

Transnational Affect: Cold Anger, Hot Tears, and *Lust, Caution*

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Abstract

This paper takes the 2007 film *Lust, Caution* by Ang Lee as its primary example to explore the ambivalent productivity of the “trans” in the current discourse on transnational cinema and global culture. The paper is divided into three parts. Part I takes the highly biased and provocative diatribes against *Lust, Caution* on the mainland Chinese internet as an intriguing cultural symptom for analysis, and finds in these angry reactions to the film not only an undisguised hostility toward collaboration framed in a paranoid rhetoric of nationalism, but also a new affective assemblage of “*hanjian*” (national traitor) and “the global man.” Part II shifts the focus to the cultural reception of the film in Taiwan and foregrounds the public shedding tears of Ang Lee and Ma Ying-jeou, the newly elected President of Taiwan, before and after the film’s world premiere: their emotional reactions are seen as being triggered by a new affective assemblage that seems to combine patriotic feeling with diasporic sentiment. A trans-historical linkage of two separate historical eras, those of World War II and the (post-)Cold War, is thus created to make “trans” less a border-crossing than a dynamic force of affective becoming. Part III further explores this affective becoming in light of the film’s major setting, Shanghai, in order to theorize a new concept of “homeland” that could be less a “single” *spatial* center than a “singular” *temporal* multiplicity. Therefore, the 1949 separation of Taiwan and China and subsequent cross-Strait geopolitical divisions can no longer be taken for granted for disparate responses; it is rather the *trans* as a new bloc of sensation variously affecting the audience members of *Lust, Caution*, creates lines of incongruity and incompatibility which form a new blockage of difference and differentiation across the Strait.

Keywords

affect, transnational cinema, Ang Lee, *Lust, Caution*, globalization,
flexible citizenship, diaspora, patriotism

This paper will start from an impossibility of *trans*-lation of a film title from Chinese to English, 《色 | 戒》 to *Lust, Caution*, the most recent film of an espionage romance set in the Japanese-occupied Shanghai in the 40s by Ang Lee, the world-famous director from Taiwan. The impossibility has less to do with the way in which the multiple and ambivalent meanings of the Chinese title (*se* as sex, lust, or appearance; *jie* as ring, caution, or renunciation; *se jie* as a colored diamond ring, sexual abstinence, or a Buddhist warning against secular indulgence) are narrowed down to two plain English words, lust and caution, and more to do with the seemingly meaningless, trivial, yet eerily unusual mark “|” adopted in the Chinese title disappears and is replaced by a comma, a familiar mark of pause, interval and separation in English.

Why is this singular mark of “|” important, a mark that is rarely used in Chinese and completely nonexistent in English? If we go back to the short story of “*Se, Jie*” written by the Chinese female writer Eileen Chang and upon which the screenplay is largely based, the punctuation mark originally adopted by her was a single Chinese period (。) and later on was changed by the editor into a comma.¹ However, the comma in its publication form is further transformed into a visual symbol of “|” in the filmic adaptation of the same Chinese title. The only explanation provided tangentially on this issue is considerably vague: Ang Lee expresses his perfect understanding of Eileen Chang’s decision to use a mark of division that separates *se* from *jie* in its Chinese title in order to create a

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¹ The Chinese version of “*Se, Jie*” written in 1950s was not published until 1979 after a long period of delay and revision lasting almost three decades. Its English version, written by Chang herself under the title of “The Spying,” remained unpublished until 2008 after the filmic success of *Lust, Caution*. Yet there has long been a strong link between Eileen Chang’s “aesthetics of the commonplace” and the formation of the new transnational Chinese cinema or Chinese-language cinema. Films adapted or inspired by Chang’s works include Yim Ho’s *Red Dust (Gungun Hongchen, 1990)*, Stanley Kwan’s *Red Rose, White Rose (Hong Meigui, Bai Meigui, 1994)*, Peter Chang’s *Camrades, Almost a Love Story (Tian Mimi, 1996)*, Ann Hui’s *Eighteen Springs (Bansheng Yuan, 1997)*, Hou Hsiao Hsien’s *Flowers of Shanghai (Haishang Hua, 1998)*, and Wong Kar-wai’s *In the Mood for Love (Huayang Nianhua, 2001)* (Chang 24-25). The decision made by Ang Lee to go back to Chang’s less well-known short story “*Se, Jie*,” written and revised mainly in the Cold War period, testifies not only to this long established literary-filmic linkage and the global coming-back of the spy thriller in the post-911 era, but also to the historical entanglement of (post)colonialism and the cold war and its subsequent power deployment of divisions whose geopolitical structures and sentiments are shared by both Chang and Lee. This trans-historical (post)cold war linkage will be attentively explored in the following argument of this paper.

proliferation of multiple meanings among erotica, appearance, seduction, ring and warning, and also his own decision to keep this division by following the right-to-left order of the traditional Chinese thread-bound book format (Ju 26). It is not clear whether this new punctuation mark reminds the director of the old-fashioned print format or whether the thread-bound book refers only to the outmoded right-to-left way of arranging Chinese characters. But this puzzling mark has aroused some critical attention or at least curiosity: it was read as an inverted exclamation mark, as a phallic symbol, a tiny snake or, as a result of the Buddhist connotation of the title, as a single stalk of incense (Sheng). Instead of adding to this wild conjecture about the authorial intention or, indeed, pursuing the Freudian path of interpretation, this paper will approach the visual mark as a concept to theorize a possible superimposition of two kinds of lines that are seemingly contradictory to each other on the surface: “ | ” as a line of blockage that separates the right from the left, and “ | ” as a line of bloc that conjoins the right with the left. This double mechanism of separation and assemblage makes “ | ” simultaneously and paradoxically a border-division and a border-proximity.

Then the questions become: why is this theoretical concept elaborated from the untranslatable mark of its Chinese title important to our approach to *Lust, Caution* as a trans-national film? What would be the possible connection among lines of block(age), the cultural dynamics of crossing-over and the current global myth of *trans*? In the past critical reception of Ang Lee's films, their highly versatile and adaptive film styles are strongly acknowledged and appraised. Critics tend to credit Ang Lee for his successful crossover between the Chinese and the Western, between tradition and modernity, and between European art-house system and Hollywood box-office popularity. Borders of nations, cultures, ethnicities, generations, genders, genres and even sexualities seem to be adroitly negotiated and successfully transgressed; Ang Lee has been accordingly endowed with the title of “the most successful surfer on the wave of globalization” (Berry and Lu 8). No matter whether the critical highlights are put on “a tourist-friendly spectacle of exotic ‘Chineseness’” (Ma), the strategic use of “flexible encoding”(Shih), or “the multiplicity of interpretive strategies”(Martin), Ang Lee's films are always regarded as the best representative cases on global crossover not only in terms of mobilizing “trans-national” and “trans-cultural” capital in production, distribution, and circulation, but also in terms of enabling differential trans-lations for differently positioned audiences, successfully reaching out to both the so-called “Pan-Chinese” (mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and diasporic Chinese) audiences and global non-Chinese audiences.

However, this line of argument (the success of crossover) and its counter-argument (the failure of crossover) follow basically the same logic of division best exemplified by taking “|” as a line of blockage: this logic first presupposes at least two pre-existing and stable entities, such as the East and the West, tradition and modernity, Chinese and non-Chinese, and then draws a clearly-defined borderline separating the two distinct entities, whether it be a concrete borderline of nation-states or an imaginary borderline of cultures. In the light of this logic of division, “trans” as a constant border-crossing becomes the most powerful and liberating force to destabilize the binary system and to deterritorialize the striated field. While the line of blockage tends to reconfirm and deconstruct the binary at the same time, this line of argument often leaves the presupposition of two separate and distinct entities unchallenged. Therefore, this paper will propose another “line” of argument to avoid this critical pitfall; it will follow, instead of the logic of division, the logic of assemblage in which “trans” will stop being merely a border-crossing but start functioning as an affective assemblage endowed with an intensity to illustrate the complex theoretical linkage of *trans*-historicity and *trans*-nationality in the current discourses on the globalization of culture. It will question, to a radical degree, how “trans” the so-called trans-national films of Ang Lee really are, where “trans” refers less to a capacity to cross over the various borderlines of divisions, but more to a capacity to create new combinations of capital and new intensities of images, to fold and unfold film-events, to be constantly re-mapped as a deterritorializing force onto a reterritorialized geopolitical system and to produce new lines of blockage that might ironically disrupt, instead of facilitate, the global flow of capital, labor and culture.

Therefore, in what follows, *Lust, Caution* will serve as the major example to explore the theoretical possibilities of lines of block(age) elaborated above. Instead of rushing to enlarge it in a *global* framework, *Lust, Caution* in this paper will first be read chiefly as a trans-national Chinese-Language film to underscore how the trans-historical force of assemblage in the (post)Cold-War era might rewrite the film’s trans-national reception respectively in mainland China and Taiwan. In order to further narrow down the scope of this paper, the focus will be on two peculiar *affective* discharges, anger in mainland and tears in Taiwan, to explore how and why certain audiences in mainland China and Taiwan are *affected* differently by *Lust, Caution*. The term affect thus used in this paper is basically configured in two interconnected ways: affect as personal affection and affect as pre-personal, non-subjective force of assemblage as conceptualized in

contemporary poststructuralist theory chiefly by Gilles Deleuze.² In the first usage of the term, affect refers more traditionally to both the psychological state of emotion and the physiological sensation of the body. It could also be a personal or collective feeling triggered by a cultural or social event. In the second usage of the term, affect is more radically described as “nonaffective affect” set in direct opposition to personal emotions suggested in the first usage; it is conceptualized as a dynamic force that passes through but also beyond personal feelings, a force being purely transitive. However, the following reading of *Lust, Caution* will not choose between these two different usages, but intend to elaborate on them *simultaneously* and *congruently*, making them superimpose upon each other to create a new conceptualization of affect in the current discussion of transnational Chinese-language films. It will foreground respectively how the audiences are affected differently and differentially in mainland China and Taiwan by mapping out their different and differential affective discharges; it will explore at the same time how these affective discharges of anger and tears are produced physically and temporally, and how they are compelled by systems of knowledge, history, memory and power. The *double entendre* of affect as emotional discharges and as dynamic forces will thus be constantly and consistently played upon throughout the whole paper.

Not Hot Sex but Cold Anger: the Clash of the *Hanjian* and the Global Man

The most heated controversy on the global release of *Lust, Caution* revolves obviously around its sexually explicit scenes. Hot sex made the film rated as Category III in Hong Kong and NC-17 in the U.S.A. with limited exposure, contingently restricted by different rating systems in different countries. In Taiwan, hot sex of the film turned out to be the media highlight and the most salient box-office appeal besides the Golden Lion Award received at the Venice Film

² Deleuze embarks on the conception of affect in his early readings of David Hume’s theory of human nature in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953) and of Baruch Spinoza’s theory of signs in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970). He elaborates successfully through the relationship of affect and difference in Hume’s writings and engages productively with the paired critical terms of “image-affection” (*affectio*) and “feeling-affect” (*affectus*) in Spinoza’s *Ethics*. This conception of affect is further systematized in *A Thousand Plateaus* co-authored with Félix Guattari and re-phrased in aesthetic terms in Deleuze’s two cinema books and again with Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?* in which the work of art is configured as a bloc of sensation, “a compound of percepts and affects” (164).

Festival. However, hot sex ultimately became the major obstacle for the film's release in mainland China due to the lack of a rating system there. At the request of the censors, Ang Lee agreed to cut sexually explicit scenes by himself to make a mainland China "clean version" of *Lust, Caution* appropriate for all ages. But besides eliminating certain scenes with explicit sex and violence, Ang Lee also edited one single politically-sensitive line in the mainland China "clean version": he changed the line "go, go quickly" uttered by the female spy to the Japanese-allied head secret police at the jewelry store into "let's go" to make the female leading character appear less of a traitor to China.

As a warming borne of confused romantic love and sexual intimacy, this line comes at the unexpected fatal twist of this film in which a supposedly patriotic female spy assists a Japanese collaborator to escape the assassination moment before it is launched. It is thus crucial in the development of both narrative and plot to determine the final survival of the Japanese collaborator on the one hand and the pathetic death of resistance agents including the female spy herself on the other. However, by slightly changing "go, go quickly" into "let's go," Ang Lee somehow naively believes that this "artistic compromise" might help him to break through the Chinese taboos on any positive or humanized portrayal of a Japanese collaborator with a hope to redeem the female spy who seems to damage completely the planned assassination and who thus betrays not only her classmates but probably the whole nation. Though this politically hyper-sensitive editing of one single line has gone unnoticed by most people while the large-scale elimination of sex and violence has drawn most media attention, it is somehow "prophetic" in both disclosing Ang Lee's political anxiety and foreshadowing a certain extremely negative critical reception of the film in mainland China.

Obviously, the cutting of sex and violence has not prevented *Lust, Caution* from becoming a huge commercial success in China; however, the editing of one single politically incorrect line has failed to save Ang Lee from being the target of harsh criticism on the internet by a marginalized group of enraged Maoist intellectuals. Though the film has largely been applauded in the mainstream media and has received box-office success in mainland China, it has been severely attacked and condemned by this group on the basis of its glorifying the *hanjian*, the traitor to the Chinese nation, by endowing him with emotions and psychological depth. As the bitter and abusive article "China Has Already Stood Up; Ang Lee and His Cohorts Are Still Kneeling Down" written by Huang Ji-su suggests, *Lust, Caution* is a *Hanjian* film that panders to the taste of the imperialist master of the West by depicting a sexual liaison between the patriotic female student Wong

Chia-chi (Tang Wei) and Mr. Yee (Tony Leung), the traitorous collaborator of the puppet government during Japanese occupation of Shanghai at World War II.³ Insulted and humiliated by the screen depictions of sexual affairs, they believe that this espionage film ultimately confounds the right and wrong of modern Chinese history, transforms disgracefully the patriotic mission of political assassination into a story of sex and romance, and even worse, denigrates the courageous and virtuous Chinese female spy by reducing her to a prostitute shamelessly offering her body to please the Western(-affiliated) master. Lost completely in anger and indignation, they eventually denounce Eileen Chang as the *hanjian* writer and Ang Lee as the *hanjian* director, both identified as national traitors to China.

Though these highly biased and bitter diatribes against *Lust, Caution* circulate mainly on the internet and among netizens in China with limited influence, their undisguised hostility toward collaboration and their extreme appeal to nationalism do serve as intriguing cultural symptoms for analysis. First of all, it seems that this paranoid rhetoric of nationalism is deeply intertwined with the strong anti-Japanese sentiment in China which is constantly intensified even nowadays by any event that might evoke the traumatic memory of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in China during World War II. This anti-Japanese sentiment is thus vehemently vented through the trope of the body posture of standing up/kneeling down encoded with anti-colonial rhetoric and gender stereotypes: the body posture implies not only a political position of fighting against/surrendering to the oppressive imperialists now and then, but also a vivid gendered contrast of phallic erection/feminine suppleness. Secondly, it inevitably reminds us of the same rhetoric of lampoon two decades ago against fifth-generation directors such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige for selling out the bodies of Chinese women to cater to the Orientalist taste of westerners. However, this time the paranoid rhetoric of nationalism is specifically aimed at a self-identified Taiwanese or, at best, diasporic Chinese director Ang Lee. A new triangulation is configured around Taiwan, Japan and U.S.A. (the West) to serve as their target: Japan kneels down to hold the legs of the West; Taiwan kneels down to hold the legs of Japan; Ang Lee kneels down to hold the legs of film festivals such as Cannes, Venice and Oscars, so their logic goes.

³ The article and other related essays on this issue could be found in the author's blog: <<http://blog.voc.com.cn/sp1/huangjisu/093426390318.shtml>> (assessed 15 July 2008). The development of Chinese populist nationalism has been deeply intertwined with the so-called "Internet Red Guards" against "foreign devils" since 1990s. In recent years, the internet in China has been functioning as a collective outlet for anti-Japanese sentiments especially in connection with the Japanese history textbook controversy and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine.

The Chinese-Japanese confrontation of World War II as depicted in the historical setting of the film is thus inevitably restructured as the China vs. Japan-Taiwan-U.S.A. tension in the current (post-)Cold War era.⁴

As a result, the highly emotionally charged reaction of anger at the film can be seen to be framed by both the structure of the Cold War and its geopolitical deployment in the so-called post-Cold War era. This fiery anger is “cold” in the sense that it is fueled by the Cold War mentality in mainland China, which used to align justice strictly on the side of the socialist countries and evilness on the side of the capitalist and (neo)imperialist countries such as the U.S.A. and its alleged cohorts, Japan and Taiwan. However, it is extremely interesting to find in these harsh criticisms “full of sound and fury” a new *affective assemblage* created by colliding the “*hanjian*” with “the global man.” In other words, instead of a geospatial crossover of borderlines, the cultural reception of the film in mainland China foregrounds a *trans*-historical crush-together of the collaborator in the Sino-Japanese War (World War II) on the one hand and the global man of the post-Cold War era on the other. It demonstrates how the past ambivalence of loyalty or betrayal (忠奸不分) in the case of the World War II collaborator becomes the current ambivalence of in-betweenness (中間不分) advocated by the tenet of the global flexibility ranging from cosmopolitan citizenship, global capital to trans-national cinema.

Therefore, in light of this newly assembled critical sentiment of “cold anger,” we can better understand why Ang Lee’s dream of *ancient* China in *Hidden Dragon, Crouching Tiger* can be romanticized as a global hit with both critical and commercial success, while his dream of *modern* China in *Lust, Caution* could turn out to be such a “nationalist” nightmare. It is not merely Mr. Yee who is suspicious in collaborating with the Japanese; it is now Ang Lee himself who is denigrated as “the *hanjian* director” and to be distrusted for his collaboration with the (neo)imperialist regime both in terms of geopolitical power deployment (U.S.A.-Japan-Taiwan) and the global film industry (trans-national flexible accumulation of capital and labor). Ang Lee as a trans-national director endowed with “flexible” citizenship and “dubious” nationalities thus seems to be pinned down as the contemporary Mr. Yee to be accused of possible treason. As David Harvey points out in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, “flexible citizenship” stands

⁴ The decision to prefix post in parenthesis in (post-)Cold War throughout the paper is intended to emphasize the fact that the Cold War structure in the East Asian region still functions effectively at a political and emotional level even at a time when the Cold War confrontation between the socialist and capitalist countries seems to have been irretrievably terminated.

out as the dominant mode of subject-formation in parallel to “flexible accumulation” as the controlling mode of production in late capitalism. It forms an elite group of global citizens that could escape restrictive government politics and repressive social structure of any given nation-state. Aihwa Ong continues to demonstrate in her outstanding studies of ethnic Chinese businessman in the Greater China region and Southeast Asia how “flexible citizenship” can adjust most adroitly to changing political-economic conditions by enacting a mobile postnational crossover between regions, countries and industries. And it is Ang Lee who has long been taken as the best spokesperson in the field of trans-national cinematic “collaboration” for his superb strategic use of his “flexible citizenship” and “flexible articulation of culture” to create “a flexible subject position with seemingly flexible gender and race politics” (Shih 47). “One may ask: Are Ang Lee and his films Taiwanese? Chinese? American? Taiwanese American? Chinese American? . . . The lack of a clear answer to such questions indicates the very nature of transnational Chinese cinema” (Lu, “Historical Introduction” 18). However, this time the “privileged” flexible citizenship of Ang Lee unfortunately backfired when a group of Chinese nationalist critics on the internet attempted to make him a contemporary Mr. Yee, suspicious of both his collaborationist project and his ambiguous national identity. Thus Ang Lee, “the glory of Taiwan,” was severely attacked and verbally abused as “the shame of China” and at the same time Eileen Chang, the legendary cultural icon in Taiwan and Hong Kong and the representative of the old Shanghai nostalgia in post-socialist China since 1980s, was similarly dismissed by means of the derogatory term of “cultural *hanjian*.” In their eyes, both Chang’s decadent petite bourgeois living style thriving in the corrupted Japanese-occupied region and her marriage to Lancheng Hu, the real-life collaborator with Japanese regime in history, were taken as proof of her unpardonable betrayal. Worst of all, the leading actress Tang Wei in *Lust, Caution*, who played the female spy making love with the *hanjian* on screen, was banned by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television of mainland China, the most devastating real-life punishment actualized ultimately by the pressure issuing from these critical reactions in the mode of “cold anger.”

Hot Tears of the Cold War: the Collision of the Patriotic and the Diasporic

While *Lust, Caution* is severely attacked in mainland China by a marginalized group of critics enraged by its affirmative representation of a national traitor as the

male lead, Ang Lee's new film is wholeheartedly embraced by the mainstream media in Taiwan, highlighted by both the national glory of numerous international film festival awards that Ang Lee has constantly brought back home, and also by the market attraction of erotic scenes which have been unanimously praised for their earnest and courageous explorations of sexuality. The whole country of Taiwan seemed to be agitated to receive the film's world premiere while the reporters inundated the media with endless items of gossip ranging from the provocative sexual positions depicted in the film to the various historical anecdotes of assassination. Two interesting events stood out at this national moment of excitement: two men of great prestige cried in public at different times and locations due to the release of *Lust, Caution*. Before the premiere, the director Ang Lee was the first to cry at a public gathering for the upcoming moon festival due to the enormous pressure that he had never encountered before. As explained by Lee himself, he was helplessly trapped at this time of family reunion and homecoming in a qualm that this film might not be deemed acceptable by the people in Taiwan that he trusted and appreciated most, though he failed to clarify which part of the film (the war spy theme, the sex, or the betrayal) made him most uncertain and worried. Then after the premiere it was the turn of presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou (now the President of Taiwan) to cry in public: with tears brimming in his eyes, Ma told reporters that the film had reminded him of the past era of his parents' generation and also of the patriotic inspiration that his own generation longed for.

While Lee's tears were sympathetically understood by the media and assuaged subsequently by the film's critical and commercial success in Taiwan, Ma's tears were lightly teased by opposing politicians for his inability to read the film's subtle anti-patriotic undertone. Since these two middle-aged men with highest profiles in Taiwan are always regarded as gentle, conscientious and sometimes embarrassingly sentimental, their emotional if not effeminate response of shedding tears in public is not that unpredictable nor unacceptable. But the affective discharge of tears out of a displaced or replaced "patriotic" feeling triggered by a supposedly "anti-patriotic" film is itself intriguingly complex. At first sight, it seems to be worth exploring how strong and complicated the patriotic "affect" is built up as the most dominant "structure of feeling" in light of Lee's and Ma's Chinese cultural upbringings in Taiwan, and also in light of the sociopolitical separation of Taiwan from mainland China after the civil war since 1949. The "affect" could be so emotionally strong that Ma Ying-jeou, deeply touched by the patriotic actions of the students who were perfectly willing to sacrifice not only their virginities but also their lives to save the nation, was made totally blind to the film's ironic comment on patriotism in its

depiction of the whole assassination plan as originally a whimsical extension of a stage performance by a student theatre troupe. It could also be so emotionally complicated that Ang Lee, while following Eileen Chang's sarcastic treatment of patriotism in the short story on the one hand but fabricating on the other a new binary tension between national sublime and carnal sex by implying the former (public and collective) as unbearable but inescapable historical burdens and the latter (private and individual) as the only corporeal salvation, could not help but re-tint the representation of those patriotic young students, especially the female spy, with a sympathetic and even romantic touch. How could it be possible to have patriotism and nationalism radically questioned and deconstructed, and at the same time still allow them to serve or survive as the most powerful underlying forces of the film?

In order to understand this peculiar affective discharge of tears triggered by *Lust, Caution* in Taiwan, the trope of "the tears of the Cold War" based upon the historical and political contingency of the real world will first be employed here for analysis. Taking the emotionally charged scenes of family reunions across Taiwan and China in the late 1980s and early 1990s in parallel to those across North and South Korea around 2000 as points of departure, Kuan-hsing Chen in "A Borrowed Life in *Banana Paradise*: De-Cold War/Decolonization, or Modernity and Its Tears" traces the formation of the dividing line of the Cold War between capitalist and socialist blocs, led respectively by the US and the USSR, to foreground the fact that, though the Cold War had seemed to be irretrievably terminated, the Cold War structure in the East Asian region still functions politically and emotionally on the empirical and cultural-social levels. He then proceeds to read attentively two Taiwanese films in light of the historically constituted cultural-political effects of the Cold War to map out how the affective discharge of tears serves as the "emotional-material basis" of ethnic conflicts between *waishengren* (外省人 mainlanders) and *benshengren* (本省人 Taiwanese) and also how the double structures of colonialism and the Cold War are inevitably entangled in Taiwan. While Chen's perceptive analysis of "the tears of the Cold War" successfully foregrounds the differential "structures of feeling" "within" Taiwan, the use of the same trope in this paper shifts the focus to the various emotional discharges "between" Taiwan and mainland China. In order to contextualize Lee's and Ma's "sentimental" tears in the politicized and historicized structure of the Cold War, the further step is required of replacing the overdetermined if not static concept of "structure of feeling" initially coined by Marxist theorist Raymond Williams with the more dynamic and creative concept of Deleuzian "affect" as blocs of sensation

and forces of assemblage to further theorize a folding of the trans-historical into the trans-national, of non-linear temporality into spatiality.

First of all, we can find the creative linkage of the World War II and the (post-)Cold War both in the affective discharge of anger in mainland China and tears in Taiwan. As a non-linear and disruptive “jump cut,” this trans-historical linkage of two separate historical eras, while making possible the clash of the *hanjian* and the global man in mainland China, creates a totally different route, assemblage and affective becoming in Taiwan. Lee’s and Ma’s tears are “cold” in the sense that they are affected by the Cold War structure; their “cold” tears are at the same time “hot” in the sense that they point to a new affective assemblage of the patriotic and the diasporic, of a passionate youth lost and reclaimed, displaced and regained. Both Lee and Ma share the same ethnic identity arbitrarily defined as the second-generation *waishengren* since their parents were displaced from the mainland China to Taiwan after the Chinese civil war in 1949. Both Lee and Ma share the same second diasporic removes to the U.S. to pursue higher education with Ma’s eventual return to Taiwan after graduation from Harvard University to launch his political career and Lee’s staying in America after earning an MFA from New York University to pursue his cinematic dream but retaining his Taiwanese citizenship until now. Both Lee and Ma have been constantly confronting the ethnic tension between *waishengren* and *benshengren* in which the former are attacked for their “suspicious” loyalty, even categorized by some local politicians out of malice as the most likely betrayers of Taiwan to China on the basis of their familial linkages to the mainland. Yet when the American-born Chinese actor Wang Lee-hom playing the student leader Kuang Yu Min expressed during the shooting of the film his difficulty in imagining the patriotic devotion of the anti-Japanese students, one contemporary male figure that the director Ang Lee would certainly be able to single out for him as a figure to “imitate” in his portrayal of the ideal patriotic student was exactly and inevitably Ma Ying-jeou.

Therefore, it is not the issue of loyalty or betrayal but the issue of patriotism that seems to play a major part in triggering tears in Taiwan. In order to understand in a more historically subtle and emotionally probing way “the patriotic feeling” both deconstructed and reaffirmed in the film, the seemingly outmoded term “overseas Chinese” (海外華人 *haiwai huaren*) has to be adopted along with the currently dominant usage of “diasporic Chinese.” “Overseas Chinese” is a term chiefly used during the 60s and 70s in Taiwan to name people of Chinese ancestry living outside mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Leung 117), a categorical con-fusion that would include all Taiwanese, Chinese students/immigrants and

Chinese Americans in the Taiwan-U.S.A. context of our discussion here. As Sheng-mei Ma has ably demonstrated, Ang Lee's earlier award-winning trilogy—*Pushing Hands* (1992), *Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994)—stand out prominently in the most recent phase of the evolution of Liu-shueh-shen-wen-shueh (Overseas Student Literature) since the 1960s. Instead of indulging in dejection and homesickness, which are the affections permeating the works of the older generation of overseas Chinese writers including the famous novelist Pai Hsien-yung, Ang Lee's films open up “the possibility of transgression of established parameters concerning nationality, race, gender and age differences,” but portray “an increasing propensity toward exotic travel in search of the Other rather than nostalgic lamentation over the loss of the self” (Ma 193, 195).

Unsurprisingly perhaps, this specific melancholia or nostalgia of “overseas Chinese” entwined with a historical complexity has not been given the attention it deserves in some otherwise very incisive readings of Ang Lee's films from a “diasporic” perspective. For example, in Christina Klein's comprehensive reading of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a work of diasporic cinema in terms of its material production and aesthetic form, “Chinese diaspora” is generalized in her article as “a transnational ethnoscape created when a people disperses, willingly or unwillingly, from an original homeland and resettles in other locations” and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as “a fundamentally diasporic notion of homecoming” (Klein 21, 22). Similarly, in James Schamus's response to Klein and another critic's readings, Ang Lee's national and cultural identity is generalized as “I am a (Chinese) Other” as one of his section titles suggests. As the co-founder of Good Machine and a long-term partner of Ang Lee's cinematic career, Schamus is keen to point out Lee's Chinese cultural binding and his anxious, repeated returning to the *Heimat*, but he seems to jump too quickly to the conclusion that *all* culture is uncanny by applying Julia Kristeva's notion of “intrinsic foreignness” elaborated in *Strangers to Ourselves*: “culture is by the very nature of its job always *unheimliche*, not at home, uncanny” (44-45). In light of this persistent deconstructivist gesture, the “otherness” of culture as Schamus presents it is inescapable even for works produced within the presumed national boundaries of the homeland, let alone the overseas or diasporic ones.

Both Klein's and Schamus's “diasporic” readings tend to simplify the historical complexity of Lee's cultural “homecoming,” not because their readings fail to map out successfully the various material, symbolic and psychological ties to the homeland, but because their readings are in actual fact not *uncanny* enough: not only do they need to show the homecoming itself as not-at-home, but they also need

to grasp homes as radically plural, centers as contingently multiple, roots as crisscrossed routes, and arborescence as irretrievable rhizome. The specific *huaguo piaoling* sentiment (花果飄零 the scattering of Chinese people like fallen petals and fruits to various part of the world, a lyrical expression made famous by the neo-Confucian scholar Tang Junyi) of the “overseas Chinese” has to be subtly incorporated into our discussion of “diasporic Chinese” to make it more historically sensitive and emotionally resonant. More importantly, it would further help to theorize a new concept of “homeland” that could be less a *spatial* “single” center that is affirmed as geopolitically real or imaginatively true than a *temporal* “singular” point of multiplicity that is contingently enfolded and unfolded.

Nostalgic Homecoming or Affective Becoming: Shanghai as Routes

But how can a “homeland” be an assemblage of de-centered and de-centering multiplicities, not *single* but *singular*, more an *affect* than a *place*? On the first and most obvious level, the split of the political China and the imaginary China, as many critics have already pointed out, exists in most of Ang Lee’s Chinese-language films. Consciously escaping from any possible identification with the political regime of the People’s Republic of China, these Chinese-language films are read chiefly as a fantasy quest for the “Cultural China,” whether it is a China associated with Confucian ethics, Tai-chi Chuan or the Wuxian world.⁵ Yet this split identity of the political/the cultural is too clear-cut to capture the complex routes of affective homecoming as affective becoming as mapped out in *Lust, Caution*; routes that might destabilize any pre-supposed frameworks of geographical and temporal divisions. It is precisely here the term “overseas Chinese” with its specific *huaguo piaoling* sentiment can best help us to approach the affective assemblage of Ang Lee’s homecoming-as-becoming. In this context, it is more important to explore how the homeland is imaginatively assembled than to trace how the real or imaginary homeland is irrevocably displaced. *Lust, Caution* provides exactly such a creative assemblage: Shanghai in the 40s is not the nostalgic *roots* to pay homage to, but the affective *routes* with which to link the

⁵ The term “cultural China” is first employed by Tu Wei-ming to map the contours of a symbolic universe that “both encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and religious boundaries that normally define Chineseness” (v). For people in Taiwan, the term helps enormously not only to dissociate themselves from the geopolitical China but also to turn the peripheral Taiwan into a new cultural center of Chinese heritage.

family, the political party and the nation and through which the filial son might regain the cultural legitimacy lost and reclaimed not in a *place* (Shanghai, Taipei or New York) but in a kind of *affect*. It is through this “anachronic” affect, formed by the trans-historical crush-together of the patriotic feeling of World War II and the diasporic sentiment of the (post-)Cold War, the father’s city of Shanghai, the father’s political party (the Nationalist Party, KMT) and the father’s nation (Republic of China) are re-united and redeemed by colliding once again *jia guo* (家國 family-nation) and *dang guo* (黨國 party-nation) together. It is the affective homecoming-as-becoming that *creates* Shanghai of the 40s before the split of the civil war, before the separation of Taiwan and mainland China, as the ultimate prelapsarian “One China” that is at once territorially and authoritatively fractured by the war and united nominally and affectionately under one single nation state.

But why are these routes of homecoming-as-becoming so strongly affected by the patriotic feeling? For Lee, Ma and their generation, the “love” for one’s country has become devastatingly confounded, if not forbidden, in Taiwan due to the political and social split of pro-unification and pro-independence, the confrontation of anti-Japan and pro-Japan sentiment and the endless debates over the legitimacy of national identity. It becomes even more problematic and frustrated in the overseas contexts especially in light of the Diaoyutai movement both Ma and Lee were involved to a various degree.⁶ For the second-generation of *waishengren*, especially the filial sons like Lee and Ma, they seem ultimately to have found a perfect “country” to love, not the R.O.C. nor the P.R.C., but the China in World War II *on the screen*, a geo-historical time and place of their fathers’ generation led by the not yet corrupted KMT fighting courageously against the Japanese military imperialism. Those “patriotic” youth of *Lust, Caution* depicted on the screen and those “diasporic” middle-aged men sitting in front of the screen seem to enact, connect and become, despite the implied critical distance of satire, an affective assemblage that creates a trans-historical moment of the most “uncanny” homecoming as both central and peripheral, authentic and hybridized, paternal and

⁶ On April 9, 1971, the U.S. announced its decision to return Okinawa and the “South-western islands” which included the Diaoyutai (Senkaku in Japanese) to Japan in 1972. Both university students in Taiwan and overseas Taiwanese students in the U.S. launched the Diaoyutai Movement to fight for the sovereignty of the Diaoyutai Archipelago, a movement that later called for a unification of all Overseas Chinese fighting together against Japan and culminating in a political confusion over “national” identity especially when some Taiwanese activists in the movement decided to return to mainland China. Over the past three decades, the “national” sovereignty of the Diaoyutai has not yet been settled, a state of affairs that has led to a high frequency of serious political disputes between Taiwan, China and Japan.

filial. Only in the light of this “uncanny” homecoming-as-becoming can we return, the more perceptively, to the most quoted diasporic (dis)identification given by Ang Lee: “To me, I’m a mixture of many things and a confusion of many things. . . . I’m not a native Taiwanese, as we’re alien in Taiwan today, with the native Taiwanese pushing for independence. But when we go back to China, we’re Taiwanese. Then, I live in the States; I’m a sort of foreigner everywhere. It’s hard to find a real identity” (qtd. in Berry 54). It is exactly this affective assemblage of the patriotic and the diasporic created by *Lust, Caution* that gives Ang Lee not a real *identity* but a real *feeling* to reclaim the homeland and to love the country undauntedly.

By teasing out the possible collapse of the *hanjian* and the global man in mainland China’s reaction and the possible collision of the patriotic and the diasporic in Taiwan’s reception, the above reading attempts to map out the force of becoming that “holds together” *trans*-historically the World War II era and the (post-)Cold War era, making them “co-exist” productively in an affective assemblage. It is not merely the different *affections* such as anger and tears that draw our attention; it is *affect* as the dynamic of desire, as the crosscutting force of assemblage that poses the final question: how can the “*trans*-historical” reading challenge the “historical” reading of the film and how can the “*trans*-historical” re-write the “*trans*-national”? Instead of returning to the historical background of 1940s by reading the story somehow as a *roman à clef* of the real historical figures such as the *hanjian* Ding Mocom and KMT female spy Zheng Pingru as many critics have done, the *trans*-historical reading of *Lust, Caution* attempted and developed in this paper aims at foregrounding how historical contingency and irreducibility could fold together two incongruent and incompatible historical eras “anachronically.” In other words, the affective line of bloc does not merely link the (post-)Cold War to The Second World War; it conjugates them, mixes them, passes between them, and even carries them away in a shared border-proximity or zone of indiscernibility. The Second World War and the (post-)Cold War are no longer locked in a cause-effect, before-after relationship of necessity, succession or sequence. They are deterritorialized to release a bloc of sensation that makes *trans*-historical as *history in becoming*. As Deleuze and Guattari succinctly point out, “‘becoming’ does not belong to history. History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new” (*What Is Philosophy?* 96) and “affects are becoming” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 256). In *Lust, Caution*, the modern Chinese “history” of the 40s can thus be taken as the set conditions for experimentation, for unforeseeable creation of concepts, and ultimately for unpredictable affective forces of becoming.

Similarly, when the trans-historical affect as dynamic force helps to break the linear thinking of history that tends to follow the chronological sequence of before and after, cause and effect, it can also help to deterritorialize Shanghai in the 40s, the major setting of the film besides Hong Kong. What *Lust, Caution* provides is no longer a representation of Shanghai that once existed, a *single* urban point of reference that is both geographically elsewhere and temporally in the past, but a *singular* becoming-Shanghai that breaks away from Shanghai as the historically and geographically discernible locale to become increasingly more an atmosphere, a milieu and even an unhistorical vapor. The affective line of bloc as initially suggested by the “ | ” in the Chinese title of *Lust, Caution* can thus successfully oppose the *line-system* (or bloc-system) of becoming to the *point-system* of representation, origin, coordinates and memory that has long been dominating the traditional “historical” approach. Instead of excluding before from after, there from here, now from then, it superimposes them to make them collide, connect and become.

In light of this dynamic *trans*-historical force of affect, we can finally come to read *Lust, Caution* as a *trans*-national Chinese-language film by asking to what extent the *trans* in trans-national, similar to the *trans* in trans-historical, could be less of a border-crossing as exemplified in most critical readings of Ang Lee’s films and more of an affective assemblage that would not only deterritorialize any presupposed divisions of nation-states and cultures but also powerfully and intensively enact, connect and become. In the current filmic discourse on globalization and transnationality, “trans-national” cinema as an emergent mode of filmmaking is chiefly defined as “the trespassing of national borders in the process of investment, production, circulation, and consumption” (Lu, “Crouching Tiger” 222). Framed by the “new international division of cultural labor,” this dominant definition pre-supposes nation-states as discrete geopolitical and geospatial entities, and takes *trans* again as chiefly the mobile power of border-crossing among these entities inclusively in terms of capital, labor and culture. As for the definition of Chinese transnational cinema, it follows basically the general presumption of the trans-national cinema but specified as “the globalization of the production, marketing, and consumption of Chinese film in the age of transnational capitalism” given the historical split of China into more than one geopolitical entity (Lu, “Historical Introduction” 3). However, in light of our *trans*-historical reading of *Lust, Caution* mapped above, the geopolitical notion of the trans-nation itself in the current definition becomes inadequate and has to be further trans-“historicized” in order to release the affective force of becoming.

Accordingly, the *trans*-historical folded onto the *trans*-national as our reading has demonstrated is not merely to underscore the tension between the national and the trans-national but to highlight “nation” as more geo-historical than geo-political. It is the *trans*-historical force of the Second World War crisscrossing the (post)Cold War that makes *Lust, Caution* a *trans*-national film. It helps to open up the nation from the imagination of spatial enclosure to the historical contingency of change and transformation, not in the sense of border-crossing from Taiwan to mainland China or vice versa, but in the sense of affective assemblage that creates new lines of bloc and blockage, the different and differential cultural receptions of anger in mainland China and tears in Taiwan. Therefore, the historical separation since the year of 1949 and the geopolitical divisions across the Taiwan Strait can no longer be taken for granted as major causes that lead ultimately and inevitably to responses in disparity; instead, it is the *trans* as affective assemblages, much more radical and productive than *trans* as border-crossings, variously carried out as new blocs of sensation among the audiences of *Lust, Caution* that creates lines of incongruity and incompatibility as new blockages of difference and differentiation across the Strait. It is exactly the *double entendre* of affect that makes the double mechanism of separation and assemblage possible, superimposing and colliding in the single and singular “|” the line of bloc and the line of blockage together. No longer entrapped within the same logic of division nor limited as a back-and-forth border-crossing, *trans* as exemplified by and reconceptualized via *Lust, Caution* can thus ultimately enact, connect and become, unleashing its highest intensity as an affective assemblage to reconfigure the linkage of *trans*-historicity and *trans*-nationality in the current globalization of capital, labor, and culture.

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