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EXPLORATIONS OF SELF AND OTHERS
WITH FEMINIST FILM THEORY

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Hsueh-jen Hsiung

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M.A. degree in Telecommunication

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STRANGERS TO OURSELVES:
EXPLORATIONS OF SELF AND OTHERS WITH FEMINIST FILM THEORY

By

Hsueh-jen Hsiung

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Telecommunication

1996

ABSTRACT

STRANGERS TO OURSELVES: EXPLORATIONS OF SELF AND OTHERS WITH FEMINIST FILM THEORY

By

Hsueh-jen Hsiung

The development of feminist film movement and the characteristics of feminist films are briefly reviewed in this project. Then, the formal strategies suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers are used to create a thirty-three-minute-long video in which a female viewpoint of the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the United States is presented. In addition, this project is intended to examine the legitimacy of a male creator in a feminist film while women's cinema is often defined as a cinema "by and for women." However, after a focus group discussion of the video text, the results suggest that this is not considered as a feminist film and the presence of the creator's maleness in the video is recognized by the viewers.

To my beloved family...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Gretchen Barbatsis for her total support to my creative freedom in developing this project. In addition, I owe her a grateful thank for her help in writing this thesis and her patience with my terrible English.

Secondly, I would like to thank my teacher Robert Albers for helping me to access the equipment in the video studio.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my actresses Wan-yin, Yi-wen, Shu-lan and Wen-yin for joining this project and helping me with patience. They did a great job. I also owe a grateful thank to Pei-fen for allowing me to interview her and sharing her valuable opinions with me.

Fourthly, I would like to thank my production crew I-lien, Tricia, Jeremy and Yi-wen for their help.

Finally, I owe a grateful thank to all other Taiwanese students who have contributed their efforts to this project. Thank you all!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

To those who have been to and lived in a foreign country for a period of time, the very first experience of encountering a totally different culture and people must always be thrilling and unforgettable. Besides all the excitements, novelty, and glamour, those foreigners must experience something stirring under the skin for they are caught between two different languages, two different cultures, and two different worlds for the first time in their lives. To some foreigners, the psychic effect and actual behavioral influence of such an experience might be so subtle that they would not notice its existence at all. However, to others, such an experience might have so much impact on them that they can not cope with it accordingly and it could leave more influences on their later lives than they would have expected.

Having been in the United States for almost three years as a foreign student myself, I have experienced a significant change in me and my view of the world. I have also noticed that a lot of my fellow countrymen have gone through similar changes. Although each case is unique, I still think there is something related among their experiences and mine. So when I was in search of a topic for my thesis, I decided to look into the lives of my fellow countrymen and try to use video as a medium to represent my interpretations of their lives.

When first looking for an explanation of foreigners' symptoms, the term "culture shock" came in my mind. "Culture shock" does explain some aspects of foreigners' experiences, especially when they just arrive in a new country and try to adjust themselves to the new environment. It seems to me, however, that "culture shock" theory focuses more on the pathology of foreigners' symptoms and how foreigners can help themselves to make a smooth transition to the world.

My interest is more focused on the psychology of the foreigners and the implications of such an experience of being away from the home land on their later lives, which Julia Kristeva describes in "Strangers to Ourselves." The author deals with the history status and psychology of the foreigners among us/ within us. In the "Toccata and Fugue for the foreigner," the first section of nine making up her text, she probes a polyphony of foreigners' voices as they flee and chase and touch one another. And she also dwells on the foreigner's position between languages, a negative space marked by not speaking one's mother tongue. Although Kristeva does not address the differences of race, class, and gender, her response to both the internal and external manifestation of "otherness" does account for my own experience and observations as a foreigner in the United States.

Taking Kristeva's text as a point of departure, I have created a video text which probes the foreigner's position-- foreignness, otherness, and a negative space between languages. However, I do not intend to use this project to suggest the universality of a foreigner's position regardless of differences of race, class, and gender. So I decided to choose a relatively small and highly homogeneous group of people, female Taiwanese

students, as my main subjects and focus on their lives in the United Stated as my main concerns. By doing so, I explore differences among their experiences and probe a polyphony of their voices while such a selection of samples may suggest a lot of similarities among them. But how can I proceed from there? How can I represent the aforesaid ideas in this video project? And what kind of techniques should I use?

Feminist film theory informs my approach to the subject. Techniques suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers present the female point of view, and the foreigner's position-- foreignness, otherness, and a negative space between languages-- is the first thing to be portrayed. I briefly review the history of contemporary feminist film movement and the characteristics of feminist film theory. Then, by using the techniques suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers, I create a video text which aims at presenting the female viewpoint of the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the United States. In the end, I will examine the effectiveness of the aforesaid attempt and the legitimacy of a male creator in a proclaimed feminist work. I use a self-evaluation and a group-evaluation by female Taiwanese students.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, first, I will first briefly review the history and context of contemporary feminist film movement and the development of feminist film theory. Then I will characterize recent women's cinema and specify particular techniques deployed by those filmmakers and explain why their film practices are considered as feminist by many feminist film critics.

Actually long before the contemporary feminist film movement , there were several pro-suffrage films produced by some prominent feminists during 1912 and 1914.[1] These films were attempts to educate and persuade the expanding movie-going public of the suffragist's normalcy and of their just demands. And early suffragists made explicitly political, fictionalized films which followed the traditional melodramatic film structure of the period. By the 1920s the structure of the movie industry had changed considerably from the pre-war period. The movie industry quickly became an enormous enterprise in which power was highly centralized and resources were tightly controlled. So it was no longer possible for outsiders to produce and contribute movies as suffragists and others had occasionally done before the war.

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[1] Jan Rosenberg, *Women's Reflections: The Feminist Film Movement.* Ann Arbor MI, UMI Research Press (1979), p.1-24.

It was not until late 1960s that contemporary feminist film movement began to surface and the development of feminist film theory and criticism was initiated. According to Judith Mayne, the development of feminist film theory and practice was shaped by three major phenomena of the late 1960s and early 1970s; the women's movement, an independent film movement, and academic film studies.[2] In the following section, I will briefly describe how each force contributes to the development of feminist film theory and practice.

Development of Feminist films

Women's movement

Since the 1950s, women groups have included the media in their overall criticism of economic, political, and social institutions of American society. To contemporary feminists the images of women and of men in the media, the impact of the images, and the stereotypes on female identity was a central component in the persuasion of sexism.

Since the 1960s, however, feminists have been divided on propositions toward the prescription for the media.[3] One main branch of the women's movement is the women's rights perspective (the "older" branch) which grew out of the mainstream politics of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (established by President Kennedy in 1961) and the State Commissions, formed in the wake of the National Commission. The women's rights branch has focused primarily on the images of women and the status of women workers in mainstream television, advertising, and the movies. But, due to its

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[2] Judith Mayne, "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism," *Signs* 11, no. 1 (1985), p.81-100.
[3] See note 1.

mainstream tendency and orientation, the women's rights perspective directed its media efforts at changes within the dominant institutions. It focused on examining and criticizing television, advertising, and the movies for how they present the images of women and treat the employment problem of women within the media industry. Also, the rights group went on try to reform the sexist practices and ideology which they uncovered.

Another main branch of the women's movement is called the women's liberation perspective (the "younger" branch), whose members received their political socialization and training in the protest movements of the sixties-- the civil rights, new left, and anti-war movement. In style and strategy, the liberationists criticized mass culture but rather than trying to reform it from within they tried to create alternative forms to challenge and replace it. The women's liberationists poured a lot of energy into producing their own, separate alternative media, mainly newspapers, magazines, and films. As far as film production is concerned, they acquired the knowledge and experience from non-Hollywood, "homemade film," both in the underground film movement that took root on the campus in the sixties and through filmmaking skill which were more widely taught on college campuses in the sixties than ever before. Although early feminist filmmakers in the younger branch of women's movement worked independently and initially did not know each other's projects, they were united by shared political understanding of their film projects. And all of the initial filmmakers had been in women's consciousness raising groups, an experience which was central to the development of their films. The

crucial point is that the early filmmakers were moved primarily by social and political, not aesthetic impulses.

Independent film movement

There has been a long tradition of the independent filmmaking in America since the turn of the century. However, since the movie industry became an enormous enterprise in which power was highly centralized and resources were tightly controlled by the twenties, early political activists and others who wished to make movies had to work outside of, and in opposition to, the new establishment. They could not afford the most up-to-date filmmaking equipment and could not exhibit their films in regular movie theaters. Furthermore, as time went on, technological changes accompanying the introduction of sound films led to further consolidation of power and control within a few major Hollywood studios, making individual experimentation and independent filmmaking much more difficult. Also, there was a time when the political climate, the period of McCarthyism, made such independent filmmaking, often time politically opposed to the mainstream ideologies, much harder. Even though facing such difficulties, several groups or organizations such as the Workers' Film and Photo League during the late 1920s and Frontier films during the 30s and 40s managed to survive and make their own political films. Explicitly left-wing and left-leaning groups viewed their films as vehicles for political organizing and consciousness raising and tried to use the progressive documentary form inspired by the legendary practice and promise of the soviet film industry to replace the dominant cinematic conventions of fiction films.

After the setback during McCarthyism in the 1950s, political filmmaking reached its most active peak in America in the 60s. Development of new, lightweight, relatively inexpensive cameras and synchronized tape recorders during World War Two created the preconditions for a critical political film movement. Also, in the early 1960s, *cinéma vérité* emerged as a new film aesthetic in America. By rejecting many traditional documentary techniques, such as artificial sets, scripts, and dramatic structures, filmmakers tried to use "*cinéma vérité*" film techniques to "capture life."

Newsreel, a new left filmmaking and distribution collective, was the single most important group involved in making political films in the late 1960s. Newsreel tried to free the control that giant media power had on people's imaginations and political consciousness. For those early feminist filmmakers who had been in the movement and especially in Newsreel, this experience provided necessary directions as well as aesthetic orientation for early feminist films.

Academic film studies

If the first two phenomena set up a more political agenda for the feminist film movement and theory, then academic film studies stressed a more theoretical agenda--not necessarily apolitical, but certainly not political in the same way.[4] From the outset, the women's movement had made clear that stereotyped images of women represented in patriarchal culture were the target for critique, and should be replaced by "positive" images offered by feminist filmmakers. Then, for those who were involved in feminist film criticism, it was a clear agenda to demystify the mechanism behind the powerful

[4] See note 2.

cinema of Hollywood "dream factory" which was thought by feminist to reinforce the patriarchal ideologies. Furthermore, they tried to envision a new way of representing "positive" images of women in women's cinema by which they could help to bring about changes in society.

Since interest in academic film studies revived at the same time that literary semioticians were testing the linguistic paradigm against other non-linguistic forms, such as film, "interdisciplinary" studies were simultaneously becoming more important within the university. And the British journal *Screen*, one of the journals concerning feminist film criticism, was the most important testing ground for the methodologies that had shaped contemporary film theory: semiotics, Marxism, and psychoanalysis.

At first, feminist film critics started with the textual analysis on Hollywood classical cinema to demonstrate that "women as women" were not represented in the cinema, they did not have a voice, and the female point of view was not heard. Also, more early feminist works tried to demonstrate how the stereotyped images of women were used as a fetishistic object for men's desire, and as a sign in a male-dominated cinema to sustain the patriarchal ideologies. Such efforts to attack the Hollywood "dream factory" corresponded with the early feminist films in which realist film techniques were used to represent "positive" images of women. Later, feminist film critics turned their attention to the formal mechanism and meaning production of "realism" which was primarily used in classical Hollywood cinema because they believed that sexist images of women can not be understood or changed for progressive ones without considering how the operations of narrative, genre, lighting, mise en scenè, etc. work to construct such

images and their meanings. Realist film strategies, regarded as a signifying system by film critics, were also criticized; critics argued that[5]

- cinematic realism perpetuates illusionism by showing what is on the screen is a decoded reflection of the "real world." Through the innocent camera, cinematic realism seems to capture "real life," but, in fact, it just creates a credible and coherent cinematic world in which the signified and the signifier can hardly be separated.
- Cinematic realism produces suturing which smoothes over possible contradictions, incoherences, and eruptions that might reflect a reality far less ordered, coherent, or continuous.
- By using realist strategies of camera, sound, editing, mise en scenè, cinematic realism conceals the production of meaning production in which the spectator is engaged. It means the spectator is seldom actually aware in watching a film that she or he is making meanings.
- The spectator-text relations characteristic of realist representations position their reading subjects as unitary and non-contradictory, and thus as passive and incapable of intervention in the signification process.

In the early stage, contemporary feminist filmmakers employed realist strategies and *cinéma vérité* for ready use and political emergency to produce feminist films which were aimed at promoting consciousness-raising and "positive" images of women, but,

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[5] E. Ann Kaplan, "Theories and Strategies of the Feminist Documentary," *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 12 (Fall/Winter 1982-83). Also see Christine Gledhill, "Recent Development in Feminist Criticism," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1978). and Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1982), p.151-71. and Julia Lesage, "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1978).

later, many feminist film critics argued that there existed several limitations and problems for feminist filmmakers' recourse to "cinematic realism."

First, they argued that *cinéma vérité*, or the "cinema of non-intervention" does not break the illusion of realism. By means of innocent camera, *vérité* filmmakers tried to capture "truth" and "reality" on celluloid, but they failed to realize that a filmmaker is not dealing with reality, but with the pro-filmic event which is coded first in the infrastructure of the social formation and secondly by the superstructure of politics and ideology. And, also by suturing, the way of narration in those early feminist films produces a syntagmatic flow of event, an easy diachronic progression, a cinematic world which might not reflect a reality far less ordered, coherent, or continuous.

Secondly, the concerns about women's realist films can be summarized by the charge of essentialism. At first, feminist filmmakers tried to claim a specific female power which would find expression if allowed to be explored freely. They sought to reinforce satisfaction in being a woman, especially as the culture did the opposite. They wanted to encourage solidarity among women through emotional appeal. However, such approaches to realist strategies harbor a danger of not taking into account the social construction involved in femininity.

Several feminist film critics, including Laura Mulvey, Pam Cook, and Claire Johnston, also used Lacan's psychoanalysis to further analyze women's place in traditional narrative films. They argued that the female is constructed as image, spectacle, and passive icon for gaze, to be looked at. At the same time, the male is constructed as the bearer of the look and has an active role in forwarding the story in the

mechanisms of visual pleasure of classical film text.[6] Furthermore, by using Lacan's adaptation of Freud's theory of the oedipal complex, feminist film critics argued that the female is only constructed as the castrated or the "other," an empty sign in the symbolic world dominated by the law of Father. In addition, in the signifying system of the classical film text, woman is spoken; she does not speak.

Accordingly, many feminist film critics argued, as Claire Johnston put it, that women's cinema must be a counter-cinema. They argued that only counter-cinema can work against the institutional practices of dominant cinema, usually at the levels of both form and content, and challenge audiences' expectations and assumptions about life. Counter-cinema means that feminist filmmakers should use either non-realist or anti-realist strategies to create a new women's cinema which can deconstruct and challenge patriarchal ideologies in dominant Hollywood cinema.

In the mid-seventies, Johnston, Mulvey and Wollen in Britain began to develop a new feminist avant-garde. While it drew on earlier perspectives (Russian formalism, Brecht, surrealism, and the recent counter-cinema directors like Godard and Duras), it was new in its particular combination of semiology, structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. This new women's cinema by Johnston, Mulvey and Wollen was characterized as theory films for they were informed directly by the theories. Besides the theory films, during the same period of time, there were other alternative film practices which were not arisen, in any immediate or determined sense, from the theories, but were regarded by

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[6] See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), and "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by *Duel in the Sun*." *Framework*, no. 10 (Spring 1979), p. 3-10. Also see Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, "The Place of Women in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh." *Edinburgh Film Festival Publication* (1974) and Claire Johnston, "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies." *The Work of Dorothy Arzner, British Film Institute Publication* (1975).

feminist film critics as of relevance to feminism and the assumptions of feminist counter-cinema. Anyway, all these feminist films, theory films and alternative film practices, were considered as important to the development of feminist films.

Although each theory film and alternative film practice of women's cinema reflects each creator's interest, they also share some common characteristics. According to Annette Kuhn, all these feminist films roughly fall into categories of "deconstruction" and "feminine writing."[7]

Characteristics of Feminist Films

Deconstruction

As the term suggests, "deconstruction" means films work by a process of breaking down. Deconstructive cinema is aimed at breaking down the textual operations and modes of address characteristic of dominant cinema to provoke spectators into awareness of the actual existence and effectiveness of dominant codes, and consequently to engender a critical attitude toward these codes. Deconstructive cinema anticipates a transformation in spectator-text relations from the passive receptivity or unthinking suspension of disbelief fostered by dominant modes of address to a more active and questioning position. However, deconstructive cinema is not simply defined by its formal strategies. The distinguishing mark of deconstructive cinema, as against other non-dominant or anti-dominant forms, is its recruitment of the spectator's active relation to the signification process for certain signifieds, or areas of substantive concern. And

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[7] Annette Kuhn, *Women's Picture; Feminism and Cinema.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1982), p.151-71.

as far as feminism is concerned, it points to the films which engage the current problems, the real issues, the things actually at stake in feminist communities. Then, deconstructive cinema may be defined by its articulation of oppositional forms with oppositional contents. And only when deconstructive cinema defines itself in relation to dominant cinema, it exerts its most power from the deconstructive strategies.

For those feminist films which fall this category, their formal strategies share following characteristic in common.

- They draw attention to the cinematic process and break the illusion that we are watching not a film, but "reality."
- They refuse to construct a fixed spectator, but try to create a multiplicity of spectator-text relationship which would make him or her to be actively involved in the processes of the film, rather than be passively captured by it.
- They try to replace the pleasure that usually comes from the manipulation of our emotions (particular around the oedipal complex in the case of the commercial cinema-- the narrative relies on identification, eruption, resolution, and completion) with pleasure in learning (cognitive processes.)

The following are the deconstructive strategies frequently employed by filmmakers to achieve the above objectives.

- intercutting among different kinds of discourse (or genre) such as documentary, docu-drama, and drama
- narrative interruption and fragmentation

Feminine writing

Compared with "deconstructive cinema" which mainly aims at challenging the signifying practices of dominant cinema along with its accompanying dominant ideologies, "feminine writing" refers to those films which are more focused on probing the possibility of a specifically feminine or feminist language for their creators are convinced that in a sexist society women have no language of their own and therefore are alienated from the dominant forms of expression. But the distinction between the deconstruction of existing forms of representation and the creation of new ones is, to some extent, one of degree rather of kind. And in any case, in a situation where certain forms of representation are culturally dominant, alternative forms will always tend to be constructed as a challenge to dominant forms.

However, the definition of and the approaches toward a specifically feminine or feminist language are still far from reaching any consensus. Conversely, through the efforts by different female filmmakers, the territory explored for a new language keeps expanding and the approaches employed by them become more diversified, although hard to be easily generalized. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that they will contradict one another, but only enhance the possibility of a specifically feminine language on the behalf of feminist politics.

The following are two early, critically acclaimed works in which "feminine voice" speaks through several specific areas, such as relations of looking, narrativity and narrative discourse, subjectivity and autobiography, fiction as against non-fiction, and openness as against closure. Each film would be given with a short description of

content and, particularly, formal strategies by which these films are considered by feminist film critics to hold out the possibility of a feminine language for women's cinema.

Lives of Performers [Yvonne Rainer, USA, 1972]

Lives of Performers, which is subtitled "a melodrama," is a reworking of the conventions of popular narrative genres, like those of the "backstage romance." In thirteen long sequences, it tells the story of the relationships between a man and two women, a triangle. The following are the characteristics of formal strategies employed in this film.

- The interpenetration of fictional and non-fictional worlds and lack of narrative closure set up a radical heterogeneity in spectator-text relations and finally refuse any space of unitary subjectivity for the spectator.
- The plot proceeds by **ellipsis** and **accretion**. The accretions (like a single long take with virtually static camera) allow the spectator to have the option of pleasurable and open-ended contemplation of an image which constructs no particularly privileged viewpoint. The ellipses offer the possibility of a more active pleasure of piecing together fragments of the story-- like working on puzzle.
- This film is told with so many **asides** by creator herself and characters that this heterogeneous narrative voice makes identification with characters in the classical cinema impossible.

Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quaidu Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles [Chantal Akerman, Belgium 1975]

This film is a chronicle of three days in the life of Brussels house wife, a widow and mother who is also a prostitute.[8] In this film Akerman scrutinizes housework in a language appropriate to the activity itself, showing a woman's activities in the home in real time to communicate the alienation of woman in the nuclear family under European post-war economic conditions. More than three hours in length and nearly without any dialogue, the film records Jeanne Dielman's breakdown through a minute observation of her performance of household routines and a daily visit from a man- a different one each day, at first systematic and unvarying, later increasingly disarranged, until by the end of film she permanently disrupts the patriarchal order by murdering her third client. The following are the characteristics of formal strategies employed in the film.

- This film is photographed at medium distance from its subject with static camera mounted at five feet from the ground. And there are no reverse shots, match cuts, cut-ins, or close-ups, and point of view shots maintain a relentless distance from the action. Often times, it is just a single long take.
- In the director's own words, the relatively low mounting of camera corresponds with her own height and thus constructs a "women's-eye-view" on the action.
- Akerman's decision to employ only medium and long shots also stems from a feminist critique: the decision to free her character from the exploitation of a zoom lens and to grant her an integrity of private space usually denied in close-ups, thereby

[8] Also see Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's cinema: Aesthetics and Feminist Theory." *New German Critique* 34(Winter 1985).

also freeing the audience from the insensitivity of a camera barreling in to magnifying a woman's emotional crisis.

- The refusal of reverse shots in the film entails a denial of the "binding-in" effect of the suture of classic cinema: the spectator is forced to maintain a distance in relation to both narrative and image, constructing the story and building up narrative expectations for herself.

Besides the characteristics found in these two films, Kaja Silverman examines several feminist films and points out that a good deal of feminist filmmaking has focused attention on the female voice, especially the dis-embodied, off-screen voice.[9] By dislocating voice from image, these films employ different techniques to examine relations between female voice and female body and to construct a new female subjectivity in women's cinema.

However, as I mentioned before, there is no consensus whatsoever on the definition and techniques of or the approaches to women's cinema by feminist film critics and filmmakers.[10] Further, since the 80s, issues such as lesbianism, class, and race have been brought into the discussions of women's cinema, further complicating a definition of "femininity" in the representations of women's cinema. At the same time, more radical experiments in women's cinema are questioned by some feminist film critics who suggest that avant-garde techniques alienate women viewers. Accordingly, these

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[9] Kaja Silverman, "Dis-Embodying the Female Voice." *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams (Frederick, Md: University Publication of America, Inc., in association with American Film Institute, 1984.)

[10] See Teresa de Lauretis, "Guerrilla in the Midst: Women's Cinema in the 80s." *Screen* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1990), p.6-25.

feminist film critics encourage conventional forms as important to reaching ordinary women viewers.

Summary

A contemporary feminist film movement has developed dramatically since the late 1960s. With collective efforts from feminist film critics and filmmakers, women's cinema has flourished in terms of quantity and quality. Also, feminist films have transformed from basically a documentary style, which was used to serve the purposes of consciousness-raising and political intervention, to a wide range of formal experiments which more reflect feminist interests in and concerns with film aesthetics as well as effectiveness of formal strategies. Despite the diversified film practices by various feminist filmmakers and the unsettled debates by feminist film critics about the definition of "femininity" involved with feminist films, all the efforts by feminist film critics and filmmakers to develop a new women's cinema can be generalized into three characteristics. First, in form, they were prone to employ alternative formal strategies other than realist film strategies which are usually used in dominant Hollywood cinema. Furthermore, they tried to create a new film language of their own, a specifically feminine or feminist film language. Secondly, in content, they tried to include current issues and important problems concerning feminist communities in their films. Finally, in result, they hoped that all these feminist film projects can bring about changes concerning women's status in society as well as on the screen.

Chapter 3

DESIGN

Women's cinema is arguably defined as a cinema by and for women. Accordingly, this project aims at creating a video text in which the techniques suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers are applied to present female point of view of the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the United States and to examine the legitimacy of a male creator in a feminist project. Female Taiwanese students are the foremost target audience, though, anyone who is around or related to female Taiwanese students can be included as a focus of the experiences.

The project design is divided into two parts: program design and evaluation design. In program design, I delineate what formal strategies I borrow from feminist film theory to achieve the desired objectives. In evaluation design, I describe how I evaluate the creative process and the effectiveness of the final product.

Program design

The main subjects of this project are female Taiwanese students. The theme focuses on different aspects of their lives in the United States.

First, I take several ideas from Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*[11] in which the author deals with the history status and psychology of the foreigners among us/within us. In the "Toccata and Fugue for the foreigner," the first section of nine making up her text, she probes a polyphony of foreigners' voices as they flee and chase and touch one another. Based on her own experience of being a foreigner in France for many years, she dwells on the foreigner's position between languages, a negative space marked by not speaking one's mother tongue. The following are the ideas I take from Kristeva's text and use in this program design.

- foreignness
- otherness
- alienation
- a dark space between languages
- a polyphony of foreigners' voices

So the content reflects a multiplicity of subjectivity concerning female Taiwanese students as foreigners to represent fragmented, alienated, and temporal moments of lives of different female Taiwanese students who are situated between two languages, two cultures, and two worlds.

With basic areas and direction of concerns in content finalized, formal strategies are taken into consideration for further program design. The prominent characteristics of formal strategies I take from feminist film theory is that they all work against realist film strategies which are used in dominant Hollywood cinema. As I mentioned in Chapter 2,

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[11] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press (1991), p. 1-40.

feminist film critics argued that cinematic Realism perpetuates illusionism by showing what is on the screen as a decoded reflection of the "real world." They argued that cinematic Realism produces suturing which smoothes over possible contradictions, incoherences, and eruptions that might reflect a reality far less ordered, coherent, or continuous. Furthermore, cinematic Realism conceals the process of meaning production and positions the reading subject as passive and incapable of intervention in the signification process. Accordingly, feminist film critics argue that cinematic Realism needs to be challenged and replaced by alternative formal strategies, maybe a specifically feminine or feminist film language, for the success of feminist films. The following are the formal strategies I take from feminist film theory:

- narrative fragmentation and interruption: used to force the viewer to piece together the fragments of a story and to be an active meaning constructor rather than a passive message receiver in the process of signification of the text
- interpenetration among different kinds of discourse such as fiction, interview, documentary footages, monologue, dramatizations of fiction accounts: used to 1) evoke **distanciation** which denies the identification involvement of the viewer with the text and **a critical attitude** which rejects passive receptivity and disbelief of the viewer; 2) force the viewer to engage in a constantly shifting and transforming spectator-text relationship (or viewing subject position) and to be an active meaning constructor; 3) reveal the video text itself as a creation of meaning and a set of signs
- asynchronous sound (disembodied, off-screen voice): used to force the viewer to cast attention to and ponder on the relationship between sound and image

- contrasting ways of expression such as color as against black & white (image,) Mandarin as against English (speaking language,) still as against moving (image): used to disorient the viewer and force the viewer to ponder on the content as well as the ways of expression

Evaluation design

The purpose of the evaluation design is to assess the creative process and the effectiveness of the finished video text. It is divided into two sections: self-evaluation and group-evaluation.

Self-evaluation focuses on my personal record of the whole creative process: from how I came up the idea of this project, how I approached this project, how I came to the decision to use feminist film theory as my methodology, and how I finalized my script, to how I executed the production.

The group-evaluation focuses on how the selected group of viewers, female Taiwanese students, respond to the finished video program. A focus group discussion was used to generate this information after the viewing. Six questions were used to stimulate the discussion between the viewers and the creator and to assess the effectiveness of the finished program in achieving the objectives set for this project.

As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, the main objective of this video project is to employ the formal strategies suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers to portray female viewpoint of the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners

in the United States. Also, this project is intended to investigate the legitimacy of a male creator in a proclaimed feminist work.

Then the following are the six designed questions and the explanations of how each question was designed to gather information regarding the objectives of this project.

- **What's your first impression, reaction, or feeling after viewing this video?**: used to get general information regarding the instant response of each viewer to the video
- **Does it relate to your own experience in the United States? If not, why? If yes, how?**: used to understand how this video relate to the personal experience of each viewer
- **Does it portray the experiences of female Taiwanese students in the United States from female point of view?**: used to examine the effectiveness of this video in presenting female point of view
- **What do you think about this video in terms of formal strategies?**: used to assess the viewer's opinion regarding the formal strategies I used in this video
- **Does it relate to feminism or feminist aesthetics, in any sense, by your own understanding?**: used to assess whether this video qualify as feminist work by viewer's opinion
- **Does the fact that the creator of this "proclaimed" feminist video project is male bother you or change your whole perception of this project?**: used to assess the legitimacy of a male creator in a proclaimed feminist video project

Summary

In program design, Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* regarding the psychology of foreigners provided several important ideas such as **foreignness, otherness, a dark space between languages** and **a polyphony of foreigners' voices** for the development of content. Then, the formal strategies, such as **narrative fragmentation and interruption, interpenetration among different kinds of discourse**, and **asynchronous sound**, which I took from feminist film theory were central to the program design. They provided most of designed effects I wanted viewers to experience in viewing this video. In evaluation design, self-evaluation and group-evaluation were created respectively to record how the creator proceeded in the creative process and to assess the effectiveness of the finished program in achieving the objectives set for this project through a list of designed questions for a focus group discussion.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter discusses the program design, and presents results of self and group evaluations. The program, being the essence of this creative work, is discussed at length. Then self-evaluation focuses on the creator's personal note of the whole creative process. Finally, a summarized record of a focus group discussion is presented.

Program design

Stranger to Ourselves is 33 minutes in length and consists of thirteen long scenes. Each scene is shortly described in terms of content, discourse, image and speaking language in Figure 1.

Figure 1- Description of scenes (also see Appendix)

Scene	Title	Description	Discourse	Image	Language
1	Railroad	Frank walks along the railway tracks; he leaves a message on Jan's answer machine	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
2	Airport	Yi-lin and Pei-wen are waiting for Jan in the lobby	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
3	Taipei Impressions	A female Taiwanese student recounts her feelings during her stay in Taipei	Monologue	B&W	English
4	Airport	Yi-lin and Pei-wen are waiting for Jan, and then Jan arrives	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
5	Lansing Streets (Pei-wen's Car)	Yi-lin chats with Jan about the decision whether America is a place to stay or not	Narrative	B&W	Mandarin

Figure 1 (continued)

6	Interview	A female Taiwanese is interviewed about her personal opinion regarding China's military threat	Interview	B&W	English
7	Railroad Side	Jan, Yi-lin and Pei-wen are staying by the railway tracks where Frank had killed himself	Narrative	Color	None
8	Story	A female Taiwanese student recounts her breakup with her first love	Testimony	B&W	English
9	Frank's Apartment	Jan stays at Frank's apartment alone and accidentally overhears the quarrel between Yi-lin and Je-ming	Narrative	Color	English, Mandarin
10	Yi-lin and Pei-wen's Apartment	Pei-wen overhears the quarrel between Yi-lin and Je-ming, and then she's got a call from her friend	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
11	Lansing Streets (Frank's Car)	Jan is wandering around the city of Lansing	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
11A	Memories	Dramatization of the breakup and quarrel between Jan and Frank	Dramatized fiction accounts	B&W	English
11B	Lansing Streets	Jan recounts her breakup with Frank while she is sitting on the side of road	Narrative	Color	Mandarin
12	Yi-lin	Yi-lin explains how she found out what happened between Jan and Frank	Narrative	Color, B&W	English
13	Pei-wen and Yi-lin's Apartment	Jan, Yi-lin and Pei-wen are watching the videotape which Frank gave to Jan	Narrative	Color	None

Then, the program is discussed in terms of content and formal strategies.

Content:

In content, the program consists of a fiction narrative, a monologue "Taipei impressions," an interview with documentary footage and a testimony "A love story."

The fiction narrative which consists of ten scenes and runs through the whole video serves as a backbone of the work. It opens with a suspicious suicide of a male

Taiwanese student named Frank. Before his death he asks his ex-fiancee Jan to come back to East Lansing to take care of the aftermath. Then Jan comes back to East Lansing as Frank wished and meets with her old friend Yi-lin and a newcomer named Pei-wen. As Jan re-visits East Lansing where everything is no longer the same, she finds out Yi-lin is going to break up with her boyfriend Je-ming and also re-discovers her relationship with Frank in the past. But Jan assures herself once more that her breakup with Frank is the only thing she could and should do.

The monologue "Taipei impressions" with a montage of still images is about a female Taiwanese student who expresses her feelings as she first went back to Taiwan. The interview with documentary footage is about the personal reactions of a female Taiwanese student toward China's military threat against Taiwan. Finally, the testimony "A love story" is about a female Taiwanese student who recounts her breakup with her first lover.

Formal strategies:

The program is discussed according to the design of formal strategies in Chapter 3.

Narrative fragmentation and interruption: The fiction narrative is a central part of the program and runs through the program from the beginning to the end. However, the narrative needs to be inserted by three other parts, a monologue, an interview, and a testimony, to create the effect of narrative fragmentation and interruption.

In the scenic sequence from scene 2 to scene 4, the fiction narrative first proceeds in the airport lobby where Yi-lin and Pei-wen are waiting for Jan. In the meantime, Yi-lin is thinking about her fight with Je-ming and Pei-wen seems to be bothered by Frank's

suicide. Then, scene 2 fades into scene 3 "Taipei impressions" in which a female Taiwanese student express her feelings as she went back to Taiwan for the first time after leaving home. After scene 3, the program goes back to the narrative which continues with scene 4 in the airport lobby. The narrative proceeds as Pei-wen is wondering about Frank's suicide and his relationship with Jan. So, for the first time, between scene 2 and scene 4, the fiction narrative is inserted with a seemingly irrelevant and independent scene. A gap in the narrative is created to allow the viewer to bridge the narrative and contemplate the content of the monologue with regard to the narrative.

In the scenic sequence from scene 5 to 9, the narrative proceeds in the city of Lansing. Yi-lin chats with Jan about the decision of whether the United States is a place to stay or not when they drive through the city of Lansing. Then scene 5 fades into scene 6 in which a female Taiwanese student is interviewed about her personal opinion regarding China's military threat against Taiwan and her participation in a rally. In this long scene, documentary footage and two chyron pages are incorporated into the interview. Then it fades into scene 7 "Died in a strange land" in which the narrative resumes again at the railway tracks where Frank had killed himself. In scene 7, Jan, Yi-lin and Pei-wen are staying by the railway tracks without saying any words. After scene 7, it fades into scene 8 "A love story" in which a female Taiwanese student recounts her breakup with her first boyfriend. Then the narrative resumes in scene 9 "A message" in which Jan stays at Frank's apartment alone and accidentally overhears the quarrel between Yi-lin and Je-ming. So in this scenic sequence the narrative is inserted twice with seemingly irrelevant and independent scenes. Two consequent gaps are created to

interrupt the narrative and to force the viewer to bridge the fragmented narrative. All gaps are designed to allow viewers to be active meaning constructors.

These designs of narrative fragmentation and interruption depend on the narrative flow. Whenever it runs smoothly and well, it needs to be cut off and then resumed again.

Interpenetration among different kinds of discourse: As I mentioned earlier, the program consists of a fiction narrative, an interview with documentary footage, a monologue with a montage of still images, and a testimony. Each of these four different formats can be considered as a specific discourse. In addition, the technique of dramatization of fiction accounts used in scene 11A can be considered a specific discourse. All together, these five kinds of discourse are used to evoke **distanciation** which denies identification involvement of the viewer with the text and **a critical attitude** which rejects passive receptivity and disbelief of the viewer.

In the scenic sequence from scene 1 to 4, the narrative first starts from scene 1 and continues through scene 2. Then it changes into a monologue with a montage of still images in scene 3. The narrative resumes back again in scene 4.

In the scenic sequence from scene 5 to 9, the narrative continues through scene 5 and fades into an interview with documentary footages in scene 6. Then the narrative resumes again in scene 7 and fades into a testimony in scene 8. Finally the narrative carries on again in scene 9. So in this particular sequence, the program penetrates through different kinds of discourse consecutively.

In the scenic sequence from scene 11 to 13, the narrative first proceeds in scene 11 and fades into dramatization of fiction accounts in scene 11A. The fiction narrative resumes again in 11B and proceeds through scene 12 and 13 to the end of program.

Concluded from the brief description of scenic sequence, we can see the constant interpenetration among those five different kinds of discourse (a narrative, a monologue with a montage of still images, an interview with documentary footages, a testimony, and dramatization of fiction accounts) is created through out the program. This arrangement of scenic sequence is designed to create as many transitions among different kinds of discourse as possible. The viewer who is directed through an array of different discourses is expected to cut off her/his close involvement with the program and critique the experiences of female Taiwanese students portrayed in the program with input of her/his own experience. Such arrangement of scenic sequence also force the viewer to constantly negotiate herself/himself among different viewing subject positions and become an active meaning constructor and realize all creative works are just a creation of meaning and a set of signs.

Asynchronous sound: This particular formal strategy is used to force the viewer to cast attention to and ponder on the relationship between sound and image. Often times, an off-screen and disembodied voice is used to achieve that goal.

In scene 3 "Taipei impressions," a monologue of a female Taiwanese student who talks about her alienation, melancholy and depression when she went back to Taiwan for the first time after leaving home is set against a montage of still, black and white images of Taipei streets. By contrasting the negative remarks (sound) on and the familiar still

pictures (image) of Taipei, it allows the viewer, especially Taiwanese students, to ponder on the relationship between sound and image, and her/his own experience of being away from home.

In scene 5, the narrative proceeds with a conversation between Jan and Yi-lin while they are driving through the city of Lansing. The conversation regarding whether the United States is a place to stay is set against the moving , black and white images of city. As with the above example, scene 5 allows the viewer, especially foreigners, to compare her/his own experience with such opposition between sound and image.

In these two particular places (just separated by one scene,) the contrarieties are created to allow the viewer to ponder on what does "home" really mean.

Contrasting ways of expression: The techniques such as color as against black and white (image,) Mandarin as against English (speaking language,) and still as against moving (image,) are used in several places in the program to disorient the viewer and force the viewer to ponder on the content as well as the ways of expression.

In scene 5, I deliberately portray Lansing in black and white and one-half-normal-moving-speed images through Jan's camcorder (Jan's point of view) to show that any city can be represented as pale and rundown through special treatment of images. Same as in scene 3, Taipei is represented through a montage of postcard-like , black and white images which is directly set against normal color, moving images on the television. All these designs are used to reveal that all video representations are a creation of meaning and a set of signs.

Another important employment of this formal strategy in this program is that I use Mandarin (speaking language) and color (image) in the fiction narrative except scene 5 (B&W) and scene 9 (English,) and English and black and white images in the rest of discourse. Accordingly, as the program is interchanging between different discourses, it is also interchanging constantly between different ways of expression. This widens the gap between different discourses and force the viewer to cast attention at the formal strategies as well as the content with a critical attitude.

Self-evaluation

The original idea of this project was inspired by my real-life experience as a foreign student in the United States. Living in a foreign country for the first time, I have sensed myself going through a subtle, but significant change which I believe would have a profound effect on my life. I also noticed that friends from my country had a similar experience while managing their lives in the United States. Close female friends were kind enough to share their personal feelings, problems, even secrets with me which gave me a chance to understand what they had gone through psychologically during the time they stayed in the United States. What surprised me most was that most of them had been abroad at least once before they came to the US and they were all fluent in English. In which case, it seemed to me that they were much unlikely to have any problem of living in the US than those who didn't have that kind of experience and language skill. But, still, they were like others having problems of positioning themselves in the American society. So I began to wonder why this would happen. Is there any "truth"

behind the appearance of this whole psychic chaos? Then I found this book, Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*, which gave me a lot of material and accounts regarding the psychology of foreigners.

In the first chapter of *Strangers to Ourselves*, called "Toccata and Fugue for the foreigner," Kristeva particularly probes a polyphony of voices as the foreigners flee and chase and touch one another. Her exploration of a polyphony coincided my observations and understanding of situations for women from my country. In addition, her thoughts on the foreigner's position within/between languages, a negative space marked by "not speaking one's mother tongue, gave me the idea to employ two speaking languages in the project: English in public and Mandarin in private. The ideas of "otherness" and "foreignness" which represents the foreigner's marginal position in either culture while s/he is staying in a foreign country, were brought forth by Kristeva's elaboration on the psychology of the foreigners for the first time. Combining Kristeva's ideas with my own experience, I decided to develop a video text to portray the lives of female Taiwanese students in the US.

Then, how can I represent such ideas like multiplicity of subjectivity, otherness, and foreignness in a video text? What kind of format should I use to achieve that goal? Documentary, docu-drama, or just pure fiction-drama? At first, I thought fiction-drama would be the choice because I was prone to use it and, based on my observations, fiction-drama seemed most likely to capture the "reality" of the lives of female Taiwanese students. I looked through a few books and articles about documentary films for the definitions. I found out that the format "Documentary" is usually used to probe

public issues, to reconstruct history, and to reveal the "truth" of the world in a sense. And as far as the private psychic side of one's life is concerned, it appears that documentary does not have its full strength in portraying that. While I actually began to write a story about lives of female Taiwanese students for this project, I still could not find other materials to convince me that fiction-drama was the clean-cut choice.

At this point, I discovered Ann Kaplan's article, "Theories and Strategies of the Feminist Documentary. It led me to a new way of thinking, a Feminist perspective. Her article made me reconsider the way I used to treat my subjects, female Taiwanese students, and the vantage point I took to look into the "reality" that I supposed. I realized that what I thought was taking a "neutral" standpoint, was actually a male and hierarchical one.

I turned, thus, to feminist film theory as the foundation and framework of this project. I found several important books and articles which helped me to finalize the choice of methodology. To me, it was clear that the feminist approach fit with the project because the subjects of the project were female. But, then, it also raised another question about me as the creator. According to feminist film critics, films are generally considered "women's cinema" because they are produced "by women and for women." As a male creator, I became problematic in this project, and my role as creator became a key research question. Can I, as a male creator, use the techniques employed and suggested by feminist film makers and critics to produce a video text with a feminist perspective and feminine sensibility? And I had to ask myself this question through out

the creative process, from script writing, designing blocking, lighting, and shooting, to editing.

Using the techniques suggested by feminist film critics, I finished the first draft of the script which consisted of fiction-drama, fictional interview, real interview, and real documentary footage. I gave this draft to several female Taiwanese students, including some prospect actresses, for feedback. Their responses were quite diverse, but they were all similarly confused by the strategies I used. One of the readers told me that there was no plot or story developing, she could not find any confrontations and resolutions. Saying " There is no drama here," she referred to what is experienced in traditional cinema. I had to explain to them what I tried to do with this fragmented storyline disrupted by other seemingly unrelated interviews and documentary footage. Even so, they did not see enough dramatic ingredients in each segment to pull viewers in. They thought I might create a disoriented feeling and dissociation when I take viewers abruptly from one segment to another. I went back to rewrite the drama and tried to engage viewers more in each segment.

One of the readers, who later became the actress in this project, told me that there is no discussion concerning sexuality, a main issue of the Feminist movement. She also pointed out that this is a project more or less about the state of mind of the foreigners and the things happening around them which she thought might not be gender specific. And she told me if I want this project to be considered as feminist, I should , at least, touch on the topic "sexuality." Actually, she was right. Among the most fervent discussions, sexuality becomes the foremost issue when the feminists attack the

patriarchal ideology. And in their political film projects, the feminist filmmakers and critics also consider the release of female desire and sexuality from the confinement of the mainstream or dominant cinema as their main purpose. So, in my first draft, lacking such an important issue did raise some concern about this so-called "feminist" project. I think the reason why I didn't touch on that issue was that I was afraid I could not address it properly. I reviewed the original idea and purpose of this project, and I reaffirmed to myself that its main purpose was to use the feminist film theory and techniques to portray the lives of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the American society. However, if the issue of female desire and sexuality is involved in the lives of those students, then I should and must put it in this project. So, when I went back to write my second and third draft, I did put more efforts into redesigning the plot to show some aspect of that issue. The readers' responses to the later edition of the script seemed more positive.

There were several other changes the readers recommended. Some dialogue was not like their normal conversations and the plot lacked emotion and passion. And I think the most important thing I learned from this process is a realization that everyone experienced the script differently and wanted different things from the screen. By this process I, as a male creator, could try to imagine female experiences, the "Other," and even transgress the "gender line."

It was even harder for me to envision a female, or feminine way of looking after I finalized the script. When I began to shoot the project, I just kept asking myself "Is there any essential difference in the way genders see and picture the world?", "Is there

any difference in the way genders look at women?" and "How are they different?." For feminist film theorists, feminist film projects are supposed to release female characters and female images from the entrapment of the traditional cinema, where they are objects of voyeurism, and restore their subjectivity on the screen. But, some of the techniques suggested by these theorists, such as framing, camera angle, and place of looking, are more or less subjective interpretations; I did not find any works on the responses of a general public to such feminist film techniques. I asked some of my female friends about the question of a female or feminine way of looking. They told me they believed there is a difference, but they could not specifically point out what it is. One of my female friends told me that she saw a so-called feminist film once. As she recalled, there was not a single way of constructing images which she could refer to or consider as a female way of looking. However, she still considered the film, which was consisted of several different visual styles, as feminist, female, or feminine. And she thought the visual styles of the feminist film project would be more versatile and emotional, if not logical. Her response gave me a fresh new idea. Since I didn't have any definite feminist film techniques in my mind, maybe I should use different visual styles, as long as they work with the subject matter, and let the viewers decide which part is the female style, and which is not.

During the production stage, some female friends who had seen rough cuts asked me why I had shot some scenes in certain ways. In one scene, I shot more profile shots than any other angle. At first, I didn't recognize that. Then I found out it was my personal preference and it could be attributed to my own personality. So it appeared that even

though I tried to or envision a female way of looking, it turned out to be my own "signature." Then I began to wonder whether my gender would affect how viewers would react to the techniques I used. At that time, I was really experiencing the anxiety and confusion of trying to represent a female perspective and vision while I was a male creator. There were too many questions I could not answer. I turned to viewer, in a structured group viewing.

Group-evaluation

In July 2nd, I set up a viewing session in which there were 7 female and 3 male Taiwanese students attending. After the viewing session, we had a discussion which lasted for two and a half hours. In the discussion, everyone was free to express his/her thoughts on the video program and ask questions, but it mainly focused on the questions I put on the questionnaire. The following are the summarized opinions and discussions regarding each designed question:

- What's your first impression, reaction, or feeling after viewing this video?

One viewer particularly expressed that this video was too sad to her, and she said the creator made it look sad on purpose. Other viewers did not answer this question specifically. However, the overall impressions I got from them were incomprehension and disorientation. Seemingly they were confused by the formal strategies I used in this video.

- Does it relate to your own experience in the United States? If not, why? If yes, how?

Most viewers can relate themselves to different parts of the video to a degree. However, almost everyone thought the segment which deals with the personal opinions of a female Taiwanese student regarding China's military threats to Taiwan in March, 1996 was the part they could relate to most because they knew it was "true" and "real" or they had joined the rallies personally. Compared with the documentary part, other segments seemed more like "acting," "performing" or "faking" to them, although they could relate to the story a little bit. Due to the creator's inability or refusal to create a more powerful and effective fiction narrative, this video failed to draw viewer's attention to and effect viewer's identification with the fragmented story. One viewer suggested that more substantial materials concerning the gender issues should add to the story to make it more powerful and tangible.

One viewer asked me why I used a love story as a main plot in this video, although she knew I would do so before she saw it. I told her that although female Taiwanese students might be engaged with different things in their everyday lives, I , according to my own observations, believed that romantic relations made much more impacts on their lives. So a love story became my choice of main theme and hopefully could evoke the same kind of reaction from female Taiwanese students after they saw the video.

- Does it portray the experiences of female Taiwanese students in the United States from female point of view?

Some viewers thought this video was not about women, although it seemed there were mainly women in the video for most of time. The main reason was that Frank's suicide drew all the attention to this mystery and to Frank himself. Although everything

seemed related to the female Taiwanese students around Frank, Frank's mysterious suicide still overwhelmed other female voices and lingered on viewer's mind until the end. So they thought this video was not specifically concerned with the experiences of female Taiwanese students, and this video did not present a female perspective.

Some other viewers thought the reason why this video was not specifically about female Taiwanese students or a female point of view was that the issue of foreigner's state of mind was much more obvious and clear the ones of female Taiwanese students. In addition, they thought the issue of foreigner's state of mind was more general and gender free. So, even though this video in some point well communicated the feelings, such as alienation, detachment, melancholy, and sadness, that foreigners might have, they still thought it was not specifically about female Taiwanese students.

Some viewers particularly expressed their concerns regarding the last scene in which Jan touched and caressed Frank's face . They interpreted Jan's gesture as a resolution and a reconciliation to the past and thought this gesture would contradict the women's self-awareness this video tried to convey. I replied to their comments that this gesture did not suggest that Jan was in love with Frank again. This gesture only meant a mutual understanding of each other's position. However, I admitted that this gesture did serve as some kind of closure to the whole story and this video.

- What do you think about this video project in terms of formal strategies?

Generally the formal strategies seemed to distance and confuse viewers, and make them frustrated in grabbing the content. One viewer even interpreted such "chaos" in from and content as my struggle and inability in creating a smooth and linear story.

Due to the viewers' unfamiliarity with the formal strategies I took from feminist film theory, I had to briefly review the theory and explicate the purposes of using such techniques to them. After realizing the program design of this video, they still seemed uncertain about the effectiveness of such formal strategies to communicate with ordinary audiences. But some viewers thought, as far as the formal experiment was concerned, this video could be considered successful.

One viewer asked me why I used two speaking languages in this video. Then I told her I got the idea of a dark space between two languages from Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* and I thought this formal design might exemplify foreigner's alienation between two worlds. She thought this particular design might show far less effect on the viewers other than Taiwanese students, such as Americans.

Then, one viewer expressed that this video contained a clear intent to "educate" audiences especially regarding the mechanism of classical Hollywood cinema and how to deconstruct it. What she meant was this video still treated its audience as "uneducated, unthinking, and uncritical" viewing subject. So it tended to inform and teach audience the mechanisms behind the images, and change the way how viewers saw movies.

- Does it relate to feminism or feminist aesthetics in any sense by your own understanding?

Actually we never got into the discussion of feminism or feminist aesthetics. But, as I mentioned earlier, most viewers did not consider this video as a project really related to women. According to some viewers' interpretation, this video is actually a male-

centered project. So, in this regard, this video is far from being called a feminist project or relating to feminist aesthetics.

- Does the fact that the creator of this "proclaimed" feminist video project is male bother you or change your whole perception of this project?

Regarding this question, it seems no need for further discussion since this video was not considered related to feminism or feminist aesthetics. However, one viewer expressed that men can still keep doing any project which is concerned with current issues of women in society. And all efforts by both genders should be welcomed and appreciated for improving women's status in society. But, as far as women's cinema and feminist aesthetics are concerned, she thought the whole purpose was to let women to speak out in their voices.

Summary

In program design, by showing examples in the finished program it exemplifies how the ideas from Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* and the formal strategies, such as narrative fragmentation and interruption, interpenetration among different kinds of discourse, asynchronous sound, and contrasting ways of expression, are used to achieve the objectives of this project: present a female viewpoint of the experiences of female Taiwanese students in the United States and deconstruct realist formal strategies of dominant Hollywood cinema. In self-evaluation, the personal record by the creator is used to examine how each decision in approaching the program design was made during the creative process. And it also shows how the creator incorporated the comments of

female Taiwanese students into the development of the program. Finally, in group-evaluation, through a focus group discussion of the designed questions it shows how the viewers react to the finished program and why this video is not considered related to female Taiwanese students and feminism.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

In this project there are two most important goals I want to achieve: first presenting a female point of view of the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the United States, and secondly using the formal strategies suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers to achieve the first goal, and to assess the possibility of a feminist or feminine film language. The first goal seems more straightforward and self-evident. And the reason I used feminist film theory to approach the first goal is that I think this project is concerned with female Taiwanese students, so it must be a feminist project.

Since late 1960, a contemporary feminist film movement has developed so rapidly both in film critics and filmmaking. In order to challenge the patriarchal ideologies of dominant Hollywood cinema and envision a new women's cinema, feminist film critics and filmmakers have suggested and experimented with many formal strategies in their film projects. Although the formal strategies used in different feminist films are quite different from each other, they are all designed to work against the realist strategies of dominant film practices. Combining with the progressive content and the deconstructive formal strategies, many feminist film critics believe, a new women's cinema has to be a counter-cinema which is intended to bring changes on screen and in society. Personally I agree with those feminist film critics and support their approach to a new women's

cinema. So, in the beginning of this project, I was convinced that the only thing I had to do was to sue the formal strategies suggested by feminist film critics and filmmakers to make a feminist film about the experiences of female Taiwanese students as foreigners in the United States.

As shown in the program design of Chapters 3 and 4, the formal strategies of **narrative fragmentation and interruption, interpenetration among different kinds of discourse, asynchronous sound,** and **contrasting ways of expression** are used to create a fragmented yet related video. Each formal strategy adds a different dimension to create as many gaps as possible which would force the viewer to be an active meaning constructor. These formal strategies, which consists of the major program design, are the heart of this video project.

Among the aforementioned formal strategies, **narrative fragmentation and interruption,** and **interpenetration among different kinds of discourse** are the most noticeable features of this video, but also the ones which confuse and disorient the viewer most. For me personally, these two formal strategies exemplify that life consists of different dimensions, relationships and problems, and sometimes it is not so ordered, coherent and continuous. In the video, such formal strategies force the viewer to move in and out abruptly, and experience fragmented aspects of different discourses. In a certain way, they work against realist strategies of dominant Hollywood cinema which smooth over possible contradictions, incoherences, and eruptions in its representations of the "real world." So they force the viewer to constantly negotiate among different viewing subject positions, and bridge over the fragmented segments of the fiction

narrative, and produce a meaning of her/his own. In addition, these two formal strategies reveal the video text itself as a visual representation of discourses, a creation of meaning, and a set of signs to force the viewer into becoming a critical reader of a video text in terms of content and form.

Asynchronous sound is another important formal design in this video. This formal strategies is frequently used in feminist film projects for examining the relationship between sound and image. The female voice is always tied with the female body on the screen for which many feminist film critics believe it reinforces the entrapment of female voice in female biological body, often times regarded as inferior to male one. Then, by using off-screen and disembodied voice, it allows the viewer to examine the relationship between voice and image, and the subjectivity and authority of the female voice against a documentary-like "real" image.

Contrasting ways of expression, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, is used to extend the gaps created by the aforesaid formal strategies and to make gaps among different discourses more obvious yet complicated. Such formal strategy forces the viewer to experience **in-betweenness**, **transformation**, and **contrariety** more intensely and frequently.

Overall, these formal strategies work for me very well. They create the formal distinctions which I desired in the beginning of this project. Maybe the form itself seems more important to me in this project, nevertheless, only when working with the subject, the state of mind of female Taiwanese students, the form reaches its full potential. The thing I would like to change if I could start it over again is to improve the

content, to make each segment of discourse more substantial and tangible to female Taiwanese students, and probably to add more materials regarding femininity and sexuality.

The viewers in the group-evaluation seemed confused and frustrated with the formal strategies while they were watching the video, yet they can not comprehend the creator's intention of using such avant-garde techniques to deconstruct the pleasure of traditional cinema and to search alternative pleasure for women's cinema. Maybe they are used to traditional representations of dominant Hollywood cinema which are more coherent and smooth. So it is hard for the viewers to accept this kind of representation which demands extra efforts from the viewers to decipher the meanings of formal design along with the content. Therefore, some feminist film critics question and challenge the use of avant-garde techniques which often alienate women's viewers. They suggest that conventional forms, such as soap opera and romance, may serve well in challenging the political status quo.[12] However, I still think there is no need to dismiss provocative feminist film practices immediately since part of the reason those feminist films are not accepted well is a lack of wide distribution and frequent screenings. Then, it is another issue concerning the huge institution of dominant film industry that feminist film critics and filmmakers have to work on to make their works recognized and accepted by women's viewers.

Regarding the objective to examine the legitimacy of a male creator in a "proclaimed" feminist film, I set up a plot in the program design in which I play the role

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[12] See Jane Gaines, "Women Representation: Can We Enjoy Alternative Pleasure?" *Jump Cut* 29(February 1984.)

Frank who kills himself in the very beginning. And before he kills himself, Frank asks his ex-fiancee Jan to come back to the aftermath left behind him. Then, Jan comes back to East Lansing and the story unfolds with a female perspective. In addition, there is a "fake" title page, "created by JAN YANG," within the first scene. Such an arrangement, for me personally, exemplifies the recession of a male creator and the introduction of a female perspective without the involvement of my maleness. But, have I really killed myself as a male creator in this project? Apparently, the answer is no. As indicated in the final scene that Jan touches Frank's face on the television screen, I still have to deal with my own maleness in the end, although I keep hiding behind the screen for most of the time. So I still can not erase my presence as a male creator in this project.

However, it is very interesting that the viewers in the group-evaluation recognize the problem of authorship. They point out that this project is not really concerned with female Taiwanese students, but with the male creator and his view of the female Taiwanese students around him. So they notice my presence as a male creator behind this "proclaimed" feminist film. Then concluded from the above discussion, I have not killed myself in this video project.

Regardless the results of this project, I still think the continuous efforts in the formal experiment along with the progressive content regarding the current issues and real problems in feminist communities are necessary. It may create a new kind of pleasure other than the ones of traditional cinema, such as identification and resolution, and allow viewers to grow with feminist films. However, different approaches to a new women's cinema do not necessarily contradict to one another. On the contrary, different

approaches bring forth the differences which already exist in society and the definition of the term "femininity." Hopefully, it may also bring forth the changes on the screen and in society for which all feminists desire.

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APPENDIX

Appendix

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1 RAILROAD

EXTERIOR, AFTERNOON

FADE UP

A close high-angle shot of the railroad tracks. A man is walking along the railroad. He walks away from the camera to the distance.

TITLE

B&W, KEY

"STRANGERS TO OURSELVES"

FADE OUT

FADE UP

TITLE

B&W, KEY

"by JAN YANG"

FADE OUT

CUT

All a sudden, there comes a loud whistling sound of an approaching train. Then, cut to a shot of a train passing by. Next is a sound of telephone ringing in the sound track. After the telephone rings four times, the answering machine starts working.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hi! Jan and Mia are not able to answer your call right now. Please leave your message after the beep.

There is a sound of "beep." After beep, a man begins to leave his message.

FRANK (M)

Hi! Jan. This is Frank. Haven't been in touch with you for a long time. How are you doing? **(pause)**

I'm calling you to bid farewell to you. **(pause)**

Also, there is one favor I want you to do for me, that is...

Then there comes a loud sound of a passing train again. It overwhelms Frank's voice.

FADE OUT

Appendix

---

2 AIRPORT

INTERIOR, AFTERNOON

FADE UP

A shot of airport building. A shot of airport runway. A shot of clouds in the sky. In the corner of airport lobby, there are two women standing next to each other in front a huge window. One is Yi-lin, and the other is Pei-wen. They are looking outwards through the window and waiting for Jan.

YI-LIN (M, Inner thought)

The snows have melted away without leaving any trace behind.

But who knows how soon is the next blizzard?

Any way, in few days, I will be away from this freezing place for good and back in Taiwan.

Yeah! Far away from here...by myself.

This kind of ending...may be better.

After all, Je-ming wants to stay.

Then we should not force each other into things anymore. **(long pause)**

Pei-wen was asked to pick up Jan by at short notice.

She doesn't know I had a quarrel with Je-ming last night.

Maybe she thinks I was feeling depressed for Frank's death.

I wished I was! **(pause)**

PEI-WEN (M)

Yi-lin, have you ever thought of committing suicide?

YI-LIN (M)

Suicide!...No! Never!

PEI-WEN (M)

I think Frank must have suffered a tremendous pain. An unbearable pain!

Then he would not have made such a decision.

But ... I don't know what was that for.

YI-LIN (M)

I don't know either. **(pause)**

YI-LIN (M, Inner thought)

Maybe after Jan arrives, many things would be much more clear.

Appendix

Maybe Frank shouldn't stay after Jan had left
Maybe It would be much better if Frank had gone back to Taiwan.

FADE OUT

---

3 TAIPEI IMPRESSIONS

FADE UP

VIDEO TRACK: still, B&W images of Taipei city.

AUDIO TRACK:

Last summer, I went back to Taiwan for vacation.
During the time I stayed in Taipei, actually I felt quite uncomfortable.
Traffic jam, crowded streets, noise, and heat.
They all bothered me.
I don't know why.
I just felt alienated.
I rather stayed home than went out.
And I talked with my friend about it.
They just said I overreacted.
And I will be fine. Maybe!
But, that time, I just wanted to come back here so bad.
That kind of feeling just scared me.
I don't know how I became that way.
For more twenty years I lived in Taiwan.
I always felt homey and safe.
But, after that summer, everything would not be the same again.
And the word "home has a new meaning for me, thereafter.

FADE OUT

---

4 AIRPORT

INTERIOR, AFTERNOON

FADE UP

Same as Scene 2.

Appendix

PEI-WEN (M, Inner thought)

December 27.

It has been exactly three months since I came to Lansing.

Back then, it was Yi-lin who picked me up at the airport here.

I think she probably would mot remember this.

Yi-lin is very quiet today.

Is it about Frank? **(pause)**

Usually she stayed the night at Je-ming's apartment.

But for three days, she came back to stay home.

Je-ming called her this morning, she even didn't want to answer it.

Did they....? **(pause)**

I don't know.

Suddenly, I want to leave here so desperately!

Pei-wen is looking at the sky through the window...

YI-LIN (M)

Pei-wen, Pei-wen,

I forgot to tell you after picking up Jan, You need to take her around to do with Frank's stuffs.

PEI-WEN (M)

Oh! O.K.!

Yi-lin, I'm very curious.

What is the relationship between Jan and Frank?

YI-LIN (M)

They were engaged once?

PEI-WEN (M)

Engaged?.

YI-LIN (M)

Yes, right before they came to America.

PEI-WEN (M)

How comes you didn't mention that before?

YI-LIN (M)

I thought there was no need to mention that!

Appendix

And, after all, you will hear that from someone else.

Pei-wen doesn't give up digging.

PEI-WEN (M)

Then what happened?

Yi-lin turns to look at Pei-wen. Then she begins to talk.

YI-LIN (M)

In the beginning, their relationship seemed pretty normal.
They looked like a sweet newlywed couple in front of everybody.
But, after a while, I heard talk that they had some quarrel.
Actually I was living next door to them at that time.
So I could overhear their quarrel sometimes.
However, isn't it pretty normal to have this kind of things in life?
So I didn't pay much attention to it.
Before long, I never heard that they quarreled anymore.
I thought they had been back to those sweet happy days!
But, at the meantime, someone said Jan went out late at night.
Moreover, people said she was seeing another man on the sly.
Before long, nobody saw her around here anymore.
I heard she transferred to LA
After that, I never saw again.

Both Yi-lin and Pei-wen go silent for a while. Then Yi-lin takes a look at her watch and says.

YI-LIN (M)

It's about time. We should see if she has arrived.

They walks toward the passenger exit.

Seen through Jan's camcorder (B&W): the interior of the airport building. The camcorder starts to pan from right to left. Then we see Pei-wen and Yi-lin enter the frame. Then it stops panning.

YI-LIN

Jan?

Jan moves away her camcorder.

Appendix

JAN

Hi! Yi-lin.

FADE OUT

---

5 LANSING STREETS/ PEI-WEN'S CAR

EXTERIOR, AFTERNOON

FADE UP

Seen through Jan's camcorder (B&W): the landscape of Lansing is passing by.

YI-LIN (M)

I think you probably have not been back to Lansing since you left.

JAN (M)

Uh-huh!

YI-LIN (M)

See anything different yet?

JAN (M)

To be frank with you, I could not remember Lansing very well.

YI-LIN (M)

Probably it is that you have gone from here for too long.

JAN (M)

Probably.

But Lansing looks similar to many other cities, doesn't it?

YI-LIN (M)

Really?

YI-LIN (M)

I haven't heard any news from you since you transferred to LA.

So, how are you doing?

JAN (M)

Not bad. I applied for practical training after graduation.

And I stay in LA doing my internship.

YI-LIN (M)

Do you plan to stay there for a long time?

Appendix

JAN (M)

It depends!

YI-LIN (M)

Actually I can understand why many people want to stay in the US.

The living environment here is really better than Taiwan.

Some people say it is hard to a job here.

Actually the situation in Taiwan would not any better.

It would not be surprising to choose to stay.

JAN (M)

Really? **(pause)**

How about yourself?

YI-LIN (M)

Oh! I will go back to Taiwan in a week.

JAN (M)

Then why don't you stay here?

YI-LIN (M)

I think it would be better for me to go back.

I don't know.

I feel like I won't have the homey feeling unless I go back to Taiwan.

JAN (M)

Really?

FADE OUT

---

6 INTERVIEW

B&W, DOCUMENTARY

FADE UP

A female Taiwanese student is interviewed about her thoughts on mainland China's military threat to Taiwan and her participation in rallies.

FADE OUT

Appendix

---

7 RAILROAD SIDE

EXTERIOR, AFTERNOON

FADE UP

TITLE

B&W

"Died in a strange land"

FADE OUT

FADE UP

Even this is a sunny day, it is still pretty cold when wind blows. Yi-lin is leaning on the car parked on the road shoulder by the railroad and looking Jan sitting by the railroad tracks quietly. Jan appears to be contemplating something. And Pei-wen still stays inside the car. She turns to look at Pei-wen and Jan, and doesn't say a word.

It is too quiet, but nobody seems willing to break the silence.

Jan looks at far side, the far end of the railroad tracks. Then she lowers heads to looks at the railroad under her feet. They remain silent

FADE OUT

---

8 STORY

B&W, INTERVIEW

FADE UP

TITLE

B&W

"A love story"

FADE OUT

FADE UP

A female Taiwanese student tells a love story of her own.

FADE OUT

Appendix

---

9 FRANK'S APARTMENT
INTERIOR, EVENING

FADE UP

TITLE

B&W

"A message"

FADE OUT

FADE UP

There is a long beep in the sound track. The living room is dark. Jan is walking toward the sofa. Then, she sits on the sofa. A moment later, she lies down on the sofa. Not for long, she slips into the floor.

JAN

Hi! Mia. It is too bad you are not home. I really need someone to talk to. **(pause)**
I'm staying Frank's apartment right now. It's kind of strange feeling. Things haven't changed much in this apartment. Even a very little thing. It brings back so much memory. **(pause)**
Agony memory! **(pause)**
All those quarrels, confrontations, and cold wars. **(pause)**
But I still can't believe he is gone. **(pause)**
Why? Why now? **(pause)**
Talk to me!

FADE OUT

FADE UP

It is still dark in the living room, and the TV is still on. But Jan is sleeping on the sofa with the telephone handset in her hand. All a sudden, the phone starts ringing. Jan is awakened by the phone. She answers it.

JAN

Hello! Hello!

But it seems nobody is on the other end of the phone. She hangs up the phone. Then she seems lost. She sits still on the floor. Then she seems hearing some noise coming from the neighbor. She stands up and checks it out. Jan walks toward the wall and

Appendix

leans on it to listen. She overhears two people, a man and a women, arguing with each other.

JE-MING (M)

You said you want to go back to Taiwan. It is difficult to find a job here. If I wanted you to stay with me while waiting on a job, definitely you would have said no. So I didn't tell you that I was trying to find a job in advance. I thought if I do get a job, that would be better. If I don't, then I go back to Taiwan.

YI-LIN (M)

You thought if you did find a job, then I have no reason not to stay, right?

JE-MING (M)

But there is such good opportunity right now. How could I give it up?

YI-LIN (M)

I did not tell you to give it up.. If you want to stay, then you stay. Nobody is gonna stop you.

JE-MING (M)

But I wish you'd stay, too. Don't leave! **(pause)**

LYNN (M)

What do you want me to do if I stay? Have you ever thought about my job, my friends, and my life? If I wanted to stay, I would have made such plan. **(long pause)**
I won't force you to go back. You better stay.

FADE OUT

---

10 YI-LIN AND PEI-WEN'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM)
INTERIOR, EVENING

FADE UP

In the bed room, Pei-wen opens the bedroom door a little bit. Then, she closes the door and sits on the floor.

YI-LIN (M)

All these things I can handle by myself. Don't bother!

JE-MING (M)

Are you still mad at me? **(pause)**

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Pei-wen closes the door and sits down on the floor against the wall.

YI-LIN (M)

That envelope is for Jan. Give it to me. **(pause)**

JE-MING (M)

You should know that I didn't change the plan of going back to Taiwan with you on purpose. It just happened so abruptly. **(pause)**

This opportunity is really rare. And their offer is not so bad. So I promised them.

YI-LIN (M)

Then why didn't you tell me that you want to find a job to stay?

JE-MING (M)

I did allude to it back then. You said you wanted to go back to Taiwan. Also it is difficult to find a job here. If I wanted you to stay with me while waiting on a job, definitely you would have said no. So I didn't tell you that I was try to find a job in advance. I thought if I did get a job, That would be wonderful. If I don't, then I go back to Taiwan.

All a sudden, the phone starts ringing. Pei stands up quickly to answer the phone.

PEI (M)

Hello! Huei-chun, it's you! I have been waiting for your phone call for so long. I keep searching for you, but I couldn't find you. Where have you been? **(pause)**

There are so many things I want to tell you, you know that? **(pause)**

The person I kept referring to killed himself the day before yesterday. Right at the railroad tracks by the campus. **(pause)**

Don't ask me! I don't know!

You know what? I met him for the last time just a few hours before he killed himself. **(pause)**

We ran into each other on the street. We talked for a while. It went pretty well. He seemed pretty normal. He even said he is interested in going out with me. I just could not tell how could he kill himself soon after that. **(long pause)**

Appendix

FADE OUT

---

11 LANSING STREETS/ FRANK'S CAR

EXTERIOR, LATE EVENING

FADE UP

Jan is driving Frank's car all alone in the streets of Lansing. She wanders around.

JAN (M, Inner thought)

In the dead of night,
I'm wandering
once again
through this remote, alien city
hidden in my memories.

Reflecting the dim yellow light
from the streetlamps,
the appearance of this city recalls
all similar nights.

I'm wandering
from a city to another
endlessly.

Searching or escaping?
I do not know.
But I do know one thing.
When another city limit is crossed,
I am
wandering.

Appendix

FADE OUT

11A MEMORIES

B&W, INTERIOR

CUT

Under the spotlight, Jan is carrying a suitcase. She seems determined to leave.

FRANK

You still want to leave!

What do you want from me really?

I don't know what I did wrong to make you torture me like this.

You don't say a word **(pause)**

and won't let me touch you! **(pause)**

What's wrong with you?

Unless you tell me why, or I won't let you go.

Frank tries to grasp Jan's hands and won't let her go.

JAN

No! Let me go!

FRANK

Then, tell me!

JAN

Let me go!

FRANK

Are you tired of me! **(pause)**

Or you've got someone in your mind! Tell me! Tell me!

Jan is struggling in Frank's arms. Then she drops her suitcase.

JAN

I just can't love a MAN as I did before, anymore!

FADE OUT

Appendix

11B LANSING STREETS/ FRANK'S CAR

EXTERIOR, LATE EVENING

JAN (M, Inner thought)

Yes!

When all the turmoil calm down,

gradually

FADE UP

Jan is sitting on the shoulder of road not far from her car. She looks around and seems easy and ascertained.

JAN (M, Inner thought)

I begin to see myself

on the edge of night.

And those complicated bygones hidden in my memories

all seem extremely clear and lucid once again.

Awake this body from long long sleep.

Loving man is not its only destiny.

That universal order,

sealed under its skin,

is only other's murmurs in the land of dream.

In front of the very cruelty of this strange land,

freedom is like an endless lone escape.

Farewell to all my hypocrisies.

Leaving is unequivocal

for the promised land I belong,

forever elsewhere,

Appendix

forever.

Jan stands up and gets in the car. She starts the car and drives it away.

---

12 YI-LIN
INTERIOR

Continued from Scene 11B.

Jan drives Frank's car away. Then it begins with the night view of city Lansing.

Buildings, streets, stores, traffic, neon lights, and so on.

Then Yi-lin's voice appears on the audio track.

YI-LIN

There she goes

out of house

into the night

all by herself

as always.

Just because she always seemed so far away,

I never had a chance to know her.

Until that night.

That night,

she drove the car out again.

But the car broke down in the middle of the road.

Then, she called me and asked me to give her a ride home.

And, on the way home, I finally asked her the questions which had been on my mind for so long.

First, she seem reluctant.

But, later, she began to explain what happened in the past.

Then, I realized everything.

Appendix

I was surprised Jan didn't speak for herself in the past.

But she said she didn't care.

Then I told her Frank left something for her.

A videotape.

FADE OUT

---

13 PEI-WEN AND YI-LIN'S APARTMENT

INTERIOR, LATE EVENING

FADE UP

TITLE

B&W

"A VIDEOTAPE"

FADE OUT

FADE UP

Late at night.

In Pei-wen and Yi-lin's apartment, TV is still on.

But, surprisingly, it is Frank's image appearing on the screen.

Jan is sitting close to TV and watching Frank quietly.

Yi-lin and Pei-wen are sitting next to each other on the floor by the sofa.

Everybody remains silent, even Frank.

They are all waiting Frank to talk.

Supposedly he would, he didn't.

Time seems standing still.

Probably he can not stand the situation. Suddenly he just walks away from the screen.

He just leaves three astonishing people in the living room.

Jan lowers her head sadly. We could not hardly hear her sigh.

Pei-wen and Yi-lin exchange their silent look.

Before long, Frank comes back.

Appendix

This time, he seems ascertained. And Jan looks at him. She seems to understand what happened. Then she reaches her hand to touch Frank's face on the screen. Her hand moves slowly and softly.

Lying in Yi-lin's arms, Pei-wen watches all this happens before her eyes. She is hold her exciting breath.

FADE OUT

(M) for Mandarin

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