

國立交通大學

外國語文學系外國文學與語言學碩士班

再現離散的家園記憶：以《愛無止盡》、《娘惹滋味》、《我的強娜威》三部電影為例

Filming Homes:

**The Politics of Representing Diasporas in
*Head-On, Rasa, and My Imported Wife***

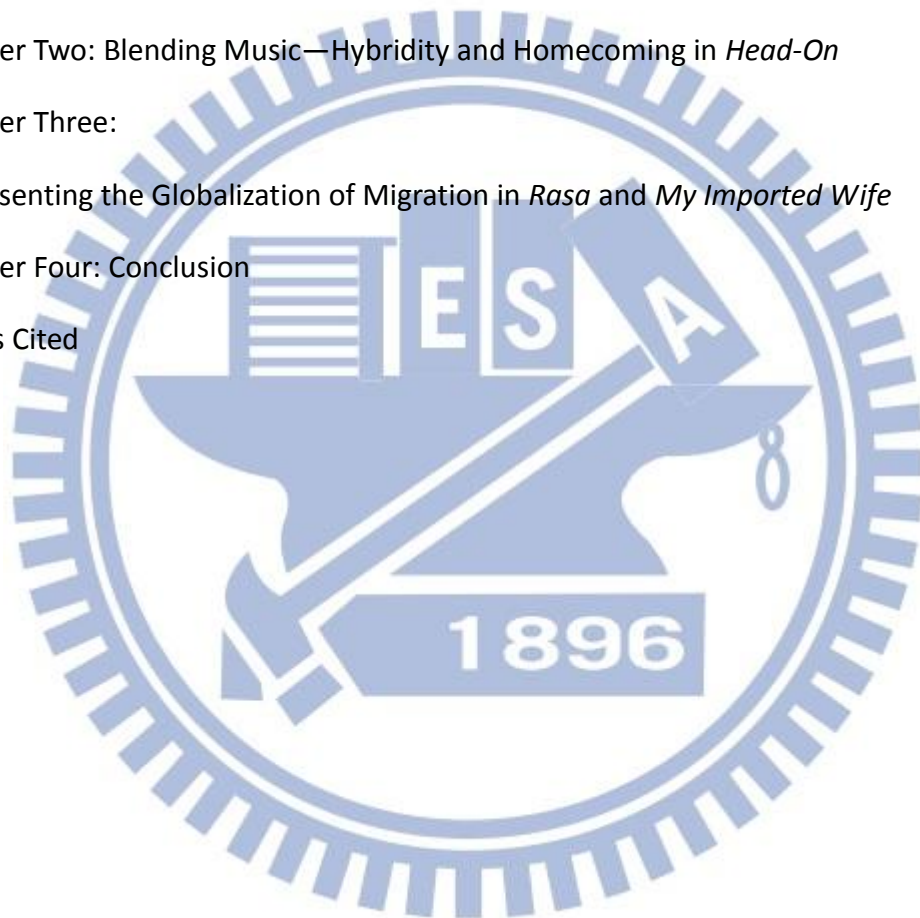
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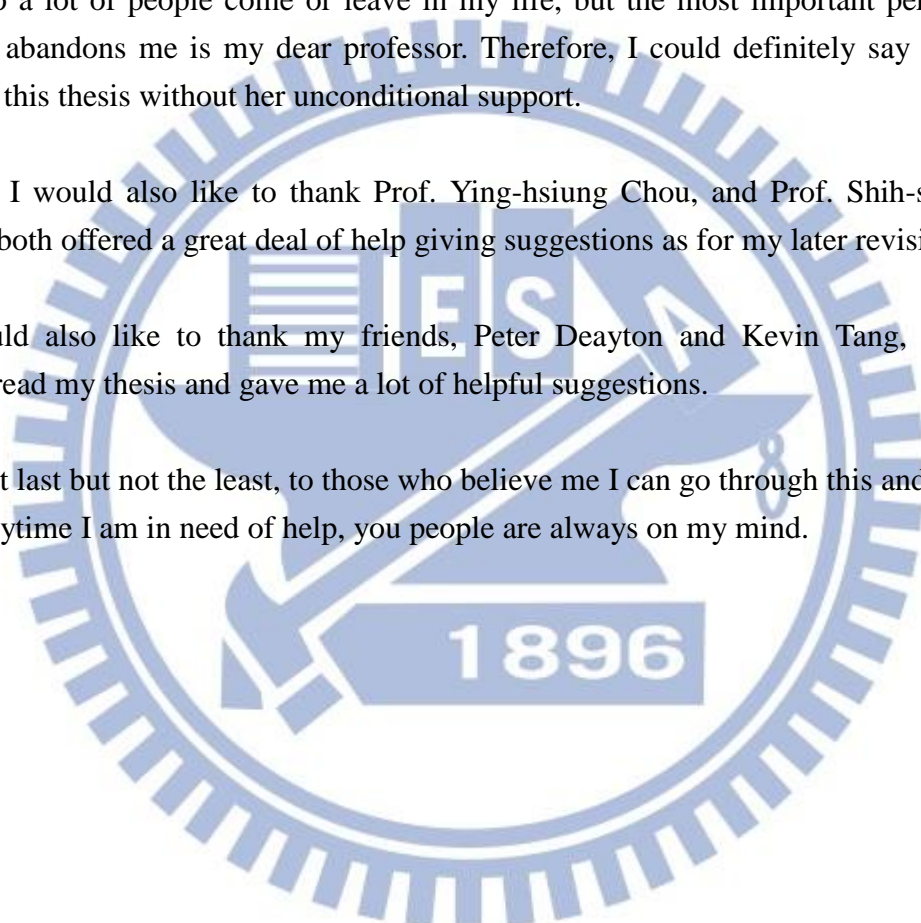
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English Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the transnational diasporic people's unfulfilled desire of homecoming by discussing how these de-territorialized people were represented in Fatih Akin's *Head-On*, and two Taiwanese films, *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife* respectively. While the host society tends to use integrationist or separatist notion to deal with the newcomers, this thesis seeks to provide a "third-space" narrative which transcends the two former notions to represent the diasporic people. Furthermore, my analysis of their different routes in terms of searching for home, shows that these films represent the idea of "home" through the politics of hybridization.

The thesis consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I try to highlight the saturated relationship of the dominant and the dominated in hegemonic formation to suggest a possible counter-hegemonic narrative in these three films. In chapter two, I analyze how Akin's "blending music" and spatial construction successfully formulate such a counter-hegemonic narrative in which he emphasizes the mobility of diasporic characters in the film as a way to break down the status quo. In contrast to my position as an outsider criticizing the issue of Turkish immigrants in Germany, I turn to analyze different politics of representation of new immigrants and foreign brides in Taiwan from an insider's viewpoint in chapter three. Although the directors of *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife* both start to make their films from a liberal perspective, their strategies of representing the new immigrants are completely different. Finally, in chapter four, I conclude this thesis by giving examples of the culinary scenes in the three films, and explain how the space of kitchen and culinary skills could be a site of domestication for women as well as a form of resistance to the dominant in different contexts.

Keywords:

diaspora, hybridization, hegemony, blending music, diaspora space

中文摘要

本篇論文藉由探討導演法堤·阿金的作品「愛無止盡」，與台灣影像作品「娘惹滋味」、「我的強娜威」這三部電影中對於離散主體的再現政策以探討對於家園意象無法實現的渴求。此外，企圖在接待社會(host society)中強勢二元化論述下對於離散群體同化，抑或排他兩種選擇之外，開創出第三論述。更進一步地分析這三部影像作品中對於尋根之旅的不同路徑中，共同存在的揉雜(hybridity)美學策略來再現其多元性。

整篇論文共涵括四個章節。在第一章中，藉由強調霸權結構下統治者與被統治者兩方位置的交互滲透性，以提供後續章節對於再現離散群體的政策，能夠跨越被霸權意識框架禁錮的可能性。第二章則主要討論法堤·阿金混合跨界音樂與顛覆傳統影像下的空間意象，並在影像與音樂兩者交互貫穿整部電影的過程下，成功地打破影像再現機制的現況。然而本人從一個全然第三者的角度下，切入分析「愛無止盡」這部探討土耳其裔移民的德國電影後，回頭在第三章中，以自我反涉的角度解析台灣影像工作者對於離散群體的再現政策。並同時藉由分析「娘惹滋味」、「我的強娜威」這兩部台灣影像作品的脈絡下，最終發現兩位導演雖源自相同創作動機，但以不同角度再現異己的結果。最後在第四章裡，藉由三部作品中皆曾出現的烹飪場景為例，來總結全文，並討論廚房與烹飪技能對於離散女性主體，是如何在不同影像文本中，扮演著歸化馴服與抵抗不平兩者迥異的角色。

關鍵字:離散、混雜性、霸權、揉雜音樂、離散空間



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Filming Homes:

The Politics of Representing Diasporas in *Head-On*, *Rasa*, and *My Imported Wife*

Chapter 1. Introduction

In the age of globalization and the flow of capitalism, people migrate from one place to another under different contexts and formulate different diasporic communities. Whether it is of one's free will or not, many members of the "people flow"¹ are constantly in a state of homelessness and lack of a sense of belongingness because their external displacement is deeply interwoven with internal anxiety. The vigorous development of the contemporary film industry makes film the most efficient and effective medium in transmitting modern culture and its ideologies. As transnational migrations have increased due to the "global cultural flow" stemming from globalization, the persistent desire of these deterritorialized people to maintain contact with their homeland provides a new market for the film industry (Appadurai 36). Therefore, the issues of diaspora have gained a lot of attention from different

¹Please see Arjun Appadurai's book: *Modernity at Large*.

filmmakers and producers. However, what I would like to explore in this thesis is to investigate the different kinds of aesthetic perspectives adopted by filmmakers to represent the diasporic issues, such as the interaction between different diasporic groups and the ways in which they struggle with the control of mainstream society.

Another important issue is that if the term “diaspora” has been used so extensively as a category for the ethnic minority in a displaced host society, does it also provide the channel through which the dominant power can easily categorize and control the minority people?

In order to unravel these problems about diaspora, I will use Fatih Akin’s *Head-On* (aka. *Gegen die Wand*), Chih-yi Wen’s *Rasa* (*The Taste of Nyonya*), and Chung-lung Tsai’s *My Imported Wife* as textual examples for exploration. The film *Head-On* (2004) highlights the conflicts between Turkish immigrants and their children while living in a highly modernized and unfriendly society within Germany. *Rasa* discusses foreign workers and the “maid trade” in Taiwan, while *My Imported Wife* uses the filmic genre of documentary to “record” the case of a trans-cultural marriage between a disabled Taiwan husband and an eloquent Cambodian wife. All three films concentrate on the issues of diaspora, ethnic relations, and cultural conflicts within global contexts. Furthermore, each director uses a different style of aesthetic framework to present their unique vision of diasporic identities.

Theoretically, my thesis seeks to delineate a “third-space,”² in Homi K. Bhabha’s terms, which transcends the two strategies that mainstream society use whilst living in the same society: one is assimilation, and the other is separation. Through an analysis of the aesthetic representations of diasporas in *Head-On*, *Rasa*, and the documentary *My Imported Wife*, I will highlight the cultural flows and their connections through the politic of hybridization. Furthermore, the hybridity in films not only attracts audiences from all over the world under the ideology of global capitalism, it is also the site of resistance that shatters ethnic, national, sexual and spatial boundaries through the exchange of culture.

The reason I would like to investigate the diasporic group of Turkish-Germans from an outsider’s viewpoint comes from my personal experience while traveling around Munich several years ago. One day during my tour around the city with my family, I walked down a street filled with restaurants and souvenir shops. I saw a waiter of obvious Middle-Eastern origin waving his hands and saying “*kon-ni-chi-wa*” to me, which means “hello” in Japanese. I happened to know some basic Japanese and realized he had mistaken us for Japanese people, so I corrected him in English: “Thank you, but we are from Taiwan.” I was very surprised that the next thing he said to me was in perfect Mandarin: “*ni-how-ma*,” which means “how are you.”

² The term is adopted from Bhabha’s book “The Location of Culture.”

Later on I found out that the waiter was a Turkish guest worker, like millions of other Turkish people who come to Germany in search of a better living. This incident provoked my interest in the Turkish-German community and their immigrant culture in a highly “non-acceptant” European environment which ironically has higher immigration rate than those “nations of immigrants” such as Australia, the United States, and Canada (Penninx 2-3). When I look back to my home country, Taiwan, recruiting lots of people from Southeast Asian countries to fulfill the shortage of labor performing “3-D jobs,” it is in some ways similar to Germany’s system of guest workers (Castles 107).³ These foreign workers in Taiwan have been under severe legal restrictions and they are required to rotate and leave Taiwan every few years so that they will not have permanent residence in Taiwan. These restraints indicate that they are regarded as “an economic buffer of labor which can be brought in as needed and sent away” at anytime when they undergo unemployment, a practice that exploits and fragmentizes people into the reductive representation of a labor product (Castles 2). However, taking the history of Turkish immigrants in Germany as a model, we can understand that whilst the recruiting country only “wanted labor, not people,” it would still “end up with new ethnic minorities” (Castles 8).

³ Stephen Castles defines “3-D jobs” as “dirty, dangerous, difficult” jobs. This Asian phenomenon happens in highly industrialized Western European countries as well such as when West Germany encountered a great labor shortage during the mid-1950s because of the “economic miracle” which stemmed from the national reconstruction after WW II (29).

The exploited condition of “immigrant workers” and “foreign brides” in Taiwan is an important phenomenon that echoes the situation of Turkish immigrant workers in Germany.⁴ Although migrants both in Germany and Taiwan suffer state-sanctioned oppression, they are represented from different points of view in these three films, which express heterogeneous social outlooks in Germany and in Taiwan. In Germany, people traditionally take their country as an “ethno-cultural” society, the so-called “Volk” (Castles 18). If we examine the immigration policy between the 1970s and 1990s, we can conclude that Germans usually take an exclusionary attitude toward their immigrants. This exclusionist practice means that they only recognize citizenship through descent and take their immigrants as temporary residents or sojourners and usually refuse to grant immigrants citizenship even after a long period of residency.

The immigrant policy in Taiwan began in a similarly exclusionist way to that of Germany, but recently the general social atmosphere in Taiwan toward treating labor diasporas has evolved into a more liberal attitude. In the beginning of 1970s, most of the industrialized Asia Pacific countries such as Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan all used the exclusive immigrant policy to prevent the permanent settlement of guest workers. However, because of the rapid development of global economy, these countries can no

⁴ The idea of articulating Turkish-German diaspora with the issue of “the new immigrant” in Taiwan benefited from the discussion I attended in a symposium entitled ‘E/Im/Migration and Culture’ held in Istanbul, Turkey. (Sept.15-17, 2007)

longer ignore the growing tendency of cross-cultural marriage that comes along with the recruitment of foreign labor (Castles 114-16). Therefore, in a multicultural society like Taiwan, which had been colonized many times over, the general social attitude toward immigrants is supposedly becoming more and more liberal.

At present, the different social atmospheres toward treating labor diaspora in Taiwan and Germany are also reflected in the different aesthetic constructions that filmmakers deploy to represent the diasporic issues in these two countries. Most importantly of all, I admire the energy and courage of diasporic people with which they deal with oppressions from the dominant group. Therefore, I wish to study the vibrant scenes of these cultural conflicts and discuss the potential counter-hegemonic politics, as well as the problematic multiculturalist notion of representing these diasporic minorities in these three films.

The term “diaspora” is important in my thesis since I adopt it as my framework to define and articulate the dilemmas of these immigrants. Originally, “diaspora” is a Greek word which comes from the Greek tradition of gardening. The term “diaspora” in Greek combines two words—*speiro* meaning “to sow,” while *dia* indicates “over” (Sheffer 9). The term “diaspora” therefore refers to the dispersed state of scattered seeds. Later on, due to the metaphorical meaning of seeds as the carriers of culture, the meaning of “diaspora” also indicates the forced expulsion of Jews since the

destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians Conquest in the 6th century (Kalra et al. 9). However, the term has also been more broadly applied to describe the conditions of other ethnicities that also go through massive dispersions. Consequently, “diaspora” becomes a term indicating people with “deterritorialized identities” because of the experiences of migration and displacement (Kearney 526-27).

However, not all immigrants can be termed as “diasporan.” We need to clarify the differences between a diasporan and an exile. In Hamid Naficy’s definitions there exist both similarities and differences between the two terms. Naficy clarifies that the term diaspora refers to a group of displaced people who “have an identity in their homeland *before* their departure, and their diasporic identity [in the host society] is constructed in resonance with this prior identity” (14). While exiles can be individualist or collective, the exilic identification process remains a “vertical and primary relationship with their homeland,” whereas the identification process of diaspora goes to a “necessarily collective” and maintains a “horizontal and multisited” relationship with their native country (14).

Some theoretical discussions of diaspora as a way to discuss cultural identity tend to construct a fixed/homogenized identity for one specific ethnic group. However, it jeopardizes the capacity of one group to affiliate with another group. Lisa Lowe, for instance, points out the problem of essentializing a cultural identity for Asian

Americans and argues that interpreting the identity of diaspora only through vertical (filial) transmission of generational conflict risks “obscuring the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities among Asians. [...And it also] displaces social differences into a privatized familial opposition” (135). Lowe believes that the cultural identity of Asian Americans is not only transmitted through vertical relationships but also through horizontal diffusion amongst communities. In this way, we can see that the process of constructing cultural identity is not fixed or pure. Instead, it is always in the state of incompleteness and “becoming” with the historical background, external environment, and material condition.

Stuart Hall’s statement about cultural identity is quite similar to Lowe’s position. Hall argues that cultural identity is a matter of “becoming” as well as “being.” It belongs to the future as much as to the past. [...] Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being externally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power. (236)

Thus following the argument, we can see that the heterogeneity and the state of constant changing and mixing of racial minorities destabilizes the dominant culture’s construction of ethnic minority people as one homogeneous group.

Significantly, the saturating nature of diaspora challenges “the notion of

singularity and conceptions of race as the material locus of differences, intersections, and incommensurabilities” (Lowe 136). The quasi-colonial hegemonic narrative of constructing one race into a “singularity” can also be seen in *Rasa*. In the beginning sequence in which Sari meets her Taiwanese boss for the first time, a female agent of a human resources company introduces Sari in front of the disabled grandmother and her granddaughter, describing her as an Indonesian. The agent characterizes Indonesians as the kind of people having a “mild temper and being quick-learners,” while she describes Filipinos as a group of people who are “smart and calculating.” The agent even goes on to tell the family that the company can provide any type of personnel according to the family’s demand. This kind of reductive narrative echoes exactly the pattern used by the dominant (majority) culture to control minority communities. The separatist logic corresponds to the structure of colonialism that “does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces and separates them” in order to subjugate them (Fanon 94). Nowadays, the rise of global capitalism replaces the arbitrary military domination of colonialism. Global capitalism has become a kind of “neo-colonialism” that follows the same ideology to control people’s political and economical status in the former colony, though in a more implicit way (Castles 163).

While emphasizing the fluctuation and heterogeneity of the racial minority, I also realize that the dominant culture, which has continual relations to the minority, is also

unsteady and closed (Lowe 139). I propose to understand how subaltern groups like ethnic minorities can stand out and influence the existing (dominant) culture through Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Throughout his analysis of the social construct of class in Italy, Gramsci argues that the political rising of the working class in Italian society during 1850-1920 is a noticeable phenomenon that empowers subordinate people. Gramsci discovers that the lower and working classes within the mechanism of capitalism reverse the subordinate position because they "succeed in creating a system of class alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State" (*Pre-Prison* 320). In this way, the working class becomes the new dominant (hegemonic) bloc and is also able to speak for the minority people that are often oppressed in the apparatus of capitalism.

However, in order to retain the primacy of the hegemonic group, Gramsci points out that the dominant culture must engage with the worldview of its subalterneity because a successful hegemonic formation relies on a minimum of conflicts and expands its leadership peacefully before the antagonists consent (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 125). As a result, before the dominant group exercises power, the interests of the dominated group must be taken into account and even concessions within a reasonable range may be needed to be made in order to seek the support of

the subalterns to expand the realm in which the leading group dominates.⁵

Gramsci's theory of hegemony proposes a certain optimism because he seems to believe that the hegemonic process endows the subaltern with a certain kind of agency.

It is because the process of hegemonic formation provides some sort of agency to subalterns, lifting up the position of the minority from a lifeless "thing" that is socially constructed as always dominated by the leaders to "a historical person, a protagonist" who can actively threaten the hegemonic bloc (Jones 47). This kind of optimism is based upon the supposed hegemonic process in which the dominant group asks for consent from the dominated, antagonist group. Otherwise, if the dominant group decides not to give voice to those whom it rules, the primacy will not last. In other words, the concept of hegemony is

[...] not only the political process by which a particular group constitutes itself as 'the one' or the 'the majority' in relation to which 'minorities' are defined and know themselves to be "other," but is equally the process by which various and incommensurable positions of otherness may ally and constitute a new majority, a "counter-hegemony." (Lowe 140)

The subaltern is the group that Gramsci defines as "not unified" and prehegemonic; however, his notion in the final transforming phase of the subaltern classes would

⁵ Gramsci explains the compromises the leading group can make to satisfy the need of the minority group are those that could not endanger the central value which has "the function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity" (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 161).

grant the subaltern its “integral autonomy” (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 52).

This integral autonomy also indicates that through articulating the needs of different minority groups, a new hegemonic party will be formed. The saturated, inter-dependent relationship between the hegemonic group and the subaltern can be regarded as the starting point upon which we can find hybrid connections and use it as a tool for resistance. While using the term hybridity, it seems to suggest that there are supposedly pure entities before the process of hybridization. For example, Paul Gilroy argues against the insinuated purity underlying the term “hybridity”: “the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities.... I think there isn’t any purity; there isn’t any anterior purity” (54-55). Likewise, as Gramsci points out, the hegemonic group needs to include part of the interests of the dominated group; while the minority also needs to affiliate with other minorities to increase their spectrum of power, this interdependent relationship in a way corresponds to the cultural politics of hybridity. On the other hand, the fact that the cultural politics of hybridity can be deployed by both sides reminds us to be aware of the contexts within which the politics of hybridity is used and also the motivation behind the employment of this term.

Thus, I want to use the saturated relationship between the hegemony (majority) and the dominated (minority immigrants) to be the point of departure for my argument to constitute a discourse of “counter-hegemony” by evaluating aesthetic

representations of the diasporic minorities in these three films and the dynamic that might disrupt the majority. I will focus on the different aesthetic politics these directors adopt to represent the processes of identification that a diasporan incessantly encounters whilst negotiating between their ethnic homeland and host society under the hegemonic structure of global capitalism.

Amongst these three films, *Head-On* was the recipient of a number of international awards after its release in 2004, including the Golden Bear at the International Film Festival in Berlin. It was the first German film to win the prestigious prize in eighteen years (Berghahn 141). The director Fatih Akin is a Turkish immigrant who grew up and studied filmmaking in Hamburg. However, Akin does not want his film to be categorized as among Sarita Malik's "cinema of duty"⁶ made by other first-generation Turkish-German filmmakers such as Tevfik Başer and Hark Bohm. Both Başer's and Bohm's films represent cross-cultural conflicts in a documentary style. Başer's most famous work *Vierzig Quadratmeter Deutschland/Forty Squaremeters of Germany* (1986) depicts female Turkish immigrants living under the oppression of Turkish patriarchy in Germany; Bohm's work *Yasemin* (1988) suggests a problematic multicultural integration by ending the

⁶ Sarita Malik defines the term "cinema of duty" in her article "Beyond the 'Cinema of Duty'? The Pleasure of Hybridity" as a cinematic style that mainly centers on the issue of ethnic relations and insoluble conflicts in a realistic style during 1970s to 1980s. Although some of the works included were under attack of embodying ethnic stereotypes, there were still other works answering back to the national narrative of ethnic relations and also "offering an alternative view of the diasporic experience" (204).

intracultural conflicts in the film with the last scene in which the title character, a Turkish girl, jumps onto the backseat of her German boyfriend's motorcycle and symbolically escapes from her Turkish patriarchal home. Film critic Deniz Göktürk points out that *Forty Squaremeters of Germany* and *Yasemin* strengthen the stereotypical dichotomy between a liberating, progressive German culture, and a backward, patriarchal Muslim Turkish culture by sketching out the colonial fantasy “of victimised Turkish women, who, especially when young and beautiful, need to be rescued” from their patriarchal ethnic family (“Turkish Women” 69).

In Chapter Two of my thesis, I will analyze the aesthetic style in *Head-On* the filmmaker manipulates in order to provide a different representation of diasporic people to counterpoint the Eurocentric paradigm in the previous films. Fatih Akin refuses to represent Turkish immigrants in Germany by following the ideological framework of his forerunners, who in the past few decades choose to present the image of Turkish diaspora “in one disguise: as a problem” (Burns 142). Akin, on the other hand, tries to represent Turkish immigrants differently through highlighting the dynamics of their “experience of rootlessness, of culture clash and of living between or in two worlds” (Berghahn 143). Akin's intention to represent the struggle of diasporic life between two cultures can be reflected in the two strategies he uses in *Head-On* to show the diasporic experience: the blending of music and the spatial

configurations that both echo the recurrent motif of homecoming.

For instance, the techno song which appears in one scene when Cahit is drunk in an urban pub embodies the inner dialogue of his mental loss and the cultural value carried by this musical genre with which he identifies while simultaneously playing the role of background music in the pub. Akin also repeatedly inserts the scene of a Turkish musical band throughout the film in which a Turkish female singer sings a traditional story of a girl searching for her true love that parallels the main storyline in the film.

On the other hand, while talking about the recurrent motif of homecoming that exists in almost all of the diasporic filmmakers' work, the diasporic "double consciousness" of home should also be noticed. Naficy points out that "accented filmmakers are structurally outsiders, however much they desire to be considered insiders, either within their own native culture or in the host society" (70). Therefore, the accented filmmaking communicates the controversial feelings between imagined home and encountered society through cinematic production, combining all sorts of elements such as the use of a hybrid narrative to reflect the filmmaker's multifocality while struggling between two cultures. Moreover, the aesthetic style derived from their works connects all the other displaced filmmakers together with a collective desire centering on the imagined homecoming. We need to realize that the accented

filmmaking underscores “visual fetishes of homeland and past” and “visual markers of difference and belonging” (Naficy 22). These accented filmmakers tend to present their work filled with doubleness to show their ambivalent feelings about home.

Furthermore, I will also discuss the aesthetic value of spatial representation in the three films and how the external spatial arrangements of *mis-ce-scène* make spectators identify with the internal yearning for the imagined homeland. For Naficy, spatial configuration in diasporic films is an important perspective to analyze diasporic filmmaking. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests using the concept of the chronotope,⁷ or “time-space,” as a critical term to study the spatial and temporal configurations in the novel and also examines the forces in the cultural background behind these configurations. Naficy follows Bakhtin’s footsteps and uses the concept of the “chronotope” in theorizing accented (diasporic) filmmaking and turns it into the idea of the “cinematic chronotope” to refer to the “temporal and spatial settings in which stories unfold” in diasporic films (152).

I will use Naficy’s theorization about “chronotopes of imagined homeland,” in which he differentiates between “home-seeking journey,” “journey of homelessness,” and “homecoming journey” to study the framework of spatial and temporal settings and analyze the forces behind this construction in the accented filmmaking

⁷ See Mikhail Bakhtin’s “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” in *Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*. 84-258

exemplified by Akin's *Head-On* (152, 222-38). According to Naficy, the concept of chronotope in film relates closely to cinematic form – it is normally divided into the open and closed forms. Open cinematic form is usually “represented in a *mise-en-scène* that favors external locations and open settings and landscapes, bright natural lighting, and mobile and wandering diegetic characters” (153). The openness in cinematic form suggests the use of long shots to situate characters in open settings and therefore preserve their integrity. On the other hand, the spatial representation of the closed cinematic form is composed by the *mise-en-scène* with closed settings such as the space of a small room with dark lighting or any other factors that can formulate a psychological feeling of restriction (153). We can see at this point it is important to pay more attention to the *mise-en-scène* in diasporic cinema, because the configuration of space carries the message of placement and displacement whether the characters dominate the space or are dominated by it (Naficy 154).

Furthermore, Naficy adopts Louis Gianneti's analysis that the connotation of the open form is “in general recessive, appears to be spontaneous and accidental, and can be associated with realism,” while the closed form suggests “conspicuous, self-conscious and deliberate, and may be associated with formalism” (154). In short, the open form implies the autonomy of one's choice while the closed form suggests the passivity of fate. Besides the open and closed forms, there is a “thirdspace

chronotope” which engages with transitional sites like airports, bus stations or borders and also other symbolic icons that can represent the mobility transporting people from one place to another (Naficy 154). The thirdspace chronotope could also be called a “border chronotope” since the spatial configuration of border-crossing is a motif that substantializes the psychological process of the diasporic experience struggling between the internal loss of displacement and the eternal yearning for returning to their homeland (Naficy 237).

Responding to Naficy’s argument, Akin’s film uses the chronotopes of homeland to reflect his “double consciousness” as a diasporic filmmaker living *between* two cultures. The plot of *Head-On* also echoes the persisting motif of “*Heimat*” in German film history – a German word that describes the “nostalgic memories of fantasies precisely of what is lost or absent” invoked by the experience of migration or reluctant exile (Berghahn 145-46). In Germany, *Heimatfilm* became a popular film genre in the 1950s, which reflected post-war trauma due to the massive in-flow of refugees relocated from Eastern Germany after the end of WW II. Both accented cinema and *Heimatfilm* emphasize the desire for belonging and identity. However, the “*Heimat*” in accented cinema refers to a country that is located faraway, and always “a structuring absence, an unattainable utopia” because the secure roots in a homeland are “replaced by the complex contingencies of transnational routes”; whereas the

Heimatfilm in Germany conveys a romantic ideal in which the characters in these films can find their new “*Heimat*” through an idyllic depiction of a rural village in West Germany (Berghahn 146-47). This romantic ideal continually exists in the cultural construct of present Germany and expands its connotations to provide a “trope for identity politics in an increasingly multicultural society” (Moltke 7).

In the process of globalization, the traditional spatial construction that helps define one’s identity is undermined by the breakdown of distance and boundaries because of rapid technological development, so we can feel a growing need for people to find a sense of belonging and security. It is also the second filmic strategy leading to the success of *Head-On*, because the motif of homecoming recalls the common desire of audiences from all cultures to retrieve the “imagined homeland” (in Rushdie’s terminology), only to realize the impossibility of coming back to the utopian space in the end.

This desire of homecoming contrasts sharply to the multiculturalistic representations in *Rasa* in which the characters find a new home in Taiwan. I want to talk about whether the identity as a diasporan transcends the general division of gender, if it can provide liberation for women and if it also problematizes the integrationist perspective of *Rasa*. The English title *Rasa* comes from the Malay language, which means “taste,” while the Chinese title *The Taste of Nyonya*, signifies

the theme of cultural hybridity in this film, which allegorizes the process of cultural clashes throughout the film. “Nyonya” in the Chinese title is a term for the daughter in a Chinese-Malaysian transcultural family. Later on it also referred to the cuisine made by these Nyonyas. Nyonya cuisine combines Chinese cooking style with food elements from Malaysia and spices from Southeast Asia (Huang). The director wants to use this kind of metaphor to describe the fact that even though clashes between different cultures could be painful, as exemplified by the sequence in which Sari’s Muslim daily prayer is misunderstood as conducting some kind of diabolical ritual, everything will turn out sweet and harmonious like Nyonya cuisine.

In my analysis of *Rasa*, I want to argue that the director Chi-yi Wen tries to juxtapose the hybridity of culture in a globalized Taiwan society by using a problematic way that seemingly “naturalizes” all these new immigrants and “assimilates” them under the cover of multiculturalism. For instance, the representations of the female characters are submissive and docile, while the plot leaves the desire of male guest workers such as the Thai worker Tsai-yo unresolved. Therefore, I will begin my analysis with discussing the gender relations within a diasporic group in *Rasa*. It is also interesting to note that in *Head-on*, the inhibited gender relations encourages the female protagonist Sibel to pursue her freedom and sexual autonomy exceeding the Muslim cultural restraints on females, but in the end

she chooses to stay with her new family in Istanbul, to be a wife that she does not want to be at the beginning with Cahit. I believe it is because the director tries to tell us it is a bildungsroman for Sibel that she finally realizes that persistent escape would end up taking her nowhere. In other words, if she chooses to elope with her true love Cahit, this act just shows she will be permanently away from her new family, her sense of “home” that she struggles with and finally finds a place she belongs to. She understands that the freedom she asks for all the time does not mean to abandon her diasporic identity or cultural limitations but to ask herself where her right to ask for it comes from. As spectators watching Sibel’s revolting and irresponsible behavior in the first half of the film, she understands at last that freedom to her is how she defines herself and the will to make an effort for it. Floya Anthias argues that there are two sets of gender relations which a diasporic woman needs to confront. One is the relation to the host society and the other is the relation to her ethnic community (560). Diasporic men are “most empowered in the household due to patriarchal norms,” but disempowered in the host society because of antagonism originating from sexual competition with other local males, whereas the situation of diasporic women is the opposite. While a diasporic woman is disempowered in the household due to the patriarchal order in the house, she might be “potentially empowered in the wider society where discourses of ‘rescuing’ vulnerable and oppressed female members” is

pervasive in the dominant society (Kalra et al., 52). Although this kind of female empowerment is limited under the patriarchal norm and its colonialist superiority, it gives somewhat more mobility to diasporic women than to men.

Furthermore, in a diasporic household women are usually considered as the “carriers of culture.” This is because in the domestic arena, the pressure to raise children and pass down cultural heritage to the next generation is usually the responsibility of the mothers. The role of cultural carrier for diasporic women can be both limiting and empowering. It is a limitation when it becomes a way of oppression to those women who question the role of being a “carrier of culture” and also becomes an obstacle for them to fit into the host society; on the other hand, the role is empowering when it grants women “positions of community authority” (Kalra et al., 57). In the film *Rasa*, Sari is employed to do domestic work as a maid, but she chooses to take the role of a cultural carrier by making South Asian delicacies and thereby receives the recognition (consent) of the host family. Finally, she takes control of everything, from domestic work to economical responsibility, by supporting the family of her boss and becoming the locus of power to convince the majority to accept the culture from which she originates.

The role of “cultural carrier” meets its challenge when one chooses to deny the role that the ethnic society imposes on her. Especially for those second-generation

diasporic women who grow up in a foreign society, there is a need to develop an expedient way to fulfill expectations from both sides of the cultural system. Eventually, these second-generation diasporic women live a “double life”: they choose the lifestyle of host society to fit in the public sphere, while privately they follow the aspirations of their ethnic parents when they come back to the household. They are under double pressure and having double lives, which is the reason they are usually labeled as a “double victim” (Göktürk 250-51).

Nevertheless, Wen’s storyline seems to assert an integrationist notion and tries to naturalize these characters through replacing them with the ordinary position in our daily life to build an emotional bonding with the audience and to persuade them to accept these “new immigrants” as local people and thus should be treated accordingly. By contrast, *My Imported Wife* uses the genre of documentary to record the struggle in a transnational marriage, which in a way complements the lack of the misconceived multiculturalist notion in *Rasa* and genuinely retains the incoherence between different cultures.

The promising liberal notion of multiculturalism is always under attack because the politics of integration and assimilation it deploys come with a “patronizing Eurocentric distance and/or respect for local cultures”:

it “respects” the Other’s identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed

“authentic” community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position [...] from which one is able to appreciate properly other particular cultures—the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority. (Žižek 44)

In *Rasa*, we can see this underlying superiority exist and being revealed throughout the film. For instance, Sari’s love for her boss is depicted as a form of salvation, and the sequences in which she falls down the stairs, has a miscarriage and finally becomes the wife of her boss bespeak that for Wen to be a “docile sacrificer” is the only path to gain recognition into the dominant culture. Finally, if we look retrospectively we can understand the reason why *Rasa* won the 2007 Golden Bell Award. Its multicultural notion corresponds to the the image of a liberal attitude that the Taiwanese government endeavors to create. For all its conservative politics, *Rasa* is a film that successfully brings the issue of immigrant workers into the attention of Taiwanese viewers; yet it is what it has sacrificed to receive the common embrace of Taiwanese audiences that we need to pay attention to.

Overall, I want to use “diaspora” as a critical term to discuss the representations of dynamic mobility in films to articulate the differences in culture, class, gender, and other modalities that relate to the struggling for power and hegemony. The word

“diaspora” often invokes the image of traumatic experiences of dispersion and psychological alienation from the receiving society. However, diaspora can also be the site of new beginning which “places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (Brah 193). It is this “creative tension” that situates the concept of the diaspora in a “relational positioning,” and transcends the socially constructed binarism in the regime of power (Brah 183). In this way, the concept of “diaspora” begins to deconstruct and interrogate the hegemonic primacy in the dominant culture from a multilocal perspective inscribed in the politics of diaspora and thus formulate a “third space” beyond the majority/minority dichotomy.

In the following chapters, I want to discuss the possibilities of constituting the “third space” through analyzing the aesthetic representations in the three filmic works. In “Blending Music: Hybridity and Homecoming in *Head-On*,” I highlight the use of music in the film, and how the hybridized music of the film such as punk rock or third world music that seem to be artistically contradictory but coexist in *Head-On* smoothly. Therefore, Akin blends different music styles as a way to influence spectators’ identification with his displaced characters. In the third chapter, “Representing the Globalization of Migration in *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife*,” I want to draw attention to what is happening in Taiwan and discuss the visual

subjectification of the so-called “New Immigrants” in *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife*. In this chapter, I argue that Wen’s multiculturalist narrative in *Rasa* fails to achieve her proposed intention of telling the story from the perspective of foreign labor immigrants. On the contrary, the docile characters in Wen’s film are mostly naturalized and also assimilated by the host society, and thereby losing diasporic “relational positioning” in the end. Nevertheless, I want to complement the problematic multiculturalist representation by taking the documentary film *My Imported Wife* as my exemplary text to elaborate on the politics of difference in the discourse of diaspora with Avtar Brah’s analytic term “diaspora space.” By using the idea of diaspora space, what I want to emphasize is that besides Bhabha’s notion of third-space and hybridization, it is also important to note that the local people also undergo the continuing hybridized process in Brah’s immanent “diaspora space”. At last, in chapter four, I would conclude the previous chapters by comparing the culinary scenes in these three different movies and discuss how cooking can be used to represent different diasporic identity.

Chapter 2

Blending Music: Hybridity and Homecoming in *Head-On*

Fatih Akin is undoubtedly the mostly popular Turkish-German director in the contemporary European film industry. This director of Turkish descent was born in Hamburg and studied visual communications in Hamburg's College of Fine Arts.⁸ After winning several festival prizes with his short films and directing some feature films, the award-winning *Head-On* made Akin a highly-recognized international filmmaker. *Head-On* is the first part of Akin's "Love, Death, and the Devil" trilogy, with the three films in the trilogy sharing a common interest in the identification of immigrants and their ideas of home. In 2007, Akin impressed the world again with his second film of the trilogy, entitled *The Edge of Heaven*. Unlike *Head-On*, which concentrates on the theme of love, *The Edge of Heaven* discusses the theme of death. The basic plot of *The Edge of Heaven* tells the story of Turkish immigrants and their second generations in Germany while also highlighting the political and cultural interaction of people struggling in two cultures. The last piece of Akin's trilogy is still in production and the producer of the third film Klaus Maeck affirming that it would still be a "big migration drama which will travel from Germany to America" (Blaney).

⁸ See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,508521,00.html>

The film *Head-On* describes a male protagonist Cahit Tomruk, who comes from Mersin (the middle part of Turkey) but abandons his Turkish roots entirely after he migrates to Hamburg. He is in his forties and yet he has no decent job; he lost his beloved wife and consequently became an alcoholic and a drug addict. Cahit decides to commit suicide out of desperation by deliberately crashing his car into the wall. However, his suicidal act fails and is then sent to hospital. There he meets the heroine Sibel, who also attempts to terminate her own life.

Sibel is the second-generation daughter of a Turkish immigrant family in Hamburg, and is brought up in a western democratic/individualist culture. But her Turkish background holds her against her will of pursuing individualist freedom since her traditional Turkish parents only permit her to marry with a man of Turkish origin. Therefore, Sibel asks Cahit to have a fake marriage with her while they can still keep their own original single lifestyle. As Cahit and Sibel's fake marriage become more and more "real," Cahit falls in love with his wife and accidentally kills one of Sibel's lovers out of jealousy. After several years of life in prison, Cahit regains his freedom and tries to reunite with Sibel. But at that time she has already had a new family in Istanbul.

In a well-known film like *Head-On*, the director opens a new path for presenting immigrants in a highly-unfriendly environment like Germany, yet surprisingly it still

wins over most of the picky viewers in Germany and in Europe. I believe the effective use of music contributes to this success. In this chapter, I want to discuss the aesthetic techniques of “blending music” that Akin successfully manipulates to present varied diasporic images of his characters in *Head-On*.

One of the most artistic techniques in *Head-On* is the way in which it combines sounds and images to enable spectators to transcend the dichotomy of insider vs. outsider. But before we talk about the music in film and how it brings an emotional effect to the audience, we need to examine the historical status of scoring first. In the era of the classical studio system, critics declared that “film music should be unobtrusive” because the composition of images and visual pleasure that movies bring are the main reasons that audiences come to the movies (Gorbman 43; Adorno 29). And in the essay “Prejudice and Bad Habits,” Adorno and Eisler suggest that the initiative concept of film music comes from “leitmotif.” The word usually associates with Wagner’s opera to indicate a short piece of melody that constantly appears during the performance, so that the repetition of this short melody could recall audiences’ attention to the theme in the opera. However, because of the differing natures between opera and cinema, the insertion of leitmotif has a different symbolic meaning. In Wagner’s opera, which has a “symbolic nature,” music played by the orchestra is equivalent to verbal conduct on the stage (Adorno 27). The repetition of

leitmotif in Wagner's opera is to parallel the heroic theme of the composition, such as the music in *Tristan and Isolde*, and build up events on stage that have a metaphysical meaning. If we look into the nature of cinema, we see that music plays a completely different role in film since film primarily depicts reality, not to mention that a single rudimentary leitmotif could not fit in with the changing scenes of the motion picture (Adorno 27).

Adorno and Eisler go on to claim that all music in cinema is utilitarian and subordinate, to grease the gap between the image and the viewers' eyes. Following Adorno and Eisler's argument, we realize that "the function of leitmotif has been reduced to the level of a musical lackey," which indicates the fact that music in motion pictures becomes subservient or even exploited to fill in the lack of visual images and verbal narrative presented on the screen, forming a "visual justification" to grease sequences in which images might disrupt spectators' identification with the characters during the viewing process (28-30). Adorno and Eisler also question the prevailing prejudice that music in cinema should be unobtrusive. They argue that whether film music should be unobtrusive or not depends on the scriptwriter; I, on the other hand, believe the arrangement of music and image is also decided by the director's artistic interpretation of the script. They believe that the obtrusiveness of film music could be an effective artistic device to create another kind of aesthetic

intention, a point I will come back to later with the scene of the Blue Mosque in *Head-On*.

While Adorno and Eisler analyze film music from an instrumentalist perspective, Claudia Gorbman tries to delineate film music in “The Sound Film and Its Spectator” from a psycho/analytic perspective. Gorbman explains first how music participates in our daily life as easy-listening or so-called background music. These kinds of utilitarian music like jazz or bossa nova songs being played in coffee shops such as Starbucks or bookstores bear a common feature in trying to relieve the pains in our life. While background music plays a role in easing people’s pains in public places like hospitals, film music also wards off two aspects of possible pains that might be engendered during the viewing process. The first is to ward off the displeasure of “uncertain signification,” and the music here tries to have the connotative meanings to the images on the screen (Gorbman 40). Therefore, the music interprets or even “supplies information to complement the potentially ambiguous diegetic images and sounds” and “anchors the image in meaning, throws a net around the floating visual signifier, assures the viewer of a safely channeled signified” (Gorbman 40). This diegetic music eases viewers’ anxiety and also supplements the understanding of ambiguous visual signification that the film might bring out. The other displeasure that music tries to ward off is the spectator’s “potential recognition of the

technological basis of filmic articulation,” which means the editing techniques such as the cutting, framing, or any other camera movements that might involve jeopardizing the process of the viewers’ identifying with the characters in film—that is “the formation of subjectivity” in filmic discourse (Gorbman 40-41).

Throughout the history of the film industry the role of film music has been constantly redefined. After fifty years of cinematic development during which time synchronized sound was adopted in filmmaking and the collapse of the studio system in 1970s, the unobtrusiveness of film music is no longer the predominant rule, and the supporting role of music in film has evolved into only one of the possible handlings of the soundtrack. Royal Brown states that “postmodern scoring” has a “tendency toward prominent and self-conscious use of music” and this kind of development shatters the aesthetic value of classical film scoring (cited in Gorbman 43). Significantly, postmodern scoring allows the music to “occupy a ‘parallel universe’ to the film’s visual narrative rather than function illustratively and subordinately [...]” (Gorbman 43). We can see the two different deployments of film music coexist in *Head-On*. While the punk music comes out in the bar scene as the compensating role for depicting the visual narrative as in classical scoring, the postmodern scoring of music creates a parallel narrative in the cross-cuts of the Turkish musical band and a female singer beside the river bank silhouetted by the iconic Turkish landscape of the Blue

Mosque.

Akin begins constructing his soundscape of *Head-On* in the first shot of the Turkish folklore orchestra playing on the bank of Bosphorus with the female vocalist Idil Üner singing a traditional Turkish love song “Saniye’ım” (My Saniye) from the 1930s. In this opening shot we can hear the vocalist singing the Turkish love song with lyrics going like:

Çaya iner gezerim

(I go down the river and walk around)

Çayda balık izlerim

(I watch the fish in the troubled water)

Balık da değil efkarım, Sancak saçlı Saniye'm

(My worry is not about the fish, but my Saniye with your wind-blown hair)

Beyhude gözleri.

(and saddened by your eyes...)

The melancholic lyrics of the song accompanied with the mellow sound of a clarinet, wooden drum, and other string instruments in the orchestra are used preliminarily to create a framing aura for *Head-On*, and to suggest the movie is about a sad, unfulfilled love story of a Turkish couple. The director uses this scene as the opening shot and recurrently intercuts the scene recurrently to accentuate its importance. Although cross-cuttings of the scenes of Turkish musical band tend to disrupt the spectators' viewing experience, it also reflects the de-centered position

which has been subconsciously repressed by the alienated characters yet aesthetically emphasized by Akin throughout *Head-On*. The next shot jumps to the underground club with the male protagonist Cahit walking around and picking up trash since it is the way he earns his living. He then goes to a bar alone and has a quarrel with another customer there and gets kicked out by the owner in the end. After being deserted on the street alone, he drives furiously and the 1980's rock band Depeche Mode's "I Feel You" comes out to accentuate the scene because this song starts the piercing sound of skid, which happens to connect to the scene that Cahit starts off his car. Here, the song complements the scene with the lyrics beginning with "I feel you, each move you make. I feel you, each breath you take. Where angels sing, and spread their wings, my loves on high. You take me home, to glory's throne. This is the morning of our love, it's just the dawning of our love." We find out later in the film that Cahit has lost his wife, which makes him completely rootless in Germany and even gives up his former career in the music business. So if we look retrospectively to the song "I Feel You," the lyrics in the song describe the psychological sufferings and also his yearning for his late wife. Here, the music plays the role of "connotative meaning," as suggested by Gorbman.

The punk rock music reflects the bitterness in his heart as we see tears running down his face before he crashes his car into a wall. The last scene of his suicidal act is

a high-angle shot outside the window of the building into which he drives directly. This elevated angle makes audiences feel as if they are witnessing the incident from an omnipotent and indifferent viewpoint. Akin uses this shooting angle to create a viewing distance to express Cahit's feelings of desperation developed from his being devoured by the alienating people and environment. The music ends with the last sentence "this is the morning of our love, it's just the dawning of our love," which symbolically tells us it's going to be a goodbye to his past and the beginning of his unexpected love relationship with Sibel in the future.

The next shot switches to an asylum in Hamburg, where Cahit meets Sibel, who has also committed suicide by cutting her wrist. The scene begins with several close-ups on different medical equipment to indicate the location and at last the camera stops on a photograph of insect hung on the wall. The *mise-en-scene* in this sequence depicts the asylum as a cold, indifferent environment that would probably treat their patients like the insects pictured on the wall. The next scene goes to a face shot of Sibel smiling at the camera and then pans to Cahit who sits across her. The German doctor calls Cahit's full name and brings him into the consulting room. After Sibel hears Cahit's last name and realizes he is Turkish like herself, she approaches Cahit and asks him if he can marry her. Cahit denies her request at first, but after a visit to a pub where Sibel cuts her wrist again with a broken beer bottle right in front

of him, he ponders Sibel's situation. Following Sibel's failed suicide, they both leave the pub and quarrel about the fake marriage on the city bus. The driver pulls the bus over and kicks them out by shouting discriminative words that go like "there's no room for godless dogs like you on my bus."

In this end of their first blood-stained quarrel, Cahit asks about her name on the street because he finally agrees to have a fake marriage with her. The next scene then shifts back to the orchestra on the banks of Bosphorous with the female singer singing "Find yourself a love, too. And make her your wife." The lyrics mirror Cahit and Sibel's marriage that later comes into being. The camera goes back to depict Cahit walking to his messy house trying to dig out a decent suit to wear for his first meeting with Sibel's parents, with the punk rock song "Ho Ho" from a defunct band "The Birthday Party" as the background music. In this scene, the song "Ho-Ho" resembles the deserted environment around Cahit's place, because viewers can hear the vocalist sing the song in a grumpy tone, as if he is releasing all the rage in his life through this song with mocking lyrics that go like "yo-ho-hole, yo-ho-hole, through which blow, a small sick wind" to build up the deserted social environment in which Cahit dwells.

The punk rock music inserted here carries a certain kind of cultural value which Cahit identifies with, supplementing the aura that the screen cannot directly represent, and also articulates the politics of the punk rock to speak to what is on the mind of the

character. Rock music is initially a musical genre that derives from the music industry under the Anglo-American hegemony. However, the rebellious and revolutionary ideas that these songs want to convey encourage the proliferation of peripheral voices (Chambers 77). Following this path, punk rock tends to speak out for those in subordinated positions in a society, and most of these musicians are young people who have complaints about society.

In “The Cultural Study of Popular Music,” Simon Frith takes Sarah Cohen and Ruth Finnegan’s survey to analyze the rising phenomenon of young people assembling a rock band. Gathering Cohen and Finnegan’s opinions from these surveys about amateurs, Frith comments that the appealing aspect of rock music comes from its mode of learning, because the learning mode of rock music is “unlike the classical mode of apprenticeship and slow progress through fixed grades of performing difficulty, [rock music] is by its nature *individualizing*” (175). That means that they learn music spontaneously, and they do not learn how to play music under formal music training, but rather learn how to play it in endless experiments in places such as the basement in a house. This explains why rock musicians always believe they have the ability to say something in their music without any kind of limitation and at the same time, they also always need to practice with other band members in a group so that it endows them with a sense of identification for being able to play a part in this

collective.

Therefore, music is not just something that people like to do, it is through their music performance that these musicians also try to show their “involvement in culture” (Frith 177). Their performance works out because “in speaking to the crowd the musicians come to speak for them,” therefore the music “both creates and articulates the very idea of community” (Frith 177). Because of this political message that rock music tries to convey, it attracts supporters from across different ages and social backgrounds to identify with Cahit even though he represents the decadent lifestyle of a disappointed immigrant.

The punk rock that is connected with Cahit also reveals the fact that his ethnic identification is different from someone who is rooted in ethnic culture, such as Sibel’s brother. We can see that from the conversation in which the doctor asks about the meaning of his first name in Turkish and Cahit carelessly replies that he does not know. Throughout the film, he is one of the living dead before he meets Sibel. He can hardly control his temper and easily comes into conflict with other people. By using such an uninviting character like Cahit as the protagonist, the director tries to externalize the internal pain of being a Turkish guest worker in Germany. John Berger calls these people the “seventh man”: “His migration is like an event in a dream dreamt by another. The migrant’s intentionality is permeated by historical necessities

of which neither he nor anybody he meets is aware. That is why it is as if his life were dreamt by another” (43). The life of being a guest worker in Germany or any other host society is never easy. Once you think of yourself as having adapted to the environment, there come more problems, such as getting interrogated by native people about your patriotism or people of the new environment consciously or unconsciously treat you as an outsider. These disoriented diasporic immigrants have a life journey often involved with “trauma, rupture, and coercion, and [...] the scattering of populations to places outside their homeland” (Naficy 14).

The diasporic background, yearning for homecoming, and his deployment of “blending” music to accentuate the protagonist’s position as a displaced outsider make Akin’s *Head-On* an “accented film.” A diasporic film like *Head-On* can get the approval and praise of both Germany and Turkey because throughout the film the director never tries to demonize or show his preference for any society in his film. Instead, Fatih Akin keeps an intermediary position to appreciate both the beauty and the imperfections in the two societies.

From the perspective of accented filmmaking, we can see the reason Akin uses a lot of rock music in the first half of *Head-On* to portray Cahit’s character as a diasporic Turk in Germany. Despite that fact that rock music comes from the tradition of Western hegemony, most of the band members come from a subaltern group who

are trying to express their thoughts through music. Thus here rock music evolves into “a global language and institution, a communicative practice, it stands in an analogous relationship to other worldly languages, offering both a shared grammar and network, and a shifting historical cultural syntax in which meanings are contingent and identities contextualized. It is both held in common and differentiated” (Chambers 83).

Analogous to the relational positioning of diaspora, the multi-faceted character of rock music provides a channel that can bring the voice of de-centered people into the center and even de-center the center in the end.

At the beginning of the film, Akin often crosscuts the scene of Turkish folklore band near the Blue Mosque with Cahit’s lower-class living style in Germany accompanied with rock music on the soundtrack. This technique makes most of the spectators think that the two cultures are seemingly quite opposite and irrelevant to each other. Yet as the plot goes further after their wedding ceremony, the cross-cuts of the orchestra appears less and the music in the later part of film blends more and more tunes from a much more diverse cultural backgrounds in response to the harmonious emotional development between the protagonists. For instance, the song “The Temple of Love” appears in the scene when Sibel dances in their small room with Cahit before she takes him out clubbing. The song is a 1992 re-recorded version by the Gothic rock band “The Sisters of Mercy” from Britain, but in the film it is infused

with the “Oriental” sound of Ofra Haza, a late Israel pop singer who performs the background high-note vocal in the song.

This cross-cultural fusion of music such as the “Temple of Love” is becoming more and more popular in the present days of globalization, which Iain Chambers describes as “the ‘world music’ phenomenon” (78). Chambers argues that the way in which “world music” blends music or sound from diverse cultures should not only be regarded as “a commercial ploy from the center,” but it should also be thought of “as representative of a cultural, economic and historical shift that disputes the very nature of the center-periphery distinction” (78). Chambers suggests that we should think of world music as the breakdown of arbitrary dualism and it offer[s] a space for musical and cultural differences to emerge in such a manner that any obvious identification with the hegemonic order, or assumed monolithic market logic, is weakened and disrupted by the shifting, contingent contacts of musical and cultural encounters. This represents the instance of a musical and cultural conversation in which the margins are able to reassess the centre while simultaneously exceeding its logic. (79)

Following Chamber’s lines of argument, we no longer formulate the issue of identification in simple self/other, or center-periphery binarism, but extend our perspective and open up a new territory to question these presumed boundaries. In this

way, we shift our attention from the politics of margins to the “politics of difference”: a movement that fully explains the fact that there is no pure authenticity and secured authorized position, which allows us to talk about the cultural embodiment in ethnicity, gender or other social categories constantly evolving in the process of “making” (Chambers 86).

When we go back to see the film itself, Akin deploys “The Temple of Love” or other world music in the film as a way of combining different genres or cultures to encourage spectators to identify with the characters in their attempt to transcend the boundaries or biased positions in their reality. Moreover, it encourages viewers to question the so-called ethnic authenticity of diasporic people like Cahit and Sibel, since we cannot say Sibel is less Turkish than the female singer in the traditional folklore band.

In *Head-On*, the director uses the “politics of difference” to represent the multiplicity in national identity of the Turkish diaspora. As for the female protagonist Sibel, she can switch her identity by being “German in public, Turkish at home.”⁹ In the public sphere, she wants to be like other German girls going out with anyone she wants. In a sequence about Sibel’s married life with Cahit, for instance, she goes to the supermarket and wishes to make stuffed green pepper, a traditional Turkish dish

⁹ Translated by Deniz Göktürk. The original sentence in Turkish is “Germany in daytime, Turkey by night.”

for Cahit. The director spends a lot of time on her making the delicacy because it is a sequence in which Cahit and Sibel reach an agreement on their descendant culture for the first time.

The cooking sequence begins with Sibel scooping out the green bell pepper, and preparing the rice and stuffing to fill the pepper with. Then she pours some clear water into a glass cup with some raki (a traditional Turkish wine infused with the flavor of aniseed), to make it become as creamy white as lion's milk and then sets the table with an Arabesque pattern tablecloth with Cahit. During the sequence, Sibel resurrects her identity as being a Turkish immigrant and recalls the Turkish roots that have been denied by Cahit for a long time. After finishing the dinner with her fake husband, Sibel invites him to go to the pub with her and then she goes to the bathroom to put on her makeup. She likes to have smokey eyeshadow on her face when she goes clubbing. In this sequence, the director shows that Sibel can perform the role of a dutiful wife making those Turkish dishes, but she can also play wildly in the club as well. The director arranges the *mise-en-scene* in this cooking sequence with traditional Turkish settings to remind us the diasporic identity that has been repressed most of the time in the public arena in Germany, and in the meantime the sequence reflects Sibel's gender role choosing to be "German in public, Turkish at home." The diasporic condition as described in the film is always in a state of pastiche and

hybridity. Bhabha also points out “hybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences. Hybridity is the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; ...[and] all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization” (*DissemiNation* 314). As in the film, we can experience the deterritorialized feelings of Sibel when she goes back to Istanbul the motherland and to be with her relatives. It is a place she once yearned for but to this point had become an invisible prison that imprisoned her heart. Also, the Turkish singing band across the Blue Mosque in the film articulates the love story which fails in the end because the two miss the chance to come across the border in their heart, just like the musical band that is always situated on one side of river and never makes it to the other side.

Akin’s aesthetic use of adopting the image of the Blue Mosque and the nearby surroundings as the background to the Turkish music band highlights the multiplicity in his cultural background. Choosing the Blue Mosque to be the location of shooting the band is a symbolic representation of Turkish culture, because the Blue Mosque is a representative site of the Muslim background of Turkey. However, the location where the Turkish musical band is situated is called the Golden Horn, the bay that signifies a kind of heterogeneity beyond the Mosque: it has water coming in from the two continents of Asia and Europe, and in a way it suggests the fluidity and hybridity

of Turkish culture.

The spatial configuration in this film is another inspiring issue that needs to be discussed. In the tradition of the film industry, space in a film has been divided into masculine and feminine spaces. Deniz Göktürk states that traditionally the feminine space is associated with “emotion, immobility, enclosed space, confinement,” while the masculine space is characterized with “adventure, movement, and cathartic action” (“Phobic Space” 128). Of course the definition mostly refers to the studio system in Hollywood, whereas diasporic filmmakers tend to disrupt the established system of binary spatial configuration used in Hollywood. As being a diasporic filmmaker who tends to interrogate all sorts of boundaries, Akin also tries to destabilize this prerequisite dualistic definition in the film. Most of the scenes that are related to the female protagonist, Sibel, are in the form of cinematic open space with bright background to suggest her mobility and urge to change her world. For example, there is one scene in which she wears her white wedding dress, which generally indicates the purity of a bride, but the camera tilts back to present a shot of her walking slowly over the street with happy smile on her face to show how she enjoys her freedom by choosing the man she likes to hang out with. This spatial configuration for Sibel also formulates a strong contrast to Cahit’s messy living environment before she enters into his life. This contradiction of imagery and

contrasting *mise-en-scene* suggested for gender relations ironically disrupts the affective mode suggested by the traditional divide of spatial configuration.

We should also analyze the film from the perspective of two different emotional impacts that an open or an enclosed space can bring about: agoraphobia and claustrophobia. Naficy uses Dr. Westphal's case study to explain that agoraphobia is a psychological complex for people who feel panic about going to public places. People who suffer from agoraphobia also experience a "fear of being away from home and from familiar places and people who provide psychological comfort and security" (Göktürk 129). As for claustrophobia, it refers to a fear of enclosed places. The symptoms are mostly caused not by "a single trauma but by 'excessive adverse life events,'" such as the feelings of isolation and alienation (Göktürk 129). The two emotional disorders might be interchangeable depending on one's feeling toward the environment.

For transnational immigrants, phobic spaces are always based on one's emotional conflict with the new society. Throughout the film *Head-On*, the definition of spatial inscription is opposite to the traditional Hollywood way. In the film, we can see the space of "emotion, immobility, enclosed space, confinement" are always related to the messy, gloomy room of Cahit. The director uses a long, closed shot to pan through his room filled with bottles and dirty dishes. The enclosed space reflects his turbulent

psychological status, and his still dead heart, unable to open up and regenerate his love for the society. It is evident that Cahit is subsumed by agoraphobia as represented in the symptom that he constantly hides himself in the enclosed dark room to be away from the indifferent society outside his phobic space. This supports Göktürk's statement that people's construction of phobic space "[...] is often based on their own experience of incarceration in their indigenous disciplinary societies, also reflects the conflicting and confining social and political conditions in their homeland" ("Phobic Space" 130).

However, phobic spaces not only express the psychic tension in migrating experience (therapeutic) but also provide a realm for transnationals to search for their new individual and collective identity (Göktürk 130). For instance, Sibel cleans up Cahit's room and rearranges the interior decorations for him. It makes Cahit see the possibilities of changing his world rather than just giving it up, like what the doctor told him in the asylum scene. He then gets out of his invisible prison and tries to live a decent life. Unfortunately, this time he is again imprisoned because he accidentally kills his rival in love and is sentenced to a real prison. He goes through the imprisonment because his heart is not caged anymore since Sibel is the one that emancipates his soul. Consequently, both of them realize the fact that the imagined homecoming in their heart is impossible.

The end of *Head-On* tells us that both Cahit and Sibel cannot “go home.” Sibel returns to her homeland, Turkey, to flee from her families who are angry with her fake marriage but fails to identify with the conservative Muslim environment there. While in Istanbul, she would rather indulge herself in a nightclub fooling around with men than being a maid working hard in her cousin’s hotel. Later, when she is abandoned by the owner of the club, she intentionally argues with the men on the street and gets beat up seriously by them. At this moment here comes a taxi driver who saves her. As for the male protagonist, Cahit, he goes back to Turkey after he is released from the prison in Hamburg. He goes to Istanbul hoping that he could be reunited with Sibel there, but after they finally see each other, Sibel leaves him the next morning and chooses to go back to her family with the taxi driver. In the last scene of *Head-On*, the director uses close-shot on Cahit’s face. He is in a coach, his face filled with disappointment because Sibel doesn’t show up. The sunlight in the sky falls upon him and then the camera dollies out to suggest that the coach is taking Cahit back to his hometown Mersin all by himself. Both Cahit and Sibel get back to their homeland in the end, but this home is different from what they thought it would be. Sibel has a new family, and she learns to be responsible for what she chooses even though she loves Cahit. She cannot have the ideal home that she dreams to have with Cahit, and Cahit cannot have her, either. This time Cahit doesn’t lose control of his temper,

somehow he realizes her choice this time is exactly what he hoped she could have done for him when they were still pretending to be married couple. In *Head-On*, the protagonist Sibel is a transcultural girl who lives every moment for the best of it. She is active, brave and open-minded to the indifferent world and also brings light to Cahit's withering soul. In the hospital scene at the beginning of the film, the doctor tells Cahit that "if you can't change the world, change your world," this sentence exactly draws out the difference between the pessimist Cahit and the active Sibel. However, coming from a patriarchal Muslim Turkish family, she also accepts part of her cultural heritage, such as making the exotic Turkish cuisine which defines her diasporic identity, while at the same time embracing the liberal idea of having sex with anyone she likes denied and in fact tabooed by her ethnic culture. Furthermore, Sibel chooses to have a fake marriage with Cahit, to escape her familial bondage. In reality, living in a displaced society filled with cultural differences such as the protagonists in *Head-On* always leads to a feeling of splitting subjectivity and conflicting psychic tension, but "the aim of cultural difference is to re-articulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying singularity of the "other" that resists totalization if we follow Bhabha's statement: "the repetition that will not return as the same ... but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification" (*DissemiNation* 312). More

importantly, the politic of identification is always in a state of “substitution, displacement, or projection” (Bhabha. 312). However, the film *Head-On* transcends the split between Turkey and Germany by blending cross-cultural music and also highlighting the recurrent motif of homecoming in the film with the *mise-en-scene* recalling the memory of the homeland.

Akin’s blending of Western and Turkish music is counterhegemonic because it “de-emphasize[s] synchronous sound,” and “destabilize[s] the omniscient narrator and narrative system of the mainstream cinema” by incorporating “multilinguality and multivocality” in the film (Naficy 24-25). This kind of parallel aesthetic strategy to present film music also falls into what Hamid Naficy defines as “accented style” since it mirrors the “double consciousness” of diasporic directors like Fatih Akin (Naficy 22). Being a displaced person, his work mirrors both the tradition of the ethnic homeland and that of the host society. The director once explains about the “sampling” strategy he uses to present the music in *Head-On* in an interview, “I’m a kid of the hip-pop culture. I sample what I need and the rest I don’t” (Berghahn 144). It is because this “sampling” strategy of juxtaposing and mixing different musical genres that are seemingly incompatible which attracts countless audiences in addition to those in Germany and Turkey.¹⁰

¹⁰ Akin acknowledges that his audiences include three main groups: German, Turkish, and Turkish-German (Mitchell).

On the other hand, Akin's distinctive style of organizing *mise-en-scène* and editing cross-cultural visual images successfully creates a "thirdspace chronotope" to depict the spatial inscription of diasporic people. The director ingeniously combines the visual with the sonic, and the two supplement each other while also constructing a "third space" in Homi Bhabha's terminology. Akin uses hybridized music that mingles different cultures to blur the boundary of the two incongruous societies and in the mean time articulates the sonic multiplicity to accentuate the visual images that portrays the cultural diversity.

In this way, in response to Akin's blending of music that formulates the third space to interrogate the binary position of cultural hegemony, Cahit also confesses his affection to Sibel's cousin (Selma) in a third language—English—that is both unfamiliar to them. Overall, Akin's aesthetic representations combine image with music, rearrange the spatial configuration to disrupt the traditional dichotomy, break down the cultural baggage carried by his diasporic characters, and thereby successfully build up a third space for immigrants in film history.

Chapter 3

Representing the Globalization of Migration in *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife*

In the former chapter, I tried to analyze Fatih Akin's *Head-On* from the two distinguished aesthetic techniques that he deploys in his groundbreaking work. However, since I was born in Taiwan, a small island situated in East Asia, and the two countries involved in *Head-On* were unfamiliar to me, it is easy for me to judge them as an outsider. I am aware that being an outsider could have the benefit of judging films from an objective viewpoint while there is also the risk of being ignorant of the cultural specificity of the film. Therefore, I try to analyze two other Taiwanese films which both deal with issues of diaspora from an insider's perspective. Overall, I hope to examine how "new immigrants" in Taiwan were being represented in these visual works.

In this age of globalization and post-capitalism, migration has become a norm. The reasons why people migrate include forced (guest workers, or refugees seeking for political asylum) and voluntary (inter-racial marriage) factors. Taking Taiwan as an example, nowadays we can easily see faces of different skin colors on the street, and most of them come here to fill in vacancies in the 3D job market. In other words, many of the migrants in Taiwan come here as guest workers without permanent residence permit. However, because of the restrictive policy on foreign labor and

immigration in Taiwan, they share very few social rights. During the past decade, there have been more and more filmic works discussing the issue of foreign migrants in Taiwan, which indicates that the issue of migration is getting noticed. In this chapter, I want to take two films, the TV feature film *Rasa* and the semi-documentary short-film *My Imported Wife*, as examples to analyze how migrants in Taiwan are represented, and also how these aesthetic representations mirror the way in which these directors define themselves. In this chapter, I point out that the multiculturalist narrative in *Rasa* erases the cultural differences of these “New Immigrants” and thus is highly problematic. The documentary *My Imported Wife*, on the other hand, records the irreconcilable conflicts of interracial marriage in a realistic style and thus offers another perspective of representing immigrants in Taiwan.

Taiwan is a small island that had gone through periods of colonization by several regimes, therefore the cultural background of the society is always in a process of creolization with each influx of foreign cultures. With the recent economic growth and the huge demand of labor derived from the late development of capitalism, Taiwan started to open its gates and recruit foreign labor. Taiwan chose to follow Germany, the first country to have designed a guest worker programme, with most of the other countries in Asia following suit. In the German programme, the receiving country has the right to decide the amount of visas that will be issued, and the rights

that migrant workers have once they have arrived in the receiving society (Tseng 100).¹¹ According to Tsen Yen-Fen, the first great flow of foreign labor recruitment in Taiwan occurred in 1989, where 3000 people were recruited to supply the labor demand of national infrastructure projects. It was not until 1991 that the government of Taiwan established a formal programme for foreign labor, and the government justified this new policy by claiming that the recruitment of foreign labor “makes it unnecessary to restructure certain jobs, or to adjust wages, so that the ‘migrant labor market’ can become isolated from the mainstream economy” (Martin et al., 165). Thus the government of Taiwan tried to persuade the citizens that the recruitment of foreign labor would do no harm to the local labor market since it prevents the potential threat of local industries leaving the island to seek out sources of cheaper labor in China and Southeast Asia.

As for the legislative measures and regulations that control these immigrants, Tseng points out that there are several severe restrictions: restrictive entrance (foreign laborers can only apply for jobs of certain domains); time constraints (foreign workers can only work in Taiwan for one time, and according to the latest legislative reform, foreign workers can grant their initial stay for three years, with the employer being able to apply for an extension of no more than three years); preventing formation of

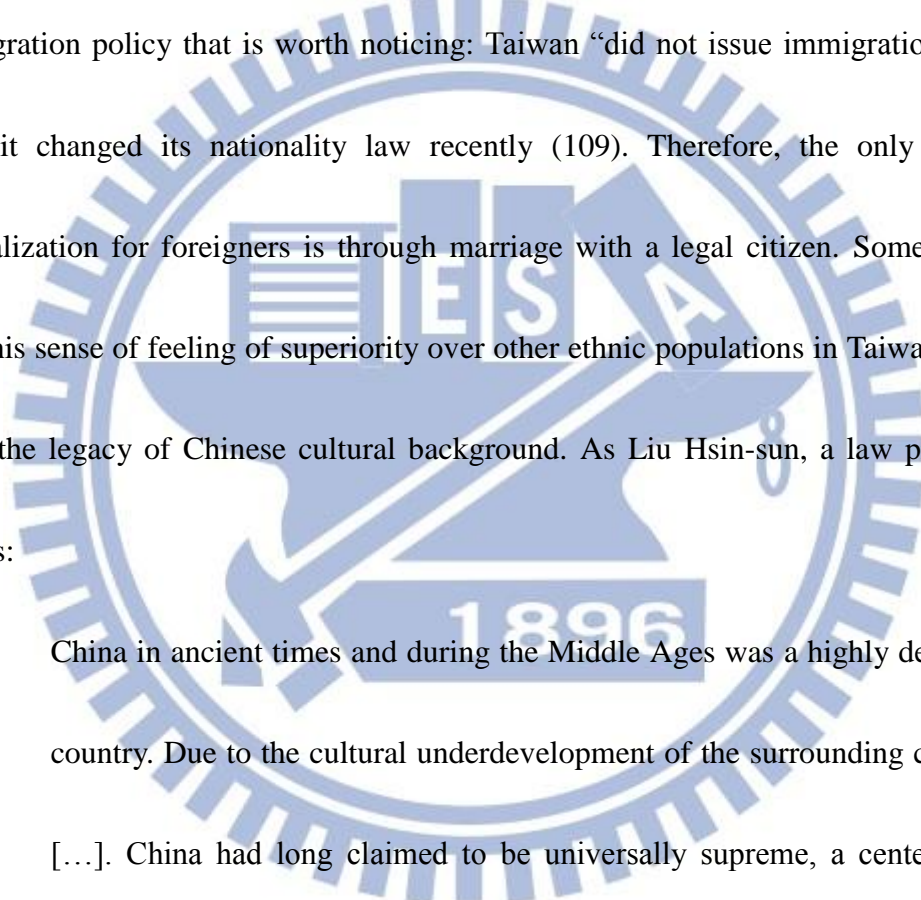
¹¹ See Bartram, David V. “Foreign Workers in Israel: History and Theory.” *International Migration Review*. 32. 3 (1998): 303-25.

family (any sort of pregnancy would cause a foreign worker to be deported immediately); no job transfer (foreign workers cannot apply for the changing of a job); restricted residence; and only four limited sending countries (Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam) are available for employers to choose from (104). As a result, although the state is losing control over other kinds of transnational movement, such as the movement of capital, it is the policy of immigration in which the state demonstrates its power of controlling people while faced with global labor migration (Tseng 100).

In addition, the market for foreign labor is highly gender-divided, since most of the allotted jobs for foreign workers were separated into two major categories: the construction and domestic sectors. Positions in construction sector are taken by men and domestic workers or the so-called caretakers are mostly female. Therefore, the gender ratio of migrants in each single sending country indicates the occupational distribution of the workers from different countries. Following his demographic statistics regarding foreign labor policy in Taiwan, Tseng points out that most Indonesian workers are female and thereby take the biggest part of domestic workers, while Thai workers are mostly male and take the biggest part in construction industries (101-03).

Understanding the policy of restrictions related to foreign labor enhances our

understanding of what kind of social attitude Taiwan holds toward foreign immigrants. In sum, in Taiwan foreign workers are not viewed as “probationary immigrants” (Tseng 103). On the contrary, the Taiwanese government does not give these foreign workers the right of permanent residence, which suggests that Taiwan is a society that has difficulties embracing outsiders. Tseng also highlights another aspect of immigration policy that is worth noticing: Taiwan “did not issue immigration visas” until it changed its nationality law recently (109). Therefore, the only way of naturalization for foreigners is through marriage with a legal citizen. Some believe that this sense of feeling of superiority over other ethnic populations in Taiwan comes from the legacy of Chinese cultural background. As Liu Hsin-sun, a law professor, argues:



China in ancient times and during the Middle Ages was a highly developed country. Due to the cultural underdevelopment of the surrounding countries [...]. China had long claimed to be universally supreme, a center of the world with other countries subordinate to her. The countries surrounding China were uncivilized states. [...] In the early stages, foreigners were regarded by China as enemies. (1)

It is comprehensible that the reasons why immigration policy in Taiwan is so restricted and enclosed from the outside world is due to the Chinese influence of

inherited superiority, since a majority of people in Taiwan are Chinese descendants whose ancestors emigrated from southern China to Taiwan in the last 400 years. The restrictive foreign worker policy can be seen as part of the endeavor to maintain a homogeneous, non-settler society in Taiwan, which in a way is also “a reflection of societal xenophobia” (Tseng 109). Contrary to the restrictive foreign worker policy, the policy concerning transnational marriage is becoming more and more liberal because of the local demand for foreign brides in recent years, and I will elaborate upon this point later on while discussing *My Imported Wife*.

Despite the restricted attitude of lawmakers in the government of Taiwan, the atmosphere in society is ambivalent yet gradually changing these days. In Taiwan, people use a neutral term “new immigrant” to label these newcomers to express a sense of accommodation for these foreigners. However, these displaced newcomers are mostly seen in negative social news stories in Taiwan. This form of repeatedly broadcasting prejudiced representations of the “new immigrant” tends to demonize these guest workers. In the meantime, we can also see news with a neutral perspective representing these new immigrants more frequently with embracing attitude, even exposing the inhuman doings of prejudiced Taiwan employers, such as the recent news about a female Taiwanese employer forcing her Indonesian Muslim workers to eat dishes made of pork, which left the entire society in astonishment and shame.

Rasa is one of the first-wave of filmic works in Taiwan that bring the topic of foreign workers to viewers' attention. The director Wen Chih-yi used her personal experience to write the script of the film, and her later works, such as the short film *Sleeping with Her*, still concentrate on the issues of cross-cultural migration and inter-cultural conflicts. Wen states that she simply tries to transform those cultural conflicts that happen in her homeland to alert people to pay attention to them, and furthermore encourage people living in the same society to learn to "leave all the cultural conflicts behind and understand each other more."¹² On the other hand, the director of *My Imported Wife*, Tsai Chung-lung, is a well-known documentary filmmaker. His works include different kinds of controversial but neglected social issues in Taiwan, such as the abolishment of licensed prostitutes or the human rights issue of aboriginal people. He is also a producer who works for the non-profit TV channel PTS (Public Television Service), and teaches in several universities.¹³ In *My Imported Wife*, Tsai hopes to highlight another issue in Taiwan—the market of "importing" foreign brides. In this documentary film, similar to the director of *Rasa*, Tsai tries to offer a viewpoint different from the negative images of these new immigrants that we see in our daily news. However, Tsai deals with the issue cautiously by only setting the camera on recording all the dialogues and even fights to

¹² See You Wan-chi's on-line news report on <http://www.peopo.org/portal.php?op=viewPost&article_Id=19232>

¹³ <http://livingwithpcb.pixnet.net/blog/post/9663309>

make it as close to reality as possible. Therefore, different from the plot in *Rasa*, which tries to sympathize and coalesce cultural differences among people with diverse cultural backgrounds, *My Imported Wife* presents the incommensurability and conflicts that not only influence immigrants but also local people. This contrast can be seen in the following analysis of the two films.

In *Rasa*, the opening scene begins with a shot of an Indonesian lady, Sari, entering the automatic sensor gate at customs in the CKS Airport in Taoyuan. In this opening scene, Wen combines the visual image with a voice over by a woman. This peaceful voice softly narrates, “How much can we take away?” Then the narration stops and the next shot intercuts several important scenes that will appear again later in the film, and goes back to the scene in the airport when the narrator continues to say, “apart from money, there are also memories that we take away which live along with us”; at the same time we see the food and dried goods that Sari brought from her homeland being thrown into the disposal bin by the custom officers in the airport.

In this beginning scene the director chooses the location of the airport to represent the border control of a nation and how a nation strictly executes its sovereignty as exemplified in what we have seen in the customs episode. The foreign workers appearing in this scene are all carefully examined with all kinds of equipment and electrical devices, obviously drawing a line between “us” and “them.” As Tseng

points out, Taiwan requires all newcomers to have a medical examination before they come to the host society, and this specific requirement sets up the boundary between citizens and immigrants (110). Even though most of the countries in the world do the same to maintain a “healthy environment” for their citizens, this differentiation of body politics is the racial oppression in a collective coming along with demonized images that these “others” should be feared and avoided from the dominant popularity (Young 123). It is this kind of practice of differentiation which defines others as ugly that creates the ideology of discrimination. The customs scene also recalls for us the embedded quality of diaspora – border, since it encapsulates the location and process of contemporary transnational migration. As Brah points out: borders are “arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; form of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression” (198). It is through this arbitrary construction that we draw out the line between us and Others. Gloria Anzaldua talks in her book *Borderland/ La Frontera* about the diasporic issue of American-Mexican immigrants; she extends the language of a border to a further meaning by stating that a border could also be taken as a metaphorical meaning for psychological, cultural, sexual, and racial boundaries. This metaphoric meaning of border is also transmitted clearly in this custom scene accompanying by the narrator’s

voice speaking about her mentality of deterritorialization.

Later in the next scene, Sari walks in the small alley with her agent and comes across Siti, another caretaker accompanying her boss who is in the wheel chair. At that moment, we viewers understand the voice of narrator is Siti herself, who is an Indonesia woman like Sari. She has left her family in her homeland for a couple of years and has come to Taiwan to be a housemaid. She takes care of the old man who has Alzheimer's disease. At their first meeting at the crossroads in that small alley, they greet each other using their mother tongue. In the next scene, Sari, who has just arrived in Taiwan, and her agent are at the household she is going to serve. Sari is responsible for taking care of the disabled mother of the Lin family. However, Sari is soon terrified by her boss because he misconceives her practicing the Muslim daily prayer in a white garment (Ihram) as conducting some kind of diabolical ritual. The disabled lady even rips off her Ihram and kicks Sari out of the house, and begins to take out all her stuff in the room to make a thorough search. The first thing Sari attempts to do after she gets kicked out is to make an international phone call to her mother back in Indonesia, but fails. Alone and being abandoned, and with the ripped Ihram as the only belonging she carries with her, Sari has experienced a cultural misencounter, which symbolizes her first rupture with the society. She therefore cries bitterly on the street, and thus meets Siti around a street corner. Siti soothes Sari's

sadness by sharing her memory of practicing Muslim ritual prayer in Taiwan when she first arrived – it enraged her boss (the old man) and made him threaten to use his sticks on her because in his unstable state of mind he took her as a war enemy from the past. Siti tells her that the cultural differences between Taiwan and Indonesia cause a lot of painful memories, but as time goes by, they will eventually find a way to assimilate into this new place. Finally, Sari goes back to her boss' house and goes upstairs to her room. Her boss then knocks on her door and hands her a sewing kit to mend the broken Ihram as a gesture of apology.

Sari soon realizes how to bridge the two different cultural environments; the key is the art of cuisine. Sari's boss (Jeng-lung) owns a restaurant, but he could not maintain the business since the death of his wife, who used to be the chef of the restaurant. The restaurant at the present time is almost empty with only a few customers. Sari witnesses this situation and decides to make some South Asian food to satisfy a customer's appetite.

The director uses a lot of sequences to depict the process in which Sari and Siti are making delicacies from their motherland together, which indicates that the cooking process is an important metaphor for these two Indonesian women's cultural identity. The sequence begins with Sari and Siti chopping a cabbage and making curry sauce with exotic seasonings. They then taste the flavor of the sauce and decide to sweeten

the sauce with a little bit more peanut powder because they discover Taiwanese people prefer it this way.

The way that Sari and Siti's "play" with the seasoning of the South Asian cuisine corresponds to Stuart Hall's argument that cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.' [...] Far from being externally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (236). Like the cuisine they make in the film, which combines Taiwanese materials with South Asian spices, the cultural identity of Siti and Sari is also represented as a "play" of cultural articulation and reproduction. Moreover, the way that Sari and Siti's "play" with the seasoning of the South Asian cuisine and also adjust the flavor according to Taiwanese taste can be regarded as a process of hybridization. As in her essay "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity," Lisa Lowe states:

hybridization is not the "free" oscillation between or among chosen identities. It is the uneven process through which immigrant communities encounter the violences [...], and the process through which they survive those violences by living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives (151).

That is to say, Sari and Siti's culinary skills "articulate" different tastes coming out of a diverse cultural background and simultaneously incorporate them to minimize

antagonism stemming from prejudiced characters such as Mrs. Lin, who previously regarded Sari as a stranger that “only brings bad luck” to her family. In this cooking scene, the hybridization of exotic seasonings becomes an incorporative principle through which, in Bhabha’s words, constructs new “structures of authority, new political initiatives [...] and a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation,” and it is also through the incorporative process of hybridization that the “third space” is established (cited in Rutherford 211).

In contrast to Homi Bhabha and Lisa Lowe’s agreement on the idea that the process of hybridization should follow an incorporative principle however, the director of *Rasa* assimilates her deterritorialized characters in *Rasa* by filling the absent role of the local household with these displaced characters. Here I want to clarify the difference between incorporation and assimilation first, the two terms present opposite meanings of articulating heterogeneous modalities in the regime of power. Assimilation in the multiculturalist’s perspective encourages the immigrants to “integrate, leaving behind the baggage of ‘inferior and archaic’” cultures that is incommensurate with the host society (Brah 229). Incorporation, on the other hand, “[...] empowers those once marginalized in relation to the dominant,” and it does not take Others like pluralists “at a nonthreatening distance” (Goldberg 9). Rather, it “seeks to undermine and alter from within the dominant, controlling, confining, and

periphractic values of the cultural dominant” (Goldberg 9). In this way, incorporative hybridization promises a transgressive dynamic exceeding and transforming the established value in the dominant culture.

Wen tries to replace the absence in the Taiwanese household with displaced characters to appeal to spectators’ sympathy. For instance, Sari takes up the duty of her boss’s late wife and does the cooking, being the chef in the restaurant and taking care of the children at the same time even though Sari is supposed to take care of Mrs. Lin; whereas Siti takes care of the old man to fulfill the filial duty of his children on their behalf. In many sequences, the son of the wheel-chaired old man compels his father and Siti to do things they dislike without acknowledging what his father really needs.

Wen states that her film tries to tell a story from the viewpoint of foreign workers, and thus tries to provide a multiculturalist notion. However, I want to argue that Wen’s multiculturalist representation of her characters in *Rasa* is problematic since most of her characters are too docile and tend to identify with the unfriendly social environment in Taiwan too easily. The ideal of a multiculturalist society is to divide the society into public and private domains, and it “envisage[s] a society which is unitary in the public domain but which encourages diversity in what are thought of as private or communal matters” (Rex 208). Nevertheless, in order to reach for “a

unitary in the public domain,” Brah adopts Home Secretary Roy Jenkins’ speech in 1966 to show the national idea of integration is “not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (qtd. in Brah 229). Brah argues that even though Jenkins acknowledges the necessity of equal opportunity for all racialized communities, the term integration inevitably carries the connotations of assimilation. Furthermore, Brah goes on to argue that the “mutual tolerance” in Jenkins’ statement tends to “conceal ‘othering’ process” and is taken “as a means of confronting the policy and practice of assimilation” while ignoring “the power relations within which such “difference” was inscribed” (230). Goldberg agrees with Brah’s argument and points out that this “weak pluralistic multiculturalism” is dressed up by “implicit monoculturalism,” and thus suggests a fixed, unshifting center to accentuate the primacy of dominant culture.

It is true that these characters *in Rasa* share the universal memories of “separation and dislocation,” which the identifying process of diaspora usually invokes (Brah 193). But Wen’s film shows that these foreign workers will all be assimilated into a coherent cultural environment in the end of the film. There is one particular scene in *Rasa* that is particularly revealing about Wen’s pretentious, multiculturalist representation of diversity. It happens when the daughter of the

wheel-chaired old man sends Siti a Chinese dress to show her gratitude toward Siti's companionship for her father. The daughter, Fang-fang, insists that Siti should put on the dress while ignoring Siti's rejection, and later when Siti comes out from her room in that dress, Fang-fang responds to her younger brother who dislikes seeing Siti wearing Fang-fang's dress as such: "It is dad's birthday, a very special occasion. I just want to dress up for her so that all of us can have dinner together like a family." The statement connotes many layers of meanings. First, Fang-fang sends Siti an old dress of her own to show her gratitude toward Siti, but ironically she is trying to assimilate Siti by dressing her up like she used to be to indicate her approval of her, and only in this way can Siti eat with them "like a family."

Contrary to the multiculturalist representation, the documentary film *My Imported Wife* records the life story of a Cambodian wife, Navy, who marries a disabled Taiwanese husband. The documentary records Navy and her husband's trip back to Cambodia, and the second half of the film records Navy's mother visiting them in Taiwan. It truthfully depicts the reality of the commodification of cross-cultural marriage since all the couple's quarrels originate in their incongruent perceptions about how to distribute their money to help Navy's relatives in Cambodia.

In *My Imported Wife*, Navy's home in Cambodia and her house in Taiwan offers an image of the "diaspora space" that puts the issue of dispersion constantly into

question. Before talking about the “diaspora space,” I want to reiterate one of the most important points of taking diaspora as an analytic term. The most important subtext of diaspora is it presupposes a border and the border-crossing that coming along in the migrating process, and thereby situates the identity of a diasporan in struggling within these different modalities of power, but this multi-locationality is exactly what empowers diasporans to have the position to articulate differences. It is also because the “multi-axial performative conception of power highlights the ways in which a group constituted as a ‘minority’ along one dimension of differentiation be constructed as a ‘majority’ along another” (Brah 189, 208-10). Consequently, this “relational positioning,” as mentioned in the first chapter, problematizes the arbitrary division of majority and minority, and constructs a third narrative that accentuates the lack of the arbitrary dichotomy such as what we have seen in the living story in *My Imported Wife*

The cross-cultural marriage of the couple in *My Imported Wife* could be the best example explaining this collapse of bi-polar power relations. For instance, the Taiwanese husband Huang Yao-Huei is disabled because of a childhood disease and therefore has only limited job opportunities. In this sense, he is a minority in terms of social and economical status and thus cannot easily get a wife in Taiwan. He chooses to pay money to get a beautiful and obedient wife for himself, but his mindset is

twisted and could not respect his wife because he believes he has paid for her obedience to be a dutiful wife. When he goes back to Cambodia with Navy, he also brings a lot of money to her family and receives their welcoming respect in return. However, there is one shot in which the husband cries out in front of the camera, because he has a quarrel with Navy and he is feeling frustrated about the fact that he cannot complain to Navy's parents directly because of the language barrier. In this shot, one can easily detect how the husband is feeling alienated in Navy's large Cambodian house even though he has the economic primacy in that country. But money power still could not stop him from feeling the discomfort and unease as a diasporan. During Huang's visit to Navy's large family in Cambodia, he wants to complain to her family about the way they taught Navy, but these thoughts were all stopped by the Taiwanese interpreters coming along with them. The interpreters try to persuade Huang that these kinds of things should be better left unspoken, and even tell him that he should learn how to respect others first. Nevertheless, in the big house crowded with Navy's relatives coming to see him, Huang still constantly tries to argue with Navy about how to divide the money he brings to her families. It is because the money is the only thing empowers him in this foreign house, despite the fact that he earns the money in Taiwan. Huang earns his money by selling bouquets of flowers in night clubs – he goes to the night club and sells his bouquets door to door to see if

there are people willing to buy his flowers on account of showing their sympathy for his incapacities. His inferiority in Taiwan accidentally profits him and empowers him in the family, as Navy tells that she has to marry abroad to earn money for her family, since the money we spent for a meal in Taiwan is equal to a monthly salary in her homeland.

The dislocated feelings of Huang are also shown in another sequence in which the Taiwanese husband is shocked by the setting in the family house of Navy's parents because it is almost an exact replica of his home in Taiwan. The closed form of *mise-en-scene* with the existence of familiar objects sent from Taiwan by Navy accentuates the familiarity and also unfamiliarity to the husband at the time. The familiarity comes from the decorations in the house, but he is unfamiliar with the possibility of seeing a place which is so similar to his own in a foreign country that he feels superior to. In another scene, when the Huangs come back to Taiwan, Navy throws a party to gather all the Cambodian wives in the neighborhood in their house. It is a precious moment of joyfulness for Navy after her frequent fights with her husband, and she talks happily with the other foreign brides and watches TV shows from her homeland. When her husband comes back, he exclaims in surprise: "I don't know when this place became international!" These differences and conflicts not only constitute the identity of diaspora, they also reflect the facts that these differences

cannot be erased in the multiculturalist paradigm. As Brah puts it in the last chapter of her books *Cartographies of Diaspora*, it is important to reconfigure the meaning of the common prefix “multi-” to “foster solidarity without erasing difference” (227). Brah conceptualizes four ways of difference as an analytic term: difference as experience, difference as social relation, difference as subjectivity, and difference as identity (115). It is through these various sets of differences that we are able to constitute our subjectivity simultaneously with multiple relations in our daily life. These four sets of differences not only articulate each other in the process constituting our cultural identity but also play an important role in “the movement of the reiterative performance” in the “the play of signifying practices” in culture (Brah 117, 234-35).

After emphasizing the necessity of difference, Brah’s concept of “diaspora space” offers us a new perspective on the discourse of diaspora. The diaspora space suggests a conceptual category that is inhabited “not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous” (Brah 209). In other words, the diaspora space, in Brah’s terms, is “the entanglement of the genealogies of dispersal” which “relies on a multi-axial performative of power” (242). The diaspora space is an immanent site where a single person or the collective experience their identity which is always in the “making” in

the formation of power relating to different social markers. Therefore, through the complicated entanglement in the diaspora space people acknowledge that differences differentiate, but are also a necessary element that situates their positioning, and helps in retaining their displaced position to interrogate the center. Brah further points out that the diaspora space is an immanent site that combines border, diasporizing process, and multi-locationality to delineate the intersectionality inscribed in the concept of diaspora, and it is the immanent site where “the native is as much a diasporan as the diasporian is the native” (209).

In diasporic household, the distribution of power is also related to category of gender, and men are always the most empowered because of patriarchal norms. However, diasporic men are disempowered in the host society due to “competitive antagonism and widespread paranoia about non-white [major] masculinity,” such as those Thai workers in *Rasa* (Kalra 52). The situation of the diasporic women is totally the opposite. While disempowered in the household for several reasons, such as Navy’s economic dependence on her husband in *My Imported Wife*, she is empowered by being seen and being able to have a speaking position to counteract the rescue narrative in the rhetoric of “saving” those “vulnerable and oppressed female members of the diasporic community,” and in a sense encourages people who care about the issues of immigrants (including both local people and new immigrants that live

together on this island) to establish some institutions in the host society, such as the “Foreign Brides Welfare Committee” in Taiwan as mentioned in *My Imported Wife* (Kalra 52). In *My Imported Wife*, although it follows the convention of documentary to document the true life of the couple in a realistic, socialist way, the director tries to offer multiple narratives by putting comments of people from different perspectives in the film. Therefore, it formulates a multiple narrative and presents a living story much closer to the reality with observations from people in the same environment and complements the lack of single narrative that happens in the TV feature film *Rasa*, in a way giving Navy an equal place to speak for herself. Furthermore, although Navy’s daughter does not appear a lot in the documentary, we understand she lives “in” the two cultures even though she can speak Chinese, but her existence is so important as to form an invisible bond that ties all the people together around her despite their continuing quarrelling throughout the film.

At last, both *Rasa* and *My Imported Wife* talk about the desire for “home.” Nevertheless, in this age of mass migration caused by global capitalism, home becomes an ambiguous idea and is hard to be simply defined. But Brah speaks brilliantly that “home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of “origin” (Brah 192). In this chapter, I concentrated mainly

on the narrative inhabited in the two films to analyze the perspective from which these immigrants were represented by Taiwanese film workers, and even tried to provide an immanent diaspora space on the account of the complicated intersections of money, gender, culture, class and other markers that construct the multiplicity of the diaspora.

On the one hand, the representation in *Rasa* is problematic in that the characters are presented in an implicit monoculturalist fashion hiding behind the disguise of multiculturalism. On the other hand, *My Imported Wife* truthfully tells us how many fights and incoherence could take place in a transcultural marriage, and eventually provides a new beginning and hope in their diaspora space. Like the last scene in *My Imported Wife*, the director intercuts the landscapes of both Taiwan and Cambodia and the happy photos of Navy and her husband to create the “diaspora space” that entangles the living stories in these two stories and also retrospectively recalls our personal ideas of “home.”

Chapter 4

Conclusion

In this final chapter, I want to conclude by comparing the culinary scenes in all three films. Culinary is one important feature for diasporic people, since the exotic cuisine arouse people's nostalgic feelings about their motherland. Besides, traditionally culinary skills are mostly in the hands of women, so it also becomes an arena for women to articulate their identity. However, as I had pointed out in the previous chapters, culinary scenes play different roles in these films, some of them become an aesthetic politic to build up an emotional bonding between people, some of them open up the channel of communication with the local people, and others become a technique to resist, or even a kind of punishment for the one that suppresses her.

In Akin's *Head-On*, Sibel's cooking scene typically shows the trace of Turkish identity in herself. Akin uses his camera to depict the detailed procedures of Sibel's cooking she makes the stuffed green bell pepper and the sour yogurt drink, both are famous traditional Turkish dishes. When Sibel and Cahit sit down together in the table well decorated with Arabesque tablecloth, it is in this particular scene in that small room full of posters of punk rock stars that a cynical man like Cahit can have a proper meal with Sibel for the first time. In this cooking scene, Cahit is amazed by Sibel's culinary skills and this dinner makes him feel like finding his home that he had lost

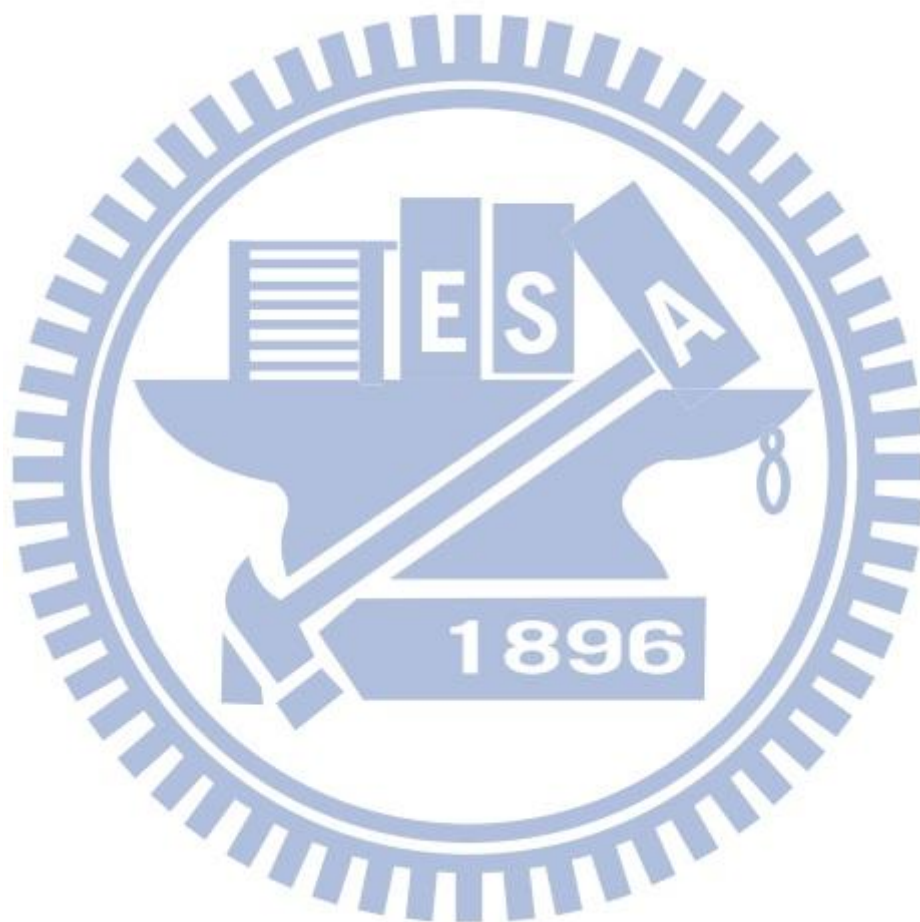
for a long time. In this small room having dinner with another person who can cook the familiar taste is indeed a dream comes true.. However, his dream-like home collapses when he goes out clubbing with Sibel and accidentally kills a man out of jealousy. Here, the cooking scene creates an emotional bonding of the couple while also unfolds their Turkish identity that is almost undetectable throughout the movie besides Akin's hybridized music and the scene of folklore band singing alongside the river.

As for *Rasa*, it is obvious that cooking is important in the film, since the film title *Rasa* means taste in Indonesian. And in the film, Sari earns her recognition by making the Southeast Asian food to help her employer's diner. The way that she adjusts the taste of the food tells us how she's aware of the taste of Taiwanese people. On the other hand, it could also suggest that she cares too much about whether people likes her and in a way lost her autonomy in making her own choice. In the most part of *Rasa*, Sari's smiles mostly appear in the sequence of her cooking in the kitchen. Because it is the place where she can make choices, and the food she makes becomes the major income of the local family, which is also the base of her acceptance. Other than that, Sari is still restricted and disdained by the grandma in the family. Thus, she can only reveal the part of herself that is recognized by the family while the rest should all be underground.

Contrast to Sari in *Rasa*, the Cambodian wife Navy in *My Imported Wife* uses her culinary skills to fight for what she needs. In one scene that is close to the end of the documentary, Navy has another fight with her bossy husband who forbids her to work and they also argue about the amount of money that her mother can bring back to her family in Cambodia. Then the disabled husband sits down and starts to have the noodles that Navy cooks for him, suddenly Navy goes to take the salt bottle and chili sauce and put them both into her husband's bowl. She says "If you don't care about my family, then don't take the food I made, you want to eat? I can give you as much salt and chilies as you need!" Unlike Sari who is always subservient to all the unfair situations, Navy dares to stand out and speak for herself.

The three works all concentrate on how to film the idea of home, whether it is about the impossible homecoming, such as the end of *Head-On*; or constructing a home in the new world, such as Sari in *Rasa*; or having a home-seeking journey like the cross-cultural couple in *My Imported Wife*. In the last film, even though they argue constantly about the money problem, but it is through their argument that we realize the idea of home does not only include love and caring, but also collisions and fights. The idea of home is just like the idea of diasporic identity, whether we are displaced or not, we always desire for a sense of belonging by choosing what we identify with and making reconciliations. However, having this "relational positioning" and

struggling within the “play” of historical, cultural, and financial tug-of-war, we can understand what we can find is only an imagined homeland. However, it is also our desire for the imagined homeland in this globalized age that intrigues these directors to use their aesthetic creativity to represent the losses or hybridization of the identification process of displaced people.



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