in this film therefore suggests the conflict between tradition and modernity as well as between local and global.

Interestingly, in *The Golden Child*, a chicken motif plays a crucial role in the plot development as a metaphor for homeness. Throughout the film, chickens are running everywhere around the house and cockcrow is one of the distinctive and noticeable non-diegetic sounds. The new immigrant spouse Kimki interacts with chickens through feeding them and talking to them. The household makes a living through pig farming, and chickens are another source of income and sustenance for the family. Moreover, while Kimki's mother-in-law passes away all of a sudden, her husband realizes the importance

of having a family. He then brings a cooked chicken to his girlfriend as a gift and explains why he needs to break up with her. He says, "I really want a family." The chicken symbol involves a playful usage of language. In the Hokkien dialect, family and chicken share the same pronunciation, *gei*. The director intentionally employs the image and linguistic performance of the chicken to reflect the eventual construction of a complete family and an ideal home. Homeness is thus reinvented through playful linguistic conceptualization and accomplished through the happy ending shared by the local Taiwanese man and his foreign spouse.

Through the textual analysis of these films, the diverse configurations of homeness from new immigrants' perspectives become clear, and they raise important issues related to migration, including nostalgia for homeland, localization and acculturation. It is true that the juxtaposition of homeland and host country plays an important role in the narrative of home. However, I argue that the representation of homeland is no longer just bound to nostalgia and desire for return, but can be associated with localization. We can understand how new immigrants conceptualize the notion of home through their migratory trajectories and gender roles, and homeness calls our attention to cultural encounters, conflicts and influences. *We Are Family* not only inherits the theme of home

and the multilingual practice from Taiwan New Cinema, but more importantly, the inclusion of new immigrants in filmmaking marks a new stage of Taiwan cinema.

### **Conclusion**

*We Are Family* demonstrates the fictional and melodramatic representation of new immigrants, with a focus on gender politics and homeness. Given the government funding and the producer's purpose, the movie series conveys both official ideology and fictional representation through the lens of new immigrants. In these films, a romanticized homeness represented in a harmonious way suggests that Taiwan offers a model site for most new immigrants to identify with their new homes.

Homeness for female new immigrants is more about relationships, familial intimacy, and cultural encounters in everyday life, goes against a male-centered grand narrative of homeland and nationalism. *We Are Family*, which dramatizes individual migratory trajectories and lived experience, offers audiences an alternative angle from which to understand new immigrants' stories and hear their voices. Additionally, because most new immigrants are women, their changing gender roles have a great impact on the transformation of family structure in Taiwan, as well as the re/construction of home. *The Moonlight in Jilin* exemplifies an unsettled home in Taiwan and challenges traditional

family structure and mores, questioning the stereotyped impressions of foreign spouses from China living in Taiwan. *The Golden Child* raises questions regarding reproduction and the shortage of labor in the countryside, and how these problems result in tension between mothers-in-laws and foreign brides. *The Happy Life of Debbie* provides a positive representation of a foreign bride's everyday life, with empowerment in the household and local homemaking accomplished through a blurring of ethnic boundaries. *My Little Honey Moon* demonstrates a new female immigrant's agency in escaping from the pressure of expected reproduction, with the reinvention of homeness in this film built upon intercultural encounters and linguistic acquisition. Unlike the stereotyped and oppressive images of new immigrants as silent and marginal, this entire movie series calls our attention to the reversal of gender politics and patriarchy within new immigrant households. Women immigrants play an important role in the transformation of family structure and the construction of local homeness, which is in relation to their gendered roles within domestic spheres. The cinematic representations therefore show us the possibility of women migrants' empowerment and agency through localization and homemaking in Taiwan.

The construction of Sinophone Taiwan as a site is built upon the diversity of cultures in Taiwan, and I propose that home is a site which contains and reflects heterogeneity. In

the *We Are Family* movie series, the reinvention of the local home offers an alternative angle from which to understand place-based Sinophone production in Taiwan. In addition, the local home in Taiwan is differentiated from the Great China, which is Han-centric. It also questions and challenges Chineseness, the cultural center of China and the discourse of Chinese diaspora which centers on race and ethnicity. In other words, the cultural production of the movie series not only shows new immigrants' agency in making a local home, but more importantly, it also presents the possibility of place-based production with local differences, cultural encounters and negotiation.

In the site of Sinophone Taiwan, literary and cultural production is not limited to Sinitic languages, and we should pay special attention to the hybridization of Taiwanese culture as it encounters new immigrants' original cultures. The spoken languages of new immigrants in Taiwan and in the films should be taken into consideration in the first place, because they may transform the conceptualization of the Sinophone. Inherited from the tradition of language appropriation in Taiwan cinema, the *We Are Family* movie series shows us that multilingual and multicultural households are a new phenomenon in Taiwanese society, and they are part of the construction of Sinophone Taiwan as a harmonious big family in which everyone can respect cultural differences, as the title suggests.

What is the cultural production of Sinophone Taiwan with the incorporation of new immigrants? I conclude that local homemaking contributes to the possibility of place-based cultural production, which crystallizes multilingual and multicultural practices in everyday life. In contrast to the official narrative of home as nation-state, homeness for new immigrants is more about relationships, familial intimacy, and cultural encounters in everyday life. *We Are Family*, which dramatizes individual migratory trajectory and lived experience, indeed offers audiences an alternative angle from which to understand new immigrants' stories and hear their voices. Meanwhile, because this movie series is fictional representation and sponsored by the government, it unavoidably conveys certain ideology through romanticization and universalization of new immigrants in the construction of Sinophone Taiwan. Regardless of the representational politics of this movie series, I argue that the transformation of family structure and homeness through the experiences of new immigrants truly brings into question the singular and so-called Han-centered cultural production of Chineseness, Chinese culture and even Taiwanese culture. Through the articulation of cultural differences, Sinophone Taiwan emerges as a new site that is constructed as multicultural and multilingual by virtue of heterogeneity and multiple migrations within the region of Asia.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION: SEEING THE WORLD FROM HOME

As hybridization consists of exchanges, crossings, and mutual entanglements, it necessarily implies a softening of the boundaries between “peoples”: the encounters *between* them are constitutive of who they are as the proceedings *within*. These encounters are not always harmonious or conciliatory: often they are extremely violent. (“Together-in-Difference” 147)

Ien Ang reminds us of the uneasiness migrants experience when settling down and localizing in a new society in which multiple cultures collide. Meanwhile, the notion of hybridity calls our attention to the relation between people, place and culture, and suggests that identity is never fixed and singular. Along these lines, given the possibility of cultural encounters in migration, migrants have agency in selectively employing cultural elements to imagine the world and reconstruct identity. Home is the space that can be (re-)produced as a microcosm of society and embedded with cultural differences as a hybrid product. Furthermore, since women are associated with the domestic sphere, they properly become the agents of homemaking. After moving to a new place, it is a necessity for women migrants to make a home in the local space for the purpose of



settlement and localization. With the process of homemaking, their employment of cultural forms represents their ways of repositioning self in relation to the world.

My dissertation has examined the literary and cinematic representations of homeness from women migrants' perspectives in the context of transnational migration. Home is constructed as a metaphor that is closely linked to migrants' lived experiences and cultural encounters. With reference to gender perspective, I argue that homemaking not only empowers women migrants to reject the conventional identity of a confined and subordinated *neiren* 內人, but also helps them to get in contact with cultural others and transform ways of seeing the world. In my dissertation, the four types of migratory patterns discussed contribute to our understanding of various forms of homeness, and demonstrate representational politics concerning both fictional and nonfictional genres. While female writers as cultural producers often write novels and prose regarding their lived experiences, documentary and feature films serve to give voice to voiceless women migrants on screen. Through the comparison of different genres and media, my dissertation argues that the convergence of physical migration and cultural production dwells in homeness, which enriches the understanding of individuals' negotiation with place, society, and nation-states.

Chapter II covers issues related to early Chinese immigration to North America to highlight the importance of history and the shift of home from native land to host land. By situating Chinese women at the center of representation, *Gold Mountain Blues* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* call our attention to the transformation of women and their gender roles, whether they are left-behind women or exported prostitutes. The Immigrant Act hindered Chinese women's immigration to North America and resulted in the unique structure of the trans-Pacific family. In addition, both novels narrate from female descendants' perspectives to trace back the history of Chinese immigration. In these novels, home is constructed by writing family genealogy and root-searching. More importantly, the shift of home from China to North America in the novels allows individuals to encounter cultural difference and ethnic conflict during the initial stage of Chinese migration to North America, and as later chapters reveal, similar problems still remain for immigrants in the contemporary period.

Chapter III investigates multiple border crossings with a focus on middle-class migrants, and the notion of homeness is reconfigured as a hybrid product featuring cultures from at least three geographical locales, including China, Taiwan and the United States. Although Nieh Hualing and Chang Yuan belong to different generations and have different reasons for their multiple movements, they are similar in that their active

engagement with local societies contributes to the multifaceted reproduction of home in three geographic locales. The representation of home is closely tied to their relationship with a specific place as well as their economic status. In Nieh Hualing's *Three Lives*, the homeland, China, is represented with memory and nostalgia, and the temporary settlement in Taiwan shows the political tension in the Cold War era. The later permanent home in Iowa is not only accomplished through a happy marriage, but also corresponds with the founding of the International Writing Program, which accommodates writers from around the world. On the other hand, Chang Yuan's migration results from her husband's career in the age of late capitalism. Thus, her middle-class status generates her mobility. Under the circumstances, the place is arbitrary, in that she can settle in anywhere and rebuild a home. The home is simulacrum, and assembled with Chang's translocation imagination from a cosmopolitan perspective. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Nieh and Chang are no longer confined within the domestic sphere, as their writing of home empowers them to get in touch with the cultural other. Home is thus a space where the individual encounters the world, and vice versa.

Chapter IV sheds light on Taiwanese businesspersons and their families in China as represented in different documentary films produced by Taiwanese and PRC filmmakers. In the cases of the westward movement from Taiwan to China, wives who used to be

career women often quit their jobs and move to China with their families. Their gender roles are transformed due to migration. However, the two selected documentary films point to two different results when Taiwanese wives move to China. While *Chang'e's Monthly Visit* presents the hardship of Taiwanese wives who are bound to their households, *A Wife's Stage* highlights a successful case of a Taiwanese migrant who happily resettles in Suzhou, China. These stories show that, whether successful or not in localizing, Taiwanese wives struggle with their gender roles in the process of cross-Strait migration. Seen in this light, the notion of home is in response to these wives' relationships with their families, and is adopted by the filmmakers in order to convey certain representational politics. In *Chang'e's Monthly Visit*, the family and the home are portrayed as imperfect from Taiwanese wives' perspectives. Moreover, the film shows the filmmaker's critical viewpoint on cross-Strait migration and unveils underground stories in opposition to Taiwanese businessmen's successes in expanding their industries. In contrast, PRC filmmaker Wang Jun portrays Suzhou as an ideal home for Taiwanese migrants. Considering the film's government support, there is no doubt that it is an image project that reflects political ideology. Homeness in the context of cross-Strait migration is appropriated to reflect different representational politics on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Chapter V emphasizes the cinematic representation of multilingual homes featuring new immigrants in Taiwan, and argues that home is constructed by engaging new immigrants in local cultural production. As shown in the feature film series *We Are Family*, after marrying into Taiwanese households, new immigrants become neiren 內人 and take charge of housework. However, through speaking Sinitic languages, including Mandarin, Hakka and Hokkien, they are able to communicate with their families and negotiate with cultural differences in Taiwan. They incorporate cultural elements from their homelands in daily life, and make multicultural homes locally. We can regard homemaking as an approach to localization, in that these new immigrants have agency in subverting patriarchal structure and constructing their subjectivities. In addition, *We Are Family* portrays Taiwan as a big family that is able to incorporate all its residents regardless of ethnicity or original nationality. Although the series romanticizes new immigrants' lived experiences in Taiwan, it calls our attention to the mediation of a multicultural society in Taiwan through film production.

Overall, my dissertation addresses the dynamics between physical migration and Chinese-language cultural production in the transnational context. Shifting the focus from so-called "mainstream" Chinese literature produced in China, the study of multiple Sinophone sites points to the multifaceted nature of literary and cinematic texts in terms

of local conditions and needs. Moreover, in drawing from migrants' everyday lives, the texts show us women's negotiation with politics, economy, and culture when moving around the world. The relation between migrants and places plays an important role in my analysis, and it is noteworthy that these cultural productions are place-based and reflect social realities at a specific point in history. The migrants whose stories I examine are no longer voiceless subjects at the margin; instead, their participation in Sinophone articulation offers an alternative way of understanding how Chinese language and culture have travelled, transformed and interacted with differences in the world.

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