

ASIAN VISUAL CULTURES



Ya-Feng Mon

Film Production and Consumption in Contemporary Taiwan

Cinema as a Sensory Circuit

Amsterdam
University
Press

Asian Visual Cultures

This series focuses on visual cultures that are produced, distributed and consumed in Asia and by Asian communities worldwide. Visual cultures have been implicated in creative policies of the state and in global cultural networks (such as the art world, film festivals and the Internet), particularly since the emergence of digital technologies. Asia is home to some of the major film, television and video industries in the world, while Asian contemporary artists are selling their works for record prices at the international art markets. Visual communication and innovation is also thriving in transnational networks and communities at the grass-roots level. Asian Visual Cultures seeks to explore how the texts and contexts of Asian visual cultures shape, express and negotiate new forms of creativity, subjectivity and cultural politics. It specifically aims to probe into the political, commercial and digital contexts in which visual cultures emerge and circulate, and to trace the potential of these cultures for political or social critique. It welcomes scholarly monographs and edited volumes in English by both established and early-career researchers.

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1 Through the Nexus of Bodies and Things

Introduction

This book examines the sensory aspects of the power dynamics between the film industry and its audience, using post-2000 Taiwan queer romance films as a case study. It revisits scholarly distrust of the culture industry to address how and to what extent the power of capitalism has privileged the industry at the expense of the audience's freedom or personality.

Between July 2009 and March 2011, I interviewed filmmakers, film producers, marketers, and spectators, in addition to running a focus group of film viewers. The fieldwork materials unravel the practices of film production, promotion, and consumption in post-2000 Taiwan, where the film industry was booming once again after a decade of decay. From what I have learnt and observed, it is incontrovertible that there has been an imbalance of power between consumers and the culture industry, represented here by the film industry, and I have seen evidence of contestation. Notwithstanding this, my fieldwork material proved inadequate the political-economic analysis of power structures and the cultural studies approach to social resistance. This is because throughout my ethnographic research, I have seen people deal with volatility as part of the film experience. This includes the experience of producing and consuming film products. By volatility, I not only mean that power dynamics shift around or between film producers and consumers; but more importantly, I have perceived power dynamics shifting on the basis that film producers and consumers act in relation to one another when both are engulfed by sensations, feelings, impulses, and inexplicable intuition. In common sense terms, social dynamics have their affective and sensory aspects. Political economy and cultural studies, however, have paid insufficient attention to these aspects when it comes to the interplay between consumers and the culture industry. This insufficiency motivated me to work on this book, in which I approach the relationship between the film industry and the audience as unstable but affectual and therefore biopolitical. Ethnographically informed, I trace and attribute the power dynamics between the audience and the film industry to intervention by physical entities, including organic bodies, inorganic objects, and media technologies. I argue that the opaque intervention by these entities affects the physical bodies of film producers and consumers,

diversifies the result of cinematic communication, and as a consequence contributes to the instability of the biopolitical relationship between the audience and the film industry.

The Revival of an Industry

My first interest in the relationship between the film industry and the audience came as a general yet also urgent and personal concern regarding social conditioning. I therefore conducted my first film-related research in 2000, pondering the implications of the 'women's genre'. I struggled through classic theories from Freud, Lacan, Althusser, Adorno, to Christian Metz, Fredric Jameson, Laura Mulvey, and Jackie Stacey. I was suspicious of the film industry but had in mind only the Hollywood 'dream factory', which had always been said to (problematically) take the world by storm.

By way of comparison, the Taiwan film industry at the start of the new millennium was a sad relic from a past era of economic prosperity. The well-remembered glory days of the 1960s and 1970s were long gone. Those were the decades in which Taiwan martial arts films and romantic melodramas were exported in large numbers to Southeast Asian markets, enjoying huge popularity. Following this period, the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) sponsored a number of new directors who spawned what came to be called New Wave Cinema in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. The New Wave Cinema was recognised and celebrated on the international film festival circuit.¹ As a result, Taiwan was selected as one of the best film-producing countries in the 1990s.² Ironically, the total box office gross for local films plummeted to an all-time low in the domestic market. By the end of the twentieth century, the increasing difficulty in financing local film production had rendered a proper, locally made 'women's genre' completely unimaginable.³ Hence, at the time of my first reflections on the relationship

1 Besides Hou Hsiao-hsien, whose historical epic *City of Sadness* won the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival in 1989, Edward Yang and Wan Jen are also considered Taiwan New Wave Cinema masters. The subsequent Taiwan New Cinema second wave involves internationally renowned filmmakers such as Tsai Ming-liang, Chang Tso-chi, and Lin Cheng-sheng.

2 Chang Shihlun, 'New Cinema, Film Festivals, and the Post-New Cinema', *Contemporary* 196 (2003): 98-100.

3 Having acquired a certain reputation on the international film festival circuit, established art film auteurs Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, and Tsai Ming-liang capitalised on their niche global appeal and looked overseas for financing. Many of their works, Ti Wei observes, have since the mid-1990s been financed by medium-sized European or Japanese production companies and grossed better internationally as global commodities than they did locally. See Ti Wei, 'From

between the film industry and the audience, I could hardly consider myself at risk of being questionably 'brainwashed' by a local industry that was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

Looking back, I wonder who would have been aware that a staggering change loomed on the horizon at that specific moment. In December 2004, having become a journalist, I attended an academic conference on film studies in Jhongli, Taoyuan, hosted by National Central University (NCU), where the prospect of a dramatic revival of the film industry was the preeminent topic of discussion. Accordingly, the conference dedicated itself to the emergent promise of a functioning local film market during an hours-long roundtable discussion. During this discussion, the predominant concern was about marketing and production strategies based on the inspiration offered by the box office success of *Formula 17* (Chen Yin-jung 2004). A queer romance film, *Formula 17* tells the story of a country bumpkin's amorous pursuit of an infamous city playboy. By the time of the conference, the film had become the year's top-grossing local feature production.⁴ The film's outspoken public relations consultant, who was present at the conference, detailed the execution of the film's triumphant marketing campaign, which had helped make the film a much-anticipated and well-received local production. To many attendees' surprise, the marketer's remarks covered details as trivial as the availability of suitable dining places near exhibition venues for audience members to have spontaneous post-screening discussions. Custom-oriented thinking/action, which was treated as if it was a newly discovered gospel, was claimed to have become the leading principle in business. In response to the claim, concerns were raised over the possibility that the quality of locally made films might deteriorate rapidly.

As the debate went on, I came to appreciate that I was surrounded by similar-minded people. Like me, the scholars, journalists, and film industry workers involved in the heated exchanges at the conference were all concerned with the relationship between the film industry and the

Local to Global: A Critique of the Globalization of Taiwan Cinema', *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 56 (2004): 65-92.

4 Having grossed just short of NT\$ 6 million (\$ 200,000), *Formula 17* was hardly a blockbuster. *City of Sadness*, which established Hou Hsiao-hsien as a leading figure of Taiwan New Wave Cinema, made a box office record of NT\$ 35 million (\$ 1.2 million) in 1989. In 1999, however, at the very nadir of the local film industry's downturn, the 16 locally made films that were released grossed NT\$ 12 million (\$ 400,000) in total. By comparison, an achievement like *Formula 17*'s would conceivably appear rather remarkable. For statistics, see Shih-Kai Huang, 'A Political Economic Analysis of Taiwan Film Industry in the 1990s' (Master's thesis, National Chung Cheng University, 2004).

audience. Some conference participants were alarmed by the premise of the discussion, which indicated that cinema should be an audience-gratifying and profit-oriented business. Therefore, they felt impelled to problematise the implied industry-audience relationship as a dubious consequence of an unexpected revival of the industry. The unease they expressed with regard to emerging local film practices and the resultant debate at the conference suggested that in post-2000 Taiwan, a worthy case for the study of intricate interactions between the industry and the audience had arisen.

Like many other film industries around the world, the post-2000 Taiwan film industry is dedicated to the grand project of audience enticement. In order to sustain itself financially, the industry is eager for a business model that can be applied to new film products. These include models that provide guidelines regarding film content management and promotion planning. In the following sections and in the chapters to come, I will delineate how this has resulted in the adoption of film genericity. I will also examine how post-2000 Taiwan 'genre films' have been consumed against a backdrop of lifestyle marketing, a process by which film products are associated with miscellaneous consumer commodities and media technologies.

In the context of film production and consumption, the post-2000 Taiwan film industry has been keen to find out what film audiences want and what they *tend to do*. The process of film production and marketing entails offering desirable films or commodities that channel behaviours of consumption. As in the case of *Formula 17*, what is being channelled includes not only film consumption behaviour but also behaviours that may help bring about actual actions of film consumption, such as purchasing supper in a restaurant near a cinema and spreading word of the brilliance of a movie, for instance. Cinematic communication and its effect, in this sense, encompass a wide range of activities in a spectator's everyday life. Meanwhile, concerns about desires and behaviours lead the film industry into an intimate relationship with the audiences' bodies. According to some film industry workers I have interviewed, this means that via consumer commodities and media technologies, the film industry has tried relentlessly to seduce the senses of its potential consumers in the hope that the impact of the seduction will increase film consumption. Rendered in analytical terms, the seduction in question regards a biopolitical issue, which sees the industry participate in governing film audiences as modern subjects. As will be evidenced in later sections and chapters, audiences are, nevertheless, unruly subjects. The unpredictability of their behaviours means that the relationship between the film industry and the audience in post-2000 Taiwan is a precarious one.

These questions of enticement, sense seduction, biopolitics, unruliness, and precariousness, when considered with regard to the relationship between the film industry and the audience, are not exclusive to the post-millennium era, and certainly not to Taiwan. In the very specific context of revitalisation, the post-2000 Taiwan film industry's enthusiastic adoption of business models from around the world – or, more specifically, from the East Asian region and Hollywood – increases its similarity to counterparts from around the globe. With its implementation of limited-budget production and marketing, especially in the case of queer romance films, the post-2000 local film industry nonetheless retains its uniqueness.

This book analyses the industry's operation as a local phenomenon that reflects universal issues. However, as David Martin-Jones argues in applying Deleuzian film theories to world cinemas, pertinent local developments are what sustain the relevance of (potentially) universal concepts.⁵ I address the post-2000 Taiwan film industry-audience relationship as being a result of a contested project of biopolitical governance, which links my research to recent advances in general film and media studies. Notwithstanding this, I will examine the biopolitical implications of the relationship with respect to the local rendition of globally circulated film genericity and cross-industry lifestyle marketing.

A Genre Innovation

Since its recent revival, the Taiwan film industry in the post-2000 era has rebuilt its relationship with local audiences. This developing relationship was first understood in terms of the changing properties of locally made film texts. Scholarly research on this subject traces the industry's revival to the year 2000 and ascribes this transforming relationship to the industry's increased use of generic language.

Darrell William Davis, for instance, argues that 2000 witnessed the rise of 'Cinema Taiwan'. Taiwan New Wave Cinema, Davis writes, has defined itself 'in opposition to the authoritarianism of martial law' enforced by the Kuomintang (KMT) government from 1947 to 1987. Cinema Taiwan, by contrast, presents 'critical-creative responses to local film's dispersion',

5 David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World Cinemas* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 234.

or rather to the local film industry's dysfunction.⁶ By Davis's definition, Cinema Taiwan as a category consists of locally made films that 'crossed over to mainstream awareness and success' from the bleak industrial landscape of unremitting recession. Examples of 'Cinema Taiwan' include *Blue Gate Crossing* (Yee Chih-yen 2002) and *Formula 17*, whose production 'contest[s] commercial channels and textual address'; *Double Vision* (Chen Kuo-fu 2002), which 'selectively adapt[s] Hollywood modes of production to local genre conventions'; the kinetic puppet epic *Legend of the Sacred Stone* (Chris Huang 2000) which 'rekindles cinematic technique from indigenous qualities unique to Taiwan's popular traditions'; and a cycle of 'popular, essentially humanist documentaries', such as *Gift of Life* (Wu Yifeng 2004), *Let It Be* (Yan Lanquan and Zhuang Yizeng 2005), and *Viva Tonal: The Dance Age* (Jian Weisi and Guo Zhendi 2003).⁷

In terms of characteristics, Davis argues, each example of Cinema Taiwan remains 'unpredictable, unlikely to resolve into a clearly focused big picture'.⁸ Drawing parallels between *Legend of the Sacred Stone*, *Blue Gate Crossing*, and *Formula 17*, he nevertheless detects a trend towards *intertextuality*, which links recent Taiwan popular cinema directly to 'tribes of comics, games, Japanese *dorama*' and other extra-cinematic art forms.⁹ Such intertextuality, he observes, is adopted for the utilisation of extra-cinematic audience formations that are already in place. The enterprise of genre-mix, moreover, negotiates the compatibility between local and global cultural elements. *Legend of the Sacred Stone*, for instance, connects the entertainment value of action/martial art films and the local theatrical or televisual conventions of hand puppets. *Blue Gate Crossing* incorporates *dorama*. *Formula 17* adopts a style reminiscent of Japanese *shojo* anime

6 Darrell William Davis, 'Cinema Taiwan, A Civilizing Mission?', in *Cinema Taiwan*, eds. Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 3-6.

7 Davis, 'Cinema Taiwan', 5. For further reference, the production of *Double Vision*, while executed by a local filmmaking team, was initiated and managed by Columbia Pictures Asia, whose founding in 1998 was aimed at engaging Asian filmmakers in producing Asia-oriented works for Asian regional markets. See Ti Wei, 'From Local to Global'. Meanwhile, *Blue Gate Crossing*, along with *Betelnut Beauty* (Lin Cheng-sheng 2001) and *20:30:40* (Sylvia Chang 2004), draws on 'investment by overseas, independent, mid-sized production companies'. See Fran Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', in *Cinema Taiwan*, 131-45.

8 Davis, 'Cinema Taiwan', 5.

9 *Dorama* refers to modern Japanese idol television dramas. Darrell William Davis, 'Trendy in Taiwan', in *Cinema Taiwan*, 153-4.

while at the same time including Taiwanese renderings of camp materials like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* or *Sex and the City*.¹⁰

Apart from appropriations of generic language, Brian Hu adds in relation to *Formula 17* that the use of music-video vocabulary (i.e. quick edits and unusual camera setups) counters New Wave Cinema's distinctive adherence to long takes and long shots. The recruitment of a cast of good-looking television actors, meanwhile, exploits 'a built-in audience' as much as it retains a sense of glamour to squeeze 'squeals out of giddy teenage girls'. All these practices, Hu understands, prove that the (re)emergence of Taiwan mainstream cinema is attributable to effective executions of well-designed production schemes.¹¹

Within the industry, the talk was likewise all about replicable genre conventions, smart visual effects, and efficient marketing operations. Aileen Yiu-Wa Li, the producer of the dazzling *Formula 17*, writes for example in *Taiwan Cinema Year Book 2005* that *Formula 17*'s unexpected success was achieved on two interrelated premises: predetermined genre guidelines and predefined audience reactions. 'Genericity concerns marketability', Li argues, 'Clearly defined generic qualities facilitate preselling the audience to the movie'.¹² Here, 'generic qualities' refer to textual properties that are easily associated with a globally established film product category. Elaborating on her own argument, Li then compares the general categories of Hollywood blockbusters, queer romance, children's films, and horror movies.

With *Formula 17*, Li explains, the adoption of the queer romance genre comes down to the issue of practicality:

Hollywood blockbusters might have constituted the largest and the best-selling genre at the local box office. But the most feasible choices for a toddling industry like ours are queer romance, children's films and horror movies, according to my business partner Michelle Yeh and my own personal experiences as film marketers and distributors. Profit efficient, the actual production of these three genres does not tend to be costly.¹³

10 *Shojo* describes anime or comics that target young women by emphasising the emotional impact of friendly or romantic relationships. Davis, 'Trendy', 149.

11 Brian Hu, 'Formula 17: Mainstream in the Margins', in *Chinese Films in Focus II*, ed. Chris Berry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, on behalf of British Film Institute, 2008), 122-3.

12 Aileen Yiu-Wa Li, 'The Production Strategy for *Formula 17*', in *Taiwan Cinema Year Book 2005* (Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 2005), accessed March 21, 2013, http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_52423_332.

13 *Ibid.*

While recognisable genericity was favoured for practical reasons (marketability, budget, profit efficiency, etc.), genre conventions were nevertheless implemented strategically. Having settled on queer romance, Li and her production team proceeded to 'contrive a desirable viewing experience' for *Formula 17*. 'Our primary goal', she states, 'was to lessen the political burden of homosexuality with a comical ending, so the audience might leave the cinema bathed in relaxation'.¹⁴ In other words, the connection between conventional queer romantic narratives and gay politics was deliberately undermined in an attempt to enhance the film's entertainment value. Taking sales into consideration, Li and her colleagues were doubtful about the effectiveness, if not the relevance, of conventional (re)presentations of gay identity. In this regard, *Formula 17* is definitely unexceptional among post-2000 Taiwan queer romance films.

Fran Martin remarks on a similar trade-off between gay politics and entertainment in her analysis of *Blue Gate Crossing*, another locally made queer romance film in which a Taipei tomboy falls secretly in love with her girlfriend who, however, has a crush on a boy. Martin regards the film as an example of the 'schoolgirl romance narrative' that circulated in China in the 1920s and 1930s as 'women's homoerotic school romances'.¹⁵ Having survived in Taiwan literary, televisual, and filmic works produced since the 1970s, the genre recently gained solid support from the lesbian and gay movement in the 1990s. As a result, its persistence in the post-millennium era seems to show optimistic signs of 'lesbian identity politics [entering] fully into Taiwan's popular entertainment culture'.¹⁶ An example of the genre, *Blue Gate Crossing* is the first mainstream Taiwan film to non-symbolically allow a tomboy protagonist the possibility of a future, meaning that the tomboy does not die or fade from view at the end of the story. According to Martin, the film marks a transformation of genre convention. The optimism, nevertheless, is attained on the dubious condition that the film has presented lesbianism ambiguously enough to suggest different interpretations of the tomboy protagonist's sexuality.¹⁷

For Martin, such genre innovation indicates a move towards 'despecification', detectable especially where the industry attempts to maximise the potential size of a film's audience. In the case of *Blue Gate Crossing*, she argues, not only does the ambiguity introduced in the sexual thematic

14 Ibid.

15 The term was coined by Tze-lan D. Sang rather than by Martin herself.

16 Martin, 'Taiwan (Trans)national Cinema', 137.

17 Ibid., 136-8.

serve to strategically draw the attention of multiple yet distinct audiences, including queer and non-queer spectators, but the adoption of a more or less transnational esthetic also enhances the film's accessibility and appeal to geo-culturally diverse international audiences.¹⁸

With Li and her colleagues concerned with marketability and profit efficiency, the despecification in *Formula 17* came about, however, as an inadvertent consequence. In order to deliver a queer romance that is free from realistic indications of gay politics, Li recalls, the production crew of *Formula 17* was preoccupied with the creation of a dreamy, fairytale-like atmosphere:

Bright colors were used to dictate the visual tone of the film. Given the premise, the characters were also shown hanging out in well-designed, fashionable places. Their outfits, regardless of the characters' different social backgrounds, were made equally trendy. In general, the production design looked whimsical with a surreal touch. Short shots at the same time were intentionally produced to speed up the rhythm, assuring the strength of the comical effects.¹⁹

This production scheme was originally implemented to refresh the pre-existing audience for queer romance, assumed to be gay men in their thirties or young women in their twenties. Nevertheless, test screenings of the rough cut brought forth a scepticism among the core gay group, whose reception of queer romance, Li then realised, was dominated to a considerable degree by political thinking. To many in the gay community, the film's utopian happy ending was as good as condescending. The younger generations of the gay communities, on the other hand, were ecstatic about its novelty. 'What they saw and enjoyed', Li understands, 'was just a fun movie, a hilarious story. Their positive response helped reshape the marketing campaign later on'.²⁰

The production of *Formula 17* was not exempt from the pressure to maximise either the film's market potential or its international appeal. The formation of its survival/profit strategy, as delineated (and interpreted) by Li, does not in a practical or a theoretical sense necessarily counter Martin's observation concerning the desirable effect of thematic or aesthetic despecification. Li's delineation, nevertheless, constitutes a conscious underscoring of an aspect of cinematic communication that has

18 Ibid., 139-40.

19 Li, 'The Production'.

20 Aileen Yiu-Wa Li, personal interview, September 10, 2009.

so far not been circumscribed by Martin's problematic which is informed by identity politics – be they sexual, national, or otherwise. Desperate to attract the widest possible audience, Li and the production team behind *Formula 17* worked more along the lines of sensation, as well as sexual or cultural difference. To the production team, films induce experiences before anything else. In its very essence, such an induction requires continuous sustenance from sensory stimulus. For a film to attain experiential effect and (hopefully) a resultant financial success, it seems in this case that there has to be 'wisely calculated investment in the immediate, most noticeable sensory impact'. After all, Li clarified, 'No other investment guarantees as much audience engagement in the current climate of film consumption'.²¹

Li's stated vision indicates a relationship between the film industry and the audience that revolves around the industry's calculated seduction of the audience's senses. As it happens, the vision is shared by quite a number of people involved in the local film industry. Cheng Hsiao-tse, whose directorial debut *Miao Miao* (2008) is yet another queer romance movie, maintained in all three of our personal interviews that the future of locally made films must be found in TV commercial-like visuals. 'Everybody loves TV commercials for their delicate visual effect', he said, 'If at the end of the day local film productions would always to some extent suffer limitations brought about by small budgets, delicacy of that nature is the least we filmmakers should endeavour to achieve'. Otherwise the audience would be forever lost to big-budget, high-profile foreign films.²² While 'TV commercial-like visuals' may not always have been what local filmmakers had in mind when they set out to produce a commercially ambitious movie, the increasing use of special effects in the years following the release of *Formula 17* indicates a growing trend towards sensation.²³ Huang Chih-ming, the producer of the NT\$ 20 million (\$ 700,000) grossing horror film *Silk* (Su Chao-pin 2006), argued that 'All the audience looks for is some "smart" effects to cover cinema's entertainment aspects', which, he also explained with regard to the local industry's prospects, underline the fact that 'technical crafts are no doubt essential'.²⁴

21 Aileen Yiu-Wa Li, personal interview, September 10, 2009.

22 Cheng Hsiao-tse, personal interview, July 30, 2010.

23 See Tu Hsiang-wen, 'The Significance of Special Effects in Taiwan Film Production', in *Taiwan Cinema Year Book 2007* (Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 2007), accessed March 25, 2013, http://www.taiwancinema.com/ct_56135_343.

24 See Ya-Feng Mon, 'The Audience Looks for "Smart" Effects', *Eslite Reader Magazine*, January 2007.

Thus, the adoption of generic language, the necessity for genre innovations, and the pursuit of cinema-generated sensations are strategically integrated for the purpose of audience enticement. As much as the integration exposes the film industry's efforts to gratify (or manipulate) the senses of the audience, it also points to a newly emergent intra-industry relation. That is, in post-2000 Taiwan, film producers like Li and Huang have admitted to their preference for collaborating with novice filmmakers like Cheng, who have a tendency towards (potentially) audience-gratifying visual effects.²⁵ These same filmmakers had been avid consumers of globally or regionally circulated genre films before they were recruited to work in/for the film industry. In this sense, the filmmakers' relation to the post-2000 local film industry constitutes one of many possible industry-audience connections. In Chapter 4 I will explore this particular connection.

Corporeal Appreciation

Technical crafts and visual effects, nevertheless, do not by themselves account for audience gratifications. The success of sense seduction incorporates contributions from miscellaneous consumer commodities, whose appearance in films integrates film production with film promotion. The incorporation of consumer commodities parallels generic characteristics in augmenting a film's marketability. Introducing daily objects in order to evoke sensations and to focus audience attention, incorporation as such also deepens the relationship between the film industry and the audience centred around sense seduction.

It may not have been a coincidence, therefore, that Aileen Yiu-Wa Li should pick out fashionable hangouts and trendy outfits to underline the significance of sensory effects while Cheng Hsiao-tse turned to TV commercials for aesthetic references. For the purpose of sensation induction, one could even see the intertextuality Davis has noted in recent Taiwan popular movies as ineluctable. Formally, the revived yet 'toddling' post-2000 Taiwan film industry has strived to follow a production model that was constructed at the birth of Hollywood high-concept films. These movies exhibit textual and extra-textual configurations that exemplify the excessive pursuit of sensory stimulation, owing partly to the maturing role of cross-industry alliances in the execution of their production and promotion.

25 See Ya-Feng Mon, 'Make Films for Audiences', *Eslite Reader Magazine*, December 2006.

According to Justin Wyatt, since the 1970s cross-industry alliances have become more dominant than ever in film history, which laid the foundation for high-concept film production. The alliances have helped secure the massive budgets invested in high-concept films and aided the encroachment of media conglomeration. As a result of cross-industry alliances, the crafts of design, casting, soundtracking, etc. have contributed to an advertising-fostered presentation of 'a method of living' in high-concept films.²⁶ Wyatt argues that, like advertisements, high-concept films centred on special effects 'sell a form of existence'.²⁷ They do so by offering 'visions of various lifestyles'.²⁸ In addition to showcasing the latest fashions, high-concept films are driven by an intricate mechanism of cross-media referencing to fulfil the task of exhibiting lifestyles. This means, the lives and experiences of film characters are formed and filtered through a common body of media knowledge. Instead of psychology, actions, and motivations, characters in high-concept films are constructed either out of their own or out of the films' various references to music, television, movies, and other media content.²⁹ Thus, 'defined almost entirely by his *taste*' in fashion, music, films, etc., a high-concept film character obliquely (or sometimes explicitly) advertises miscellaneous consumer and media products. Those same products, meanwhile, advertise the high-concept movie in discrete extra-cinematic contexts.³⁰

On most occasions, the impact of 'taste culture' is understood symbolically in terms of social status or individual identity. However, 'the most striking result of the high concept style', Wyatt contends, 'is a weakening of identification with character and narrative'. In place of identification, 'the viewer becomes sewn into the "surface" of the film', appreciating the excess of sound-buttressed spectacles when s/he contemplates the style of the production.³¹ To Janet Harbord, Wyatt's approach to high-concept film reception suggests a spectatorial distance, which breeds a disinterested attention to cinematic presentation, in contrast to a 'depth' of understanding or connection.³² If this were the case, by appropriating a long-established production model, Aileen Yiu-Wa Li and the *Formula 17* production team

26 Justin Wyatt, *High Concept* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 60.

27 *Ibid.*, 59. Wyatt has borrowed the turn of phrase from the French film director Etienne Chatiliez.

28 *Ibid.*, 60.

29 *Ibid.*, 57-9.

30 *Ibid.*, 59-60, emphasis added.

31 *Ibid.*, 60.

32 Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage, 2002), 101.

would have endeavoured in vain to contrive a sense-engaging, relaxing viewing *experience* through technical configuration. Instead, their practice would have eventually kept the audience 'at a distance'. The paradox can only be solved on the condition that, alongside appreciation and contemplation, Wyatt recognises bodily activities that take place 'at a medium depth', that is, activities that take place at the experiential and perceptual level of the body. At this particular level, 'the body is only body, having nothing of the putative profundity of the self, nor of the superficiality of external encounter'. Brian Massumi calls this asubjective and non-objective level the 'medium depth' of the body, which is the dimension of the *flesh*.³³

Intriguingly, in describing the production goals of *Formula 17*, Li enunciates the intention to circumvent homosexual identity politics in favour of pursuing physical effects identifiable as relaxation. Assuming a lifestyle-oriented cinematic spectacle has, for this reason, materialised on the 'surface' of *Formula 17* to effectively prevent the deep political connection of identification. Therefore, is it possible that from within the spectator the experience of physical relaxation has simultaneously emerged in the dimension of the flesh? The answer is obvious if one looks at the audience's reaction.

In a focus group discussion session I conducted for this research, two participants, Emolas and Grace, were huge fans of *Formula 17*. Asked what had made them enjoy the film so much, Emolas objectively singled out the exquisite visuals, whereas Grace became excited when detailing the film's witty combination of generic formulae. After an information-intense conversation, however, both proceeded to recount a lightness they had felt separately once they had laughed, smiled, and quietly gasped with the technically intelligent production.³⁴

It is not surprising that film audiences do not – or at least do not always – embrace cinematic communication in terms of a distanced, knowledgeable appreciation of film crafts. Since the nineteenth century, popular scientific knowledge production/distribution has devoted itself to unpacking the execution of virtuoso theatrical and cinematic spectacles.³⁵ Although its objective was reportedly to prevent sensory deception, its existence indicates only the extent to which senses have always worked discernibly in the construction of a relationship between theatre/film and the audience.

33 Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 59.

34 Emolas and Grace, focus group discussion, August 9, 2009.

35 See Michelle Pierson, *Special Effects: Still in Search of Wonders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Otherwise, an effort to prevent sensory deception would not have been necessary. The intervention of the sensate body has been crucial in the formation of cinematic (mis)perception. So much so that even Eisenstein, whose political faith resides in his montage-fostered intellectuality, believed that intellectual cinema would become worthless without correlating 'sensory thought' or 'emotional intelligence'.³⁶

In the history of film theory, corporeal connections have nevertheless been bypassed in favour of intellectual interpretations to the extent that the effect that sensory impressions create in spectators are not necessarily a focus of critical consideration. This has been the case even if the potential consequences of cinematic (mis)perception have, since the onset of the cinematic medium, attracted substantial attention. With or without technical misinformation, it has been regularly assumed that the mechanism of identification must sneak in at some point during film consumption in order to form the core of cinematic (mis)perception. As a consequence, psychoanalytic spectator theories conceptualise vision in the cinema space as the trigger for an identificatory process, alongside which visual pleasure surfaces to be theoretically grasped in libidinal rather than in sensual terms.³⁷ A Judith Butler-inspired approach to media reception, on the other hand, underscores identity-generative inscriptions that demonstrate media discourses may 'perform' on the spectator's body, without considering the possibility of any reactive bodily sensation.³⁸

In this context, Wyatt's theory of 'surface' appreciation seems to have bypassed identity-based theories of film/media reception, however inadvertently. Now that Emolas and Grace's reception of *Formula 17*, described above, has supplemented Wyatt's theory and evidenced that craft appreciation

36 In Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone, 1989), 159.

37 Following both psychoanalysis and apparatus theory, Christian Metz, however, integrates spectatorial vision with the operation of cinematographic machines through the explanatory concept of identification. That way, he tangentially touches upon the use of the spectatorial body by counting the spectator as 'part of the apparatus' that modulates visual perception as a result of cinematographic communication. Within the cinema space and during the film screening, he writes, '[t]here are two cones in the auditorium: one ending on the screen and starting both in the projection box and in the spectator's vision insofar as it is projective, and one starting from the screen and "deposited" in the spectator's perception insofar as it is introjective (on the *retina*, a second screen)'. Perception, in Metzian theory, is nonetheless a delicate concept to work with. Described as introjected onto (the second screen of) 'the retina', cinema-informed visual perception to Metz feeds into a 'consciousness' whose constitution is less theorised with respect to bodily/cerebral function. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 50-1, emphasis added.

38 See, for instance, Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism* (London: Sage, 2009), 59-69.

weakens the mechanism of identification without compromising the generation of corporeal connection, the study of a spectator's relation to a lifestyle-advertising (high-concept) film requires, among other things, an examination of the spectator's physical reaction. The stale expression of '*brainwashing*' would in this case capture with a certain precision the corporeal, non-identificatory bearing the film industry may have upon spectators. Between cinema and the brain (as a body part), there does exist a material linkage that, to borrow Deleuze's words, deserves 'molecular' tracing.³⁹

Given this premise, the effects of a film text, whose production in the current climate of film circulation is ineluctably informed by promotion schemes, must (to a certain degree) be sought 'around, on, within' the spectator's body.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the audience's relation to the film industry is to some extent built upon a corporeal foundation. Chapter 3 in this book examines cinematic effects and the industry-audience relationship in these terms.

(Re)configuration of Bodies and Things

Thus, via cross-industry alliances and text manipulation, the newly revitalised Taiwan film industry, like other film industries around the globe, effects corporeal changes.⁴¹ This invites urgent concerns over 'biopolitical' control, a situation in which the industry purposefully feeds the audience with cinema-generated sensations for capital reproduction. Control doubtless plays a prominent part in the current relationship between the film industry and the audience in Taiwan. In the imaginations of Aileen Yiu-Wa Li, Cheng Hsiao-tse, and Huang Chih-ming, for the industry to thrive or survive, biopolitical 'control' must first of all become technically possible.

Of course, by any definition, biopolitics involves more than the controlled production of sensations. For Antonio Negri, who is concerned with the

39 See Gilles Deleuze, 'The Brain is the Screen', trans. Marie Therese Guirgis, in *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

40 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 184.

41 Interested in and concerned with 'tactile, kinetic, redolent, resonant, and sometimes even taste-ful' experiences of films, Vivian Sobchack has alternatively approached the question of the cinema-body relation through phenomenology and the cross-modality of the senses. See 'What My Fingers Knew', in *Carnal Thoughts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53-84.

relation of the labour force to value generation in late/global capitalism, the biopolitical defines a social context of reproduction which 'integrates production and circulation'.⁴²

In the Frankfurt School's pivotal formulation, the integration of production and circulation/consumption – a 'newer', more sophisticated form of social control – compels consumption and renders it commensurate with the ethos of production. Herbert Marcuse writes, for instance:

We may distinguish both true and false needs. 'False' are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs.

[...] The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed; and social control is anchored in *the new needs which it has produced*.⁴³

Thus, the pleasure principle has been lost, Marcuse declares. Gratification, like production, has long been subject to social regulation.

Marcuse's argument that the emergent mechanism of social control is productive of *needs* is an arresting one. Unpacking these needs in practical terms, he instances the need 'to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume' – all of which point to actions, or tendencies for action. Advertising (plus advertisement-infused or advertisement-fostering cultural productions) implements a procedure of human manipulation, argue Adorno and Horkheimer.⁴⁴ If this is the case, it seems that in Marcuse's formulation the effectiveness of the procedure, measured in relation to the ultimate goal of capital reproduction, is contingent not only on psychological but also on sensorimotor mobilisation. Without underscoring (or even realising)

42 Antonio Negri, 'Value and Affect', trans. Michael Hardt, *Boundary 2* 26.2 (1999): 83.

43 Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 4-9, emphasis added.

44 Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 1979), 163.

it, Marcuse has hinted that the creation of (new) needs, false or otherwise, entails channelling the use of the body. It is this channelling that has, matter-of-factly, blurred the boundaries between the regularisation of production and consumption/gratification.

There is, nevertheless, a difference between Marcuse's and Negri's theories. It lies in the acknowledged degree to which, and the way in which, capital has subsumed the process of social reproduction. For Marcuse, and in Patricia Ticineto Clough's words, 'along with the extension of mass consumption, the reproduction of the labourer is drawn into the market'.⁴⁵ In the light of the Frankfurt School's tragic vision of passive compliance, the integration of production and consumption represents a market-led reproduction that aims to discipline, normalise, and delimit. Yet in Negri's later elaboration of market-commanded reproduction, the value of labour is sought and found in the sheer bodily capacity 'to act'. According to Clough, this means that in order to maximise value production, the market economy must and will capitalise on any possible bodily actions. In the circumstances, bodily capacities can only be circumstantially expanded or contracted, effectively channelled but never subject to limitation.⁴⁶ Where needs are persistently produced and bodily activities canalised, this is to say the target-focused standardisation of human needs has constituted less and less of an issue in contemporary consumer economy. Instead, the market is after bodies that are ready to mutate or deviate – or, in other words, bodies that are highly active and infused with dynamic possibilities for change.⁴⁷

This difference between Marcuse's and Negri's theorisation (of reproduction) recalls the contrast between the Foucauldian disciplinary society and the Deleuzian 'control' society. In 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', Deleuze writes that within disciplinary societies, a subject/labourer is governed/reproduced in various spaces of enclosure – families, schools, barracks, factories, etc. – each of which regulates the activities of the human body in accordance with specific *laws* to maximise productivity.⁴⁸ Control societies, on the other hand, seek ultra-dynamic relationships with their subjects/labourers. Instead of restricting bodily activities with rules or laws, control societies constantly change the parameters of governance to serve the purpose of governance. In so doing, they allow diversity in the actions

45 Patricia Ticineto Clough, 'Introduction', in *The Affective Turn*, eds. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 23.

46 Clough, 'Introduction', 25.

47 *Ibid.*, 19–20, 25.

48 Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October* 59 (1992): 3.

of their governed subjects/labourers, and they adjust to these actions while at the same time canalising the subjects/labourers' behaviours.⁴⁹

There is little contention among theorists that cinematic communication has from its inception been deeply involved in the project Marcuse conceptualised as (new/false) needs production. Wyatt's analysis of advertisement-permeated high-concept films, in fact, echoes Adorno and Horkheimer's conviction that 'advertising and the culture industry merge technically as well as economically'.⁵⁰ Serving as approximate advertisements, for instance, lifestyle-showcasing films, whose production revolves around cross-industry alliances, seek to impose guidelines regarding what 'to love and hate' when it comes to consumption for the purpose of gratification. Due to the spectatorial distance suggested in Wyatt's theory, however, this particular process of guideline imposition rids itself of the mechanism of identification, which by prescribing social identities risks limiting the bodily potential for diverse actions. As a consequence, lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication may prove a suitable case for the study of the Negrian/Deleuzian process of social reproduction.

Ethnographically speaking, the biopolitical impact of lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication has been observed as anticipating and reinforcing a body-mediated linkage between the film text and a miscellany of consumer products. This, of course, boils down to the role of cross-industry alliances in film production and promotion.

For example, in the case of *Blue Gate Crossing*, the main cast was scheduled to turn out at events to promote branded commodities as diverse as music records, luxury watches, designer jeans, retail sneakers, beauty products, and mobile communication services during the film's limited local release. Some of the goods were featured in the film; others were not. Regardless, the cast's presence attached the disparate (or somehow symbolically connected) everyday objects to a vaguely defined, overly atmospheric, ideally glamour-charged impression brought forth by, or for, the promoted movie. Under these circumstances, any sensory connection to the related products could (potentially) initiate, enhance, modify, or sustain the experience of the movie, and vice versa. Even past possession of a related object would also work the same magic. In one focus group discussion, for instance, a participant, Lan, was thrilled to recall a piece of old clothing she owned that happened to appear in *Blue Gate Crossing*.⁵¹

49 Ibid., 4-7.

50 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic*, 163.

51 Lan, focus group discussion, January 31, 2010.

As such, the practice of film production and film promotion, loaded with the task of product presentation and that of sensation/action initiation, is carried out through the film industry's (re)configuration of a network of body-object relations. Within the network, a spectator's body is related to a movie as it is also related to various consumer products and to the main cast's bodies. In many cases, these body-object-film relations are enabled via further mediation, that is, via the operation of different media platforms that are utilised in film marketing, including television, radio, subway posters, the Internet, etc. In this sense, miscellaneous media technologies are incorporated into the (re)configured network as objects that bear on the spectator-film connection.

Generated via cross-industry alliances, product placement, or cross-media marketing, the industry-(re)configured network of body-object relations informs the result of cinematic communication. Where genre films and their sensory effects are considered, in the face of the network the effects in question cannot remain solely attributable to a specific generic language or to the technical crafts the language's adoption entails. Rather, the effects are filtered through multiple bodies and things. Actively bringing numerous body-object relations into being, the film industry further invests in the sensory impact of genre films. Since in this case the sensory impact might end in the spectator's acting 'to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume',⁵² the investment could advance the potential for biopolitical control. In this book I discuss this network of body-object relations within two different contexts. In one, I examine the body-object relations' collective impact on the audience's connection to film texts and by extension to the film industry. In the other, I single out the body-Internet relation to explore how the use of the Internet in film marketing has restructured the interaction between the film industry and the audience.

As the network is constantly in formation, the impact of the (re)configured body-object relations may often appear fluid and present. Nonetheless, once incarnated, it could stretch over time to bring about recurrent urges or evoke old memories. The latter is illustrated by Lan's recollection of an old item of clothing after watching *Blue Gate Crossing*. The former, meanwhile, can be evidenced by the fact that a number of my focus group participants have habitually utilised the Internet to search for information regarding previously viewed movies. The global and the local, as embodied in the diverse commodities incorporated, have also, in the network of bodies and things, become interwoven or proximately juxtaposed.

52 Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man*, 5.

'Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies', claimed Adorno and Horkheimer. The authors argue that although illusive in essence, mass-manufactured sound films have unjustly homogenised individual thoughts and behaviours, '[leaving] no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience'. As a result, they say, mass-manufactured films have forced spectators to equate them 'directly with reality'.⁵³ On the basis of the sensations or actions generated by films and film-related body-object connections, there exists a distinct integration of life and movies, one that blends movies with reality when the sensory experiences of the two affect each other. This includes when, for instance, the experience of a mundane object (either a commodity or a communicative technology) influences the experience of a movie, and vice versa.

Probing the mechanism behind recent film production and promotion, Janet Harbord observes that nowadays films – high concept or otherwise – tend to be sold 'as the primary product in a range of related commodities'. The film products consequentially function as 'the cohering factor in a range of lifestyle products' – so much so, she suggests, that film genres can neither be defined in terms of textual properties nor by the composition of their target audiences. Rather, in the current environment of film production and consumption, they can be understood in relation to the clustering of lifestyle formations.⁵⁴ This is not merely a genericity tactically (re)organised in the face of prevailing genre innovations or cross-genre intertextuality, even though on account of cross-media referencing Wyatt has underlined this form of intertextuality as a distinctive feature of lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication. But it is also a genericity brought forth through the integrated practices of film production and promotion. Defined thus, a film genre represents a grand nexus of mundane objects/technologies that bear on, or is borne upon by, bodily senses. Accordingly, generic film communication involves sensory activities that take place within the nexus, in connection with pertinent objects or technologies.

It is generic communication as such that this book investigates in order to examine the relationship between the post-2000 Taiwan film industry and its audience. As a result of the investigation, Chapter 4 extends Harbord's conception of film genres and argues that, in respect to filmmaking, a

53 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic*, 126.

54 Harbord, *Film*, 77-83. A recent example of this, I think, could definitely be found in the groundbreaking success of *The Matrix* franchise. See Matthew Kapell and William G. Doty, ed., *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise* (New York: Continuum, 2004), and Stacy Gillis, ed., *The Matrix Trilogy* (London: Wallflower, 2005).

film genre functions like a canal system for cinema-initiated sensations to flow and alter among various bodies and things. Given this premise, the audience's relation to the industry has also been restructured with regard to generic film communication.

A Volatile Non-oppositional Relation

What industry-audience relationship has thus far emerged from the industry-(re)configured network of bodies and things? What characterises the relationship, apart from the relevance of biopolitics?

Writing on social control, Marcuse pointed out the 'particular social interests' that have unfairly superimposed 'false' needs on individuals. Biopolitics considered, Clough specifies that the social interests in question stand for the converging of state politics and the market economy.⁵⁵ The latter includes powerful sectors of the culture industry, among which is the film industry that (re)configures body-object connections. In this context, the key question I would like to raise is whether the practices of film production and film promotion always serve the profit-concerned film industry in its biopolitical control over mass society.

In the aftermath of cultural studies and post-structuralism, few critics deem monolithic hegemony to be a useful concept in the understanding of power relations. Instead, the notions of negotiation, contestation, struggle, and dynamism command more attention within studies of political/economic dominance. With respect to lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication, examples of such dynamism are available where the film industry (re)configures bodies and things to effect behaviours of consumption but the audience (re)acts unpredictably, thereby hampering the industry's efforts.

Take, for instance, the Internet campaign for Cheng Hsiao-tse's debut film *Miao Miao*. The marketing plan brought together a wide variety of free gifts, including shoulder bags, soft toys, cosmetics, etc. The free gifts were offered to readers of the film's official blog on condition that the blog readers participated in communicative activities on that same blog. These included sharing sentimental real-life stories and purchasing the film's related commodities. Used to strengthen the readers' connection to the promoted movie and to attract the attention of more Internet users, participation from blog readers was thus encouraged by the sensual appeal of particular consumer products. In response to campaigns like this, several

55 See Clough, 'Introduction'.

of my focus group participants admitted to having recounted personal stories on film promotion websites. Driven by the offer of free gifts, their communicative actions nevertheless led them to associate the free gifts with objects and people unrelated to the promoted films – with possessions and friends from the past, for instance. Some of these associations evoked such strong sensory memories that they effectively undercut the advertised movies' memorability.⁵⁶

In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins has analysed similar cases in which industrial contrivances backfire 'as consumers seek to act upon the invitation to participate' in the life of media products or franchises.⁵⁷ Jenkins' analysis emphasises the function of 'collective *intelligence*' in computational-networked communication. The inadequacy in this analysis, nonetheless, relates to the fact that Jenkins has downplayed factors other than human intellect. The aforementioned free-gift hunters, for instance, did not 'break down' the reciprocal relations they were expected to share with the media or the film industry⁵⁸ because they had collectively forged industry-challenging knowledge. Nor did they frustrate the agenda of media/film marketers in an attempt to counteract the effect of industrial manipulation. Rather, they confront industrial activities on a daily basis by living, acting, shopping, and communicating in a world that is mediated by numerous consumable *things*. These are things that simultaneously affect intellects and bodies. In lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication, object-generated bodily affections are usually desirable. Through free gifts, for instance, the film industry seeks bodily affections for the sake of film promotion. In the case of the aforementioned free-gift

56 Chun-yi, Village, and San, focus group discussion, August 15, 2010. On a similar note, Janet Harbord writes of the precarious relationship a spectator may now have to film production due to the very prevalence of DVD technology. Created for the proliferation of ancillary products, the most basic DVD format, when working in combination with the remote control handset, enables the spectator to slow, quicken, or pause the moving image. With menu options allowing scene selection, it further opens up a film's sequencing to spectatorial manipulation. The viewer's relation to the film and to the industry that produces the film, Harbord argues in accordance with Laura Mulvey, is consequentially 'changed in terms of a dynamic of power'. See Janet Harbord, *The Evolution of Film* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 127–31, and Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second* (London: Reaktion, 2006). In this regard, Wanda Strauven argues, DVD technology is comparable to nineteenth-century 'domestic optical toys', such as thaumatrope. The operation of the latter likewise requires spectators to use their hands and 'allows for some *manipulation* or "interactivity" during the viewing process'. See Wanda Strauven, 'The Observer's Dilemma', in *Media Archaeology*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 148–63, emphasis in original.

57 See Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

58 *Ibid.*, 20.

hunters, ironically, the generated affections also disrupted the marketing schemes.

Body-mediated disruption as such instantiates power negotiation in a biopolitical sense. As stated above, recent theories of biopolitics see the process of social reproduction as being subsumed under capital and associate the subsumption with market-prompted biopolitical control. With respect to lifestyle-oriented cinematic communication, its Negri-inspired reading is a compelling one. That is, in the era of lifestyle-showcasing films, the market economy controls social reproduction to optimise the value of sheer bodily capacities. In this case, resistance to control depends also on the potentiality of the body. This incorporates, according to Negri, the body's capacity to circumvent control and retain volatility.⁵⁹

Bodily volatility manifests itself when the organic body co-operates with inorganic things. My focus group participants, for example, ended up frustrating Internet film-marketing campaigns with the assistance of free gifts and through their sensory memories of past possessions. This book explores object-fostered bodily volatility in its different forms. In Chapter 6, I examine the film industry's relationship with the audience with regard to the volatile body, which thwarts film marketing plans as the body engages the Internet medium for communication. On the other hand, in Chapter 3 I discuss how mundane objects destabilise the sensory impact of (genre) movies, and by extension undermine the film industry's biopolitical control.

The existence of power dynamics notwithstanding, the dichotomy between the audience and the film industry, on the basis of which the possibility of power negotiation subsists, is more elusive than it is imagined to be. This is because the industry, like the audience, is itself caught up in a network of body-object relations. The promotion of *Blue Gate Crossing*, for example, involved connections between selective consumer commodities and the main cast's bodies. The audience's experience of the movie becomes interwoven with these connections. The film experience, in this sense, is a product of industrial manipulation, even though the audience's volatile bodies may bring about an unpredictable response to the manipulation. However, the industry in this case does not manipulate the audience from the 'outside', as an absolute adversary to or the complete opposite of the

59 Negri, 'Value', 88. See also Brian Massumi, 'Requiem for Our Prospective Dead (Toward a Participatory Critique of Capitalist Power)', in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture*, eds. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 40-64.

audience. Rather, the 'manipulation' only takes effect when the industry and the audience become interconnected in the industry-(re)configured network of bodies and things.

In delineating contemporary media cultures, John Thornton Caldwell provides more examples of industry-audience interconnections. One of them concerns how the film/media industry has incorporated consumer activities into professional practices. Like their audiences, film/media industry workers see films, watch DVDs, surf the web, and participate in cross-platform communication. For promotional purposes, they also disseminate information about the industry to engage the audience's curiosity. As a consequence, a gradual *desegregation* of productive and consumptive experiences and practices comes into being.⁶⁰ Theorising the influence of Web 2.0, which increasingly involves the audience in media content provision, George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson alternatively discuss the industry-audience desegregation in terms of 'prosumption' – the mergence of production and consumption.⁶¹

Neither Caldwell nor Ritzer and Jurgenson raise the issue of body-object relations. However, to follow Negri's theory, the integration of production and consumption is precisely the late capitalist context from which biopolitics emerge. In this sense, prosumption invites questions of biopolitical governing without holding the audience in opposition to the media/film industry. In this book, I interrogate this non-oppositional relationship with respect to filmmaking and Internet film marketing. I will argue that both the cinematic apparatus and the Internet medium have facilitated audience participation in film (value) production. Each communicative technology, as a result, allows the film industry to take advantage of the audience's bodily capacities. The industry-audience desegregation, however, does not lead to the thorough domination of film consumers, since the consumer's body remains volatile as it co-operates with various physical entities in film prosumption.

60 See John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

61 See George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson, 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10.1 (2010): 13-36. The term 'prosumption' was originally coined by Alvin Toffler. See Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (London: Pan Books in association with Collins, 1981).

The Way Out of Control

Like many recent publications in film studies that concern biopolitical governing, this book acknowledges the Deleuzian proposition that a body brought into contact with cinema is a body under the influence of the cinematic apparatus – inasmuch as the body and the apparatus eventually merge to form an inseparable organism-machine assemblage. Integrated with Foucault's delineation of the emergence of biopolitics, with which the body became governed via painstaking (re)arrangement of its surroundings, the Deleuzian proposition has broadly been considered paradigmatic within film and media studies when it comes to theorising the biopolitical power in/of media technologies. Pasi Väliäho's *Mapping the Moving Image* provides but one example of how the Foucault-Deleuze paradigm has been cited to maintain the instrumentality of media technologies in the configuration of sovereignty over the body.⁶² Less taken into account in works like Väliäho's, however, is the full promise of the Foucault-Deleuze paradigm. That is, with or without being incorporated into the function of a biopolitical regime, physical entities surrounding a body are capable of affecting and altering the body. This allows the contingency that, either intentionally or randomly, any given entity – including organic bodies and inorganic things – may effect body changes alongside or in the wake of media technologies.

This book notes the contingency in question to present a case study instance of contested biopolitical governance. It demonstrates the way in which fortuitous connections among miscellaneous entities have laid the foundations for the ineluctable contestation between the governed and governance. The ethnographic research helps trace biopolitical power as an immediate *effect* of various bodily experiences that have emerged from regulated or irregular relations between a body and its surroundings – to follow Foucault's reasoning in *Discipline and Punish*. In Bruno Latour's terms, this research would thus represent the requisite process to track down in an intricate assemblage of thing-body interactions the material constitution of otherwise abstract social/political forces.⁶³

The acknowledgement of contestation enables a refined reading of a theory clearly citable in the analysis of sovereignty over the body – especially when at issue is a sovereignty that is deemed a consequence of communication, techno-scientific developments, or the operation of culture industries in the late capitalist society. This is the theory pertaining to

62 Pasi Väliäho, *Mapping the Moving Image* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

63 See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

'the Societies of Control'. The Deleuzian concept warns against the ever more adaptive late capitalist power by drawing attention to how it has simultaneously turned more compelling and penetrating. Inspired by the concept, a considerable number of analyses of late capitalism have yielded to the temptation of picturing the late capitalist control as an overarching monopoly. They allege that since Foucault's insight into the subtle exercise of 'disciplinary power', the capitalist regime has anew cannily stretched the effect of its governance by means of flexibility.⁶⁴ If anything, sovereignty in late capitalist societies is nevertheless an arresting fantasy. In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri underscore the prominence of the 'multitude' as the source of an inevitable social force that permits resistance to the adaptable late capitalist regime. In their context, the multitude consists of a responsive but uncontrollable population whose unruliness stems collectively from indeterminate bodily capacities.⁶⁵ Having empirically demonstrated the compromised sovereignty of late capitalism over the body, this book presents a concrete case of the 'multitude'. In fact, it takes the concept of the multitude beyond the limit of the human body/population, so to eventually dispute the absoluteness of 'control' on the basis of chance assemblages of bodies and things.

The core chapters investigate selective aspects of the dynamic, desegregational and presumptive relationship between the film industry and the audience with respect to the nexus of body-object connections (re) configured around post-2000 Taiwan queer romance films. Arguments are developed on the basis of sensory experiences brought about by generic film communication which, in the context of my discussion, includes communicative activities revolving around film texts and Internet film marketing campaigns. Mediated by objects and technologies, these communicative activities not only permit the industry to exert influence on the audience's bodies, but they also help incorporate film consumption into film production. Both consequences underline the industry's involvement in biopolitically governing the audience's bodies but do not guarantee the full subjection of the audience to the industry.

Preceding analyses of empirical materials, the next chapter reflects upon the ethnographic methodology I have employed in the research so as to acknowledge two more instances of mediation. These are the mediation of language in personal interviews and in focus group discussions, and

64 See, for example, Patricia Ticineto Clough's introductory chapter in *The Affective Turn* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

65 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

the mediation of the researcher in the process of knowledge production. Both cases of mediation underline that ethnographic research outcomes capture the studied phenomena only partially and uncertainly. A process at once affective and intellectual, nevertheless, the practice of ethnography inextricably involves the researcher, the informants, and the everyday objects that bear on the progression of the research. This intertwined involvement renders the outcomes of ethnographic research the fruits of a collective agency, which helps prevent knowledge production from being fully dominated by the academic profession.

As the first instance of empirical analysis, Chapter 3 has at its core the phenomenon that film spectators re-enact film content. Using the reception of *Blue Gate Crossing*, the chapter examines the experiences of a group of audience interviewees and focus group participants and centres the discussion on their bodily citations of cinematographic expression. The accounts offered by the interviewees and participants throw into question theories of identification, discursive performativity, and technological determinism. They feed instead into the central argument of this book that intervention by mundane physical entities limits the power of cinema. Ranging from a computer screen and a human body to digital film stills saved on iPods, these entities affect the spectator's body and diversify the effect of cinematic communication. Due to such diversification, the spectator's bodily citation may not indicate full subjection to the cinematographic expression or to the industry's biopolitical manipulation.

Chapter 4 analyses interviews with post-2000 Taiwan filmmakers to clarify the mechanism of filmmaking as a form of generic communication. It demonstrates how filmmaking is in itself an enterprise of homage, with filmmakers inexorably replicating cinematographic formulae for self-expression. The practice of filmmaking as such is conceptualised as a result of embodied cinematic experience. This means filmmakers are propelled by their previous experiences as spectators to cite existing modes of cinematographic expression, just as any spectator may in daily life re-enact a film scene. Like the spectator's bodily citation of cinematographic expression, the filmmaker's enterprise of homage is susceptible to intervention by physical entities. As a consequence, the enterprise of homage does not necessarily lead to a full replication – and therefore to a loss of cinematic creativity – even if the acts of replication assist in the reproduction of cinematographic language to facilitate the emergence of film genericity. Since the enterprise of homage entails filmmakers consuming film works before becoming involved in filmmaking, film production

as a particular modality of generic communication constitutes an example of film prosumption.

Chapter 5 examines the official blog of *Miao Miao* to reveal the way in which the film industry and its audience have, via Internet marketing, collaborated on film production. Like those in the cinema, communicative activities on a film's official blog engage the audience and the film industry in sensorimotor communication. That is, when actively engaged in computational-networked communication, both parties experience as Internet users information-evoked sensations and turn these sensations into communicative action. As communication on the blog potentially contributes to the effectiveness of *Miao Miao's* marketing – and therefore to increasing the value of the movie – the blog marketing campaign involves both the audience and the industry in film value production. Given that the involvement of both parties is affective, communicative activities on the blog are comparable to filmmaking, which renders blog marketing a genuine instance of film prosumption.

Either taking the form of filmmaking or blog marketing, film prosumption raises a biopolitical issue about the film industry mobilising spectator bodily capacities for possibly lucrative film production. Chapter 6 continues exploring the execution of Internet film marketing to answer the question as to whether participatory communication has further submitted film audiences to the industry's exploitative efforts. With regard to film marketing in post-2000 Taiwan, it is argued that bodies participating in film (value) production within or without the film industry have likewise frustrated the late capitalist power by being unpredictable, indeterminate, and ambiguously conducive to capital reproduction.