

DOCTORAL THESIS

The oral testimony and the embodied witness: orality, intersubjectivity, and Chinese oral history documentary film

Xu, Yaping

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**The Oral Testimony and the Embodied Witness:
Orality, Intersubjectivity, and Chinese Oral History Documentary Film**

XU YAPING, APPLE

Ph. D. Thesis

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
2013**

**The Oral Testimony and the Embodied Witness:
Orality, Intersubjectivity, and Chinese Oral History Documentary Film**

XU Yaping, Apple

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Principal Supervisor: Prof. Ian AITKEN

Hong Kong Baptist University

October 2013

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been written after my registration as candidate for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University. This thesis has never been submitted to journals for publication. Nor has it ever been submitted to this or other institution, other than the present degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Signature: _____
XU Yaping, Apple
Date: September 2013

Abstract

In order to explore the embodiment of oral history in documentary film this study sets out its analysis in two sections. The first section concentrates on understanding the issue of intersubjectivity in Walter Ong's idea of 'orality', namely, orality as characterized by an interactive relation between speaker and listener, based on the sensual-perceptual experience of sound phenomenon and the expressive act of the spoken word. Additionally, in this first section, intersubjectivity in cinematic experience is also investigated in relation to early German film theorists' romantic conceptions of filmic 'gesture'. Employing a 'performance-centered' approach, the second section of the dissertation analyzes how the oral testimony and the embodied witness collaboratively produce historical knowledge on the scene of interviewing and beyond. This section will also consist of three case studies covering three broad areas of historical identity: 1. Women induced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops (the so-called 'comfort women'); 2. Villagers affected by the Great Leap Forward Famine, and 3. Intellectuals affected by political persecutions during the era of Mao.

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Looking back on the four years of Ph.D studies, it indeed has been a bittersweet journey, a mixture of all kinds of tastes. It took me quite an effort to achieve the present stage; and in this final piece of writing for this dissertation, I cannot avoid but being so proud that I have come so far and truly grateful that my supportive families, scholarly mentors and beneficial friends have been inspiring and encouraging me so much and so enduringly. I finally complete a research that blended in the important years of my youth. I own this to my supervisor, Ian Aitken, who always allows me to make changes; I would not find an area that I am truly committed to study for my Ph.D research, without his patience of being the first reader of my drafts, his responsive guidance and support.

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Introduction

Sheila Nayar (2010b) relates a curious story in her interdisciplinary studies on film orality; when presenting her subject of study to film scholars at an annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference, she was frustrated by puzzled responses such as, ‘Did you say *morality*?’ (p. 15, emphasis original). Sadly, orality is still not a self-evident idea in film scholarship. Encountering Nayar’s story, I too was disconcerted. In the process of researching the phenomenon of orality in film, I found the uneasiness of the juncture—partly from the ambiguity of orality, which is a dynamic totality, or an experience—difficult to thoroughly examine with linguistics. However, I still attempted the task. This dissertation is driven by, above all, a desire to explore the methodological input of orality to understand moving images: How are studies on sound able to illuminate studies on film, a visually determined medium? I shall commence answering this question by correcting it. Firstly, orality cannot be reduced to sound; secondly, moving images are haptic beyond visual; thirdly, film is an embodied experience, which is beyond the linguistic signification, although necessary as a conveyer. The unfolding of the dissertation follows the steps of my investigations into this question, and the theoretical derivation of the first section is further applied to a practical field—oral history documentary filmmaking—in the second section.

The subject of this research relates to *the orality in the visual*, particularly in the moving image; among the moving-image cultures created by the modern media technologies, I concentrate on film to explore the revived orality. The research is driven by two broad motives: the empirical and the theoretical. It is important to study *the orality in the visual* primarily because it is a ubiquitous and

tenacious phenomenon. For example, before the cinema was invented, magic lantern lectures took place in Britain with the lecturer standing in between the screen and the audience, giving a vocal performance, drawing memories or knowledge from the paintings or photos projected on the screen. We can also find this tradition in the Japanese context: *benshi*, where the skilled narrator stands to the side of the movie screen, and relates the screen world to the audience. Both are illustrations of the various kinds of embodied speaking in the cinema. However, what I'm concerned with in this research is more the embodied speaking *within* the screen world—or how the specific visual-duration mimetically represents the embodied communication and expression. I would argue that even if the film is silent, lacking sound, it still evokes the oral through the visual. For example, in the early film, *The Kiss* (William Heise, 1896), there is speaking and hearing between the couple and we can perceive their oral communication although we can only *see* that without synchronized sound.

Although the cinema is transformed with sync-sound technique, the sound cinema still preserves the visual representation of speaking even if it also occupies our auditory space, such as Woody Allen's monologue in the opening sequence of the film *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977). Within the sound cinema, the visual representation of the oral performance also includes the 'talking heads' testimony, which is a frontal display of a witness/person recounting his/her experience or memory of a past scenario. Even if changes occur to recording technologies and exhibition spaces—film or digital video, cinema or websites—the display of talking people remains consistent. Despite such consistency, studies are hesitant on the question of whether there is orality in the moving image and how this occurs. The American cultural and religious historian Walter Jackson Ong defines

orality as the oral mode of thought, expression and communication; his definition of orality is one of the most frequent of those adopted by film scholars. However, he denies the existence of orality in ‘movies’. In this dissertation, I will suggest that his thesis can be revised from at least two perspectives. First, film can be not just the narrative features that he listed; second, the orality in film resides not in (or not only in) the sequential organization of narrative, but (or but also) in the experiential dimension of the visual display.

Nonetheless, it did not stop film scholars from applying Ong’s ideas on orality, and the phenomenological histories of the demise and revival of orality, to understand a certain cinema or visual culture, although some scholarly explanations about orality sometimes compete. For example, the American scholar Sheila Nayar, as mentioned above, is influenced by the narrative comprehension theories, arguing that the oral cinema calls for the cognitive process of the audience. However, another American scholar, Laura Marks, whose phenomenologist standpoint on embodiment integrates the ‘affect theory’ (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 6) of recent social sciences and humanities, is influenced by Gilles Deleuze’s vision of the affective quality of the cinema, and conceives orality in video to be a kind of embodied experience of the human beings involved. For example, if we see the act of touch on the screen, it might arouse our sensory experience of touching or being touched. With such unsolved problems, I am going to revisit Walter Ong’s thoughts and writings on orality. I want to establish the irreducible variables of orality in the first place and see whether they are relevant to the moving image display and how. With such motives, the research is interested in two questions generally: 1. Is there oral in the visual? 2. How can we adopt it as a perspective to understand the moving image?

The research is structured according to two general approaches to understand the orality in the visual: the first section is a theoretical exploration of the oral variables, and how such variables can be connected with the specificity of the moving image. The second section is an empirical investigation that focuses on a contemporary example—the oral history documentary, or the orality conveyed in video. In the theoretical exploration, I first survey Walter Ong’s writings on orality and its implication that orality is not just about sound; next, I provide literature on the applications of Ongian orality and summarize its perspectives of understanding visual cultures through orality. One of the key implications is that there is less discussion on orality in relation to the specificity of the visual display; consequently, I surveyed the early film theories that particularly concerned the specificity of the moving image, so as to relate the variables of the oral mode of expression and communication to the visual display.

Orality as the embodied experience of intersubjective exchange

Walter J. Ong’s theoretical framework on orality, as commonly referenced by film scholars¹, is taken as the departure point of my inquiry. Chapter 2 is a review of the existing literature on the applications of Ongian orality notions to the interpretations of visual cultures, potentially forming five major concerns. Nayar’s *Cinematically speaking: The orality-literacy paradigm for visual narrative* (2010) is a pioneering work that contributes to adapting Ongian orality to film studies. It argues that an oral episteme exists in some particular cinemas and films (e.g. Hindi *masala* films), while others are determined by the literate episteme (e.g. French new wave films). Nayar’s assumption is that the oral

¹ Chapter 2 attempts to elaborate on this and the implications.

episteme is tantamount to oral noetic, a particular cognition that is fostered by certain norms and visual codes. However, Marks (2000), although not examining Ong's theses in depth, adopts a different methodology to Nayar—the phenomenology of the visual, and proposes that the visual can be haptic, especially in relation to articulating memories and other subjective visions. I take Marks's implication on the corporeal dimension of the visual object—moving image—and undertake to revisit the oral episteme as one that consists in the apperception of the viewer—the interplay of sensibility and cognition. In order to approach the oral within the visual, I propose to examine the pre-reflective² experience residing in the visual.

In *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (1967), *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (1971), *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (1977), and *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), Walter Ong develops a hypothesis of orality-literacy dynamics, in which the primary orality, he assumes, is authentic to the human life-world, emerging within bodily expressions and interpersonal communications, nurturing the oral cultures and human consciousness. Such orality also characterizes a mode of knowledge production that integrates 'the known' with 'the knower', while modern literacy intensified an arbitrary split

² For Merleau-Ponty (1945–2012), the 'unreflective' (p. xi) experience characterizes the spontaneous human experience before rational conceptualization, the 'initial situation, unchanging, given once and for all' (p. xvi), which depends on the body to emerge. His notion of the pre-reflective, as a pre-rational and -analytic one, describing the sensual-perceptual bases of intersubjectivity, is adopted in Ongian orality to characterize the oral spontaneity in the face-to-face level of communication, see Chapter 1. The Merleau-Pontyan 'un-reflective' is also developed in film phenomenology to analyze the film experience as a 'pre-reflective' one, for example, Sobchack (1992) asserts that it is embodied, 'prereflectively lived' (p. 43), derives from the body-subject's primary perception and concrete, dynamic, situated praxis, beyond 'neither verbal nor literary' understanding of that (p. xvii). Basically, the 'pre-reflective' experience builds upon the sensual-perceptual centered view, investigating the living engagement.

between subjectivity and objectivity; visual objects dissociated ‘the known’ from living human beings. The belief in textual objectivity, a mentality of literacy, privileges knowledge conveyers (e.g. linguistic language, book pages, etc.) over the livingness of bodily experience (e.g. tone, gesture, etc.); simultaneously, situational sharing and intersubjective engagement, as the necessary component of orality and oral cultures, had been lost. The loss of orality and the tendency of objectification with literacy, specifies a romantic critique of modernity underlying Ongian orality.

Some textual products contour a desire for the redemption of orality, intending to revive the intersubjective components through the self-consciously created dynamics of textuality (e.g. the ‘Dear reader’ direct address in novels), with the technologized forms of word (e.g. spoken word written down), arousing the interdependent sensibility of the oral mode of expression and communication. Such self-consciousness is what Ong called ‘secondary orality’, a phenomenon that characterizes the post-literate stage of human expression and communication; Ong identifies the redemption of orality especially in mass electronic media (e.g. radio, television, computers, etc.). Nevertheless, Ong did not count film (for him, ‘movies’) as a redemptive means; instead, he criticizes film as a place with no potential of orality. Such a verdict, arguably, resulted from his limited experience of visual culture; yet it is such corporeal dimension residing in the moving image that this dissertation concerns, which argues that filmic orality consists in the embodied experiences conveyed by, but going beyond, the two-dimensional screen.

Contradicting Ong’s critique on the absence of filmic orality, the early and romantic film theorists celebrated the revitalization of interdependent embodiment

in film and cinema. For Béla Balázs, Georg Lukács, and Walter Benjamin³, the intersubjectivity⁴ consists in film imaginary⁵ and spectatorship⁶, and they had faith in film's ability to confront the abstraction tendency of modernity residing in the experiential dimension. Drawing from that, this dissertation argues that the intersections of orality and film lie, firstly, with the emphasis of gestural expressions of the human body, and secondly with the embodiment of intersubjective communication in existential encounters. To revise Ongian 'secondary orality', the dissertation also argues that certain filmic experiences can mimetically enliven the corporeal human exchanges in the form of actuality, and foreground the orality underlying the visual.

Thus orality, in this dissertation, is considered as a phenomenon not merely preoccupied with the irreducible sound component, but essentially an interdependent sensual-percept that is underpinned existentially in a communal sharing of knowledge, based on corporeality of exchanges. The orality characterizes a total bodily experience in existential situations. Both sound and

³ The examinations concentrate on a number of representative works of the three theorists, including Balázs's *The Visible Man* (orig. 1924) and *The Spirit of the Film* (orig. 1930), Lukács's 'Thoughts towards an aesthetic of the cinema' (orig. 1913), and Benjamin's 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproducibility: Second version' (orig. 1936).

⁴ 'Intersubjectivity' is a notion rooted in phenomenology (the study of experience) and has different traditions (Crossley, 1996). Above all, it recognizes a mutual relationship between self and other, identifying that the self/subjectivity makes sense only in a relational engagement with the other; the intersubjective experience means the beings possess the world by perception towards the other, an experience of distinguishing 'subject from subject in the shared realm of the interpersonal' (Sobchack, 1992, p. 55).

⁵ The Merleau-Pontyan 'imaginary' means a presentational/experiential mimesis, or, 'a world of embodied or disembodied objects and images which can be creatively elaborated on within an intersubjective transference to become [...] a gestural sense of language' (Campbell, 2005: 20). It tends to conceive of the object as an animate being that is involved in an interdependent relationship with the subject, actualizing a perceptual experience. In this paper, the 'film imaginary' refers to the Merleau-Pontyan model, which fits into the articulations on the intersubjective experience of either spoken-word or moving-image in the works of Ong, Balázs, Lukács, and Benjamin. Film imaginary thus means the set of visual objects on screen that take on meaning in a relation with the spectator.

⁶ In this dissertation, the spectator means the active body of the viewer, corporeally and socially prepared to engage in embodied knowledge reception.

image are necessary, but both not exclusively; the orality characterizes the interplay of auditory and optical percepts in the interdependent communication.

The case studies on the embodied experiences in oral history-based documentary films, and the empirical research

The intersection between oral history and documentary film constitutes a pertinent case for investigating the intersubjectivity of orality as embodied experience in the moving-images. The second section of this dissertation, which takes the arguments of the first section as assumptions, intends to observe the embodied mimesis that film experiences can evoke. Oral history denotes both the academic methodology of undertaking social-scientific research with alternative materials (subjective experiences), and the social activist perspective that advocates the alternative traditions of history (from the below, the hidden, the ordinary people). Both aspects connote the political implications of the voice, and the alternative historical materials created by living human beings through exchanges—the interview format—beyond the official records and written documents. As the collaborative production of knowledge, encompassing two parties of social actors playing the role of themselves in an encounter, the intersubjectivity of oral history is recognized and developed by oral historians besides its being used as a means of data collection. The growth of oral history as a modern academic practice since the late 1940s, established firstly in the American context but promoted by localized practices, suggests its privilege as the embodied experience to produce alternative knowledge. The incorporation of technologies promoted such a culture of embodiment, from sound recording devices, to moving-image apparatus (e.g. video).

The 1980s witnessed serious discussions by oral historians on the appropriation of videotaped oral history to advance their making of oral history to ‘a new level’ (Sipe, 1991, p. 75)⁷, a level acknowledging and developing the physicality and haptic dimension of the audiovisual that foregrounds the reflexivity⁸ of oral history. In addition, in documentary scholarship, the 1980s saw emergent theorizations on the emplacement of oral history, particularly interviews, in documentary filmmaking. Beyond ‘talking heads’, performative video documentary filmmaking oriented documentary scholars further to the theorizations on the bodily performance within social encounter in *vérité*, and the embodied knowledge that documentary produces. Undoubtedly, the spread of technology in the 1980s and 1990s, with individuals’ mastering of the lightweight cameras and synch sound recorders⁹, availed the bodily mimesis and embodied knowledge production about the personal and the subjective. The digital technology devices and their diffusions since the late 1990s have been further testifying the significance of the mimetic embodiment in film for producing knowledge (conveyers) within the everyday encounter, the corporeal exchanges with one another.

The ‘talking heads’ with ‘digital mimesis’¹⁰ particularly demonstrates the joint between the two-dimensional film world and the three-dimensional life-

⁷ As Chapter 4 will elaborate, such concern on the input of moving images to oral history-making can be found in a number of oral historians.

⁸ The ‘reflexive’ dimension of oral history basically means that human beings’ involvement in the collection and interpretation of historical materials affects the ultimate formation of knowledge and historiography, which refuses the absolute objectivity and examines the priorities that shape interaction within a given time (Sipe, 1991, p. 75).

⁹ For example, Bill Nichols (1993; 1994)’s theorization on the production of ‘embodied’ knowledge in the performative mode of documentary draws many examples from video documentaries. Wang Yiman (2005) develops Nichols’s perspective in her examination on the digital video advocated amateur-authorship in Chinese independent documentaries.

¹⁰ I derive the notion of ‘digital mimesis’ from Zhang Z. (2010). As Philip Rosen suggests, the digitally technologized moving images have been challenging the referential frameworks of representation: ‘Accounts of the digital gravitate toward a postulate of radical change in arenas of representation, discourse, culture, and sometimes even society as a whole’ (quoting from Prince,

world, the oral history and moving images. As suggested by Martineau (1988), Rabinowitz (1994), Gaines (1999), or Sarkar & Walker (2010), the ‘talking heads’ have empowering or advocating significations for social-political documentary filmmaking. Such a form, projecting self-representation and personal visions in the vérité actuality, intensifies the political and affective implications of oral history’s advocacy on the subjectivity of the narrator, which, as a textual *becoming*, produces agency of historical actors. This is exemplified by *Shoah* (dir. Claude Lanzmann, 1985); namely, the ‘talking heads’ format of oral testimony, which intends to affect the viewer with the narrator’s own performance, suggests an imaginary that produces agency of social changes from the spontaneous engagement.

Deployed by the grassroots media activists, such apparatus have been drawn into the formation of alternative cultures. I take cases from China to discuss the performative, technological, political, and social implications of ‘talking heads’ testimony; the variations of embodied oral history filmmaking in the New Documentary Movement¹¹ of China, which, in knowledge production about the

2012, p. 149). Zhang Z. suggests we can understand Rosen’s “digital mimesis”—in particular, its “capacity of the digital to imitate preexisting compositional *forms* of imagery” (quoting from Zhang Z., 2010, p. 116, emphasis original)—in relation with the human body in general and filmmaker’s body in particular, which is one of the ‘*forms* of imagery’.

¹¹ The New Documentary Movement of China is a notion deployed to describe the independent filmmaking that emerged in the early 1990s, starting with the film *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (dir. Wu Wenguang, 1990), which aimed to reveal alternative realities in China, deploying unofficial and non-commercial media sources. Specifically, they concerned subaltern (*diceng*) society and people of alternative identities, whose voices could not be privileged by state-owned media. It was also the response to the changes subsequent to the failure of the 1989 Tiananmen Incident and the full-speed economic reforms since 1993 (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 6). However, arguably, this documentary movement started as early as the end of 1980s, in the state-owned media, involving the ‘television documentary movement’ (Lü, 2001, p. 693), which reformed the old models of socialist realism with documentary realism (*jishi*). Such commitment to *xianchang*, with signifiers such as location shooting and synch sound recording (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 5), was shared by the institutional and independent documentarians in the 1990s. The divergence between the two (television and independent documentaries) was more obvious from the late 1990s, when the television systems were increasingly driven by the media reforms towards marketization and affected the aesthetics of documentary programs to hark back to the old models, whilst the spread of digital video cameras, cheaper editing equipment, and alternative distributions made it possible for the independent documentarians to form a third media culture beyond official

social, advocates the bodily mimesis with the aesthetics of documentary realism (*jishi*), or, with the commitment to actuality (*xianchang*), provides the ground for discussing the emergent social agency. The selection of cases attempts to locate the transformation of documentary realism in different contexts of praxis, encompassing both institutional practices and independent filmmaking, which can also become a comparative basis for observing respective appropriation of oral history's alternativeness of localized interests.

The case analyses encompass three historical issues and related historical actors/testimonies, in the embodied documentary inquiries:

- i. The Japanese sexual slavery regime, or the so-called 'comfort women', and the survival victims, in four documentary series produced by the Shanghai Television Station's Documentary Editing Room (DER) (1994–2006): *Half Century's Homesickness* (Zhang Kunhua, 1994), *Remains of Victims* (Song Jichang, 2002), *The Sufferers* (Zhang Lai and Su Lei, 2004), and *The Scar of Memory* (Ji Zhe and Zhang Chengcheng, 2006).
- ii. The Great Leap Forward Famine (1959–1961), and the survival peasants, in the documentaries and theaters of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine' (2009–2012), curated by Wu Wenguang and participated in by a number of artists-in-residence of Caochangdi Workstation¹², student-filmmakers, and village-video-makers. Some representative examples are

and commercial ones. The divergence also illustrates their respective changes concerning commitment to *xianchang*; the early observational mode of filmmaking, which gradually decreased in the institutional works, shifting to more participatory, self-reflexive, performative styles in the independents, suggesting its tendency towards the embodied knowledge production concerning the alternative realities. For more on the New Documentary Movement, see Berry & Rofel (2010a), Lü (2010).

¹² Caochangdi Workstation is an independent art space studio located in Beijing, founded by Wu Wenguang in 2005, which includes documentary exhibitions and archives, a theatrical stage, post-production studio and living spaces. It also holds annual art festivals that cross arranges programs of documentary and theater; for more information, see its website: <http://www.ccdworkstation.com/>.

discussed in detail, e.g. Zou Xueping's trilogy *The Starving Village* (2010), *The Satiated Village* (2011), and *Children's Village* (2012); and the oral history-based theatrical performance: *Memory 2: Famine* (2012).

- iii. The 'anti-rightist campaign' (1957) and related political movements, the influenced intellectuals, in Hu Jie's documentary films and some other related documentary practices, for example: *In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul* (dir. Hu Jie, 2004), and *East Wind State Farm* (dir. Hu Jie, 2009).

Data collections were mainly conducted in my field trips to three archives:

- i. The Shanghai Audio-Visual Archives (SAVA), in which the broadcasts of DER are digitalized for internal circulation and paid external use, administrated by the Media Asset Management Center (MAMC) of Shanghai Media Group (SMG), which has managed STV's broadcasts as 'assets' since the mid-2000s.
- ii. The Caochangdi Workstation (CCD) of Beijing, which was founded by Wu Wenguang and supported by the non-governmental China Independent Documentary Film Archive (CIDFA) since 2005; it hosts a library that archives a number of important independent documentaries, including those of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine', and organizes exhibitions in its May Festivals and other workshops;
- iii. The Documentary Archive of the University Service Center (USC) for China Studies in the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), which was founded in 2005, depositing and distributing contemporary Chinese documentaries that serve as firsthand materials and testimonials for studies and pedagogies on Chinese culture, society and history. The documentaries are emplaced within the category of 'folk history' (*minjian lishi*), emphasizing its alternative quality.

SAVA, CCD, and USC are architectures that orchestrate testimonials with different intentions, in official or alternative operations. More information about my archival research is recounted in the respective chapters. In addition to film viewing, I also conducted interviews during and after my stays at SAVA, CCD, and USC. The interview with Zhang Kunhua (the director of *Half Century's Homesickness* and a number of DER's significant works in the 1990s) centers on his authorial autonomy and specialty in relation to DER's development. The interview with Wang Yi (SAVA's executive manager) focuses on the re-use of DER's documentaries as archival footage. In my participant-observations at CCD's May Festival (2012), I noticed the intertextuality underling the documentary and theater characterizing the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine'. Their exhibitions of the documentaries and the theatrical performances, constantly crossing the boundary of the textual and social, were slotted with relentless workshops, post-screening discussions, informal interviews, not to mention emails, microblogs (*weibo*), and other forms of interactions. It was an amazing movie-going experience to sit next to, and laugh with the filmmakers who were simultaneously present and addressing you in the screen worlds. At CUHK, I interviewed Xiong Jingming (the director of USC) and Zhang Hongli (the administrator of the Documentary Archive) about their intention, criteria and operation of archiving documentary films as a source of folk materials in addition to textual documents.

Some academic writings on contemporary Chinese documentary films, containing a number of transcribed interviews in which the filmmakers represent themselves to the scholars, are actually living-memory-based documentary inquiries in the linguistic form. For example, Fang Fang's *Zhongguo jilu pian*

fazhan shi (*A history of the development of Chinese documentary film*, 2003), Lü Xinyu's *Jilu zhongguo: Dangdai zhongguo xin jilu yundong* (*Recording China: Contemporary Chinese New Documentary Movement*, 2003), Wang Weici's *Jilu yu tansuo: Yu dalu jilupian gongzuozhe de shiji duihua* (*Recording and exploring: Conversations with documentarians from mainland China*, 2000), Mei Bing and Zhu Jingjiang's *Zhongguo duli jilu pian dangan* (*Documents of Chinese independent documentary*, 2004), Li Xing, Liu Xiaoqian and Wang Jifang's *Bei Yiwang de Yingxiang* (*The Forgotten Video Images*, 2006), etc. Recently, the embodied production of documentary culture has been driven into another realm—weblogs and microblogs (*weibo*)—that highlights the social affect of the living memories.

My analytical approaches basically consist of textual analysis on two levels: the actuality and the narrative¹³; the former conveys the testimony's self-representation in relation to a historical scenario, whilst the embodied vision of intersubjectively producing historical knowledge emerges in the latter. The empirical inquiries attempt to locate the textually revealed interlocutors, with which the redemption of the historical and the social scenarios can be actualized. I particularly look at the body's engagement in bearing firsthand and secondary testimony, documentary realism and personal filmmaking, with which lie both 'public record'¹⁴ and self-consciousness, alternative traditions of history and alternative identities. Implied by the analyses, the corporeal and committed documentary relationship is a necessary basis of oral materials production, in

¹³ Or the 'cinema vérité and narrative' for Rabinowitz (1994, p. 26); the settlement on this approach is presented in Chapter 4.

¹⁴ The notion of 'public record' can be understood in association with Berry & Rofel (2010b)'s thesis on contemporary Chinese independent documentaries as 'alternative archives', suggesting the documentary formation of the un-official and non-mainstream materials and traditions of China's history, culture and social reality.

which the presence and performance of the embodied interlocutor constitutes an irreducible part of the knowledge. Whilst the oral history inquiry, by means of digital personal filmmaking, foregrounds the experiential quality and liminal vision of testimony, creating alternative traditions of history in relation to the filmmaker's own selfhood, and in doing so, the agency of making (secondary) testimony is inscribed into the rhetoric, anticipating the mimetic response of the viewer (social actor) to bear further testimony. Ultimately, I argue that oral history-based documentary inquiry not only produces textual knowledge about the past, but also, if not more importantly, produces the agency of social actors to engage with the past, remembering and remaking history through embodied acts.

Outline of chapters

The first chapter explores the embodiment of intersubjectivity in Walter Ong's idea of orality. It first introduces key issues of Ongian orality: pristine orality, secondary orality, life-world, that are developed in Ong's writings about the hypothesis of orality-literacy dynamics. Second, it focuses on the notion of embodied intersubjectivity that underlies Ongian orality, specifying the phenomenological models of intersubjectivity that are applied in Ong's writings: Edmund Husserl's life-world, Martin Buber's *I-Thou* relationship, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's body-subject. The loss of orality, namely, a withdrawal of the interdependent encounter of speaking and hearing in life-world, leads Ong to his critique of the visual culture for its removal of the existentially emanated speaking-act.

The second chapter surveys the applications of Ongian orality in film studies, and summarizes six general strands from their concerns. When surveying

what cinemas orality can characterize, this chapter finds that the three general stages of human culture and consciousness that Ongian orality posits—primary orality, literacy, secondary orality—has been questioned by contextually situated studies on the filmic redemption of folk traditions, native cultures and local histories. The embodied mimesis of oral storyteller and oral testimony (e.g. African *griot*, or native stand-up comedian, etc.)—the bodily imaginary of orality—emerges as interesting subject matter for film scholars to illuminate on the vernacular experiences.

The third chapter explores the embodied intersubjectivity within the filmic imaginary and the cinema experience, drawing on the early and romantic film theories that believe in the utopian film's redemption of gestural expression, against the linguistic language. The new technological culture of the moving image in the context of 1895–1933 Germany engaged the mass public with its expressiveness. Béla Balázs's notion of physiognomy, Georg Lukács's early thought on the mimetic representation of cinema, and Walter Benjamin's ideas on inter-corporeal film spectatorship, provide pertinent approaches to explore the gestural expressiveness and bodily mimesis of film. In fact, the cinema experience can be an interdependent one, involving the active interaction of human beings on- and off-screen, as one of the consensus underlying these theoretical discussions, revitalizing the 'human presence' and the 'psychic participation' (Ong, 1981 p. 312), or what Ong identifies in the electronic media: the experience of personal existence that is simultaneously and dynamically open within a collective.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss briefly the evolution of oral history in the Western visions. I argue that the early attention to it as a social-scientific method

of data collection, drawing textual objectivity as standard, was complicated by the later acknowledgement of its intersubjective and performative elements, which went beyond the textuality and the linguistics of oral narratives and recognized the gestural expression of the narrator. The oral narration is essentially a performance, and the oral narrative encompasses both semantic and somatic meanings. Intersubjectivity acknowledges that an oral history interview is a social interaction between subjectivities, rejecting the idea of the passive interviewee but encouraging self-performance. The subjectivities emerge within the encounter—the oral history interview. Orality and performativity characterizes both in oral history and documentary, which are discussed by focusing on the aspect of ‘talking heads’ testimony in *vérité* actuality as the conveyer of the testimonial apparatus, engendered by the embodied experience of filmmaking and bearing of testimony, and might produce the agency of the viewer in political documentary filmmaking.

The fifth chapter is a brief overview on oral history practices in China. I list a number of examples that illustrate the insufficient development of oral history discipline in academic institutions, contrasting with a mushrooming growth in cultural fields. The sixth and seventh chapters elaborate on the social practices with oral history-based documentary filmmaking. Chapter six studies the Documentary Editing Room of Shanghai Television Station, focusing on the four documentary series on the issue of Japanese sexual slavery and its survival victims, produced and broadcasted over the 1990s and the 2000s. As one of the core forces in the ‘television documentary movement’ (Lü, 2001, p. 693) in the early 1990s, although DER appeared in a number of historical writings on

Chinese documentary film development¹⁵, there has not been a comprehensive study on it, even less on its oral history documentary productions. The case study on DER intends to explore its production of testimony in accordance with the institutional changes of TV in general and DER in particular, against which the four series on the so-called ‘comfort women’ emerged.

Chapter 7 elaborates on another two illuminating case studies in the realm of independent documentary, in which the intersection of oral history and documentary filmmaking depends on the personal mode of filmmaking and digital technologies, foregrounding the embodied intersubjectivity across the boundary on- and off-screen: i. the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’ (2009–2012); ii. Hu Jie’s documentary inquiries into the political movements of Mao’s era. Such practices basically took place in the 2000s, as a convergence of influences of the individualized technologies of production and dissemination, amateur-author aesthetics¹⁶, the cultural formation of ‘the third type imaging’ (Wang, 2005, p. 17) in addition to commercial and official, and the ‘activist turn’¹⁷, suggesting a different picture of oral history embodiment, and an attempt to affect the social realm with the creative and bodily re-presentations of testimony. The two case studies attempt to suggest the self-representation of the

¹⁵ For example, Lü (2001) proposes the notion of ‘television documentary movement’ and includes DER in the formation of that; however, he did not provide a close analysis (p. 689–694). Zhang T. D. (2001) positions DER in the broad picture of TV programs’ formation of the ‘popular culture’ (*dazhong wenhua*) (p. 838), independent from ‘mainstream culture’ (*zhuliu wenhua*), ‘elite culture’ (*jingying wenhua*) and ‘marginal culture’ (*bianyuan wenhua*) (p. 826–845). Fang (2003) incorporates DER against the backdrop of TV documentary’s shifting towards plebian subjects (p. 334–339). Shan (2005) only allocates one paragraph to list the aesthetics and representative works of DER (p. 405–406). Berry (2009)’s in-depth diachronic study on STV’s documentary programming pays attention to DER as one of the early models; however, still focuses on the most popularly mentioned series and is not a comprehensive study on DER.

¹⁶ As Wang Y. M. (2005) suggests, the amateur-authorship associates with the individualized video making and dissemination, values the knowledge produced with limited vision about experiential realities.

¹⁷ As Zhang Z. (2012, Mar. 9) points out, such activist turns, promoted by DV technologies, privileges the agency and creativity of the embodied filmmaker who is considered to be shaping media citizenship, the discourse of grassroots, and affecting social changes with image-making.

testimony (peasants, intellectuals) contributes to shape a self-reflexive experience for the embodied filmmaker to search for alternative traditions of socialist history, and also to shape alternative moderns in association with that.

Section 1. Intersubjectivity in Ongian orality and romantic film theories: the embodied human experience

Chapter 1. Essential issues of Ongian orality

1. Ong's writings on orality, and the limits of 'secondary orality'

Ongian orality-literacy dynamics attempts to describe a grand picture on the mutual dependence between human subjects and their world (both 'nature', i.e. the material world, and 'life-world', i.e. the world of direct and everyday experience) derived implication from the interacting experience with the use of word. Basing on the assumption that technologies shape the course of human civilization, Ong hypothesizes three general stages: pristine orality, literacy, and 'secondary orality' (i.e. a transformed orality in modern literacy), characterizing the transformations of human expression and communication. For Ong, such large-scale developments resulted from, and can be perceived through, the transformations of the devices of communication, from sound-word (i.e. spoken utterance) to technologized word (e.g. alphabetic language, talk shows, type writing, etc.). The sound-word means the physical and social verbalization that is determined by temporal and experiential delivery for one to perceive and know. Such sensual path to knowledge characterizes the specialty of sound-word as a contextualized phenomenon. However, the shift from the verbal memorization to the mnemonics with written text suggests the emergence of rational intentionality, towards knowledge accumulation and de-contextualization.

The forms of word suggest the relationship of human beings with the world. For Ong, the sound-word and the sound-experience were enchanting and transcending because they are 'true person-to-person contact', characterizing the authentic scenario of one's existence within the life world – the everyday life, so that 'A paper pope and

a pope in the flesh' are quite different (1981, p. 284). The sound-experience is beyond the physical occurrence of sound, which immediately affects on subjects and unifying them into a fusion, in a communicative relationship with each other. The notion of 'lifeworld' for Ong connotes a utopian and primitive ecology, or the analogous communal environment where human beings connect with each other immediately and interpersonally; as a necessary and structural constituency of such utopia, 'the [spoken] word unites one human being with another' (1977, p. 25), as 'Oral utterance [...] encourages a sense of continuity with life, a sense of participation, because it is itself participatory' (1977, p. 21). Such sound-word is like mother's 'closeness' (i.e. connection) to the infant which relies on 'suckling' 'feeding' 'chewing, swallowing, digesting' other than linguistics (1977, p. 23).

Pristine orality, the status when spoken word dominates the experience of communications, is the ideal oral mode of thought and expression that is not mediated by any literate technologies. However, the modern word – 'writing, print and the electronic devices of recent times' (1977, p. 9) – were invented and subsequently, rational, analytical, conscious, reflective mentality was heightened, and with the textual devices, human beings can be de-contextualized from their lifeworld, which brought about Ong's notion of 'alienation' (1977, p. 17) – the division of the human being from unconscious experience, and the loss of integration within community. The lifeworld actuality that is embodied in the oral-aural word, closely approached by the human subjects in pristine orality and through person-to-person encounters, loses its presence in the literacy-dominated cultures, particularly so when mass reproductive technologies (e.g. mass-printed novels) dominated. As the phenomenologically oral-aural voice decreased, whilst the visual-tactile word, fixed in spaces, penetrated (and even constituting 'the hypertrophy of the visual', 1981, p.

288), the transformation of communication happened, from the oral word to visual word. For Ong, it led to an inevitable manipulation on visual word, which brought about the division of subjectivity and objectivity, which is the detachment of livingly and temporally experiencing percipient from the textual product, in essence.

But ‘the strong antialienation drive’ (1977, p. 41) characterizes the self-consciousness of human beings to redeem the oral utopia. Ong investigates the textual forms of modern media (e.g. ‘television talk shows’), to identify the modern subjects’ desire for the existential interaction. In order to stress the aspect of interactive relationships underlying some textually embodied orality, Ong refuses to use the term ‘media’ for describing the conveyers of expression and communication, because the concept of ‘media’ does not acknowledge the experiential dimension of human activities (1982, p. 175). Although irretrievable as much as the infancy for an adult, the modern subjects still attempted to reconstruct lifeworld connections, through technological mimesis on the corporeal human voice and interactive mode of expression. For Ong, the technological cultures in general and the literary history in particular are driven by the desire for orality and self-conscious representation on the oral relationship, which are revealed by a number of textual phenomena, for example, the readers as fictionalized characters inscribed in novels (1982, p. 102). ‘Secondary orality’ designates such self-conscious creation of the oral phenomena.

1.1. The social implication of physical sound-experience

The 1967 work (*The presence of the word*) concentrates on the enchanting affect of the spoken word (i.e. sound, oral verbalization) to human perception. The interplay of sound and perception forms the basis of the oral-aural sensorium that structures the oral-cultural mode of expression and communication. The sensorium is

an organization of sensations—the visual, tactile, auditory, saporous (relating to taste) and olfactory (relating to smell), etc.—radiating from the corporeal body and open to experience and perception (1981, p. 264). The oral-aural sensorium connotes the privileged status of auditory in the structured perception (‘sensibility’, ‘feel’, *ibid.*) within the lifeworld (‘circumambient actuality’, 1977, p. 56); ‘oral verbalization’ (1981, p. 93) is the primary means for subjects to engage with the dynamic knowledge of lifeworld.

The orally transmitted word is, above all, a physical phenomenon, qualitatively authentic to human presence, directly derived from existential environments. Ong suggests that the actuality of oral culture is structured by such sound experience, where corporeal speaking and hearing forms the genuine relationship between human beings. The word as sound is an irreducible aspect of pre-reflective human life. Deriving his approach from biophysics, Ong suggests sound has an autonomous power of positioning individual perspectives of perception, and integrating the self in a fusion with the lifeworld, because:

Sound is more real or existential than other sense objects, despite the fact that it is also more evanescent. (1981, p. 111, emphasis original)

Sound is a special sensory key to interiority. (1981, p. 117, emphasis original)

Sound unites groups of living beings as nothing else does. (1981, p. 122, emphasis original)

Sound situates man in the middle of actuality and in simultaneity, whereas vision situates man in front of things and in sequentality. (1981, p. 128, emphasis original)

Two important aspects emerge in Ong’s characterization of the ontological authenticity of sound in relation to lifeworld. Firstly, through sound-word we can register what is hidden but exists in one’s body: ‘The word as sound signals interiority and mystery (a certain inaccessibility even in intimacy)’ (1981, p. 314). The sound utterance, for Ong, is the genuine incarnation of ‘the mysterious “I”’ – the

consciousness – that is ‘utterly different from what it means in the mouth of anyone else’ (ibid.). Such revelation on interiors is what makes sound experience enchanting: filled with ‘mystery and holiness’ and ‘hope’ (ibid.). The ‘hearing’ of sound enables the recognition of such ‘interiority’ (the speaker’s consciousness) ‘without violating it’ (1982, p. 71), and thus a necessary interdependence for the personal consciousness to be recognized. Set in contrast to sound by Ong, sight leads to a less integrating sensual perception, because ‘of all senses sight is the most distancing sense: it requires always that eye and object be removed to a considerable extent from one another’ (1977, p. 137), thus the notion that ‘Sight isolates, sound incorporates’ (1982, p 72).

Secondly, such physics of sound-experience enables the socialization of beings in the lifeworld. ‘[S]poken words [by] their very nature entail real, not imagined, personal relations, since the audience is on hand and reacting’ (1981, p. 112). Physically, the speaker and the hearer are integrated in an experiential ground. Socially, they reciprocate via interactions but still keep personal existence. And such interdependent status, with both awareness of self and existing with the others is what Ong characterizes as ‘man’s sense of presence in the human lifeworld’ (1977, p. 9). Such ‘presence’ connotes the socially defined personal properties, thus to be present means to be recognized *from* the other, because ‘Man’s life-world is the opposite of solipsist: it is a world not of presence but of presences.’ (p. 1981, p. 295). Thus such ‘life-world’, in effect, refers to a social world where ‘it would be to man alone that I could present myself, establish a relationship of presence.’ (ibid.) In such socially established world, the sound-word determines that the presence of man is initiated from his body and the body’s ‘interaction with its surroundings’, or ‘the circumambient actuality’ (1977, p. 56). The existential emplacement of sound

(speaking-hearing) presents a reality that stems from the immediate relationship with actuality. And for that, Ong considers the oral performance as a form of actuality, because it is a result of social encounter between the performer-audience interactions. For example, 'A West African griot or other oral genealogist will recite those genealogies which his hearers listen to', and 'skilled oral narrators deliberately vary their traditional narratives because part of their skill is their ability to adjust to new audiences and new situations or simply to be coquettish' (1982, p. 49). Thus oral performance is also an experience of engaging with the other to establish self.

Essentially, the spoken word suggests the expression that foregrounds the body of self as an interface connecting with the other. Ong's emphasis on the body as 'a frontier between myself and everything else' (1982, p. 72), recognizing the activeness of bodily pursuit of knowledge of the interior and the exterior, associates to the Merleau-Pontyan notion of the 'body-subject':

Merleau-Ponty posits that we are our bodies and that all of our experiences and the meanings which animate our lives are based in our active corporeal (and intercorporeal) involvement in the world. (Crossley, 1996, p. 28)

Deriving partly from Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the corporeal basis of perception, Ong stresses the 'bodily activities' in the oral mode (1982, p. 67). For example, for the oral performers participating in oral memorization, his/her body is 'a high somatic component' that consists of sub-components such as 'hand activity', 'gesturing, often elaborate and stylized' (ibid.).

Basing on such integrating physical and social experience, the orally presented knowledge is existentially grounded within the sensuous, embodied beings in the life-world. Beyond a dualism of separation between objectivity and subjectivity, Ong emphasizes an intersubjective dimension of the bodily interfaced communication:

To formulate anything I must have another person or other persons already 'in mind'. This is the paradox of human communication. Communication is intersubjective. (1982, p. 177)

For Ong, a world of sound suggests the pre-analytical experience in which comprehension emerges in identification, by 'putting my mind in yours and yours in mine' (1982, p. 175), instead of via 'intellectual knowing' (1977, p. 121). The intersubjectivity specifies the reciprocity of individual and life-world.

Ong argues that the transformation of the word from its vocal form to written form, i.e. the alphabetic language, is actually that from sound to sight, and one in which the authenticity and actualities of the life-world are reduced. This transformation took humans existence from oral-aural structure to visual-tactile structure, and the belief in word as sound is replaced by the belief in word as sight. The written word gains power and authority over the vocal word, and, concurrently, there is the separation between subjectivity and objectivity. For Ong, the polemics of subjectivity and objectivity are essentially a fabricated dualism based on a sight-dominated manipulation of knowledge; the artificial sense of such a division results from the alienation of the sound-word from human communication. The sight-word creates the 'modern man' (1981, p. 289) who undergoes the silencing of the life-world, that is, in other words, the loss of face-to-face encounters and the speaking-and-hearing existential experiences that can envelop the subjects. The ability to respond to the situated word in a face-to-face encounter is replaced by, or mediated by, the literate media such as writing and print. For Ong, the replacement by the written word implies a loss of human presence, for which he refers to Martin Buber¹⁸'s intersubjective perspective of the *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships (1981, p. 16, 288), and

¹⁸ See more on Buber in Crossley (1996), pp. 10–16, or a later part of this chapter.

characterizes the objectivity constituting a deduction of the *I-Thou* relationship, or the social interplay of the human subjects.

The technologized forms of word also bring about different modes of social relationships, for example, the readership. The invention of alphabetic language separates the knower from the known; a person isolatedly reads a book, written by one whose face is unperceivable for the reader. Alphabetic language engenders communication that depends on conventionally utilized signs. For the oral cultures, knowledge comes from the humans who tell it, where ‘a total, existential situation [...] always engages the body’ (1982, p. 67). But for the chirographic and typographic cultures that are impacted by writing and print techniques, as expressive means, abstract language replaced the perceivable human body and voice in real situations. Correspondingly, the literate mind relies on cognition and visible words to know.

Telephone, radio, television and various kinds of sound tape are what Ong means by ‘electronics’ (1982, p. 136). In them, secondary orality has a power of integration derived from the technological mimesis of sound-experience, for example, electronically taped interviews; it redeems the spoken word in a way that can escape the fixation of the textual space, such as a page of a book, and interacts with its audience more straightforwardly. Corresponding to the re-presence of sound, there is the possibility of re-integrating the individuals into a community, such as the radio broadcast brings audiences together in a dialogue with broadcasting speakers. Such re-integration characterizes the ‘group-minded’ transmission of knowledge (1982, p. 136) – knowledge created and shared in participatory and communal circumstances, taking the place of private reading.

1.2. Open system, the textually embodied encounter

Ong's 1977 work (*Interfaces of the word*) extends the idea of 'literate orality' raised in the 1971 work (*Rhetoric, romance, and technology*) to the other popular media forms, literary writings, indigenous oral performances (e.g. African talking drums, i.e. a musical instrument whose pitch can be managed to mimic the tone of human speech) (1977, pp. 92–160), and explores the embodiments of oral dynamics. His studies centers around language, however, with focus on its physical and 'indicative' (1981, p. 113) aspects. In *Interfaces of the word*, he identifies the act of communication, the encounter between the reader and the writer, within the language. Some texts (personal narratives, autobiographical fictions, 1977, p. 231) perform such encounter.

For Ong a textually embodied encounter is conveyed through visual sensorium, because the written word could only be perceived and cognized by means of the eyes instead of the ears. So an active reader, although reading the book individually in isolation, he/she can still perceive the presence of the writer and participate in the narration by situating self in the cognitive position. The privacy of the reading situation creates the distinguishing figure of the *reader* (isolated) in place of the *audience* (interdependent), detaching from the mutual experiencing. For Ong, the oral traditions in a literary text imitates the intersubjective relationality of a self within a social realm, such as the direct addressing mode suggests a desire to open the writer's world to the reader's world, implying an impulse to share experiences, to communicate across the visual word. But in literary texts such as Jonathan Swift's letter-narrative *Journal to Stella* (1977, p. 78), we can also find a desire for intersubjective connection. In such epistolary situation, the embodied reader–writer connection becomes conventional, such as direct address: 'Dear Sir: Your dirty rat ...'

(1977, p. 78). As Ong suggests in his 1971 work, the voice is the primary device through which a human being can exercise power of presence; in a social encounter, speech poses an authorial gesture and making indication. A person giving voice is simultaneously mastering authority. In literate cultures, the voice in physical terms loses its presence; however, the authoritative properties of speaking persist, in the written text, manifest by textual properties e.g. embodied address: 'Dear reader' suggests an authorial equivalent of the writer.

Ong suggests, the presence of the voice in the written form indicates the desire to open a 'closed system', i.e. a fixed text (1977, p. 305). The written word is a technology that closes down perception to actuality (1977, p. 305); but the knowledge is frequently wrapped up in the direct address mode, as in the 'Dear reader' situations, implying the impulse to open the textually determined closed-system. A mimetic oral delivery of knowledge in written text returns human beings to the pre-semantic and pre-reflective ground of experience. The 'secondary orality', for Ong, generally identifies such oral persistence in the literate systems in terms that it characterizes the impulse of openness, or the mutual dependence in the post-orality era, to specify a 'new kind of orality' that 'has its own openness, but is itself dependent upon writing and print.' (1977, p. 305)

Developing the proposition of 'secondary orality' in association with the notion of 'open system' (1977, p. 215), Ong gives examples of television culture. For Ong, television is a new 'interface', embodying both the spoken word and the written word: the mimesis of a human body through electronic technology, imitating a face-to-face conversational situation through imaginaries. Television is oral, in the sense that it creates a dialogic or intersubjective world for the audience. But the experience of spontaneity is self-consciously strived in TV. The orality it redeemed is, in

comparison with the print embodiment of oral dynamics, more immediate to the pre-reflective sound-experience. For Ong, such ‘openness’ is embodied by a formation of interworld interaction between the speaking people in the television and the audience in the spectatorial world. Describing the positive aspect of such interactivity, ‘a healing and strengthening sense’ (1977, p. 316), Ong provides an example:

[A]n oral account¹⁹ is always in essence a report; however recent, the event described is over with. The speaker knew the *fait accompli* before the hearer did. Television is different. The voice on a live television sports broadcast lags behind the audience’s perceptions. Jack Ruby was viewed by millions while he was actually murdering Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas. But he was murdering him in Dallas, not in hundreds of thousands of homes into which the killing was artificially projected as it took place. This intrusion creates a new unreality of presence, grotesquely assertive in the case of such tragic violence. The event in Dallas and the synchronized nonevent in living rooms across the country corresponded in time, though not even remotely in human context. More routinely but no less really than the Ruby-Oswald killing, such conditions obtain in a live television presentation of scheduled events, such as football games. Living in the ambience of such nonpresent present events has reorganized *human consciousness, which is to say, the individual’s own sense of presence in and to himself and in and to the world around him.*

*The individual’s sense of presence to himself and others is not always rendered grotesque by television, as it was in the case of Ruby-Oswald killing. Television coverage of the funeral ceremonies and related matters made the entire United States into a community in a new and healing way as the country mourned collectively the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Something similar happened at the national mourning for the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. In both these cases the collective self-presence, the sense of community, came into being around live events. More recently, a similar collective healing and strengthening has been experienced through the television presentation of Alex Haley’s *Roots*, where the events were not live. Although the story was basically historical (with many fictional elements) and in this sense real, it was played by actors and its historical (and fictional) events belonged to the past. But the participatory sense conveyed by television, plus the fact that the events were symbolically momentous in national history, again created a sense of community. It has become a commonplace to remark about *Roots* that nothing like the same effect would have been achieved had the story been put out as a movie, so that the experience of viewing it could not have been shared, as it was on television, by millions simultaneously, blacks and whites and others. As in*

¹⁹ The ‘oral account’ refers to that of radio, in the original context.

the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King tragedies, the audience could sense its own vast unity. (Ong, 1977, pp. 316–317, my emphasis)

The ‘Ruby-Oswald killing’ in this example refers to the 1963 American event, that Jacob Leon Ruby, owner of a Dallas nightclub and, reportedly, an admirer of President Kennedy, shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, who was accused of assassinating Kennedy. It happened two days after Oswald had been arrested, when he was being transferred from one jail to another. A number of journalists, photographers and police, who were crowded around in the jail’s basement garage, witnessed the shooting.²⁰

Who else was on the spot, witnessing the murder scene? ‘Hundreds of thousands of homes’, as Ong says, were also witnessing to the violence. Because the television station was broadcasting Oswald’s jail transfer live, the sudden occurrence of the Ruby-Oswald killing was captured by the television and turned thousands of American people into witnesses to the scene via the TV screen in their homes. As Ong describes it, ‘Jack Ruby was viewed by millions while he was actually murdering Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas.’ The audience became embodied witness to the scene of murder, incorporated in the temporal experience of the live broadcast. And television’s healing and strengthening aspects emerged during this collective witnessing, which gave rise to mutual dependence and communal consciousness: ‘The individual’s sense of presence to himself and others’. Thus Ong’s account on the secondary orality in television derives from television’s meta-communicative gesture of engaging self within the interdependence, rather than the televised content. It is the reciprocal formation, ‘a collective healing and strengthening’ and ‘a sense of community’, identifies a ‘secondary orality’ in television.

²⁰ ‘American’s story from American’s library’. Retrieved from: http://www.24en.com/subject/american_story/category/page/jb/modern/ruby_1.htm.

What makes television a site for raising the collective consciousness, or for realizing the interworld of the self and others? In the ‘Ruby-Oswald killing’ example, Ong emphasizes the role of the ‘television coverage of the funeral ceremonies and related matters’, which are not the crime site, but the embodiment of the aftermath of memorization. It is the memorization rituals, the funeral ceremonies, that insert the violence into individual viewers’ memories and transforms the on-the-spot event into a historical event – the embodied act of remembering. The televised mourning as the act of remembering participated in forming the historical consciousness and collective memory of the public.

Thus the open-system like the embodied witness in TV is characterized by orality, and transcends the dualistic logic of subjectivity–objectivity. Ong’s open-system is an analogy of the lifeworld, illustrated by two metaphors: the ‘Klein bottle’ and the ‘Moebius strip’ (1977. pp. 319–320). The Klein bottle, or ‘Kleinform’, is ‘a container with no bottom’ (1977, p. 320); similarly, the Moebius strip that is ‘a surface with no other side’ (ibid.). Both analogously connote a blurred spatial boundary, but a temporal endlessness. For Ong, television characterizes such endlessness, in terms of the temporal experience it engenders that transcends spatial boundary: ‘the television audience and the television show can likewise contain one another’ (1977, p. 320).

Such a re-fusion of subjectivity–objectivity (subjects and actualities), for Ong, will return human beings to the sense of lifeworld again, in which the self would come into consciousness of its presence and the presence of others. The coming-into-consciousness derives from the bodily perception: ‘The “I” interfaces with everything’ (1977, p. 337), in which the activeness of the body-subject is emphasized.

Such I-interface can be embodied in television—e.g. historical drama, *Roots*²¹, one of Ong's examples. Watching *Roots* on television screens means both the ethnically separated social selves lives spontaneously in a shared viewing-temporality. Such temporal experience of watching *Roots* on a screen is the sharing and knowing of the historical retrospect. For Ong, television fosters a sharing of historical knowledge and the chance of memorizing it; and because of that, television raises collective consciousness from the mourning of the dead, and also from the recalling, engaging, knowing of the past.

Ong addresses the embodied audience on screen as mimesis to life-world interdependence. The embodied audience in television, different from the literary mechanism of 'Dear reader' apostrophe (direct address), is corporeally present. For example, in the game shows, the audiences are as important as the recipients of the prizes: 'the entire audience is somehow carefully screened' (1977, p. 321), because their presence, in particular the way they dress, are to affect the viewers (the social public) in front of their television screens – 'a real and immediate effect' (ibid.). The television viewer can thus mimetically engage with the fictionalized audiences on the screen. It is implied that the human beings on television screens interacts with the body off screen. The notion of bodily mimesis is important to consider the openness of television orality.

1.3. The limits of secondary orality

Ong's notion of 'secondary orality' was subsequent to his giving up of the earlier notions of 'present-day orality' (1971, p. 284), and 'literate orality'. Although 'present-day' and 'literate' orality identify that the oral phenomena still exist in

²¹ *Roots* (1977) is an American television drama-series and a family saga, chronicling the history of African Americans from the 18th century to post-civil-war, from the perspective of an African American family.

modern media, they primarily concern about literate technologies, i.e. literary writings, as an approach attempting to recognize the overlapping zone of the literate mind and the oral mind in textuality, or, the oral persistence in the textual. In popular literature, authorship is a way to articulate a presence of an embodied speaker, such as Charles Dickens in his novels, and such texts are made for public delivery (1982, p. 149) and thus revives social interactions with sound. The ‘formulary devices’ (1971, p. 303) in popular texts reveal the mechanism of ‘literate orality’, which are actually transformed from oral compositions to text – formulas that are established by a collective of people, and authorized by customs. What is implied by the popularity of authorial novels is the collective consciousness of a reading public who share views, knowledge and experiences for establishing the conventions of expression and preferred presence of certain figures as textual properties. The author, instead of a creator of a masterpiece, is but a social member, sharing horizon with the reading public via the textual communication.

Secondary orality thus, for Ong, is much a concept aiming at the oral phenomena emerging in non-literary texts, particularly the electronics, for example, the television of embodied audience as he took to exemplify. The orality in television differs from the literate orality, consisting in its redemption of the pre-reflective experience of face-to-face communication – the intersubjective encounter – through the sensuous synthesis:

Both visually and aurally (sound is of the essence of television), the instrument takes a real presence from the place where it is real and present and represents it in other localities where it is neither real nor truly present. This representation is not a report. (Ong, 1977, pp. 316–317)

In television, the visual and the auditory are synthesized, narrowing perceptual gaps, as Ong emphasizes. But whether the auditory sense is privileged as the essence of the

television open-system, superior to the visual modality, Ong makes no clear differentiation. However, the examples he provides, such as the embodied audience in the game shows, suggest the visual aspect is an important dimension for reviving the orality in moving-image media.

Ong intends to overturn the domination of the visual bias of literacy, for which he places much emphasis on spoken word, regarding it as the primary means of lifeworld encounter. Arguably in doing so, he establishes an alternative hierarchy of the senses, in which the sound is superior to the vision. Ong's defense on television as a redemptive medium of orality brings tension to understand the contest between sound and image in the audiovisual display. The embodied audience on screen – the visual imaginary – forms a social encounter with the real viewer subverts the sound bias of Ongian orality. Thus Ong's sound bias results in the paradox underlying the term 'secondary orality' – the (self-)conscious creation of the pre-reflective effect of immediate oral communication which bypasses the visually experienced spontaneity. Essentially, the secondary orality designates more the meta-communicative act (e.g. the embodied audience) than the content of the sound. In fact, the mimesis of the face-to-face encounter in the social situation is foregrounded in the audiovisual, in terms that it conveys a temporal spontaneity of human being's perception and presence, through the visual, but mimetic to the oral.

Thus, oral culture, structured by the sensorium of the oral-aural, and immediate interactions, is not only auditory, but also the state of intersubjective engaging. Losing such immediate intersubjectivity in literate cultures led to arbitrarily separating subjectivity and objectivity. If the face, that is, a part of the bodily expression, could generate such a state of intersubjective engaging, then it can also to be regarded as part of the oral. If the Ongian notion of 'secondary orality' excludes

the visual engagement, then it would be too narrow to be applied to the case of the audio-visual media, however, that contradicts what Ong did about television. The *mouth-to-mouth* conversation realized by the *face-to-face* encounter suggests both *mouth* and *face* are vital organs of sense for oral communication. The ambiguity in the definition of ‘secondary orality’, then lies with the understanding of it as an auditory-mastering form, overlooking the other sensual formations of the experience of intersubjectivity. Perhaps instead of considering ‘secondary orality’ as a demarcation of stages in the technological history, it can be revised to signify a transformed intersubjective engagement in human society that is facilitated by the modern technologies. Considering Ongian orality refers to a romantic signifier of the authentic and primordial characteristic of human communication: the transformed orality could mainly be redemption of such immediate human relations with modern means.

In general, Ong’s view on secondary orality is a positive one since he does not mention the hypertrophy of sound, like he does about the hypertrophy of visual objects. Perhaps it is because Ong’s main focus is to bring out the sound-experience, he barely addresses the point that in secondary orality, not only sound is redeemed, but also the body, particularly the human face, e.g. in the ‘talking head’ of television programs, is reinforced visually. In addition, Ong makes no attempt to differentiate moving-image mediums, such as television, from more sound-dominated media, such as the telegraph, radio, etc., all of which are similarly electronic for him. He does not distinguish diversities of visuality, in terms of the image and the written word, both of which are encompassed in moving-image media. The secondary orality conceptualizes too general a modality to elucidate the specificities in modern technological cultures.

2. The intersubjective component underlying Ongian orality

Implied by the above introductory study on Ongian orality, the intersubjective component of orality needs to be uncovered for understanding the connotation of orality. As Ong argues, the split of subjectivity and objectivity are not innate to human consciousness but fostered by the literate cultures (1981, pp. 222-231). Whilst, as a fusion of beings in the world through sound-experience, orality stresses a state where the personal is both incorporated by and incorporates the public/communal consciousness. Such an aspect, that human subjectivity emerges from interpersonal encounters and open engagement, instead of from literate intellection, awaits elaboration. In fact, the intersubjectivity characterizes an irreducible component of oral mode of expression and communication, and such component is particularly embodied in the social relationship basing on speaking and hearing interactions, the embodied interlocutor that actualizes such interdependence across the restraints of the textual, and the gestural expression of the spoken word that demands experience beyond cognition.

2.1. Speaking–hearing encounter in life-world

[I]ntersubjectivity is one of the primary modes by which man's life-world is constituted. A world of sounds thus tends to grow into a world of voices and of persons, those most unpredictable of all creatures. (Ong, 1981, p. 131)

For Ong, the 'lifeworld'²² refers much to the totality consisting of human beings, the circumambient actualities, and their interplay. It is dynamic and open, where human beings have immediate exchange with the other. In such existential situations, the sensually active subjects come to perceive and know each other in speaking-hearing

²² Arguably, Ong's notion on lifeworld shares with Husserl's notion of the *Lebenswelt*, emphasizing the 'material complexities of everyday life' or the world of 'immediate experience' (Aitken, 2008, p. 31), both connoting the autonomous position of the perceiving body of human beings.

mode of interaction. It is immediate experience that forms the basis of knowledge about actuality; the subject of experience is the knower who is constituted and constitutes the known. Being in the lifeworld is being both the knower and the known.

Ong states that the ‘auditory ideal’, the human life-world, and the ‘knowledge’ gaining through encounter with and in actuality, constitutes ‘harmony’ (1982, p. 72). The term ‘harmony’ stands for a quality that is not self-contained and self-sufficient, but is irreducibly open and endless. The ideal status of orality connotes a harmonious fusion, and that is incarnated in the reciprocating role speaker as listener and vice versa. Knowing through objectified texts epitomizes the ‘death’ of the livingness; ‘closed-system’ detaches the human being from the life-world, arbitrarily separating knowledge from dynamic actualities, in which the listener becomes a subject detached from object. Ong’s portrayal sets writing and print literacy in contrary to the harmony, to reinforce the alienation of knowledge as the negative aspect of modern technology. In the life-world actuality and utopian orality, the word flows freely from one being to another, like the ‘winged word’ (1982, p. 77), signifying the ‘evanescence, power, and freedom’ of communication with one’s own consciousness (ibid.). The subject is animated by the sound. In secondary orality systems, the word flows freely again; the radio can broadcast a personal story that directly offers the human voice of the storyteller to the listeners, and thus connects the human beings viscerally.

Arguably, Ong’s privileging on auditory sense as ‘the primary physical medium’ (1981, p. 179) of the oral form of communication contradicts his underlying awareness of the dialectic of perception and expression with bodily acts, e.g. the kinesthetic of signification. Ong is aware that the oral interplay has to be the intertwining of bodily perceiving and perceivable, in which the evanescent sound-word is ‘never fully determined’ nor as ‘abstract signification’, but only has meaning

‘with relation to man’s body and to its interaction with its surroundings’ (1977, p. 56). As it happens in the face-to-face communications, the oral phenomenon largely encompassing significations that are transient but constantly emerge within bodily acts. The body as a place to fold transient and dispersed perception and experience connects Ong to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘reversibility’²³, which designates the ‘body-subjects are visible-seers, tangible-touchers, audible-listeners, etc.’ (Crossley, 1996, p. 30) and it is such corporeal synthesization underlying ‘reversibility’ that founds the basis of the notion of ‘open onto each other’ (ibid.), namely, the sensible existence reveals self in relation with the other. The Merleau-Pontyan ‘open onto each other’, in a way, founds the basis of the Ongian social dynamics: ‘of man to man, of man to society, of man to his entire life-world’ (1981, p. 15); with such notion, the storytelling becomes a social kinetics in which speaker and listeners are involved in reciprocal revelations.

2.2. The interlocutor in-between the textual and the real

Ong’s analyses about the fictionalized reader, a textual interlocutor, suggest the bodily situating of existence in the symbolic forms of human communication:

The transcribers of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* presumably imagined an audience of real listeners in attendance on an oral singer, and readers of those works to this day do well if they can imagine themselves hearing a singer of tales. (Ong, 1977, p. 61)

The textual character of the ‘audience’ mimetically embodies the ‘real listeners’; for Ong, such inscription suggests the textual redemption on the speaker-hearer intersubjectivity, because the mimesis of ‘real listeners’ is actually imitating their

²³ Ong does not directly apply such notion, but refers to Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of perception* to point out the concept that spoken word is part of ‘the total situation in which it comes into being’, it is the inter-corporeal engagement of the body-subject, ‘the person speaking and the other or ones to whom he addresses himself and to whom he is related existentially’ that makes signification (1977, p. 56).

engagement with ‘an oral singer’, about to engage the real audience (reader) from his/her social world with the textual world. Such textual ‘audience’, can be understood as interlocutor, addressing the subject who is beyond the textual world. The mimesis is common within literary history, for example, the textually embodied dialogues of Plato and Socrates (Ong, 1982. p. 103), the use of apostrophes in nineteenth-century British fiction (e.g. ‘Oh, Romantic Reader’ in *Wuthering Height*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Villette*, etc.) (Garrett, 1996), inscribed ‘talk’ in fictions such as the addressing of a second-person ‘you’-character in Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979) (Kacandes, 2001), the ‘dear diary’ address in the personal diary (Ong, 1982, p. 102), and the dictation in writing personal narratives by handicraftsmen such as goldsmith (Amelang, 1998). The consistency of the fictionalized reader phenomena underlies literary history, and the typographic and chirographic cultures.

For Merleau-Ponty, the interlocutor actualizes ‘a shared operation’ (Crossley, 1996, p. 33) in the experience of dialogue, in which neither the speaking subject nor the interlocutor is the creator of such an operation. Instead, they reside within such an operation. It is more like a device in the interworld fabric for self and other to recognize their respective positions. The interlocutor as a textual formation can be found in Ongian orality, identifies that in each dialogue, the utterance is not determined by the subject of the articulating but by the interlocutor’s remarks. Firstly, an interlocutor is a mnemonic device to fix the thought in a dialogue of pre-reflectiveness, which is vital for oral cultures because they have no written text to stabilize the dynamics of thought embedded in an evanescent sound. Secondly, for literate cultures that have textual devices to memorize knowledge, the interlocutor is

still necessary, when the text strives to retrieve its openness and livingness by addressing the existence of the listener.

2.3. The ‘the genuine spoken word’, and models of intersubjectivity

[T]he genuine spoken word relates person to person. (Ong, 1981, p. 290)

For Ong, the intersubjective constituent of pristine orality resides at the face-to-face (‘person to person’) level. It is the immediacy of the sound-experience that fosters a perceptual field. As we are our bodies, for Merleau-Ponty, we experience and interact with other bodies in the act of perception. Perception is the basis of knowledge and understanding. It is both not created in the individual’s head, and is not an arbitrary representation. The world is only intersubjectively available to the body-subjects, and their corporeal involvement in it, in a pre-reflective and pre-objective fashion (Crossley, 1996, p. 29). The pre-reflective fashion of the relationship between body-subjects means that being-in-the-world is above all the corporeal connection:

[I]n perception we do not think the object and we do not think ourselves thinking it, we are given over to the object and we merge into this body which is better informed than we are about the world, and about the motives we have and the means at our disposal for synthesizing it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 277).

The perceptual field is an interworld, in which the self and the other are not fixed objects for each other, but dynamically open onto each other. The primordial oral worlds are embodiments of the pre-reflective ‘open onto each other’, and the sound-word as a form of the oral life-world embodies the openness.

By ‘words are basically and irreformably sound’ (1971, p. 264), Ong refers to the physical and existential aspect of the word beyond linguistic or conceptual meaning, for example, the text of oral narratives reflects their ‘actual habitat’, including ‘gesture, vocal inflections, facial expression, and the entire human,

existential setting in which the real, spoken word always occurs' (1982, p. 34). Ong's concern on the gestural connotations of oral narratives connects with the Merleau-Pontyan conception of the gestural, i.e. the sound-word as an expressive act relating the body-subjects in the perceptual-field. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the speech is characterized by 'conversations of gestures' (Crossley, 1996, p. 32); he illustrates on 'the word's physiognomy' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 226), namely, the word is actively involved in gestural communications beyond its semantic meaning making. Speech, as a physical act gestualized by a body-subject, identifies an intention of acting towards the other; and by making a speech, it activates 'a living relation' between subjects (Merleau Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 228). 'The primary physical medium' of Ongian sound-word, in fact identifies the actualities that can only be experienced in the interworld.

For Ong, in the modern technologies that transform or reinforce oral components of intersubjective experience, we can identify two intentions, regarding the attitude of human towards knowledge. First, there is the intention of objectifying the voice of the knower/writer within a textual storage, and Ong corresponds it with Martin Buber's *I-It* relationship. Ong applies Buber's philosophical conceptions to elaborate the relationships between human and life-world (1981, p. 288); For Buber, the human subject has two ways of engaging with (addressing) the alterity (the other): the *I-It* relationship and the *I-Thou* relationship. In the former relationship, the *I* is a privileged consciousness of knowing, and the *It* is the object under control and manipulation, the address of the *I* to the *It* is one-way and objectifies the other. Whilst in the *I-Thou* relationship, the subject of knowing (*I*) and the subject of being known (*Thou*) are in a mutual dependence. Different from the *I-It* relationship as the object is fixed in a spatial location, the subject of being known, the *Thou*, is actively involved

and shares a space with the knowing *I*. *Thou* cannot be objectified or reduced into an object under manipulation. The *I* in the *I-Thou* relationship openly engages with the other but is not reducible to the other (Crossley, 1996, p. 11).

Applying Buber, Ong observes a similarity in the objectifying *I-It* address in the visual word. The ‘hypertrophy’ and ‘intrusion’ (1981, p. 288) of the visual ‘noetic’ (1977, p. 18) (i.e. visual organization of cognition) substantially attenuates the fusion and openness of the oral world, and moves humans into the stage of typographic and chirographic cultures which are characterized by the maximized ‘it’ and minimized ‘I’ and ‘thou’ (1981, p. 289), or, passive reception of the objective knowledge. The visual-tactile sensorium subjects the ‘body-subject’ to the experience of acquiring knowledge through sight, replacing the oral-aural active way of knowing ‘by hearing’ (1977; p. 140). For Ong, Buber’s *It* world is the knowledge of things and corresponds to the knowledge acquired by sight, whilst the knowledge of persons, which is the world of ‘Thou’, is homologous with the knowledge acquired by hearing (ibid.). For him, the orality equivalent of *I-Thou* relationship designates ‘a world of sound’, or ‘a world of voices and of persons’ (1981, p. 131) and the interdependent production of knowledge. While the shift to the visual-tactile mode intended to increase knowledge concerning the material world rather than the human and his/her own lifeworld, and that is one of the dominant reasons for the rise of modern science. Knowledge production and accumulation in the material world gives rise to consciousness and reflectiveness. When Ong contends that visual cultures silenced the human ‘voice’ (1977, p. 293), he means when the embodied act of living human being is reduced in the textual representation.

For Ong, reading the knowledge in the text, a spatially fixed and detached object, is largely a one-way experience since the object has no reciprocal experience

of us seeing it. Even ‘oral history’, as mentioned by Ong, a way of experiencing history starting from an encounter with the human voice (the recalling of memories) is assimilated into objectification. On the one hand, this is because oral history has to interact with writing and print logics as it is ultimately presented as a self-sufficient ‘production’ (1982, p. 84), a transcript in written-word forms in books, magazines and newspaper articles, etc. On the other hand, it is because of the rationale of transcribing which focuses primarily on the ‘facts’, valuing the objectivity of knowledge more than the ‘insistent actual habitat’, i.e. the speaker-subject of the oral history, where the knowledge originated. For Ong, history in any written forms is a production of writing (‘writing creates history’, 1982, p. 172), a textual fabric rather than the existential actuality. Print quantifies facts production, but also draws more and more distant from the habitat of knowledge. The objectifying *I-It* intention thus might be embodied in the ‘alienation from a natural milieu’ (1982, p. 82), separating historical information from living human beings. In primary oral societies, where histories are wrapped in narratives for oral telling from generation to generation, the formation and transmission of historic knowledge is based on communal structure and shared consciousness. For example, there would be no history to be known if the oral genealogies in West Africa could not find listeners for whom to recite those genealogies (1982, p. 48). As implied, the intersubjective structure of communal sharing is necessary for making history socially produced and transmitted in oral societies.

For Ong, communal remembering remembers only the histories of and for the people themselves. The histories residing in human voices and to be experienced when present during reciting and listening is the past concerned by the present. The activity of knowing animates the subjects in a totality by the ‘empathetic

identification of knower and known, in which the object of knowledge and the total being of the knower enter into a kind of fusion' (1977, p. 18), that is, a body-subject needs to participate in the knowing and telling activity, putting the self into a social fabric. The voice is a force to revive memories for the present people to hear; histories in oral modes involve an intersubjective production and knowing. For Ong, objectifying histories is separating the knower from the known (we cannot hear the voice from the knower; instead we see textual symbols, that is, written-words, which are based on the logic of abstraction), because writing establishes 'a distance from the immediate interpersonal human lifeworld where the word unites one human being with another' (1977, p. 25). The written-word creates knowledge that depends on analytical recognition, demanding reflectiveness and consciousness, which departs from the knowledge production that depends on empathetic identification in the physical experience of body-subjects.

Ong argues that in separating the knower and the known, writing replaces the oral mode of knowledge-by-empathy with the literate mode of knowledge-by-analysis. Such analytical transformation engendered various 'closed systems' (1977, p. 48) and the textual fabrication of historical narrative, in accordance with a certain self-contained rationale of comprehension. Literate histories, as textual fabrications of actualities and productions of plotted facts, disembody the human experience from organization of knowledge. The 'fusion' or 'total merger of knower and known in a holistic, formulary experience' (1977, p. 20) is replaced by the textual manipulation of the word (1977, p. 22). The 'open system' of the oral storytelling contrasts the 'closed system' of the textual fabrication. However, Ong suggests, the 'closed systems' can be redeemed into 'open systems' or quasi-open-systems, only if the livingness of the sound-word is revived in the textuality.

To retrieve the *I-Thou* relationship, recovering the intersubjective structure of the knower and the known, demands an emergent relationality of mutual dependence. Such a mutual perceptual-field, as suggested by Ong, can revitalize the oral ‘empathetic identification’ (‘new ways of searching for responses’, 1977, p. 46). The textual interdependence would be characterized by the mimesis on such ‘empathetic identification’. Suggested in the Husserlian model of self-other relationship, that the self actively strives to enter the social realm in order to be intersubjectively engaged and to apprehend the essence, ‘empathetic identification’ is different from the Merleau-Pontyan model where the self is born naturally in a mutual experience with others.

The redemption of *I-Thou* relationship in textuality is based on literate mind’s coming-to-consciousness of orality. The embodiment of orality in written texts implies the intention of the reader who desires to have a dialogue with the author. The inscribed direct-address is demanded by a public that shares a socio-cultural space with the author-writer (Garrett, 1996). The figural equivalent of the writer is more an embodied consciousness of the public. Secondary orality is characterized by a planned pre-reflective experience that demands empathetic identification. Ong’s example of television’s mimetic displaying of the interaction between the speaker and audience, illustrates the living encounter in audiovisual forms.

However, for Ong, film is categorically different from televised moving-image, in which we can find no *I-Thou* relationship. Ong criticizes that in ‘movies’ (1977, p. 293) we can have only a narrator without a narrative voice, that is, as he argues, ‘movies’ plot the actualities in a certain sequence according to arbitrary principles, which is distant from the mimetic mode of representation, and departs from the actuality of the life-world. ‘Movies’ lose the essence of life-world because it

disembodies the irreducible intersubjectivity, and also because ‘Vision has taken over completely from voice’ (1977, p. 295). Namely, the narrator (filmmaker, for Ong) who is not textually embodied and not uttering in front of the audience, loses the living voice. However, for Ong, ‘movies’ are categorically different from television, because in the former, there is no embodied existence of the human beings. Arguably, Ong’s understanding of ‘movies’ is partial and incomplete. Firstly, the term ‘movies’ is such an abstract and all-encompassing generalization that he disregards the technological and cultural specifics of cinemas. And secondly, Ong’s focus on narrative cinema bypasses other forms of films, especially those that blur the boundaries of fiction and nonfiction (e.g. Marks, 2000; Naficy, 2001, etc.).

Nonetheless, Ong believes that there is a potential redemption of orality that consists in the active deployment of knowledge to realize the existence of the human beings, instead of being manipulated by the fixed texts. The dynamics of human being’s operation of textual knowledge lies with a learning act that enlivens the fixed and incorporates that into the living body, by means of, for example, generational transmission:

Through the development of culture, a store of experience and knowledge that human beings can accumulate and hand on to succeeding generations, mankind as a whole gains more and more conscious access to and control over the cosmos and itself. (Ong, 1977, p. 43)

For Ong, the *I-Thou* relationship of redemption in the modern technologized word can bring ‘certain greater unities’ (ibid.), when the hearing-subject and the speaking-subject – two generations – come to a dialogue, realizing an empathetic identification. It is in virtue of such embodied dialogue, the knowledge ceases to be object. The redemptive potentials of the mass media consist in the deployment of the

interpersonal level of intersubjectivity in orality: the irreducible experience of dialogue.

Summary

Relating intersubjectivity of Ongian orality, to the models of phenomenologist intersubjectivity of Merleau-Ponty, Buber, Husserl, we can observe that the relational aspect in social life, is crucial to understand Ongian orality. The genuine sound-word embodies the actuality of life-world, which is primordial, integral, unifying and enveloping. And the fusion of beings in the life-world, like the knower and the known integration, is actualized in the experience of the subjects who perceive with bodies. The sound-experience refers to the embodied perception of the Merleau-Pontyan body-subject, implying the experience of sound-word as a ground of pre-reflective perception, engendering the process of ‘open onto each other’.

Modern technologies (alphabetic writing, print, electronics, etc.) had transformed forms of intersubjective relationality. The sound-word may be objectified and alienated, fixed in space that is detached from life (e.g. books). The mass objectification of sound-word, fostered by print, manipulates the word in a certain reflective and conscious fashion; and this could be negative as such manipulation alienates knowledge from the actual life-world. The redemption can only occur via redemption of the speaking-hearing experience, which, for Ong, is irreducible in an authentic interpersonal encounter. In the mass media, when the speaking-hearing interaction is mimetically enlivened, a modern form of the *I-Thou* relationship would emerge.

The intersubjective structures in the textuality might refer either to the Husserlian ‘empathetic identification’ where the self strives to be socially animated, or to the Merleau-Pontyan body-subject where the self is born to be interdependent

with the other, sensual-perceptually. The notion of textuality comes to imply different modes of redeeming the irreducible speaking-hearing relationship. The Husserlian model implies a self-conscious organization of words for vivifying an imaginary speaker or hearer in the text, exemplified by the textual fabrications in 'Dear reader' novels. The indeterminacy of the Ongian 'secondary orality', in light of Husserlian self-consciousness or Merleau-Pontyan pre-reflectiveness, implies two ways of investigating the textual embodiment of intersubjectivity. On the one hand, we can trace the relationship between the author and the textual embodiment of the speaking; on the other hand, we can explore the textual embodiment of address (interlocutor) in relation to the reader, or audience, who participate in the social dialogue.

In addition, Merleau-Pontyan notion of the physiognomy of the word, i.e. the gestural act of speaking, is useful to decipher the activeness in Ongian idea of sound-word: it is emphasized as a corporeally acted expression that constitutes social encounter and interpersonal dialogue, apart from semantic meaning. Merleau-Pontyan physiognomy of the word as gesture stresses an emotional and affective aspect of verbal action which can only be experienced sensuously. The gestural word within the dynamics of textuality has been discovered by Ong, particularly in literary and televised forms; however, he has a negative opinion of film to embody the gestural dimension of interpersonal relationality. In the third chapter, film theories stressing the issue of gestural aspect in the cinema will be elaborated to contest Ongian orality's opinion on film.

Chapter 2. Surveying film orality: What do we talk about when we talk about orality in film?

The following chapter review literature of film and cinema studies that deploy notions of Ongian orality. Emphasizing the sound-experience, a pre-reflective ground

for body-subjects within a society to encounter one another person-to-person, Ongian orality acknowledges first above all a level of interpersonal encounter within existential situations, such as in an oral storytelling performance or a public speaking event. Electronic media is the ‘level beyond’ that is touched by Ongian orality, the mass media beyond interpersonal. As Chapter 1 illustrates, Ong has a dialectic vision on the mass media. The modern technologies have potentials of redemption for the speaking-hearing experience and of revitalization for the authentic mode of encounter in the life-world. Although Ong rejects any redemptive potential that ‘movies’ might have, some contemporary theorists of film attempt to restore in film ‘the authenticity of pre-reflective experience’ (Trifonova, 2009, p. xvii), making efforts to explore film as a ground where one can find the pre-reflective relationship between ‘the perceived world and the embodied subject’ (ibid.). In contrast to Ong’s cognition of film as a manipulated narration characterized by arbitrariness and irony (Ong, 1977, p. 293), detached from the life-world, Sobchack (1992) suggests ‘film experience’ (addressing and being address with the sight) is dialogic and intersubjective (p. 5), deploying ‘*modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement)’ (p. 4) to integrate individuals within an ‘animated experience’ (p. 63). In direct relation to Ongian orality’s stress on the speaking-hearing encounter, film studies or analyses examine how the sound-experience is embodied in film. The existing film orality studies imply that film engages with the notion of orality in various ways; in film analysis, the orality is a subject of (re)presentation, and in film theorization, the orality elicits contested perspectives to think about modernity in the vernacular terms.

1. The psychodynamics of orality-literacy in cinemas: the oral episteme

Ong’s hypothesis of the psychodynamics of orality-literacy, namely, human’s oral or literate behavior is psychologically and existentially rooted in the modes of

expression and communication, is acknowledged by some film studies. Drawing from Freudian psychosexual perspectives, Ong suggests that the ‘psychosexual sequence’ from orality, anality to genitality²⁴ implies the human being biologically and psychologically develops from a state of ‘free’ and ‘permissiveness’ to that of ‘constraint’ and ‘controlling’, and that of ‘penetrating’ and ‘aggressiveness’ (Ong, 1981, pp. 92–93). Such a change implies a transformational contrast between orality and post-orality – from pre-consciousness to self-consciousness. The psychodynamics of orality-literacy indicates that orality and literacy are understood by setting in contrast with each other; they are meaningful interdependently. Some film studies identify the contesting or co-existing aspects of orality-literacy in considering indigenous cinema (an embodiment of local forms of life), in which the encounter between the primordial, free and permissive orality, and the literate and the ‘civilization’ (modernity) is an important subject of (re)presentation. The oral and the modern are regarded as historically and culturally localized forms of experience and expression.

Nayar (2001; 2004; 2008; 2010a; 2010b) contextualizes orality as the oral way of knowing found in the popular cinema of the *masala* genre in India which favors conventions, whilst literacy is a literate way of knowing found in a European art cinema which values auteurism and creative subversion to convention. Redefining Bollywood *masala* genre films as a middle-class cinema popular with both native and international cinemagoers, Nayar suggests that a mixed cinema such as Bollywood is

²⁴ For Freud, the oral, anal and genital (physical focal objects) suggest stages of energy developing for child, which relate to phases of psychological development respectively. Such as the oral regulates the first 18 months of a child’s life after its birth, characterizing a stage of sensuous and mouth-related pleasure e.g. sucking; the anal is a stage when a child is able to control physical urges and rational behaviors; the genital characterizes a stage of maturity and creativity, producing new things. See for example in Pastorino, 2010, pp. 465-466. Ong’s understanding on Freudian psychosexual stages of development was also influenced by Erik H. Erikson’s interpretation on Freud (e.g. *Childhood and Society*), see in Ong, 1981, p. 93.

a cultural expression that is able to embrace both oral and literate ways of knowing. Nayar develops a model to apply orality to visual narrative by defining orality as the oral ‘episteme’ of storytelling normativity, in contrast to the literate ‘episteme’. Her use of ‘episteme’ is derived from Michel Foucault’s idea that the conventions and branches of knowledge are conditioned by the *a priori* of a particular era (Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*, in Nayar, 2010b, pp. 7-8); the oral episteme thus designates the *a priori* to master particular norms of visual narratives. Rejecting that oral stands for pre-modern and primitive, Nayar thinks of the *masala* cinema as bearer of spontaneous social interaction that is rooted in the lifestyle, values, dispositions of the vernacular viewing public, who are familiar with the ‘oral characteristics’ of filmic norm, such as ‘weighty words and outsized heroes’ (Nayar, 2010b, p. 31) (e.g. oppositional and abundant lines, dramatic body movements). The ‘oral characteristics’ are considered as cognitive clues for Nayar (2010b, p. 53), by which the audience can comprehend such film narrative and identify the pleasure of intellection. For Nayar, the orally characterized film is an emergent genre that appeals to a certain cognitive mode of the audience, rather than an under-developed cinema.

Thus in Nayar’s studies, orality-literacy is utilized as a methodological approach, to understand different cognitive mechanisms of popular cinema and auteur cinema. On a spectrum of orality-literacy in visual narrative norms, the oral polarity is illustrated by Indian popular cinema whilst the European art cinemas, such as the French New Wave, exemplify the literate extreme. Defending Ong, Nayar rejects a developmental linearity existing in the stages from orality to literacy. She argues that film norms are ‘constituted as socially sanctioned form of storytelling, at least as determined by the viewing public’ (2010b, p. 9). Therefore, for her, the diversity of film texts, characterized by different sets of cognition norms that are historically and

culturally contextualized, are embodiments of the co-existence of oral and literate epistemes, and should be taken as the articulations conditioned by respective *mentalité* (i.e. “mind/brain process by which humans think, feel, and experience the world about them,” (quoting from Nayar, 2010b, p. 4). Producing the narrative of film, the noetic (i.e. cognitive mechanism) process of a certain cinema is influenced by, or set in, a specific cultural environment. For Nayar, the norms of comprehension reflect the way of knowing in visual narrative, and the oral characteristics in visual narrative, taken from Ong’s classification on the ‘characteristics of orally based thought and expression’ of ‘a primary oral culture’ (Ong, 1982, pp. 36-57), standing for identifiable and routinized textual codes, are reproducible. It is implied in Nayar’s stance that the oral signifies the popular culture in general; in comparison, the literate identifies intellectual culture. The examples that are given by Nayar in relation to the comprehension of visual narrative are derived from film critiques and analyses, as evidence of noetic processing, stressing the cognitive model of narrative comprehension. Such an approach acknowledges a rational reading of films, however, arguably, losing Ongian orality’s emphasis on the bodily and experiential dimension of senses.

Comparing with Nayar’s focus on popular Indian cinema in raising the oral episteme, Marks (2000) and Naficy (2001) examine minor cinemas, specifically intercultural cinema and diasporic filmmaking, in which culturally nurtured sensuous knowledge are found. Ong’s proposition that bodily behaviors are psychic expression is deployed in Marks (2000) and Naficy (2001), that is, the sound sensorium, or, the organization of a set of senses that stresses the authority of the auditory experience (the spoken word), shapes the oral culture and the cultural subject’s psyche. The notion of oral-aural sensorium is developed by Marks (2000) to identify a broader

‘cultural sensorium’ (p. 215) that consists of more than auditory sense but a composition of the sensory perception and memory in multi-faceted everyday experiences. Particularly, she emphasizes that the sensual-perception of touch, smell, and taste, storing sensory memory and knowledge of cultural differences in visceral terms, are beyond audiovisual and technical representation (p. 129).

For Marks, such ephemerals of everyday experience, closely related to the texture and actualities of cultural knowledge, are elusive for verbal and visual signification, which, however, can be embedded and perceived through bodily acts, such as ‘the experience of wearing a tight woven belt’ for a Zinacanteca woman of Guatemala (p. 130). She argues that the belt bears is encoded with complex meanings of a tradition, whilst individual female wears such belt although her life and the body conveys such history daily. When such experience is embodied in film, the multisensory quality of perception is evoked in a cinematic act of viewing; and such viewing is beyond optical restraints, characterized by a haptic episteme which contains multiple senses such as smell and touch. For Marks, the ‘haptic image’, for example, ‘the heat rising and the coolness of water on her hand and face’ in *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (dir. Rea Tajiri, 1991) ‘calls up multisensory imagery’ (p. 131) of her mother. The moving-image reproduces such ‘tactile memory’ (p. 130) and sensory knowledge through ‘mimesis’ (p. 138). Different from ‘symbolic representation’ (p. 138), which is based on ‘easily consumable’ meanings and ‘translatable signs’ (p. 139), or, the referential frameworks of mainstream cultures, the mimetic representation characterizes the creative bodily expression and communication: ‘bodily forms of representation’ that emphasizes the ‘concrete here-and-now’ (p. 139), and ‘lively and responsive relationship between listener/reader and story/text’ (p. 138).

The very body and the senses are the basis for the ‘tactile epistemology’ (p. 138) of mimetic representation, by which we know the lifeworld, and more importantly, ‘create a transformed relationship to it – or restore a forgotten relationship’ (p. 141). Marks points that the mimesis is ‘an immanent way of being in the world’, and characterizes an episteme of ‘compassionate involvement’ (p. 141) in such world. Referring to Walter Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty (ibid.), Marks (2000) identifies that language and representation could still be mimesis, as long as they enliven a relationship of being within the world, and such acknowledgement is close to the the irreducible intersubjective experience of Ongian orality. In contrast to Nayar, Marks privileges in film the body’s complex and total perception over the intellection (p. 145). Marks raises the notion of ‘embodied spectatorship’ to describe the perceptual knowing in the viewing experience (pp. 145-146). Further, Marks posits ‘haptic visuality’, a notion builds on Merleau-Pontyian mutual dependent body-subjects to understand the mimetic relation of ‘the spectator and the world of a film’ (p. 151). The cinematic viewing experience is conceived by Marks as a ‘cinematic encounter’, an interaction between the body of viewer and the film’s body (p. 153); such encounter characterizes the intercultural cinema spectatorship, in which the spectator actively engages in the translation of dynamic knowledge.

Emphasizing on the phenomenological experience of sound in films, Naficy (2001) regards orality (the speaking of a culturally located language) and acousticity (the perception of hearing such language) particularly characterizes diasporic filmmakers’ articulation of identities. Such filmmakers usually convey a self-consciousness of natal identity, which is explicit to observe in the expressive aspects of their language use, and preoccupied with the issue of trans-border experience. The audible and the visible uses of bilingual language in a film articulate a subject who is

having trans-border experiences physically and spiritually. Pronouncing alphabetic English with an accent is an embodied act to bring out the subjectivity of the speaker. For example, the epistolary film, which relies greatly on enlivened language, sometimes in voice-over narration, sometimes in written and pictorial presentations (e.g. texts, intertitles, subtitles), is an example of accented orality (the speech gesture of accent) for Naficy. It implies that orality can be both aurally and visually displayed. Different from Nayar, Marks and Naficy both adapt their own spectatorial experiences to elaborate on the oral aspects in film. Arguably, their viewing experiences testify the 'embodied spectatorship' as the oral way of knowing residing in cinematic encounter. For both, film conveys a certain specific organization of senses, and the filmmaker is a physically presented subject in the film world, interacting with the spectator.

2. The politics of orality

The political dimension of orality emerges in Naficy (2001), regarding of the experimental practices on the film properties to foreground the oral-aural dimension; for him, conventional film is primarily a visually privileged medium, thus foregrounding the auditory experience signifies the competition towards hegemonic conventions. Such film rarely aligns with the norms of mainstream cinema. For Naficy, orality and acousticity are radical uses of sound (distinctly from synchronous diegetic sound) to create 'counterhegemonic discourses on ideology and cinema.' (p. 122) The alternative ways of (dis)associating body and voice, sound and image, for the diasporic filmmakers, constitute political gestures with culturally different subjectivity. It implies that the embodied filmmaking can be the political articulation on alternative identities.

The local concern about the traditions, and the native subjectivity in the encounter of modernity, relate considerations of orality to politics. Orality interprets the tradition, the communal history and memory, and a sense of cultural selfhood. For example, African cinema-scholars raise orality as a perspective of investigating the African-ness in film representations; Tomaselli et al. (1995) regard African cinema as a ground in which oral traditions and Western visual literacy compete. Such competition of orality and literacy results from colonial legacies in the post-colonial condition. The cinema as a modern technology is an invention taken from the modern world to Africa. Oral traditions characterize a cultural expression living with the oral 'forms of life' (p. 30), a world without writing and visual literacy. Tomaselli et al. realize, in cultivating native filmmakers with Western technological literacy in general and film literacy in particular, the problematic of oral traditions demands re-conceptualization; dealing with the oral issues in film implies a conflict between an indigenous reality and an ideal form of life proposed by modernization. They consider such a conflict results from the ontological irreducibility between oral culture and written culture.

The oral traditions, in contrast with the ideal normative models brought by modern literacy, might be imperfect, however, they are the actualities of the South African people, and films characterizing such traditions acknowledge the specificities of the local context. Tomaselli (2006) draws on Martin Heidegger's notion of ready-to-handness (p. 73)²⁵, and Hannah Arendt's 'think what we are doing'²⁶, both

²⁵ 'Ready-to-hand' for Heidegger means a kind of knowledge that comes from our involving relationships with the ordinary, everyday entities of the world, and in such condition, knowing is not guided by a certain theorizing or scientific premise but emerges in the pre-reflexive – the ordinary and everyday – interactions between us and our context. The opposite condition is 'present-at-hand', in which we might observe the facts of a certain entity and come up with a theorization and our attitude is characterized by neutrality and detachment. Tomaselli (2006) here deploys 'ready-to-hand' to describe a 'practical reasoning characteristic of orality' (p. 73) which is communally nurtured; such knowledge resides in the presence of community and activity, rather than an textbook learning.

encouraging committed participation in actualities, and argues to ensure differences in the encounter between literate and oral (p. 21). The cultural identity of African-ness is representations on the ‘forms of life’ concerning local actualities. Indigenous culture characterized by oral traditions (such as the *griot* storytelling performance) is, for them, irreducibly local. Orality characterizes a communal subjectivity, and should be experienced and analyzed from the locally familiar level.

Arguably, Tomaselli et al. reject the dualism of objectivity-subjectivity in technological literacy, and address the notion of intersubjective openness and recognition, since the orality is understood as the concrete and actual, connecting the indigenous subjects. Moreover, orality can also shape the vernacular modern/urban forms of life. Tomasselli et al. consider that orality contributes a perspective to the subjectivity formation in the native community, such as the oral traditions of a community are embodied in film for inter-generational viewers to recognize and remember. And in the oral traditions, an important aspect is the motif of relational life through storytelling. The role of African filmmaker as *griot* then is a particularly important approach for elaborating the intersubjective formation of indigenous identity (e.g. Bouchard, 2009; Diawara, 1999; Tomaselli et al., 1995).

A *griot* is a historian, a storyteller, and also a praise singer, who motivates his vocal expertise to tell the historical knowledge of his community in a narrative. In so doing, the *griot* is a repository of oral traditions, presenting the past for the present. For Tomaselli et al. (1995), orality places emphasis ‘on being, on totality, on an integrated world not separated into dualisms – where the Western artist tends to hide

²⁶ Arendt stresses the active power of ‘thinking’, an activity, to engage with our world and ongoing reality, instead of relying on science, technology, or other abstracted knowledge. Tomaselli (2006) deploys such a view to argue that orality characterizing everyday life ‘embodies a form of *Realism* that enables people to interact in a meaningful way with their worlds’ (p. 72). To paraphrase him, conducting forms of life and activities that characterize orality facilitates us to engage with everyday reality.

away from “life” in seclusion while “creating.”” (p. 29) In oral traditions, the oral bard, or the *griot*, and the oral historian, who interacts with the local subjects (audiences) to formulate a shared narrative, is beyond an artist-author of his performance or oral narrative. Instead, he is assimilated into the communal world (‘an individual in a community’), rather than the supreme artist (‘a community in an individual’) (Tomaselli and Eke, 1995, p. 114). The filmmaker is considered more than an auteur but an embodiment of a ‘totality’ and ‘integrated world’ (Tomaselli and Eke, 1995, p. 116). Taking Jean-Marie Teno (the director of *Afrique je te plumerai*, a.k.a. *Africa, I will fleece You*, 1991) as an example, Tomaselli et. al (1995) argue that, in the film, Teno, who presents his own personal testimony of his childhood (memories of being encouraged to study and work hard to achieve a life at the level of the white people), witnesses a culturally colonized process. The personal testimony intertwines with the oral traditions embodied by his grandfather’s storytelling of a fable about a country of larks dominated by a race of hunters.

Thus, the filmmaker Teno performs ‘one of the functions of the *griot* or oral historian, that of transmitting stories or history from one generation to another’ (Tomaselli et al, 1995, p. 26) in a modern form of film; the personal memories is, by the conveyance and transmission of film, become a collective and social memory of the Cameroonians. ‘This intergenerational transmission of testimony is one of the fundamental features of the oral tradition.’ (ibid.) And such tradition comes to characterize the film as a place of sustaining collective memories. The vital ‘forms of life’ that characterizes orality in Africa (cinema), for Tomaselli et al. (1995), is thus the sharing of memories and traditions inter-generationally. In film, the filmmaker, as an oral narrator, bears testimony for the world they live in. Diawara (1999) also considers the figure of the filming subject as an important embodiment of orality

(*griot* tradition) that indigenizes African cinema. He comments that ‘The figure of the griot, symbol of the oral tradition, has also often been represented in African films.’ (p. 118) For him, the filmmaker Ousmane Sembène is ‘the mouth and ears of his people’ (p. 118), undertaking ‘to present an account of what he witnesses and understands to be the realities of African people’ (p. 54); namely, Sembène is a witness to local history/actuality and a testimony for the viewing public to gain knowledge of local history/actuality.

Characterizing the cinematic embodiment of oral traditions, Tomaselli (1997) shares emphasis on the mimetic quality of film embodiment with Marks (2000). For both, the film refers, most of the times, to videotaped nonfictions of actuality. For Marks (2000), cinema is a representational system but rich in delivering experiential knowledge: ‘the iconic and symbolic coexist with the indexical: representation is inextricable from embodiment’ (p. 142); for Marks, the knowledge of the body is more sophisticated to represent in fixed icons or symbols, but much more authentic in dynamic indexes where multifaceted elements interact and contribute to a whole imagery. The sophisticated and ephemeral experiences of everyday life are more likely to be found in the form of ‘recorded’ nonfictional actuality (p. 130). Tomaselli (1997) has a similar recognition of such embodied experiences in nonfiction; for him, videotape, or video technology, is mimetic and able to make meaningful representations of life in relation to a context (p. 100). Characterized by a mimetic privilege, video technology is not only closer to the everyday reality, but also able to engender and record interpersonal encounters.

The concept of ‘encounter’ is used by Tomaselli (1997) to characterize oral forms of life, and to reject the solipsistic privileging of the individual above the community. In the embodied encounter between the video-maker and the videotaped

oral storyteller, both are body-subjects constituting and constituted in a mutual world, concrete and relating to each other experientially. Oral form of life, embodied, or encoded, in the filmic imaginary of the oral-storyteller, is not inferior to the video-maker, but shares a filmic space with each other. Abandoning to capture oral life as a fixed icon or symbol, video technology enables situational encountering and knowing. The dynamic experience embodied in film is closer to the essence of orality, as '[o]rality creates an ontology based on interacting forces rather than on concrete objects.' (p. 93) In other words, orality is not a fixed or symbolized object and thus subjecting to visualized signs, but experienced as a temporally dynamic phenomenon. Video technology is a vital medium for body-subject to experience an encounter because of its mimetic embodiment of oral forms of life: interactive and relating.

In contrast to the assumption that the African cinema embodies the African-ness through the mimetic representation of African oral traditions (Tomaselli, 1997; Tomaselli, 2006; Tomaselli and Eke, 1995; Tomaselli et al. 1995), Papaioannou (2009) contests the idea that the African-ness in representation is ontologically stable, questioning the universal 'discourse of African originality and authenticity' (p. 147); she observes that articulating the African-ness by fixing it to the tradition 'elevates orality or rather the meaning of orality to a transcendental signified to which refer all meanings in all African cultures.' (p. 147) Because of that, orality and African-ness, two dynamic subjects, are symbolized and abstracted in textual representation; in fact, as she contends, the reception (comprehension) of orality and African-ness, in a global context, impacts the definition and the meaning of both.

Papaioannou recognizes that the global reception is a significant factor for making meaning of the representations on traditions in the Third World cinema in general and African cinema in particular; the trans-border films are mostly art

cinemas diasporically distributed, appealing to foreign viewers and culturally different cinemagoers. She observes that global reception impacts on the filmmaker's choice of *griot*-like storytelling; some of the indigenous filmmakers tend to mediate the oral traditions in order to adjust to a global audience by blending in more commercial norms. Based on such changes, she argues that the former conceiving on orality (e.g. Tomaselli, Diawara, etc.) in African cinema tends to stereotype the African by objectifying African-ness with oral traditions. In opposition, she regards that African cinema and African-ness is not an all-encompassing entity; it subjects to the spectatorship than authorship. Papaioannou argues that the spectator produces meanings (of African-ness) with their individual references of cognition.

Like the *griot*'s shared narrative formation with his audience, the filmic text provides a 'shared memory' of the filmmaker with his/her viewers. The spectatorial experience is the contextualization of orality that makes meaning of the cultural representation of the alternative histories. Based on that, Papaioannou contends orality consists of not only the filmmaker who masters the oral economy of writing, but also the viewer, as well as the visual properties of the medium that enhance the cinematic 'writing' of oral traditions. She derives from Homi Bhabha's notion of 'the interstitial space of conflicting relationships' that produces meanings (p. 151), and argues the competing discursive definings on orality in African cinema constitute 'the interstitial space,' shaping the interdependent relationship between the African cinema and other cinemas.

Concerned about how oral traditions project a communal identity, Hearne (2006) compares the indigenous subject's embodiment in films produced through the gaze of the *other* culture, and through the gaze of the insider-subject. For Hearne, the re-enactment and retelling of oral narratives by the native subjects involves the

anticipation of community revitalization. Native Americans (the indigenous peoples in North America) have histories of telling oral traditions inter-generationally for the purpose of remembering and communicating. The indigenous filmmakers visualize the “‘old” stories’ (p. 309) (since 1980) by introducing the oral storytelling frame in the film, which sets the film spectator in a position of the inter-generational chain of communication. Such a contextual frame of oral performance and embodiment of inter-generational listening-and-narrating is an alternative mode of achieving the desired authenticity, alternative to the ‘salvage ethnography’ (p. 312), which attempts to preserve however objectifying the native ways of living with certain pre-given references, e.g. the ‘vanishing natives’ (p. 309). In contrast, the filmic embodiments of inter-generational storytelling are the ‘reincarnation’ (p. 309) of the spiritual ties and life-world communication beyond the “‘old” stories’ themselves. In making so, the filmmaker to the indigenous land is as much as ‘a testimony to the power of the “continuation of oral traditions” ’ (p. 321), it implying that the filmmaker himself is an embodiment of the native life-world. Inter-generational listening returns the life-world and authority of the ancestors to the eyes and ears of contemporary listeners, such as the youth. By performing the links and relationships of interpersonal communications, such films are rather renewing the indigenous culture and reviving the ‘old stories’ as living stories, than objectifying and alienating the native people.

Communal revitalization via audiovisual media, particularly through the documentary film form, is also the concern of indigenous Canadians, as Burnett (2004) suggests. Taking *Pour la suite du monde* (dir. Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault, 1963) as an example, Burnett asserts that there is a type of ‘oral cinema’ in Canada that is characterized by the ‘presence of the storyteller-character and his/her dominance over the narrative’ (para. 2). The film *Pour la suite du monde* is a documentary feature

following residents of Île aux Coudres, an island in the Saint Lawrence River in Quebec. It documents and through that revives their disappearing traditions of Beluga whale hunting, a practice that was abandoned after the 1920s. The making of the film manifests a strong sense of modern discovery of the traditional life-world via the camera. The documentary embodies a community, consisting of islanders and villagers, partaking various roles in the whale-hunting activities. The old trap-master, who ran the last Beluga traps of the 1920s before that market collapsed, is custodian of living memories. For Burnett, he embodies ‘the conteur-personnage’ (literally, storyteller-character), which is the defining elements of ‘oral cinema’, distinguishing it from ‘literary’ films (para. 2). The filmmaker, who is the auteur and thus also has the authority of storytelling, embodies another type of ‘conteur-personnage’ (para. 2).

For Burnett, the storyteller-character and the storyteller-filmmaker both have opportunities to revive the traditions of oral storytelling, by reviving the Homeric role as ‘conduits of tradition and as oral radicals in a literary culture’ (para. 3), namely, by passing on living memories. Burnett considers that this filmic ‘doubling effect’ (parag. 35) actualizes the authority of the storyteller. The ‘doubling effect’ here also means doubling of the visual and the aural. What is told by the storyteller, the aural words, become ‘things’ (ibid.), that is, visually presented objects, and even ‘actions’ (ibid.), such as the last whale hunt come true. By means of such a textual effect of visualizing/eternalizing the evanescent aural words, the storyteller’s knowledge is positioned as an authoritative knowledge. For Burnett, in audiovisual media, the visual is a place for reinforcing the authority of the aural, taking advantage of its power of objectification; and he observes that the oral presentation is actually a practice of making imaginary: ‘The words ... possess a powerful ability to control perception (of the characters *and* the viewer) because of the strength of his [oral

performer e.g. Homer] words, which are imbued with a certain permanence by becoming themselves a series of observable images.’ (para. 35) Storytelling produces authoritative imageries; and such a characteristic of oral performance is mimetically represented in film.

The storyteller-character also incarnates a wider social-cultural frame in which they are positioned. Burnett stresses that the storyteller-character’s importance lies not merely in the fictional portrayal of such characters, but also in the social role they play that ‘bears the weight of great communal responsibility’ (para. 33), one of which is the passing down of traditions and engendering communal engagement and identity. Burnett draws on Plato’s *Republic* to suggest that the figure of the storyteller, or the ‘rhapsodes, like poets and other oral transmitters of tale’ (para. 15), is a contested one. For Plato, the oral storytellers are ‘crazed messengers’ (ibid.), as they affect the audience’s emotions and make the audience irrational and easy to manipulate. Plato’s contestation of the storyteller implies to Burnett that the storyteller-character might vary in character, constructive or destructive for a community and social harmony; and Burnett feels *Pour la suite du monde* projects a constructive concern for a community. He explains such constructive character in relation to Benjamin’s model of ‘The Storyteller’ who embodies the knowledge ‘rooted in the people’ (quoting from Burnett, 2004, para. 10), and communicates actualities. Thus Burnett stresses that the rise of modernity engenders the disappearance of the storyteller and thus the communal harmony. Film, a modern technology, however, could redeem such communal traditions, as much as in *Pour la suite du monde* does.

Differentiating television documentary and standup talk show as two kinds of mass culture that both deploy orality but in different ways, Lo Kwai-Cheung (2000) observes that orality could be used by either the official discourse or the vernacular.

For him, television documentary incorporates the former, whilst a dynamic orality can be found in the latter such as standup talk show. In television documentary, the voices of the actual people are framed by the hegemonic vision by means of the voice-over narration or the subtitle entrenchment. Whilst the live oral performance, such as Wong Tze Wah (a Hong Kong comedian)'s standup comedy, embodies a counter-signification force, where the signification on alternative identity and history is embodied in ephemeral dialogues (verbal, applause, laughter, etc.) between the performer and the vernacular audience. Those two phenomena, for Lo, are 'two forms of signification' (p. 183) emerging in Hong Kong's transitional period, acknowledging an issue of 'becoming Chinese' (ibid.), namely, the re-formation of the subjectivity of Hong Kong (people), in the historical takeover from the past British colony to the future sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Oral forms, language phenomena of mass culture, suggest paths to social signification.

Television documentary, such as *Hong Kong: One Hundred Years (Xianggang cangsang)*, is, for Lo, a fabrication of becoming Chinese according to dominant ideology, objectifying the geographical history and the identity of Hong Kong through textual fabrication. Although the people talk in the interviews, their voices are transcribed and subtitled and thus mediated by the official discourse, thus 'the diversification of these voices in the process of writing or rewriting the nation' (p. 185) is concealed. Lo (2000) argues that the signification depends on the signifiers and their variations, instead of the signified; the dynamic acts of signifier complicates a universal picture of the signified. The 'resubjectivation' of Chinese-ness, as a signification practice, derives from the variations of signifiers, namely, the new blood of Hong Kong adding to the Chinese subjects. For him, the mainstream television documentaries tends to ignore or suppress the differences and present an arbitrary link

between a signifier (the multiplicity of people) and a signified (the national unification), eliminating the dynamics of differences. Subtitle, a textual form of official discourse, composes ‘a subtle form of power manipulation’ (p. 186), through which the ‘unique’ and ‘schizophrenic contextual combination of the vernacular Cantonese’²⁷ (p. 186) is eliminated by the symbolic representation of Chinese words and Putonghua, reducing contextual dynamics to a ‘comprehensible’ and ‘readable’ text.

Lo implies that the authentic ‘resubjectivation’ concerns the subjectivity re-formation of the people in Hong Kong, who actively and daily play a role in shaping the narratives about Chinese-ness. In the stand-up comedy of Wong Tze Wah, the people dialogically and transiently produce knowledge about Hong Kong’s subject-position in a historical transition. Mobilizing the vernacular language, the performance fosters a localized encounter and formation of cultural identity; the historical knowledge is embedded in live interactions; in the shows, Wong weaves in his personal experiences with comments on ‘modern Chinese history and China-Hong Kong politics’ (p. 192). In a story ‘The God of Money’, Wong tells the audience how the elder generation of Hong Kong people came from mainland China as refugees and made their living in the colony (p. 192), identifying Hong Kong people as a specific historical community however with close connections to the mainland. Apart from the intellection within the storytelling identification about communal history, the comedian and audiences are simultaneously involved in pre-reflective sound-experience through telling and responding, e.g. ‘the applause and laughter’ (p. 191). The hearing of the audience is responsive: ‘by listening and responding to the humorous narration of China-Hong Kong politics in Wong’s jokes, the audience

²⁷ Talking about the hybridity of ‘the written form of Chinese, and verbal, written, and broken English’ included in the vernacular Cantonese (Lo, 2000, p. 186).

recognizes and reiterates itself in a site where any unified identity is bound to be contested.’ (p. 195) Responding constitutes an act through which the hearing subject recognizes and participates in the mutual construction on a shared past. The vernacular animates a cultural access to a mutual production of historical knowledge characterized by spontaneity. The oral performance rooted in vernacular dialogue situates knowledge on the ground of the shared production; histories are aroused *from* bodies and *for* bodies.

3. Secondary orality in/of film

Secondary orality in film means the self-consciously inscribed oral communication and expression in film. But whether film is qualitatively secondarily oral is a contested idea. The secondary orality, as the first chapter discusses, was primarily designed for exploring the phenomena of ‘psychodynamics of textuality’ (an impulse of enlivening social dialogue, Ong, 1982, p. 102–103) in literary texts and electronics. For example, the textually inscribed reader-character is a phenomenological expression that signifies the living act of spoken utterance. The psychodynamics of textuality specifies the spoken gesture of the written word, situating the subject of voicing in a living context, e.g. author-reader relationship, within sensory perceptions evoked by the text’s mimetic representation. The interdependence of oral and technological cultures is found in film, where forms of communications co-exist and interact.

A strand of film studies contributes to define and analyze the representations on media interdependence in film, such as the issue of the ‘essay film’, or ‘film essay’ (Rascaroli, 2009; Corrigan, 2011; Lopate, 1992), the ‘epistolary film’ or ‘film letter’ (Naficy, 2001), the ‘autobiographical documentary’ and the ‘journal entry approach’ (Lane, 2002), and so on. Such studies apply literary categorizations to conceptualize

filmic phenomena that blend multiple forms of representation and expression, especially the vocal and the visual. Orality and acousticity are stressed in Naficy (2001)'s account of the 'epistolary film' and 'film letter', which, as he argues, foreground performativity and the knowledge obtained basing on dialogue; the expression of a cultural identity through making voice depends on the identification of such identity through the perception of hearing; the comprehension of a filmic mimesis of orality and acousticity can be understood as a response to the audiovisual direct address.

Ongian orality contends that the knowledge (embedded in a narrative) is interactively formulated in a shared experience between the oral narrator and the audience, so that the knowledge production is not a solipsistic activity of creation, but an intersubjective process of recurrent telling and hearing. The fictionalized reader-character embodied in the textual psychodynamics, and also the imaginary author-character in filmic representation, acknowledge the relational aspect of the text-audience; filmic representation of textuality emphasizes an interdependent formation and a shared representation. The film studies that have been discovering the dynamic convergence of orality and textuality in the audiovisual representations contradict Ong's primary critique of movies as a medium of visuality lacking the 'oral coefficient' (1982, p. 293), and his denial of the possibility of 'secondary orality' in film. Scheunemann (1996) contests that secondary orality might not be an appropriate approach to discuss the filmic embodiment of orality-literacy dynamics, particularly she is not satisfied with the Ongian idea of 'secondary orality' because of its ignorance that film is genuinely different from both purely oral and purely literate cultures. For Scheunemann, 'secondary orality', based on new media reinforcement and transformation of the old media, misses the media interaction which takes place

between each in a specific period of cultural history. Film, whilst, is privileged to convey such media interrelations in the actual cultural-historical situations. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, writing and print as the dominant communication form was challenged by the aesthetics of *montage* of the early cinema as well as other visual concepts stemming from new pictorial arts. Taking *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as an example, Scheunemann suggests that modern writing assimilated both the perceptual mode of montage and the epic storyteller's style of narration. The secondary orality as a perspective to study on modern media histories should identify the shared perception and expression towards modernity in artistic forms, such as epic storytelling.

Scheunemann conceptualizes epic storytelling as 'a matter of listening to stories floating by, collecting them and making them in turn the property of coming generations' (p. 84). The act of the 'storyteller' is characterized by the collection of 'pre-shaped, ready-made', 'pieces of stranded goods', and that of the modern storyteller features documentation of the modern experience, such as experience of life in a big city. In Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the 'ready-made' in modern and urban experiences contains 'street ballads as well as official administrative announcements, stock market news as well as weather reports' (p. 87). The montage-like collection of actual experiences, for Scheunemann, underlies 'modern epic' (p. 88) in print form (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*) and filmic form, which, as a new medium in the early twentieth century, immediately responded to the modern perception. Scheunemann considers that Eisenstein's concept of *montage* as 'the assembling of goods out of a selection of ready-made elements' (p. 88) suggests the reinforcement of orality in the 'modern epic', in terms of a belief in filmic collection of life-world experience and its bearing of the traces of this 'social and practical

experience' (p. 87). Such montage aesthetic was a shared perception, suggested by the Cubist *collage*, Duchamp's ready-made, Dadaist *photomontage*, Tatlin's Tower, Brecht's concept of epic theater, Joyce's and Döblin's writings, etc. (p. 88). Scheunemann claims that considering such interrelations of trans-media reinforcement and transformation of orality – the modern embodiments of the storytelling tradition – Ongian 'secondary orality' is deficient.

Scheunemann also criticizes the Ongian orality-literacy hypothesis because that it only emphasizes the three-stage ideal and bypasses diverse human communication forms, in which film characterizes an irreducible one. She argues, focusing on such a universal ideal, Ong overlooks the complex presentations subdividing oral and literate technological expressions. The three stages are too general, whilst cultural phenomena such as montage cinema challenge such over-generalizing model, pointing out the alternatives of orality and literacy, and identifying the specific moments of interrelations amongst the full span of communication forms. Scheunemann (1996) suggests we should go beyond Ong's notion of secondary orality:

The particular challenge of extending the debate of orality and literacy into the field of modern media, however, lies in the need to discover and develop new patterns of thought and categories appropriate for the description of the new phenomena and our experience with them. (p. 81)

It is stressed that for new categories of analysis on orality to emerge, we need to pay attention to the interrelations of 'major and minor events', and 'recognize a fruitful constellation between the present and a moment of the past' (p. 91), replacing the linear historiography of the three-stage sequence of communication forms in order to discover the cultural history of film media. For example, Scheunemann (1996) argues that 'The emergence of the new technical media of film and radio challenged the

previous constellation of the arts and the dominance of the printed letters' (p. 81). The early film, as a new medium, intersected with many other technologies, such as lithography, mass produced images, newspaper, magazine, photographs, etc. and such intersections of word and image, challenging conventional understanding and forms of writing and print, which reinforced and transformed patterns of orality.

When Ong asserts that there was a 'modern discovery of primary oral cultures' (1982, p. 16), his focus is on modern studies on literary Classics, including the research that relies on print to disseminate knowledge, e.g. anthropological studies of Havelock, Parry, etc. in the 1930s-1970s. But for the present age, when new technologies such as the digital camera are so prevalent, the modern discovery of primary oral cultures, activities previously undertaken by literate persons who 'write down [...] sayings' (ibid.) are replaced by the filmmaker's videotaping bodies and voices. The challenge of new technologies to the Ongian framework of orality demands new categories to analyze media phenomena and human culture. Lippert (1996) provides an elaboration on such perspective, to investigate the specific moments of history; he extends the 'oral sensibility' of popular cinema to 'cyberspace-related films' (p. 267). For this kind of film that relies on pictorial imaginations, Lippert suggests the rationales of visualization (literacy) and situationalization (orality) relate to each other in audiovisual presentation. Cyberspace implies an interface where the oral and the literate episteme co-exist and interact.

In addition, Jackson (2008) provides an analysis on film's representation about the relation of technological cultures. His emphasis is on how the writing phenomena in film *mise-en-scène* constitute a moment of both 'showing' and 'telling' (visualizing and verbalizing). For Jackson, the interrelation between orality and writing indicates to extend film narrative studies that separating 'showing' and 'telling'. Taking *Citizen*

Kane (dir. Orson Welles, 1945) as an example, Jackson considers that the words on the film screen, particularly on images of newspaper or subtitles, etc. can be understood as both speech and visual display.

4. Orality as a perspective on the vernacular moving-image cultures

Some studies illuminate on the vernacular cinemas in relation to orality, interpreting orality as rooted in the everyday life, interactively communicating with the visceral interests of the people. For Koven (2006), *giallo* (i.e. Italian genre film relating to crime fictions) belongs to such vernacular cinema, which is different from popular cinema in terms that it emerges from the actual participation of the audience's cinematic pleasure and narrative comprehension. Such interactivity leads Koven to the hypothesis that certain formulaic *mise-en-scènes*, themes, and plots in the *giallo* films, such as 'use of space; the murders; the role of the detective; the identity of the killer; issues of belief; excess, and the set-piece' (p. viii), presents cultural moments specially for vernacular audiences; namely, the local people can cognitively comprehend the variations of *giallo* formulas and thus gain cinematic pleasures, because they participate in creating such formulas. Koven (2006) argues that the play with variations of formula in *giallo* cannot be seen as literary generic fabrications, but as more geo-contextually related 'filone' (literally 'genre') (p. 5); genre thus should be considered as more dynamic, subjected to the experiential reading of film. Koven's elaboration on the psychodynamics of the text-audience relationship characterizing the mechanism of the vernacular cinema (between the filmic texts and the local consumers) reminds of Nayar (2010b)'s hypothesis of the oral episteme in visual narrative as a dynamic but localized process of cognition.

For Koven, applying the idea of 'oral culture' to characterize vernacular cinemas such as the *giallo* films can distinguish it from 'mass/popular cinema'.

Koven points that popular cinema is supposed to be ‘of the people’ and ‘in the people’; however, the analysis on popular cinemas usually focuses on the textual authorship; the reading of a film as an individual creation bypasses the existential people (p. 42). For him, applying Ongian perspective on orality and oral culture would discover the meaningful interactions underlying the ephemeral and elusive phenomena of vernacular cinema. For example, the filmic motifs in *giallo* film are shared narratives, and in the analysis on these, an underlying cultural community would emerge. The study of the interactions between the filmic embodiment and the experience of the audience in the vernacular cinema raises an approach to reading orality from poetics of visual narrative comprehension. And such reading attempts to draw on the existential situations of cinematic experience, which nurtures the formation and comprehension of narrative motifs and emphasizes the role of the actual people. Koven argues, ‘vernacular cinema is truly “the people’s cinema”’ (p. 41), specifying the vernacular cinema as emergent interactively with the viewer.

Paying attention to the ‘text-audience relationship’ embodied in vernacular cinema would help to elaborate on the intersubjective relationships or the ‘shared experience’, among the characters in the film world, the audiences in the movie theaters. Koven implies that the vernacular cinema is the cinema of orality, for it embodies mental constructions through the perceivable interactions of the characters in the filmic world: ‘any kind of discourse these films offer needs to be represented visually through the interactions of those characters.’ (p. 40). Such a notion that the visual narrative incorporates oral episteme of storytelling is similar to that in Nayar (2010b); and arguably *masala* film that Nayar concentrates on is also a vernacular cinema. It is implied by the Koven’s studies on the Italian *giallo* film and Nayar’s

studies on the Hindi *masala* film, particularly on the narrative comprehension, that the vernacular culture is related to the oral episteme.

Both emphasize Ongian orality as a quality characterized by ‘the cognitive dimension’ (Koven, 2006, p. 35), characterizing the vernacular mode of thought and expression. They identify audience comprehension via cognition of filmic norms; and the genre of categorizing filmic texts can only emerge from the actual comprehension. Koven tends to focus his analyses on textual properties that are cognitively recognizable to the audience of vernacular cinema. For example, the types of amateur detectives, the killer’s relationship to the amateur detective, the killer’s past traumas as motives to kill, sexual perversions, etc. are described as formulaic clues for narrative comprehension. Such embodied figures, and relationships, are both formulaic constituents of local/oral culture, and a poetics of the vernacular. Nevertheless, Koven acknowledges that the *giallo* film comprehension is dynamic, set in an intersubjective experience drawing on the participation of the audience which gives rise to the ‘free indirect discourse’ moments, in which the audience exercises their freedom of interpretation on the narrative diegesis. Borrowing from Pasolini, the subjective point-of-view shots in many a *giallo* film as the ‘free indirect discourse’, are indeterminate shots depending on the audience to make meaning out of it. For Koven, the audience takes such opportunity to organize the empty subject position and enjoy the active involvement in translating cinematic indeterminacy, such as flashbacks that enable them an alternative temporality of experience. Koven posits that such experiential moments enables ‘the return of orality in a cinema of poetry’ (p. 153), namely, the poetics of vernacular cinema (the cinematic conventions), consist in a playing-with the cinematic conventions, or the active participation of the audience

in the filmic text. The film, in this way, can be understood like an oral storyteller who changes its voice according to the audience's response.

Discussing television, John Fiske and John Harley (1978) argue for a similar stance that regard moving-image mediums as the participatory culture; in their romantic conceptualization of television, it plays a 'bardic role' (p. 88), collecting and transmitting shared narratives, or '*mythologies*' (p. 87, emphasis original), shaping individual presentations within social-cultural norms. The television, in terms of both form and content, embodies the consciousness of the social audience. What is on the small screen of the TV set is experienced and shaped by the public. Such model implies to minimize institutional and ideological restraints and maintains that television programs embody the public's intentions.

5. Orality in the photographic making and perception of history

Edwards (2008)' discussion on orality in photography, identifies the image's unique way of relating the living human's photographic presence to the social-cultural context: the optical image redeems the multiple sensory experiences through the embodiment of intersubjectivity in relation to the spectator's perception. With such, Edwards believes photography could be considered as a form of oral history (p. 241), different from the cognitive knowing and literary narratives of history. Photography has an ability to revive a frozen moment to a dynamics, which is the ability of verbalizing the history through optical presentation, drawing on the affective components of photography that evoke sensory memories, such as touching and reading. Such photographic mimesis of the situated sensual experience of touching, seeing, verbalizing, echoes Marks (2000)'s proposition of the 'haptic visuality', namely, the visual evokes the existentially multiple sensory experiences. Edwards gives an example: in a photographed image, Frank Gurrmanamana (the operator of a

native communal ceremony) holds a picture in his hand, which records his operation of ceremony; evoked by such image, he sings to the image in the hand; Edwards considers that his sensory memories are revived.

Such imagery of the embodied interaction between the oral performer (Frank Gurrmanamana) and photography (a modern technology) reminds of Ongian depiction of the Klein-form, which characterizes an open form that blurs the boundary of, or connects two worlds of, image and actuality; in such visual embodiment about the situated performance of the indigenous subject, ‘the spoken and seen cease to be separate modalities’ (Edwards, 2008, p. 241); rather, the spoken and the seen both integrate into the life-world occurrences of the oral performer. The living human participates in the constitution of a photograph. Deriving from Walter Benjamin’s notion of ‘optical tactility’, (i.e. a photograph extends people’s physical engagement with the visual), and Christopher Pinney’s concept of ‘corporethetic’ (MacDougall, 2006, p. 24) that posits the portrayed subject in a visual image has a power of address and affect the spectator²⁸, Edwards (2006) acknowledges that iconography could establish a relationship of connection, by means of the direct address of the subject in the picture. Images that are characterized by the ‘optical tactility’ and the ‘corporethetic’ engagement bear mimetic communication, drawing on mimetic ability of photography as ‘indexical trace’ (p. 244), namely, the dynamics that is created by the symbiotic presence of the visual signs. Photography can be oral in the way that it imitates an embodied vocalization and sound’s unifying affect. In addition, in the exhibition experience, photography evokes social relations, through situated interaction between the image and the corporeal spectator.

²⁸ MacDougall (2006) explains that in the traditional Hindi iconography, ‘the deity looks at the beholder and the beholder experiences this being-looked-at (or *darshan*) as *akarshan*.’ (p. 24)

Edwards extends the sensory intersubjectivity in Ong's orality from the sound experience to the visual experience, elaborating on photographic verbalization. Edwards identifies the vocalization of knowledge in the post-orality age that rests in photography. Photography as embodied vocalization implies proximity with oral history, in terms of 'passed down, validated, absorbed and refigured in the present' (p. 244), namely, producing historical knowledge interactively with the present perceivers. Edwards extends the oral components of the visual into the contextualized photograph-spectator relationship, localized in existential reception. The viewing of photographs could unify a community of people, in a physical space, and in a temporal space of perception. Conceiving photographic image beyond the visual, Edwards suggests that 'The oral is [...] not simply the verbalizing of content,' (p. 39) and the oral is not merely the aural and sound. The oral is relational: 'Oral articulation, the naming of names, invests tellers with a dynamic power over their own history, breaking the silence' (p. 243); thus oral history is not simply history that is told by the mouth, but that are told to engage with people in the present time. The oral history depends on the sense of hearing which constitutes the relationality of the orality, which characterizes orally presented history as an irreducible category compared to written history, producing knowledge from contemporary temporal interrelation. Because of this, Edwards regards that oral histories can be also histories in photographs that are characterized by the embodied vocalization.

Summary

To sum up is trying to answer the question: what do we talk about when we talk about orality in film? Above all, the joining of the perspectives of orality into moving-image studies illuminates certain pre-existing problematics in film scholarships (such as Third World cinemas, ethnographic documentary, authorship,

reception studies, objectivity and subjectivity, cinema and modernity, etc.) and provokes new ways of thinking. The romantic belief of the intersubjective openness in Ongian orality migrates into certain junctures of film and orality. These perspectives or approaches to the understanding of photographic cultures beyond visual, implies the engagement of the corporeal viewer with the visual, either through certain filmic imaginaries (to emphasize the perceptual aspect of spectatorship) or with certain norms of visual narrative (to emphasize the cognitive aspect of spectatorship). The mimetic representation of the *griot*-figure and oral traditions (oral narratives, oral performances, oral storytelling, etc.) constitutes the former. Self-consciously embodied *griot*, a textually inscribed character, implies an intention of revitalizing the oral traditions in the modern filmic technology for a local society.

The concept of ‘vernacular cinema’ developing Ongian oral culture, suggests that the perceptual conventions of viewing public can condition the filmic texts. Such vernacular perception reflects the ‘oral episteme’, or the oral way of knowing, which can be cognitively identified in a number of oral characteristics in visual narrative, engendering motifs, aesthetics, norms and poetics, distinguishing particular genres that are locally engaged and dynamic. Developing the notion of the psychodynamics of textuality in the visual narrative, orality as an episteme is more productive to consider film beyond it as merely a sound phenomenon; such position regards that the oral culture of film is produced through the participation of the noetic process of certain vernacularly, or socially, shared motifs and characters. The social-culturally conditioned visual narrative depends on audience comprehension of the vernacular motifs incorporated as filmic norms (e.g. the outsized performance and abundance of verbalization in *masala* genre). The oral episteme identifies the social interaction between the on- and off-screen worlds.

The psychodynamics of textuality, a textual embodiment of the intersubjective relationality of speaker-hearer can be mimetically represented in film. Inter-generational storytelling is an example of mimetic representation of the actual relationality of a community: the knowledge-passing ritual and the recognition of collective identity through telling and re-telling of the common past. Yet the textual embodiment of the authentic communal structures could also be avant-garde. Experiments on sound—e.g. accented language, counter-hegemonic sound treatment, and using the embodied written word, etc.—imply the cultural differences of the subject characterized by an oral identity. The verbal and visual vocalization of language can embody political and radical ideas of cultural difference.

Studies that request to localize orality in specific historical moments (Scheunemann, 1996) and cognitive processing of spectator (Papaioannou, 2009) suggest orality, as an approach to understand film aesthetics, can illuminate on the intertextual and cross-cultural connections between film and other forms, concerning the embodied human experiences underlying norms or forms of representation. Regarding the concept of orality, or secondary orality, as too over-generalized and overlooking the specific modes of thought and expression, the considerations on the intertextuality and cross-cultural reception emphasize localized social, historical and cultural domains, or human participations. The micro-grounds of film experience might be places in which the oral episteme can be differentiated. Situating the orality in the visuals, or the embodied verbalization, within localized society, culture and historical moments, it is necessary to study on the subject characterized by speaking, i.e. performer of verbalization, and the subject characterized by hearing, i.e. perceiver of the speech performance who makes responses and participates in the dialogic culture. The psychodynamics of textuality (textually inscribed speaker-character and

listener-character), the textual aesthetics (sensual-perceptual modes of expression and communication), the intersubjective formation (the interaction between text and the viewing public), and the different episteme (cognitions of visual narrative), and mimetic representations of film that mobilize sensory memories (embodied perception and spectatorship), are approaches to explorations of the orality in film culture.

Chapter 3. The problematic of ‘language’, and the redemptive ‘gesture’: filmic imaginary and spectatorship

Introduction

As the analysis on Ongian orality in Chapter 1 suggests, primary orality consists of at least three variables, namely, i. the integrating phenomenon of sound that can create an engaging time-space for human beings to immerse themselves in, ii. the intersubjective engagement thus produced, for the subjects to encounter and open towards each other interpersonally, iii. the bodily expressiveness involved in the communicative acts, which resides in the kinesthetic movements and sensual-perceptual performances of corporeality. With such components, we can have the speaking-hearing interactions, and the vocal performances with sound and hand gestures that can signal both the communicative content and the communicative act. Based on these three variables of Ongian orality (primary orality), I set out to connect film to the oral mode of expression and communication, with regards to the specificity of film, a new embodiment of modernity (i.e. a modern-technology advanced mode of experience, of human beings creating activities and perceptions) acknowledged by the theoretical consensus in the early German context.

Additionally, the literature review in Chapter 2 implies that, from one aspect, the visual display, instead of the norms of film narrative of the oral traditions or oral

mode of expression and communication in film, can be the specific place to locate the orality in the visual. Writing in the early stages of cinema, witnessing the signification of visual attractions, the German early film theories in general and the writings of Béla Balázs, Georg Lukács, and Walter Benjamin in particular, can be surveyed as they report on the perceptions of the attractive moving-image display. The theorizations on the specificity of the then new medium of film by the three selected thinkers centers on two aspects: 1. film is full of gesture and with that it is different from abstract language; 2. cinema-going is an integrating experience, differing from reading a novel—it overcomes the language barrier and creates opportunities for people to encounter the other socially and physically. Arguably, such two concerns were influenced by the literary debates on cinema (‘kino debate’) from the first to the third decade of the twentieth century in Germany. What the debates concerned was the specificity of film/cinema experience in comparison with the other established art forms, e.g. theater, novels, music, etc. Some literary critics who participated in the debate suggest the specificity resides in the redemption of gesture in film, and also the salvation of the actual encounter in the cinema experience. Some compared film with the existing art forms such as pantomime, dancing and sport movements, to suggest the redemption of the bodily signification characterizes film, and with it, a new and universal kind of language can be formed, beyond the cognitive barriers of linguistics.

Béla Balázs, Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin are among the early film theorists who emphasize the moving-images’ engendering of the intersubjective experience that enlivens sensual-perceptual dynamics of modern spectator, in comparisons with the linguistic/spoken word. The communicativeness and expressiveness of gesture characterizes the filmic imaginary (i.e. a dynamic totality of

display), specifying the experiential aspect of moving-image presentation and reception. Although their concerns about the intersubjective component in film imaginary and cinema experience are situated cultural-historically in the German film context – encompassing the early cinema (1895–1918) and Weimar cinema (1919–1933) – the implications in the theories are pertinent to explore the pre-reflective engagement and embodied experience in ‘movies’ that is overlooked by Ong. Collectively, the early thoughts hold a romantic faith in film and cinema experience because of its redemption of the life-world. For example, Benjamin believes that film presents ‘mediated immediacy’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 141), namely, in film we can regain immediate sensory perceptions towards living things, with but possibly transcending technological fixation and deadness. Such utopian thesis can also be found in the articulations of Béla Balázs and Georg Lukács, in different ways, but emanating from the mimetic embodiment of film.

In this chapter, I explore these early ideas, of Balázs, Lukács and Benjamin, in relation to the gestural quality of the film imaginary, and the embodied intersubjective experience in cinema. As the early theories of film believe, although a visual means of representation, film differs from linguistic languages (visual signs) in the way that it is characterized by the expressiveness of bodily communication and the immediacy of experiential temporality. The cinema experience engenders a layer of knowledge engages the body-subject of spectator with the film imaginary; the subjects on- and off-screen are enlivened in the cinema-going action, positioned in a dialogue. Such a relational dimension is particularly obvious in the ‘cinema of attractions’²⁹; Balázs,

²⁹ According to Tom Gunning’s (1990) conceptualization, the ‘cinema of attractions’ specifies a kind of cinema that renders pleasure from the visual engagement. It is characterized by an explicit address to the audience-spectator, whose participation in simultaneous perceiving is encouraged more than only intellectual comprehension. It is a mode of ‘cinema less as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power’ (p. 57). The ‘cinema of attractions’ viscerally engages with the viewer in the situated dialogue; to an extent, it is

Lukács and Benjamin conceive their utopian models in relation to the attractive power of the moving-image presentation; for them, the film imaginary and cinema experience embody a sensual integrity of self-other, and an engaged process of knowledge production.

Firstly, this chapter presents an overview of the public perception (among critics) to the then new medium of moving image (film) in the context of German early cinema and Weimar cinema (1895–1933). Second, it explores Balázs’s thoughts on film, particularly addressing his concerns about physiognomic expressions in film which engages the spectator in the experiential way of knowing in cinema. After that, it studies Lukács’s early thoughts on film – specifically ‘Thoughts towards the aesthetic of cinema’ (1913) – and compares them to Balázs’s physiognomic model. A following part elaborates Walter Benjamin’s ideas on the embodied experience for the corporeal spectator. I suggest that the quality of orality is carried by the moving-image of attractions in particular, because of the participatory spectatorship and bodily mimesis.

affected by the mode of exhibition that exerts control over the shows being presented and the way the show address the spectator; it relies on performative organization and stage effects such as the tableau. The actualities characterize such a mode of address to the spectator, influenced by both the dynamic programming and relatively lower performativity of technological apparatus. With the rise of diegetically self-contained narrativization and feature films in the period around 1907-1913 (Gunning, 1990, p. 60), the cinema of attractions became no longer a main model. However, as a mode engaging the spectator, ‘the system of attraction’ still characterizes some popular and avant-garde films such as the ‘chase film’ (which synthesizes visually displayed spectacle and narrative, Gunning, 1990, p. 60), the musical, and the erotic appeal of particular stars’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 181). Such a mode relying on visually engaged attraction also reemerges in recent digital practices, extending the participatory cinema experience and enchanting effects of the imaginaries in the moving image (Elsaesser, 2004, p. 83). With such continuities underlying a tradition from the early moving image to the digital moving image, the concerns with the sensuous knowing in the pre-classical cinema, deriving from Benjamin, and also Lukács and Balázs, could be useful for illuminating post-classical cinemas.

1. The discovery on the gestural quality of film

1.1. Overview: German early cinema (1895–1918) and Weimar cinema (1919–1933)

Film appeared, as a technical novelty for public exhibition, in Germany on November 1st, 1895, and from then on until 1933, that is, from the early cinema (1895–1918) to the classical cinema (1919–1933) of Germany, it bore a new medium culture with close linkage between technology and mass perception. Writing against the backdrop of the classical cinema days, Balázs carried many concerns that characterized literary discussions in the early beginnings (1895–1918). Film culture that emerged in an international cosmopolitan city Berlin and appealed to the blue-collar class, identifies a degeneration of established culture for some critics, but a regeneration or even revolution of popular culture for others. The competing attitude towards film implies the perceptual mode underwent changes. Nonetheless, film-experience suggested the rising mass culture, challenging élite entertainment forms (e.g. theater, literature, concerts, etc.) which could not correspond to the needs and reflect the experience of the urban working masses (Kracauer, 1995, p. 325).

The emergence of film culture participated in the differentiation of social strata in German of the time. The antithesis between new form and old cultural forms reflect such differentiation and was discussed in coeval literary writings. The new form, as believed, is full of expressiveness, gesture, and facial expressions for Balázs, able to activate tangible visual sensations, and could engender a revolutionary culture to overturn the rationality of modernity. In order to encourage such potential, critics focused on the specificity of the new cultural form, consisting in the language of body (e.g. facial expressions) that demands an experiential way of knowing.

The early films in Germany were largely short actualities that ‘last[ed] for only a few minutes and consisted of non-fictional city vistas, news reportage, and depictions of military pageants and royal engagements.’ (Bock & Bergfelder, 2009, p. 557) In the main, film projections were located in entertainment places such as ‘circuses and vaudeville’ (Brockmann, 201, p. 13) and thus their audiences were ‘often working class people with not much education – people who would have felt uncomfortable or out of place at a conventional theater or opera house’ (ibid.). Primitive in form, such actualities foreground uncanny visual experiences, for example, ‘a factory yard, now at the open sea, now at a city railway station’ (Brockmann, 2010, p. 17). Sensual awareness was likewise awakened by the experience of watching films as if ‘standing in front of an open window, looking out’ (ibid.).

Up to the mid-1910s, screening bars (*Kientopp*), and more specially designed theaters prevailed the former traveling projections of short films (Brockmann, 2010, p. 18). Cinema developed as a mass medium, which brought film culture to the next step: the emergence of longer narrative films as the predominant form (1910–1913) (Hake, 1993, p. 13). In addition to the combats of the established cultures, censorship that was unveiled in 1906 by official also participated to create negative reception of cinema. Such negations were competed by the ‘kino-debate’, beginning around 1909–1910 (Hake, 1993, p. 11) and lasting until around 1931 (Aitken, 2012, p. 30), among literary intellectuals who viewed film as affecting the chance to nurture a new social consciousness. The debate took place in the leading journals (Hake, 1993, p. 11)³⁰.

³⁰ Including the popular family magazine *Die Gartenlaube – Illustriertes Familienblatt* (*The Garden Arbor – Illustrated Family Journal*), the prestigious reviews like *Velhagen & Klasings* or *Der Kunstwart*, and politically-oriented journals like Karl Kraus’s *Die Fackel* to Friedrich Naumann’s *Die Hilfe* (Hake, 1993, p. 11).

According to Kaes (1987), the literary debates on cinema evolved, from discussing cinema as a primitive entertainment subordinate to the dominant print culture (1895–1909), to heated debate on it as a serious challenge to literature when it began gradually assimilating established cultural sources (1909–1920), and to the realization that film is an self-contained expression and referential system from which other artistic and linguistic systems derived³¹ (1920–1929). The idea of film as an independent mode of expression, a ‘language without word’ (Hake, 1993, p. 228), gained growing recognition.

The rising visual cultures had prepared the optical sensibility for film before it appeared. In mid-18th century Germany, the market for literature, which had formerly been predominantly controlled by official institutions such as the church and the court, was opened up, and increasingly expanded into the mass media. The mass media reproducibility and dissemination characteristics, impacted on ‘the almanacs, calendars and paperback editions’ that grew in popularity towards the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, newspapers also became a particular channel for the transmission of the serial novel (Kaes, 1987, pp. 15–16), characterizing the phenomenon of ‘hypertrophy of the visual’ (Ong, 1981, p. 288) (the pervasiveness of visually transmitted knowledge and dominance of sight-perception) that is motivated by means of print technology. The ‘typographic stage of culture’ (Ong, 1981, p. 288), with the preponderance of the *I-It* relationship and the maximization of the ‘it’, namely, the increasingly objective and visual-tactile existence of expression and communication systems, for Balázs, indicated the accelerated process of ‘reification’ (2010, p. 84), the growth of abstraction and ‘intellectual climate of capitalist culture’

³¹ For example, the novels of such time imitated the spatial and temporal organization of narrative in the mode of montage, suggesting impacts from the cinematic expression (Kaes, 1987, p. 23).

(ibid.) that was brought by print and book culture, estranging human experience from immediate existence.

Meanwhile, the urban population, as the potential reading public, was undergoing social stratification. In the emergence of ‘employee-culture’, (Kracauer, quoting from Kaes, 1987, p. 23), the metropolitan working populations, who had come from the countryside and could not afford education and literacy, turned to visual culture where ‘photographs superseded paintings, LP³² and radio supplanted the concert, and film, it seemed, replaced both theater and the novel.’ (Kaes, 1987, p. 11) Textual culture, encountering a crisis in the 1910s and the 1920s, began to incorporate images: ‘The public has put aside the dull and dry book; the newspaper is quickly skimmed, and in the evening, the hunger for images is satisfied in the cinema.’ (Kaes, 1987, p. 23) The ‘hunger for images’ reduced the amount of the words and led to illustrated texts or photographic papers. Kaes (1987) suggests, the foregrounding of the visual in literary texts indicated a ‘hunger for images’ that had already been pervasive in the 19th century prior to the appearance of film.

Lukács distinguished the moving images from signifying visual forms in terms of its indexical quality, that is, a dynamic and temporally expressive characteristic in mimesis of lifeworld beings. Such perceptually distinguishing characteristic of film led to a differentiation of cognition and perception involved in the film experience. Compared to the informational and cognitive aspect of visibility, celebrations of film’s divergence from typographic culture emphasized its perceptual tangibility and accessibility. There was defense of film as a culture in which people can experience concrete and immediate realities, and critiques of the language which depended on educated literacy and filtered meanings (Kaes, 1987, p. 24).

³² i.e. Long Playing record.

1.2. The problematic of abstract language within the literary debates on cinema (1907–1931)

A rising awareness of optical sensibility drove literary critics to raise the problematic of language. Before Balázs, there had already been critiques of conceptual language as an instrument of modernity that brackets out sensual experience. The sensory experience of film thus, as believed, might provide a transcendental communication, for the repressed (by linguistic literacy) to be recognized. The technological apparatus of film that is characterized by a sensual openness, thus might give rise to a revolutionary possibility for the development of a counter-bourgeoisie culture of educated literacy.

The manipulating effect of the word gained critique during this period. In about 1895, the year when filmic experience was officially introduced into Germany, the Austrian essayist Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote:

People are indeed tired of hearing speech. They are deeply revolted by words: for words have placed themselves before things ... We are in the midst of a terrible process of completely squashing thinking under the weight of meanings. ... And thus there awakens a desperate love of all those arts which are exercised in silence: music, dancing and all the arts of acrobats and jugglers. (quoting from Kaes, 1987, p. 25)

It was worried that through the word, a person's immediate encountering with 'things', the physical existences within the world, is reduced. The mind-word subordinated individual bodily acts. Attempting to perceive the 'silence' implies the desire for embodiment. The examples given by Hofmannsthal indicate an impulse of transcending linguistic barriers through non-verbal communications, to redeem the pre-word authenticity of human perception.

Hofmannsthal also addresses the importance of 'pure gestures' that express the soul, and such an attitude towards the interdependence between the form

(primarily gestures and bodies) and the soul foreshadows Balázs's celebration of the regeneration of visible and visual more than two decades later. Between the early essayists and Balázs, there was a consistency of the critique of word and encouragement of 'nuanced gestural signification' (Kaes, 1987, p. 28), implying a shared awareness of conceiving film as an experience, differing from the conceptual and analytical way of knowing basing on the word.

The bodily performance in general and pantomime in particular was also a consensus for Hofmannsthal and Balázs, which manifested the redemptive power residing in another, everlasting, expressive system. The bodily performance as a characteristic of cinematic expression was a shared concern of a number of critics and essayists in the 1910s and 1920s. Discussions compared film with élite forms, e.g. theater, opera, literature, etc., in terms of their different presentations of performance. The physical characteristics of similarity between film and pantomime (Hake, 1993, p. 82) became an interested topic of discussion, about the movement of the body to involve the cognitive and perceptual participation of the audience. The codes of the expressive body replacing the language of abstract signs characterize both pantomime and film that is characterized by 'the expressive potential of the human body' (Hake, 1993, p. 82).

It is believed that basing on the expressiveness of body gesture, cinema has the specific advantage of reuniting a spiritual community that was split by the linguistic signs. For Jo Häiri Peterkirsten, writing in 1918, the masses of the lower classes with their low literacy skills, are 'victims of the modern civilization' (Hake, 1993, p. 83), who are refused and alienated by elitist literate words. But cinema provides them with the opportunity to find their 'starved senses' and their 'insatiable need for spiritual community' (ibid.) that are suitable and meritorious for existing in

the world. The collective nature of cinema experience in the movie theater not only provides the opportunity for social members to share a physical space, but also offers a space of psychological solidarity, which is possible to remedy the actual divisions in society. Recognized by Peterkirsten, the mode of reception in film is integration. In movie theaters, the lower classes found themselves more at ease, and such scenario can be found in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). When the proletarian protagonist Franz Biberkopf has just been released from prison, he finds himself more comfortable in the dark surroundings of the cinema, where there are 'just folks, free folks, amusing themselves, nobody has a right to say anything to them, simply lovely,' and a sense of identity: 'I right here among'em!' (Kaes, 1987, p. 15) In such collective watching experience, the semantics of language loses its power, as 'nobody has a right to say anything to them'. The excitement of 'I right here among'em!' characterizes the enchanting affect of film's integration. For Peterkirsten, the word separates off, in a sense quite anticipating Balázs and Ong, meaning the word isolates people who cannot master the literate signs and the linguistic underpinnings of the culture, whilst film, particularly silent film, activates the optical senses to 'read' the bodies that consist of gestural languages, transcending the linguistic barriers, which engendered 'a new spiritual body culture' (Hake, 1993, p. 83).

The visual perception of the body restored the 'original unity of meaning' (Hake, 1993, p. 83). For Hofmannsthal, such unity of meaning is what linguistic language lacks; the problem of word was it caused isolation in a society:

[D]eep down, without knowing it, these people fear language; in language they fear the instrument of society. This language of the educated and half-educated, whether spoken or written, is something foreign. [...] There's too much algebra in this language, every letter covers yet a further number, the number is the abbreviation of a reality; from a distance, all this points to something or other ... This doesn't really lift the spirit, doesn't carry it anywhere. All of this tends to leave behind a residue of despondency, and this feeling again

of being a powerless cog in a machine... (quoting from Kaes, 1987, p. 26)

Film experience was set in opposition to the linguistic word. First, the problem of language lies with its conformity with 'the educated and half-educated'; hence, language literacy is related to social hierarchy. Education was a 'sought-after commodity' in 18th century cities (Kaes, 1987, p. 11) that could only be gained in the city and by middle-class people who could afford such a commodity. Germany's rapid development from an agrarian state to industrialization and urbanism witnessed a significant expansion in the numbers of migrants who migrated from the countryside to cities such as Berlin (ibid.). The size of the population of the working class was large enough to transform the constituents of the class formation. The universal language of body gesture, which does not demand learning, but is open for perception, implied a cultural form that participates in the class formation.

Second, as Hofmannsthal pointed, language contained 'too much algebra' and was too abstract for access, indicating a modern instrument that is in complicity with other industrial mechanisms. Without the ability to master the language instrument, the working classes would be refused by a social totality and modern civilization. The linguistic signs restricted their freedom of access; the working classes thus had to find an alternative signification system that appealed to them. Film, as 'the vehicle for a satire on a culturally pretentious, undemocratic middle class which would not let go of the book' (Kaes, 1987, p. 22), promised the working classes to participate in social expression and communication. The accessible and tangible visual system might also be able to challenge the urbanism that privileged the middle class, book culture and literacy. The optical experience, as believed, with the primacy of nonverbal communication and universal language, is thus a significant aspect of fulfilling the social ambition of raising social consciousness and democracy.

The literary discussions about cinema over those two decades were characterized by an increasing recognition of the specificity of film medium and its cultural identity. That is, the recognition of the mutual and unifying signification system of the body, the integrating affect in the participatory acts of perception and reception of movie-going events. Those concerns about the new signifying system, of the ability to transcend social division, found their way into Balázs's writings on film, which address the redemption of the human senses, the revolutionary potential of film, romantic belief in film as a transcendental expression and communication over the barrier of linguistic signification.

1.3. Béla Balázs's early writings on film: gestural expression

Writing over two decades, Béla Balázs's theories about film culture are basically embodied in three major works: *Der sichtbare Mensch* (*The Visible Man*, 1924), *Der Geist des Films* (*The Spirit of the Film*, 1930), and *Iskusstvo Kino* (*The Art of Film*, 1945). They accumulate the reviews and essays that Balázs had written for journals³³ (Hake, 1993, p. 220). The 1924 work and the 1930 work concern the aesthetic formation of the new film culture in the German context, and will be the focus of the following examination.

In consistency with the critique of abstract language in literary debates during the 1910s and 1920s, Balázs began his work of theorizing the specificity of film by criticizing the printed word as well. But for him, it is the printed word, a mass medium reproduction of linguistic language, not just the language itself (an arbitrary combination of a sign and a meaning) that blocked perceptual sensitivity towards

³³ E.g. *Der Tag*, *Die Rote Fahne*, *Die Weltbühne*, and *Die Filmtechnik* (Hake, 1993, p. 220).

physical experiences. Anticipating Ong's thesis that the printed word separates the knower from the known and thus creates an absence of the human voice, Balázs wrote:

The discovery of printing has gradually rendered the human face illegible. People have been able to glean so much from reading that they could afford to neglect other forms of communication. (1924/2010, p. 9)

[S]ince the advent of printing the word has become the principal bridge joining human beings to one another. The soul has migrated into the word and become crystallized there. The body, however, has been stripped of soul and emptied. (1924/2010, p. 10)

For Balázs, the 'word' in printed books is conceptual and mediated. By 'conceptual' it means that communication and expression exist in a rationally cognitive way, distinct from the emotional and affective communication and expression: 'the conceptual nature of the word distorts the irrational, hallucinatory character of sensuous apperception.' (1930/2010, p. 125) Being 'mediated' (1924/2010, p. 11) means that expression and communication are based on instrumental composition via sign language; the actual and existential context of communication is stripped away.

Word, in the arguments of *The Visible Man*, is considered primarily as a physical phenomenon which is self-sufficient, no matter whether spoken or written. It established its social role by being reproduced and transmitted pervasively against an urban background, by means of complicity between print technology and literary institutions. The 'hypertrophy' of the word was observed by Balázs's: 'human beings [...] are now buried under mountains of words and concepts,' (1924/2010, p. 11) and 'the word has become the principal bridge joining human beings to one another' (p. 10). Balázs identifies that the printed word-culture alienated the people, even the 'highly educated intellectual' (1930/2010, p. 94), from one's immediate perceptions. Speaking of the loss of expression in the abstract word, Balázs claims that:

The immediately visible spirit was then transformed into a mediated audible spirit and much was lost in the process, as in all translation. But

the language of gestures is the true mother tongue of mankind. We are beginning to recall this language and are poised to learn it anew. (1924/2010, p. 11)

The 'language of gesture', or, the gestural expression of living person, is thus set in opposition to the word. For Balázs, the word includes not only the written word, but also audible words, verbalization that make semantic meanings. The word suggests a loss of 'spirit' but privileging rationalization over 'irrational' and 'emotional' expressions. Balázs believes that the visually presented, gestural 'language' in film, could redeem the lost spirit with its fullness of expressive elements. Ong also addresses modern civilization in terms of a loss in relation to the audible word. But when Ong talks about the loss of orality in written and print cultures, he means the lost total experience of immediate interaction, which involves the primacy of spoken (audible) words that engage people in such interactions in the existential context of communication. For Balázs, the primacy of expression and communication, in contrast, resides in the visual and optical: 'we are reverting to primordial forms of expression.' (1924/2010, p. 11) The forms he encourages are the gestures and facial expressions, the most authentic means of obtaining knowledge of things, as believed. Ong and Balázs identify two dimensions of the sound-word: the perceptual and expressive aspect of the spoken word that is regarded as authentic by Ong, and the conceptual and linguistic aspect that is criticized by Balázs.

Both Ong and Balázs regard the experiential and perceptual aspect in human communication as one that motivates the beings in the world to reach fuller comprehension and share a common horizon, nonetheless, they have different opinions and attitudes towards the specific sensory perceptions required for fulfilling that mission of animating and integrating. For Balázs, even the auditory experience, the experience of being engaged by the spoken word, is mediated and not sufficient

for people to gain authentic understanding of each other. Because the audible word, even if it is a physical phenomenon, is still based on an abstraction of existential things, that is, based on conceptual organizations of signs and linguistic fabrications. For Balázs, since the conceptual organization of sign language is arbitrary, it not only detaches human beings from the natural experience, but also has a potential of manipulating the realities with certain spurious ends. For one thing, the arbitrariness resides in the fact that ‘our words are not simply the after-images of our thoughts, but form that determine those thoughts from the outset.’ (1924/2010, p. 12), in other words, the linguistic forms that are a combination of split sign and unconsciousness limit the actualities people are about to perceive, if they commit to such a way of expression and communication.

For another thing, Balázs regards such arbitrariness is also a result of modern technologies of reproducibility, which eternalize the objectified and renders ‘Words, concepts and thoughts’ ‘timeless’ (1924/2010, p. 21). Ong acknowledges such externalization of object in relation to the textually nurtured faith in objectivity, and critiques of self-sufficient knowledge and literary text as a closed system. The lack of expressiveness and emotions in the conceptual word, for Balázs, is also suggested by its linear and sequential organization; he believes, it will only be in the ‘chords of emotions’ (1924/2010, p. 34), that is, in the interpenetrating status of expressive elements co-existing within the visual moving-image, that we can rediscover the rich experience of temporality. Arguably, the moving image with optical sensibility, for Balázs, is a pre-conceptual or pre-reflective mode of expression and communication. Such a mode is characterized by its ‘simultaneity’ (1924/2010, p. 34) in that different emotions can be co-existing and interpenetrating with each other, and ‘such

simultaneity cannot be expressed in words' (ibid.), the word that is 'dematerialized, abstract and over-intellectualized' (1924/2010, p. 11).

Balázs criticizes the culture of words that 'degrades the human body to the status of a biological organism' (1924/2010, p. 11). Such idea anticipates Ong's illustration on the *I-It* mode of communication, whereby sign language reduces the beings involved in communication to passively observed objects, unable to actively engage in a mutual dialogue. Since the human body is reduced to a biological organism, it passively receives the information in the linguistic systems, which are pervasive in textual forms, even mass-reproduced pictures that are undermined the temporal mimesis to life-world. For Balázs, such use and circulation of printed word facilitated the domination of the capitalist rationale, because sign systems favor the value of the social constituency that masters the literate word. He refers to the notion of 'reification' (1924/2010, p. 84), to designate the estrangement of people's minds from the existential and immediate experience of objects, resulting from a capitalist economic rationale that separates the 'intrinsic value of objects' from their 'market price':

Printing merely accelerated the process of "reification", the term used by Karl Marx to designate the growth of abstraction. Just as in the minds of men the intrinsic *value* of objects has been displaced by their market *price*, so too people's minds have gradually become estranged from the immediate existence of objects in general. It was this intellectual climate that enabled the book culture of later centuries to become so dominant. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 84)

The massive reproduction of the system of abstract signs through book culture tends to detach human beings from their existential experiences and immediate existence. Thus film can be redemptive in terms that the tangible entities that appear in film represent the 'concrete, non-conceptual, immediate experience of things' without the restraints of linguistic signification. Although Balázs did not acknowledge the

industrial and technological determinations of film in terms of the scope of visible, up to this statement, he did present a utopian vision on film which has great potential to re-engage people's direct experience towards things, and which would overcome the capitalist alienation that is promulgated by the consumerist book culture. Such utopian reengagement, through gestural language, with the presence of things redeems the 'pre-modern mode of embodied experience and expression' is to be redeemed (Carter, 2010, p. xxiv).

As Balázs envisions, breaking through the instrumental rationality and the domination of sign language, necessarily depends on a new language that is able to transcend conceptual and intellectualized division. Balázs believes such language would be 'primordial' (1924/2010, p. 11), or pre-linguistic, a language that would rely on direct perception of the emotional and expressive elements of the body. Prior to linguistic languages, people were born with such a true 'mother tongue' (1924/2010, p. 13) although in the industrial-capitalist society, as Balázs against, they are now blinded from realizing the ability to communicate with this. Balázs uses the Tower of Babel as an example to reflect on contemporary social formation, which consists of divisive communities, each of which shares a 'common mastery of the words and concepts' (1924/2010, p. 14) of its own community. He suggests that communications without linguistic language are able to reach a harmonious and inter-comprehensible state—as the people in the Tower of Babel did, that is, by means of physical interactions to generate the symbolic meanings. In the language of the body, people will find 'the *first international language*' transcending fragmentations (1924/2010, p. 14, emphasis original); the universal language of the body would overcome the curse of Babel, and the increasing isolation and fragmentation of individual groups.

For Balázs, the language of gesture and facial expression is different from sign language in terms of three aspects. Firstly, gestural language is full of expressiveness and emotions, motivating the richness of body senses, removing the confinement of the mind. Taking body performance in dance and pantomime as example, Balázs suggests the performer, bodily activated, will affect the spectator in a way that the affected spectator becomes active and involved in the gestural conversation (1924/2010, pp. 25-26). In such mimetic conversations, gestural language redeems the experiential knowing, as it is born out of existential interactions, and meanings come from such interactions instead of being artificially assigned.

Secondly, gestural language is not a sequential or linear organization so much as found in conceptual and arbitrary signs; rather, emotions in gestural language exist in a fashion of simultaneity, or, the bodily expressions such as facial expressions are ‘polyphonic’ (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 34), without a predomination of one meaning being over the others. Rather, in gestural language there is a ‘rich amalgam’ (ibid.) of emotions that overlap and interpenetrate each other, together constituting ‘the chords of emotions’ (ibid.). The meaning of the ‘chords’ is indeterminate and in order to recognize their meaning, the spectator must be actively involved in the conversation with the forming and transforming of the ‘rich amalgam’.

Thirdly, gestural language animates the subjects involved in the viewing/viewed experience, an interpenetrating and dynamic horizon which has no boundary of reality-as-an-ideal-form and representation-as-a-sign-system, but mutually depended feeling. The notion that the beings are representations of an ideal form, a disembodied spirit, or eternal value that is created by the mind (concepts, thoughts) is contested by gestures and other forms of nonverbal communications for Balázs, and it is within the bodily or lived experience that symbolic meaning emerges.

The human being is determined in the dialogic process of perceiving/perceived, instead of comprehension of concepts, and such transformation, or redemption, is made possible through the technological innovation of film, a moving-image form which demands optical awareness and perception. Celebrating such optical awareness, Balázs says:

This new language arises from our yearning for the *embodied human* being who has fallen silent, who has been forgotten and has become invisible. ... It is film that will have the ability to raise up and make visible once more human beings who are now buried under mountains of words and concepts. (1924/2010, p. 11, emphasis original)

The new technology, the new medium, suggests the possibility for an '*embodied human* being', an enlivened presence of bodily experience. Balázs believes that the visual embodiment of human subjects, particularly their faces, in the moving image, evokes the living and anti-alienation experience in the film medium. For him, the new medium of moving-image, or film, awakes, above all, the optical sense of modern human beings, and beyond the optical: it awakes the sensual-perceptual connection of people to their lifeworld, in opposition to the conceptually cognitive knowing of the world; for Balázs, the technological innovation means the redemption of the unmediated experience and expression, and also, the perceptual connection of being with the lifeworld.

For Balázs, the technological apparatus of film enables people to master a new language of gesture and facial expression; such language is actually a primordial language that relates people closely and affectively as it did in the pre-modern communications. But against the period when film was in a process of changing and becoming, still relating to the conceptual cultures to some extent, Balázs addresses the problematic of the emergent spectatorship – the optical-sense-based perceptual understanding of the world:

But today this visible man is in an in-between state: no longer there and not yet present. ... In the culture of words our bodies were not fully used and have lost their expressiveness in consequence. This is why they have become clumsy, primitive, stupid and barbaric. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 11)

As he pointed, people were still in the process of learning how to interact with the new visual culture in terms that the audiences ‘have to learn to perceive their beauty [of the gestures and bodies on film] for that beauty to emerge at all.’ (1924/2010, p. 8)

The spectator has to learn how to interact with the optical system and gestural language, either to enjoy a visual pleasure or to emphatically identify with a certain cultural and social expression underlying the visual. For Balázs, this indeterminacy might be because human beings had forgotten their ability to use gestures, but might also be because the new visual innovation is different from the purely optical visions (1924/2010, p. 37); such spectatorship is different from private reading of a fixed sign system, analytically and rationally. Movie-going as an event and collective behavior, is included in such new spectatorial experience, forming an alternative mode of reading. Balázs insists that, ‘To *see* speech is to learn quite different things from just hearing the words’ (1924/2010, p. 25); the optically animated experience of film watching engages not only the sense of sight and the ability to read the visual materials organized on the screen, but also the *experience* of such ‘visible’ materials, that is, the felt awareness of a relationality, i.e. being engagement, which is formerly absent in sign languages and now redeemed with the screen. The loss of spirit can be understood as a loss of a totality of experience, the relationally connected experience; embodying the spirit ‘visible’ and learning to read such a visibility would raise the consciousness of existence. Through mastering the way of knowing such visibility, the audience could have the ‘ability to experience enjoyment’ (1924/2010, 2010, p. 8), the enjoyment of perceiving the spirit. In order to master the skills of recognizing the

forms of the spirit, Balázs specifies the notion of ‘physiognomy’ (1924/2010, p. 27) and the technological specificity of the ‘close shot’, to characterize the filmic mode of expression and communication, and the filmic epistemology of perceiving and knowing.

2. Mutual openness in and through ‘physiognomical expressions’

In ‘On the creative enjoyment’ (1924/2010, pp. 6–8), Balázs affirms that the optical pleasure of watching things of direct sensory accessibility creates immediate enjoyment, without the necessity of educated literacy. For elucidating such an unmediated enjoyment, he compares ‘gazing’ in the movie theater (‘a place of darkness’, 1924/2010, p. 6), and literary reading, to illustrate that the enjoyment of ‘reading’ (1924/2010, p. 35) the face in film is not for the purpose of being educated; it is above all a pleasant experience of ‘senses and nerves’ (1924/2010, p. 7). However, he does believe that the way of film ‘reading’ has to be nurtured, in order to enjoy another level of pleasure, that is, the pleasure of ‘understand[ing]’ (or ‘recogniz[ing]’) the ‘invisible’ spirit behind the observable things that seem ‘primitive and naïve’ (1924/2010, p. 7). Such a beyond-level recognition is a ‘conscious enjoyment’ (ibid.), which goes beyond sight, and identifies the audience as a part of the determination for the full meaning of a filmic totality to emerge. The audience physically participates in the textual form’s meaning making.

Such ‘conscious enjoyment’, an engaging spectatorship, arguably, connects Balázs with Ong; for Balázs, ‘Film is a social art, one that in a sense is created by the audience’ (2010, p. 8); for Ong, the ‘shared consciousness’ (1967, p. 180) of the oral storyteller and the audiences shapes the formulas in oral narratives. Drawing on the dialogic relation in film, Balázs stresses, it is the director who determines the direction of the gaze, whilst it is the audience who makes meanings out of the film.

The ‘conscious enjoyment’ implies that beyond the optically perceived reality in film, there is another level of reality that can only become emergent (‘visible’) if the audience masters how to recognize and know it with awareness: the audience has to ‘learn to perceive their beauty for that beauty to emerge at all’ (1924/2010, p. 8). With a romantic vision of the relationship of mind and body as a unity, rather than subordinating the body to the mind, Balázs turns to Goethe’s conceptions of physiognomy and posits film ‘reading’ as ‘an act of symbolic reading’ (quoting from Gunning, 1997, p. 4); the things (especially the faces and bodies) on film are all and always symbolic and physiognomic, or, the appearances are symbolically related to the character and spirit of the things; such relationality depends on the ‘act’ of the audience, or, the active participation in ‘reading’ the symbolic appearance: the physiognomy.

Physiognomy is a study of physical form and bodily expression, and further investigates the relationship between such expression and the underlying character/spirit. It is philosophically rooted in pre-modern time³⁴, and the romantic discovery of such a tradition is found in Goethe’s reference to Aristotle; Balázs continued such a romantic interpretation, explicit in his quoting from Goethe:

Motto: For no animal has ever existed that had the shape of one creature and the habit of another, but each creature has its own body and its own meaning. Thus every body necessarily determines its nature. In the same way, everyone acquainted with animals judges each according to its shape. If this is true, as indeed it is eternally true, then such a thing as physiognomy must exist. Aristotle in Goethe’s “Physiognomical Fragments” (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 27)

For the pre-modern thinkers³⁵, the soul and destiny of the human face can be metaphorically known by referring to the correspondingly emblematic animals; such

³⁴ For example, early inquiries by Aristotle and Pythagoras, up to Giovanni Battista della Porta at the end of the 16th century, and on to the 18th century philosophical aesthetes such as Goethe (Gunning, 1997, p. 3).

³⁵ For example, the 16th century thinker Giovanni Battista della Porta (Gunning, 1997, p. 3).

corresponding relation makes meaning of the facial appearance, for example, if one's face resembles a lion that will indicate 'strength and hot temper' (Gunning, 1997, p. 3). The interrelation was the center of study of Goethe and Johann Caspar Lavater. They collaborated to write the *Physiognomical Fragments* (1775–1778), quoted by Balázs as the beginning of his 'Type and Physiognomy' (1924/2010, pp. 27–32). Goethe shares the view with Lavater that the human being is 'an entity in which body and soul, external and internal being, form an inherent unity' (Carter, 2010, p. xxvii), which can be understood as a modern (scientifically studied) restatement of the pre-modern thesis. But what specifies Balázs's view on physiognomy is Goethe's distinguishing view from Lavater, in terms that physical appearances are not a fixed 'sign of transcendental content' (ibid.), rather, the bodily phenomenon 'stands in a dialectical and mutually determining relationship with a hypothetical conception of the whole' (quoting from Carter, 2010, p. xxvii); the form itself is dynamic, and the form and spirit are also in a dynamic relationship of interdependence.

Thus for Balázs, there is no pre-given determination of soul and appearance, both in a constant process of changing and becoming, forming and transforming. In such a permanent status of becoming, the body and the spirit, the form and the soul, remain as relational dynamics. Based on comparative anatomy studies, Goethe applied the concept of *Gestalt* (form) to elucidate the way to know such a dynamically transforming relation: the spirit can be perceived 'as a fleeting presence within the perpetual flux of natural or organic life' (Carter, 2010, p. xxvii); the fleeting presence is only a provisional and transient presence that will be transformed, and the perceiving subject has to keep itself in a state of mobility, intuiting to know the totality beyond the immediate presence or a fleeting form (pp. xxvii-xxviii).

Goethe's conceptions of the dynamic totality between visible appearance and invisible soul characterized Balázs's conceptions on the physiognomy in film: 'The invisible face behind the visible has made its appearance ...' (Gunning, 1997, p. 1) Balázs addresses the notion of 'pan-symbolism' (1924/2000, p. 56) to designate the state of things that are 'all and always' symbolic in film, that is, everything has an appearance but also 'a second meaning over and above' the appearance (ibid.). Balázs claims that in the pan-symbolic phenomenon, the Goethean idea of dynamic interplay can be found, particularly that animate objects in film affect the spectator: 'all objects make a physiognomical impression upon us' (ibid.). The physiognomic recognition of things characterizes the spectator's experience of 'conscious enjoyment'. Such a 'physiognomical impression' is thus 'a necessary category of our perception', with and through which, the spectator becomes perceiver more than viewer. Thus physiognomy can be different from representational sign, utilizing a metaphor of assemblage to portray a totality of form and meaning. For Balázs, objects have their own subjectivity and can share their spirit with us, if only the spectator masters the ability of recognizing their subjectivity.

Balázs believes that 'A raging sea, a glacier above the clouds, a storm-lashed forest or the painful expanses of a desert – in all these images we find ourselves face to face with the cosmos.' (1924/2010, p. 41); the entire diegesis of the film world are full of life and significance. For him, the key physiognomic expressions in film include 'the mass, the landscape, gestures and body parts, inert part-objects', and importantly, 'the human face' (Carter, 2010, p. xxv). The human face is particularly addressed as a physiognomical expression in Balázs: '*In film the beauty of the human face functions as physiognomical expression*' (1924/2010, p. 30, emphasis original). It designates that facial expressiveness might encompass recognizable and meaningful

patterns of symbolic appearance in film. Balázs believes that film provides knowledge material for anthropology and psychology (1924/2010, p. 30); one's face expresses firstly a meaning of appearance, and also a meaning that identifies familial, racial and class-specified characters and souls.

Relating the physiconomical expression to the underlying intuitive way of knowing, Balázs posits that the human body is set in the permanently transforming flux of time and totality. The embodied human being would be a fleeting presence of such a perceptual flux that can be understood by means of the film experience. The film experience is a way of knowing, a mode of acquiring visual knowledge of the spirit and the dynamic totality. Balázs anticipates in film the technologically raised 'new instrument of knowledge', apart from its role as 'a new art form or a new language' (Gunning, 1997, p. 1). Such a new instrument is powerful because the knowledge it acquires is not only empirically visible, and can be captured by sight and cognition, but also 'invisible', concerning the underlying expression of the soul.

Balázs's celebration on the ability of film to render the human face visible again, arguably, is on film's technological ability to reveal intuited realities; he believes that the spirit and character can transcend empirical knowledge perceived through the optical senses. In an example, Balázs describes the knowledge he intuited from the footage shot by a dying cameraman:

[A] new form of human consciousness that has been vouchsafed to man by the camera. For as long as these men do not lose consciousness, they keep their eye to the lens and use the camera image to make their situation a perceptible reality. Presence of mind becomes living image [and] the "clear gaze" of inner scrutiny [which] used to involve an internal sequence of images [becomes] a roll of film loaded into a camera; it functions mechanically ... The cameraman does not shoot as long as he is conscious; he remains conscious as long as he continues to shoot. (Balázs, 1930/2010, p. 157)

Balázs recognizes that both the expression of consciousness and the perceptual faculties have been substantially affected by the new visual technology. It indicates the ego ('mind') in an embodied form can transcend technological representation; the body can perceive and know immediately with and through a camera. Through the film we can perceive the embodied filming experience of the dying soldier when he gazes at a visual world unfolding before him. His consciousness is embodied in the moving image. Seeing through the camera, the man is also an active spectator who captures the perceptual flux in a pre-reflective and spontaneous fashion. Such spontaneity is an interaction and integration between body and technology: 'the camera takes my eye along with it ... I see the world from within the filmic space' (Balázs, 1930/2010, p. 99).

Arguably, seeing with and through the camera as an alternative episteme is essentially different from the 'visualist' way of knowing that depends on conceptual reading, in terms of the embodied act of knowing. Such alternative visual experience complicates Ong's all-encompassing 'hypertrophy of the visual' (Ong, 1967, p. 288) which includes all sight experiences within the category of visualist culture. The intuitive knowing in film, arguably, embodies the oral way of knowing. The intuitive impulse exists in both the sound-experience and the film-experience, both demanding and engendering active subjects that share an existentially based spiritual space, open towards each other.

The physiognomical recognition in film thus can be understood as the 'practice of film "reading"', which would not be as the 'extraction of meaning from the film text, but as a refined poetics of film reception' (Carter, 2010, p. xxv). Such impulse of refining emerged against the background of 19th century industrial modernity, indicating a strive for human being's autonomy in the technological

engagement with the world. Gunning (1997) suggests, if we consider Balázs as a modern spectator, his interest in gestural details was shared by a number of other contemporary film theorists' interests (e.g. Walter Benjamin, Dziga Vertov, Jean Epstein, etc.), who were active modern subjects, eager to find patterns of regularity in the moving images characterized by an 'instinctive sensibility' (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 13); for them, the ephemeral and trivial, the 'primitive and naïve', nature and natural things, from the everyday actuality and perceivable in the film, address the gaze of spectators. The active spectator is both enlivened and enlivens the physiognomy in film, reading 'every creature has its own body and its own meaning' (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 27) from the appearances. For Balázs, children are the prototype of such active spectators, curious about reading the creatures they encounter, because they have not yet been educated to use abstract and conceptual ways of thinking. Rather, they bodily and openly perceive things: 'they regard each thing as an autonomous living being with a soul and face of its own.' (1924/2010, p. 46)

Therefore, central to Balázs's notion of physiognomy are two aspects; firstly, the physiognomic expressiveness of the moving image constitutes an ability to reveal inner reality. Secondly, the active spectatorship: ready to see through the surface of things to their inner meanings, differing from the 'traditional and abstract way of seeing' (1924/2010, p. 46) that depends on passive decoding of textual representations. Such an alternate way of seeing redeems the pre-reflective experience of perception, a knowing of the spirit beyond the arbitrarily assigned codes. The 'internal reality' characterizes the physiognomic appearances, and they form and transform each other dynamically. In particular, the intuitive reading on the human face can be embodied in the film techniques such as close-up shots and slow motion.

3. The polyphonic physiognomy in facial close-ups

Carter (2010) recognizes that there are three main concerns in Balázs's early writings on film: the filmic body, the close-up, and montage (p. xviii). The body in film is the basis of gestural language, an ensemble of expressive elements; the close-up and montage are the technological creativity of film which give scope to the filmic body. Balázs emphasizes that 'close-up is film's main terrain' (1924/2010, p. 38). In such apparatus, the body as indexical appearances projects the spirit perceivable and recognizable. The close up expands optical perception through its concentration on the living character of the body, or, the durational flow of interpenetrating elements of expression that engage the spectator in the intensive experience of knowing. For Balázs, everyday and ephemeral things become symbolic appearances in close-ups, and in two modes: the fairytale close-up (Carter, 2010, p. xxviii) and the Bergsonian close-up (p. xxxii); the fairytale close-up presents the simultaneous expression of polyphonic facial elements, and the Bergsonian close-up reflect the interpenetrating perceptual experiences in a duration of close-up temporality. It is arguable that the close-up in general and the facial close-up in particular, forms a specific category that designates the empathetic engagement of the spectator with expressive filmed-things and the expressive filmic-apparatus, turning filmic representation to the bodily experienced actuality of the spectator.

3.1. Simultaneity in the fairytale close-up: the castle of Bluebeard

Balázs's emphasizes the immediate relation between the bodily expression and the close-up: 'the technical precondition for the art of facial expression' (1924/2010, p. 37), the medium conveyer of the physiognomical expression. He believes that the close-up distinguishes film as an art from other arts which might also

present the play of facial expression, for example, theatrical performance (1924/2010, p. 38). In the variety of film apparatus, the facial close-up privileges physiognomical expressions, whilst in theater—which has an aptitude for verbal expressions—facial expressions are subordinate. In addition, facial close-up promises the spatial-temporal flux (duration), to communicate with the face (both the surface and the deeper face). Temporality and spatiality are two important properties for the close-up to transcend the appearance to the symbolic.

As a modern discoverer of the oral cultures, Balázs also contributed to the ‘modern discovery of the oral cultures’ (Ong, 1982, p. 16). Balázs’s romantic vision on the oral traditions was practiced in his field trips of collecting musical and oral materials with phonographic recordings³⁶. The oral sources and popular cultural elements he collected then migrated into his writings on the fairytale³⁷ and the fairytale close-up, a kind of close-up that is characterized by its simultaneous (visual-spatial) organization of temporality. Based on an 1899 version of the Bluebeard legend by the Belgian symbolist Maeterlinck, Balázs wrote *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* (Carter, 2010, p. xix). In the story, he writes: ‘Now hear the song/You look, I look at you./Our eyes’ curtain – the eyelashes – opens:/Where is the stage: outside or inside/Men and women?’ (ibid.). Carter argues that such a boundary-less state characterized in this writing comes to feature the fairytale close-up: a utopian temporality that transcends the borders of the past, present and future; the temporally divided elements co-exist in a spatial integration, presenting the polyphony of symbolic appearance.

³⁶ Balázs collaborated with the composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály into the multiethnic territories of early 20th century Hungary, making phonographic recordings and musical transcriptions of Magyar, Romanian, Slovak, Ruthenian, Serbian, Romany and Arab folk songs (Carter, 2010, p. xviii)

³⁷ Balázs had been collaborating with Leni Riefenstahl on the film *Das blaue Licht* (*The Blue Light*, 1932), which is a fairytale film.

In 1910, Balázs wrote and published the one-act opera libretto *The Castle of Blue-Beard* (Leafstedt, 1999, p. 20). In that one-hour opera, there are only two singing characters onstage: Bluebeard, and his wife Judith. They arrive at the castle owned by Bluebeard. The castle has seven doors, and Judith asks to open the doors in order to shed light into the darkness. With each door she opens, a past secret of Bluebeard is unfolded. It is not however until the last door is opened that she finds the bodies of Bluebeard's three dead ex-wives. The one-act opera exercises the polyphonic treatment of the past and present. In the staged space the temporal stages of the past and the present are mixed, and the space conveys the simultaneous perception of the temporality: the past, the present, or the travel cross both. Such temporal organization features the fairytale mode of narration and perception, which emphasizes the 'suffusion of the object world with subjective affect' (Carter, 2010, p. xxxi); the experience of the object is in accordance with the dynamic involvement of the subject. There is less a rationalized and linear causality in the fairytale presentation, but a co-existing mixture of different temporalities in an 'enchanted' (Carter, 2010, p. xxxiv) space that transcends narrative to the tempo of living experience.

A close-up of space-time as such, by its spatialization of the temporal simultaneity, presents a 'whole thing' (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 37) that contains the entire drama in the filmed thing, that is, a stage-like totality in which the expressive (performative) elements form an ensemble (ibid.) and mimetically represent 'the polyphony of life' (1924/2010, p. 38). For Balázs, a facial close-up, in which a shot is occupied by the expressive facial components, returns the subtleties of facial expression, to the naked eye. The close-up – a filmic apparatus – brings the nuances of facial expression, a gestural language, into the light again. The time-space of the

facial close-up corresponds with an alternative temporality, which is not determined by the rationalized narrative, but the interrelations of an ensemble of expressive elements of the face.

3.2. The interpenetrating experience in Bergsonian close-up

In contrast to the ‘fairytale images’ which emphasize ‘the changed form’ (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 49), the Bergsonian close-up concerns ‘the changed substance’ (ibid.) which enables the emergence of alternative consciousness. Henri Bergson argues against the ‘conventional concept of time’ (quoting from Carter, 2010, p. xxxiii), which conceives time as a linear progress developing from the past to the present and to the future. He suggests such a conceptualization of time is a manipulation of the reflective consciousness, which tends to adopt spatial imagery to confine the temporality fluidity. He models an alternative temporality, a ‘pure duration’ (ibid.): an experienced succession, deriving from our ‘inner states of consciousness when our self [...] abstains from establishing a separation between the present state and anterior state.’ (Carter, 2010, p. xxxiv) The ‘pure duration’ of Bergsonian temporality demands that we abandon the conceptually divided past and present, but conceive of the division according to immediate experience and one’s own consciousness.

Balázs proposes a type of close-up upon Bergson’s notion of duration, which embodies how the inner states and perceptions ‘overlap and interpenetrate each other’ (ibid.). In comparison, the fairytale close-up conceives of a spatialized temporality that allows the past to fall into the present, the Bergsonian close-up discard spatial bound of the temporal experience through the interpenetrating elements—such as the eye’s welling up, the widening of mouth muscles with roaring anguish, etc.—each of

which has an independent physiognomic expression and flow of time. The ‘extraspacial dimension’ (Carter, 2010, p. xxxiii) of the Bergsonian close-up cannot be known only by means of mental construction, rather, it demands ‘sensuous apperception’ (Balázs, 1930/2010, p. 125). The ‘apperception’ identifies that what is added in our understanding towards the object results from the interplay of the sensuous experience and the mental process that draws from the imagination, interests, values, and other pre-occupied sources for making a perceptual mode (Carter, 2010, pp. xxxiv-xxv). For Balázs, ‘apperception’ characterizes spectatorship of the durational flow of time in a facial close-up; he believes the facial close-up, with its alternative temporality, is able to transcend rationality, returning one’s inner state and personal existence.

3.3. The address of the face: Lilian Gish and Asta Nielsen

For Balázs, the two kinds of facial close-up can redeem the utopian physiognomic subjectivity. The physiognomy identifies the transcendental dimension of the face, based on, but also going beyond the surface of the close-up; it describes a subjective temporality that allows the captured substance to express its complexity; such expression is ‘a deeper look’ (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 35), which means that the close-up presents animate subject, dialogically addressing the spectator who gazes at it. As Balázs describes: ‘Many a face surprises us with a deeper look, as if gazing out at us through the eyes of a mask’ (1924/2010, p. 35). By ‘gazing out at’ the spectator, the face in close-up opens itself towards the audiences, sharing a meaning-making horizon with the perceiver-audience. In the engagement between spectator and filmed object, the object takes on its livingness. Such thesis relates to the Merleau-Pontyan notion of intersubjectivity: the notion of body-subjects ‘open towards each other’,

constituting and constituted with self-other. The child characterizes a primordial body-subject for Balázs:

Every child knows that things have a face, and he walks with a beating heart through the half-darkened room where tables, cupboards and sofas pull strange faces at him and try to say something to him with their curious expressions. Even grown-ups may still glimpse strange shapes in the clouds. And the uncannily explicit gestures of the black shapes of trees in the forest at night can make the soberest philistine quake inwardly. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 46)

The relationship between the child and the things characterizes the utopian spectatorship in film. Recognizing the subject-ness of the filmic imaginary, one identifies the ‘faces of things’. The faces address the spectator, and illustrating on such aspect, Balázs refers to the face of Lilian Gish and that of Asta Nielsen, which foregrounds the evocation of complex sufferings and emotions with facial expressions; for example, Asta Nielsen’s face has a competence in mastering facial mime that characterizes her soul:

Her face wears not only her own expression but, barely noticeably (although we always sense it), the expression of her interlocutor, which is reflected as in a mirror. Just as I can hear what the heroine hears in the theatre, so too can I see from her face what she sees. She carries the entire dialogue in her features and fuses it into a synthesis of understanding and experiencing. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 88)

Nielsen’s face exemplifies the fairy-tale close-up, in which different temporalities are brought into a transformative presentation. The address of Nielsen’s face – the ‘interlocutor’ and ‘mirror’ – anticipates the spectator’s mimetic response. As in the sound-experience, the interlocutor is what enables the dialogic engagement with the things and transcends the textual fabrication, in the intuitive reading of film, the face of Nielsen incorporates the corporeal viewer from his/her life-world into the film world: ‘see from her face what she sees’. Similarly, Balázs identifies the empathetic

affect of face in Lilian Gish's mimetic representation about a person's subjective actuality:

In *Way Down East*, Lilian Gish plays a trusting girl who has been seduced. When the man tells her that he has deceived her and made a fool of her, she cannot believe her ears. She knows what he says is true, but wants to believe that he is just joking. And for five whole minutes she laughs and cries by turns, at least a dozen times. We would need many printed pages to describe the storms that pass over this tiny, pale face. Reading them would also take up much time. But the nature of these feelings lies precisely in the crazy rapidity with which they succeed one another. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 35)

The face of Gish illustrates the Bergsonian close-up, our perception and inner experience are oriented towards Gish's 'laughs and cries by turns', which determines the sequential succession with subjective feelings and present to us an alternative consciousness, one consisting in her embodied acts.

It is arguable that a link exists between Balázs's physiognomy and Kracauer's 'hieroglyphic writing', which addresses the perceived subjectivity of material phenomena that lie beyond the surface (e.g. 'the mass ornament') (Kracauer, 1995). Both hold the view that things, consisting of material phenomena, animate by evoking and involving the perceptual experiences of modern subjects like the cinema spectator. Both believe that in spectatorship, the mode of perception and knowing, we are able to recognize the subjectivity of the filmed, and our relationality with it, through its gestural expressiveness and the mimetic representation of the filmic apparatus.

4. Beyond the filmic apparatus: the embodiment in and out of film

The cinematograph is a machine that in its own way will create a living, concrete internationalism: *the unique, shared psyche of the white man*. ... the film will help to produce a uniform type of the white race. (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 14, emphasis original)

Kaes (1987) suggests there was an aesthetic of the metropolis in early-twentieth century Berlin (p. 10), and the arts interplayed with the respective technological

apparatus, representing life in modernity – the new actuality. The aesthetic of the metropolis emphasizes that cosmopolitan life, encompassing class and ethnical differences and suchlike, requires the mass media to generate an internationally accessible and integrating perception within which social members can comprehend, entertain, express and communicate. Balázs believes that the physical body in film can be a constituting factor that, like a ‘machine’, ‘create[s] a living, concrete internationalism’ (1924/2010, p. 14). The way it produces the solidarity and shared consciousness of ‘*the unique, shared psyche of the white man*’ (ibid. emphasis original) lies with the ‘living, concrete’ spectatorship, that is, the embodied experience, perceiving with and through the physical body on film, as a filmic imaginary.

In the embodied film experience, the body in the film world and the body of the spectator are both animate; things are living and have lives of their own. Arguably the ‘anthropocentric’ (Carter, 2010, p. xxxvii) conception or aesthetic characterize Balázs’s conceptualization of the spectatorship, centering on the notion that film redeems living-ness and life, transcending the ‘dead matter’ of technology (1924/2010, p. 86) and instrumental rationality of capitalism. The ‘anthropocentric’ film theory believes that the bodily poetics and aesthetics in film were able to redeem the living-ness of things from alienation. For Balázs, the empirical body in film is affective, and relates with the spectator who is a Merleau-Pontyan body-subject, corporeally involving in the dialogue with the physiognomic expressions in film. The ‘living, concrete internationalism’ (1924/2010, p. 14) of Balázs is based on such corporeal dialogue and in two ways (Carter, 2010, p. xxxix). Firstly, the film mimetically represents the modern life of internationalism. Secondly, such mimesis is recognized through the interpersonal communication of the body in performance and the body in

perception, in the concrete viewing event. Arguably, the interpersonal level of embodied experience characterizes Balázs's thinking, which posits that bodily recognition is the vital component for the self to enter the social realm.

Recognizing and interacting with the other forms the basis for a self-other relationship that possibly engenders an emergent social consciousness. The social concern characterizes Balázs's thinking: 'a surrender of the sovereign self to the ambivalence of intersubjectivity, a muddying of self-other boundaries of precisely the kind that Balázs's phenomenology of film promotes.' (Carter, 2010, p. xxxix) It could be argued that such intersubjectivity in film experience—although basing on the Merleau-Pontyan bodily openness—is, as a social phenomenon, close to the Husserlian thesis that avoiding solipsism, the self strives to enter the social realm.

There can be three ways that the bodily identification occurs. First, in close-ups, the bodies, body-parts, and the world of things are set into motion (Carter, 2010, p. xxxix). Second, in the Balázsian montage, or 'visual linkage' (Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 67), which privileges and illuminates the integrality—'commonalities across and between animate and inanimate bodies' (Carter, 2010, p. xli)—over the dissonance. Third, the body, as composed of sensory organs, positions a certain perceptual and experiential subjectivity. The senses such as sight and hearing, breathing, are activated *with* the technological apparatus of film (such as the camera eye, the microphone ear, the montage breath, etc.); *through* combinations of apparatus-senses, total perception towards the other emerges. The subject-positioning ability of the film apparatus can shape our perception of the other. Dwelling on the Husserlian notion of 'empathetic identification', we experience the other or another perspective, in order to perceive a total being, by transferring the experience of ourselves or the experience

from one perspective. Balázs depicts the transferring experiences with and through film:

And if one of the characters looks into the other's eyes, he looks down from the screen into my eyes. Because the camera has taken my eyes and makes them identical with the gaze of the characters. They see with my eyes. Nothing like this kind of identification – which is standard procedure in the average film of today – has ever occurred in another art. (1924/2010, p. 79)

In such specifically cinematic condition, the boundary of reality and representation is not definite. The active sight of the spectator is engaged with experiencing the enlivened sight of the character.

The final 'muddying' (Carter, 2010, p. xxxix) of self-other, or the ultimate integration into the collective consciousness, would be achieved by means of embodied experience, in addition to cognitive comprehension of visual information. Such an embodied experience highlights the affective-ness of the performance-body for the body of the spectator to feel. As Carter (2010) identifies, in *The Abyss* (dir. Urban Gad, 1910), Asta Nielsen performs a staged dance that provides an example of the affective performing body. It happens when the female character she plays runs off with a circus performer and abandons her fiancé in the process. In the tableaux dance, Nielsen draws on elements from the dance tradition of Argentinian herdsmen (the 'Gaucho dance', p. xli), which emphasizes drumming on the floor with the feet and using a lasso (an everyday tool for the native people), but makes it quite exotic, which subjects her body to the gaze of visual pleasure. Nevertheless, the physiognomic body, that is, the body of herself and the body of the 'Apache' woman she imitates, gazes out at us, expressing to us the cultural difference that resides in Nielsen's performance. Such a presentation on the double-ness of meaning characterizes a 'resemblance' (living the other's life, Balázs, 1924/2010, p. 31), or, polyphonic simultaneity of souls. By mimesis of the other, Nielsen re-memorizes the

other by her bodily representation (Carter, 2010, p. xli). The sensory engagement with a polyphonic presentation that is simultaneously both the woman in the present and a mimesis of the other would also be recognition and re-memorizing of the cultural other, beyond apparatus' rendering.

Such physiognomic overlapping in the embodied experience in film corresponds with what Campbell (2005) calls 'embodied mimesis', which posits that the body is written as a hieroglyphic system, not to be read as a linguistic sign in which signification is universal and fixed; rather, the physiognomic and hieroglyphic body is an imaginary, a dynamic ensemble of expressive and affective elements, demanding apperception. Nielsen's physiognomic body in performance thus could transcend textual objectification into the social-cultural context underlying the competing symbolic elements of the double-ness. Recognizing the social level, one needs to consider the audience as active social subject, a constituent of the contextually based public. But this level of social intersubjectivity is not thoroughly investigated in Balázs's early ideas of film. He concentrates more on the interpersonal and corporeal interaction of the embodied mimesis, the gestural expression and communication that redeems pre-modern prototype.

5. The intersubjective embodiment in Geog Lukács and Walter Benjamin

Central to Balázs's concerns, lies a utopian vision of the interplay between the new sensory mode of experience brought by film apparatus, and the dynamic spectators in a life-world reception. For Balázs, the bodily imaginary in film, the physiognomical expression, implies the embodied human being. Geog Lukács, Walter Benjamin to different extent, shared such viewpoint on the intersubjective embodiment in film. The following is a discussion on the intellectual intersections between Balázs and Geog Lukács, and Walter Benjamin, concerning the engaging

quality of the moving image. Following such a romantic tradition of film theory concerning the embodied expression and communication in film, the cinematic way of knowing can be acknowledged as an intuitionist episteme which relies on an dynamic and interdependent experience of perception and apperception. Beyond cognition, the spectatorship is involved and embodied in cinema experience. Arguably, film essentially embraces orality, if orality is defined by its intersubjective dynamics in the lifeworld and oral experience is related to the existentially perceived, dialogic interaction.

5.1. The mimetic representation in Lukács's early film thought

Set in the 'kino-debate' (Aitken, 2012, p. 29) which revolved around the role of the emergent film culture in comparison with the other established cultures (e.g. literature, theater, etc.), Lukács's 'Thoughts towards an aesthetic of cinema' can be seen as his primary intellectual contribute towards identifying the specificity of film during that period. Published in 1913 by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (i.e. Frankfurt Newspaper, Levin, 1987, p. 37), it is an essayistic paper associated with the early cinema, when film was still seen as 'primitive' or 'naïve' in terms of its mode of expression, technical possibilities, and participatory spectatorship. There are three central concerns in this essay. First, Lukács contends that film, or moving image, in contrast with photographic image, is 'anthropomorphizing', that is, the filmic imagery renders the things of living-ness and life, and such a living characteristic has a fairytale-like temporality that corresponds with the subjective perception. Second, Lukács is concerned with the 'privileged' indexicality of film, which is the basis for cinema to be a mimetic embodiment of the lifeworld actuality, and specifies the dynamic quality in the moving image, distinguishing from the photographic image.

Third, in film experience, the renewed sensory pattern encourages a type of spectator who is able to master the aesthetic way to transcend the ‘naïvely animalistic happiness of a child’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184), or, the visual pleasure of passivity, but to redeem the open and animate aspect charged with such a ‘*child*’-like (ibid., emphasis original) experience of happiness.

For Lukács, a sense of the ‘*fantastic*’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 182, emphasis original) characterizes the animate-ness, or the ‘life’ (ibid.) and ‘livingness’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184), of the moving image, because things that reside in the image are like the Balázsian physiognomic faces which gaze out at us. Both Balázs and Lukács derives from the anthropomorphic view that the things in the natural world ‘all and always’ (Balázs, 2010, p. 56) have life and meaning. The anthropomorphism confirms that the human is a ‘general equivalent’ substance onto which everything else would be mapped (Hansen, 2000, p. 44); it recognizes the necessary role of the actively perceiving subject, with the ability to sense and reason, in knowing the world. Such an anthropomorphic view, as in Balázs, believing and figuring clues for redeeming the lives of inanimate things, ‘permits transforming the whole world of dead matter into an animistic cosmos, rendering it as pure expression’ (Koch, 1987, p. 168). Such a human-centered, or life-centered view implies an intentionality of reengaging with the world of experience, against the instrumental rationality of modernity and capitalism.

To Lukács, his anthropomorphic view derives from the *Lebensphilosophie*, a philosophy focusing on the phenomena and meaning of life, addressing the foremost focus of lifeworld and immediate experience; compared to the present living humans (actors and actresses) on stage in theatrical performance, which are active but complying with pre-scripted narrative causality, the bodily imaginary on film redeems

the living-ness and life that is ephemeral but dynamic in the everyday life. The embodiment of such ephemera and dynamics in the filmic apparatus characterizes the specificity and the utopian state, of the moving image. Intersecting with Balázs's notion of physiognomy, the paradox of moving-image characterizes Lukács's romantic vision on film, that the two-dimensional illusion produced by the dead technological apparatus can impress the audience with a living character that goes beyond the material surface. The deadness of filmic apparatus resides in the 'absence of "present"' (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 182), that is, the film presents only the images of the human (actor and actress). However, 'the pictures of cinema become uncannily lifelike' (ibid.); the moving image can be redemption of the transient actuality, and the neglected things in the lifeworld to the naked eyes.

Also in cinema we have the effect of 'appearing identical to nature' (ibid.), a mimesis of living-ness that is a verisimilitude to immediate things in their existential contexts. Such living-ness cannot be measured or pre-scripted. As opposed to a theatrical performance—which essentially gives us a kind of 'fate and substance' by measurement based on a standard script, a conceptual basis—in film 'It is a life without measure or order, without essence and value; a life without soul, made up of pure surface.' (ibid.) A difference exists between Lukács and Balázs, in terms that Lukács privileges and celebrates the mimesis on the living beings in film, over the corresponding symbolic meaning underlying the mimetic surface of film imagery; whilst for Balázs, the symbolic meaning would always transcend the appearance of expressive elements in the moving image. For Lukács, the paradox of the living-ness of dead images engenders the effect of the '*fantastic*' (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 182), dwelling on our perception of the immediate experience of the material verisimilitude, eliminating conceptually designed reference. A life is the one a human lives and

perceives, and the sense of the *fantastic* lies with the ability of filmic apparatus to render ephemera moving; moving images and moving the feeling of the spectator:

Everything is true and real, everything is equally true and equally real': this is what the picture-sequences of 'cinema' teach. Thus a new, homogeneous and harmonious, unified and diverse world emerges in the 'cinema', that, in the worlds of literature and life, finds its correspondence in the fairytale and dream ... (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183)

The living-ness of the 'picture-sequences' derives from indexicality; it lies with the moving image's affinity/mimesis toward the existential conditions of life, the empirical experiences. However, the empirical appearances in film do affect us as the '*fantastic*'; the spectator can obtain the sense of the affective impact of film that transcends his/her perceptual experience, towards the innermost feelings. Such a '*fantastic*' affective-ness of the moving image brings Lukács close to Balázs, commonly emphasizing on the active spectatorship that the film experience can arouse and necessarily build upon: the romantic vision of 'the maximum uninhibited mobility of the characters, the complete coming alive of the background, of nature and of interiors, of plants and animals ... ' (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183). However, Lukács's romantic vision, residing in the film technology, is more associated with the emphasis on the empirical presence of things, or, the mimetic representation of the actuality in the everyday life, more than the symbolic/physiognomic rendering beyond the empirical appearance.

Lukács also compares the filmic temporality with the fairytale temporality, both characterizing simultaneity and fluidity, transcending conceptual and rationalized causality, implying the pre-modern psyche (for Balázs), or the pre-measurement aesthetics (for Lukács). Balázs regards the fairytale as a fusion where the past and the future dwell on the present. Such simultaneity is illustrated in the staged story when Bluebeard's wife Judith wants to open his past memories, the castle,

an object, ‘itself becomes an animate object, sweating, weeping, moaning, sighing and bleeding to a musical score that amplifies its anguish ... ’ (Carter, 2010, p. xxxi).

In comparison, Lukács’s idea of the fairytale temporality appears like this:

Furniture moves within the room of a drunkard. His bed flies with him, high over the city. Only in the last moment is he able to hold on to the side of the bed, whilst his shirt waves about like a flag, enveloping him. The bowling balls which a group of people intend to use become rebellious, and chase those people across mountains and fields, forcing them to swim across rivers, run across bridges and climb steep staircases, until, finally, the skittles come alive and catch the balls. (Lukács, 1913/2012, pp. 184–185)

For Lukács, the fairytale-like temporality of film not only transcends the temporal divisions, but also the conventional referential frameworks. Nonetheless, the empirical mimesis of the living things still permits the sense of livingness in such a rhapsodic organization of temporal connection from one thing to another. Lukács stresses that ‘the truth-to-life of the cinema is not bound to our reality’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183), namely, the cinematic temporality transcends the empirical confinement of experience in its linear convention, and follows dream logic or imagination. Lukács’s cinematic temporality also draws on Bergson’s conception of the durational flux of inner state and consciousness, transcending the arbitrary fixation of time according to spatially conceptualized models. According to Aitken (2012), Lukács’s 1913 writing on cinema is influenced by Bergson’s *élan vital*, ‘a force which supposedly permeates the evolutionary process as an evolving flux, causing life to evolve and transform itself in an “endless stream of becoming”’ (p. 20).

Such an ‘endless stream of becoming’ implies Lukács’s epistemic conception of cinema. For him in the 1913 essay, the ‘sensual encounter with the “seamless succession” of the film images’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184) is the essential basis for knowledge of reality. The empirically perceptual experience with and through the flow of life in film is a precondition for the complete experience of an

interpenetrating and overlapping totality of life to emerge. Such an epistemic conception is associated with the ephemeral and primitive morphology of the early cinema (Aitken, 2012, p. 20). The 1913 essay is also Lukács revelation of his personal experiences towards cinema of the early years, when he was enjoying and affected by the non-conceptual moving image and the ‘sensual encounter’ it entails, which had not been regulated according to conventionalized narrative patterns. Lukács sets the sensual fantastic-ness in cinema in contrast with the rational thinking and measurement in theatrical performance, which is burdened with the spoken word, or linguistic meanings of language. Lukács shares with Balázs the skepticism about the conceptual word:

The spoken word, and the resonating concept, are the conveyors of destiny ... The *revocation of the word*, and, along with it, of memory, of duty, and of the obligation to ones self and the idea of one’s own selfhood, renders everything light, lively and soaring, playful and dancing. And, in a roundabout manner, the wordless now becomes a totality. What is important here, is that representation must be expressed exclusively through events and gestures, and each appeal to the word represents a falling out from this world, and a destruction of its essential value. ... everything that has always been crushed by the abstract-monumental weight of destiny now prospers, and takes on a new rich and plentiful life. (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184)

The spoken word, as heavily burdened signification, provides the conservative model that the new expression and communication through ‘events and gestures’ goes against. A shared hope is found in Lukács with Balázs that embedded in the gestural language of film the old model is contested, giving birth to a new social vision. The linguistic burdens of the word that Lukács addresses here, similar with Balázs, have less to do with the engaging possibility of sound-experience in speaking the word but concentrate on the semantic dimension of the word.

Both Lukács and Balázs contest the word that, either in spoken or fixed form, is based on conceptual semantics and reduces the expressiveness in relation to

lifeworld; they share a strong inclination towards the image as the re-enchanting place for a primordial gestural expression to revive, which is living and indeterminate, awaiting physiognomic, or gnostic, deciphering. The mute image of rich expressiveness is positioned as an antithesis to the spoken word, the agent for an emergent experiential totality, and an alternative to the model of modern civilization that excludes the perception towards the ephemera and the everyday actuality, which, however, are imbued with enchanting affect. Film is believed by Lukács, a particular form to re-enchanting the spectator with the '*beauty*' (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 181, emphasis original) of the actuality; and the '*aesthetic*' (ibid.) of film, is the particular way of perceiving the fantastic-ness of the dynamics in film, of being re-enchanted by the filmic imaginary. Anticipating Benjamin's 1936 essay 'The work of art in the age of technological reproduction: Second version', in which Benjamin posits that mass production technologies render the new mode of perceptual experience and sensory memory, Lukács' 1913 essay posits 'a new *beauty*' to characterize the renewed sensory mode.

The life-centered view towards the film world privileges the human reception of the moving image, an actively engaged experience. Such concept of the animate human being in film experience, anticipates Ong's anthropomorphism basing on which he conceives of the oral culture: 'For oral cultures, the cosmos is an ongoing event with man at its center. Man is the *umbilicus mundi*, the navel of the world' (Ong, 1982, p. 72). But the perception of the 'Man' that Ong stresses means exclusively the auditory that enlivens the human being's engagement in relation to being in the world. Whilst for Lukács, it is basically optical, but transcendently gestural. It is the affective and expressive aspect of the gesture that the participatory mode of perception is engendered in a dialogue between the filmed objects and the perceiving

spectator, dialogic in terms that the filmed ephemera becomes dynamic and enchants the viewer. It is in terms of such dialogic expression and communication of the affective imaginary that the moving-image experience characterizes the oral constituent.

The concept of index in the moving image, for Lukács, characterizes and privileges film beyond the spoken word which has the expressive competence to portray the external world, and affective ability to engage with the spectator. For Levin (1987), Lukácsian index is understood in relation to C. S. Peirce's categories of the representing networks (p. 41). Differing from the linguistic basis of the signifier-signified duality in signification (e.g. alphabetic English), the indexical character of 'the photographic sign' (quoting from Levin, 1987, p. 41) designates the factual connection between the sign and its object; the indexical representation is a kind of mimesis of the existential existence. Film is characterized by such mimetic representation, rendering the flow of life (ibid.); and privileging indexical mimesis, the moving image is different from the linguistic conveying of 'intellectual' contents, compared with words, as its rhetoric resides exclusively in 'events and gestures'³⁸ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183). For Lukács, unlike photography, the moving image is able to anthropomorphize inanimate objects with the privileged indexical representation, although fleeting, able to imitate the flow of living-ness and of the innermost perception and feeling: 'The ephemeral nature of its [film's] achievements is not a weakness to be regretted, but, rather, a productive limitation.' (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183) The indexical dynamics corresponds with the participatory spectatorship. Aitken (2012) also conceives the Lukácsian 'index' as a concept to understand the cinematic linkage (p. 32), which connects the visual network with the

³⁸ To emphasize, Lukács's idea of such was based on his observations of the early cinema without synchronized sound.

factual world – ‘*an actual or very close and even physical connection to that which is represented*’ (p. 33, emphasis original). The sensual encounter between the moving imaginary and the spectator corresponds with our everyday experience of perceiving, for example, the portrayal of ‘rushing water in a film sequence’ is ‘humanly meaningful’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 183).

Lukács’s early film thought considers the participation of the human being, who makes sense of the index and the ‘body’ of the film, as necessary, whilst the ‘soul’, or the eternal value, underlying intellectual and conceptual fabrications, is not necessary for film, which depends on ‘events and gestures’ to express and communicate. The body on film suggests the redemption of the substance that resides in the subjectively situated and concrete conditions over the pre-given value; and the technological apparatus nurtures the awareness of such alternative value: ‘Man has lost his *soul*, but he has regained his *body*. ... Those achievements of modern technology that are irrelevant to any great art will also have fantastic and poetic effects here.’ (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184). Lukács holds a view that the spectator would affirm his/her personal existence through the mimetic embodiment that draws him/her back to situated perception. In turn, it is the participation of the human being that gives life to technology and turning it to a conveyer of corresponding sensory pattern and way of knowing.

Articulating the idea that the perceptual mode has been renewed with film apparatus, Lukács also emphasizes an emergent mode of spectatorship who is able to master the aesthetic method to transcend the ‘naïve-animalistic happiness of a child’ (i.e. the visual pleasure of passivity), avoiding technological determination. Lukács puts that the ‘*aesthetic*’ (1913/2012, p. 181, emphasis original) is the spectator’s embodied experience on film; it is based on the sensual encounter, but beyond that.

Lukács urges recognizing ‘meaningful’ aspect of film beyond amusement. The ephemeral and ordinary surface of film, for Lukács, can only be deeply affective if the spectator can engage with it with subjective input. He regards that such personal evaluation emerges with the affective embodiment in film:

Only in cinema ... can a car become poetic, as in a romantic and thrilling pursuit involving other speeding automobiles. In this way also the common bustle in the street and in the market place acquires a powerful humor and a forcefully original poetry. (Lukács, 1913/2012, p. 184)

Situated in relationships with the other automobiles and the street and market place, the car is anthropomorphized with character, whilst the realization of such underlying character derives from the spectator’s recognition, that the car, the automobiles, the street and market place, become meaningful in relation to each other. The open and affective engagement characterizes film as a ‘utopian medium’ that returns the modern subject to his/her everyday experience and immediate mode of perception, finding personal presence in the ‘amusement meaningful’ (Aitken, 2012, p. 34).

5.2. Inter-corporal film spectatorship in Benjamin

Benjamin observes that modern society is cut off from traditions and lacks integrity; the enchanting traditions, for example, the ‘magical practice’ in ‘prehistoric art’, such as storytelling (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 107), characterizing a relational process that engages subjects with unknown beings, is replaced by the self-sufficient manufacture and mechanical object. Such object, emblem of industrial modernity, for example, ‘railroad stations and our factories’ that ‘close relentlessly around us’ (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 117), constricts dynamic connections; the mechanical apparatus removes perceptual sensitivity from our existence. Additionally, the rise of capitalist commodification and the nationalism, subjects modern subjects to the

simplification of existence, for example, with erotic objects appealing to voyeurism, or with the fascist manipulation of the collective imaginary, both of which characterize the conscious management with the mechanical apparatus to control people's mind. Nonetheless, he holds a romantic view on film, regarding it a promising means for the redemption of the unconscious and the authentic collective-experience in a disenchanted world (Hansen, 1987, p. 193). He acknowledges that the urban-industrial technology, film, possesses the 'possibility of *undoing* this alienation', the alienation of individual's emergent subjectivity (or, the annihilation of one's sensual perception and experiential engagement) (Hansen, 2012, p. 80, emphasis original); a re-enchanting experience, for Benjamin, resides in the unconscious reciprocity in the cinema that depends on individual's situated and sensual-emotional response; and such cinematic experience is one of 'distraction' (*Zerstreuung*) (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 119), a symbiosis corporeally constituted by multiple subject-positions and sensory participations, different from the 'attentive observation' (p. 40) that relies on a linear and cognitively dominate pattern.

Benjamin believes that film can incubate a 'battleground' for countering the 'crisis in perception' (Hansen, 2012, p. 85), which would return humanity into a two-way relationship with the world again as much as the enchanting oral traditions did. The utopian cinema can be the redemption of the sensory unconscious, which is actualized through the aesthetic experience of film (the sensual-perceptual viewing). A 'magical reading' (Benjamin, 1933/1996, p. 696) of film spectatorship, would be an embodied experience that relates the living traces on film to the meaning of life, destiny and fate, as much as the graphologist's reading on a material object's physiognomic properties (ibid.). In comparison to Ong, and in contrast to Balázs, Benjamin awares that language is a literary dynamics that enlivens experience; the

dynamic representation of life in linguistic language derives from the mimetic faculty of the embodied human being. Different from Ong, Benjamin found in film the same faculty of mimesis and the ability of embodied human experience.

Benjamin recognizes the redemptive power of film consists in cinema experience – the ‘embodied, kinesthetic mode of seeing’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 152) transfers raw-life impression and experience, ‘redramatizes’ (p. 153) the relational engagement between us and things, and the other body-subjects. Such embodied seeing can identify the tactile quality of the film imaginary beyond, but depending on, the optical encounter. For Benjamin, the ‘optical unconscious’ (1936/1996, p. 118) of human culture, characterizing people’s pursuit for perceiving symbiotic aspects of reality transcending the limitation of the naked eye, is reinforced by the film apparatus and cinema experience. The unconscious of finding with the optical experience the tactility of existence, characterizes the self enlivened with the moving-image dynamics, as believed, can return human beings to the enchanting lifeworld. Arguably, such unconscious pursuit for the tactility in Benjamin echoes the physiognomic intuition for the symbolic ‘inner face’ under the appearance. The embodied distraction in film, as believed, can transcend the visualist domination.

Benjamin’s thinking of film spectatorship is also influenced by the conception of *Lebensphilosophie* (Hansen, 2012, p. 144); he considers human being’s knowledge about the world derives from the ‘contact with the cosmos’ (ibid.); beings in the world are mimetically linked and experienced. Taking ‘children’s play’ (quoting from Hansen, 2012, p. 198) as an example, Benjamin suggests that the mimetic mode of behavior is the primordial expression, forming a tradition from the pre-history and rooted in the pre-conscious growth of the individual. The relational aspect of the form and the soul characterizes such mimetic knowing, like the perceivable ‘small tip’

imitates the disembodied 'underwater mass' (ibid.), the phenomenological surface mimetically enlivens the totality of certain knowledge. The film technology, revitalizing the ancient means of knowing, activates the body as a medium of learning to grasp unknown realities.

Although the mimetic faculty had been transformed from the corporeal body to the technological embodiments (Benjamin, 1933/1996, p. 694), the embodied knowing, relating the phenomenological expression to the totality, is sustained. For example, astrology is characterized by the 'sensuous shape-giving': experienced people gain knowledge from the 'shape' of a cosmic being, which offers access to the fleeting and the transitory that are difficult for the naked eye to perceive (p. 696). The sensuous shape-giving is temporally fleeting, whilst the sign language, or script, operating on the 'non-sensuous similarity' (ibid.), fixes the temporally fleeting experience spatially and normatively. The 'canon of language' establishes the mimetic correspondence between 'what is said and what is meant', 'what is written and what is meant', 'the spoken and the written' (p. 695). Language normalizes dynamic correspondence (similarity) between perception and unknown realities. By such rationalization, it reduces the perceiving of the similarity into the seeing of the similarity. The mode of reading (perceiving) also transformed. In linguistic language, one needs to master techniques to read 'the semiotic element' (Benjamin, 1933/1996, p. 722), such as 'runes and hieroglyphs' (ibid.), which are stripped off the shapes, tempos, and aromas: the sensuous similarities. To know the unknown in the runes and hieroglyphs requires more imagination or intuition for discovering 'underwater mass'.

Benjamin observes that the tradition of mimetic representation persists in the cinematic knowing, in which the expression relates to the soul and the totality. The

sensuous similarities consist in the visually conveyed expressiveness. When considering film as imaginary, Benjamin addresses more on the expressiveness of the moving image and less on the narrative organization. Hansen (2012) observes that the film that fits into Benjamin's utopian notion on the mimetic embodiment is 'a pre-classical mode' in relation to the 'cinema of attractions' (p. 86); and Benjamin's inclination towards such cinema suggests his attempt to locate the transformative and utopian possibilities in 'defamiliarizing glimpse of the quotidian' (ibid.). Specifically, the quotidian, or the empirical actualities, are emphasized in physical forms in the cinema, such as:

[S]lapstick comedy with its anarchic physicality; American serials with their high speed and attention to material objects; trick films in the style of Méliès, Cohl, Bosetti, and Feuillade; or early nonfiction films on scientific subjects ... (Hansen, 2012, p. 87)

Impliedly, the heritage of primordial sensuous mimesis that resumes the tactile quality of reality is sustained with the physical ephemeris in such filmic imaginaries; for Benjamin, such physically dynamic imaginaries on film mimetically engage the audience to the interplay; it is believed that within those the distractive mode of reception and the instinctual knowing of the unknown can be revived.

The cinema experience for Benjamin means also the reception in the movie theater, an existentially and viscerally reciprocal interplay of cinematic understanding. On the one hand, it happens between the individual spectator and the film imaginary; on the other hand, it also happens among the collective viewers. With the presentational style of film, the spatially organized, performative mode, could address the audience in a dialogic encounter. The dialogic interplay in cinema, for Benjamin, positions the multiple subjects of the audience in the 'mirror stage' (quoting from Hansen, 2012, p. 98) which is characterized by the inter-subject relation between self and other. For Benjamin, the imaginary is an enlivened constituent for a self-other

encounter. The imaginary on film is a ‘unique appearance of a distance’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 114), which is situated in the where and when as an actuality, but keeps a perceptual distance from the ‘other’ body-subject. In the Benjaminian mirror-stage, a dialogic encounter, the film imaginary under the technological apparatus of projection, engages ‘the bodily ego’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 137), namely, the real and existential spectator in the movie theater, to relate with each other (Hansen, 2012, p. 137). The objects (imaginary) interact with the ego in its visceral and kinetic existence. For Benjamin, such a possible relation between the image and the body promises cinema experience the capability of reconfiguring the boundaries that ‘traditionally divided – and hierarchized – subject and object, vision and body, individual and collective, human and mechanical.’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 92)

Considering the emergence of a physically collective experience, Benjamin moves to another level of intersubjectivity in cinema experience, the interdependent tactility, which relates film to the social function and conceives the spectator in terms of the ‘masses’ (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 119). In comparison with the situations in the established forms of arts, for example, ‘the simultaneous viewing of paintings by a large audience, as happens in the nineteenth century’ (ibid.), Benjamin specifies the collective experience in cinema is ‘*highly progressive*’ (ibid. emphasis original). The progressiveness lies with the ‘immediate, intimate fusion of pleasure – pleasure in seeing and experiencing’, depending on the situated viewing, independent of pre-established values such as the ‘expert appraisal’ (ibid.) For Benjamin, the ‘immediate, intimate fusion of pleasure’ in the cinematic experience also embodies a social experience: ‘Such a fusion is an important social index’ (ibid.); the cinema experience designates an action that social subjects reciprocally connect with each other.

For Benjamin, the physical involvement in collective viewing experience exerts spontaneous regulations other than pre-given. Such interdependent experience could confront with the annihilation of selfhood. In visceral encounters among bodily egos in the movie theater, Benjamin sees a chance to redeem the inter-subject space to ‘regulate one another’ (Benjamin, 1936/1966, p. 116), countering the mass mobilization that attempts to dominate the social masses within universalizing models. As Hansen (2012) puts it, ‘simultaneous collective reception allows for a public and reciprocal fine-tuning of audience reactions and thus works to disarm destructive tendencies in the masses.’ (p. 100) ‘Reciprocal’ interactions among the viewing public, such as embodied laughter, is a level that animates body subjects viscerally. Such inter-corporeal construction of collectivity could destruct technological, ideological and institutional manipulation. Because the ultimate authority to judge whether the filmic imaginary is good or bad, meaningful or not is reserved for the masses in the cinema.

Mickey Mouse and Charlie Chaplin are two embodied imaginaries that can arouse visceral experiences by means of collective laughter. For Benjamin, Chaplin has the affective quality: ‘the ploughshare that cuts through the masses; laughter loosens up the mass’, who can engage the audience in unconscious reactions, or as ‘an institution of infection’ or sensual contagion (Hansen, 2012, p. 99). For Benjamin, the sensory infection is powerful, as much as that ‘People whom nothing moves or touches any longer learn to cry again in the cinema’ (p. 100). The cinema experience in a situated encounter demolishes axiomatic reception. Benjamin develops his belief that because of the particular ability of film to transcend the machinic beings (p. 108), film has a ‘historical task’ of training the habitual mode of reception, the ‘*reception in distraction*’ (p. 120, emphasis original). In distraction, the masses are sensorially

motivated, experiencing in terms of sensory infection such as ‘warmth and closeness’ (ibid.).

Reciprocal experience in the movie theater characterizes the collective experience of *distraction* in opposition to *contemplation* (Hansen, 2012, p. 100). Contemplation, as a reflective mental process, is contrary to the spontaneous and intuitive experience of distraction. Benjamin considers that the spectator facing film is more sensual-perceptually active in a dialogue with the artwork: ‘A person who collects himself before a work of art is absorbed by it. [...] By contrast, the distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 100). Unlike reception of painting by a mass of viewer that is characterized by ‘attentive observation’ and intellection, cinema experience revitalizes visceral exchanges. The embodied experience of distraction in cinema is a react that possesses the power to making meaning of imaginary on screen and the other bodily egos.

Cinema experience is essentially a collective sensory experience for Benjamin, especially in contrast to the reception of literature, theater, and the fine arts, as in film there is more ‘sensory-somatic immediacy’ (Hansen, 2012, p. 161); it is more a lived experience that fuses individual egos bodily into a totality of collective identification. The bodily responses e.g. outrage, laughter, crying, etc. in cinema are the ‘variant of social behavior’ (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 119). However, Benjamin does not conceive such collective in cinema experience of the empirical social profile; for him, the cinema-going collective might be a community encompasses a diversity of social subjectivities (Hansen, 2012, p. 162). For Benjamin, the masses or the reception collective is rather a historical tendency that is given rise to by the possibility of cinema experience, engendering a new social experience.

Benjamin's conception of 'innervation' suggests a 'two-way process or transfer' (Hansen, 2012, p. 137) differing from the Freudian one-way conversion from motor excitation to somatic phenomenon. The collective 'innervation' is deployed by Benjamin to characterize the interplay between technology and humans, in the historical process where humans as the collective subject of 'psychic energies' (Hansen, 2012, p. 137) can adapt, assimilate and incorporate the external transformations into their reinvented knowledge and experience. For Benjamin, the technologically reorganized sensorium gives rise to reinventions of experience and actuality, reinforcing the organ-nerve interplay between the cosmic world and humans. He addresses film as a vital place in such a historical moment, because film's social formation offers a great opportunity for humans to be aware of their total experience and ways to assimilate such experiences. For Benjamin, film has a 'historical task' of training humans how to grasp unknown realities:

The sort of distraction that is provided by art represents a covert measure of the extent to which it has become possible to perform new tasks of apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to evade such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important tasks wherever it is able to mobilize the masses. It does so currently in film. *Reception in distraction – the sort of reception which is increasingly noticeable in all areas of art and is symptom of profound changes in apperception – finds in film its true training ground.* Film, by virtue of its shock effects, is predisposed to this form of reception. In this respect, too, it proves to be the most important subject matter, at present, for the theory of perception which the Greeks called aesthetics. (Benjamin, 1936/1996, p. 120, emphasis original)

The aesthetic experience of apperception, bodily collective innervation, and distraction/tactility, are ideas that illustrate the possibility that in the utopian cinema experience, the film imaginary as a mimetic performance is capable to redeem the unconscious realities and thus embodies a total experience towards gaining of knowledge.

Summary and implication

As Ong propositions, the literate cultures are structured by modern technologies of writing and print, which separate people from their immediate encounter with ‘the others’ and the lifeworld; for example, I could read the linguistic signs from a book page to know something and, subsequently, I am isolated by the literary text from the actual things. Thus, our sensory experiences and communications are dominated by the visuality of the text. Modern literacy brought the disappearance of primary orality, and Walter Ong regards this negatively, because the authentic state of expression and communication, the actual encounter in the lifeworld, had thus become a lost utopia. Although Walter Ong critiques the modern visuality that was brought by writing and print, he believes there is still a psychological desire for an oral mode of expression and communication in the literate cultures, and attempts to find examples of such embodiment. He does find a number. For example, the ‘dear reader’ phenomenon in the personal narratives, or autobiographical novels, is an example of what he calls ‘dynamics of textuality’ (Ong, 1982, p. 101); it is a mimesis of oral communication, by directly addressing someone (a textually inscribed reader) via the textual representation to engage with that person (an actual reader). Thus, orality can be understood as an experience of engagement with technological mimesis.

If orality is an experience, how can we have the redemption of orality if we cannot escape the penetration of modern technologies? It can be the transformed and embodied oral expression and communication within the modern technologies. Ong identifies such transformed orality—‘secondary orality’—in electronic communication processing, e.g. telephone, radio broadcast, television, online networking, etc. burgeoning in post-WWII times. In such electronic cultures, people

are not isolated by literary reading but engaged with the other again. However, what is consistent in this new orality with primary orality—a kind of self-consciously planned participation and engagement—relies necessarily on the visuality to actualize. For example, Ong argues, in live television shows, ‘the pictures of the studio audience’ embody the engagement of one group of people with another in the screen world (Ong, 1977, p. 293). In addition, the actual audience member in front of the TV screen can identify his/her position with the studio audience and participate in the dialogue with the screen world. It is implied that the crucial factors include a planned engagement, and in the case of television—a technology of audio-vision—it is through the visuality of the moving image (‘the pictures of the studio audience’) that the planned face-to-face-communication is actualized. What is indicated is that although both depend on the optical faculty of perception and cognition to form a culture, the moving image and the literary text are characterized by two categorically different kinds of visuality. Additionally, it also indicates an answer to the question of what qualities of primary orality are revived in the re-incarnations with visual technologies: as the audience’s face suggests, the oral mode of expression and communication are another two necessary components in addition to the sound that integrates one person to another, including the interplay between people, and the expressive body with which one can express oneself or communicate with another beyond linguistic signification.

With such implications, I analyzed the theorizations on the specificity of film in general and of the moving image in particular. It is found that in the visual display, or the actuality image that promises a duration of consistent performance, consisting of time/space/subject, with the mimetic representation of our sensory experiences including the oral-aural sensual-perceptions, the oral mode of expression and

communication can be redeemed. The theoretical explorations suggest the early film theories that focus on the experiential dimension of the visual display are still relevant for discussing the oral phenomena in the audiovisual media in general. To briefly sum up, in the early film context when the visual attractions and the performative elements of the moving image occupied the majority of production, exhibition and discussion, the literary debates on the specificity of the film/cinema experience reveal two aspects that, according to the theorists of analysis, demarcate the visuality of film from that of the 'abstract' language. First, the film imaginary as redemption of the gesture, redeeming the bodily expressiveness that recognizes the somatic significations, against the cognitively based language that emphasizes the semantics more. Second, the cinema experience is integrating, enveloping the existential and actual human beings together in a geographical and social space within the temporality of the on-screen world, as opposed to isolated reading, which fosters a separation between subject (reader) and object (book) at the expense of an immediate encounter with the lifeworld dynamics.

Such two aspects in relation to the specificity of the film/cinema experience are also found, and theorized, within the writings and thoughts of Béla Balázs, particularly his ideas on the 'physiognomical expressions' and close-ups. Essentially, the 'physiognomical expressions' acknowledge that the filmic imaginary is not merely a representational sign in accordance with the language systems, but more the fleeting moments for the spectator to experience, grasp and recognize the relationship between the visual display and the 'deeper face' (i.e. total reality) that visual display refers. With this idea, Balázs stresses that the spectator is the active subject of acknowledging, or of intuitive knowing, and the notion that the living bodies on-screen are also active subjects, with emergent subject-ness during the filmic

temporality and space, and addressing the spectator with emotional affective-ness, rather than the abstracted or passive objects for a reader to decode.

In terms of the filmic apparatus of affective-ness, I particularly explored Balázs's opinions on close-ups, which in effect imply two potential modes of relationship between the spectator (real person with sensual-perceptions and subjective knowledge) and the on-screen display: i. the fairytale close-up, emphasizing the simultaneous projection of subjective experiences; ii. the Bergsonian close-up that generates alternative temporalities and consciousness in comparison to the conceptually and causally manipulated, unitary or universal temporality that dominates the perceptions of modern subjects. Both close-ups depend on a temporally and spatially prepared flow in the film diegesis; the first kind of close-up foregrounds the performativity of the filmic imaginary, whilst the interpenetrating experience and self-consciousness of the spectator comes to prominence in the second kind of close-up. Particularly, Balázs provides examples of the addressing faces (e.g. Lillian Gish and Asta Nielsen in films) to illustrate the two kinds of close-ups, and the activeness of spectatorial experience in recognizing the physiognomic meanings underlying the facial close-ups. The implications drawn from that can be applied to the discussions on the 'talking heads' testimony in the second section of this thesis, which is characterized by the facial signification and upper-bodily performance of the social actor—the oral testimony—addressing the other social subjects (spectators) but transcending the close-up duration.

One of the key implications is that obtaining the utopian state of the film/cinema experience—transcending the modern technological apparatus and regaining the human subjectivity—depends on two necessary elements in the filmic imaginary: firstly, the moving-image attractions. It focuses less on linear narrative

progression, and draws the spectator's attention (focused sensory-perception) allowing his/her emotional responses to a unique form of display, e.g. the dancing body conveyed in the long-shot performance by Asta Nielsen in *The Abyss* (dir. Urban Gad, 1910), or the myriads of facial performance communicated in the long-shot close-up of Lillian Gish in *Way Down East* (dir. D. W. Griffith, 1920). Such moving-image attractions are promised by the performative scenes within but independent of the film narrative/narration, foregrounding the bodies in the performance of addressing the audiences and arousing the intuitive knowing that cannot separate from emotional exchanges. The long shot and the close-up are necessary for the performance of the on-screen bodies to cause the affect of attractions, and for the off-screen bodies to make responsive performances³⁹.

Secondly, the specificity of the film/cinema experience can also be found within the film diegesis—or a totality of time/space/subject, or as Elsaesser (2004) propositions, the 'world-making' process taking place between screen and audience (p. 102) —in which the on-screen character as the actually living subject, shares a horizon with the viewer (the Merleau-Pontyan intersubjectivity), who interacts with the on-screen world, mobilizing their performative bodies. The understanding of such film diegesis is beyond or against the notion that the film narrative and narration are self-contained and cue the audience to comprehend and make a universal reflex. Rather, it recognizes the subjectivity of the on-screen human beings, regarding the on-screen subject as a living being socially and existentially, and the shifted parameters of the screen space and audience space, acknowledging the diegetic, extra-diegetic

³⁹ Indeed, the viewership can be seen as a distinct performance, as suggested by Elsaesser (2004) with his observations on the early film spectatorship, in which the 'mutual interdependence'—either between the screen and the audience, or between the audiences—characterizes the cinema experience (p. 109)

and imagined spaces of cinema experience: the audience as part of the performance in the experience of being addressed and making responses.

Arguably, such two dimensions of the utopian state of cinema—the moving-image attractions and the film diegesis—that are derived from Balázs’s ideas on the facial or bodily close-ups can theoretically be inspiring for understanding the ‘talking heads’ testimony and other kinds of somatic testament in the oral history documentary films, shot in *vérité*, conveyed in the long-shot and/or the close-up. Additionally, it is also by relating to two such dimensions that we can have an analytic perspective to understand the recent ‘affect theory’ (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) that emphasizes the emotional responsiveness of the audience, and the ‘political mimesis’ (Gaines, 1999) of documentary affective-ness enhanced by digital technologies of production and exhibition. That is, the affective-ness of the film as the construction of mutual recognition and relationality, based on the performativity and intersubjectivity of film/cinema experience.

Lukács's exploration discovers that the foundation for the film/cinema experience to be affective, performative and intersubjective lies with the ability of the moving image to make mimetic representation, redeeming the *index*—the linkage between the on-screen representation and the actual things. It is based on such a linkage that Lukács comes to emphasize film spectatorship as aesthetics, and aesthetics as modes of sensual-perceptual experience of the individual audience, recognizing the livingness on the screen as ‘fantastic’ attractions and being amazed by the ‘beauty’ of the mimesis of the lifeworld vitality. It suggests that with such actuality mimesis, the connection between the on-screen world and the off-screen world can be direct and interpersonal. Lukács’s stress on the indexicality of the film imaginary—the livingness of the actual world on the screen—is still relevant for the

recent discussions on ‘digital mimesis’ (e.g. Zhang Z., 2010, p. 116), which contends that the digital technologies make the bodily activities and subjective experiences perceivable and living, or ‘fantastic’, as Lukács describes. In addition, its relevance for the embodiment of the oral traditions and oral cultures can be seen in relation to Tomaselli (1997)’s account of video’s accessibility towards the oral-storyteller’s personal vision, in comparison to the transcription to pages, which inevitably reduces the emotional and visceral knowledge of the oral storyteller.

In relation to Balázs and Lukács, found in Benjamin, it is implied that the film can be a new mode of embodiment in modernity that has the potentiality of competing with the industrial/capitalist alienation of a human being’s self-perception. For Benjamin, the film realizes this because of the sensuous mimesis of the moving image; namely, it can revive the tactility of realities, depending on but beyond the optical faculty. Such ability of revealing the total reality with visual display is reverberated as the notion of ‘haptic visuality’ by Marks (2000), intersecting with the idea that the cinema experience is essentially an embodied, kinesthetic mode of seeing relating to the actual reality. It implies that the specificity of the moving-image display lies with its affective-ness and sensuousness, motivating the bodily sensations with the film apparatus, and in doing so, the attenuation of self-perception and the alienation of the emergent individual-subjectivity can be undone.

Mickey Mouse and Charlie Chaplin, as two imaginaries that are favored by Benjamin in suggesting the engagement in the cinema of bodily sensations, imply to us that the affective quality of the filmic imaginary, arousing the visceral experiences of the audiences, lies with the performativity of the moving-image attractions that is conveyed in the actuality mode of display, which permits the bodily mimesis of Chaplin to affect the audience, demolishing the axiomatic reception but arousing

sensual contagion. This is relevant for current discussions on the ‘affective transmission’ or ‘emotional contagion’ (e.g. Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 10; Ahmad, 2004, p. 10) within the film/cinema experience; such a contagious affect can also be ideological when it is connected with generational sensations, shaping the cultural memories and the feeling for history, as suggested by Moltke (2007). Arguably, such shaping of cultural memories is realized to a large extent through the visual affect, the reciprocal experience in the cinema, and the haptic knowing with the moving-image attractions. Such affect is based on the revitalization of the experiential faculty of the human beings; in the cinema, their identity as social subjects is emergent via the visceral exchanges.

Above all, what I want to suggest through elaborating on Benjamin’s idea about the individual and collective engagement in the movie-going experiences, is that the visual in the cinema can revive the human faculty of experiencing. However, it is this experiential faculty that is seen by Walter Ong as a lost tradition along with the demise of the pristine oral culture and communication in modernity. Thus, to some extent, the early cinema stage in which the cinema of attractions generated considerable influences, foregrounds the cinema’s redemption of the human embodiment, endowing us with an anchor point to revise Walter Ong’s thesis about the ‘movies’ having no orality. Overwhelmed by the narrative cinema, showing no awareness of the visual embodiment but merely critiques of the self-contained narrative and narration in ‘movies’, Ong sees film as being without potentiality of redemption of the embodied communication. Resisting such a far too general thesis on film, the romantic theories of the moving image in general provide a standpoint for observing in the visuality of film the redemptive communications, and for propositioning the idea of a transformed orality in film. Thus, to complement Ong’s

oral theories, there is the need to include the theorization on the oral in the moving image.

The materialist phenomenology of Béla Balázs, Georg Lukács, and Walter Benjamin suggests to us that the film can be a new mode of embodied human experience in modernity, more than a textual object, with its redemption of the sensory experiences (e.g. touch, hearing, smell, taste, etc.) through mimetic representation and embodied engagement, with but beyond sight. Based on their theorizations on the specificity of the moving image, we can revise Ong's account of the modern visibility by differentiating two categorically different types. Namely, the visibility of the moving image, which differs from the visibility of the semantic text, in terms that the former revives the bodily and gestural significations and the immediate engagement based on such gestures. With such visibility of the moving image, the things and people rendered on the screen world are recognized as living subjects addressing the perceiving audiences, and the audiences as social subjects make embodied and kinesthetic responses. Thus within movies there can be a transformed orality beyond the 'secondary orality' of electronic communication processing, because the visibility of moving images conveys gestural richness, and the cinema experience revives the experiential intersubjectivity. With such an implication, in order to identify *the orality in the moving images*, we need to focus on the performativity and intersubjectivity of bodies on- and off-screen, in the cinema and in the actual world. In contemporary practices and analyses, one needs to look at the two variables—performativity and intersubjectivity—and locate the embodied human activities based on these. Such implication will be developed in the second section of the thesis with empirical and contemporary examples. I will use oral history documentary film to suggest that the oral mode of expression and communication in

the digital moving-image (video loading orality) is essentially cultivating the affective-ness of the film/cinema experience based on the two aspects of the utopian state of film—the visual attractions, and the film diegesis—to engage with real spectators who are social subjects with emergent agency, and to potentially make social changes by relating the two-dimensional screen to the three-dimensional lifeworld.

**Section 2. The embodied encounter between testimony and documentarian:
case studies on Chinese oral history-based documentary films (1990-2012)**

**Chapter 4. A performance-centered approach to the embodied testimony in
oral history interview-based documentary film**

Introduction

What can the intersubjectivity and performativity of the bodies within the moving images suggest to us to understand oral history documentary, or, video loading orality? The following section is concerned with this question and utilizes surveys into the histories and discourses of oral history and documentary traditions, and the empirical texts and spectatorial experiences of individual cases in contemporary practices. With these, it attempts to suggest that the experiential dimension of being engaged, and the intersubjective drive of relating the two-dimensional/textual world of the documentary characters to the three-dimensional/real world of the audiences, characterize the documentary films that embed oral history methodology and content, beyond their being evidential objects.

In the second section, I particularly relate the intersubjective embodiment of orality to the documentary relationship between the filmmaker and the subjects. I take the oral history documentary film as a case to contextualize the theoretical problem of

the orality in the visual. In such a case, we have the orally delivered testimony that is rendered as actuality by the audiovisual recording. Because of the connotation of oral history as social advocacy, giving voice to the voiceless, I place oral history documentary in the tradition of political documentary. Within such traditions, this section explores how the use of *vérité* and documentary rhetoric—two dimensions of political documentary that affect the production of knowledge and social change—relates to the oral variables. The case histories in China's context can provide answers to another question: how do local factors relate to the production and presentation of documentary testimony?

First, I define oral history documentary against intersections between oral history and documentary traditions, and attempt to ask: what becomes special by loading oral history into the moving image. Next, I locate my empirical investigation into the oral history practices of mainland China. Chapters 6 and 7 analyze and document two categories of exercise: the testimony produced by television, the state-owned institution; and the digital-video testimony generated by independent filmmaking in the personal mode, which foregrounds the experiential dimension of the oral mode of engagement. It is acknowledged in the surveys on oral history that it is not only about the objective evidence, but also—and perhaps more—about the dynamics of producing that evidence with two parties. In reality, the two emphases on oral history ontology and practice—objectivity and intersubjectivity—mark different traditions in the oral history discipline. It is arguable that there is a tradition of objectivity bias, within which the oral materials are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of historical evidence; this means that to prove such materials objective, the historians need to compare the oral transcript to the existing textual records and official documents, in order to adopt such oral materials. Subsequently the oral

narration is treated as the textual object to a large extent, and the subjectivity of either the interviewer or the interviewee is problematic.

Notwithstanding, the ‘narrative turn’ and the ‘performative turn’ since the 1970s have brought interdisciplinary and new perspectives to understand this problematic subjectivity. Rather, such perspectives recognize that the subjectivities, either the interviewer’s or the interviewee’s, are productive and affective to the oral narration, and embrace the notion that the interview is a social dynamic happening between two active subjects. Within such understandings, we can realize that the oral narration can be more than just linguistic articulation, but also involves gestural expressions and environmental interactions to articulate one’s subjective knowledge. The interviewee actively makes a self-presentation in front of another social actor, ceasing to be a passive informant who surrenders his/her agency to the charge of the interviewer.

In addition, collecting oral history is largely affected by the recording techniques. The idea of ‘oral history’ has been defined by the use of the audio-recording devices to retrieve the past by certain oral historians. However, since the late 1970s, oral historians have recognized that video-recording apparatus has brought their practices and understandings of oral history to a new level. For some academic practitioners, videotaped oral-history can cause a rupture in the historical development of oral history. This is because the gestural expressiveness and the meta-communicative acts of the bodies can be retrieved through the moving image and constitute an important dimension of historical knowledge, and the performative acts of both the interviewer and the interviewee foreground their subjectivities, which cannot be ignored. Thus, it is new also because the interviewer as viewer is attracted by the reflexivity of undertaking oral history, which means an interviewer can

recognize the presence of him/herself who collaboratively produced knowledge about the past with another, and analyze the role he/she plays to affect the outcomes.

Interestingly and correspondingly, a performative tradition to understand documentary can also be found since the 1980s, largely consisting of discussions on video documentary shot in the mode of *vérité*. The *vérité* documentary is characterized by the direct on-camera encounter between the filmmaker and the subject; the performative tradition considers the documentary relationship as also a social relationship, in which a social actor displays him/herself to another. In such an encounter, the knowledge is produced by means of communicative acts, including linguistic signification as a kind of gesture, in addition to dressing styles, facial expressions and other bodily movements, etc. It is implied that the intersubjective event rendered by audiovisual means can be not just the formal interview; it can also be informal exchange in the documentary encounter, although when an interview event is incorporated in the documentary, the documentary relationship and its reflexivity can be foregrounded. In addition, discussions about oral history in the political documentary being used to affect the spectator and arouse his/her spontaneous action of remembering history and making social change can also be found; and there are indications that the ‘talking heads’ is a conventional form used to display interview events and produce knowledge and affect. One precedent is illustrated by the British documentary *Housing Problems* (1935) in which the slum dwellers present their miserable living experiences individually; they were placed in frontal display style, and we can perceive their faces, upper bodies, dressing styles, and their everyday environment, all of which communicate and engage with the audience beyond semantics.

With these implications based on surveys, I proceed to look at oral history documentary as not only an evidence of the past, but more an intersubjective production of knowledge about the past, involving the documentary relationship and self-presentations of the people on both sides of the camera. I particularly analyze aspects in relation to the bodily expression and communication, and consider the oral testimony not as an object of evidence, or passive victim whose traumatic memories can be unspeakable, but as an active sufferer who brings out the historical scenarios and his/her memories with the body to impress the present spectator. The filmmaker in *vérité* documentary is considered to be a witness on the scene of filmmaking—making physical responses by listening with a camera and making performances of documentation—and the active re-teller in the post-filmmaking testament—representing the primary historical-scenarios with their bodily differences.

1. From evidentiary knowledge to performative relation: the oral history (interview)

Oral history has two practice and theorization scopes. On the one hand, in the academic scope, oral history is a method of collecting alternative historical materials: creating them subjectively from living human beings. With retrospective expression, oral history interviews create new knowledge cooperatively, between living persons (interviewee and interviewer), characterizing an active practice of knowing. It is also a narrative genre, and is concerned with understanding of every(day) human activity, especially that of vernacular sensibility and intellection, recognizing the significance of deriving historical materials from memory, and rejecting an absolute objectivity of history (Burke, 2001, pp. 2-6). In a narrow sense, oral history has a social-activist dimension. It is a way of giving voice to the voiceless, and allowing their alternative versions of history to be perceived and known, in addition to, or resisting, the

mainstream, or official, version of history. Oral history has been deployed by grassroots historians, who have either rarely academic foundation, or sometimes are ordinary people concerning about their own communal identity and common past. Such practice embodies the social intervention of the ‘people’s history’ (Samuel, 1981), based on social-historical experiences of the people and on behalf of the people’s interests. In practice, the academic and the social scopes of oral history are interrelated; it can be scientific instrument of ‘interview-based research’ (Quinlan, 2011, p. 25) or the social action of listening to what people say (élite and non-élite).

1.1. Growing into a culture

In 1948, oral history found a niche in the university system in America, based on the efforts of Allan Nevins, who began to interview well-known people and ‘great men’, those who ‘contributed significantly to society or who were close affiliates of world leaders’ (quoting from Abrams, 2010, p. 40). It started the modern oral history, or the systematic development of oral history as a conscious research method. For Nevins’s generation, oral history was to a large extent an instrument to collect the factual information that would otherwise disappear, to undertake biographical research on ‘prominent individuals’ (Dunaway, 1996, p. 8), where carried a massive body of information for understanding high-profile politics, business and professions (Sharpless, 2006, p. 21).

However, prior to Nevin’s efforts to establish oral history as a scholarly field in the university, many practices had already existed that adopted this method to recover historical experiences from contemporary people. For example, in the 19th century, a Californian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, hired people to interview and create autobiographical records of groups of people living in the western part of the United

States. Also in America, in the 1930s, the government sponsored the Federal Writers' Project, and writers were hired to record the slave narratives and the African-American people's living memories. Such examples differ from the paradigm of 'élite oral history' (i.e. history created by prominent and powerful people, Seldom and Pappworth, 1983), and characterize the ordinary people's perspective, some of whom are historically disfranchised of the competence of literacy and hence the possibility of making written records to pass on their own histories. In the latter, oral history is associated with the politics of orality, and the advocacy to the people's culture.

Collecting evidence and preserving the receding past characterized the first generation of oral historian in the 1950s, the second generation of oral historians in the mid-1960s and later became more concerned about the empowering ability of oral history to give a voice to the marginalized subjects for entering history. This turning to activism coincided historically with the rise of the new social movements that occurred in modern developed societies, with the rising consciousness of the diversity of social identity, e.g. ethnics, genders, sexual orientations, etc. It is acknowledged that during the 1970s, the oral history collectors participated in the social-action campaigns for human rights and community cohesion (Dunaway, 1996, p. 8). With the belief of bringing empowerment, the scope of interviewing was also broadened to contain larger populations of the 'people' (Samuel, 1981).

The 'people's history' proposes that ordinary people and their everyday experience, are largely overlooked, whilst the 'history from below' intends to uncover the significance of subaltern and daily experiences. With rising consensus, since the 1950s and 1960s onwards, oral history became a collective recourse and practice. The British and North Europeans rediscovered their oral history traditions based on 'the tradition of ethnology and folklore collection' (Abrams, 2010, p. 4). Latin American

countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina set out to recover the testimonies of ‘public figures’ to generate an open access to the unrecorded history of the pre-military governance in the first half of 1970s, and shifted to giving voice to the voiceless in the second half of the 1970s (Schwarzstein, 1996). The social and political commitment to oral history also took place in the Italian context, often happening outside academia (Portelli, 1996). Politically committed, the British oral history movement was characterized to a great extent by the values of the New Left, which advocates the politics of identity and recognition of proletarian constituents. West Germany’s oral history in the 1980s was influenced by ‘history from below’, attempted to recover the past of from the perspective of the ‘subordinate classes and the “victims” of history’ (Fletcher, 1988, p. 563). Oral history as ‘history from below’ suggests a reliable societal history written from and with the subaltern. Models, of doing oral history, such as the ‘dig where you stand’ movement in Sweden (providing ‘a practical manual for workers to write the histories of their own working-places’) (Thompson, 2000, p. 18), and the history workshop community-motivated history in Britain, activated the subaltern’s autonomy of action and cognition of history, and raised the historical consciousness in the social public (i.e. understanding the present and the self in relation to the past and the other).

1.2. Striving for objectivity and conforming to social-science law

Doing history that relies on oral sources collected from ordinary people challenged the hierarchy of evidence that privileges textual authority. Abrams (2010) suggests that subordinating oral testimony to the ‘textual model’ (p. 80) dominates the practice of oral history in the 1970s and 1980s, which reduced oral materials to ‘a text or other written document’ (p. 5). Reducing oral testimony to object of evidence in

accordance with written references, such model privileges the objectivity of the oral narrative content, i.e. what the oral narrator says, over that of the dynamics in content production. Abrams (2010) observes that the effort of verifying the objective status of the oral sources occupied the practice of oral historians during the 1950s and 1960s. Following social-science tradition (of course there are very good reasons for doing this), an oral history interview is evaluated by procedure codes, e.g. representativeness and the sampling reliability. The result of the interview, i.e. transcribed words, is carefully crosschecked against the written documents. The *objectivity* critique, as a value system that derived from the written criteria of documentary sources, favoring the static features of evidence and a self-contained reliability, orients oral history to factual information, regarding the subjectivity of a living subject as problematic. Arguably, the reliability critique derives from the assumption and practice that considers the main information conveyer of oral history is linguistic language, whilst the dynamics of information selection and reconstruction involved in the local production of orally presented units becomes problematic. The subjectivity underlying the selections of information according to the memory and appeals of the individuals who possess the access to history that is hidden or ambiguous are, however, none other than the specialty of oral history as a method of historiography. Recognizing the irreducible subjectivity in oral history, committed oral history reinforces subjectivity as a productive stance from social and political engagements.

1.3. Narrative turn, performative turn, and the performance-centered approach

The 1970s witnessed a ‘narrative turn’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 113), followed by an associated ‘performative turn’ in the 1980s (Pollock, 2008, p. 121), both recognizing

the gestural meanings involved in the act of oral narration. The ‘narrative turn’ acknowledge the way people ‘organize their lives, construct their selves and represent themselves in relation to the wider cultural context by telling stories about themselves’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 110). In other words, how people activate linguistic and other means to represent and express themselves, with reference to the cultural and social frameworks, which influence their formation of identity and expression. This turn to the narrative production of subjective experience and culturally specific knowledge recognizes subjectivity and identity as productive elements to generate facts.

Portelli (1991) considers that the subjective *is* the factual, in the sense that oral narration (an act) contains unique evidence that cannot be framed into the hierarchy based on the standards of textual evidence. The subjectivity of oral testimony is itself an expression of realities that cannot be read from the surface. In Potelli (1991)’s study on a worker’s death, testimonies provide various versions, including keeping silence which is analyzed as a form of expression and meaning-making act. Associated with memory studies, oral historians acknowledge that narrative formations basing on individual memories are meaningful discursive acts. The narrative expression of memory as ‘an active process of creation of meaning’ beyond ‘a passive depository of facts’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 79) acknowledges oral testimony as contingently produced in a situated narration, as an ‘active process of reconstruction’ (ibid.) that would be influenced by many factors, one of which is the narrator’s capacity to create a coherent narrative, or a consistent self, from memory.

In producing a self-narration, the narrator-subject has a dialogic relation with the discourses of society and the referential framework of her/his culture. Not all subjects comply with narrative coherence. For people who were considered unable to

produce a self-contained and coherent self-narration in a conventional autobiographic format that privileges causality and continuity, the sense of self can be produced through a relational account with others (Abrams, 2010, p. 50). For in such conditions, the self is both a unique but shared identity. Herthan Dawn Wong's research on Native American autobiography suggests that self is mostly positioned within a communal identity, as 'the communal I' (quoting from Abrams, 2010, p. 37), the self-narrative is created by reference to the cultural framework of value and discourse. The dialogic interview facilitates the alternative self-narrations that are characterized by interdependence more than independence of the self-other.

Oral history interview is characterized by the collaboration of two parties, as 'a multilayered communicative event' (D. K. Dunaway, quoting from Abrams, 2010, p. 13), a 'conversational narrative' (R. Grele, quoting from Abrams, 2010, p. 115), and 'a shared authority' (M. Fisch, quoting from Abrams, 2010, p. 167). The notion of collaborative production of narrative challenges the idea of 'an essential self' (Abrams, 2010, p. 45) that is stable and prescribed. Narrative and narration *about* and *by* self are dynamic selections and disclosures, a shared production of knowledge in a social setting between the interviewer and the interviewee; the intersubjective aspect significantly characterizes narratives emerging within interview. Oral history interview necessarily contains two parties of different cognition and corporeality; it is a shared production and collaborative creation between living people, 'a socially shared experience' (Abrams, 2010, p. 13). The narrative turn acknowledges that *self* is an intersubjective being, that is, 'our sense of self is produced via a series of relations with other people and ideas and through activities such as speaking and writing' (Abrams, 2010, p. 45). The act of remembering is an activity through which *self* is embodied in the dialogic interaction. Each encounter between interviewer and

narrator is a uniquely situated experience, and the embodying of *self* resides in the interdependent dynamic to bring forth self-formation.

With increasing recognition of the richness of intersubjective interplay, beyond the expressive capacity of linguistic language and the ‘referential real’ (i.e. a pre-given knowledge, Pollock, 1999, p. 64), the oral historians came to recognize the performative aspect and the ‘representational real’ (i.e. the knowledge that is acted out by bodily performance, Pollock, 2008, p. 132), acknowledging the process of testimony-knowledge production is essentially ‘site-specific interaction’ (Pollock, 2008, p. 120). Elucidating the social exchange characterizing an oral history interview as ‘performance’, Pollock (2008) stresses the interplay—the testimony, witnessing and responding to such testimony—of the interview is a temporally enclosed process of ‘*being* and *becoming*’ (p. 121). In other words, each encounter as situated and contingent is characterized by dynamics of exchanges and environmental settings (e.g. weather, location, etc.). The *saying* (acting out) of the *said* (testimony) is a repetition with possibilities of variation.

The performance-centered approach contradicts pre-given script before the embodied knowledge emerges in the situated exchange. The production of testimony is located in a ‘spatio/temporal “encounter”’ (p. 122), an embodied action of inquiry and transformation. The performance-centered approach stresses that narratives are not stable and fixed, but depend on the intersubjective situation and perception to ‘represent’ (acting and re-acting) actively. The performative turn destabilizes oral history ‘from a text- to subject-centric history’, and ‘give[s] unprecedented favor to perspective and perception’ (Pollock, 2008, p. 122), which recognizes the expressive and representational dimension of oral testimony, such as gestural embodiments, in addition to linguistic articulation, acknowledging the corporeal involvement of the

body-subjects in bringing forth contingently the personal experience and subjective memory otherwise unperceivable.

The 'representational real' (Pollock, 2008, p. 132) emphasizes the personal testimony as a bodily self-presentation, displaying *for* the other, which positions the interviewer as 'audience' (p. 122). The self-representation is constituted by a series of selections, disclosures and concealments, to and for the counterparts, because of which, it is a repetition of experience with difference, adding present currencies. The notion of 'situated knowledge' (Pollock, 2008, p. 121) identifies the dynamics of subjective engagements in here and now that plays a part in such transformational creation of testimony in self-representation. The listening of the interviewer is a performative response that facilitates the 'mutual embedding of one's vision of the world in the other's' (Pollock, 2005, p. 2); or, the committed listener is a necessary participant in producing historical testimony. The exhibitionist acts of the interviewer and of the interviewee underlie the notion of 'a shared authority' (Fisch, 1991a; Grele, 2006) that characterizes the power dynamics of knowledge production.

Further, interviewer, as the 'audience', might re-tell, or re-present, the embodied testimony, in forms such as a staged performance. There are two kinds of performance in oral history as depicted by Pollock (2005; 2008) and Friedman (2006):

- i. the performance during the interview, between the interviewer and the narrator of the scene;
- ii. the oral history-based performance given by the interviewer as a staged performance in a confined time and space that embodies what s/he witnessed from the firsthand testimony. The second performance is a critical mimesis as it embodies not only the testimony but also the *remembrance* of the testimony, which is a responsive behavior and will cause a larger audience to respond. Oral history-based performance stresses the creative transmission and mediated circulation of the oral testimonies.

Various forms or conveyers of testimony—theatrical performance, audio and audiovisual media (e.g. radio broadcast, television program, film), museums and digital archives and exhibitions, print publications (e.g. autobiography, memoir)—fuses autobiographical memory into a collectively perceivable realm, practices public history and historical pedagogy (Abrams, 2010, p. 97; Ritchie, 2011, p. 12).

1.4. Intersubjectivity of oral history

Intersubjectivity in oral history designates both the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, and the exchange between the (public) audience to and re-presentations of testimony. In the first aspect, intersubjectivity characterizes ‘the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer, or, in other words, the interpersonal dynamics of the interview situation and the process by which the participants cooperate to create a shared narrative.’ (Abrams, 2010. p. 54); it implies the relationality as the constituency of fact, as Grele (2006) puts out, ‘Oral history interviews were seen as documents similar to all other documents, to be treated by the historian in the same manner as he or she would treat any other source.’ (p. 53) The performance of the interviewer in the interplay influences the ultimate testimony. The interviewer *is* a part of the factual information in the way that s/he is involved in its creation as well as the explanation of the embodied testimony.

Discussions on the second aspect of intersubjectivity pay much attention to the affective quality of representations to history cognition and pedagogy, the ‘affective structures of identification’ (Simon, 2005, p. 3). ‘[T]he form of diaries or eyewitness statements, documentary photographs or film, novels, poetry, stories, song, fictionalized film, or theatre’ (p. 50) are bearing witness and acting out the remembrance of the past. The ‘testimonial account’ is affective as much as ‘touch’ on

the audience, connecting the present (public) to the historical scene. Words, images, video testimonies are ‘transitive bearing of witness’ (p. 8) that might realize ‘true learning’: beyond a ‘timeless attunement to timeless truths’ (ibid.), an open engagement, and an active and necessary questioning of the present structure of cognizance. ‘Difficult knowledge’ such as that of mass-violence events, saliently carries the quality of ‘touch’ and the possibility of ‘explod[ing]’ the pre-given knowledge structure (Simon, 2005). For example, the trauma testimony might both impress the audience affectively and demand him/her to keep a critical distance for understanding; such a dialectic subject-position characterizes the specific spectatorship, a ‘summoned sensibility’, a morally engaged reception (p. 92) that is beyond sight or sound or ‘perceptual engagement’ (ibid.).

2. Oral history in the moving-images

2.1. Oral testimony and technological impacts

As primarily treated as an ‘archival practice’ (Grele, 2006) for collecting data and evidence, technologies were important for oral history to make recordings and depositories, especially sound recording devices. When Nevins did interview in the 1940s, he had to take a partner to make records with handwriting. But by the mid-1970s, sound recordings flourished. The so-called ‘digital revolution’, namely, the massive technological change from analog (and electronic) signal systems to digital since the 1980s, which brought audiovisuals more pervasive, had been raising debate around the nature of multimedia oral history, including audiovisual (or, videotaped) oral history or video testimony (Goddard, 2010). The popularity of digital video challenges the oral historians’ view that oral history is an ‘aural history’ (Charlton, 1984, p. 230). Practitioners and theorists came to realize the irreducible experiential

quality of video testimony and audiovisual oral history; some treat it as an advanced instrument that can record more than verbal language by including nonverbal communications. Audiovisual testimony is qualitatively akin to oral history as it reinforces the ‘multilayered communication event’ of oral history interview (Dunaway, 1996, p. 9). The audiovisual form of testimony has ontological proximity to oral history, both characterized by the inscription of performance. From the 1980s and onwards, the technological innovations and popularity shift the paradigms that emphasize oral history as ‘maintenance’ and ‘collections’ (Dunaway, 1996, p. 8), incorporating oral history into public presentations such as museum exhibitions and mass-media representations, for example, television documentaries and fiction films. Popular technologies bring various cultural populations to participate in historical representations. As Rabinowitz (1994) observes, new technologies, such as photography, reportage and documentary films, were crucial for ‘the survey of one segment of the population by another’ (p. 6); ‘a range of new knowledge’, about the ‘previously hidden, subaltern population’ (p. 13) enters the social recognition.

2.2. The appropriation of video in oral history: videotaped testimony

Sound recording technologies—ranging from the wax cylinders of the late nineteenth century, to wire recorders and then magnetic tape recorders in the late 1940s, portable cassette recorders and the more affordable and accessible digital recorders (e.g. compact discs, digital audio tape, iPod, etc.) in the 1980s onwards—led to an expansion of recorded oral history interview, and the greater involvement of amateurs and grassroots historians (Ritchie, 2011; Dunaway, 1996). The sound-recorded oral history interview aroused the awareness of the ‘auditory gesture’ (Grele, 2006, p. 77) and the discovery of ‘aurality’ (Gluck, 2006, p. 367). The ‘data’ of oral

sources is more fully realized by the gestures in the 'aural' (Ritchie, 2011, p. 9). And the recording as an act, recording device as a participant in the interview, might make the two parties more aware of their positions of 'equality and difference' in the encounter between self and other. The audiovisual means brought another transformation after the auditory turn.

Oral historians' discussions on the assimilation of moving-image technologies, especially videotaping, into creating oral history sources and preserving oral materials, date back to the 1970s. Don Page (1976–7) observes that videotape can capture the 'facial expressions, postures and gestures' (p. 20), which occupy 55% of the total information in communications. The 'visual dimension' (Sipe, 1991, p. 80) of videotape had raised the awareness of the oral historian to address the communicative and situational nature of testimony production. Whitaker (1981)'s advocacy of videotaping oral history subsequently raised concerns about the practical aspect. Hesitation and debates around 'videotaped oral histories' (Charlton, 1984) still arose; Charlton (1984) conducted a pros-and-cons evaluation, with an investigation into the technological and ontological capacities of the visual dimension. What continually drew their attentions was the ability of the visual means to capture the 'nonverbal elements of the interview' (p. 228) including the 'appearance and body language' (ibid.) of the interviewee.

Charlton (1984), an oral history researcher, was surprised by the expressiveness in the videotaped oral-history, as rich as in the 'aural documents' (p. 230) (sound recorded oral-history). The gestures of the human body and the 'gesticulation' conveyed in the visual means amazed the researchers: 'the eye of the camera never blinks' (p. 235). Oral historians knew more from viewing the 'video oral history' on screen; the moving images mimetically represent 'a new level of

evidence' (Sipe, 1991), beyond the semantics of narrator's verbal recount. Sipe (1991) identifies, such new level reinforces the 'reflective dimension' (p. 75) of oral history; the visual mimesis foreground the bodily communicativeness of the oral testimony, and also the self-representational performance of the narrator. In other words, the video oral history is also about the narrator's self-representation, in addition to the historical information.

'[F]ilm and video can support the emerging reflexivity of oral history practice' (Sipe, 1991, p. 79), it points that the filmic form makes the two parties of the interview more aware of their roles as performer or audience. It foregrounds that one group's surveying on another is privileged by the interview. The oral historians, such as Sipe, realize their irreducible subjectivity, in the process of and after interviewing. In such case, the video oral history – the interviewed testimony recorded by accessible and less obtrusive technological devices – can be scientific instrument that avails the oral historian (scientist) to find the hidden truth within the physiognomy of testimony. Videoed testimony compels Sipe (1991) to realize that orality, as the 'core' in oral history interview, is not 'purely a concept grounded in sound' (p. 145), or, not only about the spoken word, which is only one of the contextualized expressions, and other kinds exist such as 'body language, expression, and tone' (Sipe, 1991, p. 79) that also characterize orality. As Sipe's reflection shows, moving-image made the oral historians aware that they are more than interviewers but also critical viewers making interpretations.

The 'new way of seeing the past' (Sipe, 1991, p. 77) is specifically characterized by the 'haptic sense and physicality' (Lichtblau, 2011, p. 279) of the memory formation in situated environment and encounter. The filmed scenes embody how subjects are animated in the interview setting, how the interviewee revive

‘memory space’, in the presence of the ‘camera’s eye’ (p. 281). The haptic quality of the memory carrier (e.g. ‘letters, diaries, photos, or even drawings’, p. 280) depends on the animating ability of the camera. For Lichtblau (2011), the camera’s eye assists the oral historians to intrude into, or grasp, another layer of the interview-engendered reality, and thus transforms oral history from ‘classic oral history’ into a new paradigm, in which the physical remembering is ‘embodied’, and the ‘expressive possibilities of the body’ (p. 279) are opened up. Williams (2011) also realizes the ‘Video allows for the collection of whole new worlds of information’ (p. 268). To explain what the new knowledge is, he gives an example: during one of his filming experiences, an interviewee, Mimi Grossberg, activates a memory in relation to the hat in her hand; making sense of the object in front of the camera, is a simultaneous act of expressing her life as a working-class woman. In essence, the camera actively participates in the production of knowledge about history and about self-representation.

Fisch (1991a; 1991b) more concerns the public distribution of oral history through moving image cultures, particularly in the form of television documentary⁴⁰. As he observes, mass media’s orchestration on the recorded testimonies submits the testimony’s ownership of their narratives to the mastering vision. What he perceives in the tension between testimony and orchestration, actually resonate Rabinowitz (1994)’s theorization on the two aspects of political documentary: ‘*cinéma vérité* and narrative’ (p. 26), or the ‘witnessing and affecting’ for Kleinhans (1988). As I observe, the ‘video oral history’ for oral historians refers mostly to the recorded actuality (the interview), the ‘*cinéma vérité*’, or the synch-sound documented moving-image; while narrative orchestration that subjects videotaped oral testimony to representational

⁴⁰ The cases that Fisch mentions include *One Village in China* (dir. Richard Gordon, 1984) and *Vietnam: A Television History* (dir. Bruce Palling, 1983).

rhetoric is another dimension, which Fisch (1991a; 1991b) concerns, which intends on viewer's identification. For Rabinowitz, it is the rhetoric that produces agency within the viewer; the corporeal viewer is the social actor who might be the 'subject of agency' (p. 26) to make social actions like 'remember and remake history' (ibid.). However, differently, as perceived by oral historians, the 'videotaped oral history', or the '*cinéma vérité*', is the place where the agency of subject is produced.

2.3. Moving-image histories and oral history as narrative device

For Rosenstone and like-minded scholars, film produces and distributes historical narratives as a realism-based mass medium; filmic histories are 'history in images' irreducible to the 'written and oral history' (Rosenstone, 2001, p. 65), but reliable historiographies that characterize, and are also reinforced by, contemporary 'postliterate' culture, a culture affected by moving-image technologies where 'people can read [and write] but won't' (Rosenstone, 2001, p. 50). In such culture, we would find the redeemed orality which now characterizes historical film as much as it does in the oral-history style of representation on the past:

[Historical film is] a way of dealing with the past that is more like oral history, or history told by bards, or *griots* in Africa, or history contained in classic epics. (Rosenstone, 2001, p. 65)

Such filmic historiography, or 'historiophoty' as Hayden White (1988) names it, actually refers to a category of narrative representation and corresponding spectatorship impacted by technology, in which the viewing experience is a characterizing way for narrative comprehension, where 'scientific, documentary accuracy was not yet a consideration, forms in which any notion of fact was of less importance than the sound of a voice, the rhythm of a line, the magic of words' (Rosenstone, 2001, p. 65). And oral testimony is assimilated in such narrative as

devices of representing knowledge and making narrative identification. For example, the feature film *Reds* (dir. Warren Beatty, 1981)⁴¹ inscribes actual witnesses, reinforcing the fictional narrative's historicity; in the television series *Heimat* (dir. Edgar Reitz, 1984)⁴², oral history methodology's advocacy on ordinary people is assimilated into the narrative perspective.

2.4. Documentary filmmaking and oral testimony in 'talking heads'

Oral history interview had already characterized documentary practices in the 1930s. For example, *Housing Problems* (1935) marked one of the first examples of testimony-based documentary and became a normative way of conveying interviewed testimony. Shot on the spot in the cine-vérité style with bulky devices (Aitken, 1990, p. 139) and displayed in 'talking heads' (synchronized sound close-ups), the slum dwellers telling their stories in front of the camera with their own voices and performances; whilst their self-representations, with some guidelines of the filmmaker, are presented within the mastering vision of the voice-over commentary. Technologies of cinematography and sound-recording affected the variations of oral testimony embodiments, captured and displayed in official and formal 'talking heads' first, but in casual, contingent and conversational address more and more since vérité of the 1960s (Martineau, 1988, p. 256); the 'cumbersome' (ibid.) recording equipment caused physical/discursive intrusion to the subjects' normal life and the documentary relationship privileging the filmmaker's representation, whilst the invents of lightweight and portable sound equipment enabled 'candid' (p. 257) conversations, sometimes contingent as rendered in ephemeral situations, with the involvement of the filmmaker embodied.

⁴¹ For more discussions about the use of oral testimony in *Reds*, see in Grindon (1993).

⁴² For more discussions about the use of oral history methodology in *Heimat*, see in Santner (1990).

The ‘talking heads’ form of bearing testimony is a normative way of expressing experiences, identities and opinions in television documentaries (e.g. Bell & Gray, 2007; Ellis, 1980; Holdsworth, 2010; Tribe, 1977, etc.). The ‘talking head’ presentation means more than a mechanical delivery of ideology (Watt, 2005, p. 365). It is also discussed and deployed to articulate social advocacy. For Rabinowitz (1994), the ‘talking head’ is conveyed by *vérité*⁴³, or the ‘visible and audible rendering of real life’ (p. 23), the documentary reality, in which the narrators are, ceased to be objects, to be identified by the spectator as the subject of narrative, as ‘source of truth, as the authority, as the author’ (p. 12); the political implication of the autonomous subject in ‘talking head’ is that ‘a previously hidden, subaltern population’ would emerge into ‘cultural and political visibility’ (p. 13) for the public to recognize and respond to. Martineau (1988) also asserts that ‘talking heads’ projects a ‘liberating’ (p. 258) stance, as the ‘empowering devices’ (p. 263), which represent subjects are in social action – grasping autonomy and representing the self. She also observes that the *vérité* ‘talking heads’ of ‘candid’ conversations, implicitly embody the ‘rapport between filmmaker(s) and subject(s)’ (p. 259); for Martineau, by disclosing the ‘milieu’ of three engaged bodies (the filmmaker’s, the subject’s, and the spectator’s), the synchronized sound close-ups are revelations of the ‘power dynamics among filmmaker, subject, and audience’ (p. 259). Rabinowitz (1994) suggests when a documentary reflexively reveals the mechanism of the bearing of testimony as a co-production overturning the object-subject boundary of documentary relationship, as *Shoah* (dir. Lanzmann, 1995) does, it embodies the agentive act of remembering and remaking history (history like Holocaust the genocide that has no referential systems), which would arouse mimetic response of the viewer, the existential social actor.

⁴³ For Martineau (1988), ‘talking heads’ is shot in the style of ‘Direct Cinema’ (p. 256).

The production, display and representation of oral testimony relate to the issues of self-other, object-subject, that characterizes the documentary relationship. The inscription of the testimony's self-representation, and the embodiment of power dynamics between the documentarian and the subject, contests with the overwhelming representation in a documentary that privileges the filmmaker's vision of mastery. It seems that the overwhelming vision of the filmmaker of social advocacy is competed by the voices of heterogeneous subjects more in the *vérités*. As Youdelman (2005) suggests, a Western tradition of documentary film speaking *for* and *about* the people can be found in, for example, *12 Million Black Voices* (Richard Wright, 1941), *New Earth* (Joris Ivens, 1934), and *The River* (Pare Lorentz, 1937), which foreground a personal account introducing, presenting and representing the 'people', addressing the solidarity of a collective voice by means of orchestrated voice-over commentary. Youdelman regards such 'Whitmanesque lines', the disembodied but omniscient vision in traditional documentaries such as *Native Land* (Paul Strand, Leo Hurwitz, 1941), foregrounds the imaginary "we the people" (p. 399). The privileged act of the filmmaker is managed by the 'fictionality of the documentary' (Rabinowitz, 1994, p. 23), and the desire to *represent* people's voice, however, subordinates the multiplicity and autonomy of social actors under a rhetorically collective voice. Rabinowitz (1994) argues that the political construction of a rhetorical collectivity shapes 'an appropriate way of seeing that vision' (p. 12), arouses the identification and produces agency of the spectator; the social action would start with the recognition and remembrance of alternative social groups, firstly on screen.

With the recognition of multiple social experiences, the diversification of the social strata, the filmmakers found it hard to claim the overwhelming voice of 'we the people'. In addition, the socialization of less cumbersome devices of cinematography

and sound recording advanced the self-representation of both the filmmaker and the participant, and the subject that affects the ultimate rhetoric. For Martineau (1988), the increasing use of ‘talking heads’ in direct cinema in a way precipitates the embodiment of the situated-ness and concreteness of the documentary relationship; the textual (‘two-dimensional, entirely artificial construct’, p. 253) would not avoid revealing the fresh-and-blood people, the ‘real three-dimensional people on both sides of the camera and before and after production’ (p. 253); the on-screen bodily engagement also relates to the off-screen relationship (‘the pro-filmic situation relates to the subject’s milieu, the filmmaker’s milieu, the milieu in which the film will be seen’, p. 259). The lecture style of commentary of the ‘earlier generation of filmmakers’, which was believed to be able to speak with a liberal voice, was increasingly rejected by the *cinéma vérité* filmmakers. With the aid of technological mimesis in a life-world situation, they believe in the people’s own voice (self-representation), the physically articulated and captured actualities as the ultimate realities; the performance of the people themselves is believed as the authentic representation.

With the emphasis on the subjective knowledge and also the act of self-representation, the ‘using oral history interviewing techniques’ (Youdelman, 2005, p. 397), capturing the people’s voice in situated production rather than representations based on reflected thoughts and scripted commentary, gained popularity. *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1980) juxtaposes multiple existential voices—five women-testimonies who worked in factories during WWII—to work against a universal representation and identification. For Youdelman, the transformation from the omniscient vision to the self-representation by oral history interview techniques is a consensus the ‘conscious political’ ‘activists and artists’

choose to ‘go back to the people’; I argue that such ‘go back’ actually corporealizes the actual social actors in actual exchanges; a shift from ‘we the people’ commentary to oral history interview narration hints at the inclusion of embodied documentary relationship as itself a kind of knowledge for the viewer to identify.

2.5. Performativity in oral history interview-based documentary: ‘talking heads’ and beyond?

As Chanan (2007) finds, in the 1960s, the rise of *cinéma vérité* was influenced in some respects by the recognition of performance in everyday life. Such an idea is inspired by Erving Goffman’s sociological proposition that our self is a social construction, emergent in the private or public social encounters where the structure of our culture is embedded and embodied in communication activities between self and other both as social actors. Performance is meaning-making practice, innate and effective in quotidian life; social life is a stage where actors give a situated performance, acting out roles by means of verbal and/or nonverbal communication, including ‘clothing, make-up, hair arrangement, and other decoration’, ‘limb and face discipline, and proper motor activity through space’, etc. (Friedman, 2006, p. 472) that are derived from life-world environments. Goffman identifies the production of selfhood within social interactions, which is otherwise nonexistent/unperceivable except unfolding relationally for the other.

Performativity as a cultural quality characterizes both oral history and documentary, both of which are involved in a ‘performance-centered approach to culture’, or, a practice emphasizing dynamic actions in various forms that bring forth particular knowledge in the social encounter, rather than ‘*reveal* or *refer to* a given world or body of knowledge’ that is fixed and determined (Pollock, 2008, p. 121). Performance is ‘a mode of knowing’, an experience of gaining and transmitting

knowledge (Friedman, 2006, p. 470). Technological development and diffusion radicalizes the worldview of multiplicity, nonlinearity and simultaneity, fostered by ‘temporally phrased embodied experiences’ (Friedman, 2006, p. 470). Performance is conceived as a constructive activity pervasive in both artifacts and social activities, engendering cultural product (e.g. ‘rituals, festivals, dramatic readings, even film’, Friedman, 2006, p. 471) that demands embodied knowing; the boundary of everyday experience and performance is difficult to identify, as set in intersubjective social exchanges, self and other constantly shift themselves as subject and object.

Oral history enacts performance-centered culture of communication particularly in interview, ‘a performance container’ (Friedman, 2006, p. 473), a dialogic and situated production of knowledge, a narrative act/event of storytelling within which co-presence of actors in a contingent situation dynamically giving rise to emergent knowledge. The documentary filmmaking, as a social encounter unfolding the relationship between documentarian and subjects, embodies a performance-centered culture, redeeming the relationality of social life in perceivable audiovisuals, displaying the personal existence for public recognition. The rockumentaries that include on-stage shows in the audiovisual renderings foreground on-camera performances (Beattie, 2008, p. 62); the *vérité* also conveys ‘social actors giving virtual performance according to the expressive codes familiar to us from fiction’ (Nichols, 1993, p. 178), e.g. *Tongues United* (dir. Marlon Riggs, 1989) in which black gays address the viewers with singing and dancing bodies to communicate their experiences and identity.

In addition, documentary locates off-camera performance, or the performance pervasive in quotidian life: self-representation. Bruzzi (2000) points that documentary is a performance of creating reality with self-conscious decoupage according to codes

of realism. The self-conscious performance of subjective reality in documentary associates with the ‘presentational performance’ (Waugh, 2011, p. 74) in vérité and post-vérité, which plays oneself *for* the other; while many pre-vérité documentary films are characterized ‘representational performance’ (p. 76) which hides the backstage negotiation of documentarian and subject; Flaherty and Ivens who minimize the revelation of the collaboration between subject and filmmaker produced ‘representational performance’. Performance is a ubiquitous phenomenon in documentaries.

For Nichols (1994), the bodily projection of subjectivity radically engages in knowledge production concerning social, historical and political minorities. Since the realist codes, the referential frameworks are set by dominant culture, the minorities strive for alternative codes of expression in performances of self-constituting actions. Video documentary, proliferating since the 1980s, proliferated self-constitution. Wang Q. (2012) contextualizes the performance model into China’s independent documentaries, particularly Wu Wenguang’s filmography, whose practices have a persistent interest in the empowering effect on self-performance enhanced by video technologies. Wang Qi suggests, the blending of performative with the observational filmmaking in Wu’s video documentaries typifies a kind of independent documentary practice in China, which identifies a tension between the irreducible subjectivity of the filmmaker and the elusive objectivity of documentary truth; she argues, a neglected ‘performative turn’ in China’s New Documentary Movement started with *Bumming in Beijing* (dir. Wu Wenguang, 1990), in which the documentary filmmaker is a diegetic embodiment: a ‘performer of documentation’ (p. 299).

Both Wang Q. and Reynaud (2010)⁴⁴ identify Wu's predilection for interview as an encounter both projecting the filmmaker's personality and intellection and redeeming the subjective realities of the subjects, whose personal knowledge associates with the total experiences of China. Documentary filmmaking incorporating interview, embodies the process of knowing, performs an inquiry for truth from subjects. Analyzing the vérité video documentary *The Other Bank* (dir. Jiang Yue, 1995), Leary (2006) testifies the thesis that filmmaking creates subjectivity in the on-camera encounter⁴⁵.

The embodied relationship between the filmmaker and the subject as one of the important aspects of the off-camera performance in quotidian life associates with collaborations on the spot in the present tense, or *xianchang*⁴⁶. The aesthetic of *xianchang* characterizes the vérités of Chinese cinemas, promoting 'documentary reality' (*jishi*), engaging social actors with multi-faceted social, cultural and political experiences in post-socialist realities. With the digital technologies introduced and adopted in China from 1995 onwards⁴⁷, the on-the-spot realism was enhanced in association with camera-stylo aesthetics that advocate free expression with one's body; the 'digital mimesis' brings haptic movement into viewer's perception (Zhang Z., 2010). Autonomous subjects with alternative sensibility and intellection can be embodied in *xianchang*. For Wang Y. M. (2005), digital video advances the politics of amateur-author who loses the omniscient vision and overwhelming authority, but producing 'experiential reality' (p. 22) with visceral and liminal vision in *xianchang*.

⁴⁴ Reynaud (2010) gives a detailed analysis of the performance of Wu—present in embodied on-screen and off-screen voices—in the on-the-spot conversations of Wu and his subject (e.g. Zhang Xiaping).

⁴⁵ For Leary, the presence of the camera and the filmmaking event gives rise to the consciousness for the unknown theatrical performer-students who were rehearsing for a play, that they are emergent movie stars, and constantly, in the on-camera rehearsals and in the backstage interviews, they switch between identities of filmed-subject and star.

⁴⁶ For discussion on the conception *xianchang*, see in Zhang Z. (2007).

⁴⁷ For Wang Y. M. (2005), the digital era of China's independent documentary came at 1998 (p. 16); for Berry & Rofel (2010a), it began at 1997 (p. 8).

The private involvement in ‘on-site documentation’ (p. 20) and ‘subaltern interests’ (p. 23) redefines documentary knowledge production into one that relies on the ‘intimate, interactive, and performative’ (p. 20) engagement with the subjects. The ‘solo production (*geti zhizuo*)’ (p. 18) of amateur-author, the ‘personal documentary’⁴⁸ (Wang Y. M., 2010, p. 222), in fact are discourses advocating the liminal and experiential quality of knowledge.

Documentary filmmaking incorporating interview reinforces the embodied performance of knowing in a communicative format, producing knowledge by acting out it. Social transmission of embodied experience further advances the performance culture and dialogical events. Technological inventions and their popularity (a ‘flood of camcorders into the consumer market’, Chanan, 2007, p. 246), and the defeat of the ‘grand narrative’ in the postmodern world (Lyotard, 1984), assist the diffusion of consciousness and embodied actions of social inquiry and witnessing. ‘Self-presentation’ characterizes on-line video podcasting and blogging networks (Navarro, 2012, p. 136), acting out oneself for the camera and to engage others. Video-blogging further blurs the boundary of performance and life, normalizing mimetic embodiment conveyed by documentary forms. Chanan (2007), Renov (2004), Marks (2000) and Rascaroli (2010) all suggest a tendency characterizing the 1980s and onwards: increasing ‘self-inscription’ and embodied subjectivity of the filmmaker’s self in documentaries (Chanan, 2007, p. 246), arguably enhanced by and enhancing the culture of bodily expressions, and the filmmaker’s role as a social actor, as much as the filmed subjects. The embodied ‘intersubjective reciprocity’ (Renov, 2004), among the subjects, on both sides but all within the camera’s pre-reflective perception,

⁴⁸ In Chinese, the ‘personal’ connotes more than one meaning, such as individual, private, etc. I adopt Wang Y. M. (2005)’s characterization of it, which defines ‘personal’ in terms of the filmmaker’s involvement and inscription of him/herself in the film; ‘personal documentary’ embodies the ‘limited perspective’ of the filmmaker and his/her presence in the filmmaking and the text (p. 18).

characterizes the ‘shared camera’ (Renov, 2004, p. 224) in *xianchang*, questioning ‘textual authority or directorial control’ (ibid.), and disclosing reality with the mutual manipulation on camera apparatus.

2.6. Oral history documentary, bearing testimony in interview and filmmaking

Oral history documentary foregrounds the scene of oral history interview, an embodied social and performative encounter conveyed in audiovisual form of actuality, depending on self-performance of the parties involved to produce historical knowledge. Technologically empowered, and privileging post-structuralist ‘difference and heterogeneity, subjectivity and intimacy, the contingent and the everyday’ (Sarkar & Walker, 2010, p. 23), oral history documentary cannot be a stable genre but the embodied experience of bearing testimony, engaging the act of witnessing and responding towards such testament, which brings forth historical scenarios into the present realm of perception. The oral testimony is both a textual category and a social actor who makes self-representation, an act that impresses the present spectator with historical scenarios.

As object, testimony means evidence acquired from other; as subject, testimony designates living person presenting memories verbally and nonverbally. For Sarkar & Walker (2010), the advocacy on testimony characterizes the documentary commitment to victims of history. Audiovisual testimony is necessarily ethical and political; it forms opposition to the modernist faith in objectivity and ‘facticity’ (Sarkar & Walker, 2010, p. 23), skeptical to official documents and fixed textual records. The *mise-en-scène* of bearing testimony embodies the ‘performative relation of testimony-witness’ (Simon, 2005), and involves more than the on-camera witness but also the spectatorial witness. In other words, testimony goes beyond

formal designation and is socially affecting; as a performative act that is continually in the making. It is ‘moving’ in the sense that the voice, body and knowledge circulate intersubjectively in the embodied interview, and transmit by various conveyers, or, ‘media object that houses this testimony’ (p. 5). It also moves the viewer and produces historical subject of agency to remember and remake history.

‘Talking heads’ as a normative textual signifier embodies a tripartite relation at the scene of knowledge production, encompassing speaker, listener and camera:

[A] seated individual speaks with conviction, eyes directed to an off-camera listener (stationed slightly to the left and below the lens) whose quality of attention is nevertheless palpable in the intensity of the speaker’s gaze. (Sarkar & Walker, 2010, p. 5)

Practical cases might vary. But such a tripartite relationship is irreducible: the interrogator and the oral testimony share a scene where they collaboratively produce history in a local encounter, with the technological rendering of actuality; the interview is an experience and a performance. Within a larger social context, facilitated by technological networks and niche spaces of reception, the faces and voices, sounds and images, of testimony, can be staged on ubiquitous but contextually and categorically diverse screens and exhibitions, animating local audiences, and actualizing the ‘moving’ affects to their bodies. Acknowledging the communal and archival quality of the documentary testimony, Sarkar & Walker (2010) come to the notion of ‘global archive of suffering’ and emphasize the agency of the testimony: passive victim can be transformed to agentive sufferer, within the filmmaking event. The perceptual affective-ness embedded in bodily presentations of memories, particularly in the traumatic memories addressing bodily and spiritual suffering and pain, anticipates the ‘responsive and response-able’ (Oliver, 2010, p. 128) performance of the viewer, or the social actor who incorporates the testimony on-screen to their own memory. For Oliver (2010), it is the self-conscious action of

seeing ('the capacity to put oneself in the place of the other while always returning to the self', p.127), or a Husserlian empathetic identification, acknowledging of self within the intersubjective exchange with others, that transcends sensual pleasure to ethical spectatorship.

The performed agentive relationship, incorporated by the political documentary, might become the same constituencies of 'pathos of facts' (Gaines, 1999, p. 92) and affect the viewer to make social actions. Gaines (1999) argues that political documentary mimetically produces body in action (p. 89); the 'committed documentary' (ibid.) produces 'politicized spectators' (p. 88) by agitating their bodies with the bodies on-screen. Would the performance of bearing testimony be 'agitational spectacles', like Eisenstein's 'montage of attractions' (p. 88) did, arouse the viewer's bodily responses, such as anger, applause and laughter? The 'political mimicry', which assumes 'a continuity between the world of the screen and the world of the audience, where the ideal viewer is poised to intervene in the world that so closely resembles the one represented on screen' (p. 92), is close to suggest that the embodied bearing of testimony on-screen relates and affects the three-dimensional life-world.

Integrating performativity models of oral history (and) documentary, and political mimesis concerning bodily performance can reconcile the two-dimensional screen-world with the three-dimensional actual-world, I propose to look at oral histories as a strong appeal to social intervention and choose politically and radically significant documentaries to do case studies to look at: What knowledge can be derived from 'talking heads' testimony as performance produced socially? Can, and how can, the situated and reciprocal filmmaking, add up to documentary testimony beyond 'talking heads'? How does the documentarian who is committed to *xianchang*,

play the role of active witness and what rhetoric effects can it engender? What subjectivities and social actions are emerging? How does the bearing testimony, as an act of intervening into reality and history, be inscribed in narratives?

Prelude. Oral history practices in China: An overview

Choosing mainland China as the focused context for the empirical investigation occurred for a number of reasons. First, importantly, I am most familiar with the Chinese language, which enables me to identify the gestural articulations in the image beyond the barriers of semantics. Second, in the context of mainland China, the practice of oral history in cultural fields, in the cultural scope, has been flourishing in post-socialist times. In 1985, Bruce Stave, an American historian, visited China and found researching oral history in China was ‘no easy piece of cake’ (Stave, 1985, p. 147); however, the first two decades of the 21st century have been witnessing the ‘burning’ (Xie, 2012, p. 128) growth of oral history in media representations in general and moving images in particular. The new recording technologies of audio-vision and the alternative exhibiting platforms have been engaging the public to touch the past from subjective perspectives and experiences. In the transformation of Chinese society in the 21st century, undertaking oral history in the cultural practices reveals some important issues about the relationship of tradition and modernity.

Local factors in terms of technology, culture, politics, etc. can affect the embodiment of orality in the moving image, as I found in the case of China, which generated implications for such potential interrelations. In order to specify the interrelations between localized factors and the production/presentation of testimony, I select two different fields of practice for my case studies. One concerns television—as civil servants within the state-owned institution, the media workers articulate the

traumatic histories of revolutionary China, and the other concerns the independents—the artists and the grassroots media activists using digital video to document the alternative traditions of the state-socialist history. Both fields doing oral history in the documentary-film form, they have something in common but they reveal different things about the oral history documentary film. Firstly, in the examples I list in the following chapters, both strands are featured by a commitment to the actuality; the commitment to actuality forms a political aesthetic of ‘documentary realism’, or *jishi*, of the television documentary in the early 1990s, characterized by synch-sound recording in favor of the filmmaker as observer on the scene. While the politics of *xianchang*, which means location shooting, holding a camera on the spot in the present tense consistently characterizes the independent documentaries, the difference between the two modalities of actuality commitment resides in the idea that *xianchang* emphasizes the physical and political involvement of the filmmaker more. Nonetheless, both documentary realism and location shooting underline the importance of the direct encounter, the awareness of preserving a filmic duration for the subject to make self-presentation, and the role of the filmmaker as a witness documenting on the scene. What I especially want to establish through the case studies is how this commitment, with its receding and consistency in practices, affects the presentation of testimony in different contexts of production. Subsequently, because the two strands of case in focus are different in terms of modes of production and exhibition, and cultural and political appeals, analyses on both might lead us to see the variety of the oral history documentary, and the culturally and politically specific managements of the orality in the video.

The systematic practices of collecting oral materials for making histories can date back to the newly established People’s Republic (Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 229);

however, the notion of ‘oral history’, a developed concept for Western societies, was only established into China in the post-socialist 1980s. Oral history as a social-scientific methodology aroused the academic consciousness began with international communications of academic historians. Following the trend of diffusion of Western intellectual models, ‘oral history’ was added to the science encyclopedia in 1987 (Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 233). The visiting scholarships of oversea historians in the 1980s, and the exposure of Chinese historians to international platforms in the 1990s⁴⁹ ushered, although still rarely, a consciousness of oral history professionalism. Bruce M. Stave, amongst the first group of observers who came to China in the post-Mao era, attempting to search for Chinese oral history in the light of modern/Western principles, identified a few spontaneous exercises of oral history-making by historians who were considered marginal (Stave, 1985; Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 228). Nonetheless, the environment for practitioners to dig the histories just past by was not promotional. Stave observed:

Like the buildings in the city of Beijing, everything seems to be behind walls. The difficulty of discovery is certainly compounded if one is unable to read or speak Chinese effectively; the Chinese puzzle is no piece of cake. (Stave, 1985, p. 147)

After about three decades, the new millennium witnessed a mushroom growth of oral history-based practices, encompassing academic and mass media rehearsals (Xie, 2012, pp. 125-126). Oral history-based stories and oral autobiographies appeared massively published in 2003, leading to the ‘burning’ phenomenon of oral history practice (Xie, 2012, p. 128). Something happened in the in-between years of the 1990s that particularly advanced oral history in mass media.

⁴⁹ Historians such as Yang Liwen (a history professor at Beijing University, and one of the early promoters of modern oral history in China) made efforts to introduce the contributions of Chinese oral history to the international picture, at the American Oral History Association Conference in 1999 (Yang L. W., 1999).

A rising social awareness of the need to preserve living memories also benefited from the radical social changes taking place during the transitional period, when the need to define and capture the soon-to-be-lost knowledge of the past and make it available to the public in perpetuity became more urgently apparent. Dissemination of technologies also nurtured such consciousness, such as the mass ownership of audio recording, videotaping, transcribing and circulating devices (Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 234). Nonetheless, it still lack of disciplinary basis, which was not put into agenda until in December 2004, on the ‘First Oral History Forum in China’, after which the non-governmental ‘Chinese Oral History Society’ established (Xie, 2012, p. 128). No oral history institute existed until 2008, when the first research center specializing in oral history, the ‘Institute of Oral History at Wenzhou University’, was launched⁵⁰. Still currently there is lack of a platform on which dispersed oral historians can share practical standards, such as those related to the governance of patent rights of transcripts (Yang X. Y., 2004, pp. 250–251).

As it happens, oral traditions characterize Chinese historical narratives. As Thompson (2000) identifies, royal historian Sima Qian had conducted systematic collections of materials from ‘commoners’ in the 3rd century (p. 31). In the People’s Republic, oral history as a method of creating historical materials from contemporary living witnesses, was re-categorized as the already existing discipline of ‘field investigation’ (*shidi diaocha*), based on collecting oral evidence of twentieth-century revolutionary events, for example, the Taiping Rebellion, the Yihetuan Movement, the 1911 Revolution, and Communist Party-led revolutions (Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 229). These field investigations were basically conducted by governmental and Party-state institutional forces. For example, the national campaign managed by the Chinese

⁵⁰ See in ‘Guonei shoujia koushu lishi yanjiu jigou luohu wenda (The first oral-history research institute settles in Wenzhou University)’. Retrieved from <http://www.zjedu.gov.cn/gb/articles/2008-11-14/news20081114105542.html>

People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) research committee. The results of this were compiled in the *Literary and History Material Series*, documenting oral evidence concerning the histories from the late Qing Dynasty to the foundation of the PRC (Yang X. Y., 2004, p. 231; Yang L. W., 1999).

Oral material collection was an important method applied in the mass movement 'sishi yundong' (a.k.a. Movement 'for the Histories of Village, Family, People's Commune and Factory'), mobilized since 1963 by Party-state and promoted as a part of the class education, mass-participated, compiling histories of and from the people (peasants, workers and soldiers). Particularly, for the commune histories participating the rural socialist education movement, people were motivated to speak family history (*jiashi*) and village history (*cunshi*). Peasants were encouraged to 'express their bitterness' (*su ku*, i.e. narrate personal histories of class struggle) for professional historians, who were sent to the rural areas for recording evidence for the history of the communist revolution. Oral delivery of bitterness forms legacies in the post-Mao era. As Stave (1985) finds, for example, the historians who were active in recording in *sishi* in Mao's era, such as Yang Liwen, maintained the model of social history-making deriving from the mouths of the participants in the 1980s.

The picture of Chinese oral history has been contributed to and complicated by the force fields of popular and grassroots cultures, integrating oral history practice into grassroots journalism, literary reportage, televised living histories, independent documentary, realist fiction features, etc. and having deposited a number of oral materials. For example, reportage literature drawing on 'all conceivable social and cultural issues' (Zhang Y. J., 1993), since the mid-1980s, including historical, benefited from the relaxation of media control and the possibility of individual

expression. Specifically, the ‘dictating literature’ (*koushu shilu*)⁵¹ that was modeled by *Beijing Ren: Yibai ge Putong Ren de Zishu* (*Beijing Profiles: Oral Histories of One Hundred Commoners*, Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye, 1986) and *Yibai Ge Ren De Shinian* (*Voices from the Whirlwind: An Oral History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Feng Jicai, 1991) characterizes the oral history interview-based literature that gained recognition for oral historians as historical materials (Stave, 1985; Yang X. Y., 2004).

Television programs have also been incorporating an increasing number of oral histories. The talk show emerged as a new genre since 1996 (Berry, 2009, p. 73), established a successful model *Tell It Like It Is* (*Shi hua shi shuo*), preparing the moving-image historical writing with ordinary people voicing their personal stories (Berry, 2009, p.74). In general, the talk shows take the form of dialogue between host and the parties of witnesses, to uncover hidden histories, or articulating histories from the below and from the ordinary. *Oral History* (*Kou shu li shi*) of Phoenix Television leads the first paradigm since 2004, excavating underrepresented historical issues, people, and perspectives. Interview-based programs flourished around the mid-2000s, for example, those focus on the life stories of elderly intellectuals include *Great Masters* (*Da jia*) of China Central Television (CCTV) premiered in 2003, *Master* (*Da shi*) of Shanghai Television (STV) premiered in 2006. In addition, *Top Talk* (*Gao duan fang wen*), *Life of Arts* (*Yi shu ren sheng*), *Story of Movie* (*Dian ying chuan qi*), *Kefan Listening* (*Kefan qing ting*), *Tell Your Story – An Appointment with Luyu* (*Shuochu Ni de Gushi – Luyu You Yue*), etc. are in-depth reportage programs basing on stories of public characters or dramatic life-experiences of commoners, against the society with ongoing transformations. In addition, interview inquiry-based television

⁵¹ There had been literary debates in the journal *Modern Literary Magazine* (*Dangdai wentan*) in 1985, on whether such literature should be understood more as historical materials rather than fictions, see e.g. in Yuan (1985), Li (1985).

documentary productions increased since the new millennium, for example, *Liberation! Memories of the folks* (*Jiefang la: Baixing de jiyi*, dir. Jiang Yue and Duan Jinchuan) broadcasted by ‘Witness: Visual Image Records’ (*jianzheng: yingxiangzhi*) of CCTV, returning the public to the historical scenarios (*chang*) (Xie, 2012, p. 129) that are ‘hidden’ or ‘from the below’ (p. 136).

With the cultural and technological decentralization in post-socialist China and the agency of striving for free expression, independent documentary has engaged closely with testimonial functions, documenting subaltern voices since the launching of *Bumming in Beijing* (Wu Wenguang, 1990), in which the testimonial unconsciousness is characterized by interviews by the filmmaker with migrant artists who share a similar identity of being the same ‘vagabond’ (Reynaud, 1996; Reynaud, 2010). The intersection of oral history interview and documentary filmmaking suggests a way to do radical documentary films within the institutional system, for example, Lü (2010) observes that oral history, in addition to ‘archival materials, interviews, and more’, characterizes *The Storm* (Duan Jinchuan and Jiang Yue, 2004), whose directors rooted in independent spirit and historical inquiry appears a new path to make social intervention; with the ‘complexity of history’ with multiple perspectives instead of a linear narrative that facilitates the official perspective (p. 47), the oral history inquiry might create a public sphere within the media systems, negotiating alternative discourses.

Historical films that integrate oral testimonies, complicating the mastery vision that dominates television compilation films, are categorized by Berry & Rofel (2010b) as ‘oral history film’, which had already characterized a few antecedents of the New Documentary Movement, such as *I Graduated!* (Shi Jian and Chen Jue, 1992) and *1966, My Time in the Red Guards* (Wu Wenguang, 1993). The ‘oral history film’

emphasizes archiving alternative histories, touching especially on sensitive themes and ‘explicitly oppositional’ positions, making public records of the hidden memories (Berry & Rofel, 2010b, p. 152). The oral history film particularly characterizes the authorship of radical auteur-documentarians such as Hu Jie, who constantly interrogate the history of PRC, especially political movements, from the victims’ perspectives. Making oral history through documentary, Hu Jie’s practices marks the model of reconstructing histories that have been silenced by official discourses, while Lin Xin does another: constructing collective memories of the victim generations (Cui, 2010, p. 10). Recent documentary oral history practice has also been associated with community revitalization projects. Launched on 13rd October 2008, ‘IFChina Original’ is a project initiated by Jian Yi (a documentarian and collage teacher) to revive communal identity through oral history making and re-telling within the local people of Ji’an Prefecture-level City in Jiangxi Province (IFCHINA Original Studio, 2010). Multiple participatory forms are utilized, including documentary filmmaking, photography, theatrical performing, oral history interviewing, etc. (ibid.) Documentary filmmaking stimulates the spontaneous participation of the ordinary citizens and villagers; the local people utilize digital cameras, creating personal memories and local histories. The participatory model emerging in oral history-based documentary also characterizes the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’ (2009-2012).

Oral history interview has also been utilized to write about the meta-social history of documentary. Historical writings about the development of Chinese documentary, especially those concerning the rising of the New Documentary Movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, were based on, and textually embody, interviews between film historians and documentarians who are witnesses and parties

of the emergent alternative documentary culture in post-socialist China, for example, Fang Fang's *Zhongguo Jilu pian Fazhan Shi* (*A history of the development of Chinese documentary film*, 2003), Lü Xinyu's *Jilu zhongguo: Dangdai zhongguo xin jilu yundong* (*Recording China: Contemporary Chinese New Documentary Movement*, 2003), Wang Weici's *Jilu yu tansuo: Yu dalu jilupian gongzuozhe de shiji duihua* (*Recording and exploring: Conversations with documentarians from mainland China*, 2000), Mei Bing and Zhu Jingjiang's *Zhongguo duli jilu pian dangan* (*Documents of Chinese independent documentary*, 2004), Li Xing, Liu Xiaoqian and Wang Jifang co-wrote *Bei Yiwang de Yingxiang* (*The Forgotten Video Images*, 2006). In practice, such oral history-based interviews prepared not only studies on the independents, the written testimonials, but also the formation of alternative cultures. The interview-based archive impresses the reader with the self-representations of the artists, who were social alternatives in a market economy-oriented society, characterizing the romantic traditions of Chinese independent documentary.

In addition, the testimonial and reflexive qualities of oral history making have also been recognized to identify competing traditions of Chinese Film History. Initiated in 2008, sponsored by the Chinese Movie Channel of State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), and operated by the China Film Archive, the 'Oral History of Chinese Filmmakers' project creates oral reminiscences from the elderly filmmakers, intersecting film history with personal memories of the elderly filmmakers, who are also bearers of social testimonies in the 20th century—a century of film (Chen M., 2010, p. 51). The project stresses the individual and subjective value in recalling histories and constructing historical moments (Chen M., 2010, p. 55).

In the post-socialist China, the modern consciousness of oral history in making new social histories has been portraying both the academic and the cultural-social scenes. Making up the deficiency of institutional and research-based oral history, media conveyers (corporeal, textual, audio, audiovisual, etc.) have been mobilized by non-academic people in their own spontaneous ways. The experiential mode of knowing that characterizes cinematic documentary is intersected with oral histories. The ‘documentary form’ (Zhang Z., 2007, p. 17), finding ‘the shape and meaning of a multifaceted social experience in the era of transformation’ (p. 18), privileges and produces ‘a new episteme’ which is associated with the aesthetics of ‘on the scene’ (*xianchang*); the experiential knowing of the documentary form allows ‘both the filmmaker and the viewer to witness the film as raw life and as a history of the present’ (p. 18). Following Zhang’s assertion that the cinematic mode in contemporary China engenders a witnessing mode of participation and a cinematic meta-form of historiography, I propose that the close intersection of documentary form and oral history recognizes the particular epistemic values of the testimony, as both a historical actor and a social actor performing knowledge about selfhood and traditions against rapid social transformations. With the aesthetics of *xianchang*, bearing testimony for the ephemera of socialist history also reveals phantasmagoria of post-socialist reality. Among the forms of oral history, documentary not only conveys content of historical narratives, working as an evidentiary methodology, but also foregrounds the dialogical mechanism, embodying historical agency of historical knowledge production, foregrounding the meaning of self-performance in social-historical encounters.

Chapter 6. Televised documentary testimonies

Introduction: ‘Documentary Editing Room’ (DER) of Shanghai Television (STV) and ‘Documentary realism’ (*jishi*)

Aesthetically, documentary realism (*jishi zhuyi*) marked a radical gesture in the early 1990s, departing from the old form of illustrated lecture, or the ‘special topics’ (Berry, 2002, p. 122), advocating *vérité* actuality rendered by on-the-spot shooting and synch sound recording (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 5). As Lü (2001) coins, the televised documentary in the early 1990s promoted such aesthetics, and radically formed the ‘television documentary movement’, with its appeals of engaging with the social reality ‘from the below’ (p. 693); documentary for Lü, is the form that embodies the social responsibility of intellectuals to represent *about* the subalterns, distinct from the journalist programs that advocate the authority (ibid.). Such ‘television documentary movement’ includes two models: ‘Documentary Editing Room’ (DER) of Shanghai Television Station (STV), and ‘Oriental Horizon: Life Space’ of China Central Television (CCTV). Both advocated the imaginaries of the commoners – the plebian (*lao baixing*, or, *pingmin*, Fang, 2003, p. 307), the subaltern (*diceng*, Lü, 2001, p. 693), the mass (*dazhong*, Zhang T. D., 2001, p. 838) – and the diversified and diversifying social strata of the time. For Lü (2001) and like-minded observers (e.g. Chen H. Y., 2001), such television documentary movement is signified by the establishment intellectuals (state-owned television system) shifting to representing subaltern populations, from crediting great men and model peasants, workers and soldiers; through the documentary realism they conceded the representational power from the media authority to the subalterns.

Nonetheless, the mid-1990s onwards witnessed the collapse of such radical movement led by the sizable amount of institutional documentaries (e.g. Fang, 2003,

p. 340), which led Lü (2003) to resettle the radical works of the early 1990s under a neoterm ‘New Documentary Movement’⁵², to articulate the independent documentaries’ significant contribution to the radical culture since the end of 1980s⁵³ which connected with and opposed to the television-station systems in many ways⁵⁴ (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 5). Both ideological confinement and commercialization rationale after media reforms formed impingement to radical documentary filmmaking inside the institutions. It seems that the early 1990s characterized a unique period for television documentary programs to be critical and political (albeit confined by institutional mechanisms), and such gesture was associated with the commitment of representing *about* the subaltern subjects with corporeal encounter.

The ‘New Documentary Movement’ designates documentations’ radical acts of truth-articulation, the collective spirit of ‘facing reality’ (Berry, 2002) but in polyphonic voices (Chu, 2007), to a post-socialist⁵⁵ backdrop, particularly the post-1989⁵⁶ dystopia of top-down democratization and post-1992⁵⁷

⁵² The term had already been raised by Dai (1999, p. 227) concerning the documentary works independently funded such as *The Other Bank* (*Bi An*, dir. Jiang Yue, 1995).

⁵³ It started from Wu Wenguang’s *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* which was begun to shoot in 1988 but finished in 1990 (Lü, 2003, p. 4).

⁵⁴ For example, the independent filmmakers Jiang Yue, Shi Jian, Duan Jinchuan, Kang Jianning were based in the television stations but made independent works in their spare time; the independent works *Bumming in Beijing* (dir. Wu Wenguang, 1990), *The Other Bank* (dir. Jiang Yue, 1995), etc. were shot with the equipment freeloading from television stations. See more in Lü, 2003.

⁵⁵ In Pickowicz (1994)’s view on the Chinese post-socialism, it means beyond a time division that demarcates the departure from Mao’s era since his death in 1976 or the beginning of reform decade, but the ‘negative, dystopian cultural condition’ (p. 62) and the social cultural and historical experience of ‘the popular disillusionment with a system’ (ibid.), often times expressed by the cultural forms that signify the deconstruction of Maoist mythology (p. 60). The concept of post-socialism had also been elaborated by Zhang Y. J. as ‘a label of historical periodization; as a structure of feelings (especially feelings of “alienation and disillusion,” confusion and anxiety); as a set of aesthetic practices; as a regime of political economy.’ (2007, pp. 50-54). See more on post-socialism in relation to cinematic articulations in Berry (1994), or in relation to Chinese postmodernism in Zhang X. D. (2008).

⁵⁶ The failure of the Tian’anmen Square protest in 1989 marked an end to elitist solutions to China’s modernization through top-down reform by the Party-state, and a rupture in the modernity of China in the post-Mao era, see for example in Reynaud (1996).

⁵⁷ 1992 was the year when Deng Xiaoping made the famous ‘Tour to the South’ after which China entered a new era of market economy, see for example in Berry & Rofel (2010b, p. 135) or Chu (2007, p. 96). In the mass-media industries, including television and film, 1993 witnessed the launch of a marketization rationale with a reform in state-owned television stations to an ‘independent producer’ regime, see for example in Chu (2007, p. 95).

marketization/developmentalist-modernization. Two aspects emerge to characterize the emergent New Documentary Movement: the commitment of documentarian to emplace underrepresented subjects in the social, and the documentary reality (*jishi zhuyi*) that produces actualities. Arguably, such two aspects are interrelated and associated with the corporeal encounter between the documentarian and the subject in *xianchang* advocating self-representation of either.

‘Documentary Editing Room’ (DER), sponsored by Shanghai Television Station, was the first TV program exclusively producing and broadcasting documentaries in China (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 60). DER premiered on 1st February 1993, broadcasting in the prime time slot⁵⁸ for Shanghai audiences. Other television stations imported the productions of DER through the transaction platform of ‘Documentary Academic Board’ (*Jilu pian xueshu weiyuan hui*) (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 60). Having around 20 staffs, DER holds 52 shows each year (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 307). Before the launch of stable programming, the documentary productions had existed since 1988 in Shanghai Television (Liu, 1994, p. 60), which were under the management of ‘International Department’ (*guoji bu*); the productions were prepared to export (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 59); the discontent to the propagandist reportage but a social advocacy led the staffs to strive for a ‘transformation’ (*bian*, DER Editorial, 2001, p. 308) – having an exclusive platform for documentary aesthetic, production and broadcast – by promoting the notion of documentary as rendering of reality (p. 310), distinguishing from the Soviet style of visualized political argument (Liu, 1994, p. 60) and the high-culture ‘special topics’ (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 310). The former privileged voice-over narration basing on highly designed script, to weave the

⁵⁸ 8:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., see in *Shanghai Television*.

materials for the end of public education⁵⁹. The latter characterizes the socialist realist model of the ‘illustrated lecture’ that were pervasive for television broadcasts in the 1980s, featuring disembodied commentary and scenarios that illustrate the cultural or ideological visions (Berry, 2002, p. 122).

DER documentary in the launch period were affected by the vernacular experience of the average citizens, the international standards of documentary filmmaking imported with the government-sponsored ‘Shanghai Television Festival’ (*Shanghai dianshi jie*), and the decentralization of powers from the central cultural authority to regional television stations through television reforms (Huang, 1994) also encouraged the creative, or autonomous, acts of reality speaking. With those appeals, DER’s concept of reality came to mean existential persons in situated actualities, with which to impress television audiences, the emergent spectatorship of Shanghai that encompassed the trans-border populations.

In the subsequent two decades, DER experienced institutional changes that affected its modes and aesthetics of production, but continued broadcasting actuality-based documentaries, experiencing remarkable longevity. In its first few years, DER’s documentaries gained an enthusiastic reception from the Shanghai public, with the audience ratings of 30–40% of its highest⁶⁰ (Shan, 2005, p. 406). A growing anxiety of positioning DER in the marketization reform of media led to big-budget experiments in the mid- and late-1990s⁶¹ (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 316). As the executive producer Wang Xiaoping confesses, DER faced triple pressure: the official ideology, the market, and authorship (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 88). Facing such dilemma, the program manager began to specify a niche market of DER, consisting in

⁵⁹ See more in Shan (2005), pp. 147-160.

⁶⁰ Whether it is national or regional rating was not indicated; however, in either case, it is significant to have such a number.

⁶¹ For example, e.g. *Entering Africa* (*Zoujin feizhou*, 1997), *Memoirs of the Ambassadors of People’s Republic* (*Gonghe guo dashi huiyi lu*, 2000), *Tangshan Earthquake* (*Tangshan da dizhen*, 2006), etc.

intellectual citizens (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 76); the observational realism that demands time and labor however produces a small rating, faced reduction. Documentary series experimented global models that conquer transnational boundaries of cognition, such as those of the Discovery Channel and National Geographic, became influential for DER productions in the 2000s (Lü, 2010, p. 46).

In general, the late 1990s onwards heralds the waning of television documentary realism (Lü, 2003, p. 23) and the rise of large budgets. DER's deployment of actuality rhetoric should be understood associating with its intersected changes among institution, discourse and aesthetic. In the following, I firstly describe DER in the time of the TV reform of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when documentary mimetically represents the embodied imaginaries to correspond with the emergent *social* among trans-spatial and trans-temporal reality-perceptions, against media power decentralization and socialization. I then sketch DER's institutional and aesthetic changes during 1993–2008, and locate oral history documentary productions in such a sketch. As I observe, war crimes justice forms a continuous motif of DER's productions from early 1990s to 2000s, in which historical inquiry suggests social intervention. In particular, I look at one example articulating such motif: the issue of so-called 'comfort women' survival victims, or the Japanese sexual slaves. I look at the self-performance of the oral testimony within *vérité* and rhetoric, in and beyond 'talking heads'; what I intend to describe is the emergent agency of the documentarian and the testimony (among the subaltern population). Does deploying oral history elements reinforce the radical and committed sense of *vérité* actuality? How the documentary realism affects the way the sufferer's testament beyond 'talking heads'? How does rhetoric reflect the institutional changes, affecting the oral testimony's self-representation?

To illustrate, I focus on four documentary series produced in the 1990s and 2000s that concentrate on the so-called ‘comfort women’ regime of the Japanese military in World War II, on Asian battlefields, and its survival victims: *Half Century’s Homesickness* (Zhang Kunhua, 1994, 80 min); *Remains of Victims* (Song Jichang, 2002, 57 min); *The Sufferers* (Zhang Lai and Su Lei, 2004, 60 min); and *The Scar of Memory* (Ji Zhe and Zhang Chengcheng, 2006, 78 min). The oral testimonies are survival female slaves, whose lives were traumatized in the war, and who live a post-traumatic life in different places of China. Thus for them, confronting traumatic memories and bearing testimony has already been a difficult and radical act of embodying historical scenarios and claiming war-crimes injustice. An authorship of historical documentary-filmmaking with documentary realism also emerges within such motif and within institutional practice, characterizing the embodied act of collecting testimonies of WWII. As Zhang Kunhua, one of the characterizing producer-director of DER in the 1990s, points, the documentary series he directed were to ‘document the imprints of history and time’ (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 265, translation mine); the historical consciousness and the retrospective fashion of historical writing specifies Zhang Kunhua from the other directors of DER in the 1990s, who privileges direct encounter with the testimonies and making interviews to discuss the legacies of WWII⁶².

⁶² Fang (2003) observes, different from CCTV’s *Oriental Horizon: Life Space*, DER did not have univocal authorship (p. 337); but focusing on the local stories of Shanghai did become a common pursuance of a number of DER directors in the 1990s, as the executive producer Liu Jingqi told (Liu, 1994, p. 62). Against that concern on local stories at contemporary time, Zhang Kunhua clearly marked one of the distinguishing author-directors, by making historical documentaries. Graduated in 1963 from Beijing Broadcasting Institute (which was specially founded for producing media workers for the official), Zhang Kunhua held a bachelor of Journalism and worked successively as a reporter in People’s Radio Station of Shanghai and Shanghai Television; for him, the documentary was mainly a reform against the television journalism, and his preoccupation with historical issues works against the superficial reporting (K. H. Zhang, personal communication, July 7, 2012). His historical documentaries took a prominent place among DER directors, for example, he made *The unspeakable attachment to this earth* (*Nanyan heitu qing*, 1996) about the former educated youth in the northeast China, *Where the Soul be Buried* (*Hungui hechu*, 1996) about the Japanese pioneering colonists in the

1. Television culture in Shanghai and the '(re)cosmopolitanism'

Shanghai Television (STV) launched on 1st October 1958 as a state-owned institution. The inauguration of television was to undertake 'political propaganda, education and cultural enrichment' as main tasks (Huang & Yu, 1997, p. 567). However, television sets were scarce; in contrast, radios and loudspeakers were more popular media, especially in the rural regions⁶³. A TV set was a near-luxury item and an emblem of political status, owned by only a few people who were more often than not privileged government officers⁶⁴ (Huang, 1994, p. 567). The inequality of ownership and viewing access in Mao's era can be illustrated by statistics. In 1958, there were only 200 TV sets in the whole of China. Throughout 1958-1976, only 925,000 TV sets were manufactured in total, although the national population reached 700 million (ibid.).

In Mao's era, Shanghai Television Station only ran one channel in black and white, which delivered only twice each week and for 2-3 hours each time (Pan, 1989, p. 102). TV programs largely consisted of newsreels that convey ideological mobilizations⁶⁵. It is ironic that the first documentary program broadcasted on

northeast China, which all deploy retrospective narratives of the testimony to discuss unsolved historical problems, suggesting that personal stories can tackle big issues. *Half Century's Homesickness* belongs to his unfinished 'War and Human' (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 289, translation mine) tetralogy about the legacies of WWII, which also covers *Where the Soul be Buried*. Interview was one of his preferred ways of making retrospective histories, favoring direct encounter with the historical testimonies, even though interviewing them often took the crew to the distant places across and out China and time consuming; see in DER Editorial (2001) for his insistent practices on this method to make *Half* (p. 267) and *Where* (p. 292).

⁶³ It is recorded that in the early 1960s, 70 million loudspeakers were installed nationwide, serving a rural population of some 400 million (Huang & Yu, 1997, p. 564). Loudspeakers intruded on every public place, such as school playgrounds, factories, rice paddies, and rural villages as well as urban areas, and on every social act (ibid.).

⁶⁴ As visualized and immortalized in a scene of the film *In the Heat of the Sun* (dir. Jiang Wen, 1994), which depicts the everyday life of the Cultural Revolution from the perspective of teenagers, specifically the black sheep, Ma Xiaojun (the protagonist) sneaks into a party leader's house and finds a USSR-produced black-and-white TV set there. For a short time, he hesitates about whether to steal it or not. And as he recalls—a testimony woven into the fiction—that house and TV set belonged to the head of a subministry department.

⁶⁵ As Fang (2003) surveys, there are basically five kinds of newsreels in television which favored ideological broadcasting: i. reports on national festivals and activities of Party and government leaders; ii. special topics on important international events, e.g. 'Laos national liberty war'; iii. reports on the

television was called ‘Going to the Countryside’ (Huang & Yu, 1997, p. 566); hardly anyone in the countryside households could receive television broadcasts at that time. Television was exclusively centralized apparatus, of the Party-state, under state administration (Yang M. M. H., 1997, p. 291); networks were nationalized and authoritative. Centralized television followed Mao’s cultural policy that all cultural productions should serve ‘the state indoctrination and the upholding of party policies’ (ibid.), produced educational dogmas; it eliminated social positions into proletarian and bourgeoisie, constructing the discourse of the ‘masses’ or the ‘people’, eliminating the subdivision of social stratum and substituted alternative identities under state discourse.

The post-Mao television reform, depicted by Huang (1994), undertook a ‘peaceful evolution’ to decentralize Party-state discourse. An increasing number of television sets were produced, and in an emergent television culture the repressed desire for expression returned. In 1989, 27.67 million TV sets were produced, with the viewing public reaching 800 million (Huang, 1994, p. 217). Also the constituencies of programs became diverse. Television reform, among the post-Mao decentralization reforms⁶⁶, attempted to decentralize state administration to the regional authorities, changing regulations to offer more autonomy to programming. Held in 1983, at China’s Eleventh National Broadcasting Conference, ‘Four-level development and management of radio and television services’ divided the administrative system into four layers consisting of the central authority, regional (30 provinces), local cities (about 450) and counties (about 1990) (Huang, 1994, p 222).

ethnic minorities’ participation in socialist constructions; iv. reports on national leaders’ diplomatic trips; v. propagandas to promote the ideology of class struggle, e.g. *Rent Collection Courtyard* (1965) (pp. 235-249).

⁶⁶ Other reforms that were proceeding included the relaxation of the housing registration system, which facilitated mobility among regions and between rural and urban areas and prompted the flood of migrants seeking a living, a better life or upward mobility in the big cities.

Managing the finance and production of programs, local television-stations need to connect with the local audiences by locally interested productions. STV in particular, as Berry (2007) observes, was involved in the 1990s in emergent local cultures; in 1992, Shanghai Television produced 1,848 hours' and broadcasted 10,130 hours' programs, in which news (10.86%) and special topics (24.98%) succumbed to entertainment programs (48.48%) in term of proportion (Tang, 1993, p. 112).

Yang M. M. H. (1997) suggests, the emergent TV culture in Shanghai since the 1980s corresponded with the audiences' identification with transnational and trans-spatial experiences and imaginations, constituting and reflecting Shanghai's (re)cosmopolitanism. In Mao's Shanghai under planned economy, urban cosmopolitan cultural life had been radically curtailed. The cause was largely the enforced nationalization of cultural media and elimination of vernacular differentiation. Although Shanghai remained an industrial city, the urbanism featured by modern – 'petit bourgeois' – cultures and communications among people was regarded negative and reduced. Social differentiation carrying diverse experiences, featuring Shanghai's 'dynamic order', as argued by Yang M. M. H. (1997), was suppressed, and regulated borders of geography and social spheres ('horizontal linkages of comradeship') subsumed gender, ethnic and other kinds of differences to a hegemonic state discourse (p. 290). In the post-Mao era, borders, identities, and experiences, faced re-acknowledgement, or re-cosmopolitanizing.

The explosive development of popular media participated in the interactive culture⁶⁷ (Yang M. M. H., 1997, p. 292). For example, the representational strategy of radio transformed from a 'serious voice' to a 'soft, fast-paced chatty style';

⁶⁷ In *Shanghai Culture Year Book* (1989), we can also find a number of records on the mass media's turning towards the communicating of vernacular experiences, for example, the newspaper *Wen Hui Bao* established a column where the citizens (including workers, students, carders, etc.) of Shanghai can post their photographic witnessing on the urban life (Lu, 1989, p. 82).

transnational figures appeared, and a participatory relationship emerged between the radio program's presenter/talker and the audience, actualized by call-in comments that articulated the ordinary people's voices (often with Shanghainese accents). The intersubjective relationship at a social level is implied by such programming, actualized by the spread of new media technologies, such as the widely available cassette recorder, telephone, television and VCR.

The widespread adoption of the telephone also facilitated interpersonal modes of communication and social interaction; educational level, region, locality, gender, occupation, and leisure interests, etc. became categories to recognize the embodied subjects. Documentary programs participated in producing social recognitions; for example, Yang M. M. H. (1997) refers to *Their Home is Shanghai* (Wang Xiaoping, 1994), a production of DER, shot in Tokyo about the Shanghainese working, studying and living in Japan, and suggests the enthusiastic reception of the Shanghai audience ('emptied the streets in Shanghai as viewers crammed in front of televisions when it first aired in early 1994', Yang M. M. H., 1997, p. 295). The exchange of experiences and opinions were embodied on private screens, in which the social subjects 'collectively and vicariously' (ibid.) addressing the viewers, reminding them of the shared identity: Shanghainese.

In the 1980s, television became a matrix bearing the re-connection of communication networks, doing public diplomacy, particularly as a platform of doing international-oriented cultural publicity. From the 1980s, television stations signed contracts with communications corporations in pan-Pacific nations and European, Latin American, and African countries to exchange programs. The contracts assume that the Chinese productions to be broadcasted on the transnational platforms should be accessible, authentic, and attractive, otherwise the international audiences would

not be interested. STV's documentary was affected by such outward-oriented consciousness⁶⁸, and documentary reality was developed under the rationale of international publicity alternative to the past explicitly propagandistic model. Such rationale recognized the active interpretation of the audience, beyond the omniscient didacticism that overlooked the spectator's emotional and cognitive responses. In 1983, the cultural authority – the Department of Broadcasting and Television – passed the 'Summary of the Conference on Outward Publicity of National Television', which propelled the institutional adjustments, especially the establishment of an 'International Department' (*guoji bu*) inside and among layers of television stations.

The documentary departments inside television station systems were also intertwined with, or following in the wake of, new publicity. In 1983, STV launched its 'Documentary Division' (*jilu pian bu*) consisting of staff transferred from the journalism division, based on production experience, and many were senior (Wang, W. C., 2000, p. 310). The following year saw a separate 'Outward-reporting Division' (*duiwai baodao bu*) founded, based on the documentary division. It was after 1987, when the Outward-reporting Division expanded into the 'International Department', with the crew amounting to over 40 people and documentary productions reaching 80 episodes, that the documentary department actually functioned fully (Fang, 2003, p. 334).

Documentary programs as the experience of (re)cosmopolitanism was affected by increasing international exchange. The Shanghai Television Festival, sponsored by the municipal government, was inaugurated in 1986 as a move towards the modernization of television programming as well as urban culture. Arguably, the first two festival competitions not only facilitated encounters between filmmakers in terms

⁶⁸ The oversea public was acknowledged as the 'primary audience' (Liu, 1994, p. 60).

of gaining recognition and filmmaking experiences but also raised aesthetic standards of documentary. Jean Rouch's participation in the review committee, Japanese *vérités*' reaping rewards, the widely acknowledged filmmaking model of 'following, following, and following' (Liu, 1994, p. 62; Wang W. C., 2000, p. 312) disseminated through panel discussions, and through the intensive screenings during the festival period, re-organizing the perceptual mode of the viewers, consisting of the filmmakers and citizens, towards the feeling and cognition of reality signified by actuality. The award winning documentaries are characterized by the observational mode, and the 'democratic ideals' signified by interview format (Waugh, 2011, p. 92), i.e. acknowledging the subject's power in the negotiation with the filmmaker; the observational mode also advocates locating the dramatic and the transformative in quotidian scenarios; observational filmmaking and *vérité* characteristics became aesthetic references for the DER's documentary realism⁶⁹.

The authorial consciousness emerges in association to the filmmakers' articulation of corporeal commitment and agency; advocacy to actuality was a way to signify the identity of documentarian as active social actors not reconciled to script. Zhang Kunhua regards *vérité*-style films stood as an alternative to 'special topics' (K. H. Zhang, personal communication, July 7, 2012). With modernizing connotation, the *vérité* style underlay DER's collective authorship in the 1990s. Wang Xiaoping – DER's executive producer in the early 1990s – asserted that the *vérité* mode was a consensus derived from the audience in the 1990s:

The self-aware era of China's television documentary is around the 1990s, during which time the producers all chose to make "documentary" programs, and the audiences also understood that there was a special mode of program called "documentary". The television station would also reserve an exclusive space and time for the

⁶⁹ The interviews of DER's senior staffs provide more personal experiences of conducting such styles, see in DER Editorial (2001), Wang W. C. (2000).

“documentary”. Everybody talks about “documentary”. I think that was the time of the self-awareness for China’s documentary. (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 69, translation mine)

The establishment of ‘documentary’ articulation can be seen as a consequence of the collective desire to interact with the other social actors. In addition, technologically, the intimacy to actuality had been prepared by the ‘live broadcast’ that was emphasized in the early 1990s. For example, in 1994, there were eight internationally collaborated live broadcasting events held (Ge, 1995, p. 150). In fact, since the late 1970s, for China’s television stations, the turn to Electronic News-Gathering (ENG) system advocated a conception of television programming on live news report in the 1980s towards the climax in 1997⁷⁰; the synch sound actuality transferred from *xianchang* to the small screens hit high ratings (Hu, 2000, pp. 87-88).

2. Institutional and aesthetic changes in DER

Since its launch, DER witnessed institutional changes influenced by the course of STV’s reforms. Four points in time demarcated such changes: 1993, 2002, 2006, and 2009. 1993 is the launching year, and STV began to put relative autonomy in good use, riding a wave of television decentralization. The Shanghai Media Group (SMG) integrated STV and Shanghai’s four other regional broadcast platforms⁷¹ in 2001, and became a multiple monopoly, encompassing radio, television, newspaper, Internet, etc., implementing specialized media programs. Following that, on 1st January 2002, SMG set up ten theme-channels. The Documentary Channel (*jishi pindao*) is one of these channels, in which DER is settled. In 2006, the Documentary Channel changed its operational strategy from *jishi* (vérité) to *zhenshi* (nonfiction), and attempted to subdivide ‘documentary programming’ (Berry, 2007) and develop

⁷⁰ A year witnessed a number of trans-spatial news (e.g. the main river closure of the Three Gorges Project, the turnover of Hong Kong, etc.) (Hu, 2000, pp. 87-88).

⁷¹ Shanghai Orient Television, Shanghai Cable Television, Shanghai People’s Radio Station, and the Oriental Radio Station.

reality-shows and docudramas. In October 2009, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) officially approved SMG's reform to separate production and broadcast systems⁷² which made it increasingly less favorable for DER to guarantee its authorship.

In 1993–2002, specializing in documentary programming, DER synthesized production and broadcast platforms⁷³. Production was subject to principles of both individual authorship and institutional supervision, both privileging the aesthetics of 'real environment, real character, real situation in the real space and time instead of an artistic imagination' (Liu, 1994, p. 60). Such aesthetics of 'returning to the ontology of documentation' (i.e. documentary realism) (Liu, 1994, p. 60) encouraged individual sensibility and intellection in the filmmaking. The staffs could spend several months to a few years and stay in *xianchang*, developing intimacy with the subjects; engaging with social problems was not a financial problem but subjected to the individual consciousness of responsibility (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 298). Engaging with reality was a pursuit for such institutional intellectuals⁷⁴; and a collective commitment to such aesthetic emerged within the editorial board, connecting the executive supervisor with the staffs; documentary was considered as a 'craft' (*zuo pin*) demanding time and committed effort (e.g. DER Editorial, 2001, p. 311).

Liu Jingqi, the founding program supervisor, tells that annually, DER is required to output 40 hours (1994, p. 62). With a limited budget and differentiating itself from the big-budget productions, DER's documentarians self-referentially oriented to film local cultures, specifically the current life of Chinese people in

⁷² SMG integration was broken down into Shanghai Radio and Television Station, and the station-owned the conglomerate Shanghai Media Group.

⁷³ Only a small number of episodes came from other sources, such as the Shanghai Television Festival participants, and the circulated documentaries from other television stations, see in Zhong (2006).

⁷⁴ Most of the seniors of DER were graduated from universities with bachelor or master degrees in journalism or literature; see in Wang W. C. (2000), or DER Editorial (2001).

Shanghai's dynamics. It was necessary to develop the realities at immediate perception to meet the ends of small budget, however, communicate with audience. Documentary filmmakers were citizens, who had themselves witnessed the reform process. Migrants brought diversified cultures and population constituencies to the cosmopolitan Shanghai, and Shanghai underwent a process of urbanization in the transitional era; the housing problem had been serious. Such realities were embodied in DER productions e.g. *Maomao's Case* (*Maomao gaozhuang*), *The Great Relocation* (*Da dongqian*), *Dexing Living Lane* (*Dexing Fang*), etc. The documentarians physically embodied in the urban *xianchang*. Zhang Kunhua (2012) remembers that a stall-keeper in the market recognized his face and expressed a liking for his productions; Wang Xiaoping recalls the same experiences happened on herself and Wang Wenli (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 77).

In 2002, DER was incorporated into China's first professional documentary channel—Documentary Channel⁷⁵. In 2006, the concept of documentary aesthetics and the mode of production changed to nonfiction, detaching from the intimate engagement with actuality. The Chief Director, Ying Qiming, advocated a more efficient and organized mode of production, in order to guarantee profits. He emphasized the necessity for pre-production planning and dramatization devices to promote audience ratings. Bigger-budget historical documentary series were privileged (Xie, 2007). The experiments included *The Tangshan Earthquake* (2006), which took less than two and a half months from pre- to post-production. In contrast, previously a 40-minute episode might take around one year to finish (Ding, 2010). Ying posited the idea that the documentary should necessarily address the élites, such as 'the top-tiers, the cadres and the intellectuals' (Xie, 2007, p. 51), indicating an

⁷⁵ Previously DER was broadcast from STV's Eighth Channel.

orientation towards the high-cultural niche. The rationale conceives documentary as a cultural commodity.

3. DER in the Audiovisual Archives of SMG: the embodied testimonies

Since the mid-2000s STV's broadcasts have been archived as 'assets' in the Media Asset Management Center of SMG (MAMC) (Y. Wang, personal communication, May 10, 2012); the items are mostly digitalized for internal circulation and paid external use, as a whole managed by the Shanghai Audio-Visual Archives (SAVA). Content of the programs are also available to reuse as found footage in the compilation series that are produced by the MAMC (Y. Wang, personal communication, May 10, 2012). Roughly calculated, there should be over 960 broadcasts up to the middle of May, 2012, when the research trip was conducted. However, at that stage, SAVA's digital preservation work had not covered all the broadcasts. Those spanning from 2009 to 2012 had not yet been transformed into digital mode and thus unavailable for me to view. Therefore, the first-time selection was actually done, unintentionally, by SAVA. In the over 800 episodes broadcasted from 1993 to 2008, there are series produced by DER, and a number of films that were sourced from other institutions or independents (Zhong, 2006, p. 61). Each broadcast contained feature and a few minutes' editorial hosting.

My field investigation intends to explore DER's oral history programs, with the criterion that the oral testimony—audiovisual testimony in relation to historical events—has to be embodied in either the typical form of 'talking heads' or the situated enactments of memories. I conducted the exploration among the digitalized items spanning 1993 to 2008—watching documentaries on a computer provided by SAVA. Due to the restricted time of viewing but a big amount of series, such investigation could not promise it an all-inclusive one. However, the found texts are

able to suggest some of the characteristics of television oral history making, particularly in terms of their subject matters and styles of displaying oral testimonies.

I undertook a three-step investigation of the digitalized items to locate the historical documentaries that created oral testimonies. First, text information browsing—scrutinizing the descriptions of the items, which were edited and input by the archive operating staffs—to identify the ones that concern historical events, historical figures, and witnesses. Second, the potential items selected during the first step were examined, in order to verify the available descriptions of the items, and to confirm the ones of concern. In the third step, I browsed all the documentary episodes, from the very first item to the last one, including the excluded ones. A few broadcasts that were suitable for the study were identified in this process, and they were watched in-depth after being identified. Using the three-step selection, some 79 documentary series⁷⁶ were identified as typical oral testimonies shot in *vérité*. Episodes of the 79 series were then viewed in detail for analysis.

For these 79 typical cases, I adopt oral-history interview as an approach and oral history as a radical social advocacy to see the documentary relationship between urban media workers and the subaltern subjects scattered in regions across China. These cases are characterized by presenting oral testimonies as ‘talking heads’ or contingent performance of testament, incorporating or minimizing the documentarians’ presence. In general, in the 1990s, when DER aesthetically relied on *vérité* actuality and observational mode of filmmaking, oral testimonies are mostly captured in their own life situations, such as the elderly people in the villages who witnessed Mao Zedong’s presence in north Shanxi (*Mao Zedong in North Shanxi*, 1993); studio-shot testimonies occur more with expert testimonies, if it occurs; voice-

⁷⁶ The number of episode per series varies from 1 to 15 or more (e.g. *Entering Africa* contains 15 episodes).

over commentary, if there is, is characterized by a strong indication of sympathy, underlying the commitment of the documentary to the subject (matter). Entering the 2000s, studio shooting becomes more common, and the voice-over narration, if there is, acts out storytelling more performatively.

The issues and associated testimonies covered:

- i. 'Comfort women' of World War II and the atrocities enforced by Japanese soldiers (e.g. *Half century's homesickness*, 1994, etc.)
- ii. Japanese veterans and the post-war atonement on war-crimes (e.g. *Man-monster-man: The life of a former Japanese gendarmerie*, 1996; *Wall: In search of former army-men*, 1995; *Wall: Two war memorial museums*, 1995, etc.)
- iii. Japanese war orphans and the relationship between them and Chinese families (e.g. *Stories about two orphans*, 1994; *Stories about Chinese adoptive parents and Japanese war orphans*, 2005, etc.)
- iv. Chinese victims of biochemical weapons and the consequences of Japanese germ warfare (e.g. *In the days of peace*, 2005, *No other choice: Conversation with Wang Xuan*, 2002, etc.)
- v. Chinese laborers abroad under the exploitation of Japan (e.g. *We are still alive*, 2004)
- vi. The Nanking massacre and the victims of atrocities committed by the Japanese army (e.g. *The sufferers*, 2004, etc.)
- vii. Americans in the battlefield of the Sino-Japanese war (e.g. *Revisiting place of refuge: Shanghai Jewish refugees*, 2005)
- viii. Shanghainese educated-youth (e.g. *The unspeakable attachment to this earth*, 1996)
- ix. The atom bomb experiment and the Shanghainese participants (e.g. *Unforgettable years*, 1995)
- x. Shanghai financial and economic histories and the witnesses to the accompanying highs-and-lows (e.g. *Shanghai memories*, 2006)
- xi. Shanghainese soldiers in the East-Zhejiang battlefield during the Sino-Japanese war (e.g. *The memories never fade*, 2007)
- xii. The gangsters of Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s and the people who had personal contact with them (e.g. *The vicissitudes of Shanghai*, 2003)
- xiii. The elderly villagers of Shike Village of Henan Province and their encounters with the migrant collage-students in the late period of the Sino-Japanese war (e.g. *A waiting 61-year-long*, 2007)
- xiv. Mao's days in the northern Shanxi district and the local villagers who had been affected by him (e.g. *Mao Zedong in the north Shanxi*, 1993)
- xv. The western expedition of the Red Army (e.g. *The Red Army in western expedition*, 2006)
- xvi. Movie-going experiences during the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. *We watched films at that time*, 2004)
- xvii. The Tangshan earthquake and the survivors (e.g. *The Tangshan Earthquake*, 2006)

- xviii. Major state events (e.g. the founding ceremony of the PRC) and the witnesses to them (e.g. *Experiencing national affairs*, 2006)
- xix. The last first-lady of the appointed national minority heredity system and her personal history (e.g. *San jie cao*, 2007)

The necessary representational devices of the documentary include:

- i. Voice-over narration: interpretative, dominant, narrative establishing, information providing
- ii. Location shooting: revealing the process of finding oral testimonies and bearing testimonies
- iii. Interviews: locations-shooting and studio-shooting
- iv. Archival materials

Some similarities exist among these categories. In terms of the historical events, common concerns exist about a. the consequences of the Sino-Japanese war as a significant part of the Second World War; b. the histories of revolution from the perspective of the ordinary patriots; c. the local history and cultural identity of Shanghai. The films are characterized by the tension between first-hand testimony's self-representation and the documentary rhetoric's framing of that. The testimony's gestualization on historical memories is conveyed by vérité actuality rather than narrative.

The following case-analyses elaborate on how actuality displays oral testimony in both 'talking heads' and contingent occasions, in this case, about traumatic memories of sexual enslavement; mimetic representation of the identity of victim becomes a radical gesture of claiming justice, in association with committed filmmaking and agentive self-performance. One important reason for conducting analysis on this group of sufferers—the sexual slavery victims—is that this case fits into the summoned spectatorship (Simon, 2005) and the agentive testimony (Sarkar & Walker, 2010), both tending to produce historical subject of agency through mimetic intimacy; as extreme cases they can suggest DER's consciousness of social engagement. Another reason is that around such a controversial historical issue, DER

forms a continuous concern, spreading from the 1990s to the 2000s, which provides a diachronic entry for observing the consistency or inconsistency of documentary realism corresponding with institutional changes.

4. Bearing testimonies for the victim's history

The term 'comfort women' designates the 'brutal regime of enforced prostitution in the Second World War' (Hicks, 1995), the systematic exploitation of female bodies during the colonization or invasion by the Japanese army in the Asia Pacific battlefields. It is believed that close to 200,000 (Chung, 2010, p. 136) women from various Asian countries and regions were violated (Yoshimi, 2000). But this number is indeterminate, which is also addressed in the opening caption of *Half Century's Homesickness*.

The group of military sexual slaves attracted hardly any attention before the 1980s. When the Japanese army was defeated and retreated from the occupied territories, the files and documents regarding the invasion of Asia Pacific territories were eliminated. Diplomatic negotiations also affected the post-war lives of the slaves. According to the Joint Communiqué issued in 1972, acknowledgement of the Japanese Government on the legitimation of PRC is made at the expense of the Chinese Government's waiving of any claim for war reparation in perpetuity (Lind, 2008, pp. 160–161). It was not until August 1991 that the first victim testimony, from a Korean woman named Kim Hak Sun, publicly disclosed the atrocities, and asked for compensation. However, that did not produce an effective official apology or legal compensation from the Japanese Government. In contrast, the survival slaves suffered from social stigma, being regarded as shame, or socially separated (Soh, 2008, p. 148).

The documentaries of concern include eight episodes of four series from *Half Century's Homesickness* (Zhang Kunhua, 1994, 80 min), *Remains of Victims* (Song

Jichang, 2002, 57 min), *The Sufferers* (Zhang Lai and Su Lei, 2004, 60 min), and *The Scar of Memory* (Ji Zhe and Zhang Chengcheng, 2006, 78 min). I will firstly unfold analysis on the first series, in terms of the rhetoric and narrative, self-performance in vérité actuality ('talking heads' testimonies and other memory enactments), and textually embodied documentary relationship; analyses on the rest three will be compared to the first one about these three aspects.

4.1. Plot, narrative, rhetoric

Half Century's Homesickness narrates the melodramatic life of a former sexual slave Li Tianying. She was born a Korean named Zheng Gaihua, but was kidnapped by the Japanese military in 1938 and enslaved in a 'comfort station' located at Zaozhuang City of Shandong Province in China. For the next half century, she suffered from sexual violence and spiritual dislocation, during and after World War II. After escaping from 'comfort station', Li Tianying migrated and ultimately settled in an underprivileged village called Kangmiao, in Anhui Province, got married with a widower Guan Chaoxin in the 1960s. The couple depended on each other living a life in poverty. However, traumatic memories haunted her post-traumatic life, and nostalgia, as psychiatric disorder, persecuted her daily life. She was supported by the local authorities and kept in hospital in 1970s during the breakdown, where, dramatically, she was found by a middle-aged man Li Shaolin, who lost his own mother and took care of Li Tianying as his adoptive mother despite himself living in poverty. In the current living house, Li Tianying bore on-camera testimony for the historical scenarios of sexual violence.

DER intervened and managed the trip to Korea that Li Tianying expected badly, for finding her families. The trip in Korea is both one of finding families and

one of making testaments. Li Tianying was brought to the Busan Quay where she recalled the memories of being kidnapped decades ago, visited the Korean survival-victim community of ‘comfort women’ (six women living in Seoul), visited the graves of her father and brother where she got into hysteria out of sorrows. She found herself concerned about her Chinese husband and at last departed from her Korean families and returned China. In the airport, her adoptive son had already waited for her arrival.

This series is still influenced by the compilation and ‘special topic’ rhetoric, suggested by the mastering voice-over narration, the disembodied male voice. Illustrative captions, archival footage, expert testimony also appear in the diegetic orchestration. The devices of legacy are deployed to represent the subaltern woman as a victim of Fascist history. The argument is, ‘Each single “comfort woman” is a history’, as the voice-over delivers; the life story of the survivor is a metaphorical display of the grand history of the victims. The narrative dramatizes the transformative moments of Li Tianying’s life: the fugitive trip, adopting a Chinese son, the trip back home, etc. each was actualized by the support from the government and social forces, and the film is an embodied social caring. The documentarian as a role actively intervening into the sufferer’s realities is embodied by the presence of the filmmaker Zhang Kunhua, who is foregrounded as a textual character since his appearance in conversation with the host, introducing the off-camera stories of filmmaking, particularly, he shares his experiences of being moved by the ‘miserable life’ of Li Tianying. The filmmaker as the textual performer was a convention of DER in the early 1990s, characterizing the communicative gesture of the documentarian intending to engage with the responses of the public.

Inscribing the author as a textual persona reinforces the narrative authority of the voice-over of the feature; so is its cognitive and emotional focalization on the victim. But less overwhelming, the disembodied voice-over performs a liminal vision, sometimes sympathetic, on the life of Li Tianying, in a way a figural equivalent of the empathetic witness. It emphasizes Li Tianying's desire for finding the lost identity through locating her family. For example, when she found neither parents nor brother were still alive, she began to look for them in the objects that could convey their living traces, such as photos. The voice-over bears Li's sorrow: there is no trace of her family, not even one picture portrait.

The narrative intensifies the misery of Li Tianying as her desiring for identity. As a sexual slave, she lost selfhood; in post-trauma, as a diasporic woman in China, or in the search trip at Korea, she could not retrieve the roots (diegetically, her brother) either. However, the film ends with a melodramatic scene of reunion—her adopted son, anxiously waiting at the arrival gate at the airport, welcomes her with tears and hugs—which visually implies the sense of belonging between Li Tianying and China which cared for her life. Whilst such a happy ending is only partly true; the subsequent story was that Li Tianying broke up with her Chinese families and went to Korea again, but could not find a fine place to spending remaining years till death. Zhang Kunhua tells that what he wants to represent in *Half* is the 'humanity' (*renxing*) and 'the scar of history' (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 295), correspondingly, Li Tianying's life was materials tailored to represent the important issues.

4.2. Intentional and contingent testaments conveyed in actuality

4.2.1. 'Talking heads' testimony: the accented memory in verbal and gestural performance

Although Li Tianying's bearing of testimony in the interview does strengthen the narrative's appeal of a victim's story, as Zhang Kunhua notes, his filming of 'talking heads' testimony was indeed loaded with the intention of making testament (K. H. Zhang, personal communication, July 7, 2012). At first he worried that Li Tianying would not open her private memory of bodily suffering to the camera, so he planned to leave only the female sound-recorder to stay with Li to record the testimony off her guard, and he had already prepared to sacrifice the image in order to capture the voluntary disclosure of her traumatic experiences in the 'comfort station'; however, he was impressed by the 'courage' of Li, who accused of 'the Japanese army's brutality in a tearful voice', where he perceived the 'strong' character of the victim (DER Editorial, 2001, p. 267). Presenting the positive character of ordinary people fits into the mainstream values; but the agency of the victim to bear testimony and release suffer to the other social actors is also explicit. Such agency could not emerge without the trust and rapport with the documentarian who approached the testimony with committed presence.

In the location-shot 'talking heads', Li Tianying tried hard to settle her mental state and bodily agency down to a rational narrative, enacting the historical scene of exploitation, and the post-traumatic suffer was spontaneously revealed. The subtitles strive to re-present her narration with coherent and sense-making words, although her voice is heavily accented. As a diasporic Korean in China, although she speaks Chinese, it is hard for the listener to recognize exactly her pronunciations. The accent brought forth her difficulty of speaking and dislocated self-identity with the loss of mother tongue and lack of Chinese oratory literacy, hence suffering alone. Spontaneously she mobilized her body—facial features, limbs, hands, legs—to perform the words that she cannot articulate.

To bring forth the historical scenes of being enslaved, rich bodily representations were mobilized. I bracket her bodily acts to indicate the simultaneous gesturalizations accompanying her oral enactment:

At the age of 15, the Japanese soldiers played a dirty trick on me and drugged my soup. Two to three Japanese caught me and forced the drug into my mouth [she presses her mouth with fingers]. Later, I became aware that after having that drug, I would never be able to give birth anymore. And afterwards, one night, they dragged me to a room. I knew something was wrong and was so scared I was trembling, but too afraid to try to escape. Then a Japanese officer with a beard entered, wearing a bathrobe [her voice trembles and her lips quiver], followed by a woman. I cried, “Sister, please help me”, but that woman not only never helped but kicked me instead [she imitates with the upper body inclined to the right of the shot and the lower part of the body stretching to the left]. She kicked me and closed the door and left. Then the officer kept my body under his weight and attempted to kiss me. I bit his face and he slapped me [she acts a few empty slaps towards her cheeks left to right]. He held me in arms and I bit him. He tied my legs up, and my hands, and raped me. This caused a large amount of blood [she then cannot help but sob too much to speak, and she hides her face behind her hands and handkerchief]. I could neither die nor live well, imprisoned in a room with nothing. From then on, the Japanese took me one after another, they took me one after another. I have no way to describe it. I was forced to receive a dozen people. And the “comfort station” got sacks of money from them and took it away [a close up of her fingers, which are twisting a small branch of wood]. One time they drugged me with sleeping pills and I fell into a coma. Then how many people raped me, I never knew. It was in the winter, they threw me in the yard after destroying me, tying my feet and hands up. I woke up in the morning and began to realize I was ruined as such [her fingers twist the wood, and following the camera, her face enters our vision, which falls silent again and displays unspeakable sorrow]. (quoting from *Half Century's Homesickness*, translation mine)

The difficulty of articulating memories is embodied in the talking heads, in addition to the story itself, demanding the spectator to identify. Current oral remembrance, as embodied, was constantly interrupted by the haunting past, causing moments of hysteria such that she could not continue but began crying. Nonetheless, the patient camera, as empathetic spectator, created a rapport for her to continue. Zhang Kunhua recalls that he intended to deploy the smallest possible crew (only himself and the cameraman) and the most peaceful environment (her living room where she felt

settled), excluding anything unnecessary, to make Li Tianying feel at ease and speak her mind (K. H. Zhang, personal communication, July 7, 2012).

4.2.2. Singing with remnant Korean-language, dancing with the visceral-language

The film captured actualities that carry Li Tianying self-representation on her identity, within which the audience are engaged empathetically by the bodily performance of Li. In daily hysterics, she was unable to verbalize the trauma, but releasing her passion by crying out and singing Korean songs. The act of singing the song embodies a past that she cannot speak about. By singing, she expresses the pain of deprivation:

The brother is about to go on a long journey,
Leaving his homeland.
When to return?
There were drizzles,
The sister just arrives,
But he has already parted from mother. (quoting from *Half Century's Homesickness*, translation mine)

Semantically, words bring into being a mimetic imaginary of the historical scenario when she was kidnapped and separated from her Korean family by the Japanese army. The lyrics interpret the sorrows of loss in her memories. She transfers the unspeakable experiences to performance of suffering—a way to release the pressure of trauma.

Singing together with the community of ‘comfort woman’ survival victims, they mourn. The mimetic effect appeared when the tears of Li Tianying bring forth the other sufferers’. Unable to speak Korean, Li Tianying is incapable of interacting with the others with semantic words, but singing saves her from alienation. Clapping to the beat of Li Tianying’s rhythms:

With a home unable to return,
unable to return,
cannot return any more (quoting from *Half Century's Homesickness*, translation mine)

The contingent actuality conveys the spontaneous self-representation of the sufferer encountering the other social actors including the cameraman. The first day that Li Tianying arrives in Korea, she was provided and put on national dress—chima jeogori—which activated Li Tianying’s femininity and ethnical identity in front of the spectators of *xianchang*: Piao Xuanling, Jin Yuandong, and the cameraman; dancing for the spectators in the dress reinforces her selfhood. Horizontally raising and stretching her limbs, clapping her hands, swinging and pausing her body to the triple-meter tempos of ‘Doraji’ and ‘Arirang’—two popular folksongs inherited from ancient Korean peoples—Li Tianying dances from memory. The rhythms of body movement and lyrical vocalization characterize Li Tianying’s cultural blood. The camera(man) moves together with the rhythms of her bodily choreography. Jin Yuandong claps his hands and Piao Xuanling joins in the singing. They are moving with and moved by Li Tianying’s body and voice. The intersubjective interactions viscerally bring forth bodily identification, and camera embodies such ephemera of physical dialogue.

4.2.3. Collaborating to re-present memories

Physically engaged with the performance of the testimony, and embodied as an active intervener, the documentarian inscribes himself as a secondary testimony on the spot. Although Li Tianying had long-time wish to find out the life-saver in Zaozhuang City, she did not actualize that until Zhang Kunhua contacted with the local media and found an informant. Moreover, the filmmaker was physically present in the frame, explaining Li Tianying’s request to the informant, which is actually a re-presentation of Li’s life history. The camera also collaborated with the other social actors on the scene to evoke Li Tianying’s testament. At the Busan Quay, responding to the request of Jin Yuandong, she brings forth memories of being abducted at the

airport when she was 13. In the dialogical fashion, Li answered Piao Xuanling and Jin Yuandong's questions about the historical scenario by re-presenting that with limbs, imitating what she was like under the kidnapping of the Japanese soldiers. She also puts the handkerchief on her eyes and shakes her fists at Jin's neck—the Japanese soldier bound her eyes with covers and threatened her with death. She uses the handkerchief and her limbs creatively to bring forth the historical *mise-en-scène*.

Undoubtedly, the dramatic performance of Li Tianying's testament to accuse of the Japanese war crimes, and the therapeutic journey of home returning, invested to DER's documentary culture and audience ratings⁷⁷, and also Zhang Kunhua's authorial reputation⁷⁸. As filed, the six-month filmmaking that involved four staffs moving across spatial borders was highly organized by the documentarians. For example, the interviewing that disclosed sexual violence; the actualization of Li Tianying's trips of root seeking. And the film did not avoid but present off-camera information to the audience, within which the persona of the television documentarians as intimate social actors was enacted. The film actively produces such imaginary that the media workers share their power with the subaltern subjects, and the boundary of self-other melted when social actors engage with each other. In a way, the documentary embodied a social theater where spectators are also actors, each active of playing oneself. For example, Piao Xuanling, a Korean female student in Nanking University, having read the stories of Li Tianying on the newspaper, found Li and raised donations for her. She endeavored to find Li's families and took on the role of Li's translator, interpreter, and companion through the journey in Korea. She

⁷⁷ As noted by the reporter Zhang Qineng of *Shanghai Television*, *Half* 'created a big stir once it was broadcasted' (Zhang Q. N., 1994, p. 6).

⁷⁸ *Half Century's Homesickness* is credited as one among the number of representative works of DER by almost each scholar writing on the introduction of DER, particularly of DER's perspective on the plebian, however without close analysis and recognition of its value of being a testimonial; for example, see Fang, 2003, p. 335; Shan, 2005, p. 405; etc.

embodied a persona of grassroots activist, and such a persona mimetically represented the social engaging gesture of the documentary culture.

4.3. The difficulty of articulating traumatic memories

Remains of Victims is about the activism and difficulties of collecting testimony; it foregrounds two embodied historian-activists—Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, a research-professor couple located at the Shanghai Normal University—to develop narrative clues and to bear witness and social action for the victims. Conducting physical research in filed works, through oral history methodology, the couple has been committedly engaged with the survival victims of ‘comfort women’. In the film, the victims are scattered geographically in different provinces, and the bearings of testimony mostly engender in their current living environments or the former sites of ‘comfort station’. The testimonies are unfolded episodically, emanating from the dialogues with the interlocutors (historians) whose journeys of interrogation brought forth their situated and ephemeral disclosures of testimony.

The difficulty of facing traumatic past and opening trauma is a theme of the documentary representation. But such theme is conveyed by juxtaposition of actualities. Different from *Half*, the film has no voice-over narration but richer in visual mise-en-scène, such as camera movement, lighting and re-enactments that imitate the victims’ psychologies; it presents the difficulty of recalling trauma through the performance of the subject which is conveyed by the vérité actualities, and reinforces that by repetition of occasions. The film deploys pathos of fact as its rhetoric, relying on the moving bodies and voices of the subjects to move the audience to interpret the narrative and identify with the embodied characters.

There are seven embodied bearers of testimony who survived sexual exploitation but led a haunted life in their twilight years—Yuan Zhulin, Li Xiumei, Zhao Runmei, Li Lianchun, and the diasporic Koreans Yi, Jin and He. The difficulty of articulating memories comes first from their present mental and physical problems inherited from WWII, which led to different attitudes and collaborations with the interlocutors, affecting the ultimate evidence-collection. The observational filmmaking foregrounded the interplay between the historians and the testimonies.

In September 2001, in order to obtain evidence for filing a lawsuit towards the Japanese military, Chen Lizhen travels with Yuan Zhulin in search of memories to the former site of the ‘comfort station’ where Yuan lived—Echeng in Hubei Province. The difficulty of identifying the site that was covered by wilderness parallels the pain of opening memory-scape. The female historian acted more like a social worker, or intimate friend of Yuan, who touched her back, and fell into tears, responding to Yuan’s testament, performing a committed social spectator of sympathy with corporeal interactions. By black-and-white color, slow movements such as panning, capturing the flickering shadows on the walk, the film visually imitates Yuan’s perception to terror and endless violence, her sensuous experiences of horror, shame, in the historical scenarios. Such re-enactment corresponds to Yuan’s portrayal of being sexually abused, the kicks and knocking on the door and the walls by the soldiers, which sometimes were interrupted by the hysteria.

Yuan’s tearful and weighty memory enactment is intercut with the other survivors’ testament, implying a collective identity of sufferer. Chen Lizhen’s husband Su Zhiliang, approached Li Xiumei and Zhao Runmei in Yu County of Shanxi Province. Su encountered resistance to remembering and the documentary hints at the everyday mechanism of silence: Li Xiumei had to lower her voice in front

of her husband when providing evidence to Su, and Zhao Runmei's son-in-law stopped Su's interrogation and confesses that each time Zhao recalled the past she became bodily and mentally ill for a long time. Su Lizhen was stopped at the gate of memory as well. Jin's adoptive son stopped her remembrance, as he was afraid that his mother could not tolerate the suffering of the psychological and physical effects of recounting the trauma, and was skeptical about the practical effectiveness of the war-crimes lawsuit. Nonetheless, Jin's son manifested that although he would pass on the truth of the sufferings of Jin to his descendants and ensure that they remember them. He embodies the next generation responsive of bearing secondary testimony.

The lost-and-found memories obtained from the bodily presentation of the testimony, as evidence are to be collected and documented, for filing a lawsuit against the Japanese 'comfort women' regime, which had already been conducted in 1995, and some sufferers, such as Li Xiumei, went to Tokyo to do that. However, on 30th May 2001—while the film was being made—the local court of Tokyo rejected the victims' appeal. The difficulty for the survival victims to articulate came also from the denial of the Japanese Government. However, the non-governmental activists still hold faith in claiming justice through judicial system and act to collect the testimonies before their dying out. The historian couple journey to Li Lianchun, located in Tengchong City of Yunnan Province. The melodramatic post-traumatic life of Li Lianchun enhances the pathos of bearing testimony: socially discriminated, lost husband and son. And the dramas were witnessed and accounted through the voice of Li's daughter-in-law. With such pathos, Li Lianchun appeared like a heroine, actively requesting the return of her 'reputation, youth, and body of great treasure'. A sense of lost-and-found-ness is intensified.

Like in *Half*, the film embodies the documentarian as agency of remembering and remaking history, but unlike *Half*, it more identifies with the historians, who endeavored to collect testimonies and promote the recognition of war crimes justice. Re-enactment emerged in this filmmaking as a new element of compilation techniques, in addition to its uses of archival footage. Eliminating the authoritative voice-over, the film poses radical stance through intertitles, subtitles and camera movements, and advocate the sufferers and activists by keeping intimacy – an act of witnessing. The affective quality of actuality reinforces the significance of intersubjective dialogues unfolded between the social actors, and the significance of the struggles for articulation as a collective effort among social actors.

4.4. Trans-border identity and cosmopolitan motherhood

The Chinese title of *The Sufferers* literally means ‘The Suffering Mother’, and as this indicates, the female sufferers are treated as a generalized subjectivity of motherhood. The film addresses such motherhood as a cosmopolitan identity beyond nationhood: heterogeneous victim experiences across geographical boundaries (various places of China and Southeast Asia, e.g. Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, etc.), and blending historical occasions (incorporating the rape of Nanking), are presented in the film. Motherhood as the traumatized collective identity is embodied melodramatically by the post-trauma female-bodies striving for bearing testimony. The film inscribes the trans-border historical studies to emphasize the social consciousness of reconstructing motherhood through cosmopolitan collaborations.

The heterogeneity of individual suffering is emphasized by the juxtaposition of ‘talking heads’ testimonies. The audiovisual testimonies of Zhao Runmei, Li Xiumei, He, Yi, and Jin in *Remains of Victims* are reused in this documentary. In

addition, more lost-and-found memories are displayed by the firsthand and secondary testimonies—Zhu Qiaomei (a Shanghai victim), Chen Jinyu (a Hainan victim), Lin Shenzhong (a Taiwan victim), Virginia Jungo Fabella (the daughter of a Filipino victim), Beatriz Tuazon (a Filipino victim), Zhang Xiuying (a victim in the Nanking rape). The social actors become secondary testimonies in the film: Chen Zhihou (an NGO member), Shu Man (a Chinese student studying in Japan), and Tamaki Matsuoka (a Japanese high-school teacher and a social activist devoted to raising public recognition on Japanese atrocity of the Nanking Massacre). They are firstly witnesses of the victim testimonies and further committed re-tellers of that.

Like *Half*, the documentary mobilizes the disembodied voice-over to provide extra-visual information and create narrative identification; in this case, the female voice-over rhetorically unites different agencies of social and historical actors in a calm and soft tone, emphasizing solid transnational efforts. Independent documentary footage is used as found footage of historical evidence in this film, e.g. the testimony of Zhang Xiuying in the Japanese court, concerning the sexual violence of the Japanese soldier did to her body, derived from Shu Man's independent documentary *The Dust of Memory* (2001).

With the affective images of the testimony, the micro narratives rich in details, the narrative foregrounds the histories of 'our mother's' suffering against the aggressively masculine Japan. The sufferings of corporeal bodies and existential lives, from trauma and post-trauma (e.g. social discrimination), are motifs already been explored in the earlier two films on 'comfort women', but here framed in a new discourse which emphasizes the passing of memories in a broader society living in post-genocide. Su Zhiliang's expert testimony provides a critical cognition entry to understand the genocide and post-genocide legacies of the Japanese army—the

traumas left to bodies, fates, families, and leading to a certain postwar social-death. This film displays the academic and social activists as determined actors to work against oblivion. They are not only the listeners but also evoke public space where more listeners can have access to the voices of the sufferers, for example, the conference held in Shanghai—‘The Second Academic Conference on the Japanese Responsibilities for Its Military Invasions in Asia’ (18th–20th September, 2003)—that aggregated transnational scholars’ efforts. The Japanese woman Tamaki Matsuoka characterizes a grassroots activist working beyond national border and identity, who attempts to make the Japanese public aware of the factuality of the wartime crimes but has her life threatened for doing so. In creating a public discourse and a space that echoes the transnational efforts from cosmopolitan actors, the film in a way develops the trans-border affectivity and identity underlying the subject matter of ‘comfort women’ atrocity which *Half* did not emphasize.

4.5. Contingent testimonies as found footage in docudrama

The Scar of Memory concentrates on the issue that the ‘comfort women’ atrocity leaves an unbearable scar in its aftermaths; by enacting how the traumatic memories of Pak Yong Sim—a North Korean born victim—were uncovered with collective efforts across China, Japan, Korea and beyond, the film suggests the ethical witnessing embodied in action, and obtaining evidence for claiming war crimes can transcend the unbearable trauma. For the survival victim, remembering is a kind of suffering at present, which nonetheless reflects the agency of striving for testament as more a transformative act.

The film traces the origin of three photographs on which a woman bears resemblance to the survival victim Pak Yong Sim, who contributed her testimony to

the ‘Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japanese’s Military Sexual Slavery’ (8th–12th, December, 2003, Tokyo, Japan). She was abducted as a sexual slave by the Japanese troops in WWII, firstly positioned in the Nanking ‘comfort station’ and then taken from Nanking, through Burma, to Dianxi (the west Yunnan Province), across Longling Country, Mengliang Country, and the Songshan mountains region, with the other enslaved women. Pak’s movements during her abduction by the Japanese army keep step with the Japanese military operations, witnessing particularly the years 1942 to 1944—observing the history of Japan’s invasion of Western Yunnan.

Comparing to the attempt to locate the dramatic and transformative moments by filmmaking, this film relies more on filmic devices to dramatize the story; in contrast to the more reportage style in terms of presentation that characterizes *The Remains of Victim* and *The Sufferers*, this series is unfolded more like a docudrama which although bases on the real life of the people of concern, relies on staged and dramatized re-enactments of the historical scenarios to a great extent. The studio-shot expert testimonies dominate ‘talking heads’, in comparison to which, the location shooting and actualities become more like found footages, or narrative instrument, for the film.

The male voice-over narration tries to project a skillful storytelling performance, prolonging narrative suspense and dramatizing the subjective status of the characters who present themselves in the ‘talking heads’. The location shooting captured the bodily testament of the narrative focus, the testimony Pak Yong Sim, while the witness and expert testimonies are shot in studio, detaching from existential environments, and thus reducing the proportion of vérité actuality and saving shooting period. The documentary realism is only deployed in filming the trip of Pak’s

testifying to China, however which is tailored by the overall storytelling into pieces and as illustrative devices. The black-and-white re-enactment of historical scenarios, archival footage illustrations, melodramatic music are used to create and reinforce audience's cognitive and emotional engaging. To prolong suspense, the storytelling is mastered into three stages and the film is accordingly divided into three broadcasts: i. discovery, ii. investigation, iii. testifying.

The first broadcast re-enacts the discovery of the photos in Tengchong. During the deadly Battle of Songshan after 4th June, 1944, one American army photographer took a photo that captured the image of four fugitive 'comfort women', among whom there is Pak Yong Sin, who is pregnant with a big belly; the photo was published entitled 'A Songshan Pregnant "Comfort Woman"'. Several decades afterwards, a reporter, Li Genzhi of The Baoshan Daily, discovered another three photos, in the possession of the Xiong brothers, whose father managed a photo studio in the early days of the war at Tengchong City. In 2003, about one month before attending the 'Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery' in Japan, which was dedicated to collecting war crimes evidence to file a lawsuit against the Japanese military, a local historian Chen Zuliang received the photos from Li Genzhi and brought them to the conference. Surprised by the figural similarity, he approached Pak Yong Sim who was attending the conference to gain her testimony. Although Pak excitedly claimed that the women in the different images are all herself, it was not enough to use the photos as evidence: there had to be both witness testimony and physical evidence. But if it could be proved that the Pak is the same person in the photos in Tengchong, and the photo in Baoshan, then both her testimony and the material evidence of the photos would be powerful evidences for testifying against the Japanese war crimes.

The second episode positions the Japanese activist Rumiko Nishino's activity of pursuing material evidence for testifying Pak's testimony as narrative clue. Rumiko Nishino's efforts to obtain evidence structure the transnational event of uncovering Pak's scarred memory. But her actions are presented by Ge Shuya, a grassroots expert on Yunnan-Burma War History, who participated in the collection of evidence with Nishino. This meta-vision of Ge Shuya is a convenient way to display the past event of Nishino, as a lack of materials of location shooting, and also to dramatize the narrative moments about the historic scenes. From Ge's recollection, we know that Nishino traveled from Japan to North Korea to collect Pak's descriptions of the details of her experienced space, time and people, which would demand large amount of time and budget to be on the spot to film.

As Pak remembers, a young Chinese groom (the term for an enslaved male laborer) saved her. So Nishino made a visit to Yunnan in China, particularly Dazhai Village in Songshan, where she found an elderly man, Li Zhengzao, who was an enslaved laborer for the Japanese troops and saved the lives of several Korean women. In order to testify that Li can be reliable witness-proof for confirming the accuracy of Pak's testimony, Pak was transported from North Korea to Baoshan, accompanied by transnational historians and activists from Japan, China and North Korea, to revisit the former sites of 'comfort women stations' along the route of the invasion and occupation of Japan from 1942 to 1944, and verify the consistency of oral testimonies and material evidences. The route taken to revisit the sites is also a route of remembering traumatic experiences and opening the 'scar'. The contingent testimonies took place when Pak recognizes the Dayakou 'comfort station' where she was imprisoned even though it was dismantled.

The third episode contains flashbacks (re-enactments in black-and-white) to the historical scenarios that chronicle the life of Pak: from her being tricked and kidnapped from North Korea to Nanking, to the shot of ‘A Baoshan Pregnant “Comfort Woman”’. Li Zhengzao’s recollection is shot in studio, juxtaposing to the re-enacted scenes according to Pak’s memoir about the fugitive history. Li brings forth, by gesturalization and vocalization, of memories about the romantic moments among sufferers in the atrocities; for example, sometimes the male laborers were allowed to communicate with the sexual slaves, who sang songs to release pains. Sometimes the girls invited Li to sing, and to dance with them. The humanity emerging from narratives is captured and reinforced by the rhetoric through visualization (re-enactment) on the transcending moments. The film tries to emphasize the transformative quality of ethical communication in the brutality and the spontaneous friendship of Li and Pak, which nowadays functions as the core of the transnational war crimes justice reclaiming activism.

Conclusion

Documentary realism that privileges *vérité* rendering of *xianchang* can be occupied by the victim person to represent knowledge about the past and the self. The symptoms of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) that constantly affected the elderly survivors of Japanese sexual slavery, for the narrative rhetoric, are devices to reinforce a story of a victim; however, embodied in the actuality, they deliver testimonials that were beyond the filmmaker’s intention. As the case of trauma suggests, personal experiences and memories as evidences of atrocities are many times unspeakable; the semantic content conveyed in ‘talking heads’ is not enough to construct historical knowledge, the somatic testament become important for revelation, which are enacted by the body and often contingent, necessarily consisting

in corporeal interactions with the other people and environmental elements in *xianchang*. As *Half* suggests, it is in the corporeal relationship with the filmmaker that the spontaneous gestualizations emerge, and would disclose ephemeras of personal history and subjective memory that are hard to verbalize, especially for the subjects who are lack of linguistic literacy but rich of bodily expression. The documentary realism and intimate documentary relationship were crucial for the somatic testaments.

But coming to the later three series in the 2000s, there appeared some major changes that reduced the proportion of documentary realism. Firstly, the self-reference of the filmmaker as a textual property conveying the image of intimate media authority disappeared. In the 1990s' production, the inscribed media worker of intimacy to the subaltern corresponded with the decentralization of media authority, and appeals of the emergent diversity of social strata in the 1990s; against the intention of governmental authority to redefine its relationship with the people, DER's documentary raised advocacy to victim rhetoric, claiming the social responsibility of bearing witness for the subaltern populations and social problems. The case of 'comfort women' survivor was treated as a part of the victim rhetoric, from which the topic of social caring emerged within the personal and historical story that related official and nongovernmental forces (local authority, media authority, grassroots activists) on the small screen. Whilst in the 2000s, when DER targeted white-color intellectuals and effective mode of production, the three later documentaries on 'comfort women' emphasized more on documentary professionalism that increased storytelling and dramatization devices (e.g. the introduction of re-enactment, studio-shot 'talking heads', etc.) but decreased *vérité*. While actualities (from various sources, including DER's former productions) became

treated as found footage, as evidentiary or narrative devices, emplaced under the overwhelming narrative.

Such rationale reveals that the somatic testament's evidentiary quality was acknowledged and deployed by the documentarians, and also brought out the new rhetoric: the discourse of cosmopolitanism underlying the transcending social actions on war-crimes justice that jointed trans-border forces. The discourse around the relationship between the official and the subaltern was attenuated by the discourse around the trans-national; the oral testimonies for the victim rhetoric was taken as transformative power in the rhetoric of social suffering that regarded survivors as historical legacies, and the 'comfort women' issue carried the expectation of constructing ethical community in post-genocide, in addition to personal suffering and striving for self-representation in post-trauma. The inscribed characters of grassroots intellectuals and nongovernmental actors mastered interpretative authority to unfold the documentary narratives, in the latter three series, corresponding to the widened historical studies that moved from the emphasis on bearing evidence for historical controversy, to social actions on war crimes justice in post-genocide, in which the trans-border intellectuals played the role of agency to approach the survival victims and produce oral testimonies for the documentarians to record but not intervene as a radical actor.

Although televised oral history documentary incorporated *vérité*, advocating documentary realism in the early 1990s, it still carried the traditions of compilation film, 'special topic' and in-depth journalist reporting. The decrease of *vérité* in the latter two series corresponded with the harking back of the old models. Studio shooting increases, which especially affects the production of historical testimonials; the collection of lost-and-found testimonies in contingent testaments produced by the

situated encounters between the survivors and the interlocutors became more narrated by voice-over than performed visually by actuality. The studio shooting reduced the risk of improvisation and budget of location shooting, as well as the emphasis on documentary intimacy and embodied filmmaking. In general, the reduction of contingent testament in *xianchang* implies the commitment to documentary realism has been withdrawn under the rationale of *zhenshi* (nonfiction), a shift of programming conception into 2000s.

The embodied relationship, between the media worker and the subaltern subjects, also changed. The intimacy that determined the spontaneous and voluntary disclosure of testimony in *Half* that cost months' time, did not fit into the efficiency-first rationale that emphasizes more on the profit of documentary rather than authorship. Correspondingly, the then executive director Wang Xiaoping disclosed at the turn of new millennium, facing the pressure of marketization, DER was about to hark back to the 'special topic' style as long as it could guarantee the balance of input an output (Wang W. C., 2000, p. 85). Documentary realism, as she confesses, was not an advantage for DER to take any longer; in the new century when documentary programming become hypertrophy, DER had to specify its 'niche market' and cater to the 'intellectuals' who would like to see 'films meeting the philosophical level and are profoundly meaningful' (p. 76, translation mine). Reflected in the latter three series, producers increasingly reduced pathos of fact in actuality and privileged intellection of fact, in order to grasp the 'mature audiences' who are able to identify the production and rhetorical 'professionalism' beyond the display of unmediated actuality. Privileging professionalism, the documentary narrative became more sophisticated, as suggested by *The Scar of Memory* in contrast to *Half*. Although both narrative emanate from a central protagonist – Li Tianying, or Pak Yong Sim – the

1994 production involves less narrative perspectives and simpler dramatizing techniques than the 2006 one. In addition, more expert testimonies – intellectuals – appeared in the later three series on ‘comfort women’ as references of historical knowledge and narrative comprehension.

Despite the shifts and variations in association with the *cinéma vérité* and narrative – two dimensions that affected the (self-)representation of testimony – televised oral history documentary programs still functioned as archive and as testimonial, in this case on the atrocities of Japanese sexual slavery. The significance of bearing testimony and construction of ethical community in post-genocide was also broadcasted to the viewer, for example, the meaning of working against social dying (the survivors and the traumatic history). DER’s investigations on the traumatized female bodies implicitly suggested its understandings and solutions on the problems of traditions underlying the modernization process after the ‘1989/1992 conjuncture’, where publicly and radically oppositional movement was under suppression and the commercialization of culture brought more potentials for the alternative social actors to participate in different cultural formations (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 6). Although Berry & Rofel posited such demarcation with studies on the independents, the documentarians outside of the state-owned media systems, the case of DER suggests that the alternatives might also exist latently within the institutional system, with the agency of raising the problematic of tradition to modernity, of remembering the history of atrocity and remaking the post-traumatic society, entering into the public the recognition of the survival victims as corporeal and no less autonomous citizens. But admittedly, such historical interrogations were confined to limited autonomy, for example, choosing ‘comfort women’ as a topic to intervene history is a radical move towards the international society, but a conservative one for the domestic. Taking

advantage of the requirement of outward-oriented publicity, DER tactically explored the subtlety underlying this issue to pose a radical gesture without overstepping the boundary of censorship. It implies that the alternatives in the institutions depend on individual ambitions and creativities, working on the margins within the system and spectatorial recognition.

Chapter 7. Re-presenting alternative traditions of socialist history

Introduction

This chapter explores two cases that illustrate the oral history-based documentary practices utilized by independent filmmakers: excavating the peasants' memories of the Great Leap Forward Famine (1959–1961), and interrogating the testimonies of the intellectuals who suffered as a result of the political movements during Mao's era (1949–1976). Discussions on these two bodies of films are mainly based on my collection of data in two archives: the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine' (2009–2012) supported by Caochangdi Workstation (CCD), and the Documentary Archive of the University Service Center (USC) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). In these archived documentaries, I concentrate on two aspects: first, a commitment to location shooting, or *xianchang*, which positions the filmmaker as a corporeal witness or "performer of documentation" (Wang Q., 2012); second, digital video filmmaking as an embodied experience of the filmmaker as amateur-author, who has only liminal vision to produce knowledge, and takes advantage of this. With such two characteristics, the filmmaker is self-referential and performs a historical act of bearing secondary testimony, re-presenting historical scenarios with bodily difference.

As suggested by Lü (2010), the use of "performative and reflexive techniques" form a new paradigm of filmmaking for contemporary Chinese independent documentary: filmmakers "make themselves into the subjects of their own films" (pp. 24–25). Independent filmmaking of oral testimonies was influenced by the filmmaker's self-performance, on- and off-camera, but acting out a textual character: the witness in *xianchang*, and bearer of secondary testimony thereafter. Working with the liminality of personal visions (of the testimonies and of him/herself), the filmmaker produces authoritative knowledge about the past from the experiential, subjective, particular realities. The embodied experience of filmmaking and the creative, or critical, treatment of the *vérité* testimonies, are important textual properties for such documentaries in terms of re-presenting hidden histories and perspectives beyond official historiographies. Further, historical writing with bodily mimesis can be affective, causing the viewer (social actor) to undertake spontaneous social acts (e.g. remembering and remaking history).

1. Filmmaking as body writing, the inscribed selfhood of the post–1980s generation

The first case concentrates on the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine', in which re-presenting oral testimony with embodied self characterizes its trans-media practices, engaging public recognition of the illiterate peasants who suffered hunger, death and beyond in the Great Leap Forward Famine (1959–1961). Orality, performativity, and self-reflexivity characterize the project's various, but inter-textually related, forms of telling and re-telling of peasant testimonies about their daily experiences: documentary, dance theater, cyberspace archiving and mourning, photo exhibitions, etc. I concentrate on the first two, and suggest that, firstly, the aesthetic of bodily mimesis, referencing self in the documentary's realism,

is coherent and privileged by the project, within which not only are the historical scenarios brought forth by the peasants' self-representation, but also the filmmakers' alternative self-identities are emergent. Secondly, digital video is deployed as a prosthesis⁷⁹ for the filmmakers to perform body writing: excavating the blind spot of the official records, and working against the ambiguity of mainstream historiography. In the oral history-based theaters, filmmakers bear secondary testimony, doubling the peasants' memories with their own growth experiences and selfhood, representing the transformative power of the testimonies and interpreting the documentary relationship as one of inter-generational revitalization, within a discourse of rural reconstruction against the post-socialist urban flight.

As observed by Lü Xinyu and like-minded scholars, documentary realism has been abused in television programming since the mid-1990s, losing its radical power of intervening in social realities; almost simultaneously, independent documentaries have flourished since the late 1990s, coincident with the introduction of digital videos at that time. The film *Old Men* (dir. Yang Lina, 1999) incorporated certain representative traits of the DV trend: the intimacy of the documentary relationship; the production of the reality inscribes the embodied experience of the filmmaker in *xianchang*, staying and communicating with her subjects (old men)⁸⁰. Wang Y. M. (2005) points out that digital-video aesthetics altered the paradigm of documentary filmmaking in China. It affected the documentary relationship with the bodily mimesis; the documentarians become, and are more aware that they are, textually

⁷⁹ I adopt the notion of 'prosthesis' from Voci (2010)'s observation on the intimate relationship between digital video and the body of the village-video-maker. DV works like a prosthesis, an extension of the video-maker's body: "The camera seems to have become an organ of the producer's body" (quoting in Voci, 2010, p. 168). Such bodily mimesis actualized through digital video filmmaking is also theorized by Odin (2012) in his study on mobile-phone moving-image-making, with which the viewer could perceive, as the hand moves, beyond 'see' (p. 56).

⁸⁰ As Wang Y.M. (2005) observes, the intimate relationship between the filmmaker and the subjects, the "abuse [of the] power of DV", embodies the filmmaker's obsession with the scene, or "a helpless, yet cruel, compulsion to stare at actual, uncouth situations", disturbing the audience (p. 20).

embodied social actors as much as their subjects; both sides of the camera are subjected to the perception of the viewer in order to create meaning. It also affects the knowledge of documentary: the digital amateur-author documentaries produce ‘experiential reality’ (p. 22) corresponding to the documentarian’s liminal perception and intellection in *xianchang*, especially in his/her exchanges with the subjects and the environmental dynamics.

Leading independents, such as Wu Wenguang, find themselves technologically empowered by DV’s enabling of body writing. Referring to his own filmmaking experiences, he tells of the blur of identity-boundary between the filmmaker and the subjects in filmmaking *Jianghu: Life on the Road* (1999):

I just carried the DV camera with me like a pen and hung out with the members of the troupe. (Wu, 2006/2010, p. 49)

Elsewhere, he held a DV in one hand and a ladle in another, filming and simultaneously cooking food for the subjects he was filming—song-and-dance-troupe performers who accepted food from Wu and then produced performances on the stage (their daily life) as well as in the documentary. Such a scene pertinently implies a new production mode of actualities: the documentarian is a necessary part of the actuality and the social. "The new modes of knowledge production", as Wang Y. M. (2010) calls them, emerge when the filmmaker invests him/herself in the knowledge about the other (e.g. the peasant troupe for Wu), succumbing his/her ‘will’ to the subjects (p. 235), to the embodied intersubjectivity.

Such an indication is more obvious in the case of ‘The Village Video Project’ (2005–2010) (Voci, 2010, pp. 152–157), in which the subalterns—a group of villagers⁸¹—grasped DV and became amateur-authors themselves as well as inscribed characters. Voci (2010) critiques that, as a collective project, ‘The Village Video

⁸¹ Initially this involved 10 villagers, but the number reduced in subsequent years; see in Voci (2010, pp. 154–155).

Project’ reduces subaltern filmmakers from author (who masters the entire filmed material) to materials (the inscribed characters that are subjected to the master vision of the project curator Wu Wenguang) (p. 155). However, in another sense, it testifies that self-performance with digital filmmaking transforms the episteme of authorship and authority, the textual and the social. It appears that the filmmaker-author, succumbing to the textual inscription, might provide more authoritative knowledge (about rural self-governance in the case of ‘The Village Video Project’). Could such an implication be drawn on to represent hidden histories, as in the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project’? How would the embodied filmmaking affect the episteme of history, and the authoritative narratives about history?

Personal documentary (*siren yingxiang*)⁸² emerged as an identifiable current among independents, emplacing self-reflexivity by referencing subjective realities (imagination, dreams, memory, etc.) associated with bodily expressions. The body can be understood as the fundamental conveyor of independent expression, testimonial, and confession; political articulation in the personal mode thus resides in corporeality and self-performance. Wu Wenguang asserts that ‘individual filmmaking’ “maintain[s] a kind of personal relationship to documentary making”, rather than making explicit gestures and claiming political identity through ‘manifestos’ or ‘position statements’ (Wu, 2006/2010, p. 54); in other words, it credits the necessity of the documentarian’s self-performance, and privileges spontaneous physical involvement. This implies that, for him, individual filmmaking is primarily embodied writing. As Zhang Z. (2012) suggests, digital mimesis adds to the articulation of politics with the ‘haptic movement’ of the filmmaker, or with the body as a form (p. 116).

⁸² Wang Y. M (2010) identifies that such personal documentary is nurtured by DV technology and the intent of deploying DV as a pen to write self-referential knowledge (p. 222).

Wu Wenguang's conceptions of individual filmmaking as body writing underlie the collective authorship of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project', which is curated by Wu and participated in by artists-in-residence at Caochangdi Workstation, artists, student-filmmakers, and villagers. Essentially, it is an artistic project that develops the personal mode to uncover hidden histories, 'for the public record'⁸³. Documentary filmmaking and theatrical performance are two primary and interrelated forms for the project's first stage of development (2009–2012), focusing on collecting and re-presenting peasant testimonies about the Famine and beyond. Oral testimonies are collected in digital filmmaking and further re-presented on the theatrical stage in the form of secondary testimony, with the latter also affecting the practice of filmmaking in turn. Subsequently, this on-going project evolved to more immediate involvement in village problems such as village education, environmental protection, rural reconstruction, and so on. The project embraces a romantic vision that the filmmakers' self-consciousness comes into being with the embodied experience of historical inquiry and intervention in reality; the filmmaker would be transformed through the embodied filmmaking, which can be a process of self-education—cognition and sensibility would be affected by the experiential engagement with the rural society. The historical inquiry into living memories is a part of the engagement with the rural reality.

Following a brief introduction about the traumatic history of the Great Leap Forward Famine (1959–1961), I introduce the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project' based on the observation that its excavation and representation of the Famine is different from the existing literary writings, because of the redemption of historical scenarios with the peasants' self-representation, conveyed by digital video realism. In

⁸³ As the title of the symposium *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the public record* (2010) indicates, and as Berry & Rofel (2010b) raise, the independent documentaries are 'alternative archives', independent from the official records, for the record of the public and recorded for the public.

addition to oral history interviews as an essential device to produce folk evidence about the Famine, the documentary and theatrical performances foreground the filmmakers' subjectivity individually, and the identity of the post-80s generation youth collectively. Independent personality emerges as a textual property. I illustrate the intertextual connections of the documentary and the theatrical performance to discuss the youths' doubling of historical testimonies with their bodies where the independent character emerges.

1.1. The Great Leap Forward Famine (1959–1961) and the literary representations

According to Manning and Wemheuer (2011), “between 1959 and 1961 some 15 million to 43 million peasants starved to death” (p. 1) but the historical details (e.g. number and causes of deaths) remain controversial. Statistics are inconsistent between official releases and research findings,⁸⁴ and the heterogeneity of deaths is difficult to reflect with statistics.⁸⁵ However, generally, ‘hunger’ designates the perceptual-existential experience that characterized the life, struggles, tragedy, death and survival of the peasants, which structured everyday life in the rural society of the day.

The Great Famine had causal association with the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) under the planned economy of state socialism. The politically mobilized and mass participation campaign was intended to be a radical realization of a socialist system of agriculture in the rural regions and industrialization in urban areas; it was hoped to finally achieve the communist ideal with a powerful socialist state. The peasants’ land-ownership was systematically undermined to realize such an

⁸⁴ Statistics vary from 2 million to 43–46 million, see in Manning and Wemheuer (2011), p. 22).

⁸⁵ Individuals died not only because of the shortage of grain, i.e. starvation, but also from irregular causes, e.g. violence, beaten to death, buried alive, dropsy, etc. See in Frank Dikötter’s *Mao’s great famine* (2010).

agricultural collectivization from the 1940s to 1956⁸⁶; subsequently, public ownership privileged Party-state decisions on land use and produce. As a result, peasants were entitled only to obtain the land produce—the ‘surplus grain’ (*yuliang*) remaining after the agricultural grain tax—instead of owning the grain. “The state monopoly of the purchase and marketing of grain” (*tong gou tong xiao*) subjected production on the land to the planned-economy regulations. Dikötter (2010) suggests that, in order to feed the military who were considered essential for national defense purposes, the Party-state set out to compete with the peasants for surplus grain.

State apparatuses were mobilized to wage this battle for the grain; national campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward deprived the peasants of grain-control rights (Song, 2013, Jan. 19). The peasants also lost the right to cook (the utensils were requisitioned for the ‘great steel-making movement’, *dalian gangtie*), and were assigned to ‘public canteens’ (*gonggong shitang*) for meals, which were organized and administered by People’s Communes (Zhou, 2012, p. 2). A peasant's labor was allocated to one of the units of People’s Communes, which were assigned the peasants' food. Crop failures and ever-increasing government procurement quotas exacerbated the outbreak of the Famine and the subsequent suffering. In order to halt the Famine, the peasants’ autonomy of the grain and land was to some extent returned in 1962; a policy of a “free market within a centrally controlled economy” (quoting Zhou, 2012, p. 163) that permitted the peasants to have a certain amount of ownership over land and produce was carried out in parts of the country. The Famine diminished gradually at the end of 1962, accompanied by a fall in the death rate, and a rise in the birthrate.

⁸⁶ In the 1940s, private land ownership was transformed to collectives. In the early 1950s, the ‘Agrarian Land Reform Law’ legitimated the transfer of landlord-owned properties (land) to the peasants. From 1953 to 1956, the private ownerships of peasants were transferred to the rural cooperatives during the ‘rural collectivization’ campaign (*nongye hezuo hua*).

‘Absence’ characterizes the Great Leap Forward Famine as a hidden history. ‘Absence’ is an approach primarily generated by Morash (2006) to describe the Great Irish Famine (1845–1852) and its literary representations:

[I]t is not hunger, or disease, or emigration, or displacement or land ownership; it is not colonialism, or resistance or culpability: it is absence. There is the absence of food, the absence of the culture that was uprooted, and most of all, the absence of the human beings who died or who emigrated. As such, the Famine presents a historiographic problem that is by no means unique. Quite the contrary, it could be said to be exemplary. In historical writing, the past, which is by definition absent, must become the subject of a text in the present, by means of the “standing for” function, of which Ricoeur speaks. In the case of the Famine, absence is multiplied; for that which is absent in the past is, in itself, an absence. (p. 306)

For Morash, the ‘absence’ of the famine means, above all, the historical ephemera that people lived through, which literary and historiographic writings attempt to locate for the present time. The ‘absence’ also indicates that the famine damaged tradition, in addition to the food supply and population.. This is also true in the Great Leap Forward Famine, which makes the representation of such a tradition political. The news of the Famine was not immediately released⁸⁷; its seriousness was not widely known until the release of population statistics by the Chinese Government in the 1980s (Manning & Wemheuer, 2011, p. 1). The ambiguity underlying the official statistics and the restricted entry to official archives prevented historiographical representations of the situation⁸⁸. The folk memories, particularly the eyewitness

⁸⁷ When François Mitterrand, later the President and the leader of the Socialist Party of the French Republic, visited China in 1961, Mao denied the existence of famine to his face, and said there was only ‘a period of scarcity’. Mitterrand accepted Mao’s statement without any doubts, and his view was shared by a number of Western politicians in the late 1960s. Retrieved from <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/09/mao-china-famine-western>

⁸⁸ Archival materials were hardly ever accessible to either historians or the general public until 1990 when the Chinese Government issued a new archival regulation that made documents more than thirty years old available for access (Zhou, 2012, p. ix). However, Zhou (2012) acknowledges that, in effect, a large number of documents are still excluded from research or public access for they are considered ‘unsuitable’ and kept in ‘closed’ files. The rules governing the central and the regional archives of China vary from place to place, and in some provincial archives, such as that of Anhui and Henan, where the Famine caused the most severe calamities, ‘every document after 1949 is regarded as “sensitive” and is therefore “forbidden.”’ (p. ix) Restricting primary documents underlies the notion of the Famine as ‘officially taboo’ (Zhou, 2012, p. ix).

recollections, became important and politically loaded devices for academic and popular writers to publicize knowledge on this subject matter. For example, British journalist Jasper Becker's *Hungry ghosts: China's secret famine* (1996) was the first popular historiography of the Famine that was based on collections of testimonies. However, "much of the story remains shrouded in secrecy", as "peasants do not write books, or make films, and rarely have a chance to talk to outsiders" (Becker, 1996, p. xi). Illiteracy participates in oblivion.

Peasant as victim poses a problem for official historiography. As peasants are considered natural allies of the Communist Party, the massive numbers that fell victim to the Famine and died as a result became a conundrum for the official history (Manning & Wemheuer, 2011, p. 14). The Party remained silent about it until the 1981 'Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the History of the Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China', which began to consider a definition of it. With a more relaxed political ambience, and in order to detach themselves from the Maoist ideology, officials in the post-Mao era addressed the issue. They claimed that the cause of the Famine lay with "the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and a series of natural disasters during this key period" (Manning & Wemheuer, 2011, p. 14), and this was written into the middle school students' history textbooks (e.g. PEP History Section, 2002, p. 113), to inform the target readers: generations born after the early 1980s⁸⁹. The textbook history avoids mention of the mass deaths of the rural population.

The 1990s witnessed a number of writings on the Famine emerging into public intellection, for example, Penny Kane's *Famine in China, 1959–61: Demographic*

⁸⁹ The history textbooks were compulsory education for nine years; the 2002 print of *Zhongguo lishi* (*Chinese History*) was cited by Luo Bing (one of the post-1980s generational documentarians of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project'), in the theatrical performance *Memory 2: Hunger* (2012); the textbook was his own property.

and social implications (1988). In the 2000s, recent writings have drawn more on folk materials. These included Yang Jisheng's historical reportage *Tombstone* (2008), Ralph Thaxton's *Catastrophe and contention in rural China* (2008), the collection of papers *Eating bitterness: New perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine* (2010) and Frank Dikötter's *Mao's great famine: The history of China's most devastating catastrophe, 1958–1962* (2010). In addition, some literary fiction provides alternative memories concerning hunger, for example, Yu Hua's 'Wang Shi Yu Xing Fa' ('The past and the punishment') and Mo Yan's 'Tie Hai' ('The iron child'), which deploy experimental styles to reveal the historical trauma, negating linear narrative but favoring subjective orchestration.

The issue of the peasants' Famine potentially engenders a public sphere that foregrounds the relationship between the intellectuals and the rural subaltern. Acknowledging the political implications of the Famine, literary writings, academic or popular, tried to introduce the topic into public recognition and discussions. However, the intellectual's attempts at representation—'standing for' the peasant who is a 'subject of a text' (Morash, 2006, p. 306)—lacked the ability to insert authorship and selfhood of the peasant eyewitnesses into such texts. In contrast, the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project' works on peasant self-representation through the 'time-image' (Deleuze, 1985/1989) with *vérité*, where the peasants can occupy the filmic duration to perform their experiences and impress the viewer with physiognomic expressions. For Deleuze (1985/1989), the storytelling by real characters (the 'poor' and the structurally powerless, p. 150) in 'cinema-*vérité*' and 'cinema of the lived' is an invention of a world according to one's knowledge; the storyteller tells stories without fictionalizing them, because the storytelling is an embodied act that bears memories of the past and brings forth selfhood. In the 'Folk

Memory Documentary Project’, the peasants bearing firsthand testimonies, and the filmmakers bearing second testimonies, became such storytellers who enact historical scenarios through embodied acts, constituting the emergent selfhood and the filmic world simultaneously.

1.2. ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’ (2009–2012): the embodied knowledge

In this ongoing project, folk materials about the Famine are collected, archived and transmitted,⁹⁰ but archiving is not the final process of the project; the folk memories are incorporated into artistic forms of re-presentations, to foster the agency of the filmmakers, and the social. Through historical inquiry into the village histories that constituted Mao’s legacies, the project pedagogically fosters the autonomy of engaging with social actions and participating in the rural revitalization; documentary inquiry into the Famine connects art to the social, as a participatory route to recognizing the potential of social changes.

From the summer of 2009 to the winter of 2012, about 108 people had participated in the project, undertaking oral history interviews in various villages across China; 926 interviewees were found in 130 villages of 17 provinces. Emanating from dialogues on the topics around the Famine, the interviewers possessed individual autonomy in the interviewing process, posing questions and responding accordingly; however, two common operations were required. Firstly, the interviewer had to choose the village where he or she was born or had connections to through family ties, which established the historical and emotional attachment of the interviewer to his/her village and the villagers. With this rationale, the interviewers

⁹⁰ Mainly through weblogs, microblogs, etc. See in the official webpages of this project: <http://blog.sina.com.cn/ccdworkstation>; <http://weibo.com/u/2181292250>

would simultaneously engage with the public history of the Famine and their own personal history with the village(r) where their family roots lay. The peasant interviewees are mostly elderly people sharing a common village identity with the interviewers; their testaments are simultaneously the passing on of memories to the next generations. The second common operation concerns the format of shooting ‘talking heads’ testimony, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

The project had given birth to 17 documentary features by 2012. However, not all recorded oral testimonies are presented in the documentary features; the inscribed testimonies fit into the narrative. The editing process starts after the collection of material in the village, and takes the form of a workshop for the filmmakers; a form that privileges communication, refining and sharing of experiences, through which the narratives of their films emerge. Caochangdi Workstation (CCD) houses the living and working support for the project; the editing, exhibition, theatrical rehearsal and performance spaces in which the workshops are held daily are open and interconnected. The pedagogical and dialogic mode of production is fostered in the everyday activities of the resident filmmakers. The filmmakers comprise two generations and three social groups:

- i. The curator and independent documentarian Wu Wenguang and the modern dancer and independent dance-theater director Wen Hui are artists who were born in 1956 and 1960 respectively.
- ii. The young filmmakers, born in the 1980s and 1990s, include graduates from arts schools (Zou Xueping, Zhang Mengqi, Luo Bing, Wang Haian, Shu Qiao) and migrant workers (Jia Nannan, Li Xinmin); these are the filmmakers of the post-1980s generation.

- iii. The village-video-makers (Shao Yuzhen, Jia Zhitan, and Zhang Huancai), are aged around 50 or 60. They were trained as amateur-authors in the ‘The Village Video Project’ (2005–2010)⁹¹.

The young filmmakers are the main forces in this project; they convey the alternative personalities of the post-1980s generation in China. As a social constituency, this generation grew into adulthood at the end of the first decade of the new century, bearing witness for various top-down reforms and the subsequent vernacular transformations. Urbanization is one of the consequences of the post-Mao reform programs, entailing the cultural formation of the ‘urban generation’ (Zhang Z., 2007, p. 3), who bear and articulate its vernacular experiences. The migration population, or rural labor, particularly characterizes the "socioeconomic unevenness, psychological anxiety, and moral confusion" (Zhang Z., 2007, p. 2) of urbanization, which coded the rural as inferior to the urban (Anagnost, 2004, p. 192). Making a living in the cities suggests an upward-mobility solution for rural persons to divest themselves of ‘rurality’ (ibid.). Arguably, this project's young filmmakers typify a substratum of the ‘urban generation’ migration population, who are trained to create artistic expressions but have rural roots. Against the rural-urban ‘unevenness’ and the mainstream value that privileges urban life, the youth who graduated from urban art-schools⁹² but returned to their villages to collect memories pose a radical gesture and characterize alternative moderns.

Zou Xueping’s ‘modern girl’ image emerges in her documentary trilogy *The Starving Village* (2010), *The Satiated Village* (2011) and *Children’s Village* (2012), and in her theatrical work *Family Objection* (2011) and *One-person Theater* (2012).

⁹¹ This is a collective project also held by CCD, see more in Voci (2010), p. 152–157.

⁹² Zou Xueping and Luo Bing graduated from the China Academy of Art (Hangzhou) in 2006. Wang Haiyan and Shu Qiao graduated from the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts (Tianjin City) in 2012. Zhang Mengqi graduated from the Dance Academy of Minzu University of China (Beijing) in 2008. Jia Nannan and Li Xinmin are migrant laborers working in Beijing.

In the trilogy, her parents' opposition to her life choice as a documentarian is inscribed as a narrative device. In contrast to that, testimony documentation and representation, as her embodied acts, are also inscribed in the narrative to form her coming-into-independence and self-consciousness. For Wu Wenguang, embodied youth with their alternative cognition on history and social reality in the film world have pedagogical implications for the viewer/social-actors; the project builds on this implication and takes the act of collecting testimony as an embodied experience of self-education: an experiential learning about self through learning about other. Documentary is deployed as an experiential knowing—"the conjunction of cognizing society and transforming self" (Wu, 2012, Jul., para. 4, translation mine); as Wu anticipates, the form of 'bearing testimony' with individual embodied filmmaking as immediate engagement with history and reality, might prepare historical subjects for the emergent civil society (ibid. para. 26).

1.2.1. Telling *ai'e* (i.e. suffering from hunger) in 'talking heads', the affective memories and agency of the peasants

'Talking heads' had been a privileged mode of conveying authoritative voices and images in television broadcasting since its launch in Mao's Era⁹³, which also produced moral categories, by representing 'model workers, peasants or soldiers' (Huang and Yu, 1997, p. 570). In the project, using 'talking heads' in location shooting is a requirement: the face and upper body of the testimony fills the medium-to-close shot, frontally positioned at eye level, against a background of their living environments, directly addressing the interlocutor. The conscious deployment of morally loaded 'talking heads' to collect and display oral testimonies implies the legacies of Mao's era. However, the difference is that it is deployed to emphasize the

⁹³ Huang & Yu (1997) observe that 'talking heads' and still pictures dominated TV space (p. 570) from 1958 to 1976.

sensuous experiences of the struggles of hunger and death, foregrounding the affectivity of the experiential knowledge of the peasants, where the agency of the storyteller emerges.

The bitterness is dramatized through the peasants' enactments of sensory suffering associated with mouth, stomach, anus, etc. Yu Xiantang, a village woman in Diaoyutai Village of Hubei Province, recounts to Zhang Mengqi, who made the film *Self Portrait: 47 Kilometers* (2011), that she and her family were so hungry that they sought out the bark of trees to fill their stomachs. She enacts that after enjoying the delicacy, however, she swelled up like a ball. Influenced by the muscles atrophying in her limbs, Yu's presentation of such a vivid historical scenario motivates the facial expressions in the 'talking heads', in which the wrinkles are written with sorrows.

The storytelling also brings forth the pain of witnessing death. Song Qiuying, a Zou Village woman in Zou Xueping's *The Starving Village* (2010), recalls her son's death from starvation in the last moments of his life:

[H]e is dying. He lies on the bed, and his aunts Chun Guan and Yun Guan are there; he is dying, just lying there. He asks me, why is there a bowl of rice over there? I say, my son, there's no bowl of rice. He says, here it is! He beats the bed and says, here it is! I say, my son, if there is a bowl of rice you will have it from me, what would it be still over there for? My boy says, mum, don't cry if I die, and what to cry? I will be dead anyway. Listen to that, he was saying those kinds of words when dying!' (quoting from *The Starving Village*, translation mine)

Hallucination grasped her son, but the death, as one can feel, seems normal and a daily event in the historical scenario. Despite only her face and upper body being visible in the shot, the gestural richness and complexity of the historical scenario characterize her testimony. Zou Xueping incorporated her feelings of being affected by Song's testimony in her theatrical performance. She felt that it was inevitable to lose the gestural connotations if Song's firsthand testimony was mediated, so she chose to let Song represent herself in the theater work *Memory 2: Hunger*, where the

video of Song's 'talking head' was projected on stage, directly addressing the theater audiences, as she did Zou in the filmmaking. This represents a collective sensibility of the project that what the filmmaker felt in *xianchang* could not be represented in a more suitable language than the physiognomy of the testimony itself, because it presents not only the content of the story, but also the affective quality of the story. The secondary testimony attempts to re-present both the knowledge gained from *xianchang*, and the affectivity of the storyteller.

In addition, the agency of the peasants emerged beyond 'talking heads' conveyer, embodied in daily life and captured by Zou's camera. After the elderly testimonies saw their recollections about the Famine in Zou's *The Starving Village*, some became anxious that their accounts conveyed a negative image of the country, and withheld their agreement to show their testaments to the foreigners. Others felt it was necessary for the public to know the real stories that took place in the past, and thus debated with the opponents. Grandpa Xilin, a proponent of recording and showing such histories, accompanied Zou Xueping during the attempt to find and persuade the opponents to change their minds. The agency is explicitly and consciously embodied by Grandpa Xilin, also recorded by Zou's camera, and inscribed into her next film *The Satiated Village* (2011).

1.2.2. Oral testimony collection and exhibition: embodied encounter as intergenerational pedagogy

The filmmaker as 'performer of documentation' (Wang Q., 2012), or the embodied interviewer in search of history from the living testimony, characterizes Wu Wenguang's documentary performance, which also underlies the collective authorial persona of the young filmmakers. The performance of documentation is inscribed as a narrative device in the theater, constituting an intertextual linkage between

documentary and theatrical performance. Two narrative motifs emerge: the recounting of the historical scenarios of hunger, and the emergence into independent personalities of the social actors through oral testimony collection and exhibition. The intersubjective encounter between the documentarian and the subjects becomes a central narrative event. I use Zou Xueping's trilogy to discuss the productive power of the embodied encounter.

In *The Starving Village* (2010), Zou Xueping returned to the village where her grandmother was living. The documentary displays two kinds of elderly people in the village. On the one hand, her grandmother in her twilight years, suffered from an aging body and loneliness. In a process of bodily decay, the old woman seemed to lose consciousness; she urinated and relieved her bowels in her pants, ground her teeth and muttered to herself. The only words coming out of her mouth were fragments anticipating a quick death. Most of the time, Zou's camera witnessed moments such as these, but she also entered the scene, assisting her grandmother to get on the bed or bathing her. The embodied interaction between the filmmaker and her grandmother, however, could not be a dialogue.

On the other hand, the village contained many other elderly people who were undergoing the same process of ageing, but who were, however, still able to share their memories. The elderly men and women, recounting their memories of hunger, became animated with vitality and creativity. Fourteen elderly people talked to Zou about their Famine memories, in their respective living locations. The storytelling was characterized by gestural enactments, intonation variations, and emerging personality; the elderly frequently addressed the committed listener as 'Xiao Ping' (Zou's nickname), identifying her as a junior to continue their narratives about the villagers she would recognize. Zou's embodied listening on the scene became a constructive

act for bringing forth village history. Further, the memorializing of the Famine implicated the children, as displayed in the next films.

In *The Satiated Village* (2011), she returned to Zou Village and screened *The Starving Village* to the elderly. A screening was also arranged for the children. Encountering both support and objections, the screenings disseminated village history and the consciousness of village identity to the children. In *Children's Village* (2012), Zou Xueping initiated the action of constructing a tombstone for the people who died as a result of the Famine, with the children sharing in the implementation of the activity. Zou gave digital cameras to the children and they divided into several groups, approaching the elderly to collect the names of the dead and their birth and death dates. With cameras in hand, the children's filmmaking embodied their act of historical inquiry, performing the agency of remembering and remaking the local history, engendered by the viewing of Zou's last documentary.

Embodied DV filmmaking blurs the boundaries of spectator and actor, textual actor and social actor, turning the subject (children, the viewers) to filmmakers. Gaines (1999) hypothesized in the notion and effect of 'political mimicry' concerning the productive power of audiovisual imaginaries, that displays of 'agitational spectacles' might bridge action in the two-dimensional screen world to the three-dimensional real world (p. 92). This is testified and inscribed as the narrative event in *Children's Village*, in which the 'talking heads' testimonies, as the 'agitational spectacles' so to speak, produced the agency of the viewers (children).

The children's participation in the remembering and remaking of history also consists in their revitalization of the identity of 'Zou Villager'. The communal identification was intensified in the staged mise-en-scène where the elderly and the young sat together and retold memories to one another; the spectator shifts to

performer. In a frontally displayed tableau-ground, the elderly testimonies sat listening to the children telling their stories of building the tombstone. Occasionally, the seated elderly were drawn to the 'stage', retelling their testimony. Zou Xueping also physically appeared as a textually inscribed actor, who created a situation in which generations were brought together around the tombstone. They touched the carved names on the stone, enlivening a mourning of the victims and raising the identity of the Zou Villagers.

1.2.3. Oral history-based dance theaters, re-telling and re-presenting firsthand testimony with filmmaker's body and voice

i. Intersection of independent documentary and independent dance-theater

Oral history as a methodology characterizes the intersection of independent documentary and independent performance theater in China; both are redemptions of subjective experiences, and advocate the survey and re-presentation of one group of people (artists, documentarians, writers, etc.) to another. The intersection is an explicit characteristic in Wu Wenguang's practices, who co-founded with Wen Hui the first independent performance-theater group in China in 1994—the 'Living Dance Studio' (*Shenghuo wudao gongzuo shi*) in Beijing. The philosophy of the 'Living Dance Studio' is that art is social intervention: "stemming from the everyday reality and life, concerned about the social and life situations of contemporary" (Wu, 2008, Jan. 17). The actor/actress's performance on stage is the playing of him/herself, reflecting and interweaving personal and social life. Its aesthetic elements are derived from Pina Bausch's concept of 'dance theater', believing the body has power to redeem real life experiences through physical enactments with multi-media stage orchestration that blends bodily performance with video, sound, installation, and

others, constituting a live and expressive *mise-en-scène*⁹⁴. The philosophy of oral history and dance-theater characterizes the staged oral-history performances of the ‘Folk Memory’ project: *Memory* (2008), *Memory 2: Hunger* (2010), *Memory 3: Tombstone* (2012), and *Listen to Third Grandma’s Story* (2012).

ii. Oral history as both content and methodology to bring forth performance of difference

The oral history interview as a situational encounter is primarily a performance between listener and speaker, a collaboration bringing hidden visions into being, an embodied experience of playing the role of oneself. The oral history-based performance on stage is the recollection of the encounter and re-presentation of the hidden visions. The performer doubles the testimony with her/his own body and voice. This doubling means the firsthand testimony and historical scenes are incorporated and re-presented by the performer as secondary testimony, with his/her cognitive, emotional, and physical differences.

In *Memory 2: Hunger*, the central gesture is the active remembrance, in which the post-1980s generation filmmakers become theatrical performers, bringing forth their experiences of encountering the survival peasants and the related stories. Basically, the theater is about the doubling of the hunger memory: the firsthand testimonies are built into the youths’ own *bildungsroman*, or stories of coming into self-consciousness. Their experiences of being affected by the testimonies in the filmmaking *xianchang* are particularly addressed as transformative for their realization of selfhood. The autobiographical self is a persona found in one’s (re)connection with previous generations, the villagers, and the village history—their

⁹⁴ The *mise-en-scène* as a recognizable moment of the orchestration, constantly emerges and reforms, along with the bodily actions (Ni, 2002, p. 183), which bring into being the orality, performativity, spatiality, temporality and meanings of the staged whole.

roots. Performing secondary testimony also acts out their responses to the peasant testimonies (the grandpas/grandmas of villages): the personal stories give rise to a collective identity as the rural descendants.

The theatrical performance starts with the actors' reporting of personal narratives; each holding a large electric torch (signifying the digital camera in a way), the young people present themselves to the audience. The self-reports also deliver us eight villages across China where the young people were personally engaged and the Famine happened. Testimonies of elderly sufferers are performed with empathy. Zou Xueping narrates the story she heard from Grandmother Fu, who experienced her child's death in the time of hunger. Zhang Mengqi recounts the story of Yu Xiantang, who was a barefoot doctor and had saved a family from illness; however, they starved to death anyway. Luo Bing re-presents the elderly peasant Ren Dingqi, who wrote a memoir to bear testimony for the sufferers' history. Repetition of form and act reinforces the transformative effect of the elderly testimonies' stories for the young individuals: their knowledge and understanding of history and rural society has been completely changed.

Independent personality is an unfolded generational identity with individual differences. The emergent imaginary of modern girl as a theme brought forth by Zou Xueping's performance is repeated with a physical/life difference in Li Xinmin's solo. Li Xinmin performs herself: a migrant laborer who is transformed by the embodied experience of filming that changed her understanding of the village, and a woman's life; she grows into a female documentarian with a DV (a transformative tool) and self-consciousness (of remaking a life story). In the theater, re-telling stories of the Famine brings the agency of the post-80s to the foreground, for whom bearing

secondary testimony becomes a textually inscribed, collective life-experience, shared with the theater audience.

iii. Documentary video as testimonial on stage

The intertextuality between filmmaking and theatrical performance is reinforced when the video footage of the firsthand testimony becomes an expressive element on stage. In a sense, the on-stage projection of moving-image actuality brings the historical *xianchang* to the audience as if it was a live broadcast; in such conditions, the doubling of the filmmaker's body to the peasant testimony is much foregrounded. In the *On-person Theater*, Zou Xueping extracted videos from her documentary *Children's Village* and projected them on the stage, which characterizes the children's actions of documenting the statistics of the deaths of peasants in the Famine, and of raising donations in order to build the tombstone. During the screening of the footage, she stopped acting and sat on the foreground stage, watching the videotaped characters with the live audiences: she performs a committed spectator. Zou considered that she could find no way to tell the story that would be better than the children themselves could. In other words, she concedes her bodily representation and authority to the self-representation of the children.

Video provided audiences with *xianchang* in *vérité*, redeeming the experiential immediacy to the firsthand testimony; the *vérité* images were thus used to produce the agency of the theater audience. The documentary footage appearing on stage as testimonials foreground the authority of the oral testimony. The use of video as a testimonial by Zou Xueping in effect foregrounds/inscribes the act of seeing, or "the capacity to put oneself in the place of the other while always returning to the self" (Oliver, 2010, p. 127). Beyond being testimonial and evidentiary, the documentary moving-image affects the audience off-stage, connecting them to

historical scenarios beyond theatrical dimensions, demanding their reflection on the role they are playing. The actuality image on-stage renders the audience witnesses, who would further bear the responsibility of retelling the stories to others.

2. Embodied filmmaking as critical historiography on political movements, and the autonomous self of the intellectuals

The ‘anti-rightist campaign’ was a mass movement attacking democratic parties and intellectuals inside and outside the Communist Party (Shen Z. H., 2008, p. 617). The term ‘rightist’ was used to label those trained minds who were suspected of favoring capitalism and being against collectivism during the campaign. Systematic treatments, with state apparatus and large-scale participation of the masses, were applied to suspected intellectuals, who harbored critical opinions of the Party-state ideologies. The movement was national, but it impacted on the personal. From 1958 onwards, the attacks on the ‘rightist’ intellectuals were combined with other persecutions and persisted until the end of the Cultural Revolution; estimated roughly, the campaign involved between 300,000 to 700,000 lives (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 365).

The ‘intellectual’ in the post-Mao era designates different social and moral categories from the state-socialism⁹⁵, one of which includes the non-establishment political activists, who hold no positions in the state-charged institutions and believe

⁹⁵ As Gu & Goldman (2004) note, the identity of intellectuals in state-socialist countries depends on their relationship with the Party-state, in terms of the latter’s need for knowledge and political commitment (p. 8). In the post-Mao era, especially with the rapid development of the market economy in the 1990s, the patterns of intellectual-state are complicated by the market force. The intellectuals find more resources to mobilize and run critical spirit and alternative political space in the form of non-establishment, non-governmental organizations. Subsequently, ‘the intellectual public space of the 1990s has been greatly enlarged and pluralized’ (p. 10). Arguably, the grassroots media workers are among such enlarged and pluralized constituencies. Particularly, the accessible production and distribution resources, e.g. DV, internet, independent exhibitions, etc. empowered the non-establishment media workers to run alternative spheres of articulation, e.g. Hu Jie, who was expelled from the Xinhua News Agency (Shen R., 2005, para. 41) but continued undertaking critical inquiries in digital video documentary form.

that critical spirit and social responsibility would largely consist in independent thinking and acts. This section looks at the grassroots media activist Hu Jie as an example of such a non-official intellectual, whose embodied filmmaking focused on the ‘rightist’ intellectuals (the living legacies of state-socialism), emplacing these historical actors’ autonomous representation of self and other as mirrors to reflect on alternative histories. He also reflects on himself, with a first-person on-camera performance. In a way, the textual reconstitution of the imaginary of a liberal intellectual with oral history inquiry in the documentary form can be understood as constructing an alternative personality for contemporary intellectuals.

As Wang Y. M. (2005) observes, the value of articulating ‘truth’ that was privileged by the early independents was questionable for the digital video makers since the late 1990s (p. 16). The discourse of amateur-authorship with digital video documentaries actually implies the liminal and experiential knowledge of the personal filmmaker, produced with intimate documentary relationships on the site, instead of omniscient truth and overwhelming rhetoric. Wang Y. M. finds digital technology impacts the negotiation between the documentarian and the subjects to produce ‘experiential reality’ (2005, p. 22). Perhaps not coincidentally, Berry & Rofel (2010a) raise the notion of ‘alternative archives’⁹⁶ to recognize the commitment of the independent vision to non-official and non-mainstream historiography. The below analyses use the case of oral history-based inquiry into political persecutions to argue that the political implications of the ‘alternative’ identity tend to foreground the rhetoric affect of the epistemologically liminal, demanding the committed filmmaker bring forth the hidden scenarios of history with reference to selfhood.

⁹⁶ It derived from the concept that emerged in documentarian Ou Ning’s ‘alternative archive’ project, a trans-media and long-range project aiming to accumulate ‘civilian or popular (*minjian*) collections and archives’ in realizing the hegemony and deficiency of the ‘state archives’ (Berry & Rofel, 2010b, p. 136).

In the margins of ‘commercial cinema’ and ‘official cinema’ (Wang Y. M., 2005, p. 17), the independents as the ‘third type of imaging’ (p. 17) contain one particular strand of filmmaking with an explicit commitment to ‘remember history’ that is ‘blank’ in official historiography (Hu Jie’s words, quoting in Shen R., 2005, para. 45). Hu Jie’s filmmaking pioneers that aspect, foregrounding the reflection on the historical periods of the “anti-rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution in China”. Born in 1958, Hu Jie was trained in painting and journalism; he had been employed by the official media (Xinhua News Agency) but was expelled when he attempted to interrogate the ‘rightist’ Lin Zhao (Shen R., 2005, para. 41). Personal filmmaking provided him with the chance to undertake in-depth investigations with sources outside the establishment. Hu Jie envisions such a mode of filmmaking would realize an emergent collective movement of historical inquiry, as he passionately anticipates:

After I made the film about Lin Zhao, I realized that there is a massive resource for documentary film in China. The resource awaits us to discover. [...] I feel that we should record this history with many, many peoples’ participation. Because the Chinese official authority does not want us to remember the history, we non-official people should remember on our own. I told students, “Ask your parents and grandparents how they starved, how they took part in weapon fighting in the Cultural Revolution. Record their words. If we do this for five years, we would make a great contribution to Chinese history.” (quoting from Shen R., 2005)

Hu Jie’s inquiry into the intellectuals’ suffering during the political movements is performative, particularly in two of his works⁹⁷: *In Search of Lin Zhao’s Soul* (2004), and *East Wind State Farm* (2009), which typify two modes of rhetoric that foreground, and depend on, the authority (‘truth value’) of the ‘experiential reality’. The self-performances of Hu Jie, and of the testimonies, unfold the ‘counterdiscourse’ (Denton, 1998, p. 46) of romantic individualism, raising the value of selfhood and reflecting on

⁹⁷ Berry & Rofel (2010b) designate his documentaries as ‘oral history films’ (p. 154).

the intellectual history of modern China. Such a paradigm can also be found in a number of other political documentaries, e.g. *My Mother is Wang Peiyong* (dir. Zhang Dazhong, 2010), *To Justify Bu Qinfu* (dir. Wang Yunlong and Han Yi, 2010), and *Storm under the Sun* (dir. Peng Xiaolian and S. Luisa Wei, 2009), etc.

Before discovering the representative quality of Hu Jie's case, I conducted data collection in the Documentary Archive of the University Service Center (USC) for China Studies, in order to investigate the variety of oral history-based documentaries. The USC is an academic institution established in 1963, initially serving Western scholarships on contemporary China studies. As it developed, it increasingly stressed the archival function and became "the most extensive and accessible collection of a great variety of materials on contemporary China."⁹⁸ Realizing documentary's significance in sociological and anthropological studies, and in the pedagogy of Chinese culture and history, the USC initiated the Documentary Archive project in 2005, depositing and distributing the documentaries that serve as firsthand materials and testimonials, addressing their value of 'folk history', i.e. history emerging from ordinary people's perceptions (J. L. Xiong, personal communication, July 7, 2012 Feb. 4). Primarily, my focus was to find out how many documentaries are related to the use of the oral history interview method and what are the forms, topics, modes of performance, and documentary relationships. I found 19 films that foreground the identity of the testimony as the textual property, and deploy interviews to acquire testimony and to interrogate historical scenarios.

Direct address (or presentational performance) (Waugh, 2012, p. 74) of the testimony to the filmmaker characterizes most of the films, reflecting the intimacy between both sides of the camera. Studio shooting of 'talking heads' testimony

⁹⁸ See USC's website: <http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/Eng/Default.aspx>.

characterizes *People Like Us* (dir. Zhao Gang, 2003), *Morning Sun* (dir. Carma Hinton, Germie Barmé, and Richard Gordon, 2003) and *The Storm* (dir. Duan Jinchuan and Jiang Yue, 2005), apart from which, location-shot ‘talking heads’ characterize the rest (most). Contingent testament is contained in those that foreground the affective images of corporeal suffering (*Though I am Dead*, dir. Hu Jie, 2006), the performative richness of the testimony’s body (e.g. *Queer China, Comrade China*, dir. Cui Zi’en, 2009), or contingent disclosure of information in daily encounters between the filmmaker and the testimony (e.g. *The Man on the Mountain*, dir. Qie Lianghai, 2004; *My 1979*, dir. Zhang Dali, 2008).

The topics, or the historical events, that are covered by the films include: female model workers in the Great Leap Forward campaign; the Suppression of Counter-revolutionaries movement; the ‘Hu Feng anti-revolution group’ case; the anti-rightist movement; the Red Guards, the *zhi qing* (educated youth), and the propaganda posters in the Cultural Revolution; the 1979 Sino-Vietnam War; the Karamay Fire in 1994; the gays and lesbians culture in contemporary China, etc. Generally, the oral history-based documentaries cover the historical issues "of the revolution and of the People’s Republic itself" (Berry & Rofel, 2010b, p. 152), displaying the post-socialist revisiting of the myths of socialist histories; however, a number of them also participate in the formation of subcultures in contemporary life. For example, *Queer China, Comrade China* illustrates awareness of the necessity to document the soon-to-be-lost experiences as historical testimonials; in a way, the flourishing of oral history documentaries since the 2000s implies the intersection of technological empowerment, individual culture, and alternative media activists.

Hu Jie’s filmmaking practices not only test the ‘limits of alternativeness’ (Berry & Rofel, 2010b, p. 152) but also embody the creative performances of the

filmmaker, potentially forming textual models. In the following, I firstly examine the tradition of romantic individualism as an emergent influence for embodied filmmaking and for the textual formation of *In Search of Lin Zhao*, to suggest that the film not only produces evidences for the hidden histories, but also develops the advocacy rhetoric: the female liberal intellectual as a romantic heroine striving against totalitarian discourse with embodied actions. In addition, I take Hu Jie and the related filmmakers' uses of 'artifacts' (e.g. animations, cartoons, computer rendered or hand-painted pictorials, etc.) to illustrate their creative treatment of testimonies, as the embodied ethical spectatorship, beyond a 'narrative instrument' of compilation technique (Barnouw, 1993, p. 205).

2.1. Romantic individualism, the textual formation of selfhood

The tension between the two oppositional but interrelated discourses: 'romantic individualism' and 'revolutionary collectivism', as argued by Denton (1998, p. 47), characterizes China's modern intellectual history, underlying the problematic of the intellectuals' representation of self, reflected in literary and critical works. Dating back to the May Fourth movement, the intellectuals' romantic notions of the self were convergences of influences of the Western models about self against the external world: "the self-assertive and rebellious heroism and the Faustian-Promethean model" and "the introspective, self-absorbed quality of the Wertherian model" (p. 68), both connoting the value and the transcending character of self-consciousness.

Paradoxically, and tragically, this selfhood is both transcending and determined. The problematic of self means that the modern individual desires to assert an autonomous ego, separating from or confronting tradition and society, whilst

simultaneously being implicated into the social changes: the ego is to "succumb to such larger totalities as History, Nation, Epoch, or the Masses" (p. 68). Revolutionary collectivism handles the individual mainly in the latter sense. For example, the Maoist view on literature and arts, settled since the 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature' (1942), subjects the self and subjectivity of the literary writers and artists to the totality of the 'People' and thus the Communist Party, which claims itself as the representative of the 'People' (quoting from Denton, 1998, p. 70). Revolutionary collectivism convinces the ego to abandon the subjective being and submit to "the moral appeal of a collective self" (p. 68) in order to achieve national salvation and the revolutionary ideal. The romantic self, as an agency of social transformation, was appropriated in the leftist-led, iconoclastic movements against traditional values in China's modern history, forming the 'counterdiscourse' (p. 46) to the traditions and the values that deprive the ego's autonomous power; such discourse legitimated the individual intellectual's commitment to his/her own consciousness.

Nonetheless, the intellectuals' assertions on subjectivity and their ambiguous attitude to collectivity led them into political persecution in Mao's era, when the revolutionary collectivism built complicity with the official discourse and promoted collectivity. For example, the 'Hu Feng anti-revolutionary clique' (1955–1965) case, which subjected Hu Feng, Lu Ling and related critics and literary writers to long-term⁹⁹ and national accusation for their advocacy on subjectivism and individualism. Additionally, the anti-rightist campaign (1957¹⁰⁰) deprived massive numbers of intellectuals of their human rights, and sent them to labor camps. A further example is

⁹⁹ The arrest of the 'Hu Feng clique' started in 1955 but the trial of the arrested members was not until 1965, whilst the criticism of Hu and the related writers and critics had begun earlier than 1955 and persisted into the Cultural Revolution; see in Lin, 2009, pp. 496–522.

¹⁰⁰ With the shift of investment to the Great Leap Forward movements in 1958, the anti-rightist movement became less of a focus, but the antagonism towards the 'rightist' intellectuals did not cease until the end of the Cultural Revolution; see in Shen Z. H., 2008, pp. 647–688.

the persecution of those individuals in the Cultural Revolution who expressed personal opinions against the official discourses or formed radical dissent, such as Lin Zhao, Bu Qinfu, Wang Peiying, etc.

The above-mentioned political movements and persecution of the intellectuals in the People's Republic's socialist history are the subject matter of *Storm Under the Sun*, *East Wind State Farm*, *In Search of Lin Zhao*, *To Justify Bu Qinfu*, *My Mother is Wang Peiying*, and some other works such as *Fengming* (a.k.a. *Chronicle of A Chinese Woman*, dir. Wang Bing, 2007), and so on. In these, oral history is deployed as a method of collecting the lost-and-found testimonies, and for inquiry into such underrepresented historical issues. More importantly, I suggest they are also the embodied experiences of returning the autonomy of self to the intellectuals on both sides of the camera, re-enchanting the viewer with romantic individualism in the post-socialist society, which is characterized by 'disillusionment' (Pickowicz, 1994, p. 62). In the documentaries, the intersubjectivity between the testimonies and the documentarian is embodied in a particular way: the collaborative production of the sublime imaginary—the female liberal intellectual, and the articulation of heterogamous suffering as the disillusion of the revolutionary collectivism.

In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul is, above all, about the *becoming* of a liberal soul. The filmmaker, deploying first person performance, sets out on a journey to collect folk materials to portray the life and political opinions of Lin Zhao, including living memories and material evidence such as manuscripts, letters, lived spaces, and others; the official dossiers are also used to foreground the counterdiscourse that Lin articulated. The character is brought into being through the embodied filmmaking/evidence-collection that draws the jigsaw of testimonial together. A female born in 1932 into an intellectual family, Lin Zhao had influences from

Christian religion, Communist thoughts and her parents' revolutionary activities throughout her girlhood. Enthusiastic about participating in the then ongoing socialist transformations, Lin gave up the chance to study abroad and became involved in rural reforms. Majoring in Chinese Literature at Beijing University, Lin stood out from the average students.

The 'anti-rightist movement' was started in 1957, and students who displayed big-character posters to air their views were indicted as a result of Mao's trick to flush out the opinion leaders. Lin, as a committed follower of Mao and communism, however, was also accused, merely because she defended the rights of free expression at a rally. When she was declared a 'rightist', she discovered that human rights and democracy were being violated under the totalitarian rule during the political movements. She became radicalized and turned to political dissent, indicting Maoism and attempting to generate theoretical thoughts and social actions to redeem democracy and humanity in individuals. However, the underground league that she led was outlawed and she was accused of being 'counter-revolution' and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in 1962. In prison, she continued indicting Maoism, using her own blood to write. Ultimately, on 29th April 1968, she was sentenced to death and executed by shooting. Her family members received no death warrant, but were charged for the cost of the bullet.

The testimonies are mostly people who bear witness to Lin's life and soul, who possess the best records of her in their memories: the close friends, acquaintances, family members, and a former prison guard who witnessed Lin's last appearance before the execution, together with persons who possess the knowledge to interpret her: a journalist, a grassroots scholar. The testimonies provide multifaceted aspects of Lin Zhao, albeit each one is liminal and committed; a heroine with a

romantic quest to promote human rights, but suffering as a result of her radical challenge to 'dictatorial' suppression emerges within the representations of the 'talking heads' testimonies. They also compare their own choices and lives with Lin Zhao's, foregrounding her faith in adherence to independent thoughts and acts.

In their sensuous characterization, she is firstly a combination of femininity and masculinity. For example, as recalled by Zhang Ling (Lin's classmate), Lin had long braids, and was usually dressed in a simple white but delicately tailored shirt: her appearance was akin to the fragile beauty in classic Chinese novels, embodying the traditional ideal. However, the delicate body was also rich in thoughts and sentiments; for the admirer Shen Zeyi, intellection characterized Lin's affectionateness. He recites Lin's poetry, mimetically reviving her sensual exquisiteness. It is sublime that the masculine power of autonomy emanates from such a feminine body. Zhang Yuanxun enacts the scenario of being charmed by such sublimity; when Zhang was indicted in the rally for the 'Free forum manifesto' (*Ziyou luntan xuanyan*) poster, Lin Zhao was the only one who defended him. She jumped onto a table and shouted down the noise of overwhelming accusation; her face could not be recognized in the dark, which only reinforced her voice as it articulated strong opinions with fine texture. Zhang used his arms and facial expressions to invoke the dramatic scene, performing the gallant bravery and strength of Lin.

The emergent "self-assertive and rebellious heroism and the Faustian-Promethean" image of self underlying Zhang Yuanxun's representation of Lin Zhao is developed further by the former members of *Spark* (*Xinghuo*), which was an underground journal articulating alternative political models and centering around Lin's thoughts. Gu Yan uses Lu Xun as a model to describe the romantic idealist vision of Lin Zhao, both believing in the autonomous self and a radical divorce of self

from the chaos of the outer world (Denton, 1998, p. 46). The filmmaker's embodied reading of Lin's manifestos that were written in blood reinforces the affective quality of the autonomous ego:

Correctly put, it is to unite the anti-tyranny activists of mainland China, in order to give birth to an epoch-making renaissance of such age-old and profound legacies of the Middle Ages—the Humanity Liberation Movement. (quoting from *In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul*, translation mine)

The agency of the soul underlying the writings is embodied by Hu Jie's reading. The filmmaker is inscribed in the text; in close shots, tinted saffron color, the camera moves along the lines of Lin Zhao's handwriting; sometimes the filmmaker uses his pen or fingers to point out the words on the manuscripts. All this displays the sensibility and intellection of the filmmaker who is involved in a dialogue with Lin Zhao's soul and the pursuit of the autonomous ego. The film is characterized by the self-reflexivity and performativity of the filmmaker from the very beginning, when Hu Jie faces the camera, directly addressing the viewer, describing how he was shocked by the counterdiscourse articulated by Lin Zhao against the 'anti-rightist' suppression of independent thinking, especially her persistent challenge to surveillance and repression through writing in blood.

The interrogation of the survivors also brings confessions about accepting the loss of freedom of speech in order to survive, which simultaneously foregrounds the transcending subjectivity of Lin Zhao. The divine soul that is emergent in the survivors' representations, and the confessions of the intellectuals in post-socialist years, cause the viewer to realize the significance of being true to oneself, or the transformative effect of this autonomous practice. As a viewer, Ai Xiaoming—a

feminist professor and social activist¹⁰¹—recalls the affective dimension of the film and the transformative potential of being affected by Lin Zhao's soul; she recognizes:

The documentarian is obviously affected by the beauty of Lin Zhao's resolve; when he was filming Lin Zhao's blood writings, he put them in an order similar to a Great Wall ... I can feel the dialogue between the documentarian and Lin Zhao's soul; he is casting Lin Zhao with his own commitment and faith. (Ai, 2004, Jun. 21, translation mine)

She particularly acknowledges the implication of Lin Zhao's autonomous actions of rebellion against current social activism:

If Lin Zhao can be our spiritual legacy, this requires our corporeal actions. Lin Zhao challenges our cognitive limits on understanding females' political, intellection and somatic life. ... This leaves a challenge to all the viewers: what efforts can we make to redeem Lin Zhao's ideal to the current appeals of human rights protection and freedom? (ibid. translation mine)

The mimetic response of the viewer is embodied through Ai's bringing forth of her own selfhood; as she recognizes, the striving for human rights needs to mimetically embody Lin Zhao's soul: acting out the transformative autonomy of self against 'cynicism', and committing to everyday social actions (ibid.). Ai's self-referencing response testifies that the testimony's agentive force can produce a historical subject of agency in remembering and remaking history.

Bearing testimony that advocates the self's performance—moving to play oneself and the other—is orchestrated for the textual production of agency. In *In Search of Li Zhao's Soul*, the inscription of the filmmaker Hu Jie as a textual character, as the figural equivalent that is interpolated by the romantic individualist ego, can be seen as the rhetoric device that advocates the individual's mimetic conduct of pursuing human rights and bearing testimony. Such a textual property is also deployed by *To Justify Bu Qinfu*, and *My Mother is Wang Peiyong*, which

¹⁰¹ Ai Xiaoming has been actively involved in grassroots media activism and human rights protection, particularly in her documentary filmmaking on AIDS infection (*Care and Love*, 2007), village election (*Taishi Village*, 2005), etc. She has been in close collaboration with Hu Jie since 2004; for more on her, see in Thomham (2008), pp. 178–179.

foreground an active interrogator who empathetically identifies with the female heroines' stories that take place in Mao's era, and is passionately involved in the formation of the history/myth of these characters. The inscribed self is motivated to produce evidence and write on the textual myths about Lin Zhao, Wang Peiying and Bu Qinfu, whose radical claims interpolated the filmmakers, who re-create the testimonies. In *To Justify Bu Qinfu*, the filmmaker Wang Yunlong is himself a personal eyewitness to Bu's life; in *My Mother is Wang Peiying*, the ephemeris of Wang's suffering cannot exist for the viewer if not enacted by the eyewitnesses' gestures and verbalization, including that of the interviewer and the producer (Bu's children). The filmmakers, in such cases, are firsthand testimonies, themselves the historical actors, creating evidence through the embodied filmmaking; the authority of history/testimony is taken advantage of to produce myths and re-enchant the viewer.

2.2. Ethical spectatorship through creative treatments of testimonies

East Wind State Farm characterizes creative documenting of hidden histories of heterogeneity and ambiguity; the creative knowledge-production consists not only in the testimonies' individualized experiences and performances, but also in the film's creative redemption of the historical scenarios through post-filmic techniques such as editing, sketches and animation, etc. The use of firsthand testimony to contradict the archival footage that was produced and represents official historiography, features a number of oral history-based documentaries as critical historiography; for example, *The Storm*, *Red Art: The Cultural Revolution and Posters*, *Painting for the Revolution*, *Storm Under the Sun*, etc. The critical filmmaker who is skeptical of official historical writings, deploys filmmaking as a way of questing for alternative traditions from folk society. Arguably, such quests revive legacies of the 'folk literature movement'

(*minjian wenxue yundong*) during 1918–1937, and the ‘new folk song movement’ (*xin minge yundong*) dating from 1958 in Mao’s era, both foregrounding the intellectuals’ romantic vision of folk society and common people (mostly peasants), questioning the interpretations of China with folk materials¹⁰². Critical historiography in documentary form shares the same faith in the common people’s subjectively experienced realities, emplacing the ‘talking heads’ testimony as relics of alternative historical visions, and the basis for questioning the archival footage of studio newsreels, particularly its authority and factuality.

In a collective work, *Painting for Revolution* by Hu Jie and Ai Xiaoming, the location-shot ‘talking heads’ testimonies are juxtaposed to the episodes of propaganda documentary *Hu Country Peasants Paint New History* (1975), uncovering the discourses underlying peasant painting. For example, the propaganda film mobilizes voice-over narration and staged shooting to portray Liu Zhide as a model peasant who uses painting to enthusiastically promote Party policies. The film juxtaposes Liu’s testimony about his story of painting *Old Secretary (Lao Shuji)* with the propaganda film’s fabrication of that. The propaganda film narrates that the genesis of *Old Secretary* was based on Liu’s study of Maoism, which stresses that artistic works come from reality and learning from the model of ‘revolutionary model dramas’ (*geming yangban xi*). However, ironically, Liu himself, facing Ai and Hu’s camera, reveals that *Old Secretary* was an imitation of an existing sketch that depicts a workpoint recorder serving at a water conservancy construction site; the model cadre was a fabrication. Liu’s testimony exposes the behind-the-scenes stories of

¹⁰² Hong (1985) asserts that the ‘folk literature movement’ essentially resulted from the self consciousness of the modern agents (folklorists) to interpret the traditional cultures with the ‘low culture’ of common people (p. xii). Xia Ri Lu Wei (2003, Jun. 13) compares the 1918–1937 movement with the national movement since 1958 that was mobilized by the government and intended to create a discourse of ‘proletarian folk song study’ (*wuchan jieji geyao xue*) and analyze the organization of the official discourse in the latter, which tried to legitimate the Communist Party by advocating the people.

propaganda filmmaking, falsifying the newsreel's representation; the 'talking heads' actuality forms a counterdiscourse to redefine that history.

In *East Wind State Farm*, the complexity of the historical scenario underlying the testimony's somatic expression and liminal vision is enacted through Hu Jie's hand-painted animations, which visualize alternative imaginaries, foregrounding the heterogenous perception and experience of the individual body. The film tells the stories of the imprisoned 'rightists' in a labor camp called 'East Wind State Farm' (*guoying dongfeng nongchang*) from the late 1950s to the 1970s, about their daily life experiences of labor, love, hunger, death, political struggles in the everyday, etc. The oral testimonies consist of camp survivors from different constituents, the local witnesses who grew up during those times, etc. The oral testimonies enact firsthand experiences that foreground the ironies of the grand narratives (e.g. the Great Leap Forward movement) with personal stories. The subjective autonomy that the mass political movements attempted to assimilate, however, is the emphasis emerging from the oral testimony's self-performance of their individual witnessing and suffering in the camp; the film's creative visualization of that enhances the value of heterogeneous perception and embodies subjective sensibility.

In the newsreel reports, the intellectuals' articulations of personal opinions of the construction of the Communist Party were praised; however, the '*East Wind State Farm*' testimonies provide another picture, namely that they were deprived of jobs and sent to the camp. In the farm, the intellectuals were laborers subjected to food control; they usually suffered from hunger. Xie Chuanbao and Li Yuande attempted to steal peanuts to eat on a dark night during the Famine, but were caught and physically punished. Xie survived, but Li did not, dying as result of his treatment. The mixed feelings of fear, hunger, shame, grief and mourning characterize the moments

that Xie experienced, and also which Hu Jie perceived in Xie's storytelling. Thus, the hand-painted animation, which visualizes the peanut stealing episode, is the secondary testimony of Hu Jie, who brings forth the fear and shame underlying Xie's sensual and moral experiences, but which is not articulated with language.

The complex feeling of witnessing death and its aftermath in the camp is further enacted by the juxtaposition of Xie's testimony to the visualized historical scenarios. After Li Yuande was beaten to death because he stole peanuts, Li's father and sister came to the camp to find Li but found only his dead body. Although Xie does not describe what the two family members' reactions were, a sense of sorrow underlies his tone. The sketches portraying the faces of Li's family re-present the texture of the unspeakable complexity that Xie felt, as a witness to the historical scene; the work demands that the viewer identifies the mixture of shock, disappointment, sorrow, and beyond, underlying the faces of the father and sister, which might be, primarily, what Hu Jie perceived in Xie's storytelling.

The creative uses of pictorial reenactment in such amateur-author DV documentaries, unlike some of the institutional exercises, foreground the embodied response of the filmmaker to the historical testimony. The historical details, or the historical *xianchang*, can be perceived or reinforced in the visualized images, and the viewer can be impressed directly by the gestural complexity. Sometimes the pictorial reenactment brings forth the filmmaker's firsthand testimony such as in *Storm under the Sun*, with Peng Xiaolian's personal memories about living through a haunted childhood impacted by the public persecution of her father. In such cases, the pictorials are beyond 'a potential narrative instrument' (Barnouw, 1993, p. 205) used to make a historical compilation film. There is an ethical dimension underlying such a technique that can affect the bodies off-screen; visual representations of atrocity

challenge the spectator's identification, pleasure and empathy (Wilson & Croder-Taraborrelli, 2012).

Wilson and Croder-Taraborrelli (2012) observe that the inscription of visual records of atrocities (such as the Holocaust) risks subjecting the sufferers to be the objects of visual pleasure; the found footage is double-edged: it could be evidential, or succumb to voyeurism (p. 11). However, arguably, the text's production of subject matter can be socially engaging, more than the textual production of subject identification. Oliver (2010) asserts that such social engagement can be achieved through ethical spectatorship, which can be derived from the visual representation that embodies a self-reflexive empathy, or, "the capacity to put oneself in the place of the other while always returning to the self" (p. 127), and thus a capacity to make an embodied response. It can be a textually inscribed 'performative act of seeing' (p. 128) as much as the pictorial redemption of a testimony's perception and witness; for example, in *East Wind State Farm*, the ethical action of simultaneously acknowledging the suffering and reflecting on one's own perception of it is made visible, and could be mimetically felt by the viewer. Such a perceptually and ethically active, embodied mode of seeing characterizes critical documentary historiography that demands the spectator to be both affectively moved by the film and also critically detached, able to make interpretations about the alternative historical imaginaries.

Conclusion

Digital video advanced personal filmmaking when it intersected with the serious intention of creating oral history, foregrounding embodied filmmaking as a construction of identity, selfhood, and personality, in relation to traditions. In the two case studies, the personal mode of filmmaking was built into the oral history-based documentaries as a privileged mode, which reinforces the sentiments of reconnecting

to history though personal reality. The embodied filmmaking displays the search for an identity, a (self-)consciousness, with the formation of alternative traditions: bearing testimony to the alternative sides of high socialism.

One characteristic in common between the two cases within this chapter lies with the self-presentation of the filmmaker being developed as a part of the film diegesis (a filmic integration consisting of time/space/subject, relating various spaces from the screen to the audience). For the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’, in the staged performance, the filmmaker becomes a performer, relating oral testimonies to the real audiences and reflects on his/her personal experience of how he/she developed a real-world relationship with the oral testimony. In other words, in the theater, the filmmaker embodies response to the oral testimony, and both his/her self-presentation in the film and in the theatrical performance become the representation, or re-telling, of the firsthand testimony with their bodily differences—the generational consciousness and autonomy of the post-80s. In Hu Jie’s political documentaries, he also performs a secondary testimony, re-presenting the primary memories of the former ‘rightist’ intellectuals with his freehand sketching; such sketches are digitalized and presented as moving pictorials, embodying the perceptions and imaginations of the filmmaker towards the narration of the oral testimony about the historical scenarios. The on-camera performance of Hu, impressing the spectator by presenting himself as an inscribed consciousness—a follower of the independent intellectual sacrificed in the political movements—is another significant illustration of the secondary testimony. Therefore, in such oral history documentaries shot in the personal mode and in digital mimesis, in addition to the self-presentation of the oral testimony, we also perceive the performative address of the filmmaker—his/her emotions and consciousness. In doing so, we can perceive

not only the intersubjective embodiment between the oral testimony and the filmmaker, but can also have a direct and dynamic engagement with the filmmaker (an inscribed character). It is through the latter that the relationship between the onscreen diegesis and the three-dimensional world is built up and challenges the textual boundary of documentary. In such independent productions of oral history documentary, which privilege the direct and personal encounter between the filmmaker and the oral testimony, and urges intervention in the process of collective amnesia from his/her personal here-and-now, the filmmaker becomes a part of the present knowledge that is produced by the documentary. Additionally, because of his/her role of secondary testimony, relating the firsthand testimony to the actual audience, the filmmaker becomes not only personally and bodily involved on the spot of testament and making embodied response to that, but with the digital technologies (the enhanced *vérité* mode and the long shot with digital video powerfully convey orality, performativity, and subjectivities emerging within the on-camera performances and film diegesis), also part of the historical knowledge with his/her bodily re-presentation embedded into the current cultural memories, through the exhibition and transmission of the audiovisual conveyers.

Arguably, filmmakers are cultural constituencies of ‘the Forsaken Generation’ of Mao’s socialism. As Wang Q. (2008) defines, such a generation is a group of people "born between 1960 and 1970, and extendable to include the late fifties up until the early seventies", and also a generational ‘sentiment and style’ characterized by the "feeling of being forsaken—abandoned and stranded—by socialist history and historiography" (p. 43). The political heat of the socialist movements vaporized, without waiting for such subjects’ grown-up and constructive participation; they did not have an embodied experience of the revolution, but were still Mao’s spiritual

children—their growth witnessed and influenced by the socialist past, and were interrupted by the cut-off from that past in the reformist era. With such experiences, they are written with "a subtle mixture of belief and suspicion, longing and disgust, nostalgia and poignancy" (p. 44). Against the post-socialist collapse of official, realistic discourse, their cultural expressions are characterized by the desire to write about the public history from the "reverse side of history and reality", the "*breaks and discontinuities* rather than linear narrative" (p. 47, emphasis original), and to write with personal, individual, subjective perception and cognition in relation to their experiential realities, to raise new identity and self-consciousness.

The Famine documentaries and Hu Jie's practices can be understood in association with such 'Forsaken Generation' sentiments. In essence, the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine' is instilled, if not mastered, by Wu Wenguang's visions, whose documentary practices are marked by a predilection of remembrance of the past from a personal perspective¹⁰³. Born in 1956, he and Hu Jie (born in 1958) both reflect on the legacies of Mao's socialism: the Famine, and the 'anti-rightist campaign'. The post-1980s generation filmmakers thus are similar to the village-video-makers in 'The Village Video Project'¹⁰⁴, negotiating authorial visions with Wu and are inscribed as textual characters within the collective project; in the negotiations, their explorations of the socialist legacies give rise to self-consciousness, textually and socially.

The complexity of socialist history and the ambiguity of official historiography provide the 'Forsaken Generation' with the legacies to reconnect with history subjectively and viscerally; oral history-based inquiry and embodied

¹⁰³ Such preoccupation can be seen in his documentaries, e.g. *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (1990), *1966 My Time as a Red Guard* (1995), etc.

¹⁰⁴ Voci (2010) asserts that the village-video-makers actually succumbed to the curator's mastering vision as textual characters, and the intention of the project to empower the subaltern subjects—the villagers—failed (p. 155).

filmmaking foreground the personal and corporeal dimensions underlying their sentiment and style, as Wu Wenguang desires, "The details of history are my concern" (W.G. Wu, personal communication, May 2, 2012). However, the embodied filmmaking is also experimenting with socialist traditions; for example, the 'talking heads' that were the instrument to propagate the models of Party ideologies in Mao's era, are utilized to provide the 'reverse' side of historical scenarios. The moral significance of the 'talking heads' now adds value to hidden faces and individual articulation. Additionally, with the affective quality of the somatic significations, conveyed by the facial and other bodily expressions of the testimony, individual articulations become related to the physiognomical expressions and collective memories of the 'Forsaken generation'. A mixture of disillusionment and re-enchantment underlies the oral history embodiments, which can be an apparatus creating and re-creating, not only knowledge about the past, but also the agency of collecting and re-collecting the past through embodied acts. With the dying out of the witnesses, and with the audiovisual preservation and transmission of the testimony, the collective memories on the alternative socialist histories are bound to be cultural memories for the current and future generations, affecting them and arousing their responses and responsibility.

The embodied filmmaking and digital mimesis reinforce the oral-history apparatus to produce historical agency. The commitment to *xianchang* is intersected with the commitment to the testimony (the historical *xianchang*). The bodily mimesis advanced by digital technologies turns the corporeal engagements in the everyday, and the self-representation in daily life settings, into visible/perceivable actualities, conveyed by audiovisual images, in which the testaments that dwell on the contingent interactions and somatic gestualization can be perceived by the viewer in order to

comprehend the complexity of history. In addition to, and because of that, the agency of historical writing that is inscribed in the textual formation, is simultaneously embodied in the three-dimensional social world; the interaction and intertextuality between the textual (actors) and the social (actors), persists in the successively embodied filmmaking and film viewing. Such a blurred boundary between text and life, on- and off-screen world, turns the filmmaker into a part of the testimony, who bears witness for the firsthand testimony and presents secondary testimony in media conveyers: theater (in the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’) or animations (in Hu Jie’s case). Bearing secondary testimony as a re-presentation of historical scenarios constitutes a necessary part of the documentary knowledge. The visualization devices such as animations, hand paintings, etc. in Hu Jie’s films foreground his spectatorial perception, comprehension and responsiveness to the sensuous dimension of the historical scenario.

With embodied filmmaking and commitment to *xianchang*, the historical scenarios blow up for the contemporaneous. The cases I have discussed suggest that the self is foregrounded as the textual formation, and the coming into self-consciousness as rhetoric can arouse mimetic response from the viewer. The affective imaginaries of the independent selfhood in the filmic world advocate active social behaviors, independent personalities, reasoning of history based on one’s own experience and comprehension in the quotidian life.

Conclusions

Documentary testimony: *the orality in the moving image*

With the theoretical exploration, this dissertation has two principal implications: firstly, ‘secondary orality’ has limitations in terms of theorizing the

categorical difference between the visuality of writing and print, and that of the moving image. From the survey of the early film theories that concern the specificity of the moving image, I found the visuality of the moving image is characterized by its gestural expressiveness and its quality to engage. Based on such findings, we can redefine ‘secondary orality’ as a kind of oral mode of expression and communication in modernity, using modern technologies, which cannot avoid incorporating the gestures of visual display to engage one modern body-subject with another, and in doing so, the intersubjective experience can be redeemed.

Secondly, with the survey of early film theories, it is implied that the experiential faculty of the human beings can be revived, and the sensory experiences including oral, auditory, visual, tactile, smell, taste, etc. can be embraced in the moving image display and in the inter-corporeal exchanges in the cinema. Based on that, it is arguable that the cinema experience could bring a new mode of embodied intersubjectivity, imitating the oral mode of communication with modern technologies, so that the spectator actively engages with the other bodies on screen or off screen, based on but beyond the optical faculty. Thus, the moving image (a modern technological apparatus) can be the place for the oral mode of expression and communication of re-incarnation, revitalizing the irreducible intersubjectivity characterizing Ongian orality, for example, the corporeal encounter between the spectator and the on-screen face, similar to the relationality between the speaker and the listener in the lifeworld. And in film, we can have a new mode of embodied human expression and communication, different from writing and reading with linguistic comprehension. It is implied that studies on *the orality in the moving image* must look at two dimensions of the oral mode of expression and communication to locate the embodied intersubjectivity in the visual display. Firstly, the gestural

expressiveness of the human body in the visual display; secondly, the engagements of an off-screen body with another body on- or off-screen—the ephemeral but experiential relationship of self and other, and being in the world.

The case studies on oral history documentary found that the embodiment of *orality in the moving image* can be achieved by forms of *documentary testimony*, which mimetically represent the orality, performativity, and intersubjectivity of the human expression and communication in the visual display, specifically in relation to the witness's retrospection on the past, personal, and subjective memories and experiences, to confirm the truth of a certain history. In addition to the conventional 'talking heads' format, we can also have the contingent enactment of historical scenarios rendered by *vérité* filmmaking—the contingent testament. This means that in the unplanned scenes, or scenes with improvisational interactions among social actors, the documentary subject who is an oral testimony presents his/her subjective memories and experiences through bodily revelation with the orchestrated exchanges with the other social subjects and with the camera (as exemplified by the survival sexual-slavery victim Li Tianying's bodily performance in *Half Century's Homesickness*). The visual display imparts the historical knowledge through gestural articulations and interpersonal exchanges. Both 'talking heads' and contingent testament can be named as the somatic testament conveyed in *vérité*, because both identify the corporeal performance of the testimony about the past loaded in the visual display.

In addition to the contingent testament, we can also have 'secondary testimony' as a form of documentary testimony, namely, the firsthand or primary testimony gathered from the oral testimony who has experienced a certain historical scenario can be repeated and re-presented with the bodily creativity and

expressiveness of the listener about such historical scenarios. The filmmaker as a committed listener, holding a camera to document firsthand testimony, can turn into a secondary testimony on the theatrical stage (as exemplified by the ‘Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine’), in an on-camera performance (as suggested by Hu Jie’s self-reference as the re-teller of the liberal-female Lin Zhao’s life story in *In Search of Lin Zhao’s Soul*), and a computer-rendered imagery presentation (e.g. Hu Jie’s presentation of his emotional response and cognitive understanding of the labor camp sufferers in *East Wind State Farm*). The ‘secondary testimony’ attempts to relate the audience of actual and existential bodies to the screen-world of suffering and striving, crossing the textual boundary and generating the agency of the spectators through audiovisual mimesis.

The second implication of the empirical part suggests that video loading orality can be reflexive; it can generate both historical knowledge, and agency of the social actors. On the one hand, in the actuality images, there is the emergent subjectivity of the oral testimony, his/her enactment of the historical experience is joined by his/her management of the performance. On the other hand, in the documentary rhetoric, we can perceive the emergent consciousness and identity of the filmmaker who is an embodied witness in front of the oral testimony, and also performs a secondary testimony with his/her bodily difference, re-presenting and re-telling the other’s experience, and thus taking up a certain social persona of responsibility with the embodied response, found in the textual and the inter-textual.

Thirdly, the politics of the commitment to the actuality, either ‘documentary realism’ or ‘*xianchang*’ aesthetic, demands the filmmaker’s physical and political commitment to directly encounter the subject. The testimony generated in such conditions contains the active performance of the interviewee, and the visual contains

the oral expression and communication with the actuality image. The politics of the commitment to actuality is reinforced by digital mimesis; this means the inevitable involvement of the filmmaker's body on the scene, and subsequently the filmmaker becomes both an inscribed actor in the screen world and a social actor in the extra-screen world, projecting a certain personal, social and generational consciousness. Differing from analog video, which is usually more bulky, digital video filmmaking exposes the experiential and corporeal presence of the filmmaker with his/her haptic movements—the filmmaker cannot avoid being an inscribed performer in the film diegesis. The amateur-author (or, personal, or self-referential, Wang, Y. M., 2005) filmmaker works hand in hand with the active bodies that are engaged on the spot, making the somatic testament and secondary testimony more perceptually expressive.

Fifthly, analyzing video loading orality provides a perspective to look at the history and practices of Chinese documentary as not only producing alternative archives but also forming alternative social and political identities; specifically, such identities emerge from the treatments of the collective memories as new oral-traditions against modernity, on remembering history and producing social agency. Additionally, it also implies that the legacies of socialist China can be the main themes of the contemporary politically oriented oral-history-documentary.

Implications for further research

This research could have several implications for future studies on the moving image culture, film and documentary. Firstly, the concept and politics of *xianchang*, or location shooting, characterizing the active involvement of the filmmaker, can be an important analytical-point for an intersubjectivity-centered approach to documentary studies.

Xianchang and embodiment intersects on the idea of active and bodily performative social actors; specifically for oral history documentaries, which are engaged socially and politically, the incorporation of *xianchang* is under the assumption that the testimony is neither a passive subject being exploited by the filmmaker, nor a visual object subjected to the pleasure principle of the spectator. Instead, the testimony is regarded as an embodied subject with the capacity and autonomy of self-representation in the on-screen world as well as in off-screen real encounters. And the filmmaker is not a master of vision or a genius creating self-sufficient art-works, but a collaborative performer on the scene with the testimony, in the production of knowledge about the past. Thus *xianchang*, or live shooting/location shooting, which emphasizes the temporality of the present and the space/place of the spot, urges embodied acts of bearing testimony. It does so with telling and bearing responsive-ness to such telling, two different social acts. The committed listening with a camera, as the social intervention performed in the film diegesis, engages with the current spectatorship, with the affect of intervening in the process where the witnesses of the alternative histories are dying out, whilst modernization is rapidly erasing rural memory by producing a collective amnesia. Registered in the Chinese oral history documentary films, the self-reference of the filmmaker as the committed listener of *xianchang*, and the secondary testimony on the re-presentational stage testifies Zhang Z. (2007)'s proposition that the political use of *xianchang* lies with laying bare the human embodiment essentially involved within the intertwining between representation and actuality, and that it foregrounds the subject-object relation between the filmmaker and the other social subjects so as to create 'a more intersubjective or democratic cinema' (p. 18).

With such implication of the use of *xianchang* in oral history documentaries, I

suggest an intersubjectivity-centered approach to the analysis of the documentary texts and cultures. My tracking of documentary traditions highlights a specific strand in the overall picture of documentary history, especially within contemporary practices, as one that moves from the producer to the subject, informed by the performative turn, which understands the filmed subjects as active social actors who engage in a dynamic encounter with the camera/the filmmaker/the other social actors/the environment. Both sides of the camera are able to make self-presentations with their speech and gestures, and it is recognized that the spectatorship is a performance of experiencing and being affected. A move from the subject-centered approach to the intersubjectivity-centered one can help us to understand the cultural meanings and the embodied human activities underlying the reformulation of the subject-object relationship, and the increasingly participatory media cultures that blur the boundary between producer and subject.

Such an intersubjectivity-centered approach aims to understand the documentary as an embodied experience, performed by the productive relationships among the subject, the producer, and also the spectator. It holds the notion that the documentary diegesis is a dynamic of time/space/subject that runs across the boundary of the frame, relating the two-dimensional screen world to the three-dimensional existential world, touching the social actors and making social changes with the sensory perceptions. With such an approach, documentaries that produce knowledge about historically significant events can be understood as attempts to relate the screen space to the current viewers, affecting them with the performative event of cinema experience, which also becomes a social experience. It is with such understanding that we would say that the documentary is an embodied act beyond being an evidence of historical events. The intersubjectivity-centered analysis of the

knowledge production in the documentary should relate the knowledge that is produced in the documentary (testimony) to the gesture and intersubjective engagement, in order to transcend the opinion that the documentary is an objective or self-sufficient representation.

I want to suggest that the notion of orality in moving images can be a more applicative one than the three-stage evolution from orality to literacy and to secondary-orality, in analyzing the modern technologies that rely on the moving image to produce and exchange the embodied oral mode of expression and communication, which can encompass both television and film, or other media conveyers specifying the moving image, though these might be different in terms of genre, recording techniques, or exhibition modes, etc. It implies a method of film historiography that blurs the arbitrary boundaries of conventions, such as genre, but attempts to identify the moments and worlds that are created by the embodied orality in the moving image. And such a technological history of film is anything but technologically determined, because it attempts to pin down the embodied human experiences that are registered by the technological changes. Therefore, digital technologies and the Internet would not change my basic thesis question that orality in the moving image is a valid fact. On the contrary, in practice, the dissertation has shown that the digital mimesis affects the production and presentation of orality in video, in terms of the necessary self-reference of the filmmaker as social responses, and the oral history documentary as one that not only produces knowledge about the past, but also produces social agency to remember alternative traditions of history and generate social change.

The second implication for the future research can be that the digital technologies and the Internet would not change my basic thesis on *the orality in the*

moving image, but might testify it to some extent. From the written technologies to the sound-recording ones, to the moving image apparatus such as analog and digital videoing, the experiential quality and gestural dimension of oral history have been opened up further and further. For example, when oral historians transcribed sound tapes into literary texts, they struggled to preserve the gestures, expressions, tones, and other emotional revelations of the testimonies in order to capture and maintain the unity of the history. However, in videotaped oral history, gestural expressions like the tear dropping slowly down her face, or grasping a hat and moving it nervously, etc. can be embodied directly through the visual projections. When the testimony in the talking heads directly addresses the filmmaker and the viewer from the on-screen world, he/she exercises his/her own capacity and motivation of performing a story of his/her past. It implies that the technological impacts on the oral history practice of conducting and recording inquiries about the past have been becoming an emergent tradition. Bearing witness for the past becomes more accessible and immanent in the everyday, with the digital technologies.

The recent case of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine' suggests that the social media platforms and the forms of presentation they convey, such as the Chinese version of online video websites (e.g. Youku), the blogs and the Chinese version of twitter (e.g. sina weibo), or microblog, are mobilized self-consciously as important means for re-presenting and re-telling the oral histories after the interview. From televised documentaries on 'comfort women' to independently produced and disseminated documentaries such as those on the alternative traditions of socialist history in the 'Folk Memory' project and Hu Jie's films, we can see the technological changes from the analog system to the digital system, from the officially sponsored and limited dissemination to the Internet and the grassroots operations. This testifies

my argument of the filmmaker as an embodied ‘secondary testimony’ or even creative testimony, with the agency of the viewing public (for the remembering and remaking of history) textually performed in the cyber space. Nonetheless, the forms of documentary testimony have been changing, which means the re-presentational performances with technological conveyers, on the actuality image containing the historical testimony, become more diversified. For example, in the ten-minute online documentary video *Testimony: The Hunger Memory of the Great Leap Forward Famine* produced by the ‘Folk Memory’ project, you get a more intimate broadcast than the conventional television documentary series, which preserves the sensitivity of history and moves the audiences with its audiovisual engagement. The individual comments and messages left for this post on the *weibo* page indicate such intimacy. Thus, the thesis that the oral history incorporated in the documentary moves the spectator with the pathos of facts, and that the spectator plays the role of the witness towards the documentary testimony, moved to remember and retell the historical scenarios, are actually testified by the new technologies.

In revising Ong’s thesis on secondary orality and exploring the intersubjective components of primary orality, we can see that there is a underlining perspective on writing about the technological history of human culture and communication—the redemption of the oral mode of expression and communication as a consistent theme and desire, around which new modes of embodiment are kept, brought by modern technologies. So identifying the redemptive quality of new technologies and observing their means of making embodied expressions and communication, can become a perspective to look at the technological history of modern media in general and moving images in particular. Investigating the connection between the desire for orality and the technological changes can be an approach to writing about the

technological history of/on film. And such a historiography need not only recognize the value of masterpieces and classics (art works), but also acknowledge the importance of ephemeral texts that convey individual but public-historical perceptions, experiences and knowledge, and try to make sense of that.

Thirdly, the inter-connections between early film theories of the first few decades of the twentieth century, the orality theories that flourished around the 1970s, and this research that derives from those phenomenologist visions a perspective of studying the embodied experience in contemporary documentary practices, suggest that the phenomenologist tradition, which focuses on the study of embodied human experiences, is still relevant for analyzing the redemption of the oral mode of expression and communication in present perceptions. Studying the visual display of orality should explore the phenomenologist perspectives and approaches, trying to relate those aspects to the empirical and micro analysis, and generate relational implications for understanding the vernacular memories, including the generational, the cultural, and the collective.

The 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) derived from anthropology can be an important method for future studies on the documentary testimony. Such a method will regard visual representations as embodiments of human expression and communication. And it can relate the localized knowledge production and local embodiments to the 'global archives of suffering' (Sarkar & Walker, 2010), in which the activeness of the sufferers are encouraged, instead of treating them as passive victims of trauma of the unspeakable-ness. Last but not least, I also want to suggest that the studies on orality in the visual can be developed as a discursive space and enunciating position in film studies, with its focus on the consistencies and ruptures of the technological history of

human expression and communication that is brought by the technologically actualized variations of moving images.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sources of Documentary Editing Room at Shanghai Audio-Visual Archives

- DER. (1993). *Mao Zedong in North Shanxi (Mao Ze Dong zai Shanxi)*.
- DER. (1994). *Stories about two orphans (Liangge guer de gushi)*.
- DER. (1995). *Unforgettable years (Nanwang de suiyue)*.
- DER. (1995). *Wall: In search of former armymen (Chengqiang: Xunfang jiu junren)*.
- DER. (1995). *Wall: Two war memorial museums (Chengqiang: Liangge zhanzheng jinian guan)*.
- DER. (1996). *Man-monster-man: The life of a former Japanese gendarmerie (Ren, gui, ren: Yige yuan riben xianbing de shengya)*.
- DER. (1997). *Entering Africa (Zoujin feizhou)*.
- DER. (2000). *Memoirs of the Ambassadors of People's Republic (Gonghe guo dashi huiyi lu)*.
- DER. (2002). *No other choice: Conversation with Wang Xuan (Bie wu xuanze: Wang Xuan tanhua)*.
- DER. (2003). *The vicissitudes of Shanghai (Hai shang fu chen)*.
- DER. (2004). *We are still alive (Women hai huozhe)*.
- DER. (2004). *We watched films at that time (Nashi, women kan dianying)*.
- DER. (2005). *In the days of peace (Zai heping de rizi li)*.
- DER. (2005). *Revisiting place of refuge: Shanghai Jewish refugees (Chongfan binan di: Shanghai youtai nanmin fang hu jishi)*.
- DER. (2005). *Stories about Chinese adoptive parents and Japanese war orphans (Zhongguo yang fumu he riben yigu de gushi)*.

- DER. (2006). *Experiencing national affairs (Guoshi qinli)*.
- DER. (2006). *Shanghai memories (Shanghai jiyi)*.
- DER. (2006). *Tangshan Earthquake (Tangshan da dizhen)*.
- DER. (2006). *The Red Army in western expedition (Xizheng de hongjun)*.
- DER. (2006). *The Tangshan Earthquake (Tangshan da dizhen)*.
- DER. (2007). *A waiting 61-year-long (Liushi yi nian de shouhou)*.
- DER. (2007). *The memories never fade (Yongbu momie de jiyi)*.
- Ji, Z., & Zhang, C. C. (2006). *The Scar of Memory (Jiyi de shanghen)*.
- Liang, B. B. (2007). *San jie cao*.
- Song, J. C. (2002). *Remains of Victims (Zuihou de xingcun zhe)*.
- Zhang, K. H. (1994). *Half Century's Homesickness (Bange shiji de xianglian)*.
- Zhang, K. H. (1996). *The unspeakable attachment to this earth (Nanyan heitu qing)*.
- Zhang, K. H. (1996). *Where the Soul be Buried (Hungui hechu)*
- Zhang, L., & Su, L. (2004). *The Sufferers (Shounan de muqin)*.

Appendix 2: Sources of the 'Folk Memory Documentary Project: Famine' (2009-2012) at Caochangdi Workstation

- Jia, N. N. (2011). *My grandpa Jia Fuqui (Wo de yeye Jia Fukui)*.
- Jia, Z. T. (2012). *My village 2010 (Wo de cunzi 2010)*.
- Li, X. M. (2011). *Return to Huamuli (Huidao Huamulin)*.
- Li, X. M. (2012). *Return to Huamulin again (Zi hui Huamulin)*.
- Live Dance Studio (2008). *Memory (Huiyi)*.
- Live Dance Studio (2012). *Listen to Third Grandma's Story (Ting san nainai jiang guoqu de shiqing)*.

- Live Dance Studio. (2012). *Memory 2: Hunger (Huiyi 2: Ji'e)*.
- Live Dance Studio. (2013). *Memory 3: Tombstone (Huiyi 3: Mubei)*.
- Luo, B. (2011). *Luo Village: I and Ren Dingqi (Luo jia wu: Wo he Ren Dingqi)*.
- Luo, B. (2012). *Luo Village: Relentless world (Luo jia wu: Tian di wu qing)*.
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- Wang, H. A. (2012). *Attacking Zhanggao Village (Jingong Zhanggao cun)*.
- Wen, H. (2011). *Listen to third grandma's story (Ting san nainai jiang guoqu de shiqing)*.
- Zhang, H. C. (2012). *My village 2010 (Wo de cunzi 2010)*.
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- Zhang, M. Q. (2011). *Self-portrait: 47 kilometer (Zi huaxiang: 47 gongli)*.
- Zhang, M. Q. (2012). *Self-portrait: Dance at 47 kilometer (Zi huaxiang: 47 gongli tiaowu)*.
- Zou, X. P. (2010). *The Starving Village (Ji'e de cunzi)*.
- Zou, X. P. (2011). *Family objection (Jiating fandui)*.
- Zou, X. P. (2011). *The Satiated Village (Chibao de cunzi)*.
- Zou, X. P. (2012). *Children's Village (Haizi de cunzi)*.
- Zou, X. P. (2012). *One-person theater (Yige ren de juchang)*.

Appendix 3: Sources of the Documentary Archive of University Service Center at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

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- Cui, Z. E. (2009). *Queer China, Comarade China (Zhi tongzhi)*.
- Duan, J. C & Jiang, Y. (2004). *The Storm (Baofeng zhoyu)*.
- Hinton, C, Barmé, G, & Gordon, R. (2003). *Morning Sun*.

- Hu, J. (2004). *In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul* (a.k.a. *Looking for Lin Zhao's Soul, Xunzhao Lin Zhao de linghun*).
- Hu, J. (2006). *Though I am Dead* (*Wo sui si qu*).
- Hu, J. (2009). *East Wind State Farm* (*Guoying dongfeng nongchang*).
- Hu, J. & Ai, X. M. (2007). *Red Art: The Cultural Revolution and Posters* (*Hongse meishu: Wenge xuanchuan hua*).
- Lin, X. (2006). *Three-Miles-Cave Mine* (*San li dong*).
- Lin, X. (2011). *Gas* (*Wa si*).
- Peng, X. L., & Wei, S. L. (2009). *Storm under the Sun* (*Hongri fengbao*).
- Qie, L. H. (2004). *The Man on the Mountain* (*Shanli de laoren*).
- Wang, Y. L., & Han, Y. (2010). *To Justify Bu Qinfu* (*Huan Bu Qinfu yi meili*).
- Xie, Y. H. (2012). *Rightist Li Shengzhao's Hunger Report* (*Youpai Li Shengzhao de ji'e baogao*).
- Xu, X. (2010). *Karamay*.
- Zhang, D. L. (2008). *My 1979* (*Wo de 1979*).
- Zhang, D. Z. (2010). *My Mother is Wang Peiying* (*Wo de muqin Wang Peiying*).
- Zhang, T. H. (2009). *Farewell, Beijing* (*Zaijian Beijing*).
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Curriculum vitae

Bibliographical items on the author of the thesis, Ms. XU Yaping, Apple 徐亚萍

- 1) Born on May 7, 1985
- 2) Received a Bachelor of Arts from Tongji University in 2006
- 3) Received a Master of Arts from the Communication University of China in 2009

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